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The Center for Information & Research
on Civic Learning & Engagement

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Young Voter Turnout Quadrupled in Iowa Caucuses

Emergence of Young Voters Highlights Possible Key Role in 2004 Presidential Election

Washington, DC - Approximately 21,000 people under the age of 30 participated in Monday's Iowa Democratic Caucus. According to entrance polls taken by Edison/Mitofsky for National Election Pool, these under-30s represented 17 percent of the 122,000 Caucus participants.

This is about a *fourfold increase in youth participation since 2000.*

In the 2000 Iowa Democratic Caucuses, under-30s represented just 9 percent of Democratic Caucus participants, according to entrance polls, and total turnout was only half of the 2004 level. The increase in youth turnout was a major factor in the overall turnout increase between 2000 and 2004.

"The results from Iowa suggest a significantly higher level of political interest and participation among young people than in recent elections," said William A. Galston, director of CIRCLE (The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement), "If this trend continues, this largely untapped pool of voters -- nearly 40 million in the 18-29 age range -- will play a significant role throughout the rest of this election year."

Young voters in Iowa were much more active than those in the next older generation. Young participants in the Caucuses outnumbered those in the 30-44 age range, who represent 31 percent of the Iowa citizen population but just 15 percent of Caucus participants. Citizens between the ages of 17-29 represent 20 percent of Iowa's citizens but fully 17 percent of Caucus participants.

According to the entrance polls, young voters (ages 17-29) were somewhat more likely to support Howard Dean (25 percent versus 21 percent overall) and Dennis Kucinich (7 percent versus 4 percent). By contrast, young Caucus participants were somewhat less likely to support John Edwards (20 percent versus 26 percent) and Richard Gephardt (7 percent versus 11 percent). Thirty-five percent of young Caucus attendees favored John Kerry, the same as Kerry's overall level of support.

(more)

Nationally, Young Voters Are Up for Grabs

According to a recent poll conducted by the Center for Democracy and Citizenship at the Council for Excellence in Government and CIRCLE, young people are divided roughly equally among Democrats, Republicans, and Independents.

However, Democrats currently lead among college students, and Republicans lead among those of high school age. Republicans and Democrats split the population of non-college 18-25-year olds evenly.

	all 15-25s	all 15-17s	all 18-25s	18-25s with no college experience	18-25s currently in college	18-25s with some college
Democrat or lean Democrat	32	16	38	29	50	48
Republican or lean Republican	28	20	31	31	27	31
Independent	25	26	24	29	20	19
don't know	15	39	7	11	3	3

This survey of 1,000 people between the ages of 15 and 25 was conducted November 17-24, 2003, and has a margin of error of +/- 3.1 percent. CIRCLE, The Pew Charitable Trusts, Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Gill Foundation, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, and the W.T. Grant Foundation supported it.

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Funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts and Carnegie Corporation of New York, and housed at the University of Maryland's School of Public Affairs, **CIRCLE** (www.civicyouth.org) is a premier source of impartial, nonpartisan, and comprehensive data, research, and analysis on the civic engagement of young people.