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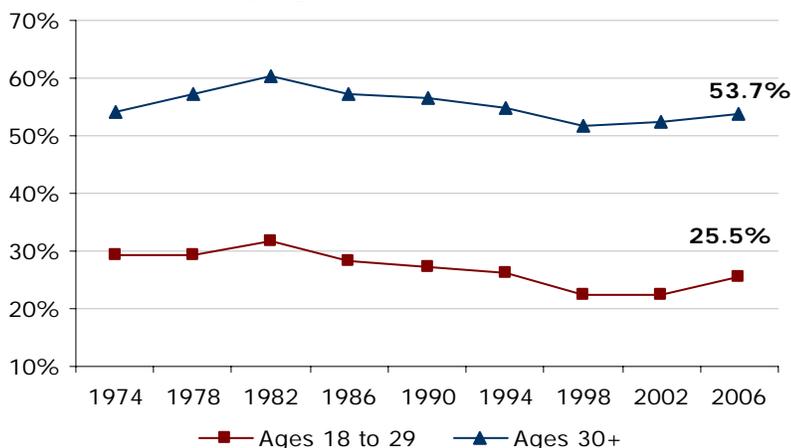
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Youth Voter Turnout Increases in 2006

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For the second election in a row, the voter turnout rate among young people increased. The voter turnout rate among 18-to-29-year-olds increased three percentage points between 2002 and 2006 from 22 percent to 25 percent, breaking a trend in declining electoral participation among young people since 1982. Last year's midterm elections followed a presidential election that nationally witnessed the highest level of youth voter participation in over a decade, with a national youth voter turnout rate of 49 percent, up 9 percentage points over 2000.²

■ Figure 1: Voter Turnout Midterm Years Among Citizens, by Age



Source: Authors' Tabulations from the Current Population Survey, November Supplements, 1974-2006.

There are three potential explanations for this surge in youth voter turnout. First, there were a large number of voter registration and get out the vote efforts directed towards young people. These generally occurred in states with governor and/or senate races, and include efforts by organizations such as the Hip Hop Summit, U.S. PIRG, and Young Voter Strategies, as well as partisan efforts. Second, states over the past 5 years, have changed voter registration processes and election day procedures in ways that have benefited young people. For example, today states such as Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Maine allow voters to register to vote on election day, a change in voter registration methods that has helped draw more young people to vote.³ Third, in 2006, as in 2004, there were many contested elections, which tends to draw more voters to the polls. Note however, that while there were more contested elections in 2006 nationwide, not every state had contested elections. For example, no races (U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate) in the state of Utah were contested.⁴

This fact sheet reports the characteristics of young voters nationally, including estimates of the number of young voters, and the voter turnout rates in 2006, 2002, and 1994 for various sub-groups of young people, and estimates of partisanship among young voters in 2002 and 2006.

In 2006, the three states with the highest level of youth voter turnout were Minnesota (43 percent), Wisconsin (40 percent), and South Dakota (39 percent). In contrast, the three states with the lowest voter turnout rates among young people in 2006 were West Virginia (16 percent), Texas (17 percent) and Utah (17 percent). It is likely that differences in electoral participation among young people across states was driven by high profile gubernatorial and Congressional races and statewide initiatives on the ballot in midterm years.

Youth Voter Turnout Surged More Than Any Other Age Group

The percentage point increase in turnout posted by the youngest voters, ages 18 to 29, was higher than any other age group for the second election in a row. Voter turnout among voters under 30 jumped 3 points from 22.5 percent to 25.5 percent between 2002 and 2006. In contrast, for all voters the overall turnout rate grew by 1.7 percentage points from 46.1 percent to 47.8 percent.

Table 1- Change in Voter Turnout Among Citizens by Age, 2002 and 2006

Age Groups	2002	2006	Percentage Point Increase
18-29	22.5 percent	25.5 percent	+ 3.0 points
30-44	42.2 percent	43.0 percent	+ 0.8 points
45-59	55.0 percent	56.0 percent	+ 1.0 points
60+	62.4 percent	63.1 percent	+ 0.7 points
<i>All Ages</i>	<i>46.1 percent</i>	<i>47.8 percent</i>	<i>+ 1.7 points</i>

Source: Authors' Tabulations from the 2006 and 2002 November Supplements of the Current Population Survey.

Estimates of the Number of Eligible Young Voters, 2006

An estimated 10.8 million young people voted in 2006—an increase of almost 2 million votes from the last midterm election in 2002. Furthermore, young people increased their share of all voters by one percentage point, from 10.2 percent in 2002 to 11.2 percent in 2006.

Table 2 shows voting statistics for the years 2006, 2002, the last midterm election year, and 1994, the last midterm election year that followed a surge in youth voting in a presidential election year (1992).⁵ Note that the number of votes cast by young people was higher in 2006 than in 1994. However, the overall voter turnout rate and voter share are slightly lower reflecting an increase in the youth citizen population between 1994 and 2006.

Table 2 – U.S. Voter Turnout Statistics, 2006, 2002, and 1994

	Young People 18 to 29	Adults 30 and Older
2006		
Number of Votes Cast	10.8 million	85.4 million
Voter Turnout Rate	25.5 percent	53.7 percent
Share of all Voters	11.2 percent	88.8 percent
2002		
Number of Votes Cast	8.9 million	78.9 million
Voter Turnout Rate	22.5 percent	52.4 percent
Share of all Voters	10.2 percent	89.8 percent
1994		
Number of Votes Cast	10.5 million	75.2 million
Voter Turnout Rate	26.1 percent	54.8 percent
Share of all Voters	12.2 percent	87.8 percent

Source: Authors' Tabulations from the 2006, 2002, and 1994 November Supplements of the Current Population Survey.

Voter Turnout Rates in 2006, 2002, and 1994 Among Young Citizens

Table 3 displays voter turnout rates for various groups of young people in 2006, 2002, and 1994. In many cases, voter turnout rates in 2006 were similar to 1994. However, between 2002 and 2006, turnout among African Americans and Native Americans declined by 1 point and 14 points, respectively.

The Midwest region experienced an increase of six percentage points in voter turnout between 2002 and 2006, leading all other regions in voter turnout in both elections. This is especially reflected in Table 5, which shows state-by-state voter turnout rates.

Partisanship Among Young People

According to Exit Poll data on young voters in the 2006 and 2002 midterm elections, party identification has swung in favor of the Democrats. In 2006, 43 percent of young voters, ages 18 to 29, identified as Democrats, an increase of six percentage points over 2002. Republican affiliation among young people fell eight percentage points during the same period. (See Table 4.)

Table 3 – U.S. Voter Turnout Rates Among Young Citizens ages 18 to 29, 2006, 2002, and 1994

Voter Turnout Rate	2006	2002	1994
Among:			
Race/Ethnicity⁶			
White non-Hispanics	28 percent	23 percent	28 percent
Black non-Hispanics	24 percent	25 percent	23 percent
Hispanics	19 percent	16 percent	20 percent
Asian non-Hispanics	17 percent	16 percent	23 percent
Native American non-Hispanics	11 percent	14 percent	25 percent
Other	22 percent	N/A	N/A
Gender			
Women	27 percent	24 percent	27 percent
Men	24 percent	21 percent	25 percent
Educational Attainment			
Less than High School	11 percent	10 percent	9 percent
High School	18 percent	16 percent	19 percent
Some College	29 percent	25 percent	31 percent
B.A. or more	41 percent	40 percent	46 percent
Marital Status			
Single Men	23 percent	20 percent	24 percent
Single Women	26 percent	23 percent	26 percent
Married Men	29 percent	26 percent	29 percent
Married Women	31 percent	28 percent	30 percent
Region			
Northeast	23 percent	21 percent	27 percent
Midwest	31 percent	25 percent	26 percent
South	23 percent	22 percent	22 percent
West	26 percent	22 percent	32 percent
Registered Voters	50 percent	47 percent	53 percent
All Youth	25 percent	22 percent	26 percent

Source: Authors' Tabulations from the 2006, 2002 and 1994 November Supplements of the Current Population Survey. Note that identification of "other" race is only available in 2006.

Table 4 – Partisanship Among Young Voters in 2006 and 2002

	2006		2002	
	18 to 29 Year Olds	Adults 30 and Older	18 to 29 Year Olds	Adults 30 and Older
Democrat	43 percent	37 percent	37 percent	38 percent
Independent	19 percent	23 percent	18 percent	19 percent
Republican	31 percent	36 percent	39 percent	40 percent

Source: Authors' Tabulations from National Election Pool Exit Poll data (2002 and 2006)

Table 5 - Voter Turnout Among Citizens by State, 2006

<i>State</i>	<i>Voter Turnout Among 18-29 year old Citizens in 2006</i>	<i>Voter Turnout Among 30 year old and older Citizens in 2006</i>	<i>Difference in Voter Turnout between 18-29 year olds and 30+ citizens in 2006⁷</i>	<i>Voter Turnout Among 18-29 year old Citizens in 2002</i>	<i>Change in Youth Voter Turnout between 2002 and 2006⁸.</i>	<i>Voter Turnout Among 18-29 year old Citizens in 1994</i>	<i>Change in Youth Voter Turnout between 1994 and 2006⁹.</i>
Alabama	26%	57%	31% points	31%	-5% points	31%	-5% points
Alaska	30%	62%	32% points	34%	-4% points	36%	-6% points
Arizona	23%	52%	29% points	14%	9% points	21%	2% points
Arkansas	21%	52%	31% points	21%	0% points	21%	0% points
California	25%	54%	29% points	22%	3% points	37%	-12% points
Colorado	31%	61%	30% points	29%	2% points	24%	7% points
Connecticut	22%	55%	33% points	23%	-1% point	24%	-2% points
Delaware	25%	51%	26% points	15%	10% points	16%	9% points
D.C.	29%	58%	29% points	32%	-3% points	47%	-18% points
Florida	18%	50%	32% points	23%	-5% points	23%	-5% points
Georgia	29%	48%	19% points	22%	7% points	19%	10% points
Hawaii	21%	49%	28% points	20%	1% point	27%	-6% points
Idaho	30%	58%	28% points	24%	6% points	32%	-2% points
Illinois	23%	54%	31% points	23%	0% points	23%	0% points
Indiana	23%	52%	29% points	19%	4% points	14%	9% points
Iowa	27%	63%	36% points	23%	4% points	33%	-6% points
Kansas	20%	54%	34% points	23%	-3% points	19%	1% point
Kentucky	28%	55%	27% points	30%	-2% points	17%	11% points
Louisiana	18%	46%	28% points	28%	-10% points	17%	1% point
Maine	32%	64%	32% points	31%	1% point	37%	-5% points
Maryland	33%	62%	29% points	24%	9% points	33%	0% points
Massachusetts	34%	60%	26% points	23%	11% points	32%	2% points
Michigan	38%	62%	24% points	25%	13% points	32%	6% points
Minnesota	43%	71%	28% points	45%	-2% points	33%	10% points
Mississippi	25%	47%	22% points	21%	4% points	27%	-2% points
Missouri	32%	60%	28% points	26%	6% points	37%	-5% points
Montana	39%	66%	27% points	26%	13% points	34%	5% points
Nebraska	27%	59%	32% points	24%	3% points	26%	1% point
Nevada	20%	48%	28% points	22%	-2% points	20%	0% points
New Hampshire	19%	55%	36% points	24%	-5% points	23%	-4% points
New Jersey	22%	48%	26% points	17%	5% points	24%	-2% points
New Mexico	25%	62%	37% points	18%	7% points	26%	-1% point
New York	19%	49%	30% points	21%	-2% points	31%	-12% points
North Carolina	21%	45%	24% points	18%	3% points	17%	4% points
North Dakota	30%	63%	33% points	33%	-3% points	35%	-5% points
Ohio	31%	59%	28% points	21%	10% points	24%	7% points
Oklahoma	25%	53%	28% points	25%	0% points	21%	4% points
Oregon	32%	67%	35% points	30%	2% points	38%	-6% points
Pennsylvania	25%	53%	28% points	21%	4% points	19%	6% points
Rhode Island	35%	65%	30% points	20%	15% points	40%	-5% points
South Carolina	24%	51%	27% points	27%	-3% points	27%	-3% points
South Dakota	39%	71%	32% points	36%	3% points	37%	2% points
Tennessee	23%	51%	28% points	21%	2% points	27%	-4% points
Texas	17%	45%	28% points	17%	0% points	20%	-3% points
Utah	17%	47%	30% points	22%	-5% points	27%	-10% points
Vermont	26%	65%	39% points	20%	6% points	19%	7% points
Virginia	32%	51%	19% points	18%	14% points	26%	6% points
Washington	30%	59%	29% points	20%	10% points	25%	5% points
West Virginia	16%	41%	25% points	15%	1% point	16%	0% points
Wisconsin	40%	63%	23% points	24%	16% points	27%	13% points
Wyoming	26%	60%	34% points	30%	-4% points	42%	-16% points
National	25%	54%	29% points	22%	3% points	26%	-1% point

Notes

¹ We thank Jared Sagoff for excellent research assistance. We also thank Peter Levine, Deborah Both, and Alex Orłowski for comments on previous drafts of this fact sheet.

² For more information on the voter turnout rates of young people in presidential years, see "CIRCLE Working Paper 35: The Youth Voter 2004: With a Historical Look at Youth Voting Patterns 1972-2004."

³ See Fitzgerald, Mary. "Working Paper 01: Easier Voting Methods Boost Youth Turnout." February 2003. CIRCLE Working Paper Series. <http://www.civicyouth.org/?p=52>

See Wolfinger, Raymond E., Highton, Benjamin, and Mullin, Megan. "Working Paper 15: How Postregistration Laws Affect the Turnout of Registrants. June 2004. CIRCLE Working Paper Series. <http://www.civicyouth.org/?p=66>

⁴ We define a contested race as a result in which the winner defeats the runner-up by five percentage points or less, just outside the margin of error.

⁵ For a full discussion of the different ways voter turnout can be calculated please see "CIRCLE Working Paper 35: The Youth Voter 2004: With a Historical Look at Youth Voting Patterns 1972-2004." All voter turnout estimates presented in this fact sheet are calculated for U.S. citizens only, according to the "Census Citizen Method" described in CIRCLE Working Paper 35.

⁶ We have defined racial/ethnic groups in the Current Population Survey November Supplements by defining anyone with Hispanic background as Latino; individuals who cite a single race or ethnicity and who are non-Hispanic as white, African American, Asian American or Native American. All programs used to generate race and ethnicity variables are available from the authors upon request.

⁷ This is calculated by taking the 30+ voter turnout rate and subtracting the 18-29 voter turnout rate.

⁸ This is calculated by taking the 2002 voter turnout figure and subtracting from it the 2006 voter turnout figure. Thus, a negative number represents a decline between 2002 and 2006. A positive number represents an improvement between 2002 and 2006.

⁹ This is calculated by taking the 1994 voter turnout figure and subtracting from it the 2006 voter turnout figure. Thus, a negative number represents a decline between 1994 and 2006. A positive number represents an improvement between 1994 and 2006.