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## **YOUNG PEOPLE RELUCTANT TO DISCUSS POLITICS, ESPECIALLY ONLINE, ACCORDING TO NEW REPORT**

Young people today are reluctant to discuss politics with people who disagree with them and view online spaces as somewhat treacherous for interacting politically, according to a new report from the Engaging News Project (ENP) and the National Institute for Civil Discourse (NICD).

To gather insight, six focus groups were conducted by ENP, based at the University of Texas at Austin, and NICD, based at the University of Arizona. The goal of the focus groups was to gain a better understanding of how and why people use online spaces to interact with politics, news, and one another.

Consistently across the focus groups, participants said they preferred in-person discussions about politics rather than those that take place online, and voiced concern that political discussion might lead to conflict. Participants also agreed that engaging in discussions with people who have differing opinions is worthwhile, but they are often reluctant to do so.

Many participants attributed their hesitation to engage in political discussions with others to the tendency for online interactions to be highly emotional and involve personal attacks.

“Several participants said that they avoided online engagement because of incivility and a lack of information,” said Cynthia Peacock, research associate for ENP. “Many thought discussion spaces that focused more on facts and less on emotion would be more inviting.”

Using information gathered from the focus groups, ENP and NICD will next team up for an experiment on how to create more effective online spaces for political involvement and discussion.

“The focus group data tells us that people want to talk politics but they have misgivings about doing it online,” said Peter Leavitt, research assistant for NICD. “Our research has the potential to produce knowledge and tools that will make online political discussion more appealing and effective and we’re excited to see where this project takes us.”

*The Engaging News Project provides research-based techniques for engaging online audiences in commercially viable and democratically beneficial ways. Learn more at [engagingnewsproject.org](http://engagingnewsproject.org).*

*The National Institute for Civil Discourse is committed to fostering an open exchange of ideas and expression of values that will lead to better problem-solving and more effective government. Learn more at [nicd.arizona.edu](http://nicd.arizona.edu).*