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**Contact: Esten Perez; 617-496-4009**

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## **OBAMA BOUNCING BACK, WIDENS LEAD OVER MITT ROMNEY AMONG MILLENNIALS, HARVARD POLL FINDS**

*President beginning to reconnect with and recapture support of America's 18- to 29- year-olds  
as plurality of Millennials now predict Obama re-election*

New York, N.Y. – A new national poll of America's 18- to 29- year-olds by Harvard's Institute of Politics (IOP), located at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, finds President Barack Obama has widened the gap between likely general election opponent Mitt Romney and himself. Obama now leads Romney by a seventeen point margin, a gain of six percentage points over the eleven-point lead the President held in late November IOP polling.

The IOP's newest poll results – its 21<sup>st</sup> major release since 2000 – also show a plurality of Millennials now predict the President will win re-election in November (43%: win; 27%: lose), a reversal from four months ago when a greater proportion of 18- to 29- year-olds believed he would lose than win (36%: lose; 30%: win). A detailed report on the poll's findings is available on the Institute's homepage at [www.iop.harvard.edu](http://www.iop.harvard.edu).

“Over the last several months, we have seen more of the Millennial vote begin to solidify around President Obama and Democrats in Congress,” said Harvard Institute of Politics Director Trey Grayson. “At the same time, there has been effectively no change in their support for Mitt Romney and Republicans in Congress. We will continue to track this demographic which we know is critical to success at the polls.”

“Although this generation is not as supportive of President Obama and Democrats as they may have been in the historic 2008 campaign, this in no way implies that the Republican Party has successfully captured the hearts, minds and votes of Millennials,” said Harvard Institute of Politics Polling Director John Della Volpe. “Instead, Millennials have clearly shown that they are a generation that cares deeply about our country, their role in it – and feel that the political system as represented by both parties has not effectively engaged them on the issues that will shape their and our nation's future.”

The web-enabled survey of 3,096 18- to 29- year-old U.S. citizens with a margin of error of +/- 1.7 percentage points (95% confidence level) conducted with research partner Knowledge Networks for the IOP between March 23 and April 9, 2012 finds –

- ***Barack Obama has widened the gap over Mitt Romney.*** With the general election approaching, Barack Obama has grown his lead over likely Republican presidential nominee and former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney to seventeen points (43%-26%), a six point larger margin than seen in IOP polling in late November/early December (37%: Obama; 26%: Romney). Obama leads Romney among 18- to 24- year-olds by 12 points (41%-29%) and 25- to 29- year-olds by 23 points (46%-23%).

- Job approval ratings generally beginning to stabilize for President Obama, especially among Hispanics – but still struggling among white Millennials.*** While November IOP polling showed Millennials’ overall job performance for President Obama hitting all-time lows, the Institute’s April poll shows the President beginning to regain Millennials’ approval. Over the past four months, Obama’s job approval rating among America’s 18- to 29- year-olds has risen six percentage points to 52% (46%: Nov. 2011). Among Hispanics specifically, Obama’s job approval increased by fourteen percentage points from 52% in November to 66% in April, a level consistent with pre-Fall 2011 levels (68%: Feb. 2011; 62%: Oct. 2010; 69%: Feb. 2010). In a potential 2012 general election match-up with Mitt Romney, Obama leads among Hispanics by 39 points (50%-11%). Despite these positive developments for the President, he continues to struggle with white Millennials – maintaining only a 41% job approval rating; according to 2008 exit polls, this demographic was not only the largest cohort of the Millennial segment but one which favored Obama over Senator John McCain in the 2008 presidential race (54%-44%). Approval for Democrats in Congress also rose six percentage points since late November to 39% (33%: Nov. 2011), while approval ratings of Republicans in Congress rose only one percentage point over the same period – currently standing at 25 percent.
- In contrast to four months ago, a plurality of America’s 18- to 29- year-olds now predict Obama will win bid for re-election.*** Late-November IOP polling showed a greater proportion of 18- to 29- year-olds believed that Barack Obama would lose re-election (36%) than win (30%), with almost a third (32%) not sure. When asked the same question this April, more than four-in-ten (43%) said they believe the President will win-re-election with twenty-seven percent (27%) predicting Obama would lose and three-in-ten (30%) not sure.
- By multiple measurements, the economy remains the top issue of concern for this generation.*** As has been the case in past IOP surveys, more Millennials cited “jobs and the economy” (58%) in an open-ended question on which national issue concerns them most – far outpacing any other answer. Additionally, the Institute tested the relative importance of 20 issues facing the United States; respondents were shown two issues and asked to choose which was a more important concern for America. “Creating jobs and lowering the unemployment rate” was considered the more important issue winning match-ups 77 percent of the time against the field and winning a majority of match-ups against every single other issue by a statistically significant margin. For example, 66 percent of Millennials felt it was more important than “ensuring affordable access to healthcare;” 75 percent said it was more important than “preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons;” and 65 percent said it was more important than “reducing the federal deficit.” When 2012’s undecided voters were isolated – “creating jobs” again remained the number-one priority (75% win percentage). A more robust breakdown of the 20 issues tested and match-up results is available in the IOP’s spring 2012 poll executive summary on the Institute’s homepage [www.iop.harvard.edu](http://www.iop.harvard.edu).

- ***Millennials place more trust in the United Nations than in the federal government, Congress or Wall Street.*** Levels of trust Millennials place in public institutions measured in the IOP's polling project have remained relatively constant over the last 12 months – however, some comparisons are still worth noting. Overall, 38% of America's 18- to 29- year olds trust the United Nations to do the right thing all or most of the time – a greater proportion than those saying the same about the federal government (27%), Congress (23%) or Wall Street (13%).
- ***Although President Obama's job approval rating on many key issues remains below fifty percent, the perception of Obama's handling of economic issues has shown improvement since last fall.*** After receiving job approval ratings of less than one-in-three (32%) on the economy and the federal budget deficit (30%), Obama's approval increased to forty-one percent (41%) and thirty-six percent (36%) respectively over the past four months. In contrast, Obama's performance on other key issues appears to be stabilizing as his approval ratings handling Afghanistan (50%: Apr. 2012; 51%: Nov. 2011), Iran (48%: Apr. 2012; 46%: Nov. 2011) and healthcare (45%: Apr. 2012; 43%: Nov. 2011) changed only marginally.
- ***Still sour, the mood of Millennials has improved since fall 2011.*** President Obama's job approval rating has been closely tied with Millennials' view on the direction of the country. While still a comparatively modest proportion, one in five (20%) of America's 18- to 29- year-olds now say they believe the country is “headed in the right direction” – an increase of eight percentage points (12%: Nov. 2011) from four months ago; the proportion of Millennials' saying the country is “off on the wrong track” has also fallen by nine points over the same period (43%: Apr. 2012; 52%: Nov. 2011). In addition, four-in-ten (40%) African Americans say the U.S. is headed in the right direction – a significantly higher proportion than the percentage of white Millennials (16%) and Hispanics (21%) saying the same. Men are also statistically more likely to say they are optimistic about the direction of the country than women (23% to 18%).

Complete results, are available – along with past surveys – online at [www.iop.harvard.edu](http://www.iop.harvard.edu).

## **Methodology**

Knowledge Networks conducted a study of young adults on political issues on behalf of Harvard University's Institute of Politics. The goal of the project was to collect 3,000 completed interviews with young Americans between 18 and 29 years old. The main sample data collection took place from March 23 to April 9, 2012. A small pretest was conducted prior to the main survey to examine the accuracy of the data and the length of the interview.

Six thousand, four hundred and sixteen (6,416) KnowledgePanel members were assigned to the study. The cooperation rate was 48.3 percent resulting in 3,096 completed interviews. One hundred seventy-three (173) interviews were conducted in Spanish with the remainder done in English.

The web-enabled KnowledgePanel® is a probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. population. Initially, participants are chosen scientifically by a random selection of

telephone numbers and residential addresses. Persons in selected households are then invited by telephone or by mail to participate in the web-enabled KnowledgePanel®. For those who agree to participate, but do not already have Internet access, Knowledge Networks provides a laptop and ISP connection at no cost. People who already have computers and Internet service are permitted to participate using their own equipment. Panelists then receive unique log-in information for accessing surveys online, and are sent e-mails throughout each month inviting them to participate in research. More technical information is available at <http://www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp/reviewer-info.html> and by request to the IOP.

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*Harvard University's Institute of Politics (IOP), located at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, was established in 1966 as a memorial to President Kennedy. The IOP's mission is to unite and engage students, particularly undergraduates, with academics, politicians, activists, and policymakers on a non-partisan basis to inspire them to consider careers in politics and public service. The Institute strives to promote greater understanding and cooperation between the academic world and the world of politics and public affairs. More information is available online at [www.iop.harvard.edu/](http://www.iop.harvard.edu/).*

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