

# Executive Summary

## Survey of Young Americans' Attitudes Toward Politics and Public Service 27th Edition

### Harvard Public Opinion Project

Presented by:

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## 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 15 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.

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, 24 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.

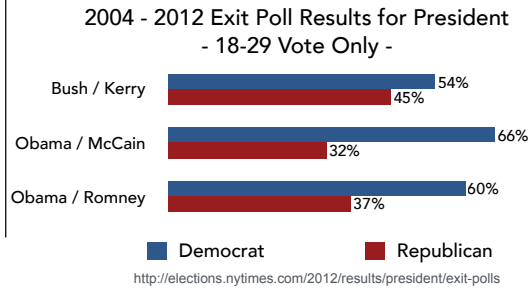
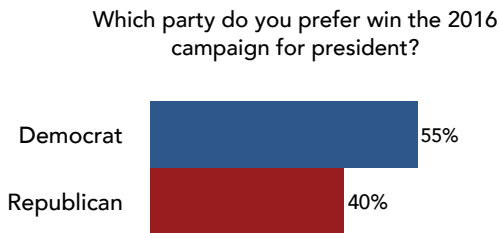
- In 2001, the survey was expanded from N=800 to N=1,200 college students in order to capture a more robust sample of the undergraduate population.
- In 2006, the survey expanded to N=2,400 interviews, as we began interviewing members of the 18- to 24- year-old cohort who were not currently attending 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, IOP surveys use RDD and Address-Based Sampling (ABS) frames and are administered online (see Appendix).

The interviewing period for this survey of N=3,034 18- to 29- year olds was March 18 to April 1, 2015. The margin of error for the poll is +/- 2.4 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. During the interviewing period, major media stories included analysis of the Israel elections, suicide bombers attack of mosques in Yemen, Ted Cruz's announcement for president, President Obama announced slowdown of troop withdraw in Afghanistan, U.S. began airstrikes against ISIS in Tikrit, Governor Mike Pence (IN) signed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, Senator Harry Reid (NV) announced he will not seek re-election, Boko Haram attacked several Nigerian towns, Senator Robert Menendez (NJ) was indicted on corruption charges, and U.S. and Iran negotiated a nuclear deal.

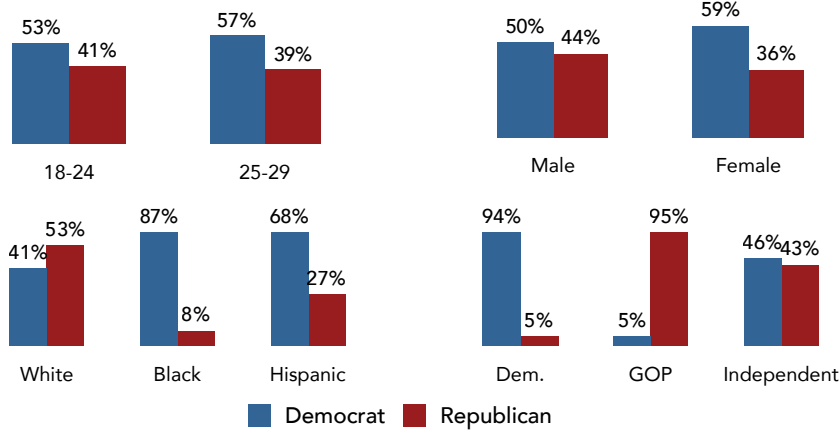
Harvard IOP Polling Director John Della Volpe supervised the survey group of undergraduates. As always, the IOP survey group would like to thank IOP Director Maggie Williams, Executive Director Catherine McLaughlin, Communications and Marketing Director Esten Perez for their insight and support over the course of this and all IOP projects.

# 10 KEY FINDINGS

## #1: SOLID MAJORITY PREFER DEMOCRATS MAINTAIN CONTROL OF WHITE HOUSE AFTER 2016

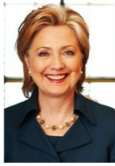


### Which party do you prefer win the 2016 campaign for president? - BY SUBGROUP -



## #2: HILLARY CLINTON HOLDS LARGE LEAD OVER POTENTIAL DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

If the Democratic primary for President were held today, which one of the following candidates would be your first choice? (n=619)



Hillary Clinton

47%



Elizabeth Warren

11%



Joe Biden

8%



Martin O'Malley

3%



Jim Webb

2%



Bernie Sanders

1%

28% Don't know

Note: Each respondent who answered the question was shown the name and photograph above.

## #3: NO FRONT RUNNER ON HORIZON IN STILL EMERGING REPUBLICAN PRIMARY

If the Republican primary for President were held today, which one of the following candidates would be your first choice? (n=486)



Ben Carson

10%



Rand Paul

8%



Jeb Bush

7%



Mike Huckabee

7%



Scott Walker

5%



Sarah Palin

5%



Ted Cruz

5%



Chris Christie

4%



Rick Perry

3%



Rick Santorum

3%



Marco Rubio

2%



Carly Fiorina

2%



Bobby Jindal

1%



George Pataki

1%



Mike Pence

0%



Lindsey Graham

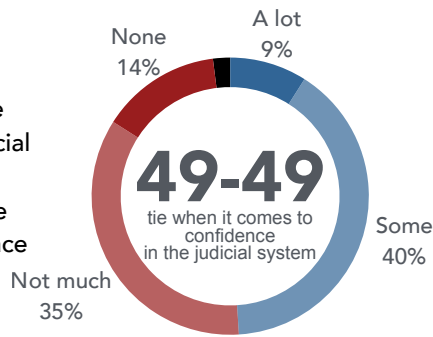
0%

36% Don't know

Note: Each respondent who answered the question was shown the name and photograph above.

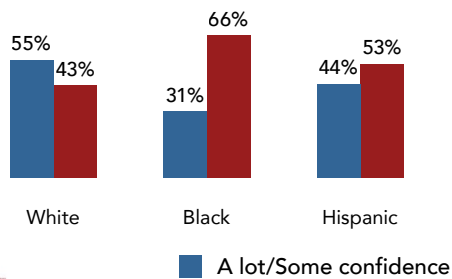
## #4: NEARLY 1-IN-2 18-29 YEAR OLDS DO NOT HAVE CONFIDENCE THAT JUSTICE SYSTEM IS FAIR; DEEP DIVISIONS BY RACE

How confident are you in the US judicial system's ability to fairly judge people without bias for race and ethnicity?

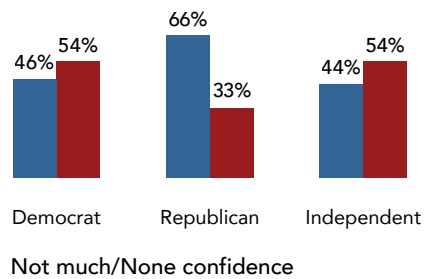


In addition to differences highlighted below by race and party identification, striking differences also emerge by income category. For example, among those in the sample with total household income of more than \$85,000 per year, 57% have confidence and 42% do not. However, confidence falls to 51% among those with incomes between \$50,000 and \$85,000 and to 43% for those with household incomes less than \$50,000.

View of Judicial System by Race

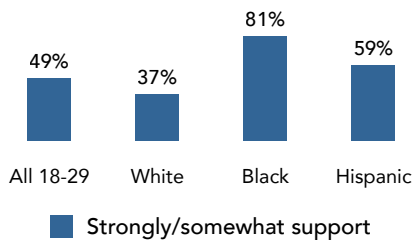


View of Judicial System by Party

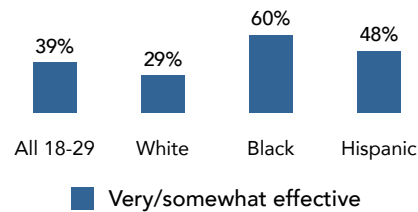


## #5: MAJORITY DO NOT BELIEVE PROTESTS WILL MAKE MEANINGFUL CHANGE; BODY CAMERAS VIEWED AS MOST EFFECTIVE MEASURE TO CURB RACIAL INEQUALITIES IN SYSTEM

Recent police killings of black men, including incidents in Ferguson, Missouri and New York City, sparked national protests of police treatment of Black Americans that centered around the slogan #BlackLivesMatter. Do you support or oppose these protests?



How effective do you believe that the #BlackLivesMatter protests will be effective in making meaningful change?



Requiring police officers to wear body cameras while they are on patrol.



Instituting practices in police departments to have their racial demographics reflect the demographics of their communities.



Eliminating mandatory minimum sentences for people convicted of possessing or selling drugs.



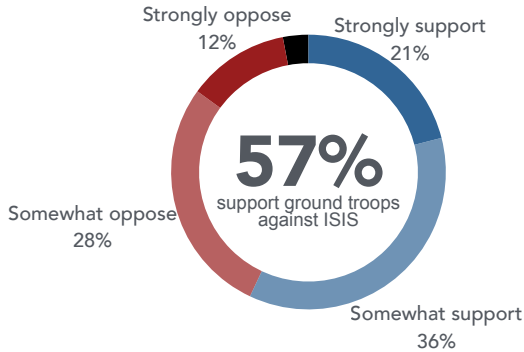
Effective Not effective Declined to answer

QUESTION:

As you may know, a series of policy changes have been proposed to reduce racial inequalities in the criminal justice system. For each of the following proposed policies, please indicate how effective you think it will be in reducing racial inequalities in the criminal justice system.

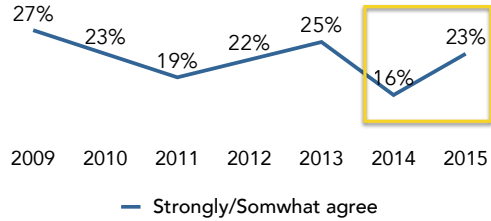
## #6: SOLID MAJORITY SUPPORT SENDING GROUND TROOPS TO DEFEAT ISIS; OTHER SIGNS OF MORE FORCEFUL PRESENCE MAY ALSO BE EMERGING

Do you support or oppose the United States sending ground troops to participate in a military campaign against the Islamic State (IS/ISIS/ISIL)?

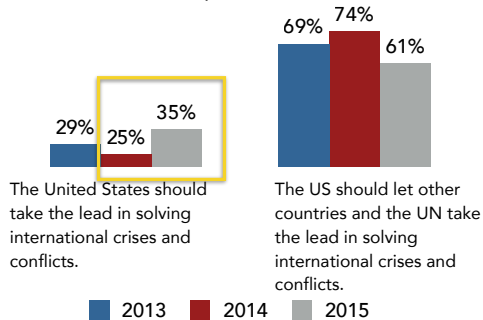


A majority of men and women, people in every age group, every party, every region of the country, every level of education and income support sending ground troops to defeat ISIS.

In today's world, it is sometimes necessary to attack potentially hostile countries, rather than waiting until we are attacked to respond.



Which of the following statements comes closer to your point of view?



## #7: 3-IN-4 BELIEVE THAT GLOBAL WARMING IS A FACT; OPINIONS SPLIT ON KEYSTONE, MOST OPPOSE USE OF FRACKING

Which of the following statements comes closest to your view of global warming?\*

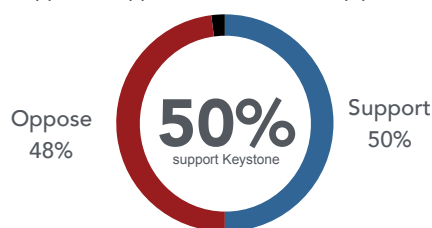


Global warming is a proven fact and is mostly caused by emissions from cars and industrial facilities such as power plants and factories.

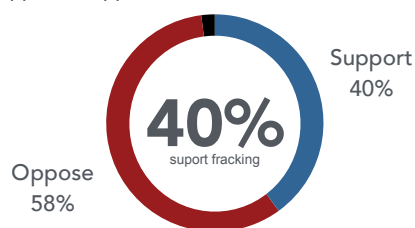
Global warming is a proven fact and is mostly caused by natural changes that have nothing to do with emissions from cars and industrial facilities.

Global warming is a theory that has not yet been proven.

Based on what you know at this time, do you support or oppose the Keystone XL pipeline?\*



Based on what you know at this time, do you support or oppose the use of fracking in America?\*

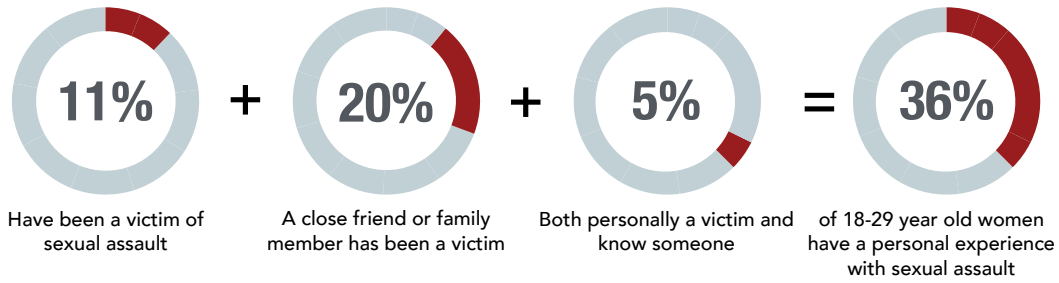


\* Question was asked originally by CNN/ORC. In January 2013, 49% of U.S. adults indicated global warming was caused by industry, 24% from nature and 23% said it was unproven.

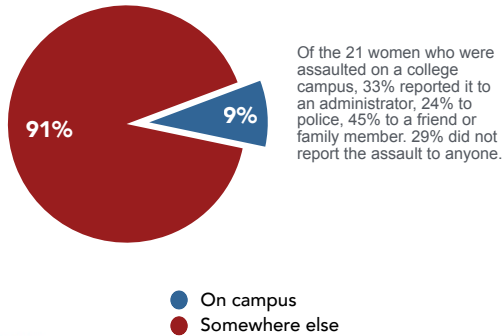
\*\* Both of these questions included pro and con statements; they can be found in topline, questions 95 and 96.

## #8: SEXUAL ASSAULT IS PERSONAL FOR MORE THAN ONE-THIRD OF 18-29 YEAR OLD WOMEN

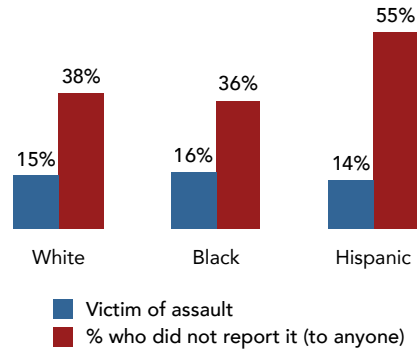
Have you, a close friend or family member ever been a victim of sexual assault?  
- AMONG WOMEN ONLY -



Did the assault occur on a college or university campus? (n=280)

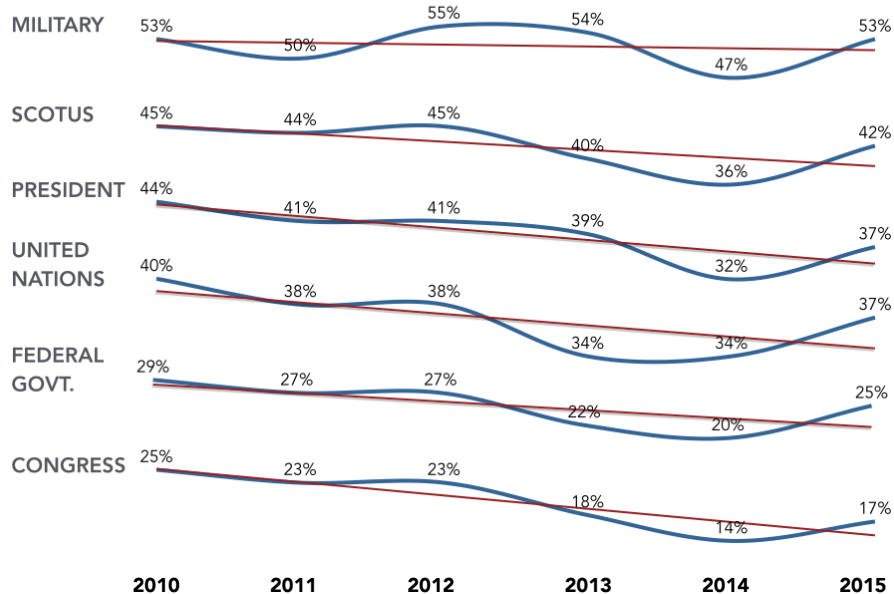


While sexual assault does not discriminate by race, Hispanic women are significantly less likely to report assault than White and Black Americans.



## #9: WHILE LOW LEVELS OF TRUST PERSIST, HINTS OF OPTIMISM EMERGE; MOST INSTITUTIONS REBOUND FROM LAST YEAR'S LOW

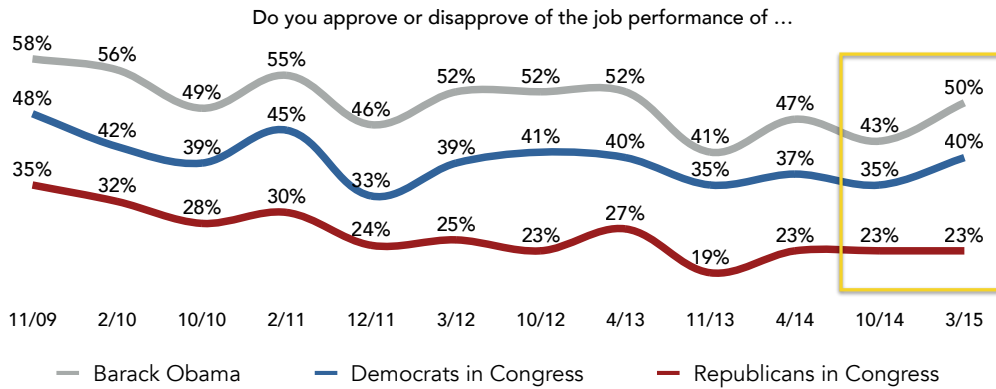
Trust in Institutions, 2010-2015



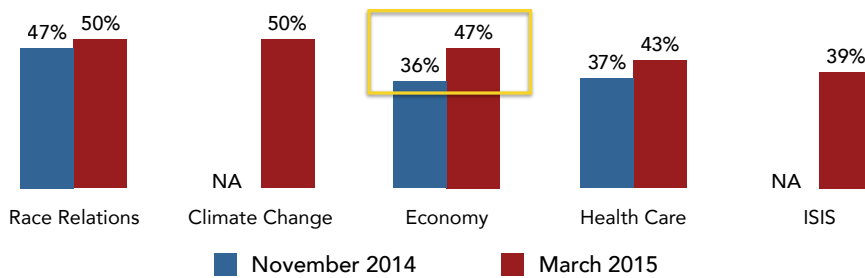
**QUESTION:** How often do you trust each of them to do the right thing? (All of the time, most of the time, some of the time, never)  
Only All of the time and Some of the time reported above.

**NOTE:** Across the board, the level of trust in each of the six major federal and international institutions that we have tracked in our polling has increased over the last 12 months. Not included in this figure, trust in state government increased from 28% to 30% over the last year, trust in local government stayed the same at 33%, trust in Wall Street increased from 12% to 14% and trust in the media increased for 11% to 12%.

**#10: OBAMA APPROVAL INCREASES BY 7 POINTS SINCE FALL 2014, DEMOCRATS IN CONGRESS +5, WHILE GOP REMAINS AT 23%**



Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling ...



**#10: APPROVAL OF PRESIDENT OBAMA UP ACROSS MAJOR SUBGROUPS; HISPANICS +16 SINCE FALL 2014**

Approval Rating of Barack Obama as president

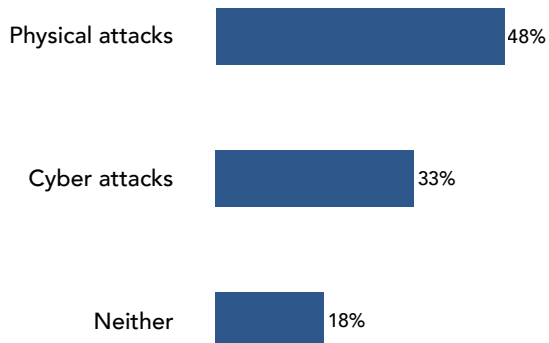
	NOV 2009	FEB 2010	OCT 2010	FEB 2011	DEC 2011	MAR 2012	OCT 2012	APR 2013	NOV 2013	APR 2014	OCT 2014	MAR 2015	NET CHANGE
<b>ALL 18-29</b>	58%	56%	49%	55%	46%	52%	52%	52%	41%	47%	43%	50%	<b>+7</b>
<b>18-24</b>	60%	55%	48%	55%	44%	50%	50%	51%	39%	45%	42%	50%	<b>+8</b>
<b>25-29</b>	56%	57%	52%	55%	47%	55%	55%	54%	43%	48%	44%	50%	<b>+6</b>
<b>College</b>	57%	60%	51%	60%	48%	52%	49%	50%	39%	47%	42%	50%	<b>+8</b>
<b>Democrat</b>	86%	84%	79%	81%	74%	81%	87%	86%	79%	79%	78%	83%	<b>+6</b>
<b>Republican</b>	21%	21%	18%	17%	15%	18%	12%	10%	7%	12%	11%	12%	<b>+1</b>
<b>Independent</b>	49%	49%	42%	46%	39%	40%	46%	46%	31%	38%	33%	40%	<b>+7</b>
<b>White</b>	48%	45%	37%	44%	35%	41%	40%	38%	28%	33%	31%	35%	<b>+4</b>
<b>Black</b>	84%	83%	83%	83%	83%	82%	86%	84%	75%	83%	78%	87%	<b>+9</b>
<b>Hispanic</b>	81%	69%	62%	68%	52%	66%	70%	71%	53%	60%	49%	65%	<b>+16</b>
<b>Male</b>	56%	53%	47%	52%	44%	50%	51%	50%	41%	45%	41%	48%	<b>+7</b>
<b>Female</b>	60%	59%	52%	57%	48%	54%	53%	55%	40%	48%	45%	52%	<b>+7</b>

QUESTION: In general, do you approve or disapprove of the job performance of Barack Obama as president?

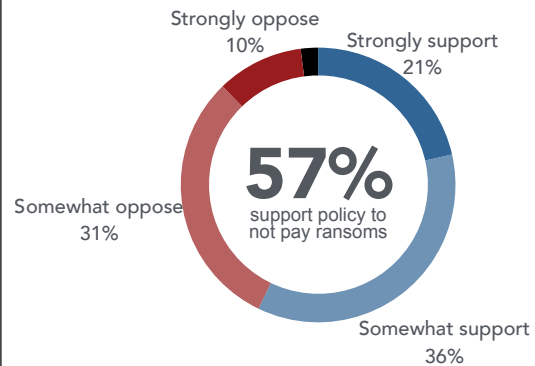
## ADDITIONAL FACTS, FIGURES & PERSPECTIVE FROM SURVEY

## YOUNG AMERICANS MORE CONCERNED ABOUT PHYSICAL ATTACKS, THAN CYBER ATTACKS; MAJORITY SUPPORT CURRENT U.S. POLICY ON NOT PAYING RANSOMS TO TERRORISTS

Generally speaking, are you more concerned about  
cyber attacks or are you more concerned about  
physical attacks on America?



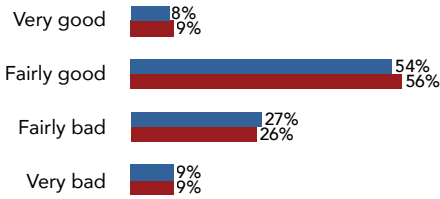
Do you support or oppose the US policy to never  
pay a ransom for the release of American hostages  
to terrorist organizations?



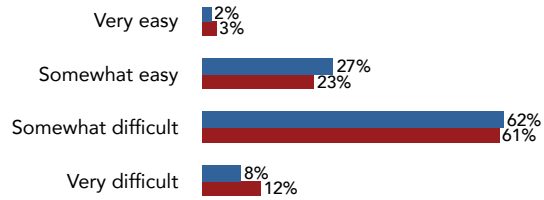


## DESPITE PROSPECTS OF DIFFICULT JOB MARKET, PLURALITY BELIEVE THEY WILL BE BETTER OFF THAN PARENTS

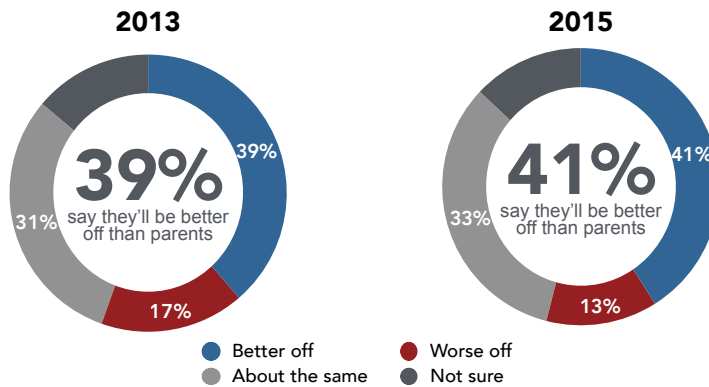
How would you rate your personal financial situation these days?



College Only: Based on the current state of the economy, how easy or difficult do you think it will be for students in your class to find a permanent job after graduation?

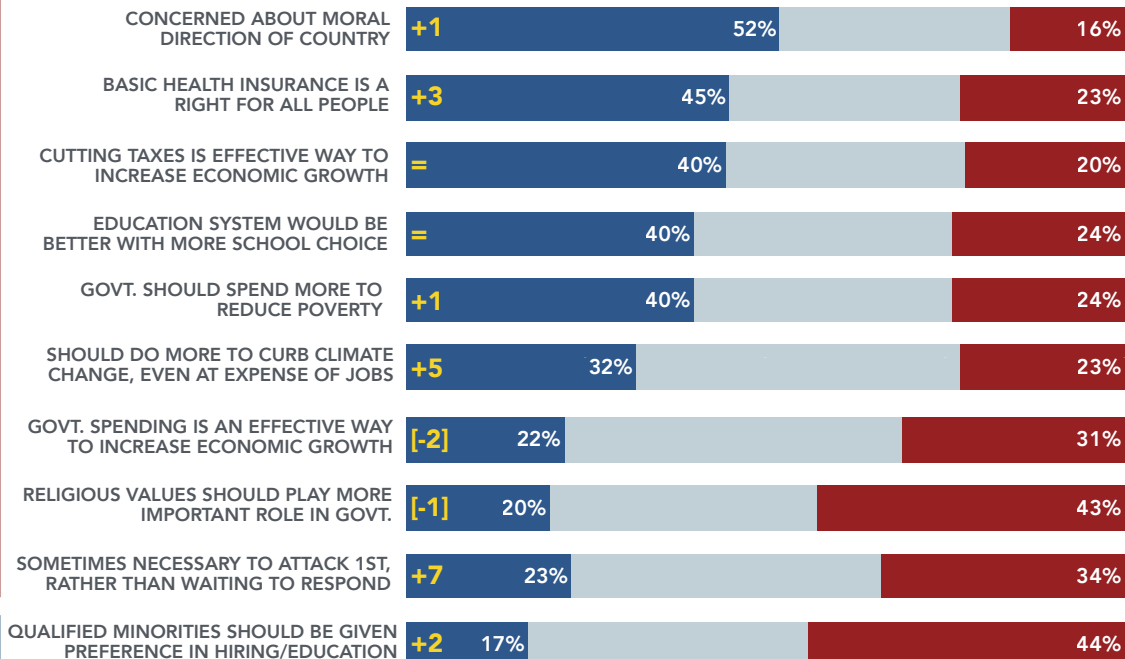


■ 2013 ■ 2015



## ATTITUDES ABOUT ROLE OF GOVERNMENT GENERALLY & SPECIFIC POLICIES COMPLEX, NOT FULLY FORMED

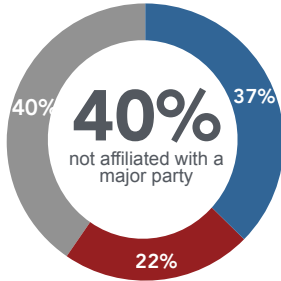
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



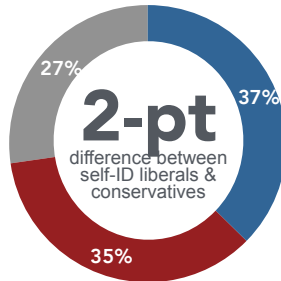
Difference in "agree" 2014/2015

■ Agree ■ Not sure ■ Disagree

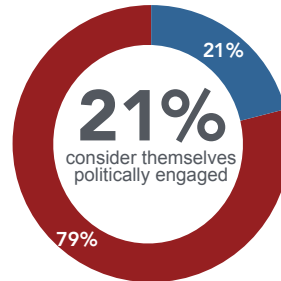
## VIEWS TOWARD POLITICS, SERVICE AND RELIGION



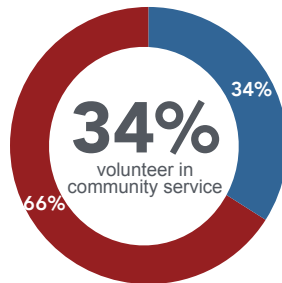
● Democrat  
● Republican  
● Independent



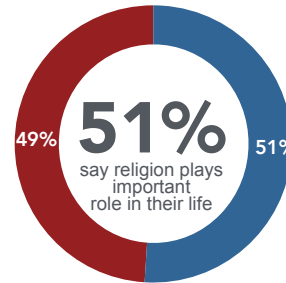
● Liberal  
● Conservative  
● Moderate



● Engaged  
● Not engaged



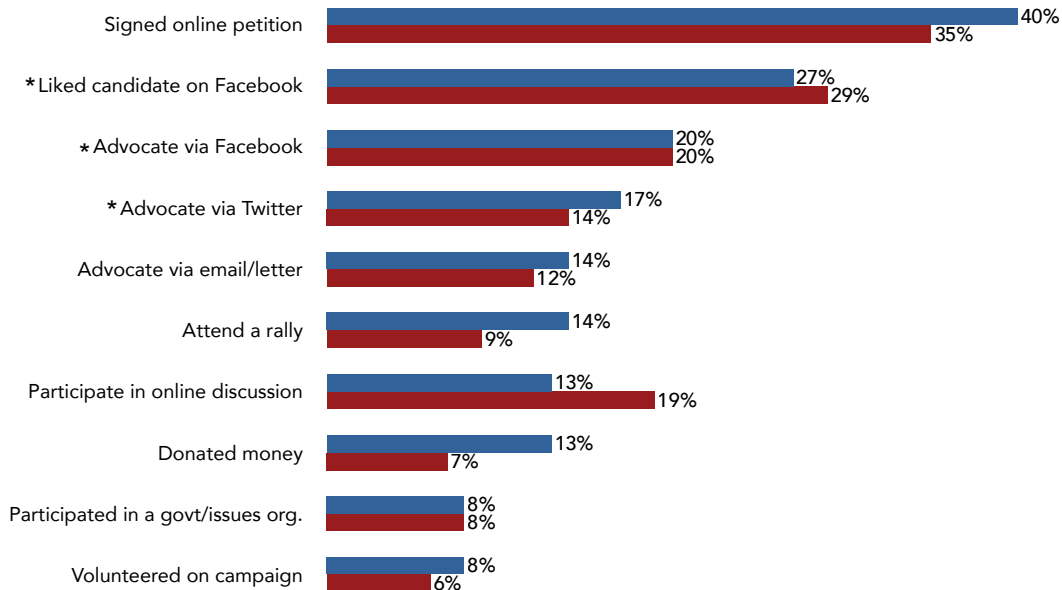
● Vol. for community service  
● Did not volunteer



● Important  
● Not important/No preference

## DETAILS ON HOW DEMOCRATS AND REPUBLICANS ENGAGE POLITICALLY, ONLINE AND OFF

We would now like to ask you some questions about your participation in various activities. Have you ever done any of the following?









■ Democrats      ■ Republicans

\*Base = people who have an account

## SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES BY AGE, RACE, GENDER AND PARTY ID ON USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA MEDIA

On which of the following platforms do you have an account?

						
<b>ALL 18-29</b>	83%	44%	39%	34%	33%	15%
<b>18-24</b>	83%	51%	43%	33%	42%	19%
<b>25-29</b>	82%	34%	35%	35%	20%	8%
<b>College</b>	88%	58%	49%	38%	55%	21%
<b>Democrat</b>	83%	50%	45%	34%	35%	19%
<b>Republican</b>	87%	44%	37%	42%	37%	9%
<b>Independent</b>	81%	38%	35%	30%	28%	14%
<b>White</b>	86%	41%	40%	38%	36%	14%
<b>Black</b>	75%	48%	42%	25%	23%	14%
<b>Hispanic</b>	78%	49%	37%	29%	29%	14%
<b>Male</b>	80%	34%	38%	12%	28%	10%
<b>Female</b>	86%	53%	41%	56%	38%	19%
	<b>Facebook</b>	<b>Instagram</b>	<b>Twitter</b>	<b>Pinterest</b>	<b>Snapchat</b>	<b>Tumblr</b>

## HARVARD PUBLIC OPINION PROJECT

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).

Harvard Institute of Politics team members who worked on this project include:

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Executive Director, Institute of Politics

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