

Survey of Young Americans' Attitudes  
Toward Politics and Public Service:  
23rd Edition

Institute of Politics, Harvard University



April 30, 2013

#HarvardPoll

For more information:

Esten Perez, Director of Communications  
[Esten\\_Perez@harvard.edu](mailto:Esten_Perez@harvard.edu)

John Della Volpe, Director of Polling  
[John\\_Della\\_Volpe@harvard.edu](mailto:John_Della_Volpe@harvard.edu)

The Institute of Politics  
Harvard University  
79 JFK Street  
Cambridge, MA 02138  
(617) 495-1360

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	Page 3
Demographic and Political Profile.....	Page 4
Obama Approval Rating and Direction of the Nation Locked In Place; Partisanship Among Millennials Deepens.....	Page 5
Millennials Split on View of the NRA; Approximately One-Half Favor Stricter Gun Control Laws.....	Page 12
Young Americans Becoming More, Not Less Divided; Government Trust and Efficacy of Politics Questioned.....	Page 14
Community Service Participation Strong in High Schools and Colleges; Motives and Efficacy of Political Participation Questioned....	Page 16
Millennials Show Their Progressive Side On Issues Related to Immigration Reform; Views Toward Marijuana Captured .....	Page 18
Conclusion.....	Page 19
Harvard Public Opinion Project.....	Page 20
Appendix.....	Page 21

# Introduction

Conceived by two Harvard undergraduate students during the winter of 1999, Harvard University's Institute of Politics Survey of Young Americans' Attitudes toward Politics and Public Service began in 2000 as a national survey of 18- to 24- year old college undergraduates. Over the last 13 years, this research project has grown in scope and mission, as this report now includes an analysis of 18- to 29- year olds on a broad set of longitudinal and current events issues.

## Methodology

The first survey of N=800 college undergraduates was completed in the Spring of 2000 and all interviews were conducted over the telephone; since that time, 21 subsequent surveys have been released. Over this period, a number of modifications have been made to the scope and methodology in order to ensure that sampling methods most accurately capture the view of the population of young adults in a manner that will be useful to both the Institute of Politics and the broader research and political communities.

- In 2001, the survey was expanded from N=800 to N=1,200 college students in order to capture a more robust sample of the undergraduate population.
- In 2006, the survey expanded to N=2,400 interviews, as we began interviewing members of the 18- to 24- year-old cohort who were not currently attending a four-year college or university. In addition, because of changing uses of technology among younger Americans, in 2006 the survey moved from a telephone poll to a survey that was administered online.
- In 2009, we expanded our scope a third time to include the population of young

adults aged 18 to 29. While we will continue to report on the attitudes and opinions of U.S. college students, this change in our research subject was made to allow for better and more direct comparisons to the broader set of election and general public opinion research tracking data, which tends to track the 18- to 29-year-old demographic group. Our Fall political tracking surveys will include samples of N=2,000 while the Spring semester's research will be more in-depth and include N=3,000 interviews. All of our interviews are conducted in English and Spanish. Using GfK (formerly Knowledge Networks) as our research partner, the Institute of Politics surveys use RDD and Address-Based Sampling (ABS) frames and are administered online (see Appendix).

The interviewing period for this survey of N=3,103 18- to 29- year olds was March 20 to April 8, 2013. The margin of error for the poll is +/- 1.7 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. During the interviewing period, major media stories included Senator Portman's support of same sex marriage, President Obama's trip to Israel, Prop 8 and DOMA Supreme Court hearings, U.S. Representative Don Young's comment about "Wetbacks," hostility on the Korean peninsula, and the death of Margaret Thatcher.

IOP Polling Director John Della Volpe supervised the survey group of undergraduate students. As always, the IOP survey group would like to thank IOP Director Trey Grayson and Executive Director Catherine McLaughlin for their insight and support over the course of this and all IOP projects.

## Demographic and Political Profile

For this survey, we completed N=3,103 web-enabled interviews with 18- to 29- year-olds in the United States.

### Demographic profile:

- 49 percent male, 51 percent female;
- 57 percent are between the ages of 18 and 24; 43 percent are between the ages of 25 and 29;
- 58 percent White (non-Hispanic), 20 percent Hispanic, 13 percent African-American (non-Hispanic), 6 percent other and 2 percent 2+ races;
- 20 percent are Catholic, 13 percent Protestant, 13 percent Fundamental/Evangelical, 2 percent Mormon, 1 percent Jewish, less than one percent Muslim, 10 percent another religion, 24 percent cite no religious preference, and 10 percent decline to answer;
- 45 percent with a religious preference say that religion is a very important part of their life, 35 percent say that it is somewhat important and 16 percent say it is not very important.
- 24 percent are married, 14 percent are living with a partner, 1 percent are divorced, 1 percent are separated and 60 percent have never been married;
- 89 percent use a cell phone, 21 percent use a landline, and 3 percent use VOIP;
- 83 percent have an account on Facebook, 33 percent have the same on Twitter.

### Current educational status:

- 7 percent of the sample indicated that they are in high school, 2 percent in a trade or vocational school, 11 percent indicated that they are in a two-year junior or community college, 22 percent in a four-year college, 4 percent in graduate school, 1 percent in a business or professional school, 1 percent are not enrolled but taking at least one class, and 53 percent of 18- to 29- year olds surveyed are not enrolled in any of these categories;
- 71 percent of college students attend a public institution, 28 percent a private one;
- 46 percent of students attend college in an urban area, 26 percent in a suburb and 26 percent in a small town or rural area.

### Political and ideological profile:

- 71 percent say they are registered to vote;
- 26 percent consider themselves to be politically engaged or active;
- 38 percent self-identify as liberal or leaning liberal, 26 percent moderate, and 36 percent conservative or leaning conservative;
- 37 percent consider themselves Democrats, 25 percent Republicans, and 37 percent Independents.

### Employment status:

- 58 percent are working as a paid employee, 4 percent are self-employed, and 19 percent are looking for work.

# Obama Approval Rating and Direction of the Nation Locked In Place; Partisanship Among Millennials Deepens

## Obama Job Approval Steady, Sharp Partisan Differences Continue to Grow

Several months after a successful re-election campaign and during the initial phase of his second term, a slight majority (52%) of 18- to 29-year olds in America tell us that they approve of the job Barack Obama is doing as President, while 46 percent tell us that they disapprove of his job performance. Despite a significant number of domestic and global events and the most expensive political campaign in U.S. history where a total of more than \$2 billion was spent,<sup>1</sup> the President's job performance rating remains at the very same place it was six months ago, 52 percent. In fact, it has not changed in the last year: during our March 2012 release, the President's approval was also 52 percent.

While the top-line indicators of approval have not changed, a look below the surface reveals that 18- to 29- year olds have never been more divided when it comes to the opinion of this President. Since November 2009, we have tracked how members of each party rate President Obama's job performance eight times, and the difference between the way that Democrats and Republicans view the President has never been more dramatic than in the last six months. For example, 86 percent of Democrats approve of his job performance, while only 10 percent of Republicans feel the same, resulting in a net difference of 74 points. One year ago on the same question, the difference between Democrats and Republicans was 63 points; in November 2009

during the health care debate, the divide was 65 points.

OBAMA APPROVAL RATING  
BY SUBGROUP

	OCT 2010	FEB 2011	DEC 2011	MAR 2012	OCT 2012	APR 2013
18-29 TOTAL	49%	55%	46%	52%	52%	52%
18-24	48%	55%	44%	50%	50%	51%
25-29	52%	55%	47%	55%	55%	54%
IN 4-YR COLL	51%	60%	48%	52%	49%	50%
DEM.	79%	81%	74%	81%	87%	86%
REP.	18%	17%	15%	18%	12%	10%
IND.	42%	46%	39%	40%	46%	46%
WHITE	37%	44%	35%	41%	40%	38%
BLACK	83%	83%	83%	82%	86%	84%
HIS- PANIC	62%	68%	52%	66%	70%	71%
MALE	47%	52%	44%	50%	51%	50%
FE- MALE	52%	57%	48%	54%	53%	55%
NORTH EAST	52%	55%	48%	51%	48%	53%
MID- WEST	46%	56%	43%	50%	53%	48%
SOUTH	46%	52%	46%	51%	52%	51%
WEST	56%	57%	45%	56%	54%	58%

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/12/06/2012-presidential-election-cost\\_n\\_2254138.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/12/06/2012-presidential-election-cost_n_2254138.html)

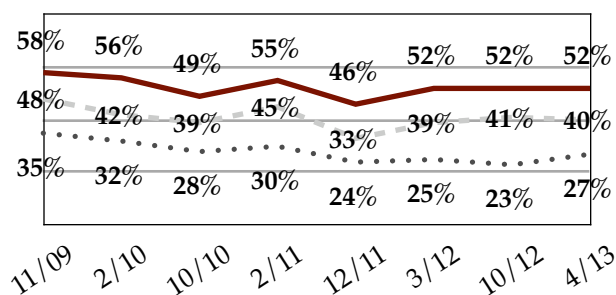
## Republicans in Congress See Slight Improvement, Democrats Locked in Place

Since our Fall 2012 release, the job performance ratings of Democrats in Congress has decreased within the margin of error from 41 to 40 percent, while approval of Republicans in Congress has increased four percentage points from 23 percent approval in October 2012 to 27 approval during the time this survey was administered. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of 18- to 29- year olds indicate that they disapprove of the way that Democrats in Congress are doing their job and 71 percent say the same about Republicans in Congress.

When the views of Congress are analyzed by ethnicity, we find that young Hispanic and Latino Americans are nearly twice as likely to approve of the job that Democrats (58% approval) in Congress are doing compared to Republicans (30% approval). Whites view the effectiveness of each party relatively the same (26% approve of Democrats, 28% approve of Republicans) while Blacks are significantly more likely to approve of Democrats in Congress (72%) than Republicans (16%).

DO YOU APPROVE OR DISAPPROVE OF THE  
JOB PERFORMANCE OF \_\_\_\_:  
-- APPROVAL RATINGS --

— Barack Obama  
— Democrats in Congress  
— Republicans in Congress

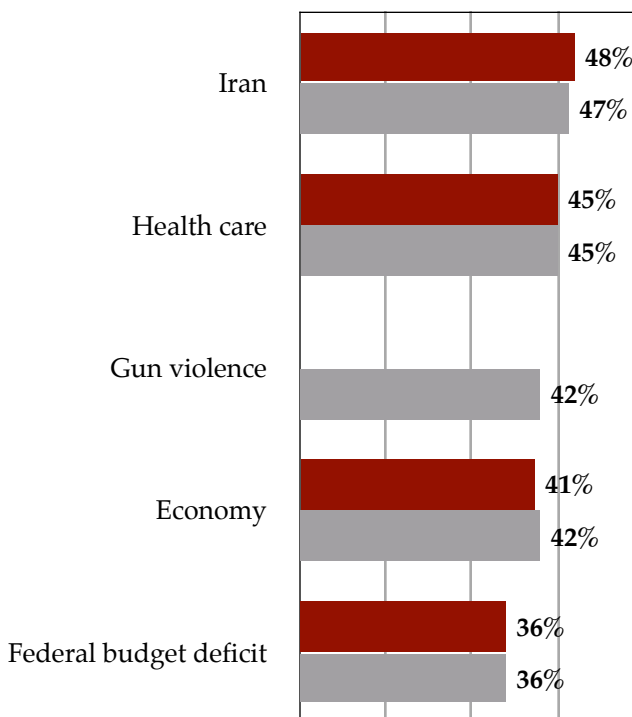


## Most Disapprove of the Obama's Job Performance on Key Issues

While slightly more than one-in-two (52%) 18- to 29- year olds say that they approve of the President's job performance overall, less than half approve of the way he is currently handling five of the most important issues facing the nation. Similar to the overall job performance ratings, the responses to all of the questions remain largely unchanged from one year ago. President Obama receives his highest relative ratings for his handling of Iran and health care, with the economy, gun violence and the federal budget deficit ranking at the bottom of the list.

DO YOU APPROVE OR DISAPPROVE OF THE  
WAY BARACK OBAMA IS HANDLING:  
-- APPROVAL RATINGS --

■ March 2012 ■ April 2013

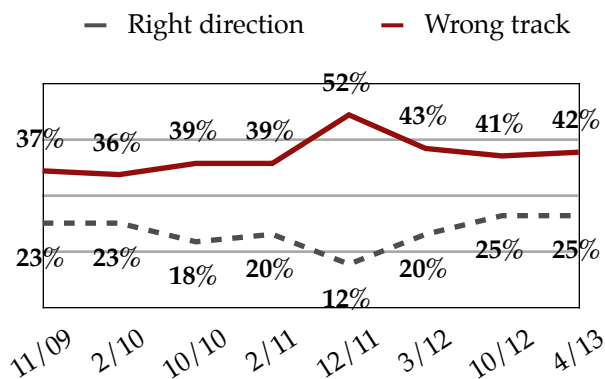


## Direction of the Country Unchanged, Economy Remains Top Issue

Slightly more than a majority (55%) of 18- to 29-year olds in America cite issues related to the economy as the primary issue facing the country at this time. Health care was the second most pressing issue, with 7 percent citing this as their top national issue; immigration and education received 5 percent a piece.

Virtually unchanged since our last poll was taken in the weeks leading up to the 2012 general election, 25 percent of young Americans in our survey indicated that things in the country were generally headed in the right direction, 42 percent reported that things were on the wrong track -- and 34 percent were unsure at this time.

ALL IN ALL, DO YOU THINK THAT THINGS  
IN THE NATION ARE ...



## Economic Issues Prevail in Head to Head Pairings, Guns and Immigration Second Tier

Similar to our Spring 2012 survey design, we included a series of questions aimed at determining the preference that 18- to 29- year olds have for a specific issue when it is paired against another issue in a pairwise comparison model. The objective of this series of questions is to look beyond traditional open-ended questions and forced ranking that have consistently shown that “creating jobs and improving the economy” is the dominant issue -- and attempt to understand how the economy and other issue compare across a broad spectrum of domestic and international priorities in a time of limited government resources.

Beginning with a list of 16 issue priorities, we randomly paired one against the other and asked survey respondents to choose which one is more important (and how much more important): Issue A or Issue B.

The table on the following two pages is ranked by the overall strength of each of the 16 issues based upon the percentage of time that it “won” its match-up against every other issue.

	Creating jobs and lowering the unemployment rate	Reducing the federal deficit	Creating a world-class education system	Lowering the tax burden for all Americans	Ensuring affordable access to health care	Addressing Social Security	Becoming energy independent	Preventing the spread of terrorism
Creating jobs and lowering the unemployment rate		62%	60%	79%	73%	78%	75%	73%
Reducing the federal deficit	37%		54%	57%	44%	55%	65%	65%
Creating a world-class education system	38%	45%		46%	47%	62%	64%	60%
Lowering the tax burden for all Americans	20%	43%	53%		46%	53%	50%	69%
Ensuring affordable access to health care	26%	56%	51%	52%		54%	59%	45%
Addressing Social Security	22%	44%	36%	46%	45%		54%	57%
Becoming energy independent	24%	32%	33%	49%	39%	44%		47%
Preventing the spread of terrorism	26%	34%	40%	31%	53%	42%	53%	
Preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon	31%	39%	29%	41%	42%	45%	47%	47%
Protecting individual liberties from government	23%	39%	38%	39%	43%	47%	48%	43%
Reducing gun violence	16%	35%	29%	34%	41%	41%	41%	47%
Developing a comprehensive immigration policy	22%	23%	34%	30%	40%	33%	35%	45%
Reforming income inequality	17%	29%	34%	35%	37%	36%	44%	47%
Maintaining the most powerful military force in the world	15%	24%	22%	24%	33%	32%	41%	31%
Combating the impacts of climate change	18%	30%	27%	21%	21%	44%	35%	43%
Maintaining competitiveness against China	15%	14%	25%	17%	31%	23%	22%	32%

Percentages shown are how often the issue on each row was rated as "More Important" than the issue in the corresponding column.  
**Bold and Black = "Win"** - **Bold and Red = "Loss"** that is statistically significant



<div><div><div><div><div><div></div></div><div>John F. Kennedy School of Government</div></div><div><div>Harvard University</div></div></div><div><div>INSTITUTE OF POLITICS</div></div></div></div>		Preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon	Protecting individual liberties from government	Reducing gun violence	Developing a comp. immigration policy	Reforming income inequality	Maintaining the most powerful military force in the world	Combating the impacts of climate change	Maintaining competitiveness against China
Creating jobs and lowering the unemployment rate	69%	76%	77%	77%	81%	83%	80%	84%	
Reducing the federal deficit	60%	61%	64%	76%	70%	74%	70%	85%	
Creating a world-class education system	69%	60%	70%	65%	65%	77%	73%	73%	
Lowering the tax burden for all Americans	58%	60%	65%	69%	62%	73%	77%	83%	
Ensuring affordable access to health care	58%	55%	58%	57%	61%	65%	78%	69%	
Addressing Social Security	54%	51%	58%	66%	62%	67%	55%	76%	
Becoming energy independent	52%	52%	59%	65%	55%	59%	65%	77%	
Preventing the spread of terrorism	53%	55%	53%	54%	52%	66%	55%	66%	
Preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon		59%	52%	56%	60%	50%	64%	62%	
Protecting individual liberties from government	39%		50%	56%	54%	55%	60%	75%	
Reducing gun violence	47%	49%		46%	52%	55%	75%	59%	
Developing a comprehensive immigration policy	44%	43%	54%		51%	69%	62%	71%	
Reforming income inequality	37%	45%	43%	47%		50%	61%	62%	
Maintaining the most powerful military force in the world	47%	44%	43%	30%	49%		52%	53%	
Combating the impacts of climate change	34%	39%	24%	35%	38%	47%		55%	
Maintaining competitiveness against China	37%	24%	39%	28%	38%	46%	44%		

Percentages shown are how often the issue on each row was rated as "More Important" than the issue in the corresponding column. **Bold and Black** = "Win" - **Bold and Red** = "Loss" that is statistically significant

Percentages shown are how often the issue on each row was rated as "More Important" than the issue in the corresponding column. **Bold and Black** = "Win" - **Bold and Red** = "Loss" that is statistically significant

For the second year in a row we found that domestic and financial-related concerns were most important to young Americans under 30. The top issue was “creating jobs and lowering the unemployment rate” which won against every other issue it was paired with (i.e., “the field”) 75 percent of the time. The other top issues were, “reducing the federal deficit” which won its matchup 62 percent of the time, “creating a world-class education system” which beat every other issue 61 percent of the time, and “lowering the tax burden for all Americans” which won 58 percent of the time.

Current hot button issues such as “reducing gun violence” and “developing a comprehensive immigration policy” were in the middle of the pack winning their match-ups against the field 44 percent and 43 of the time respectively.

THINKING ABOUT THE MAJOR ISSUES FACING THE UNITED STATES TODAY, PLEASE TELL ME WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING TWO IS MORE IMPORTANT TO YOU:

- % OF MATCH-UPS EACH ISSUE WAS CONSIDERED MORE IMPORTANT -

	% WIN MAR '12	% WIN APR '13
CREATING JOBS AND LOWERING THE UNEMPLOYMENT RATE	77%	75%
REDUCING THE FEDERAL DEFICIT	62%	62%
CREATING A WORLD-CLASS EDUCATION SYSTEM	60%	61%
LOWERING THE TAX BURDEN FOR ALL AMERICANS	60%	58%

	% WIN MAR '12	% WIN APR '13
ENSURING AFFORDABLE ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE	61%	56%
ADDRESSING SOCIAL SECURITY	58%	52%
BECOMING ENERGY INDEPENDENT	59%	50%
PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF TERRORISM	54%	48%
PROTECTING INDIVIDUAL LIBERTIES FROM GOVERNMENT	52%	47%
PREVENTING IRAN FROM ACQUIRING A NUCLEAR WEAPON	52%	47%
REDUCING GUN VIOLENCE	NA	44%
DEVELOPING A COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION POLICY	48%	43%
REFORMING (NB, CHANGED FROM “ADDRESSING” IN 2012) INCOME INEQUALITY	50%	41%
MAINTAINING THE MOST POWERFUL MILITARY FORCE IN THE WORLD	NA	35%
COMBATING THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE	37%	33%
MAINTAINING COMPETITIVENESS AGAINST CHINA(NB, “CHANGED FROM COUNTERING CHINA’S RISING INFLUENCE” IN 2012)	31%	29%

When members of the 18- to 29- year old population were asked to make trade-offs between their top priorities we found that:

- Creating jobs and lowering the unemployment rate won every match-up with the 15 issues tested in the pairing;
- Reducing the federal deficit lost to creating jobs and only one other match-up, and that was to providing Americans with affordable access to health care (56%);
- Preventing the spread of terrorism won 55 percent of its match-ups against protecting individual liberties from the government;
- Developing a comprehensive immigration policy was in a statistical tie with reducing gun violence; and
- Protecting individual liberties was also in a statistical tie with reducing gun violence.

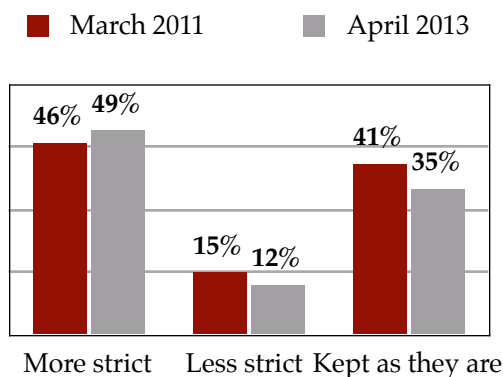
## Millennials Split on View of the NRA; Approximately One-Half Favor Stricter Gun Control Laws

### Little Change in View of Gun Control Since Giffords' 2011 Shooting

Recent tragedies in Newtown and Aurora have brought gun control to the forefront of the public discussion, and a plurality of 18- to 29- year olds support greater restrictions on guns. Nearly a majority, 49 percent, support making gun laws more strict, while 35 percent believe gun laws should be kept as they are; 15 percent of 18- to 29- year olds tell us that they prefer less strict gun laws.

But those recent tragedies and resulting public discussion do not appear to have strongly increased youth support for stricter gun laws. Our Spring 2011 release (which was conducted following the Tucson shootings of U.S. Representative Gabrielle Giffords and 18 others) found 46 percent of 18- to 29- year olds supported stricter laws on and 12 percent wanted less strict gun laws. Since 2011, support for making gun laws more strict has increased only by 3 percentage points.

IN GENERAL, DO YOU THINK GUN CONTROL LAWS SHOULD BE MADE MORE STRICT, LESS STRICT, OR KEPT AS THEY ARE NOW?



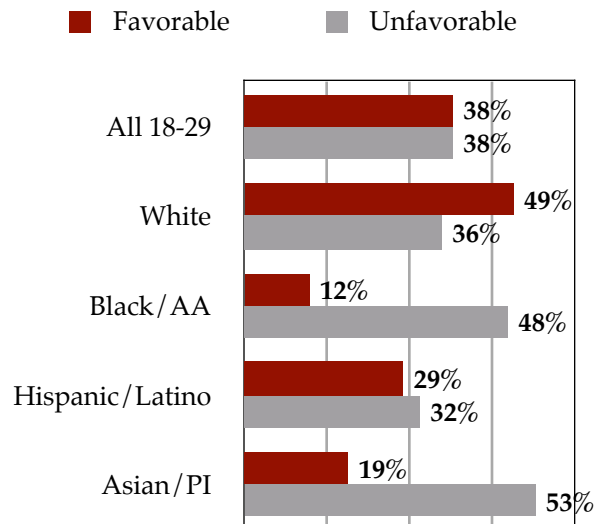
This contrasts with the general adult population. Overall adult support for stricter gun laws in a January 2013 CBS/New York Times poll was 54 percent, 5 percentage points higher than 18- to 29- year olds in our survey. The CBS/New York Times poll also found a greater increase in support over the past two years: support for stricter gun laws increased 8 percentage points from January 2011.

President Obama has taken an active public stance in response to gun violence, proposing and advocating for gun control legislation. But a majority of 18- to 29- year olds disapprove of his handling of gun violence (42% approve and 56% disapprove). This poll was conducted before the failure of the Senate gun control bill, reflecting disapproval with President Obama's proposals more than the legislative results.

Young Americans under 30 have a mixed opinion of the National Rifle Association (NRA), which has been the face of opposition to President Obama's gun control proposals. Thirty-eight percent (38%) expressed either somewhat or very favorable (13% very favorable, 25% somewhat favorable) attitudes towards the NRA, with equal numbers expressing unfavorable attitudes (20% somewhat unfavorable, 18% very unfavorable).

Views of the NRA differ greatly along ethnic lines. A near majority of Whites have a favorable view of the organization (49% favorable, 36% unfavorable) while Blacks (12% favorable, 48% net unfavorable) and Asian-Pacific Islanders (19% favorable, 53% unfavorable) hold strongly unfavorable views of the NRA; Hispanics' views are mixed (29% favorable and 32% unfavorable).

DO YOU HAVE A FAVORABLE OR UNFAVORABLE VIEW OF THE NRA?  
-- BY ETHNICITY --



Our survey also revealed a regional divide on the NRA. While 18- to 29- year olds in the Northeast (40% favorable, 41% unfavorable), Midwest (44% favorable, 35% unfavorable), and South (39% favorable, 36% unfavorable) had mixed or slightly favorable views of the NRA, a plurality of youth in the West (32% favorable, 42% unfavorable) had unfavorable views.

Despite disapproval of President Obama's handling of the issue, his major legislative proposals for gun control have plurality, but not majority support among 18- to 29- year olds. For example:

- 41 percent of respondents support an assault weapons ban, 33 percent oppose a ban; 26 percent are unsure;
- 43 percent support a ban on high capacity magazines, 28 percent oppose ban; 28 percent are unsure.

Other proposals to reduce gun violence, such as those from the NRA, have focused on protection and prevention. While 18- to 29- year olds oppose allowing concealed weapons in both the workplace (26% support, 48% oppose) and college campuses (25% support, 51% oppose), a plurality support putting armed guards in schools (39% support, 33% oppose) and on college campuses (43% support, 27% oppose).

### Half of Millennials Surveyed Either Own a Gun or Has a Close Family Member That Does

Overall, half of 18- to 29- year olds either own a firearm or have an immediate family member who does. Slightly less than one-in-five (18%) tell us that they own a gun; and slightly more than twice that number, 39 percent, have an immediate family who owns a gun.

Our survey reveals the majority of those with a gun in the household are White. Sixty-one percent (61%) of Whites either own a gun or have an immediate family member who owns a gun. Only one-third (33%) of Blacks and Hispanics reported owning a gun or having a family member who owns one, and only 17 percent of Asian-Pacific Islanders did.

Not surprisingly, young Americans who own a firearm differ greatly from non-gun owners on nearly every gun control issue. For example, 62 percent of gun owners oppose an assault weapons ban, while 26 percent of non-gun owners feel the same way.

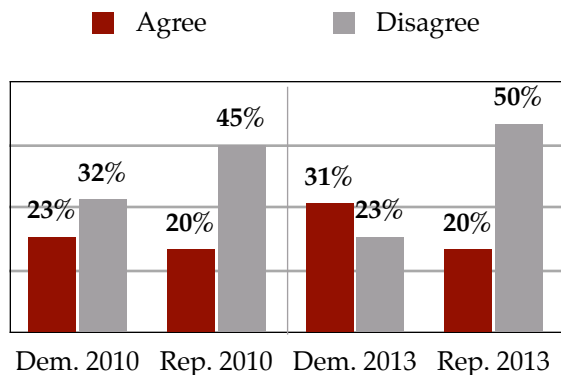
# Young Americans Becoming More, Not Less Divided; Government Trust and Efficacy of Politics Questioned

## Significant Hardening of Views on Both Sides Apparent Since 2010

As noted in the previous section, analysis of President Obama's approval rating clearly shows that Democrats view him more favorably than they did three years ago, while at the same time Republicans view him less favorably. This gap in opinion between the way Democrats and Republicans see politics and in many cases the world, has grown sharper and more distinctive since 2010 -- the last time that we can make the same methodological comparisons.

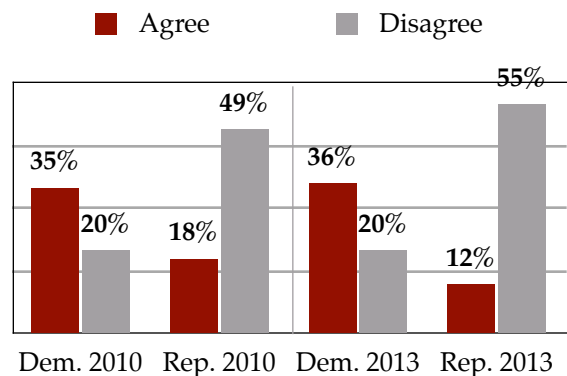
From immigration to government spending to views on morality, the divide between political parties, even among our youngest voters, is stark. For example, in the Spring of 2010 Democrats were three points more likely than Republicans to agree that recent immigration into the U.S. "has done more good than harm" -- and today they are nine points more likely. In 2010, Republicans were 13 points more likely to disagree with that statement, today they are 27 points more likely to disagree.

## RECENT IMMIGRATION INTO THIS COUNTRY HAS DONE MORE GOOD THAN HARM.



On the issue of whether or not "government spending is an effective way to increase growth," in 2010 the difference between the number of Democrats and Republicans who agree with this statement was 17 points, today the number is 24 points with most of the difference accounted for by less Republican support (as compared to more support from Democrats). While disagreement among Democrats is consistent at 20 percent between 2010 and today, Republican disagreement with this concept increased six percentage points from 49 to 55 percent.

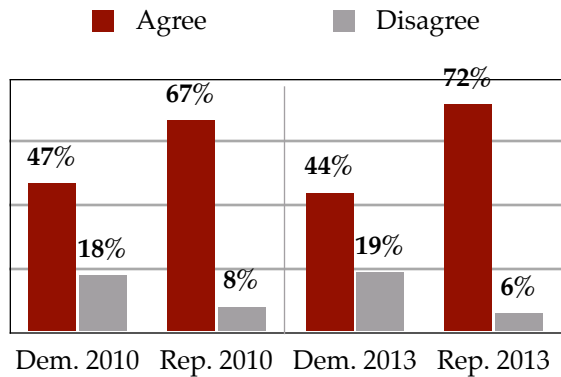
## GOVERNMENT SPENDING IS AN EFFECTIVE WAY TO INCREASE ECONOMIC GROWTH.



Although there are additional examples, the final example that will be used to illustrate this point comes from a question on morality, specifically whether 18- to 29- year olds are "concerned about the moral direction of the country." In 2010, 47 percent of Democrats agreed that they were concerned, compared to 67 percent of Republicans; today the number of Democrats who are concerned decreased 3 points to 44 percent while the number of Republicans concerned about the moral direction of the

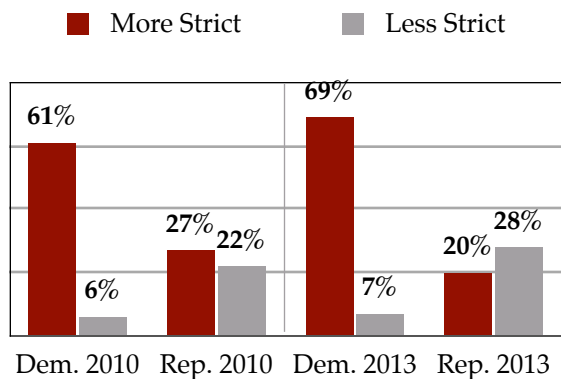
country increased 5 points to 72 percent.

I AM CONCERNED ABOUT THE MORAL  
DIRECTION OF THE COUNTRY.



Not surprisingly, opinions on the hot buttons of the day have also shown a tendency to shift and harden over time. As noted below, the percentage of Democrats who believe that our gun laws should be more strict increased by eight points since 2011 (from 61% to 69%), while the number of Republicans who believe the same decreased by seven (from 27% to 20%).

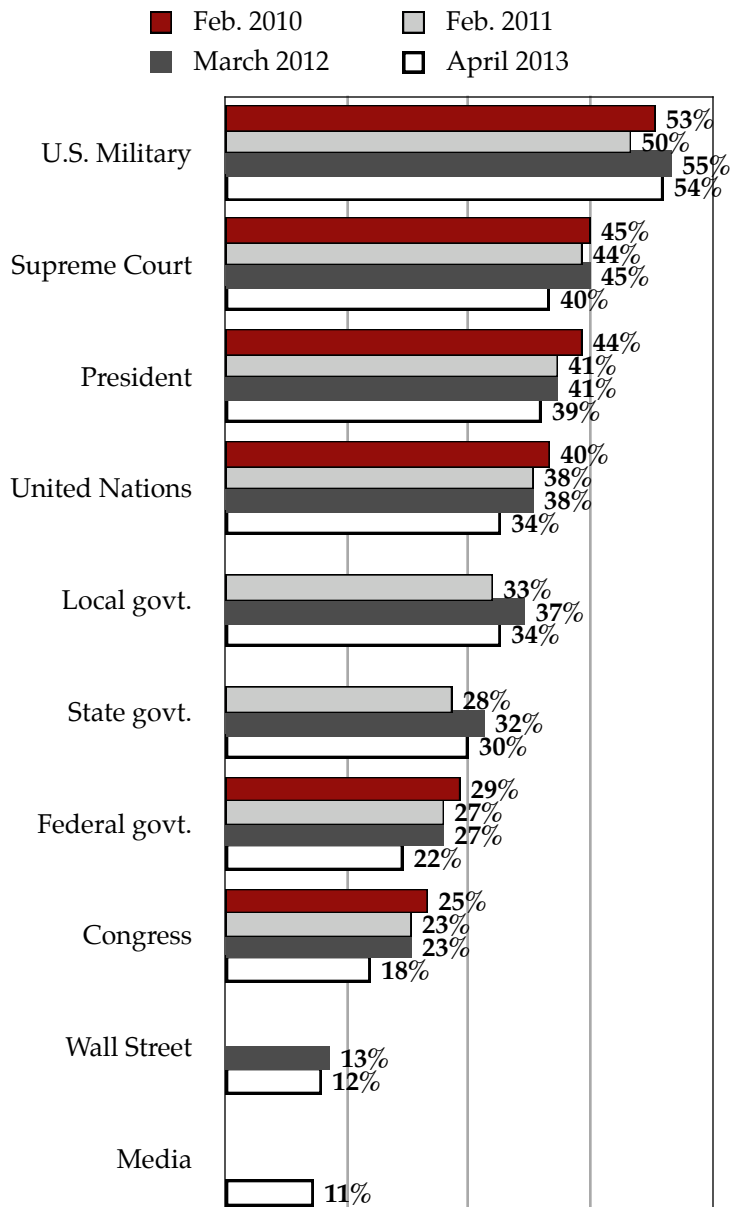
IN GENERAL, DO YOU THINK GUN CONTROL  
LAWS SHOULD BE MADE MORE STRICT, LESS  
STRICT, OR KEPT AS THEY ARE NOW?



### Except for the Military, Institutional Trust is Down Across the Board

As a further indication that our nation is divided, the following graph illustrates that the overall level of trust that young Americans have in each of our major institutions has continued to slide since 2010 for all but the U.S. military.

HOW OFTEN DO YOU TRUST ...  
TO DO THE RIGHT THING?  
(ALL OF THE TIME / MOST OF THE TIME)





# Community Service Participation Strong in High Schools and Colleges; Motives and Efficacy of Political Participation Questioned

## **A Majority of High School Students, College Students and One-Third of All Millennials Volunteer for Community Service**

Slightly more than one-in-three (34%) of all Millennials report that they have volunteered for community service in the last year; as has been the case from the start of this project, we find that volunteerism is greater among college students than others in this cohort. Fifty-three percent (53%) of college students report volunteering in the last year -- of which, 41 percent do so at least a few times a month or more. While community service is an important part of the lives of millions of young Americans, members of the cohort who are most active and engaged include:

- High school students (56% have participated in the last 12 months);
- Republicans (43%) compared to Democrats (32%) and Independents (31%); and
- Those that say religion plays an important role in their lives (41%) compared to those who are less religious (29%).

## **Negativity and Cynicism with the Political Process Hardens**

When compared to the attitudes of 18- to 29-year olds in 2010, the year where we have the most direct methodological comparison, every major question developed to measure the health of American politics has trended more negative.

Using a 5-point scale with a neutral rating:

- Nearly three-in-five young Americans (59%) agree strongly or somewhat that

“elected officials” seem to be motivated by selfish reasons” -- an increase of 5 points since 2010;

- 56 percent agree that “elected officials don’t have the same priorities I have” -- an increase of 5 points since 2010;
- 48 percent agree that “politics has become too partisan” -- an increase of 2 points since 2010; and
- 28 percent agree that “political involvement rarely has any tangible results” -- an increase of 5 points since 2010;

In a question that we developed in 2012, a near majority (47%) agree that “politics today are no longer able to meet the challenges our country is facing,” only 16 percent disagree -- with 36 percent saying that they neither agree nor disagree.

When the attitudes toward the process of politics and governing are analyzed by key subgroups such as race, we find significant differences -- specifically, that White 18- to 29- year olds are significantly more likely to hold cynical views than Blacks and Hispanics. Whites continue to be more likely than both Blacks and Hispanics to agree that:

- Elected officials don’t seem to have the same priorities I have;
- Politics has become too partisan; and
- Politics today are no longer able to meet the challenges our country is facing.



### **Young Whites and Blacks Significantly More Likely to Vote than Hispanics and Asian Americans**

Approximately five months since the 2012 election, 60 percent of young Americans report that they voted for President with no significant differences of turnout based on age (NB, this figure is 9 percentage points higher than estimates by CIRCLE which reported under 30 participation in 2012 to be 50 percent nationally). However, our polling did find that:

- Democrats (68%) and Republicans (72%) were more likely to vote than Independents (44%); and
- 18- to 29- year old Whites (64%) and Blacks (68%) were significantly more likely to vote compared to Hispanics (47%) and Asian Americans (41%);
- Hispanics who speak and converse mostly in English (61%) were significantly more likely than Hispanics who mostly communicate in Spanish (23%); and
- Young Americans who are Protestant (76%), Evangelical (66%), Born Again (74%) or Jewish (78%) were more likely to vote than those who are Catholic (54%) -- some of these differences are also correlated with race and ethnicity.

In total, 39 percent tell us that they voted in person at a polling place on Election Day, 10 percent voted early and 10 percent voted absentee. Among college students, 13 percent voted early and 19 percent voted absentee.

Although only one percent of all 18- to 29- year olds in our survey reported that they went to the polling place, but were not allowed to vote -- further analysis indicated that Hispanics/ Latinos (2%) were statistically more likely to have responded affirmatively to this question than Whites (less than 1%). In particular, it was Hispanics and Latinos who opted to take our survey in Spanish (6% compared to 1% of Hispanics who chose English) that were most likely to have not been able to vote.

### **Same-Day Registration Endorsed by Most**

By a margin of more than 4 to 1, 18- to 29- year olds support Same-Day Registration when they are informed that it permits eligible citizens to register to vote when they arrive to vote on Election Day. Sixty percent (60%) support this program, while 13 percent oppose; 27 percent say that they are unsure. However, when the respondent is told that Same-Day Registration can also increase voter fraud, support decreases to 35 percent, with 21 percent opposing the program and the remaining 44 percent unsure.

# Millennials Show Their Progressive Side On Issues Related to Immigration Reform; Views Toward Marijuana Captured

## **Plurality of Young Americans Support a Pathway to Citizenship for Illegal Immigrants and Opportunity for Permanent Residency for Undocumented Students**

While there are many areas and issues where young Americans are divided, one area in which there is some consensus is in the immigration reform debate where a plurality of Democrats (56%), Republicans (32%) and Independents (41%) believe that those currently in the country illegally should be afforded a path to citizenship as long as they do not have criminal records, have paid taxes, learn English and pay a fine. Overall, 44 percent of all 18- to 29- year olds subscribe to this policy (pathway to citizenship), whereas 22 percent support “a path to legal status now, but not citizenship, for those who don't have criminal records, have paid taxes, learn English and pay a fine,” 11 percent support a path to citizenship or legal status but only after measurable improvements have been made in border security,” and 20 percent believe in “no path to citizenship or legal status; they should be required to go home and reapply for entry into the country.”

When the 44 percent of those in favor of a pathway to citizenship are analyzed, we find that a plurality, but not a majority of Whites (40%), Blacks (41%) and Asian Americans (40%) are in support, while nearly three in five Hispanics (59%) are supportive of this new, potential policy.

In order to compare the opinions of those under 30 with the nation as a whole, we used the same language that Bloomberg National Poll researchers used in a question asked of all

Americans 18+ in February 2013. In our comparison, we found that 18- to 29- year olds were significantly more likely to support a pathway to citizenship; 44 percent support in our Harvard IOP poll compared to 35 percent in Bloomberg's national sample of American adults.

When 18- to 29- year olds are asked whether they support or oppose “allowing undocumented immigrant students who arrived in the United States as minors the opportunity to gain permanent residency as long as they attend college or serve in the U.S. Military” 49 percent supported the measure with 22 percent in opposition.

## **Not Quite Half of Under-30 Crowd Support Legalization of Marijuana**

For the first time since our project was conceived in 2000, we asked young Americans their opinions related to legalization of marijuana. Overall, not quite half (44%) of young people under 30 support legalization, one-third oppose (33%) -- and when provided the option, 23 percent report that they are unsure or refused to answer the question.

The most ardent supporters of legalization include Whites (51% support compared to 37% among Blacks and 36% among and Hispanics), Democrats (49% compared to 32% for Republicans) -- and those who are politically active (53% compared to people who are not, 42%).

## Conclusion

There are many in the political community who look at the role that youth played in the 2012 re-election and argue that the virtual glass is “half full.” The share of youth participation in the general election increased from 18 percent in 2008 to 19 percent in 2012<sup>2</sup> according to National Exit Polls conducted by Edison Research and young people were largely responsible for key Obama wins in battleground states such as Ohio, Virginia, Pennsylvania and Florida. They argue that everything is just fine, young people are progressive and plugged in.

Others argue, and we think correctly, that the glass is actually half empty. While young people may have been responsible for a greater share of the overall vote, their level of participation decreased in 2012 and their attitudes toward politics soured. Data analyzed by CIRCLE, The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, indicate that 18- to 29-year old turnout slid from 51.1 percent in 2008 to 50 percent in 2012. Moreover, in states that were not considered “battlegrounds,” participation was as low as 47 percent, 11 points lower than the turnout percentage in “toss-up” states and 8 points lower than turnout in states classified as “leaning” one way or the other.

Our 23rd report on the political attitudes of a key cohort within America’s largest generation tells us that unless there is a dramatic shift in word as well as deed by our nation’s leaders, the level of political engagement and participation among Millennials will continue to decline.

Our research indicates that the hyper-partisanship and gridlock and that has befallen Washington, DC is having a traumatic effect not just on our nation’s status at home and abroad, but on the political health of tens of millions of once (and hopefully future) idealistic young

people. At no time since President Obama was elected in 2008 have we reported less trust, more cynicism and more partisanship among our nation’s youngest voters. Young voters, like older Americans, are becoming more partisan by the day. On issues ranging from their views of the President to immigration to gun control to the role government should play in improving our economy, both Democrats and Republicans are hardening their positions, while Independent-minded voters are tuning out. The collaborative spirit of working to make America better, inspired by a generation raised in an era where service to others was highly valued, is in danger of being extinguished by the brinksmanship that has become the norm in Washington.

Past generations of elected officials have shown that partisanship in and of itself does not lead to gridlock -- elected officials can stay true to their ideals and values but at the same time work across party lines to meet the needs of the nation. The vast majority of young people in our survey report having friends from another political party. While their views of politics may be increasingly partisan, they know that good people exist across the aisle working together does not mean selling out.

Nearly half of all Americans under 30 believe that the politics of today are not able to meet the challenges our country is facing.

We have been warned.

Unless the discourse in America changes, from the top-down, all of us will suffer and the nation will lose a generation of the best and brightest citizens, voters and public servants the world has to offer.

---

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/11/07/youth-vote-2012-turnout-exit-polls\\_n\\_2086092.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/11/07/youth-vote-2012-turnout-exit-polls_n_2086092.html)

# Harvard Public Opinion Project

Trey Grayson  
Director, Institute of Politics

Catherine McLaughlin  
Executive Director, Institute of Politics

John Della Volpe  
Director of Polling, Institute of Politics

Esten Perez  
Director of Communications, Institute of Politics

## **Student HPOP Chair**

Eva Guidarini '15

## **Student HPOP Committee**

Forrest Brown '15

Colin Diersing '16

Mayra Espinoza-Martinez '16

Jenny Gao '16

Ryan Grossman '15

Auden Laurence '16

Steven Lee '16

Zach Lustbader '16

Shannon Lytle '16

Mason Marek '15

Ellen Robo '16

Priyanka Menon '16

Alex Wirth '15

John Wang '16

Matthew Warshauer '14 (Former Student Chair)

Benjamin Zhou '15

Harvard's Institute of Politics (IOP) was established in 1966 as a memorial to President Kennedy and aims to inspire undergraduates to consider careers in politics and public service.

The Institute oversees the John F. Kennedy Jr. Forum, one of the world's premier arenas for political speech, discussion, and debate, and runs a fellowship program offering a unique opportunity for political practitioners to spend semesters at Harvard and interact with students.

The IOP also offers dozens of paid internships for eight to ten weeks during the summer; a nonpartisan, quarterly journal written and run entirely by undergraduates; and a unique, nationwide survey project of young adults' political views.

Students are offered wide-ranging opportunities, including internships and conferences intended to provide opportunities for interaction with the people who shape politics and public policy. The IOP does not offer formal courses or degree-granting programs; instead, it provides avenues for practical experience and encourages students to examine critically and think creatively about politics and public issues. For more information, including past results of these polls, please visit us online at [www.iop.harvard.edu](http://www.iop.harvard.edu)

# Appendix

## Methodology

The GfK Group (formerly Knowledge Networks) conducted a study of young adults on political issues on behalf of the Harvard University Institute of Politics. The goal of the project was to collect 3,000 completed interviews with KN panelists 18- to 29- years of age in English and Spanish. The main sample data collection took place from March 20, 2013 to April 8, 2013. A small pretest was conducted prior to the main survey to examine the accuracy of the data and the length of the interview.

N=6,313 KnowledgePanel members were assigned to the study. The cooperation rate was 49.2 percent resulting in 3,103 completed interviews. 145 interviews were conducted in Spanish with the remainder done in English.

The GfK Group (formerly Knowledge Networks) is passionate about research in marketing, media, health and social policy – collaborating closely with client teams throughout the research process, while applying rigor in everything we do. We specialize in innovative online research that consistently gives leaders in business, government, and academia the confidence to make important decisions. GfK has recruited the first online research panel that is representative of the entire U.S. population. Panel members are randomly recruited through probability-based sampling, and households are provided with access to the Internet and hardware if needed.

GfK recruits panel members by using address-based sampling methods [formerly GfK relied on random-digit dialing methods]. Once household members are recruited for the panel and assigned to a study sample, they are notified by email for survey taking, or panelists can visit

their online member page for survey taking (instead of being contacted by telephone or postal mail). This allows surveys to be fielded very quickly and economically. In addition, this approach reduces the burden placed on respondents, since email notification is less intrusive than telephone calls, and most respondents find answering Web questionnaires more interesting and engaging than being questioned by a telephone interviewer. Furthermore, respondents have the freedom to choose what time of day to complete their assigned survey.

Documentation regarding KnowledgePanel sampling, data collection procedures, weighting, and IRB-bearing issues are available at the below online resources.

- <http://www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp/reviewer-info.html>
- <http://www.knowledgenetworks.com/knpanel/index.html>
- <http://www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp/irbsupport/>

## RDD and ABS Sample Frames

KnowledgePanel members today may have been recruited by either the former random digit dialing (RDD) sampling or the current address-based sampling (ABS) methodologies. In this section, we will describe the RDD-based methodology; the ABS methodology is described in a separate section below. To offset attrition, multiple recruitment samples are fielded evenly throughout the calendar year.

KnowledgePanel recruitment methodology has used the quality standards established by selected RDD surveys conducted for the Federal government (such as the CDC-sponsored National Immunization Survey).

GfK employed list-assisted RDD sampling techniques based on a sample frame of the U.S. residential landline telephone universe. For purposes of efficiency, GfK excluded only those banks of telephone numbers (a bank consists of 100 numbers) that had fewer than two directory listings. Additionally, an oversampling was conducted within a stratum of telephone exchanges that had high concentrations of African American and Hispanic households based on Census data. Note that recruitment sampling was done without replacement, thus numbers attempted in earlier waves were excluded from subsequent recruitment waves.

A telephone number for which a valid postal address can be matched occurred in about 67-70% of each sample at the time RDD was being used for recruitment. These address-matched cases were all mailed an advance letter informing them that they had been selected to participate in the KnowledgePanel. For purposes of efficiency, the numbers without a matched-physical address were under-sampled at a rate of 0.75 relative to the address-matched numbers. Both the minority oversampling mentioned above and this under-sampling of non-address households are accounted for appropriately in the in the panel's weighting procedures.

Following the mailings, telephone recruitment by professional interviewers/recruiters began for all sampled telephone numbers. Telephone numbers for cases sent to recruiters were dialed for up to 90 days, with at least 14 dial attempts for cases in which no one answers the phone, and for numbers known to be associated with households. As occurs for most telephone interviews, for those participants who were

hesitant or expressed a soft refusal, extensive refusal conversion was also performed. The recruitment interview, about 10 minutes in length, begins with informing the household member that the household had been selected to join KnowledgePanel. If the household did not have a computer and access to the Internet, the household member is told that, as reward for completing a short survey weekly, the household will be provided with free monthly Internet access and a laptop computer (in the past, the household was provided with a WebTV device, currently, netbooks are provided). All members of the household were enumerated, and some initial demographic and background information on prior computer and Internet use was collected.

Households that informed recruiters that they had a home computer and Internet access were asked to take GfK surveys using their own equipment and Internet connection. Incentive points per survey, redeemable for cash, are given to these "PC" (personal computer) respondents for completing their surveys. Panel members provided with a laptop computer and free Internet access do not participate in this per-survey points-incentive program. However, all panel members receive special incentive points for selected surveys to improve response rates and/or for all longer surveys as a modest compensation for the extra burden of their time and participation.

For those panel members receiving a laptop or netbook computer, each unit is custom-configured prior to shipment with individual email accounts so that it is ready for immediate use by the household. Most households are able to install the hardware without additional assistance, although GfK maintains a toll-free telephone line for technical support. The GfK Call Center contacts household members who do not respond to email and attempts to restore both contact and participation. PC panel members provide their own email addresses,

and we send their weekly survey invitations to that email account.

All new panel members receive an initial survey for the dual purpose of welcoming them as new panel members and introducing them to how online survey questionnaires work. New panel members also complete a separate profile survey that collects essential demographic information such as gender, age, race, income, and education to create a personal member profile. This information can be used to determine eligibility for specific studies and is factored in for weighting purposes. Operationally, once the profile information is stored, it does not need to be re-collected as a part of each and every survey. This information is also updated annually for all panel members. Once new members have completed their profile surveys, they are designated as “active,” and considered ready to be sampled for client studies. [Note: Parental or legal guardian consent is also collected for the purpose of conducting surveys with teenage panel members, aged 13 to 17.]

Once a household is recruited and each household member’s email address is either obtained or provided, panel members are sent survey invitations linked through a personalized email message (instead of by phone or postal mail). This contact method permits surveys to be fielded quickly and economically, and also facilitates longitudinal research. In addition, this approach reduces the burden placed on respondents, since email notification is less intrusive than telephone calls and allows research subjects to participate in research when it is convenient for them.

### **Address-Based Sampling (ABS) Methodology**

When GfK first started panel recruitment in 1999, the conventional opinion among survey experts was that probability-based sampling could be carried out cost effectively through the use of national RDD samples. The RDD landline

frame at the time allowed access to 96% of U.S. households. Due to the rapid rise of cell phone-only households, this is no longer the case. In 2009, GfK first used address-based sampling for panel recruitment to reflect the changes in society and telephony over recent years. Some of the factors that have reduced the long-term scientific viability of landline RDD sampling methodology are as follows: declining respondent cooperation in telephone surveys, the development of “do not call” lists to reduce unsolicited commercial calls, call screening with caller-ID devices, increased use of answering machines; dilution of the RDD sample frame as measured by the working telephone number rate (more fax lines and lines dedicated to other functions), and finally, the emergence of cell phone only households (CPOHH), since these households are typically excluded from the RDD frame because they have no landline telephone.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (January-June 2011), approximately 33.6% of all U.S. households cannot be contacted through RDD sampling—31.6% as a result of CPOHH status and 2% because they have no telephone service whatsoever. Among some age segments, the RDD non-coverage would be substantial: 47% of young adults, ages 18–24, reside in CPOHHs, 58% of those 25–29 years old, and 46% of those who are 30–34.

After conducting an extensive pilot project in 2008, GfK made the decision to move to use an address-based sample (ABS) frame in response to the growing number of cell phone only households that are outside the RDD frame. Before conducting the ABS pilot, we also experimented with supplementing RDD samples with cell phone samples. However, this approach was found to be much more costly, and raised a number of other operational, data quality, and liability issues (for example, calling cell phones while respondents were driving).

The key advantage of the ABS sample frame is that it allows sampling of almost all U.S. households. An estimated 97% of households are “covered” in sampling nomenclature. Regardless of household telephone status, those households can be reached and contacted through postal mail. Second, the GfK ABS pilot project revealed several additional advantages beyond expected improvement in recruiting adults from CPOHHs:

- Improved sample representativeness for minority racial and ethnic groups
- Improved inclusion of lower educated and lower income households
- Exclusive inclusion of the fraction of CPOHHs that have neither a landline telephone nor Internet access (approximately four to six percent of US households).

ABS involves probability-based sampling of addresses from the U.S. Postal Service’s Delivery Sequence File. Randomly sampled addresses are invited to join KnowledgePanel through a series of mailings and, in some cases, telephone follow-up calls to non-responders when a telephone number can be matched to the sampled address. Operationally, invited households have the option to join the panel by one of several ways:

- Completing and returning a paper form in a postage-paid envelope,
- Calling a toll-free hotline maintained by GfK, or
- Going to a dedicated GfK web site and completing an online recruitment form.

After initially accepting the invitation to join the panel, respondents are then “profiled” online by answering key demographic questions about themselves. This profile is maintained through

the same procedures that were previously established for RDD-recruited panel members. Respondents not having an Internet connection are provided a laptop or netbook computer and free Internet service. Respondents sampled from the ABS frame, like those sampled from the RDD frame, are offered the same privacy terms and confidentiality protections that we have developed over the years and that have been reviewed and approved by dozens of Institutional Review Boards.

Large-scale ABS sampling for KnowledgePanel recruitment began in April 2009. As a result, sample coverage on KnowledgePanel of CPOHHs, young adults, and minority population groups has been increasing steadily since that time.

Because current KnowledgePanel members have been recruited over time from two different sample frames, RDD and ABS, GfK implemented several technical processes to merge samples sourced from these frames. KN’s approach preserves the representative structure of the overall panel for the selection of individual client study samples. An advantage of mixing ABS frame panel members in any KnowledgePanel sample is a reduction in the variance of the weights. ABS-sourced samples tend to align more closely to the overall demographic distributions in the population, and thus the associated adjustment weights are somewhat more uniform and less varied. This variance reduction efficaciously attenuates the sample’s design effect and confirms a real advantage for study samples drawn from KnowledgePanel with its dual frame construction.



## Team

Key personnel from GfK involved in this project include:

- Mike Dennis – Senior Vice President, Government & Academic Research.  
Phone number: (650) 289-2160  
[mike.dennis@gfk.com](mailto:mike.dennis@gfk.com)
- Wendy Mansfield – Vice President, Research Development.  
Phone number: (202) 686-0933  
[wendy.mansfield@gfk.com](mailto:wendy.mansfield@gfk.com)
- Sergei Rodkin – Associate Vice President.  
Phone number: (650) 289-2041  
[sergei.rodkin@gfk.com](mailto:sergei.rodkin@gfk.com)

## The GfK Group

The GfK Group has a strong tradition in working with sophisticated academic, government, and commercial researchers to provide high quality research, samples, and analyses. The larger GfK Group offers the fundamental knowledge for governmental agencies, academics, industries, industry, retailers, services companies and the media need to provide exceptional quality in research to make effective decisions. It delivers a comprehensive range of information and consultancy services. GfK is one of the leading survey research organizations worldwide, operating in more than 100 countries with over 11,000 research staff. In 2010, the GfK Group's sales amounted to EUR 1.29 billion.

For further information, please visit:  
[www.gfk.com](http://www.gfk.com).