



CIRCLE

The Center for Information & Research
on Civic Learning & Engagement

For Immediate Release
January 30, 2008

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Florida Youth Voter Turnout Triples 286,000 Florida Citizens Under the Age of Thirty Participate in Primary

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Washington, DC - 13 percent of eligible Florida citizens under the age of 30 participated in last night's Florida primary, according to preliminary estimates by CIRCLE (The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement). More than 150,000 young people participated in the Florida Democratic primary, despite the fact that the Democratic primary was not fully contested (see Table 2.)



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

Florida Primary	Youth Turnout Rate	Turnout Rate of Age 30 and Over	Overall Turnout Rate	Number of Youth Who Voted	Youth as Share of All Voters
2008	13%	33%	29%	285,970	8%
2000	4%	14%	12%	80,610	6%

Source: The share of primary voters is obtained from the 2008 and 2000 FL Republican and Democratic exit polls conducted by Edison/Mitofsky. The numbers of votes cast are obtained from the CNN.com (as of 7:55 am eastern time, 1/30/2008.) 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 in Florida 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 Florida, the Democratic primary was not formally contested, and that fact may have lowered turnout.

Because there is no actual count of the number of votes cast by young people in the Florida primaries, we can only estimate their level of participation. Our turnout estimates are based on day-after vote tallies reported by the media, the share of voters who are young calculated by the National Election Pool exit/entrance polls, and an estimate of the eligible voting population obtained from the Census Current Population Survey (CPS). 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 Florida primaries. The following table provides estimates of youth participation in the Florida primary by party.



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

Political Party	Number of Primary Participants	Share of Primary Participants
Democratic	151,599	9%
Republican	134,412	7%

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. In the Democratic contest, with the exception of Florida, Obama has won the largest share of the youth vote (ages 18-29). In the Republican contest, youth support has varied by state. (See Table 3.)



**Table 3 – 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%
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

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 Florida,” 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.”

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Definitions

Youth: For the purpose of the Florida primary, we define "youth" as citizens between the ages of 18 and 29 on January 29, 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.