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The Youth Vote in the 2008 Early Contests:

New Hampshire, Michigan, Nevada, South Carolina, and Florida

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According to CIRCLE's analysis, youth turnout rose dramatically in the 2008 Iowa caucuses and the New Hampshire and Florida primaries. In Michigan, South Carolina and Nevada, no clear comparisons can be made to past years, but estimates of 2008 youth turnout in Michigan, Nevada, and South Carolina are available in Table 1.

This fact sheet contains additional analysis of young voters in the New Hampshire, Michigan, Nevada, South Carolina, and Florida Republican and Democratic caucuses and primaries. For information on young voters in Iowa, see CIRCLE Fact Sheet "The Youth Vote in the 2008 Iowa Caucus." The analysis is based on the 2008 National Election Pool entrance and exit polls conducted by Edison Media Research and Mitofsky International.²

Youth Turnout Estimates

According to CIRCLE's analysis, youth turnout rose dramatically in Iowa, Florida, and New Hampshire. In Iowa, the youth turnout rate rose to 13 percent in 2008 from four percent in 2004 and three percent in 2000. Young voters expanded as a proportion of all caucus-goers, *and* the total number of Iowans who caucused grew, producing a three-fold increase in youth participation. Similarly, in New Hampshire, the youth turnout rate rose sharply to 43 percent in 2008 compared to 18 percent in 2004 and 28 percent in 2000. Young people increased their turnout more than the older voters. The youth turnout rate increased by 15 percentage points over 2000 while the turnout rate for those ages 30 and above increased by only six percentage points. In Florida, the youth voter turnout tripled compared to 2000 despite the fact that the Democratic primary was not fully contested.



Table 1- Presidential Primary Participation in 2008 18-to 29-Year-Old Citizens

Caucus/Primary	Youth Turnout Rate	Youth Turnout Rate in Comparable Elections	Turnout Rate of Age 30 and Above	Overall Turnout Rate	Number of Youth Who Caucused/Voted	Youth as a Share of all Caucus-goers/Voters
FL	13%	n/a	33%	29%	285,970	8%
SC	19%	n/a	34%	31%	118,565	12%
NV	5%	n/a	11%	10%	19,848	12%
MI	14%	n/a	21%	20%	213,609	15%
NH	43%	(28%) 2000; 18% (2004)	55%	53%	84,232	16%
IA	13%	3% (2000); 4% (2004)	17%	16%	65,230	18%

In Michigan, South Carolina and Nevada, no clear comparison can be made to past years, but in 2008 youth turnout was 19 percent in South Carolina, 14 percent in Michigan, and five percent in Nevada. (See Table 1.)

Youth Support Obama in the Democratic Contests; Young Republicans' Support Varies by State

Young democratic voters were Senator Barack Obama's strongest supporters. He drew at least 50 percent of the Democratic youth vote in Iowa, New Hampshire, Nevada, and South Carolina. In the Republican contests the youth vote split with Huckabee leading in South Carolina (35%) and Iowa (37%), Romney in Nevada (50%), and McCain in New Hampshire (31%) and Florida (30%). (See Table 2.)



Table 2 – Youth Vote Choice by Party

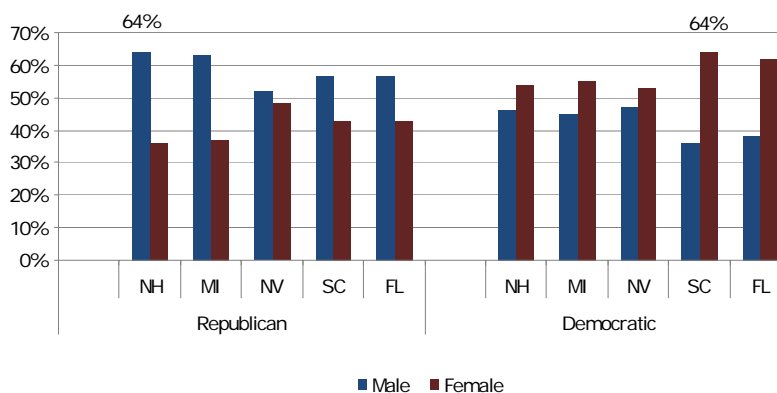
		Democratic Candidates			Republican Candidates			
		Clinton	Edwards	Obama	Huckabee	McCain	Paul	Romney
Florida	Ages 18-29	44%	11%	43%	18%	30%	5%	23%
South Carolina	Ages 18-29	23%	10%	67%	35%	28%	7%	12%
Michigan*	Ages 18-29	27%	11%	54%	19%	27%	19%	30%
Nevada	Ages 18-29	33%	7%	59%	7%	13%	19%	50%
New Hampshire	Ages 18-29	28%	13%	51%	13%	31%	18%	23%
Iowa	Ages 17-24	10%	14%	57%	37%	8%	20%	21%
	Ages 25-29	15%	12%	57%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

*The question on the Michigan Democratic primary exit poll read, "If these candidates had been on the ballot today, for whom would you have voted in the Democratic presidential primary?"

The Gender Gap

In all early voting states, young men participated in the Republican contests at higher rates than their female counterparts, while young women participated at higher rates than young men in the Democratic contests. In the New Hampshire Republican primary 64 percent of young voters were male. The opposite was true in the South

Figure 1: Gender Breakdown of 18- to 29-Year-Old Primary/Caucus Goers by State

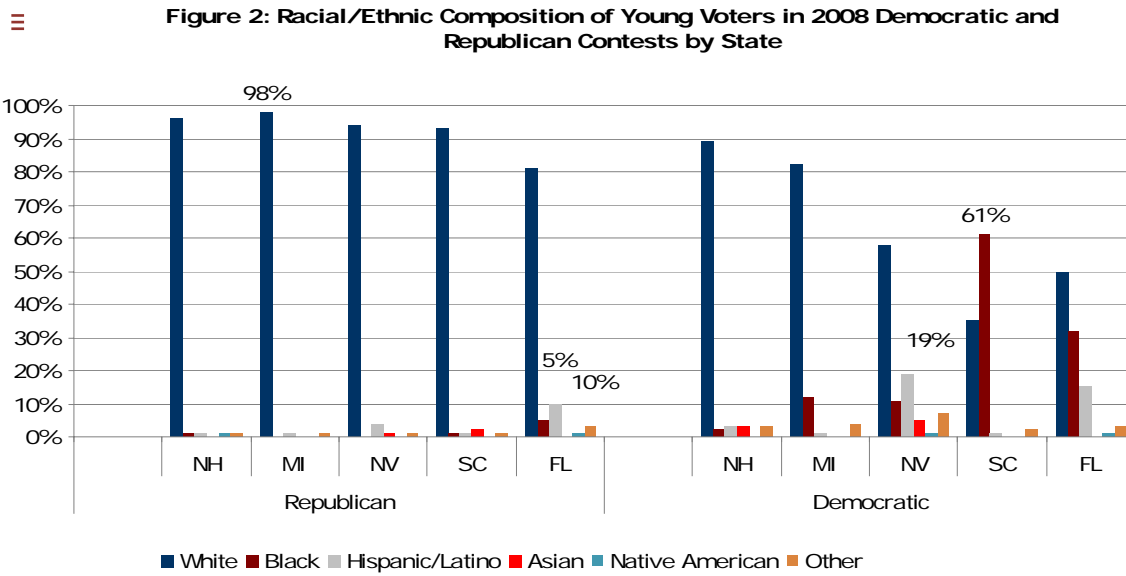


Source: 2008 National Election Pool, Exit/Entrance Polls, Edison/Mitofsky

Carolina Democratic primary where young women made up 64 percent of the youth vote.

Racial/Ethnic Composition of Young Voters Varies by State and Party

Young voters in the Democratic primaries tended to be more racially/ethnically diverse than young voters in the Republican contests. The South Carolina Democratic primary drew the highest proportion of African American youth voters: 61 percent of young voters identified themselves as “Black.” The Nevada Democratic caucus drew the highest proportion of Latino youth voters: 19 percent identified themselves as “Hispanic/Latino.” Of all early voting states, Florida had the most diverse youth voting bloc.

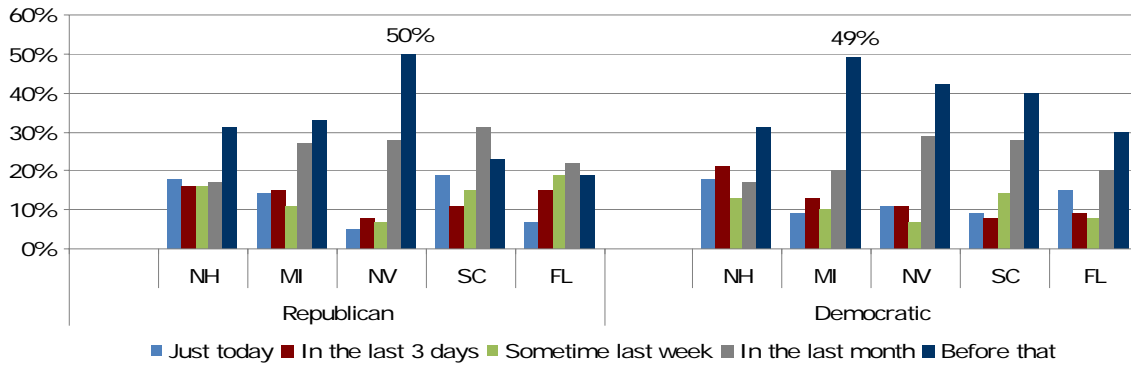


Source: 2008 National Election Pool, Exit/Entrance Polls, Edison/Mitofsky

Young Voters Make Early Decisions about 2008 Candidates

Many young voters decided who they were going to support as early as a month before the primaries, even with many states holding their contests at an earlier date than in past years. For example, in both the Nevada Republican caucus and the Michigan Democratic primary, roughly half of young voters decided whom they would support more than a month before the contests took place.

≡ **Figure 3: "When did you decide for whom to vote in the presidential primary/caucus?" Ages 18 to 29**

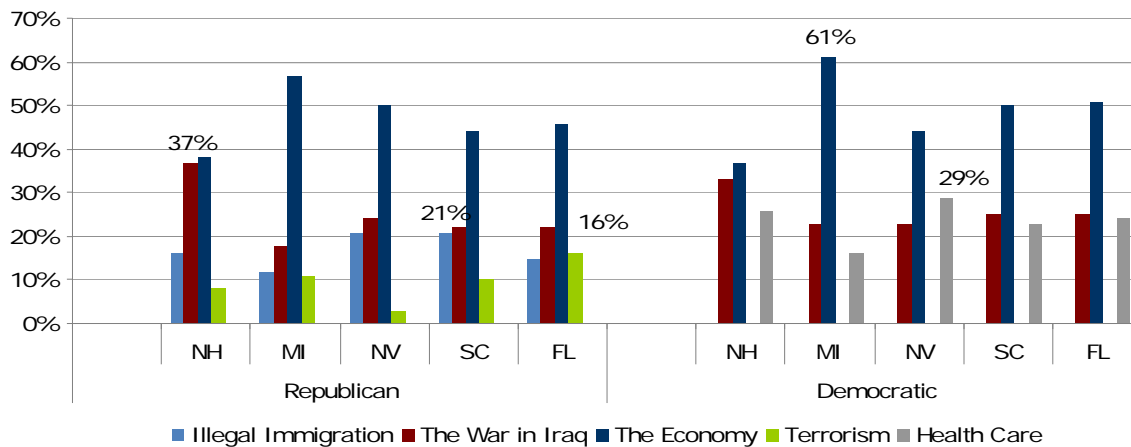


Source: 2008 National Election Pool, Exit/Entrance Polls, Edison/Mitofsky

Top Issue: The Economy

Much like older voters, young voters in both the Democratic and Republican primaries/caucuses, reported that the economy was the top issue facing the country. With the exception of New Hampshire, young voters consistently ranked the economy much higher than other issues such as the war in Iraq, illegal immigration, health care, or terrorism.

≡ **Figure 4: "Which ONE of these four issues is the most important facing the country" Ages 18 to 29**



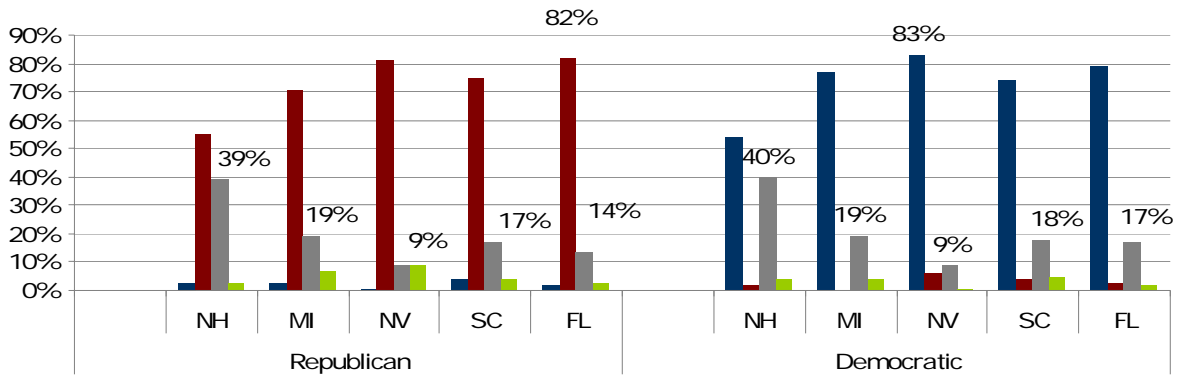
Source: 2008 National Election Pool, Exit/Entrance Polls, Edison Mitofsky

Young Independents Split Between the Democratic and Republican Contests

Figure 5 shows that young voters who identified as “Independents” were equally likely to participate in the Democratic and Republican contests. For example, in New Hampshire, about 40 percent of young voters who participated in the Republican primary self-identified as “Independent,” almost the same amount as in the New Hampshire Democratic primary.



Figure 5: "No matter how you voted today, do you usually think of yourself as a:", Ages 18 to 29



Source: 2008 National Election Pool, Exit/Entrance Polls, Edison/Mitofsky

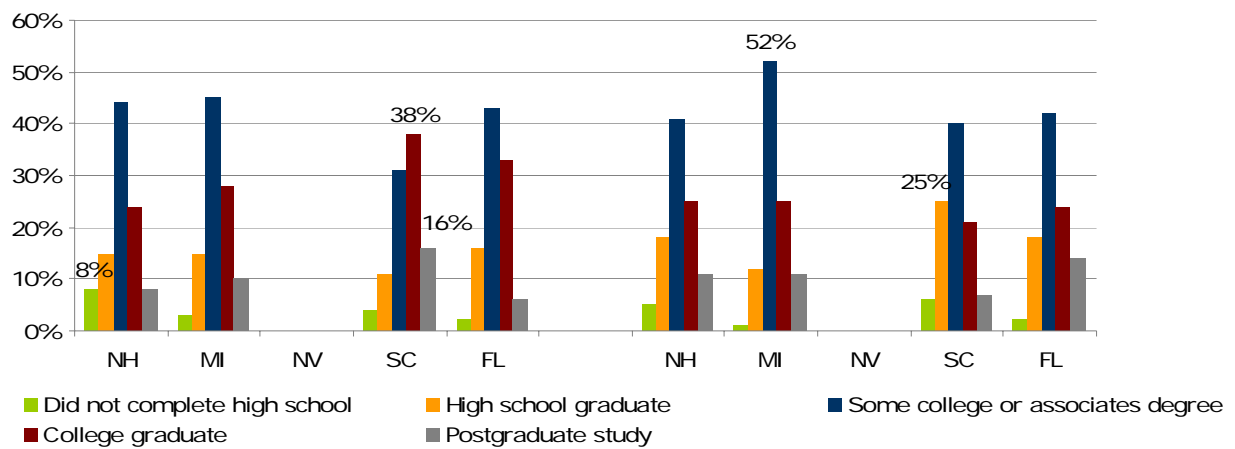
■ Democrat ■ Republican ■ Independent ■ Something Else

Young Voters Highly Educated

Young voters in the early contests tended to have high levels of education, compared to the youth population at large. For example, in all contests (both Republican and Democratic) well over 60 percent of voters had some college experience. (About 50 percent of young people nationally have at least some college experience.)

Young voters in the Michigan Democratic primaries and the South Carolina Republican primaries reported the highest levels of education. 88 percent of young voters in the Michigan Democratic primary and 85 percent of young voters in the South Carolina Republican primary reported they had at least some college experience. The South Carolina Democratic primaries drew the most young voters with no college experience: 31 percent of young voters in the South Carolina Democratic primary had no college experience.

☰ **Figure 6: "What was the last grade of school you completed?" Ages 18 to 29**



Source: 2008 National Election Pool, Exit/Entrance Polls, Ages 18 to 29

Notes

¹ Senior Research Associate and Research Associate, respectively. All errors in fact or interpretation are our own.

² Unless otherwise noted, all data presented in this fact sheet comes from the 2008 National Election Pool Survey conducted by Edison Media Research and Mitofsky International.