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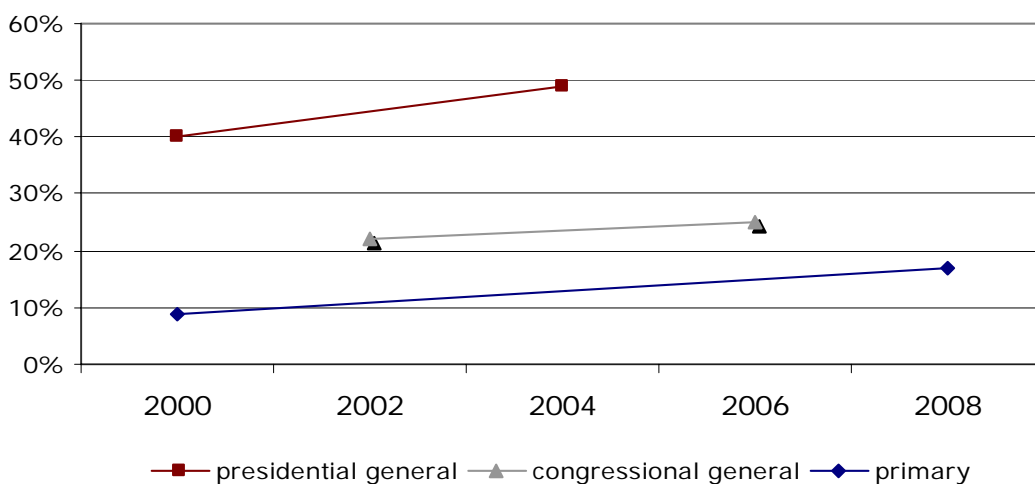
The Youth Vote in the 2008 Primaries and Caucuses

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More than 6.5 million young people under the age of 30 participated in the 2008 primaries and caucuses (See Table 1). This marks a dramatic increase in youth voter turnout over the last comparable election cycle in 2000. In states where data is available for both the 2008 and 2000 primaries, the national youth turnout rate rose from nine percent in the 2000 primaries to 17 percent in the 2008 primaries.²

The increase in youth turnout in the 2008 primaries and caucuses continues a historic trend observed in other elections since 2000. In the 2006 congressional elections, the voter turnout rate among 18-to 29-year-olds increased by three percentage points compared to the previous congressional election of 2002. And in the 2004 presidential election, the national youth voter turnout rate rose 9 percentage points compared to 2000, reaching 49 percent. This is the first time since 18-to-20-year-olds were allowed to vote that youth turnout has increased three election cycles in a row.

Graph 1: National Youth Voter Turnout, 2000-2008



Source: Authors' Tabulations of the 2000, 2002, 2006, 2008 Census Current Population Survey (CPS) for presidential and congressional general elections. For primary elections authors' tabulations based on vote counts from the media, exit poll results from Edison/Mitofsky, and population estimates from CPS March Demographic file (2000 and 2008). Due to data limitations, we were unable to create a national youth voter turnout estimate for the 2004 primaries.

Table 1: Presidential Primary Participation in 2008, Citizens Under 30³

State	Type of Contest	Youth Turnout Rate	Number of Youth who Voted	Youth as Share of All Voters	Allowed 17 year olds to vote/participate
Alabama	Primary	19%	136,000	13%	No
Arizona	Primary	7%	59,000	7%	Yes
Arkansas	Primary	11%	50,000	9%	No
California	Primary	19%	951,000	14%	No
Connecticut	Primary	12%	51,000	10%	No
Delaware*	Primary	7%	92,000	10%	Yes
Florida	Primary	13%	286,000	8%	No
Georgia	Primary	21%	282,000	14%	No
Iowa	Caucus	13%	65,000	18%	Yes
Illinois	Primary	18%	378,000	13%	No
Indiana	Primary	20%*	213,000	17%	Yes
Kentucky	Primary	12%*	89,000	13%	Yes
Louisiana	Primary	7%	51,000	10%	No
Maryland	Primary	15%	138,000	13%	Yes
Massachusetts	Primary	25%	231,000	14%	No
Michigan	Primary	14%	214,000	15%	Yes
Missouri	Primary	21%	191,000	14%	No
Mississippi	Primary	14%	71,000	13%	Yes
Montana	Primary	15%*	25,000	14%	No
Nevada	Caucus	5%	20,000	12%	No
New Hampshire	Primary	43%	84,000	16%	Yes
New Jersey	Primary	18%	188,000	11%	No
New Mexico	Primary	4%*	12,000	8%	No
New York	Primary	12%	312,000	13%	No
North Carolina	Primary	15%*	222,000	14%	Yes
Ohio	Primary	25%	479,000	15%	Yes
Oklahoma	Primary	14%	83,000	13%	No
Oregon	Primary	18%*	91,000	16%	No
Pennsylvania	Primary	14%*	276,000	12%	No
Rhode Island	Primary	14%*	24,000	13%	No
South Carolina	Primary	19%	119,000	12%	No
South Dakota	Primary	9%*	13,000	13%	No
Tennessee	Primary	15%	140,000	12%	No
Texas	Both	17%	620,000	15%	No
Utah	Primary	15%	66,000	16%	No
Vermont*	Primary	18%	17,000	11%	No
Virginia	Primary	16%	188,000	13%	Yes
West Virginia	Primary	16%*	46,000	14%	Yes
Wisconsin	Primary	25%	220,000	15%	No
Total			6,594,000		

Source: The share of primary voters is obtained from the exit polls conducted by Edison/Mitofsky. The number of votes cast is obtained from the cnn.com (the morning after the respective state's contest.)

*The youth turnout rate present in Table 1 is the *overall* turnout rate for the state. Because no Republican exit polls were conducted in the starred states, the numerator for overall turnout rate includes **only** young voters who participated in the

Democratic primary. The denominator includes ALL eligible young voters in the starred state (Democrats, Republicans and Independents). Thus the turnout rate does not reflect the full participation of young people in each starred state's primary.

Comparisons of youth turnout rates among states must be made with caution, because turnout is affected by the date of the primaries/caucuses and by the nature of the Democratic and Republican presidential campaigns, which are different in every state. "Closed" primaries/caucuses tend to depress turnout since Independents cannot participate.

Significant Increase in Youth Vote Turnout Between 2000 and 2008

There was a significant increase in youth voter turnout from the 2000 contests to the 2008 contests. Of the seventeen states in which exit polls were also conducted in 2000, sixteen saw increases in youth turnout, and in some of these states, youth turnout tripled or quadrupled. Overall, the youth voter turnout rate rose from nine percent in 2000 to 17 percent in 2008.

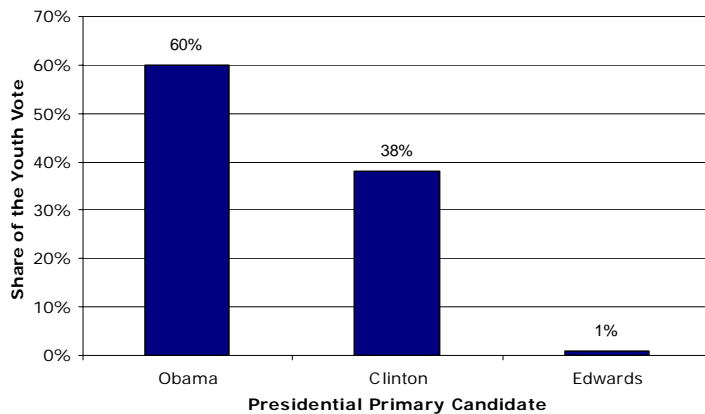
Table 2: Change in Youth Voter Turnout Between the 2000 and 2008 Primaries/Caucuses, Citizens Under the Age of 30

State	2008 Youth Turnout Rate	2008 vote count	2000 Youth Turnout Rate	2000 vote count	Percentage Point Increase Between 2000 and 2008
New Hampshire	43%	84,000	28%	44,000	+ 15 points
Massachusetts	25%	231,000	11%	91,000	+ 14 points
Georgia	21%	282,000	7%	92,000	+ 14 points
Missouri	21%	191,000	7%	71,000	+ 14 points
Texas	17%	620,000	6%	172,000	+ 11 points
Tennessee	15%	140,000	4%	35,000	+ 11 points
Iowa	13%	65,000	3%	15,000	+ 10 points
Mississippi	14%	71,000	4%	15,000	+ 10 points
Ohio	25%	479,000	15%	251,000	+ 10 points
Oklahoma	14%	83,000	4%	18,000	+ 10 points
Rhode Island*	14%	24,000	3%	4,000	+ 9 points
Florida	13%	286,000	4%	81,000	+ 9 points
California	19%	951,000	13%	575,000	+6 points
Connecticut	12%	51,000	7%	21,000	+ 5 points
Louisiana	7%	51,000	3%	27,000	+ 4 points
Maryland	15%	138,000	11%	79,000	+ 4 points
New York	12%	312,000	12%	282,000	+ 0 points

Obama was Clear Choice among Young Democrats; Young Republicans' Choice Varied by State

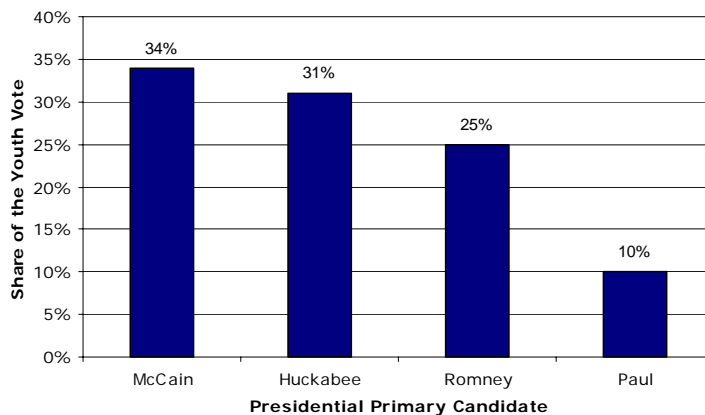
Barack Obama was the clear choice among youth voters in the Democratic primaries. He garnered support from 60 percent of young voters. Four in ten young voters supported Hillary Clinton. In the Republican contests, young voters split their support between John McCain and Mike Huckabee. Approximately one quarter of young Republican voters supported Mitt Romney. Graphs 2 and 3 contain the share of youth votes won by each Presidential candidate. Table 3 contains a state-by-state breakdown of the youth vote choice by party.

Graph 2: National Youth Vote Choice, Democratic Primaries



Source: Author's tabulations using day-after vote tallies as reported by the media and exit polls conducted by Edison/Mitofsky.⁴

Graph 3: National Youth Vote Choice, Republican Primaries



Source: Author's tabulations using day-after vote tallies as reported by the media and exit polls conducted by Edison/Mitofsky.⁵

Table 3: 2008 Youth Vote Choice

State	Democratic Candidates			Republican Candidates			
	Clinton	Edwards	Obama	Huckabee	McCain	Paul	Romney
Alabama	32%	2%	64%	51%	22%	4%	24%
Arizona	37%	5%	59%	15%	32%	9%	43%
Arkansas	56%	N/A	43%	68%	16%	6%	7%
California	49%	1%	49%	20%	35%	7%	33%
Connecticut	39%	2%	58%	11%	51%	18%	9%
Delaware	28%		66%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Florida	44%	11%	43%	18%	30%	5%	23%
Georgia	23%	2%	75%	43%	23%	8%	24%
Iowa	11%	14%	57%	40%	7%	21%	22%
Illinois	29%	2%	69%	28%	30%	13%	22%
Indiana	38%	N/A	62%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Kentucky	54%	N/A	41%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Louisiana	30%	N/A	66%	54%	32%	8%	6%
Maryland	33%	N/A	64%	33%	41%	10%	10%
Massachusetts	49%	N/A	48%	4%	36%	6%	52%
Michigan	43%	N/A	N/A	19%	27%	19%	30%
Missouri	30%	3%	65%	43%	27%	9%	18%
Mississippi	25%	N/A	73%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Montana	24%	N/A	74%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Nevada	33%	7%	59%	7%	13%	19%	50%
New Hampshire	22%	9%	60%	15%	27%	19%	17%
New Jersey	39%	N/A	59%	8%	46%	17%	19%
New Mexico	42%	N/A	55%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
New York	43%	1%	56%	15%	43%	11%	21%
North Carolina	25%	N/A	74%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ohio	35%	N/A	61%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Oklahoma	N/A	N/A	N/A	38%	26%	3%	28%
Oregon	29%	N/A	71%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Pennsylvania	40%	N/A	60%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Rhode Island	47%	N/A	53%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
South Carolina	23%	10%	67%	35%	28%	7%	12%
South Dakota	33%	N/A	67%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tennessee	44%	2%	53%	38%	25%	14%	15%
Texas	40%	N/A	59%	43%	44%	9%	N/A
Utah	25%	N/A	70%	2%	6%	4%	88%
Vermont	31%	N/A	64%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Virginia	24%	N/A	76%	45%	39%	14%	2%
West Virginia	59%	N/A	38%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Wisconsin	26%	N/A	70%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: www.cnn.com

Notes

¹ Senior Research Associate, Research Associate, and Undergraduate Assistants respectively. We thank Peter Levine and Abby Kiesa for comments on earlier drafts of this document. All errors in fact or interpretation are our own.

² This turnout rate was calculated for states that had both a Republican and Democratic exit poll in 2000 and 2008 with the exception of Rhode Island where there was only a Democratic exit poll in 2000 and 2008. The states used to calculate the youth turnout rates for 2000 and 2008 were NH, MA, GA, MO, TX, TN, IA, MS, OH, OK, RI, FL, CA, CT, LA, MD, and NY.

³ Because there is no actual count of the number of votes cast by young people in the primaries, we can only estimate their level of participation. The estimate of votes cast is calculated by multiplying the youth share of all voters (source: exit polls) by the actual number of votes cast (source: media tallies). The turnout rate estimate for each state is calculated by dividing the estimated number of votes cast by young people in the state's primary by the estimated number of young citizens (source: 2008 March Demographic File, US Census).

⁴ The share of youth votes received by each presidential candidate is an estimate. It was calculated by first estimating the number of young people who voted in both the Republican and Democratic primaries/caucuses in each state. To estimate the number of youth votes each Democratic candidate received, the total youth vote estimate for the state's Democratic primary was multiplied by the share of all votes that each Democratic candidate received from young voters (source: Edison/Mitofsky exit polls). To estimate the number of youth votes each Republican candidate received, the total youth vote estimate for the state's Republican primary was multiplied by the share of votes each Republican candidate received from young voters (source: Edison/Mitofsky exit polls).

⁵ See footnote four for methodology.