

NEW CIRCLE FACT SHEET SHOWS DISPARITIES IN VOTER TURNOUT BASED ON COLLEGE EXPERIENCE

According to the new CIRCLE fact sheet, "Electoral Engagement and College Experience," young people with college experience continue to be more likely to vote than those who don't attend college. Data also shows that membership in unions, religious congregations and community groups among young people without college experience has fallen drastically since the 1970's. Despite these trends, research shows that there are effective strategies and initiatives that can be used to help bridge this gap. "Electoral Engagement and College Experience," can be found at <http://www.civicyouth.org/?p=380>.

FURTHER EDUCATIONAL BREAKDOWNS PRESENT DEEPER GAPS

Research shows that many more young Americans are attending college, but 22 million (nearly half) of 18-to-29 year-olds are not enrolled in higher education programs. Since 2000, voter turnout among college-educated youth has increased by 12 percentage points and non-college youth turnout has increased by nine percentage points. In 2008, the turnout rate of college-educated 18-to-29 year-olds was 62 percent - 26 percentage points higher than the rate of non-college youth. Also, midterm turnout disparities are equally drastic: in 2006, there was a 17 percentage point gap between the two groups.

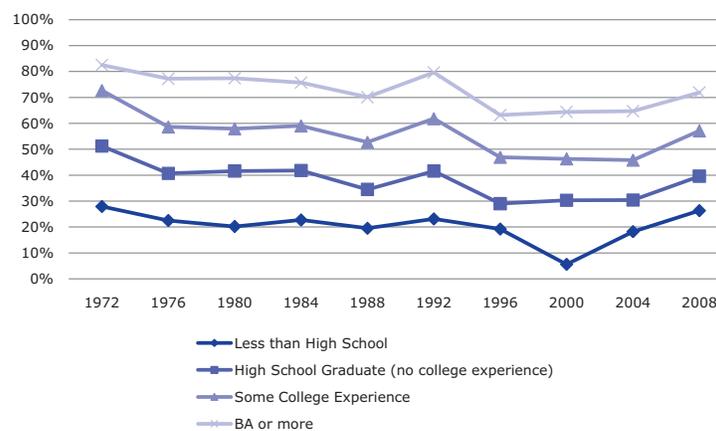
SINCE 2000, VOTER TURNOUT AMONG COLLEGE-EDUCATED YOUTH HAS INCREASED BY 12 PERCENTAGE POINTS AND NON-COLLEGE YOUTH TURNOUT HAS INCREASED BY NINE PERCENTAGE POINTS.

Youth voter turnout disparities are even higher when broken down further into four more specific categories. In 2008, 72 percent of those with a Bachelor's degree or higher voted, which is 21 percentage points higher than the national average for young people. Fifty seven percent of young people with some college experience voted. Among high school graduates, 39 percent went to the polls. Slightly more than a quarter of young people with less than a high school diploma voted in 2008.

STATE LAWS CAN HAVE AN IMPACT ON NON-COLLEGE YOUTH VOTER TURNOUT

Research shows that strategies can be leveraged to overcome turnout disparities. In recent elections, some states have implemented election reform laws, including Election Day registration, mail-in ballots, early voting, absentee voting laws and extended poll hours.

Figure 1: Voter Turnout Among 18- to 29-Year-Old Citizens in Presidential Years, by Educational Attainment



Source: Authors tabulations of November Supplements current population survey 1972-2008

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In fact, in 2008 among 18- to-29 year-old citizens who are in the labor force, implementation of longer polling hours was associated with a seven percentage point increase in the voting rate for full-time (35 or more hours per week) workers and a five percentage point increase for part-time workers.

IN 2008 AMONG 18- TO 29-YEAR-OLD CITIZENS WHO ARE IN THE LABOR FORCE, IMPLEMENTATION OF LONGER POLLING HOURS WAS ASSOCIATED WITH A SEVEN PERCENTAGE POINT INCREASE IN THE VOTING RATE FOR FULL-TIME (35 OR MORE HOURS PER WEEK) WORKERS AND A FIVE PERCENTAGE POINT INCREASE FOR PART-TIME WORKERS.

The research also looked at the political party affiliation and ideology of young people in the 2008 election. Almost half of 18-to-29 year-old voters identified with the Democratic party, compared with a third in 2004. However, those with no college experience were slightly more likely (47 percent) to call themselves “Democrat” than their college-going counterparts (45 percent). Nearly four in ten self-identified as “politically moderate,” roughly a third as “politically liberal,” and a quarter of non-college youth identified as “politically conservative.” ★

CIRCLE’S NETROOTS NATION PANEL ON JULY 24, 2010 IN LAS VEGAS DISCUSSED HOW THE “FORGOTTEN HALF” – NON-COLLEGE YOUTH – ARE AN IMPORTANT VOTING BLOC FOR THE 2010 MIDTERM ELECTIONS

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The panel “Mobilizing the Forgotten Half: Outreach Strategies for Non-College Youth” discussed effective strategies to close the voter turnout gap between young people with college experience and those without college experience. Panelists Biko Baker (The League of Young Voters Education Fund), Tarik Ross (Amer-I-Can Foundation and Pasadena youth organizer), Surbhi Godsay (CIRCLE), moderator Abby Kiesa (CIRCLE) and participants discussed how state policies, electoral campaigns and non-profits can engage this cohort of young voters.

To watch the panel, go to:

<http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/8490406>

To see CIRCLE’s research presentation from the panel on the political engagement of non-college youth, go to

<http://www.civicyouth.org/?p=381>

