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TRUMP, CARSON LEAD REPUBLICAN PRIMARY; SANDERS EDGING CLINTON AMONG DEMOCRATS, HARVARD IOP POLL FINDS

After Paris Terrorist Attacks, Solid Majority of America's 18- to 29- Year-Olds Support Sending U.S. Ground Troops to Defeat ISIS; Less Than 20% Inclined to Serve if Needed

Cambridge, MA – A new national poll of America's 18- to 29- year-olds by Harvard's Institute of Politics (IOP), at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, finds Donald Trump (22%) and Ben Carson (20%) locked in a dead-heat as young Republicans' first choice in their party's presidential primary – and young Democrats giving the edge to Bernie Sanders (41%) over Hillary Clinton (35%) as the top selection in their presidential primary. Overall, a majority (56%) of 18- to 29- year-olds prefer a Democrat win the 2016 campaign for president over a Republican, a net increase of five points since the IOP's spring 2015 survey was released.

The IOP's newest poll results also show – in the wake of the mid-November Paris terrorist attacks – a solid majority (60%) support the U.S. committing ground troops to defeat ISIS. When asked how likely they would be to serve, 16% said they “have already,” “would definitely” or “would strongly consider” joining the U.S. military to combat ISIS if additional troops were needed. A detailed report on the poll's findings is available online: <http://www.iop.harvard.edu/harvard-iop-fall-2015-poll>.

“For 15 years, the IOP has polled Millennials, the largest generation in U.S. history,” said Harvard Institute of Politics Director Maggie Williams. “Our fall poll shows they are deeply divided about who should lead America, focused on candidate integrity and split over whether the American Dream is alive or not. We are hopeful that political leaders will inspire and include this generation in conversations about the future of their country.”

The IOP's 28th major release since 2000, the GfK-KnowledgePanel® survey of 2,011 18- to 29-year-old U.S. citizens has a margin of error of +/- 2.8 percentage points (95% confidence level) and was conducted online with the Government and Academic Research team of GfK for the IOP between October 30 and November 9, 2015. The poll finds:

Solid Majority of America's 18- to 29- Year-Olds Support Sending Ground Troops to Combat ISIS. Early fall 2015 IOP polling fielded before the Nov. 13 Paris terrorist attacks showed America's youth split over whether to send U.S. ground troops to combat ISIS, with 48% saying they supported the action (48%: oppose) – a nine percentage-point drop in support over the past eight months (Mar. 2015: 57% support, 40% oppose). However, IOP polling re-fielded the question following the Nov. 13 Paris terrorist attacks – finding a 12 percentage-point swing in support with a strong majority (60%) of young Americans supporting sending U.S. ground troops to combat ISIS (40%: oppose).

Entering 2016, 18- to 29- Year-Olds Prefer Democrats Maintain Control of White House. As shown in spring 2015 IOP polling, young Americans prefer that a Democrat win the White House over a Republican in the 2016 race for president. November IOP polling indicated a majority (56%) prefer a Democrat, with less than four-in-ten preferring a Republican (36%).

Donald Trump and Ben Carson locked in Dead-Heat, Ahead of Republican Presidential Candidate Field. Among potential Republican primary voters (definite, probable or 50-50; n=472), fall 2015 IOP polling showed Donald Trump (22%) and Ben Carson (20%) in a statistical dead-heat – with a strong lead over the rest of the Republican candidate field. Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz captured seven (7%) percent, closely followed by Rand Paul and Jeb Bush (each with 6%), Carly Fiorina (3%), Mike Huckabee (3%), Rick Santorum (3%), John Kasich (2%), Lindsey Graham (1%), Bobby Jindal (1%), Chris Christie (1%), and George Pataki (<1%) – with 17% undecided. Regardless of whom potential Republican primary voters plan to support, forty-three percent (43%) say they believe Ben Carson is “qualified to be president” (17%: “not qualified;” 41%: don’t know). Slightly more than one-third (38%) said the same about Donald Trump (39%: “not qualified;” 22%: don’t know). Seventeen percent (17%) said they were “very satisfied” with the Republican candidates for president this year (47%: “somewhat satisfied;” 25%: “not very satisfied;” 11%: “not at all satisfied”).

Starting at 1% in Spring 2015, Bernie Sanders Now Holds Lead (41%-35%) over Hillary Clinton; Most Don’t Believe “Democratic Socialist” Label Makes a Difference. While Hillary Clinton maintains double-digit leads over Bernie Sanders in national polls of likely Democratic primary voters, November IOP polling showed 18- to 29- year-old potential Democratic primary voters (definite, probable or 50-50; n=751) as an outlier – with Sanders holding a slight edge and leading Clinton 41%-35% (22%: don’t know). Less than one percent (<1%) said they supported Martin O’Malley. A strong majority (66%) of 18- to 29- year-old potential Democratic primary voters said the fact that Bernie Sanders is a self-described Democratic Socialist made “no difference” in their likelihood to support his candidacy. Slightly less than one-quarter (24%) said the label made them “more likely” to support Sanders, with only nine percent (9%) saying it made them “less likely.” In addition, nineteen percent (19%) said they were “very satisfied” with the Democratic candidates for president this year (53%: “somewhat satisfied;” 21%: “not very satisfied;” 6%: “not at all satisfied”).

Nearly Half of Young Americans Believe the American Dream is Dead for Them. When November IOP polling asked 18- to 29- year-olds if the “American Dream is alive or dead” for them personally, respondents were nearly evenly split (49%: “alive;” 48%: “dead”). While no significant difference was found based on race or ethnicity (whites – 49% said “alive;” African-Americans – 44% said “alive;” Hispanics – 52% said “alive”), respondents’ level of education did play a role. Nearly six-in-ten (58%) college graduates said the American Dream was alive for them personally, compared to only 42% of those not in college/never enrolled in college saying the same. Additionally, a significant majority of both Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders supporters said they believed the American dream was “dead” (Trump voters – 61%: American Dream “dead,” 39%: “alive;” Sanders voters – 56%: American Dream “dead,” 44%: “alive”).

America’s 18- to 29- Year-Olds Say Integrity, Level-Headedness and Authenticity – Not Experience – Most Valued Attributes in Future President. When the IOP’s fall poll asked 18-29 year olds what attributes they valued most in a presidential candidate, integrity (51%), level-headedness (33%) and authenticity (26%) topped the list – with political experience (18%) and business experience (11%) trailing behind.

70% of 18- to 29- Year-Old Republicans, 31% of Democrats Support Building a Wall on the Border of the U.S. and Mexico. Forty-three percent (43%) of America’s youth said they supported building a wall on the border of the United States and Mexico, with a slim majority (53%) saying they oppose the idea. Support differed among Republicans (70%: support; 28%: oppose), Democrats (31%: support; 68%: oppose) and Independents (42%: support; 56%: oppose).

Engagement Slipping Since 2011: 20% of America’s Youth Say They Are Politically Engaged; Less Than Half Say They Are Following 2016 Campaign. Only two-in-ten (20%) of America’s young adults said they considered themselves “politically engaged and active,” a drop of five percentage points compared to IOP polling conducted during the same pre-election time period four years ago (fall 2011: 25%). When fall 2015 IOP polling asked America’s young adults “how closely do you follow the 2016 presidential race?” – only 46% said they were following the campaign “very” or “somewhat” closely (52%: “not very” or “not at all”).

Methodology

The goal of the project was to collect 2,000 completed interviews with young Americans between 18- and 29- years old. The main sample data collection took place from October 30 through November 9. A small pretest was conducted prior to the main survey to examine the accuracy of the data and the length of the interview.

Four thousand four hundred and forty-one (4,441) KnowledgePanel members were assigned to the study. The cooperation rate was 45.2 percent which resulted in 2,011 completed interviews included in this report (after data cleaning). Eighty-three (83) 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, GfK 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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of politics, governing, public service and the countless opportunities to make a difference in the world. More information is available online at www.iop.harvard.edu.

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