



CIRCLE

The Center for Information & Research
on Civic Learning & Engagement

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Young Voters Turn Out in Michigan Primary 200,000 Michigan Citizens Under the Age of Thirty Participate in Primary

Youth Voter Experts Available for Interviews
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Washington, DC - 14 percent of eligible Michigan citizens under the age of 30 participated in last night's Michigan primary, according to preliminary analysis by CIRCLE (The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement). Michigan's youth turnout rate was lower than in New Hampshire, but higher than in Iowa. Since the Democratic primary was not fully contested, participation flagged among all Democratic voters. The Republican primary was contested and had higher participation rates.



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

Caucus/Primary	Youth Turnout Rate	Turnout Rate of Age 30 and Over	Overall Turnout Rate	Number of Youth Who Voted	Youth as Share of All Caucus Voters
Michigan	14%	21%	20%	213,609	15%
New Hampshire	43%	55%	53%	84,232	16%
Iowa	13%	17%	16%	65,230	18%

Source: The share of primary voters is obtained from the 2008 IA, MI, and NH Democratic and Republican exit polls conducted by Edison/Mitofsky. The numbers of votes cast are obtained from the WashingtonPost.com (as of 8:12 am eastern time, 1/16/2008.) Estimated voter turnout is obtained by taking the estimated number of votes cast and dividing it by the estimated population of 18-to-29-year-old citizens and citizens over the age of 30 from the Current Population Survey (2007).

See p.3 for definitions.

The results from last night and from Iowa and New Hampshire punctuate the findings of national focus groups that CIRCLE conducted last fall. The research showed that college students are deeply concerned about issues, involved personally as volunteers, and ready to consider voting. But they want political leaders to be positive, to address real problems, and to call on all Americans to be constructively involved.

Comparisons to other caucuses and primaries must be made with caution, because turnout is affected by the date of the primaries and by the nature of the Democratic and Republican presidential campaigns, which are different in every state. In the case of Michigan, not all the Democratic candidates contested the primary, thereby attracting fewer voters of all ages.

Because there is no actual count of the number of votes cast by young people in the Michigan primaries, we can only estimate their turnout rate (the percentage of eligible young people who voted). Our turnout estimates is based on day-after vote tallies reported by the media. The 2008 voter turnout rate may rise as more votes are tallied. (The day-after vote tally does not include such votes as absentee ballots and provisional ballots).

As a result, our 2008 turnout rate likely underestimates the level of participation in the 2008 Michigan primaries. The following table provides estimates of youth participation in the Michigan primary by party.



**Table 2 – 2008 Michigan Presidential Primary Participation By Party
18-to-29-Year-Old Citizens**

Political Party	Number of Primary Participants	Share of Primary Participants
Democratic	100,776	17%
Republican	112,833	13%

Not all the Democratic candidates contested the Michigan primary, so overall turnout is low compared to the New Hampshire primary, where all candidates campaigned. Youth turnout increased in the Iowa caucuses where the youth turnout tripled compared to 2004, rising from four percent of eligible citizens in 2004 to 13 percent in 2008. In New Hampshire, the youth vote soared to 43 percent, up from 28 percent in 2000.



Table 3 – Youth Vote Choice by Party

		Democratic Candidates			Republican Candidates			
		Clinton	Uncommitted		Huckabee	McCain	Paul	Romney
Michigan	Ages 18-24	42%	48%		19%	26%	22%	27%
	Ages 25-29	44%	49%		19%	28%	16%	32%
New Hampshire	Ages 18-24	22%	9%	60%	15%	27%	19%	17%
	Ages 25-29	37%	18%	35%	11%	37%	15%	33%
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

Source: www.cnn.com

This increase in youth turnout in the early primary season continues a trend observed in other elections since 2000. In the 2006 congressional elections, the voter turnout rate among 18-to 29-year-olds increased by three percentage points compared to the previous congressional election of 2002. And in the 2004 presidential election, the national youth voter turnout rate rose 9 percentage points compared to 2000, reaching 49 percent. In 2004, under-30-year-olds were registered to vote at the highest rate in 30 years.

“Younger Americans are doing their part, registering to vote, paying more attention to issues and politics, and now turning out in Iowa, New Hampshire and Michigan,” said CIRCLE Director Peter Levine. “Now it is up to political leaders to reach out to younger Americans and run campaigns that address their issues and concerns.”

Definitions

Youth: For the purpose of the Michigan primary, we define “youth” as citizens between the ages of 18 and 29 on January 15, 2008.

Number of youth who voted: An estimate of how many youth participated.

Youth share primary participants: An estimate of the number of young people who participated in the primaries as a percentage of the number of *all people* who participated in the primaries.

Youth turnout rate: An estimate of the number of young people who participated in the primaries as a percentage of the total number of young people who were eligible to participate in either primary.

The youth turnout rate is the best indicator of how young Americans are engaging in the political process. The other statistics—the sheer number of youth participants and the youth share of the electorate—can change because of factors unrelated to youth engagement.

CIRCLE (The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement) promotes research on the civic and political engagement of Americans between the ages of 15 and 25. Since 2001, CIRCLE has conducted, collected, and funded research on the civic and political participation of young Americans. CIRCLE is based in the University of Maryland’s School of Public Policy and is funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts, Carnegie Corporation of New York and several other foundations.