

CENSUS DATA CONFIRMS SHARP RISE IN YOUTH VOTER TURNOUT IN 2004

BY JARED SAGOFF

Contrary to much of the media reportage directly following the 2004 presidential election, youth voter turnout surged in 2004 across most demographics, according to new research from CIRCLE.

A recently published CIRCLE Fact Sheet, "The Youth Vote 2004," shows turnout among America's youngest voters, those age 18-24, increased from 36 percent in 2000 to 47 percent in 2004, marking the largest increase in turnout among any age group.¹ This figure marks the widest turnout among young voters since 1992, when turnout temporarily spiked in a highly contested, three-party election.

Overall, 64 percent of voters went to the polls in 2004, an increase of four points over the 2000 election. In the November election, 125.7 million votes were cast, of which approximately 11.6 million were cast by young voters age 18-24. That number represents an increase of more than 3 million votes from the 2000 election.

PARTICIPATION OF YOUNG AFRICAN AMERICANS ESPECIALLY STRONG IN 2004

All ethnic and racial groups showed increased turnout over 2000 as well. African-Americans posted especially large voting increases, as nearly half of blacks age 18-24 voted in last November's election, up from fewer than 40 percent in 2000. Whites showed similarly large gains, while Asians, Latinos, and Native Americans each achieved smaller, but still significant, improvements.

YOUNG PEOPLE WITH MORE EDUCATION MORE LIKELY TO VOTE

While young people with at least some college education have consistently turned out approximately twice as often as their less-educated counterparts since 1972, both groups still increased their turnout rates significantly over the last election cycle. However, the gap between the more- and less-educated continued to widen, as close to 60 percent of college-educated 18- to 24-year-olds cast a ballot last November, while only 35 percent of non-college-educated young people did so.

GENDER GAP WIDENED IN 2004 FOR YOUNG VOTERS

With 50 percent of 18-24 year old women and 44 percent of young men voting last year, the so-called gender gap widened to nearly six percentage points among this age group. That's the largest margin since 18-year-olds began voting in 1972, when there was virtually no difference between the turnout rates of young women and men, and nearly two percentage points wider than in 2000. For the 18-29 age group, the gender gap has widened to almost 7 percentage points. The turnout rates for both 18-24 year old men and women rose sharply between 2000 and 2004, by 12 points for women and 10 points for men.

Single young people, particularly women, were more likely to vote than married young people. The turnout among single women age 18-24 led the way and increased 12 percentage points, or about a third, since 2000. Single young men jumped by over 10 points. But the turnout rates for young married

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TABLE 1: VOTER TURNOUT AMONG CITIZENS NOVEMBER 2000 AND 2004

AGE GROUP	2000	2004	PERCENTAGE POINT INCREASE
18-24	36%	47%	+11% points
25-34	51%	56%	+5% points
35-44	60%	64%	+4% points
45-54	66%	69%	+3% points
55-64	70%	73%	+3% points
65-74	72%	73%	+1% point
75+	67%	69%	+2% points
All Ages	60%	64%	+4% points

¹ All voter turnout estimates presented in this article are calculated for U.S. citizens only, and according to the "Census Citizen Method" described in CIRCLE Working Paper 35.

Our Grants column provides valuable information on the CIRCLE grant application process. An up-to-the-minute list of funded proposals on youth civic engagement, their authors, and supported institutions is also included.

CIRCLE ANNOUNCES YOUTH-LED RESEARCH GRANTS

CIRCLE is happy to announce the winners of our youth-led community research grant competition sponsored by the Cricket Island Foundation. We received nearly 300 project proposals from teams doing amazing work around the country. While we wish we could fund many more projects, we are proud to support the youth-led teams below:

Austin Voices for Education & Youth, Austin, TX

What changes do youth in Austin want for their high schools and how can they make their priorities heard during the reform process?

Cabrini Connections, Chicago, IL

What do residents and former residents of Cabrini Green think about the demolition and gentrification of the Greens?

Community IMPACT! Nashville, TN

What supports actually exist and what supports are needed to help students in our low-income community get to college?

Covenant House, New Orleans, LA

What are the experiences of homeless youth with police in New Orleans?

East Point Youth Action Team, Fulton County, GA

What disparities and inequalities exist between schools in the Northern and Southern regions of Fulton County, GA?

Summer Enrichment Program, Greencastle, IN

What is the extent of hunger among children in our community during summer?

Teen Leadership Inst. at the Penn Center, St. Helena Island, SC

How many African Americans on the island have lost land in recent years and what are the stories behind their landloss?

TINCAN, Spokane, WA

Why have some teens chosen to have babies and how did their lives change once they did?

Youth Dreamers, Baltimore, MD

How does the community perceive youth in Baltimore and why might they oppose a youth center in their community?

Youth Resiliency Project of PROP, Portland, Maine

Does being poor, an immigrant, and/or young relate to job opportunities, and what skills are needed to get good jobs in Portland?

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women only grew by six points and for young married men by four points. And, for the first time since 1992, single men turned out more than married women. Among 18-24 year olds:

- 51% of single young women voted in 2004, up from 39% in 2000
- 45% of single young men voted in 2004, up from 34% in 2000
- 44% of married young women voted in 2004, up from 38% in 2000
- 38% of married young men voted in 2004, up from 34% in 2000

"The huge growth in the number of young voters going to the polls was a hallmark of the 2004 elections," said CIRCLE Director William A. Galston. "But taking a closer look, there are very telling and

wide gaps within the overall positive trend. While the conventional wisdom used to be that married young people were more likely to vote than singles, we see that the opposite is now true, and the divide is significant."

In calculating their turnout figures, CIRCLE researchers switched from their previous method of excluding non-responders on the voting question of the survey from the final tallies and instead decided to count them as non-voters. This aligns CIRCLE's method with the turnout calculations performed by the Census Bureau among the U.S. citizen population.

For more information on youth voting, please visit http://www.civicyouth.org/research/areas/pol_partic.htm 