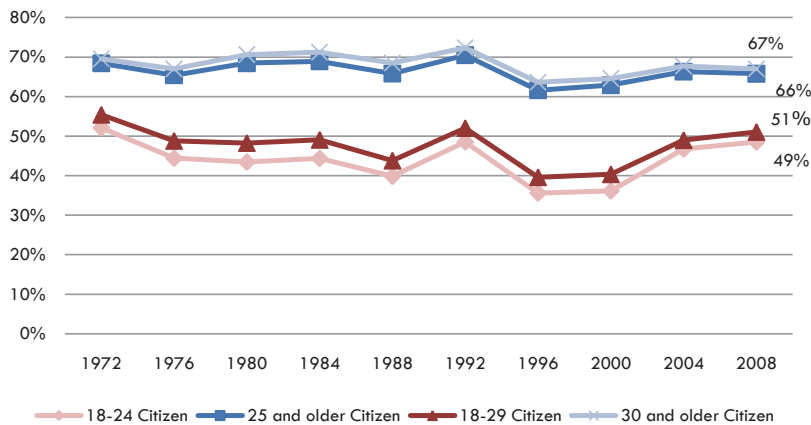


THE YOUTH VOTE 2008

Nearly two million more young Americans under the age of 30 voted in the 2008 presidential elections as compared to the 2004 elections, according to new Census data analyzed and released by CIRCLE. The increase is a continuation of the trend observed in the 2004 and 2006 elections. Youth turnout was 11 percentage points higher than in 1996, which was the low point after decades of decline. While young people increased their turnout significantly in 2008, older adults voted at lower rates than in 2004 and only slightly above their 2000 level.

Graph 1: Voter Turnout by Age, 1972-2008



PARTICIPATION OF YOUNG AFRICAN AMERICANS ESPECIALLY STRONG IN 2008

Although overall youth turnout was high in the 2008 presidential election, there were important differences in turnout rates. Young African Americans posted the highest turnout rate ever observed for any racial or ethnic group of young Americans since 1972. Fifty-eight percent of African-American youth voted on November 4th, the highest turnout rate of any youth racial/ethnic group since 1972. Moreover, among young people, African-American youth had the highest turnout: nearly six in ten young African Americans voted in the 2008 election. Turnout among this group rapidly increased between the 2000 and 2008 elections, rising by nearly 20 percentage points. This increase represents the greatest increase in turnout of any racial or ethnic minority group since 1972.

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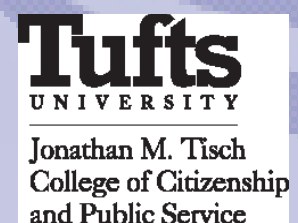
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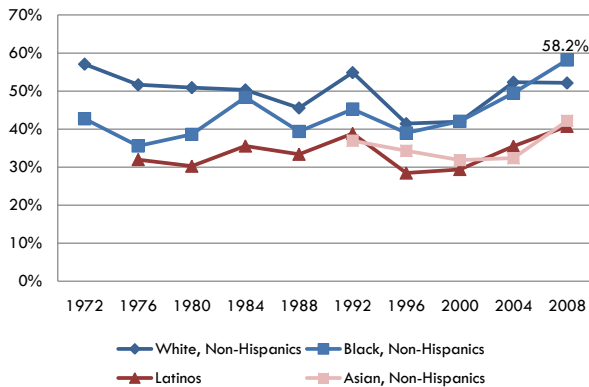


THE RESEARCH ROUNDUP COLUMN HIGHLIGHTS RECENT RESEARCH FINDINGS COMMISSIONED OR GENERATED BY CIRCLE. ALSO INCLUDED IS AN UPDATE ON NEW CIRCLE PRODUCTS SUCH AS FACT SHEETS, RESEARCH ARTICLES, RESEARCH ABSTRACTS, BIBLIOGRAPHIES, AND DATASETS.

WHILE AFRICAN AMERICANS EXPERIENCED NOTEWORTHY INCREASES IN TURNOUT OVER THE PAST DECADE, OTHER RACIAL AND ETHNIC GROUPS ALSO MADE SIGNIFICANT STRIDES.

While African Americans experienced noteworthy increases in turnout over the past decade, other racial and ethnic groups also made significant strides. Turnout among white youth was 52% and unlike most other racial/ethnic groups, whites showed no gain between the 2004 and 2008 elections. Asian-American youth increased their turnout by ten percentage points, and turnout among Latino youth increased five percentage points.

Graph 2: 18-to-29 Year-Old Citizen Turnout, by Race 1972-2008



YOUNG PEOPLE WITH MORE EDUCATION ARE MORE LIKELY TO VOTE

The gap in turnout by educational attainment remained large; voter turnout of young people without college experience was 36%, compared to a 62% rate among young people with college experience. (About half of the young adult population has some college experience.) “We have now seen three consecutive presidential elections with substantial increases in youth turnout,” said CIRCLE Director Peter Levine. “Compared to the 1980’s and 1990’s, we appear to have entered a new era of stronger youth engagement—also shown by higher rates of volunteering and community service. But there are persistent

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gaps in engagement, with less advantaged youth still mostly left out. We must find ways to engage and expand civic opportunities for this cohort of young people.”

Educational attainment has long been understood to be a strong predictive factor of one’s likelihood of voting. More-educated individuals—those who have had at least some college education—have consistently been almost twice as likely to vote as those who have received no more than a high school diploma. Between the 2000 and 2008 presidential elections, turnout among college-educated young people increased one point more than it did among lesser-educated youth. Despite the fact that college attendance has grown since 1972, the turnout gap between these two groups has remained relatively constant.

“Compared to the 1980’s and 1990’s, we appear to have entered a new era of stronger youth engagement—also shown by higher rates of volunteering and community service. But there are persistent gaps in engagement, with less advantaged youth still mostly left out. We must find ways to engage and expand civic opportunities for this cohort of young people.”

YOUNG WOMEN HAVE BECOME MORE LIKELY TO VOTE THAN YOUNG MEN

Although in the 1972 general election men and women were equally likely to go to the polls, over the past thirty years the gap between male and female turnout in presidential elections has widened considerably. By 1992, 54 percent of women ages 18-29 voted while only 50 percent of men did so. In 2008, this difference continued to widen to nearly eight percentage points, although both genders posted significant gains in turnout over the 2000 election. Young women also have substantially higher levels of educational attainment today.

STATE-BY-STATE VOTER TURNOUT FOR 2008

In the 2008 election the youth voter turnout was highest in Minnesota (68%), Iowa (63%), New Hampshire (62%) and Oregon (59%). It was lowest in Hawaii (31%), Arkansas (35%), Utah (37%), Texas (39%), and South Dakota (44%).

For the most part, in each state, voter turnout among

those age 30 and above was at least 10 percentage points higher than turnout among 18-to-29 year-olds. Iowa, Minnesota, and West Virginia had the smallest gaps between youth and adult turnout rates (under 10 percentage points). The fact sheet on youth voter turnout and trends in 2008 and a 50-state breakdown can be found at <http://www.civicyouth.org/?p=339>. ★

NEW CIRCLE STUDY EXAMINES IMPACT OF STATE ELECTION LAW REFORMS ON YOUNG VOTERS

A new CIRCLE Fact Sheet shows that young Americans in the nine states with Election Day registration laws (EDR) were more likely to vote than those living in states without EDR after controlling for education, gender, age, race/ethnicity and marital status. EDR also may decrease the disparity between young and older voter turnout. Before implementing EDR, Idaho, New Hampshire and Wyoming were among the worst states in terms of turnout inequality between young and older Americans. This gap has closed in all three states since EDR was implemented.

While EDR showed the most results, the study also concluded that keeping polls open for more than 12 hours on Election Day increased the youth voting rate by seven percentage points among full-time working youth and five percentage points among part-time working youth. Part-time students benefited from extended voting hours, also receiving a five percentage point boost. For more information, see <http://www.civicyouth.org/?p=349>.

