



CIRCLE

The Center for Information & Research
on Civic Learning & Engagement

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New Hampshire Youth Turnout Rises Sharply 84,000 of New Hampshire Citizens Under the Age of Thirty Participate in Primary

Youth Voter Experts Available for Interviews
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Washington, DC - 43 percent of eligible New Hampshire citizens under the age of 30 participated in last night's New Hampshire primary, according to preliminary analysis by CIRCLE (The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement). 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 age group. 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.



**Table 1 – New Hampshire Presidential Primary Participation
18-to-29-Year-Old Citizens**

Primary Year	Youth Turnout Rate	Turnout Rate of Age 30 and Over	Overall Turnout Rate	Number of Youth Who Voted	Youth as Share of All Primary Voters
2008	43%	55%	53%	84,232	16%
2004	18%	25%	24%	30,770	14%
2000	28%	49%	45%	43,924	11%

Source: The share of primary voters is obtained from the 2008 NH Democratic and Republican exit polls and the 2004 NH Democratic exit poll conducted by Edison/Mitofsky and the 2000 NH Democratic and Republican exit poll conducted by Voter News Services. The numbers of votes cast are obtained from the Federal Election Commission (2000 and 2004) and WashingtonPost.com (as of 9:24 am eastern time, 1/9/2008.) 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(2008, 2004, and 2000).

See p.3 for definitions.

The results from last night and last week in Iowa 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 past years 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 cycle. For example, the Republican primary in 2004 was not contested and drew few voters.

Because there is no actual count of the number of votes cast by young people in the New Hampshire primaries, we can only estimate their turnout rate (the percentage of eligible young people who voted). Our turnout estimates are based on an "official vote count" released by the Federal Election Commission (FEC) for past elections (2004 & 2000) and a "day-after vote tally" reported by the media for 2008. 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).

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



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

Political Party	Primary Year	Number of Primary Participants	Share of Primary Participants
	2008	51,218	18%
Democratic	2004	30,770	14%
	2000	20,103	13%
	2008	33,014	14%
Republican	2004	N/A	N/A
	2000	23,821	10%

Youth turnout also 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.



**Table 3 – Youth Vote Choice
by Party**

		Democratic Candidates			Republican Candidates			
		Clinton	Edwards	Obama	Huckabee	McCain	Paul	Romney
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 and New Hampshire,” 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 New Hampshire primary, we define “youth” as citizens between the ages of 18 and 29 on January 8, 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.