Teens and Twenty-Somethings Support Clinton, Obama Over GOP Field

One year before the 2008 presidential election, more than 20% of teens and twenty-somethings support Democratic front-runner Hillary Clinton, while nearly as many express support for Illinois Sen. Barack Obama. The most popular Republican candidate, Rudy Giuliani, garners support from just more than 10% of Millennials, the influential cohort of teens and twenty-somethings.

According to an online survey of 1,035 teens and 973 twenty-somethings, even Al Gore-who has not announced a presidential candidacy-beats out second-place Republican hopeful John McCain.

Some 21% of teens aged 12 to 19 support Clinton (including significantly more girls than boys), while 18% prefer Obama (including significantly more guys). Rudy Giuliani garners support from 11% of teens, including significantly more white and Hispanic teens.

Twenty-somethings aged 21 to 29 also give Clinton the edge-23% prefer the junior Senator from New York, compared to 18% who favor Obama. Giuliani claims support from 13% of twenty-somethings. Again, non-candidate Gore (6%) bests the rest of the GOP field, including McCain, Thompson, and Romney.

TRU Trends Director Rob Callender says the Democrats' popularity is the result of a convergence of factors. Among them: attitudes toward the current administration, party identification, and hot-button issues.

"Young people have soured on the Bush administration," Callender says. "When TRU asked these individuals to name the best and worst presidents of the past 30 years, more teens (54%) and twenty-somethings (62%) judged George W. Bush the worst leader of their lifetimes than any other president. Only 7% of teens and 4% of twenty-somethings named him as the best."

Whether a cause or an effect of this disenchantment, more young people also identify with the Democrats over the Republicans. Nearly one-third of teens (30%) say they prefer the Democratic party, compared to 20% who favor the Republicans. Another 19% say they're independent. The difference is even more stark amongst twenty-somethings, 37% of whom describe themselves as Democrats compared to just 23% who identify with the Republicans. Another 18% say they're independent.

Teens' most important hot-button issues in the next election include gasoline prices (29%), Iraq (28%), Terrorism (24%), health care (24%), education, (20%), global warming/environment (20%), and immigration (20%). Twenty-something respondents list their hot-button issues as health care (30%), Iraq (29%), gas prices (25%), the economy (24%), global warming/environment (22%), education (21%), and immigration (20%).

Callender says the bulk of these findings suggest bad news for the eventual Republican nominee, at least as far as the youth vote is concerned.

"Young people harbor distinct misgivings about George W. Bush," Callender explains. "The fact that he remains the Republican party's figurehead doesn't help the GOP's image. Meanwhile, Democrats are asserting the need for change regarding many of young people's most pressing issues, including Iraq, health care, education, and global warming."

Callender says Democrats are successfully claiming the outsider status that originally propelled Republicans into power-and kept them there for two presidential terms and more than a dozen years in Congress.

These findings are based upon The 2008 TRU Study, fielded in August and due for release this month. The TRU Study is the largest of its type, surveying teens and twenty-somethings on attitudes, values, lifestyles, consumer behaviors, and trends. Last year, TRU, a Research International company, conducted more than 1,000 qualitative-research sessions, in addition to numerous quantitative studies. Over the past 26 years, TRU has interviewed more than one million teenagers.

First Call Analyst:
FCMN Contact:

SOURCE: TRU, a Research International company

CONTACT: Rob Callender of TRU, a Research International company,
+1-847-564-3440, ext. 222