

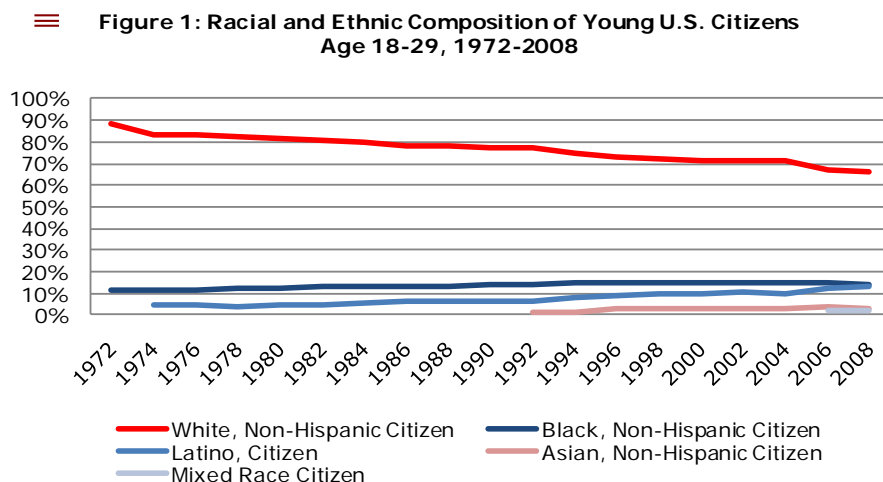
## The Minority Youth Vote in the 2008 Presidential Election

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Youth voter turnout increased for young people of all races between the 2004 and 2008 elections, with the exception of young white voters, whose turnout between the two elections remained unchanged. This fact sheet presents data on the characteristics of the youth population and youth voting trends through 2008 by race and ethnicity.<sup>2</sup>

### Growing Racial and Ethnic Diversity among Young People

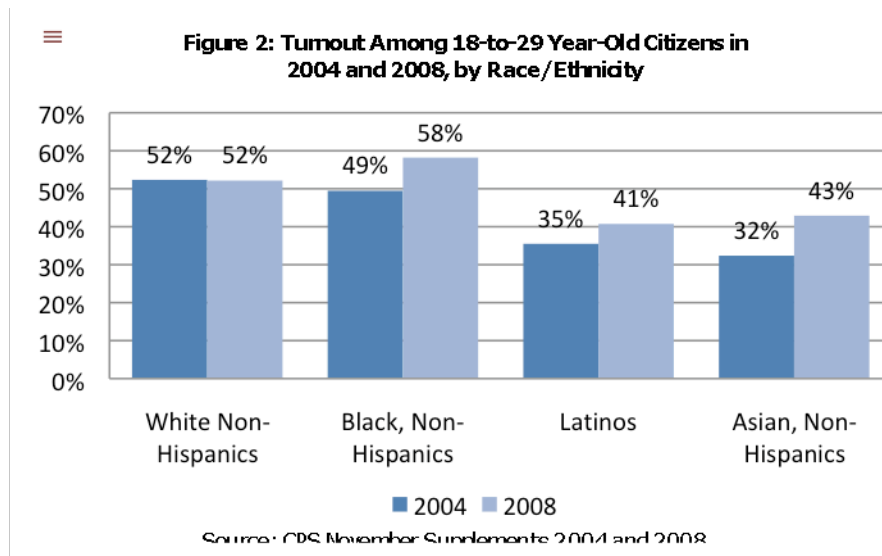
Each year, America’s youth population grows more diverse. In 1972, nearly 88 percent of the 18- to 29-year-old population considered themselves as non-Hispanic white. Today, just 66 percent of America’s 18- to 29-year-olds identify as non-Hispanic white. As shown in Figure 1 below, today’s youth population is 14 percent African-American, 13 percent Latino, three percent Asian, and two percent multi-racial.



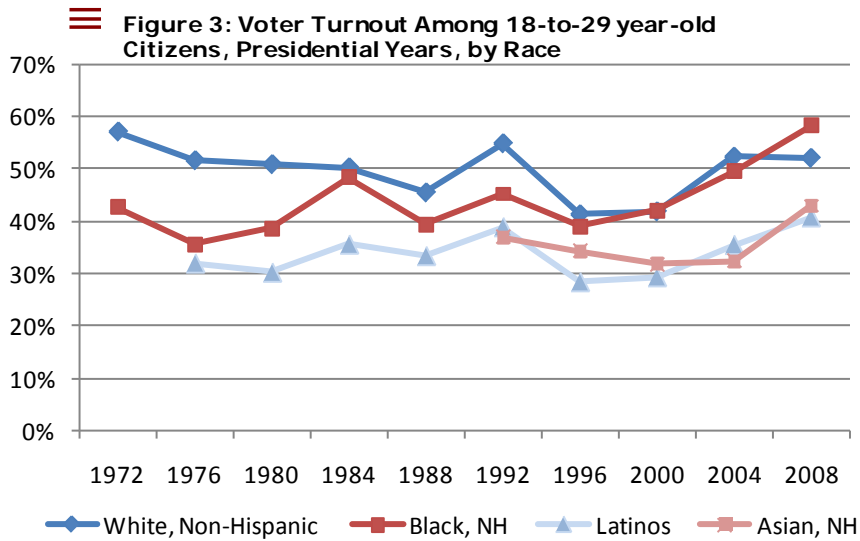
Source: Current Population Survey, March Supplements , 1972-2008

## Voter Turnout

The 2008 presidential election saw huge increases in minority youth turnout. This was likely due to the candidacy of Barack Obama, a candidate who energized young people across the board - especially young African-Americans. (Turnout among young white voters remained relatively unchanged between 2004 and 2008.)



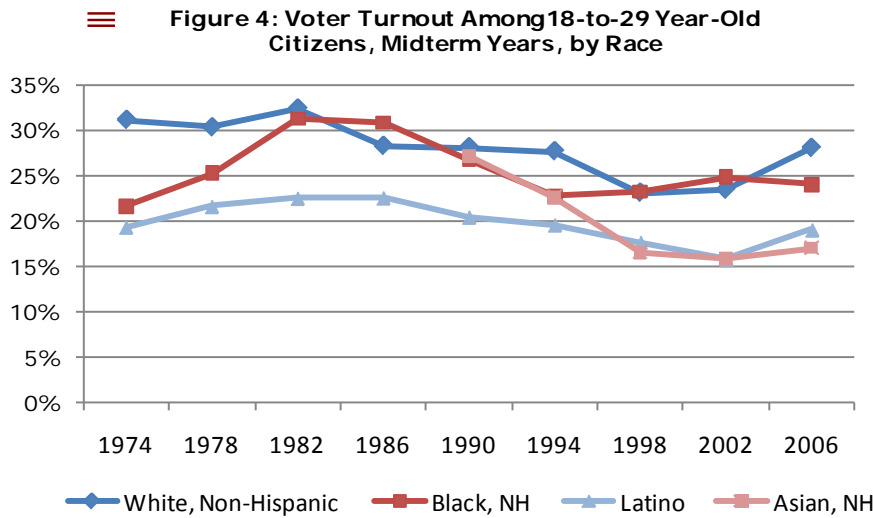
Fifty-eight percent of African-American youth voted in 2008, the highest turnout rate of any youth racial/ethnic group since 1972. Turnout among this group rapidly increased between the 2000 and 2008 elections, rising by nearly 20 percentage points. This increase represents the greatest increase in turnout of any racial or ethnic minority group since 1972 (see Figure 3).



Source: Census Current Population Survey, 1972-2008

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

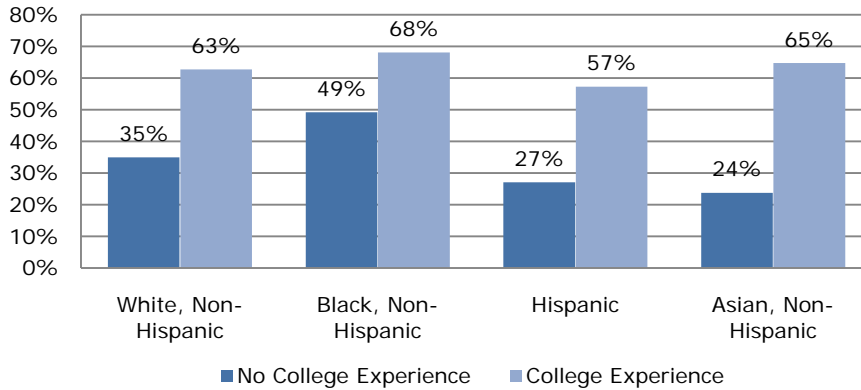
The 2006 midterm election did not follow the same trend as the 2008 Presidential election. White youth were more likely to vote compared to any other race, whereas in the 2002 midterm elections, African Americans were most likely to vote. African American youth, in fact, were the only minority group whose midterm turnout rate decreased from 2002 to 2006. Furthermore, Latinos and Asian both made marginal gains in midterm election turnout from 2002.



Source: Census Current Population Survey, 1972-2008

Generally speaking, college experience is a strong predictor of youth voter turnout, representing a deep educational divide in civic engagement. However, our analysis suggests that the degree to which educational attainment predicts turnout varies by racial/ethnic background. As seen in the figure below, non-college youth generally turned out at a lower rate than their college peers. However, young African Americans who have not gone to college fared better than other groups, whereas young Asian Americans who have not gone to college showed the worst turnout of all groups. The turnout gaps ranged 19 percentage points for African Americans to 41 percentage points for Asian Americans. Among youth without college experience, young African Americans were the most likely to vote in 2008 (49%) compared to their White, Hispanic, and Asian counterparts (35%, 27% and 24%, respectively).

**Figure 5: 18-to-29 Year-Old Voter Turnout by Race and College Experience**

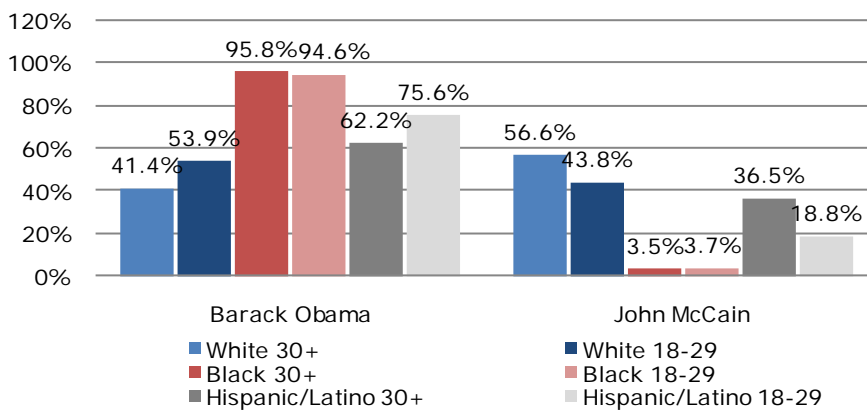


Source: Census Current Population Survey, 2008

### *Support for Presidential Candidates in 2008*

As shown in Figure 6, about 95% of young and older African American voters supported candidate Barack Obama. Support for presidential candidates varied by age among white and Latino voters. More than half of young voters supported Barack Obama while four in ten supported candidate John McCain. Older white voters were more likely to vote for John McCain (56.6%) than their younger counterparts (41.4%). Latinos exhibited a similar pattern. Young Latinos were more likely to support Barack Obama (75.6%) than their older counterparts (62.2%).

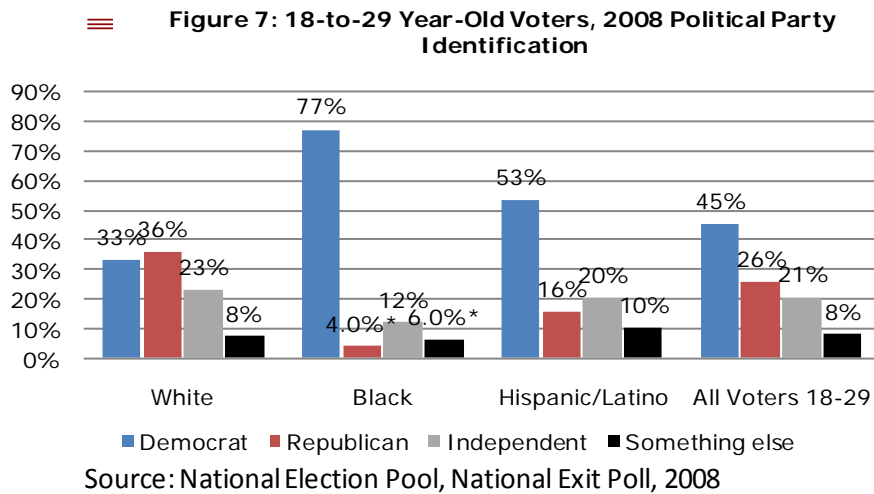
**Figure 6: 2008 Support for Presidential Candidate, by Age**



Source: National Election Pool, National Exit Poll, 2008

## Political Party Identification

As in the 2004 Presidential Election, young African-Americans voters were the most likely to self-identify as “Democrat” (a seven point increase over 2004) and least likely to identify as “Republican” in the 2008 presidential election. Over half of all young Latino voters self-identified as “Democrat” (a ten point increase over 2004). Young white voters were the only racial/ethnic group to have more young people self-identify as “Republican” than any other party, although there was a decline in the number of young white voters who identified as “Republican” between 2008 and 2004 (36% in 2008 vs. 44% in 2004).



## Top Voting Issues

Among young voters of all races, “the economy” ranked as the top issue facing the country. Six in ten young voters chose “the economy” with white voters slightly more likely to choose this issue than their Black or Latino counterparts. Overall, just 12% of all young voters chose “the war in Iraq” as the top issue. However, almost 20% of young Black voters noted that “the war in Iraq” was their top voting issue.

**Table 1: Which one of these five issues is the most important facing the country (Voters Age 18-29)?**

	The Economy	The War in Iraq	Energy Policy	Terrorism	Health Care
All Young Voters	62.6%	12.3%	10.7%	4.9%	4.9%
White	64.8%	10.4%	10.5%	5.8%	8.5%
Black	54.4%	18.6%	*	*	*
Latino	59.3%	*	*	*	*

\*Did not report due to small sample sizes.

**Appendix**

**Voter turnout tables, 1972-2008**

**Table 1a – Voter Turnout Among U.S. Citizens, 1972-2008  
Selected Series**

<b>Table 1A: Voter Turnout Among White, Non-Hispanic Citizens, 1972-2008</b>				
	<b>18-24 Year Olds</b>	<b>25 and older</b>	<b>18-29 Year Olds</b>	<b>30 and older</b>
<b>Midterm Election Years</b>				
1974	27.0%	53.4%	31.1%	55.9%
1978	26.0%	55.8%	30.3%	58.8%
1982	26.8%	58.7%	32.3%	61.8%
1986	23.8%	55.1%	28.2%	58.5%
1990	23.7%	55.3%	28.1%	58.4%
1994	23.5%	54.7%	27.6%	57.2%
1998	19.5%	51.0%	23.0%	53.4%
2002	20.4%	52.7%	23.4%	54.9%
2006	24.0%	55.1%	28.0%	57.2%
<b>Presidential Election Years</b>				
1972	54.2%	69.5%	57.1%	70.6%
1976	47.5%	67.3%	51.7%	68.7%
1980	46.4%	70.3%	50.9%	72.3%
1984	45.5%	70.2%	50.3%	72.5%
1988	41.3%	67.7%	45.6%	70.2%
1992	52.0%	72.6%	54.9%	74.4%
1996	37.7%	63.7%	41.4%	65.6%
2000	38.1%	65.0%	42.0%	66.6%
2004	49.8%	69.4%	52.3%	70.6%
2008	49.5%	68.2%	52.1%	69.4%

Source: Authors' Tabulations from the CPS Nov. Voting and Registration Supplements, 1972-2008

<b>Table 1B: Voter Turnout Among African-American, Non-Hispanic Citizens, 1972-2008</b>				
	<b>18-24 Year Olds</b>	<b>25 and older</b>	<b>18-29 Year Olds</b>	<b>30 and older</b>
<b>Midterm Election Years</b>				
1974	17.5%	40.4%	21.6%	42.2%
1978	21.6%	44.5%	25.2%	47.0%
1982	27.1%	50.7%	31.2%	53.5%
1986	26.6%	50.1%	30.8%	52.8%
1990	21.6%	46.9%	26.7%	49.4%
1994	18.3%	43.1%	22.7%	45.3%
1998	16.9%	46.5%	23.2%	48.7%
2002	20.7%	46.7%	24.8%	48.7%
2006	20.1%	45.2%	24.0%	47.4%



<b>Presidential Election Years</b>				
1972	37.5%	59.1%	42.7%	60.1%
1976	29.8%	56.4%	35.5%	58.4%
1980	32.4%	59.9%	38.6%	62.1%
1984	44.1%	65.1%	48.3%	67.3%
1988	37.8%	58.9%	39.4%	62.3%
1992	40.6%	63.0%	45.2%	64.8%
1996				
2000	36.2%	60.9%	42.0%	62.2%
2004	47.3%	62.8%	49.5%	64.1%
2008	56.1%	66.9%	58.2%	67.7%

Source: Authors' Tabulations from the CPS Nov. Voting and Registration Supplements, 1972-2008

<b>Table 1C: Voter Turnout Among Latino Citizens, 1974-2008</b>				
	<i>18-24 Year Olds</i>	<i>25 and older</i>	<i>18-29 Year Olds</i>	<i>30 and older</i>
<b>Midterm Election Years</b>				
1974	18.0%	37.0%	19.3%	40.4%
1978	16.9%	41.8%	21.6%	44.9%
1982	21.4%	43.7%	22.5%	47.9%
1986	18.6%	43.2%	22.5%	46.9%
1990	16.4%	40.3%	20.4%	43.2%
1994	18.0%	37.8%	19.6%	40.8%
1998	14.7%	37.3%	17.6%	39.6%
2002	13.2%	35.2%	15.7%	37.3%
2006	17.0%	35.5%	19.0%	38.0%
<b>Presidential Election Years</b>				
1976	28.6%	48.3%	32.0%	50.7%
1980	25.6%	52.5%	30.2%	56.1%
1984	32.6%	55.1%	35.5%	59.0%
1988	28.3%	53.0%	33.4%	55.8%
1992	33.1%	55.8%	38.9%	57.4%
1996	24.0%	48.8%	28.4%	51.2%
2000	25.6%	49.7%	29.4%	51.7%
2004	33.0%	50.5%	35.5%	52.3%
2008	38.8%	52.3%	40.7%	53.8%

Source: Authors' Tabulations from the CPS Nov. Voting and Registration Supplements, 1974-2008. Sample for Latino Americans are not large enough for accurate estimation.

<b>Table 1D: Voter Turnout Among Asian, Non-Hispanic Citizens, 1990-2008</b>				
	<i>18-24 Year Olds</i>	<i>25 and older</i>	<i>18-29 Year Olds</i>	<i>30 and older</i>
<b>Midterm Election Years</b>				
1990	27.0%	42.3%	27.1%	44.8%
1994	20.5%	42.6%	22.6%	44.8%
1998	16.6%	35.0%	16.5%	37.5%
2002	15.1%	33.7%	15.8%	35.8%
2006	15.0%	34.3%	17.0%	36.2%
<b>Presidential Election Years</b>				
1992	31.7%	58.0%	36.9%	59.9%
1996	35.0%	47.8%	34.3%	50.0%
2000	27.8%	46.0%	31.8%	47.1%
2004	35.5%	45.9%	32.4%	48.1%
2008	39.4%	47.9%	42.9%	48.0%

Source: Authors' Tabulations from the CPS Nov. Voting and Registration Supplements, 1990-2008. Sample for Asian Americans are not large enough for accurate estimation.

<b>Table 1E: Voter Turnout Among Native American, Non-Hispanic Citizens, 1990-2008</b>				
	<i>18-24 Year Olds</i>	<i>25 and older</i>	<i>18-29 Year Olds</i>	<i>30 and older</i>
<b>Midterm Election Years</b>				
1990	13.2%	40.4%	13.0%	44.8%
1994	24.6%	39.1%	25.3%	41.4%
1998	11.2%	38.8%	16.6%	42.6%
2002	11.3%	35.5%	14.5%	37.5%
2006	11.3%	35.0%	11.0%	39.1%
<b>Presidential Election Years</b>				
1992	36.5%	56.0%	35.8%	58.9%
1996	25.0%	49.5%	27.5%	52.8%
2000	30.1%	49.5%	30.2%	52.3%
2004	36.6%	50.8%	35.4%	53.1%
2008	27.0%	46.9%	28.5%	55.2%

Source: Authors' Tabulations from the CPS Nov. Voting and Registration Supplements, 1990-2008. Sample for Native Americans are not large enough for accurate estimation.

<b>Table 1F: Voter Turnout Among Mixed Race, Non-Hispanics Citizens, 2004-2008</b>				
	<i>18-24 Year Olds</i>	<i>25 and older</i>	<i>18-29 Year Olds</i>	<i>30 and older</i>
2004	45.8%	62.8%	46.4%	65.3%
2008	51.0%	62.5%	53.8%	63.2%

Source: Authors' Tabulations from the CPS Nov. Voting and Registration Supplements, 2004 – 2008. The Census Bureau did not permit respondents to choose multiple racial and ethnic groups until 2003, and the voter turnout data for individuals of multiple racial origins are available only after 2004.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Researcher, research assistant, and Senior Researcher, respectively. We thank Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg, Abby Kiesa and Peter Levine for their comments on previous drafts of this fact sheet. We thank Mark Hugo Lopez and Emily Kirby for their 2005 Fact Sheet "Electoral Engagement Among Minority Youth" upon which this fact sheet is based. All errors in fact or interpretation are our own.

<sup>2</sup> We have defined racial/ethnic groups in the 2008 CPS November Supplement by defining anyone with Hispanic background as Latino, single race or ethnicity individuals who are non-Hispanic as White, African-American, Asian American or Native American, and those who are of mixed race/ethnicity as a separate category. Since 2003, the CPS has allowed survey participants to mark more than one racial/ethnic category in describing their backgrounds. This potentially means that 2000, 2004 and 2008 may not be entirely comparable when identifying race and ethnicity categories of survey respondents. Prior to 1990, the Current Population Survey allowed individuals to categorize their race/ethnicity as "other." Those classifications have been suppressed here since it is unclear what race/ethnicity people who identified themselves as "other" are. All programs used to generate race and ethnicity variables are available from the authors upon request.