



CIRCLE

The Center for Information & Research
on Civic Learning & Engagement



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Young Voter Turnout Surging & Engaging Diverse Constituencies

***New Report Looks at History and Background on the Rising Youth Turnout &
Underlying Demographic Trends***

College Park, MD – Young adults today are not only voting in larger numbers, but are more diverse than ever before, according to a new report released today by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) and Rock the Vote.

After a steady decline in youth electoral participation since 1972, the 2004 and 2006 election cycles saw a dramatic rebound in voters between the ages of 18 and 29, which has continued in the primaries and caucuses of 2008. While white youth still represent the single largest group of young voters, there has been a significant increase in young voters that are African American and Hispanic. Together, Hispanic and African Americans represent almost 30 percent of young voters in recent elections, up from 13 percent in 1992.

The report, *Young Voter Registration and Turnout Trends*, takes an in-depth look at historical trends in youth voter turnout, the demographics of young voters, and the politics of the youth vote. The report offers research and data on young voters broken down by state, gender, ethnic group, religious affiliation and other key demographics for the 2000, 2002, 2004 and 2006 elections. The complete report can be found at www.civicyouth.org or www.rockthevote.com/research.

“In the last two elections, the racial and ethnic composition of young voters has changed dramatically,” said CIRCLE Director Peter Levine. “This is a very encouraging sign because not only is the youth vote much more ethnically and racially diverse than it was 30 years ago, but also in comparison to adult voters.”

The rising trend in the number of young voters of all ethnic backgrounds showing up at the polls can be attributed to an advancement in communications and internet technology along with reinvigorated get-out-the-vote and voter-registration campaigns targeting young people. These voter outreach efforts have been promoted by political campaigns and non-partisan organizations like Rock the Vote, HeadCount, the New Voters Project and Smackdown Your Vote.

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“Rock the Vote’s efforts to engage young people have paid off and we will continue to build their political power in 2008,” said Heather Smith, Executive Director, Rock the Vote. “For politicians it means the days when the youth vote could be ignored are long gone. Engaging young voters and talking to them about the issues they care about such as jobs and the economy and the war in Iraq is imperative for candidates to win this election in November.”

Facts about youth electoral participation:

- Young voter turnout rose in the last two election cycles;
- In the 2004 presidential election, voter turnout increased for all groups of young people;
- Young voters are more ethnically and racially diverse today than 30 years ago, and are more diverse than their adult counterparts;
- Economy/Jobs and the Iraq War are the top two issues for young voters; and
- An estimated 44 million 18-29 year olds will be eligible to vote in 2008, constituting 21 percent of the eligible voting population.

With the 2008 Presidential Election in full swing, CIRCLE and Rock the Vote have already documented an increase in youth voter turnout in many of the primary and caucus elections to date.

Visit www.civicyouth.org or www.rockthevote.com for more information on youth voter turnout rates in the 2008 presidential primary elections and caucuses or to find out more about youth engagement this year.

About CIRCLE and Rock the Vote

CIRCLE 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. For more information please visit www.civicyouth.org.

Rock the Vote’s mission is to engage and build the political power of young people in order to achieve progressive change in our country. Rock the Vote uses music, popular culture and new technologies to engage and incite young people to register and vote in every election. It also gives young people the tools to identify, learn about, and take action on the issues that affect their lives, and leverage their power in the political process. www.rockthevote.com.

Our 2008 efforts are already in full swing, including our goal of registering 2 million 18-29 year olds to vote. At this time in 2004, 13,000 individuals had downloaded voter registration forms from our website; already in 2008, more than 640,000 individuals have downloaded forms from the Rock the Vote web site.