



## CIRCLE

The Center for Information & Research on  
Civic Learning & Engagement

## How Young People Expressed Their Political Views in 2006

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Efforts to address community or public problems usually involve efforts to persuade other people. Therefore, expressing political views is an essential aspect of civic engagement. Among the 19 survey indicators of civic engagement in CIRCLE's "Civic and Political Health of the Nation" surveys (2002 and 2006), ten are activities that require individuals to express their own political or social opinions in public forums or to participate in a public event for expressive purposes.

Both adults and young people are most likely to express their political views through boycotting (deliberately buying products for political or ethical reasons), boycotting (refusing to buy products for political or ethical reasons), and trying to persuade others in an election. The first two activities—boycotting and boycotting—affect companies and thus differ from the forms of expression that are aimed at the government, such as signing a petition or directly contacting a public official.

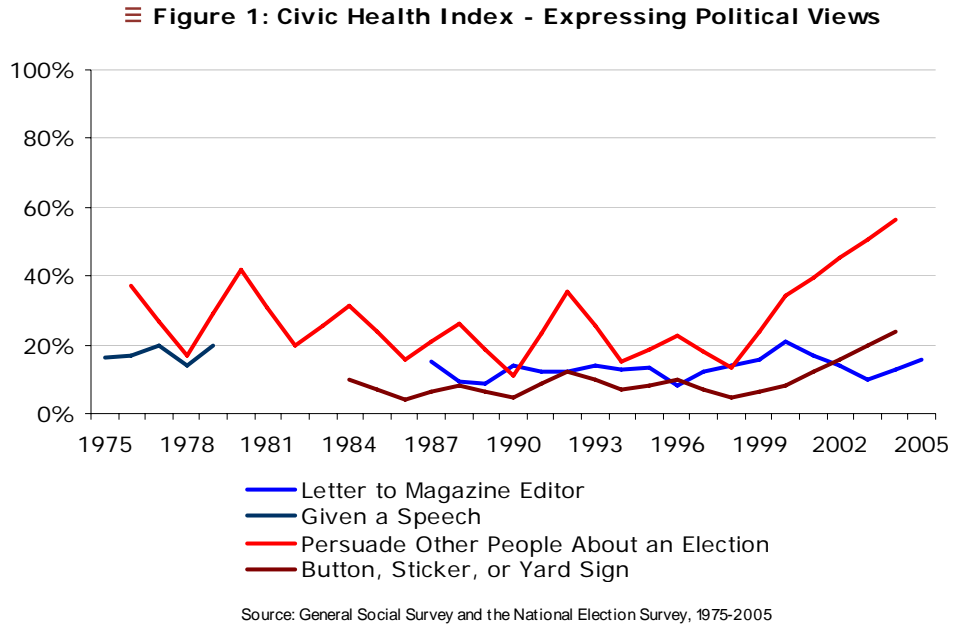
**Table 1: Measures of Expressing Political Views**

Contact a Public Official
Contact News Media
Contact a Talk Show
Sign an E-petition
Sign a Written Petition
Boycott
Boycott
Canvass
Protest
Try to Persuade Others in an Election

Analysis of subgroups of young people shows that African- and Asian-Americans are the most likely to express political views in the ways shown in Table 1. Young Latinos and immigrants are the least likely, except in respect to protesting.

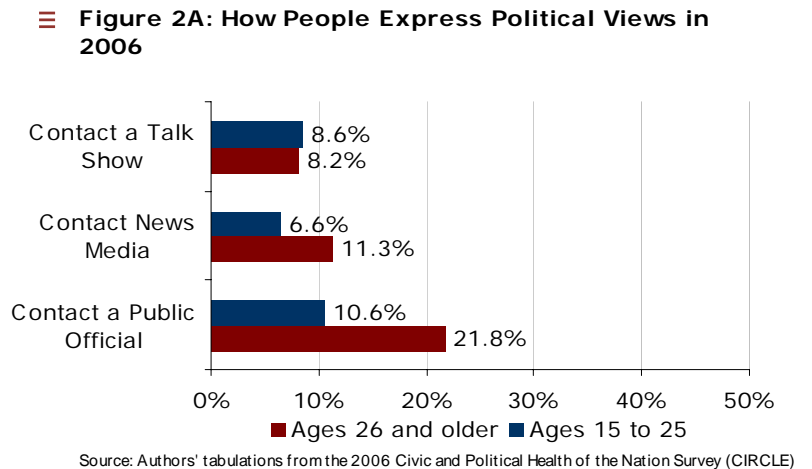
Since 2002, young people, ages 15 to 25, have become more likely to express themselves in four ways listed in Table 1. These measures are canvassing, contacting a talk show, and protesting.

To show trends over time, Figure 1 uses longitudinal data from the General Social Survey and the National Election Survey from 1975 to 2005. The figure shows several measures of political voice over time for young people, ages 18 to 25. Measures such as wearing a button or sticker, displaying a yard sign, and persuading other people about an election are on the rise. They are also cyclical: generally higher in presidential election years than at other times.



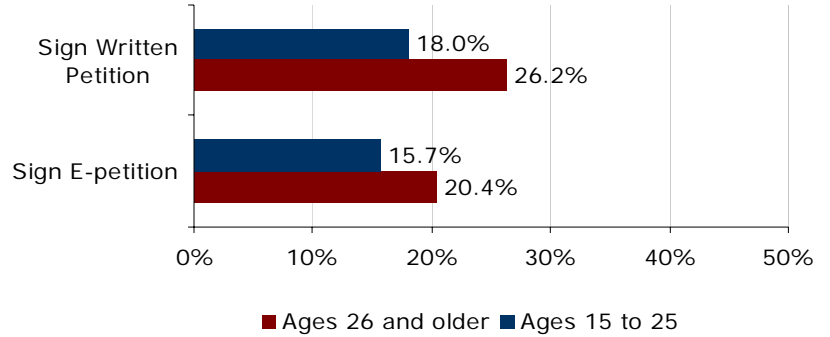
*Political Voice Measures from the 2006 Civic and Political Health of the Nation Survey*

Figure 2A shows that adults are twice as likely as young people to contact a public official and nearly 5 percentage points more likely to contact news media. However, young people are slightly more likely to contact a talk show.



Adults are more likely to sign petitions, both in writing and online, than young people are. See Figure 2B. Young Asians and the children of immigrants are the most likely to sign petitions. Conversely, young Latinos and young immigrants are the least likely to sign petitions.

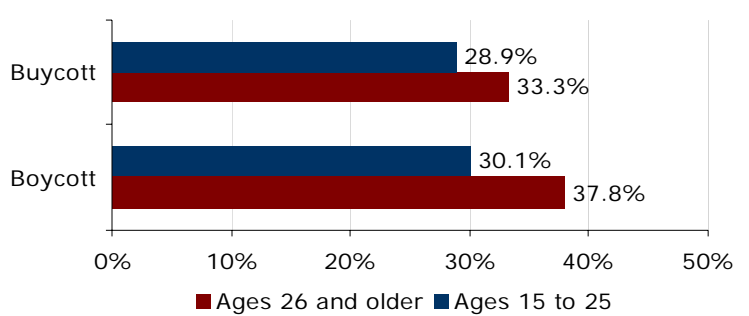
Figure 2B: How People Express Political Views in 2006



Source: Authors' tabulations from the 2006 Civic and Political Health of the Nation Survey (CIRCLE)

Both adults and young people boycott and boycott at high rates. Still, adults are more likely to perform both activities. See Figure 2C. Whites and Asian-Americans are the most likely to boycott or boycott compared to African-Americans and Latinos. Young immigrants (people who were born abroad to foreign-born parents) are less likely than others are to boycott or boycott.

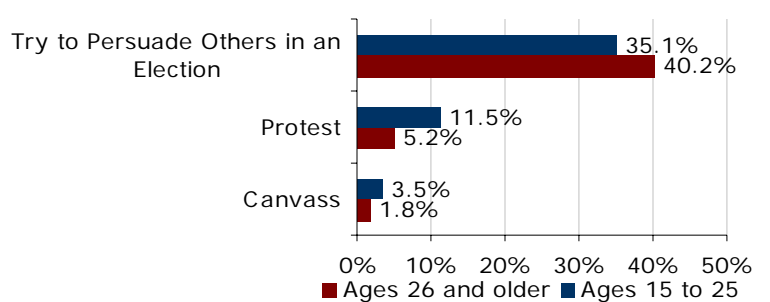
Figure 2C: How People Express Political Views in 2006



Source: Authors' tabulations from the 2006 Civic and Political Health of the Nation Survey (CIRCLE)

Young people are twice as likely to canvass and protest compared to their adult counterparts. See Figure 2D. Young men and women protest at similar rates, 10.9 and 12.0 percent, respectively. Young Latinos are the most likely to protest (25.3 percent), over three times more likely than their white counterparts.

Figure 2D: How People Express Political Views in 2006



Source: Authors' tabulations from the 2006 Civic and Political Health of the Nation Survey (CIRCLE)

At least two-thirds of young Latinos who reported protesting in the last 12 months were immigrants or the children of immigrants.

Young African-Americans are the most likely to canvass compared to other racial and ethnic categories. Young Asians and the children of immigrants are the most likely to try to persuade others in an election among racial and ethnic and nativity status categories.

## APPENDIX

Table A – Political Voice Measures for Young People, ages 15 to 25, by Subgroup

	GENDER		RACE AND ETHNICITY				NATIVITY STATUS		
	Men	Women	White	Black	Latino	Asian	Immigrants	Children of Immigrants	U.S.-born to U.S.- born
Protested	10.9%	12.0%	7.6%	12.9%	25.3%	11.9%	22.6%	18.2%	9.7%
Signed an E-mail Petition	13.9%	17.6%	16.1%	16.1%	13.0%	30.4%	9.2%	24.9%	16.1%
Signed a Paper Petition	17.2%	18.9%	19.6%	18.0%	14.6%	19.6%	10.6%	24.8%	18.9%
Boycotted	29.4%	30.7%	33.3%	27.4%	23.3%	33.9%	13.3%	33.4%	33.0%
Buycotted	28.0%	29.9%	31.9%	27.8%	22.6%	28.3%	18.2%	28.0%	31.4%
Canvassed	3.6%	3.3%	2.8%	7.1%	2.7%	5.5%	3.5%	6.2%	2.9%
Contacted a Public Official	10.7%	10.5%	11.1%	9.0%	8.9%	12.4%	7.8%	11.1%	11.0%
Contacted Print Media	6.3%	6.8%	5.9%	9.9%	5.2%	9.5%	6.4%	6.9%	6.5%
Contacted Broadcast Media	9.6%	7.6%	8.3%	13.0%	8.6%	5.7%	5.4%	12.4%	8.8%
Tried to Persuade Others in an Election	38.6%	31.5%	33.1%	42.3%	33.5%	51.3%	24.8%	46.2%	35.2%

Source: Authors' tabulations from the 2006 Civic and Political Health of the Nation Survey (CIRCLE).

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Research Associate and Research Director, respectively. We thank Peter Levine for comments on previous drafts of this fact sheet. Also, thanks to Michael Olander. All errors in fact or interpretation are our own.

The study was informed by the 2006 Civic and Political Health Survey (CPHS), which measured the civic engagement of young people across the nation. This fact sheet is based on a similar document by Michael Olander in 2003, but uses data collected from the 2006 CPHS to measure the young people's political expression on an updated list of 10 civic engagement measures. These measures are listed in Table 1. Michael Olander. "How Young People Express Their Political Views." July 2003. Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE). Available at [www.civicyouth.org](http://www.civicyouth.org).

Signing an E-petition and signing a written petition were not included in the 2003 version of this fact sheet.