



**CIRCLE**

**The Center for Information & Research  
on Civic Learning & Engagement**

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- Wrap-Up of 2008 Primary Youth Vote -

**Record Youth Voter Turnout for '08 Presidential Primaries  
& Caucuses  
Turnout Rate Almost Doubles with More Than 6.5 Million  
Young Voters**

**Obama Clear Choice Among Young Democrats,  
Young Republicans Vary By State**

**Youth Voter Experts Available for Interviews  
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Washington, DC - A record 6.5 million citizens under the age of 30 participated in the 2008 presidential primaries and caucuses, according to data compiled by CIRCLE (The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement). This marks a dramatic increase in the youth voter turnout over the last comparable election in 2000, and the first time the youth vote has risen in three consecutive election cycles since 1971 when the voting age was lowered to 18.

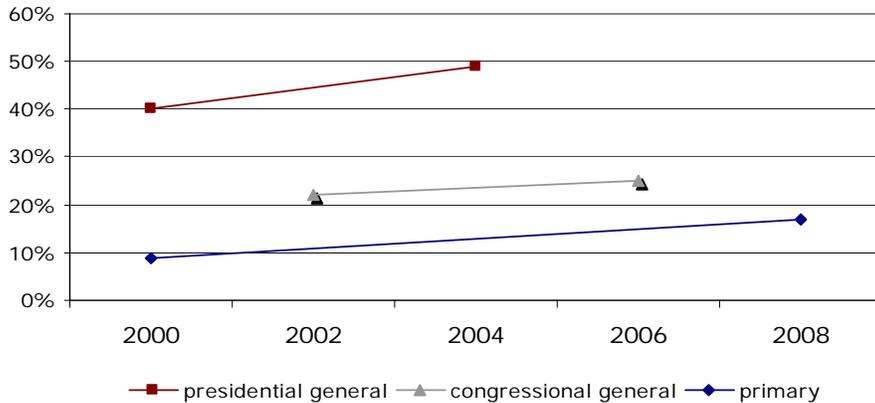
Overall the national youth voter turnout rate<sup>1</sup> almost doubled, rising from nine percent in 2000 to 17 percent in 2008. Of the seventeen states in which exit polls were also conducted in 2000, sixteen saw increases in youth voter turnout with some states seeing triple or quadruple increases. The complete fact sheet including a state-by-state and candidate breakdown of the 2008

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<sup>1</sup> This turnout rate was calculated for states that had both a Republican and Democratic exit poll in 2000 and 2008 with the exception of Rhode Island where there was only a Democratic exit poll in 2000 and 2008. The states used to calculate the youth turnout rates for 2000 and 2008 were NH, MA, GA, MO, TX, TN, IA, MS, OH, OK, RI, FL, CA, CT, LA, MD, and NY.

primary youth vote can be found at [www.civicyouth.org](http://www.civicyouth.org).

**Graph 1: National Youth Voter Turnout, 2000-2008**



## Page 2/ Record Youth Voter Turnout for 2008

"This primary season the Millennials have gone to the polls in record numbers, showing they are an influential voting bloc in American politics. They realize what's at stake and the impact this election will have on their future and the future of our country," said CIRCLE Director, Peter Levine. "Since 2000, young people have been volunteering at high rates and are becoming more interested in news and public affairs. With the large turnout this election cycle, they now understand the importance and power of voting in making a difference."

Democratic presidential nominee Barack Obama was the clear choice among young Democrats, winning the support of 60 percent of young voters and a majority in 32 of the 40 states. The Republican preferences were not as clear-cut with GOP presidential nominee John McCain winning the support of 34 percent of young Republicans, while Gov. Mike Huckabee garnered 31 percent and Gov. Mitt Romney 25 percent.

The massive turnout of young people in these primaries punctuates 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.

The increase in youth turnout 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 in 2002. And in the 2004 presidential election, the national youth voter turnout rate rose 9 percentage points compared to 2000, reaching 49 percent.

"All key indicators and trends point to a predicted record turnout of young people voting this coming November," Levine continued. "Now it's up to the candidates to run campaigns that address the real issues and concerns that young Americans care about rather than the negative mudslinging tactics that have turned off young voters in the past."

Any comparisons of youth voter turnout among states should be made with caution since each state has different rules governing

who can participate in their primaries. Furthermore, we cannot compare all state youth turnout levels in 2008 to youth turnout to 2004 or 2000 since many states did not have exit polls conducted for those years.

*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. The Pew Charitable Trusts, Carnegie Corporation of New York and several other foundations provide funding for CIRCLE. Currently based at the University of Maryland's School of Public Policy, CIRCLE will be moving on July 1, 2008, to the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University.*