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New Study Shatters Stereotypes and Dispels Myths About Young African American Voters

*Analyzes Political Participation, Types of Engagement of Voting
Bloc that Broke All-Time Turnout Record in '08*

MEDFORD/SOMERVILLE, Mass. – Today, Tufts University's Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement ([CIRCLE](#)), the nation's leading non-partisan, research center on the political and civic participation of young Americans, released an in-depth study analyzing the political behaviors and civic engagement of young black voters ahead of the 2012 presidential election.

The study, "Youth Civic Engagement in the United States, 2008-2010: Understanding a Diverse Generation," shatters stereotypes and dispels many common myths about the ways in which young African Americans, ages 18-29, are involved in the U.S. political system. The full report and findings are available at: <http://www.civicyouth.org/?p=2977>. In addition to the report, you may also download an accompanying infographic of the study's findings at the same link.

The study from CIRCLE, which is part of Tufts University's Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service, draws on 2008 and 2010 U.S. Census data on young voters. This data compares youth engagement, broken down by race, in the 2008 and 2010 election cycles. Today's report shows that while the news media tends to present an overly simplified portrayal of young black voters and young voters in general, the reality is the political engagement of young African Americans is much less homogenous.

In 2008, young African Americans set an all-time turnout record with a 58% rate among 18- 29-year-olds – the highest that any ethnic or racial group of young adults has ever achieved. Yet further study shows a more complex picture.

"Anyone who cares about youth civic engagement should dig beneath broad generalizations and stereotypes and recognize the diversity within all demographic groups, certainly including young African Americans," said Peter Levine, director of CIRCLE. "The political engagement of young African American voters in recent years should be greatly admired."

"However, when we dig deeper, we still see that one in five young black voters is almost entirely civically alienated," Levine added, "reducing such individuals' political power, making them easy to ignore, and keeping them away from networks and organizations that work together to support both political and personal gains."

Key findings on young black voters included in the study show six distinct patterns of engagement that have emerged in recent years:

- The Broadly Engaged (17.5% of black youth) filled many different leadership roles and did most of the civic and community work performed by young African Americans;
- The Political Specialists (15.4%) were focused on voting and other forms of political activism;
- The Donors (9.7%) gave money to political or social causes but did little else;
- The Under-Mobilized (21.1%) were registered to vote but did not actually vote in 2010 or do much else;
- The Talkers (13.8%) report discussing political issues and were avid communicators online, but did not take action otherwise; and
- The Civically Alienated (22.5%) did hardly anything at all.

According to Levine, this data illustrates important opportunities to increase civic engagement among young African Americans in 2012. “The Under-Mobilized showed they cared enough to register, but then they did not vote in 2010 for a variety of reasons, probably due to a lack of outreach from candidates and political parties,” he said. “These particular voters show a willingness to participate in our democratic process, but in order to keep them engaged and involved it is crucial they receive ongoing support and encouragement.”

Today's in-depth study of the millennial generation's civic engagement is one of the first in a series of studies and reports that CIRCLE will publish over the next 13 months during the 2012 election cycle. In addition to the publication of ongoing research documents, CIRCLE provides next-day turnout estimates for each of the presidential primaries and caucuses..

To sign-up to receive copies of CIRCLE's cutting-edge research on young Americans and next-day voter turnout estimates for the 2012 elections, please email amy@lunamediaigroup.com.

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CIRCLE (www.civicyouth.org) is a nonpartisan, independent, academic research center that studies young people in politics and presents detailed data on young voters in all 50 states. CIRCLE was founded in 2001 with a generous gift from the Pew Charitable Trusts and is part of the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University. CIRCLE's reputation for reliable, independent, timely research has been hailed by experts in the field of civic partnership, such as Harvard University professor Robert Putnam who said CIRCLE had brought "the best and most serious research to one place."

The Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service (<http://activecitizen.tufts.edu/>) is a national leader whose model and research are setting the standard for higher education's role in civic engagement education. Serving every school of Tufts University, Tisch College creates an enduring culture that prepares students to be lifelong active citizens.

Tufts University (<http://www.tufts.edu/>) located on three Massachusetts campuses in Boston, Medford/Somerville and Grafton, and in Talloires, France, is recognized as one of the premier research universities in the United States. Tufts enjoys a global reputation for academic excellence and for the preparation of students as leaders in a wide range of professions. A growing number of innovative teaching and research initiatives span all Tufts campuses, and collaboration among the faculty and students in the undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs across the university's schools is widely encouraged.