For Immediate Release:
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Tiller's 2024 Presidential Election Survey Finds:

IF DEMOCRACY IS ON THE BALLOT, IT MAY BE LOSING (PARTICULARLY AMONG YOUNG VOTERS)

Survey Finds Many Young Voters Discouraged and Unenthused About Democracy:

- Just 51% of 18- to 29-Year-Olds Agree They Are "Lucky to Live in a Democracy"
- Half Feel a "Strong Obligation" To Vote (vs 69% of Americans 30+)

Most Young Adults Say Personal Finances a Larger Focus than Preserving Democracy

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When It Comes to Character, Harris Leading Trump on Most Factors

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NEW YORK, N.Y., OCT. 23, 2024 – It's been said that youth is wasted on the young. Is the right to vote?

Many Americans ages 18 to 29 are discouraged over the state of American democracy, feel unrepresented, and are disinclined to vote, according to the results of a national poll released here today by Tiller, LLC, a leading philanthropic and advocacy marketing consultancy.

Just 51% of 18- to 29-year-olds surveyed agree that they are "lucky to live in a Democracy." That compares to 74% of Americans over the age of 30. Almost four out of five (79%) of Americans 30 and up said they were very likely to vote in November or had already, but just 55% of 18- to 29-year-olds responded that way.

As for views of America more generally, just 31% of 18- to 29-year-olds surveyed agreed with the statement – 17% strongly and 14% somewhat – that "while there is always room for improvement, I feel that America is great already." By comparison, 50% of Americans over the age of 30 – 20% strongly and 30% somewhat – agreed with the statement.

"Our poll demonstrates a considerable and concerning generation gap when it comes to valuing democracy and the critical importance of voting," said Tiller CEO Rob Densen. "It appears that many young people feel neglected, unvoiced, and even alienated and are bringing that disaffection to bear in a disinclination to vote. While the last dozen years or so have been challenging for lovers of American democracy, civil discourse and seamless presidential elections, voting is our opportunity to change the narrative."

When asked to choose from among a list of eight reasons people under the age of 30 have been significantly less likely than the general population to vote in presidential elections, respondents 18 to 29 cited “Feel My Vote Doesn’t Count” (21%), “A General Feeling of Hopelessness (19%), and “Feel Neither Party/Candidate Represents My View” (15%) as the three top reasons.

The poll results underscore research released in 2023 by Penn State’s McCourtney Institute for Democracy which found that close to half of all Millennials believe either that it makes no difference whether they live under a democracy or a dictatorship (28%) or that a dictatorship could be “good in certain circumstances” (19%). It is not surprising, then, that over half of all Americans polled believe strongly (34%) or somewhat (22%) that “Democracy is on the ballot in 2024."

“We know this election will be decided by turn-out,” said Harvard Law School Professor Lawrence Lessig, who has been studying the impact of the youth vote in recent elections. “Young adults’ skepticism is understandable, but their future depends on making their voices heard.”

“As fitful as progress has been, the truth is that over time our democratic system has trended toward freedom, equality, justice, and respect for the rule of law – usually with a helpful push from voters who have chosen leaders committed to those values.” Densen said. “The great paradox of the 2024 presidential election is that if they turn out in numbers, young people may never have a greater opportunity to shape the future.”

The Tiller 2024 Presidential Election Survey was designed to generate insights into Americans' perceptions and attitudes relative to democracy and leadership, with a special focus on 18- to 29-year-olds. It was conducted from September 21 to September 25, 2024, by AlphaROC, Inc., who collected census-balanced responses from 3,221 Americans – including 572 18- to 29-year-olds and 2,649 age 30+ – across eight different demographic variables, providing a reliable and accurate representation of the total U.S. population. At a 95% confidence level, the margin of error for the overall sample is +/- 1.7%, +/- 4.2% for the 18- to 29-year-olds, and +/- 1.9% for respondents ages 30 and over.

Of Dollars and Sense

Their financial well-being is important to most Americans but critical for many young adults.

Half of all respondents under age 30 agreed with the statement that “my personal finances are a larger focus for me than preserving our democracy.” Thirty-eight percent of Americans age 30 and over agreed with the statement.

“Young adults’ focus on finances is hardly surprising given that many of them came of age in a decade bracketed by two of the biggest economic disruptions the country has even known, the Great Recession and the COVID pandemic,” said Tiller President Jim Marren.

Homeownership remains a financial priority for many young people but something of a stretch goal, which may be why most 18- to 29-year-olds say they are more likely to see a UFO in their lifetime than 3% mortgage rates.

"We think Harris's efforts on home affordability, college debt forgiveness and a more inclusive child tax credit are likely to appeal to most young adults," Densen said. "But it's not like character and the preservation of our democracy are unimportant. Your home will provide a lot less sanctuary if political violence is rising and democracy is slipping away."

Harris Leading Trump on Most Character Markers

The survey looked at a number of presidential leadership qualities.

Asked which candidate was better described by a statement or attribute, Harris out-polled Trump by double digits on "Seeks Counsel/Listens Well/Allows Other to Be Heard" (50% to 27%), "Treats His/Her Opponent with Respect" (48% to 22%), "Strongly Condemns the Use of Political Violence" (45% to 31%) and "Is a Staunch Supporter of Democracy (45% vs 32%). Harris had a narrower edge over Trump on "Tells the Truth" (38% to 31%), "Understands the Day-to-Day Challenges Faced by the Average American" (42% to 37%). and "Has Character" (40% to 38%). Trump narrowly outpolled Harris on "Does What He/She Says He/She is Going to Do" (43% to 37%) and "Has a Strong Vision for the Country's Future" (42% to 39%).

"Character still counts, and, in a very real way, it is on the ballot this November, just as it was four years ago," Densen said. "Notwithstanding all the misrepresentation, mudslinging, fear mongering, peevishness, and name calling manifest in this election cycle, Americans would still like to respect and count on their president's character."

FDR Redux: Democracy's Greatest Threat Is Indifference

Voting remains a key measure of civic engagement, and, in that regard, the poll may offer some encouraging signs. Indeed, there is a chance that voter participation this year could exceed 66% – a level not seen in a presidential election since 1900 – as 74% of respondents said they were "very likely to vote," 13% said they were "somewhat likely to vote" and 2% reported having already voted.

"There has been a lot of conjecture on why young people sit out presidential elections. But the bottom-line is this: Voting is the cornerstone of our democracy. It is the best vehicle we have for shaping our collective destiny," Densen said, "As Franklin Delano Roosevelt once said, "Democracy's greatest threat is indifference' It really comes down to this: either vote or submit to the will of the people who do."

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Tiller, LLC is one of the nation's leading consultancies in the creation and implementation of advocacy marketing programs for major U.S. corporations and non-profits.

AlphaROC is a data science company building software tools that deliver rapid insights, identify trends, and make accurate predictions. AlphaROC's proprietary AI-Pollster, EdWIN, is constantly querying Americans, longitudinally answering user questions with data. Users investigate these EdWIN-collected data within occam, AlphaROC's visualization and analytics platform. From brand trackers, Net Promoter Scores, and Net Purchase Intent, to macro indicators, message testing, and campaign optimization, AlphaROC is re-imagining market research with AI.