

## Study shows voting higher among youth using social media to express beliefs

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Young adults who are interested in politics are more likely than others to participate in public affairs by speaking out about their political beliefs using Facebook, online blogs and other social media, according to a study performed by researchers from the Edward R. Murrow College of Communication at Washington State University.

Co-authored by Bruce Pinkleton, a communications professor at WSU, and Yushu Zhou, a former WSU graduate student who is now a doctoral candidate at Stanford University, the study is scheduled for publication in the November issue of the journal, *Mass Communication and Society*. It is based on an analysis of the [political involvement](#) and online interactions of more than 400 undergraduate college students.

Pinkleton and Zhou found that participants who were interested in election information were more likely to use [social media](#), public affairs websites and other digital information sources to learn about the elections and were more likely to participate in [public affairs](#) by expressing their opinions online. Prior research has shown that the more informed a citizen is, the more likely they are to participate in elections. They also found that participants using traditional news sources, government sources, and candidate websites had higher levels of political efficacy, or the belief that their participation matters.

"In 2012, candidates have more channels to keep in touch with voters, such as [Facebook](#), Twitter, and even LinkedIn where presidential candidates have created their own profiles," said Zhou. "These new

communication channels not only provide richer political information and interactive messages for voters, especially young voters, but also reshape the relationships between candidates and voters."

Current presidential candidates Barack Obama and Mitt Romney offer political websites and [social networking sites](#) in order to promote their campaigns. Both candidates use not only social media, such as Facebook, but have also developed Tumblr, Spotify, and Flickr accounts. These are all websites that enable political engagement, and are typically used by [young adults](#). The findings of the study are expected to become particularly significant as candidates continue to branch out into other new forms of media.

"When young people are motivated, even blogs and social media can be important sources of information and contribute to their political participation," said Pinkleton. "Given the historically low levels of political participation among young people, this is an important finding. The more we can get people involved in the political process, the more likely we are to enjoy the benefits of a strong, healthy democracy."

The article is entitled "Modeling the Effects of Political Information Source Use and Online Expression on Young Adults' Political Efficacy."

Provided by Washington State University

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