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**Youth Turnout Down in New Jersey, About the Same in Virginia,
Compared to Past Gubernatorial Elections**
**Turnout of Voters Under Age 30 is 19% in New Jersey, 17% in Virginia, and
12% in New York City**

**Interviews with Experts Available; Contact David Roscow at
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Tisch College, Medford/Somerville, Mass. - Young voters played a major role in the 2008 presidential election, but less so in 2009. In the New Jersey governor's race, turnout decreased by seven points to 19% between 1997 and 2009. In Virginia, turnout decreased by just one point to 17% between 1997 and 2009. Less than one in five eligible young people voted in both states. A majority of young people preferred the Democratic candidate in New Jersey and the Republican candidate in Virginia.

To produce state-level youth voting estimates immediately following an election, CIRCLE relies on preliminary exit polls, which are subject to revision. We must use 1997 for comparison because no turnout data are available for more recent off-year elections in these two states. Thus we do not know the change since 2005, the most recent gubernatorial election year in Virginia and New Jersey. Comparisons to the presidential election year of 2008 are misleading because turnout is always much lower in odd-numbered years.

Table 1: Turnout in Gubernatorial Elections, ages 18-29

STATE	1997	2009
New Jersey	26%	19%
Virginia	18%	17%

As a proportion of all the people who voted, in 2009, under-30s represented 9% in New Jersey and 10% in Virginia. ("Turnout" is the proportion of all young citizens who voted, shown above.)

In Virginia, where Republican Robert F. McDonnell won the election by a large margin, young voters preferred McDonnell to Democrat R. Creigh Deeds by 54% to 44%. In New Jersey, young voters preferred Jon S. Corzine over Christopher J. Christie by 57% to 36%. In New York City, young voters preferred Michael R. Bloomberg to William C. Thompson Jr. by 49% to 48%. These results are according to exit polls conducted by Edison Research.

Data from the 2000, 2004, and 2008 presidential elections show that youth turnout in Virginia, New Jersey, and nationally had been steadily increasing in presidential years:

Table 2: Turnout in National Elections, ages 18-29

STATE (Ages 18-29)	2000	2004	2008
New Jersey	41.4%	51.2%	53.0%
Virginia	47.2%	43.1%	58.7%
National	40.3%	49.0%	51.1%

“Although 17 and 19 percent are low turnout numbers and far from satisfactory, they should be put in context,” said CIRCLE Director Peter Levine. “Turnout is always much lower in off-year gubernatorial elections than in presidential years. Also, it is a statistical mistake to generalize or make predictions based on a very small sample, such as two governors’ races. We do know, however, that gubernatorial campaigns and independent, nonpartisan groups put more resources into mobilizing youth in 2005 than they did in 2009. Other research shows that campaigning to young voters is effective at raising their turnout.”

As another way of estimating the turnout trends, CIRCLE analyzed the number of votes cast in 13 precincts in VA and 5 precincts in NJ that have relatively high concentrations of college students. These precincts were the focus of non-partisan get-out-the-vote efforts of the Student PIRGs’ New Voters Project in 2005. We compared the turnout rate of registered voters from the 2001 and 2005 Gubernatorial Election with Tuesday’s turnout of registered voters and found that the number of voters decreased by an average of seven percentage points (compared to 2001) in the precincts studied in VA (see Table 3) and increased by three percentage points (compared to 2001) in NJ (see Table 4). Again, it is important to note that the campaign and nonpartisan resources devoted to youth outreach were smaller in 2009 than in 2005. For instance, in New Jersey the PIRGs made 16,000 get-out-the-vote contacts in 2005 and 6,500 in 2009. The PIRGs did not have a get-out-the-vote effort in VA in 2009.

Table 3: Analysis of Selected Virginia Precincts: Percentage Point Change Compared to 2001 and 2005 Gubernatorial Elections

College or University	County	City or Town	Precinct Code	Percentage Point Change 2009 vs 2001	Percentage Point Change 2001 vs 2005	Percentage Point Change 2009 vs 2005
Virginia Tech	Montgomery	Blacksburg	601	-6.30	+2.9	-6.60
			102	-6.30	-.77	-5.60
			501	-18.20	-3.7	-14.60
Virginia Commonwealth	Richmond City	Richmond	211	-12.30	+2	-12.50
			206	-5.20	+3.7	-9.00
			204	2.30	+5.5	-3.20
			207	-1.10	+4.2	-5.20
			505	-28.30	+3.8	-32.10
			208	+1.00	+7.4	-6.30
University of Virginia	Charlottesville City	Charlottesville	302	+3.30	-2.9	-1.70
			401	-8.70	+1.2	-9.90
			402	+12.10	+2.0	+10.10
					-.38	
College of William & Mary	Williamsburg City	Williamsburg	1	-4.50	+3.6	-8.10
			Aggregate Percentage Point Change	-7.1	+1.6	-8.7

Source: CIRCLE tabulations and analysis of raw precinct data, November 2001, 2005 & 2009.

Table 4: Analysis of Selected New Jersey Precincts: Percentage Point Change Compared to 2001 and 2005 Gubernatorial Elections

College	County	City	Ward	Percentage Point Change 2009 vs 2001	Percentage Point Change 2001 vs 2005	Percentage Point Change 2009 vs 2005
Rutgers University	Middlesex	New Brunswick				
			1-6	+6.95	+16.3	-9.31
			6-1	+6.63	+5.2	+1.42

			6-2	-2.36	-.15	-2.17
			6-3	+7.17	+8.5	-1.36
			6-6	-29.03	-20.4	-8.68
			Aggregate Percentage Point Change	2.62	+6.64	-4.02

Source: CIRCLE tabulations and analysis of raw precinct data, November 2001, 2005 & 2009

More information on youth voters and civic engagement can be found online at www.civicyouth.org.

* The estimated number of young people who voted in the 1997 VA and NJ Governor's races were calculated using: (1) the number of ballots cast in each race according to the media, (2) the youth share of those who voted, as reported by CNN/Time Exit Poll, and (3) the estimated number of 18-29 year old citizens taken from the 1997 Census Current Population Survey, March Demographic File.

***CIRCLE (The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement)** conducts and promotes research on the civic and political engagement of Americans between the ages of 15 and 25. A part of the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University, CIRCLE has received funding from The Pew Charitable Trusts, Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Ford Foundation, among others.*

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