



## HIGH SCHOOL CIVIC ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES PRODUCE ACADEMIC BENEFITS

**N**ew CIRCLE research by Professors Alberto Dávila and Marie T. Mora suggests that participation in civic engagement activities such as voluntary community service, service-learning, and student government during the high school years enhances academic achievement. In two new CIRCLE Working Papers, Dávila and Mora, using data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS), find that those civic engagement activities raise the odds of graduation from college and improve high school students' progress in reading, math, science and history. For example, they estimate that service experiences—when required as part of high school courses—raise the odds of graduation from college by 22 percentage points.

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While the impact appears to be universally positive, different types of activities affect demographic groups in distinct ways. Young men, for instance, appear to make greater academic gains when they participate in service activities: they are 29 percentage points more likely to graduate from college on time if they have engaged in service to fulfill a class requirement during high school, controlling for the other factors measured in NELS. Student government activities seem to produce the strongest effects on female students.

NELS 1988 tracked the educational attainment of a specific cohort over time—from 8th grade through college graduation. According to Dávila and Mora, "NELS represents the most suitable panel dataset to analyze the questions posed in our study because of the relatively young age of the initial cohort, the large nationally-representative sample size, and the detailed questionnaires." Additionally, NELS allowed the researchers to control for a host of demographic and socioeconomic characteristics (including eighth-grade scores on standardized tests, which allowed them to hold constant initial academic ability or motivation).

### HIGH SCHOOL ACADEMIC BENEFITS OF SERVICE NOT GENDER-NEUTRAL

Looking first at community service activities, Dávila and Mora found that, on average, students who participated in service-learning<sup>1</sup> scored 6.7 percent higher in reading achievement and 5.9 percent higher in science achievement than those who did not participate in service-learning. Voluntary community service activities produced slightly bigger results: students participating in voluntary activities scored 8.1 percent higher on reading scores and 7.6 percent higher on

<sup>1</sup> Service-learning is defined as "course-related required community service."

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science scores. These relationships hold even when controlling for the factors measured in NELS.

Additionally, Dávila and Mora found that service opportunities, while academically beneficial for both male and female students, produced greater academic gains for male students. For example, young male students who participated in service activities (either required or voluntary) scored about nine percent higher on reading scores than those who didn't participate in any service activities. The academic gains from service opportunities were smaller for female students: females who participated in service scored about five percent higher than those who did not participate in service.

On the other hand, young women who participated in student government appeared to benefit slightly more scholastically than their male counterparts. Being involved in student government improved the academic progress of female high school students by 1.1 and 1.7 percent in history, mathematics and science achievement. The authors conclude, "It appears that the average scholastic returns from civic engagement activities during high school are not gender-neutral."

Dávila and Mora found that academic gains were similar across different racial/ethnic groups. Overall, they conclude that "high-school civic engagement does not generally favor the academic development of one racial/ethnic group over another."

#### SERVICE LINKED TO HIGHER EDUCATION GAINS

Additionally, civic engagement activities appear to have long-term academic benefits: Dávila and Mora find, "Civic activities undertaken during high school are related to significantly higher odds that individuals graduate from college in later years, when controlling for a host of socioeconomic and demographic characteristics."

Specifically, they found that students who participated in service-learning activities in high school were 22 percentage points more likely to graduate from college than those who did not participate. Similarly, they found that service-learning had a greater effect on male college graduation rates while participation in student government had a stronger effect on female graduation rates. Required service appears to be more effective for males than

**CIRCLE** (The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement) promotes research on the civic and political engagement of young Americans. Although CIRCLE conducts and funds research, not practice, the projects that we support have practical implications for those who work to increase young people's engagement in politics and civic life. CIRCLE is also a clearinghouse for relevant information and scholarship. CIRCLE was founded in 2001 and is funded predominantly by Carnegie Corporation of New York and The Pew Charitable Trusts. It is based in the University of Maryland's School of Public Policy.

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voluntary community service.

The relationship between high school civic engagement and college graduation varied across racial/ethnic groups. The long-term effects of both voluntary and required service were greatest for African-American males. Additionally, service opportunities seemed to raise college attendance for white students more than for Asian-American students.

### WHO PARTICIPATES?

Dávila and Mora also show that participation in civic engagement activities differs by racial/ethnic group and by gender. Looking first at gender differences, the researchers find that across all four racial/ethnic groups studied (non-Hispanic whites, African-Americans, Hispanics, and Asian-Americans) young women were the most likely to participate in voluntary service activities in high school.

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**TABLE 1: THE EFFECTS OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT ON ACADEMIC PROGRESS 4 YEARS AFTER THE 8TH GRADE**

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY	PERCENT INCREASE IN ACADEMIC SUCCESS			
	READING	MATHEMATICS	SCIENCE	HISTORY
<b>All Students:</b>				
Performed community service between 1990-92 as required for class	+6.7%	+4.6%	+5.9%	+3.3%
Performed strictly voluntary community service between 1990-92	+8.1%	+6.5%	+7.6%	+4.3%
Participated in high school student government	+0.3%	+1.3%	+1.0%	+1.5%
<b>Females:</b>				
Performed community service between 1990-92 as required for class	+4.9%	+4.7%	+4.7%	+3.3%
Performed strictly voluntary community service between 1990-92	+5.7%	+5.0%	+6.3%	+3.9%
Participated in high school student government	---	+1.7%	+1.7%	+1.1%
<b>Males:</b>				
Performed community service between 1990-92 as required for class	+9.4%	+5.6%	+8.2%	+3.9%
Performed strictly voluntary community service between 1990-92	+9.5%	+6.3%	+7.2%	+4.3%
Participated in high school student government	---	---	---	+1.2%

**Table 1 Notes:** The results in the top of the table are based on over 12,000 students in the NELS who: (1) were in the 1988-1992 NELS panel, (2) reported information on the frequency of community/volunteer work in 1992, (3) were in school during the 1992 survey, and (4) had non-missing scores on the corresponding 1988 and 1992 IRT exams. The gender-partitioned samples include approximately 6,000 female and 5,900 male non-Hispanic white, African-American, Hispanic, and Asian-American students. Using the regression method of ordinary least squares (OLS), these estimates are based on regressing the natural logarithm of the 1992 IRT score on the corresponding 1988 ln(IRT) score, interaction terms between race/ethnic binary variables and the civic engagement measures, required community service performed for reasons other than class, participation in eighth-grade student government, low eighth-grade academic ranking, immigrant status, household characteristics in 1988 (family income, parents' highest education level, parents' marital status), school characteristics in 1988 (percent of students receiving free lunch and location: urbanicity and geographic region), and binary variables for missing information for family income and the percent of students in the 1988 school receiving free lunch. Sampling weights provided by the NELS are employed here to maintain the national representation of the sample. ("---" means no increase in academic progress.)

## RESEARCH ROUNDUP

*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.*

### THE CIVIC EFFECTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

There is a strong link in the United States between education and political and civic participation. Those who spend more years in school and college are more likely to vote, volunteer, and otherwise participate. This does not necessarily mean that colleges and universities enhance students' civic skills and attitudes; rather it may be that education confers social advantages that facilitate civic participation.

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CIRCLE has recently published four detailed fact sheets that update, refine and in some respects, complicate our knowledge of the links between college education and civic engagement by addressing the differences in civic engagement among 2- and 4-year college students, delving deeper into the impact of education on the civic engagement of 18-to-25 year-olds, and analyzing the civic engagement experiences and other characteristics of recent college graduates.

As a greater fraction of the American population attends college (estimated at 53 percent in 2004), it becomes more important to develop tools and measures that help us understand the impact of higher education on young people's civic participation. The following new fact sheets are available on CIRCLE's Web site ([www.civicyouth.org](http://www.civicyouth.org)):

- "College Attendance and Civic Engagement Among 18-to-25 Year-Olds"
- "Civic Engagement among Recent College Graduates"
- "Civic Engagement among 2-year and 4-year College Students"
- "Higher Education and Civic Engagement: Summary"

#### DIFFERENCES BETWEEN 2-YEAR AND 4-YEAR COLLEGE STUDENTS

Consistent with previous research in the field, CIRCLE's analysis of our 2006 *Civic and Political Health of the Nation* survey found that young people who have some college experience are more likely to be civically engaged than their peers who have not attended

college. This pattern remained relatively consistent when young people were grouped into the following four categories depending on their post-secondary educational experience: (1) no college experience, (2) only attended a 2-year institution, (3) attended both a 2-year and a 4-year institution, and (4) only attended a 4-year institution. Four-year students showed the highest levels of civic engagement, followed by the other groups in decreasing order of college experience. The only form of civic engagement that broke this pattern was following the news. Those young adults with no college experience were the most likely, by far, to watch TV news daily, and also the most likely to read the newspaper daily.

#### IMPACT OF COLLEGE ATTENDANCE ON CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Research consistently finds that, for almost all forms of civic engagement, those with more education are more involved. In the recent survey, however, there were several notable exceptions. Current college students (rather than college graduates) were the most heavily involved in the following activities: running, biking, or walking for charity; displaying a campaign button or sign; trying to persuade others about an election (tied with the college graduates); protesting (tied with the non-college youth); and contacting the broadcast media (tied with people with only some college). Young adults without any college experience were the most likely to protest (tied with college graduates) and just as likely to volunteer as those with some college experience. The research also found differences in the form of civic participation by gender.

#### CIVIC ENGAGEMENT CONTINUES AFTER COLLEGE GRADUATION


The third CIRCLE fact sheet analyzes behavior of college graduates in the years after they complete their four-year undergraduate degrees. CIRCLE's findings (based mainly on the Baccalaureate and Beyond survey) suggest that:

- African-American and Native-American college graduates are more highly engaged than whites;
- graduates of private universities are more engaged than those who graduate from public institutions;
- verbal SAT scores correlate with political participation;
- and, graduates with degrees in law, public administration, planning or the humanities are more engaged than are their peers in other fields

## RESEARCH ROUNDUP

**A SYNTHESIS WITH RECOMMENDATIONS**

For more information on college attendance and civic engagement—and recommendations for research and policy—see also “Higher Education: Civic Mission & Civic Effects.” This joint report produced by The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and CIRCLE is a consensus statement of 22 scholars that explores

the civic effects of attending college and the benefits of various approaches to civic learning in higher education. The authors represent the fields of political science, psychology, economics, philosophy, sociology, research on higher education, and women’s studies. The report concludes with a research agenda. For a free hard copy of the report, please contact Dionne Williams at [dwillia8@umd.edu](mailto:dwillia8@umd.edu) or (301) 405-2790. A PDF of the report can be downloaded from CIRCLE’s Web site. 

**CIRCLE FACT SHEETS**

*CIRCLE has produced forty-eight Fact Sheets, which are brief documents with basic information and graphs on various topics. The following Fact Sheets have been recently added to CIRCLE’s Web site:*

≡ **Young Voters in the 2006 Elections.** Using data from the National Election Pool, National Exit Poll, 1992-2006, the fact sheet provides information on 2006 youth voter turnout, voter turnout trends, and youth voter attitudes.

≡ **Immigrant Youth Demographics.** Compares the numbers of 18-25 year-old **immigrants** by nativity status, gender, race, ethnicity, geographic distribution, country of origin, year of arrival, marital status, educational attainment. Assesses population trends from 1994-2006.

≡ **2006 Youth Demographics.** Compares the numbers of 18-25 year-old **residents and citizens** by gender, race, ethnicity, geographic distribution, marital status, military status, unemployment, educational attainment. Assesses population trends from 1968-2006.

≡ **College Attendance and Civic Engagement Among 18- to-25 Year-Olds.** Presents new evidence on the correlation between a wide range of civic engagement measures and college attendance.

≡ **Civic Engagement among Recent College Graduates.** Examines civic engagement of recent college graduates. Highlights relationships between core civic engagement measures, on the one hand, and graduates’ race and ethnicity, gender, type of college or university, SAT scores, and major field of study, on the other.

≡ **Civic Engagement among 2-year and 4-year College Students.** Uses one relatively recent dataset to look closely at community college students. It shows that graduates generally fall between 4-year college students and high school graduates in their civic engagement. In some respects, community college students (especially transfers) are quite close to those who hold bachelor’s degrees, although they come from less advantaged backgrounds.

≡ **Higher Education and Civic Engagement: Summary.** This fact sheet is a summary of key points from the aforementioned three fact sheets on civic engagement and higher education.

## RESEARCH ROUNDUP

## YOUTH POPULATION ON THE RISE IN 2006

In November 2006, CIRCLE released two fact sheets: "2006 Youth Demographics" and "Immigrant Youth Demographics." The fact sheets provide a snapshot of a growing youth population that is more racially and ethnically diverse and better educated than preceding generations. Young people today are also less likely to be married than their counterparts of thirty years ago, and less likely to have any military service record. The fact sheets are based on data from the Current Population Survey Annual Demographic Supplement, March and can be downloaded from CIRCLE's homepage ([www.civicyouth.org](http://www.civicyouth.org)).

*Today's young people are more likely to be immigrants: 13 percent of 18-to-25 year-olds were born outside of the United States and an additional six percent were born to only foreign-born parents. From 1994 to 2006, the percentage of young people who were born outside of the U.S. grew from 11 percent to 13 percent.*

## YOUTH POPULATION EXPANDS IN SIZE, BUT NOT TO THE LEVELS OF PAST YOUTH COHORTS

The number of young people has grown in recent years and is likely to continue growing in the foreseeable future. In 2006, there

were over 32 million young people between the ages of 18 and 25. There were also 70 million young people under the age of 18. By comparison, the baby boomer generation numbered approximately 77 million in 2006.

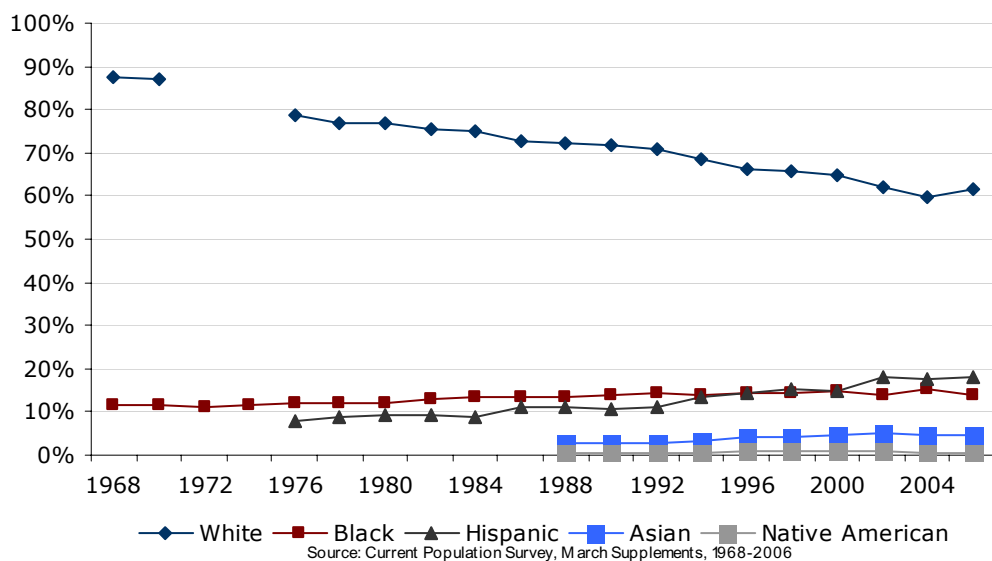
Despite the growth in the youth population, young people still represent a declining share of the adult population in the U.S. This is because youth cohorts of the past—such as the cohorts that comprise the baby boomer generation—were larger in size than the current youth cohort. (See Table 1 for an illustration.)

## IMMIGRANTS MAKE UP A LARGER SHARE OF THE YOUTH POPULATION

Today's young people are more likely to be immigrants: 13 percent of 18-to-25 year-olds were born outside of the United States and an additional six percent were born to only foreign-born parents. From 1994 to 2006, the percentage of young people who were born outside of the U.S. grew from 11 percent to 13 percent. Currently, the immigrant population accounts for 12 percent of the entire U.S. population.

## TODAY'S YOUTH COHORT THE MOST RACIALLY AND ETHNICALLY DIVERSE

Figure 1: Race and Ethnicity, Ages 18-25



Over the last 35 years, the population of young people ages 18 to 25 has grown more racially and ethnically diverse, and is likely to continue to do so. Between 1968 and 2006, the percentage of young residents who are white has fallen from 88 percent to 62 percent. During the same period, the percentage of young people who are African-American or Hispanic has grown by two and 11 percentage points, respectively. The percentage of Asian- and Native-American young residents also increased, but dropped slightly in 2006. (See Figure 1.)

## RESEARCH ROUNDUP

## MARRIAGE RATES DECLINE

One of the most striking demographic trends among young people over the past 35 years is the decline in the percentage of young people who are married. Since 1968, young people have become more likely to delay their first marriage. Only 15 percent of young people in this age group were married in 2006. Foreign-born young people are more likely to be married than U.S.-born young people. Immigrants are more than twice as likely to be married as their U.S.-born counterparts (28 percent to 13 percent).

**TABLE 1: RESIDENT ADULT POPULATION SHARE**

	Ages 18-25	Ages 18-19	Ages 20-21	Ages 22-25
1968	18.6%	2.2%	5.0%	8.8%
1970	19.2%	5.3%	4.8%	9.2%
1972	20.7%	5.5%	5.1%	10.1%
1974	20.6%	5.5%	5.3%	9.8%
1976	20.8%	5.6%	5.4%	9.8%
1978	20.8%	5.4%	5.4%	10.0%
1980	20.6%	5.3%	5.2%	10.1%
1982	20.3%	4.9%	5.1%	10.3%
1984	19.5%	4.5%	4.8%	10.2%
1986	18.2%	4.1%	4.4%	9.7%
1988	17.1%	4.1%	4.1%	9.0%
1990	16.2%	4.0%	3.9%	8.3%
1992	15.1%	3.6%	3.8%	7.8%
1994	15.5%	3.6%	3.6%	8.2%
1996	15.1%	3.7%	3.6%	7.8%
1998	14.6%	3.8%	3.7%	7.0%
2000	14.9%	4.0%	3.8%	7.1%
2002	14.8%	3.8%	3.9%	7.1%
2004	14.8%	3.5%	3.9%	7.4%
2006	14.7%	3.5%	3.7%	7.5%

## COLLEGE ATTENDANCE ON THE RISE, ESPECIALLY AMONG YOUNG FEMALES

More young people today are enrolled in college or have completed a bachelor's degree (or higher) than in 1968. While educational attainment has risen among all young people over the last 35 years, subgroups of young people have made different amounts of progress. For example, females between the ages of

18 and 25 have become more likely to attain a bachelor's degree than their male counterparts; they now lead by a margin of four percentage points.

## SERVICE IN THE ARMED FORCES DROPS, ESPECIALLY IN THE NORTHEAST AND MIDWEST

Since the mid-1970s, the percentage of young people who are either active military or veterans of the armed forces has declined. To a large extent this is a function of the elimination of the draft in 1974. While military service overall has declined, young women have greatly increased their participation in the armed forces. In addition, armed service-members report higher levels of educational attainment (many now have some college experience).

*In 2004, 80 percent of 18-to-25 year-olds serving in the military were from the Southern and Western regions of the United States compared to just 60 percent in 1968.*

In 2004, 80 percent of 18-to-25 year-olds serving in the military were from the Southern and Western regions of the United States compared to just 60 percent in 1968. This is likely the result of two factors: while the youth populations in the South and the West have grown, the percentage of youth from the Northeast and Midwest serving in the military has declined. (See Table 2.)

**TABLE 2: REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF 18-25 YEAR OLD ARMED FORCES MEMBERS**

	2004		1968	
	Veteran	In Military	Veteran	In Military
Northeast	11.8%	8.2%	24.4%	20.2%
Midwest	21.1%	11.9%	30.8%	17.5%
South	52.6%	39.4%	26.2%	31.2%
West	14.6%	40.5%	18.6%	31.2%

To read more about youth demographics, visit [www.civicyouth.org](http://www.civicyouth.org).



## RESEARCH ROUNDUP

**A TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE ON CLOSING THE CIVIC GAP**

Meira Levinson, a teacher and a scholar, documents evidence of a growing civic achievement gap between students of different races and socioeconomic and immigration status in her new "CIRCLE Working Paper (#51) The Civic Achievement Gap." She maintains that this gap will lead to serious political disadvantages for many young immigrants and students of color. The Working Paper is drawn from a forthcoming book by the author.

Using previous research and her own experience as a teacher in urban schools in Boston and Atlanta, Dr. Levinson shows that poor non-white students demonstrate lower levels of civic and political knowledge, skills, positive attitudes toward the state, and participation, than their wealthier and white counterparts.

**TWO PERSPECTIVES ON KNOWLEDGE: TEACHER AND STUDENT**

Levinson begins her paper by illustrating an obstacle faced by civic educators when teaching students from poor, urban neighborhoods: economic and social inequality colors reality for both the teacher and the student. She notes, "One challenge my students and I face in learning from each other about [civic] engagement is that our lived experiences, and thus in part what we think we 'know' about how the world works, diverge so widely."

An example of this gap in knowledge can be seen in a proposed experiential learning project. Each year, Levinson requires her students to work on "citizenship projects" in which they address a problem of concern to them through community and/or political action. The top issue of concern her students cited was the growing gang violence in their neighborhoods, but they protested studying this issue because they felt it would be "literally suicidal" for them to work visibly to reduce the gang problem in their neighborhoods. Levinson states, "I know this [project] would empower them and their communities – but my students can be eloquent about the dangers of visible power." As a teacher, Levinson believes that students need to learn to solve community problems by learning to work within the existing community and political structures. However, her students believe that taking such action could be dangerous to their own lives. Both are likely right.

**INEQUALITIES IN CIVIC AND POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, ATTITUDES AND PARTICIPATION**

In addition to describing her own teaching experience, Levinson summarizes existing evidence of a civic achievement gap. She cites numerous studies showing consistent gaps in important civic measures (knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors) between students of color and poor students and their white and wealthier counterparts.

Looking first at knowledge and skills, she notes that many poor minority students lag behind their wealthier, white counterparts. For example, she summarizes research that shows, "As early as fourth grade and continuing into the eighth and twelfth grades, African-American, Hispanic, and poor students perform significantly worse on the civics test of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) than white, Asian, and middle-class students."

Levinson finds that there are large and important differences between the races and socioeconomic groups when it comes to the attitudes that correlate with civic participation. For example, several studies show the more one feels politically efficacious (or feels one can influence government), the more likely a person is to participate. Levinson cites research that shows, "individuals' political efficacy increases in direct relationship to their income, with the poorest individuals expressing attitudes almost a full standard deviation lower than the wealthiest; it is also significantly correlated with race/ethnicity, with Latinos at the bottom, African-Americans in the middle, and white respondents at the top."

The paper ends with a call for creative solutions to closing the civic achievement gap. Levinson's proposal is not only on behalf of the students that she teaches, but also on behalf of democratic governance. She concludes, "In sum, the civic achievement gap is a significant and measurable threat to democratic ideals and practice. I suggest that it is important for both the civic and political empowerment of poor, minority, and immigrant individuals, and for the health of the polity as a whole, that we develop means of closing the gap." ■



## YOUTH TURNOUT INCREASES FOR SECOND ELECTION IN A ROW

Preliminary CIRCLE estimates show that turnout among 18-29 year-olds increased for the second major election in a row, growing to approximately 24 percent, up at least two points over 2002 levels. In addition, CIRCLE's analysis of the 2006 Edison/Mitofsky National Election Pool's exit poll shows that young adults voted for the Democratic candidate over the Republican candidate in races for the House of Representatives (58% vs. 38%), the Senate (60% vs. 33%) and governor (55% vs. 34%). Additional findings include:

- ★ Young voters were the most likely age group to make their voting decision on Election Day. Forty-four percent of young voters decided for whom to vote in the U.S. House election within a week of Election Day, compared to 28% of the electorate as a whole.
- ★ Young voters are more racially and ethnically diverse than older voters. Eleven percent classified themselves as Hispanic/Latino (larger than the proportion in the electorate as a whole 6%). Young latinos have increased their voter share by eight percentage points since 1992, more than any other minority racial/ethnic group.
- ★ Thirty-nine percent of young respondents said their vote for Congress was meant to express opposition to George W. Bush.

### UPDATED STATISTICS ON VOTERS BETWEEN THE AGES OF 18 AND 29

In our November 8th press release, CIRCLE used the Edison/Mitofsky National Election Pool exit polls for the House of Representatives races and the first day vote tally as reported by the Associated Press to estimate youth turnout. Based on these early reports, CIRCLE estimated that youth turnout was 24%. As new data has become available, CIRCLE now estimates that the turnout of 18-to-29 year-olds was somewhere between 22% and 24%, clearly up from 2000 when youth turnout was 20%.

CIRCLE's estimates of youth turnout are based on three components: (1) the number of votes cast in the election (from local election officials via the Associated Press); (2) the percentage of voters who are in that age range (according to exit polls); (3) and, the size of the citizen population between the ages of 18 and 29 (according to Census Bureau).

The reported number of votes cast has risen since our November 8th release and will continue to be adjusted upwards as local election officials count absentee ballots and provisional ballots. Meanwhile, since our press release Edison/Mitofsky updated their exit poll results, changing the percentage of voters who were between the ages of 18 and 29. This percentage changed from 13% to 12%. These two changes affect our estimate of the number of votes cast by young people, and hence youth turnout rate estimates can be adjusted.

Table 1 below shows how the changing figures affect youth voting estimates. The turnout estimate labeled "2006 (A)" uses the first estimate of the youth share of the electorate (13%). The turnout estimate labeled "2006 (B)" uses the second estimate of the youth share of the electorate (12%). Each calculation generates slightly different results, but all calculations tell the same basic story. Youth turnout in mid-term elections was higher in 2006 than 2002 and certainly rivals turnout in 1994 (a midterm election with one of the highest youth turnout rates).

Currently, exit polls are the only source of data for estimating youth voter turnout, but they may not be the best data source for comparing the turnout of different age groups over time. More information about youth voter turnout will be available in 2007 when the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey, November Supplement is released.

**TABLE 1: ESTIMATES FOR YOUTH VOTING IN MID-TERM ELECTIONS**

Year	Youth Share of Electorate <i>Source: National Election Pool, National Exit Poll</i>	Youth Turnout Rate Estimate #1 <i>Source: 1st day vote tally and Youth Share Based on Exit Polls</i>	Youth Turnout Rate Estimate #2 <i>Source: 2nd day vote tally and Youth Share Based on Exit Polls</i>
2006 (A)	13%	24%	24%
2006 (B)	12%	22%	23%
2002	11%	20%	21%
1994	13%	22%	24%

## RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

*From Research to Practice, a column dedicated to recognizing successful "bridges" between researchers and practitioners, reports on research with practical implications for youth civic engagement. Additionally, it presents concrete examples of how practitioners have applied this research to encourage the participation of young people in civic and political life.*

### CIRCLE HOSTS RESEARCH FORUM FOR PRACTITIONERS

On October 3rd, 2006 at the National Press Club CIRCLE released the 2006 National Civic and Political Health Survey (CPHS), the most up-to-date and detailed look at how young Americans are participating in politics and communities. The full results can be found at [www.civicyouth.org](http://www.civicyouth.org).

Following the release, CIRCLE hosted a Practitioners' Forum that had the following goals:

- to create a professional development opportunity for practitioners to learn about and discuss research relevant to their work;
- to provide an opportunity for practitioners to discuss the research findings relevant to their work with other practitioners; and,
- to open a two-way conversation between researchers and practitioners to address what opportunities exist to capture youth civic engagement even more accurately.

*More than 40 individuals representing over 25 organizations in the youth civic education and civic engagement fields attended the forum.*

More than 40 individuals representing over 25 organizations in the youth civic education and civic engagement fields attended the forum. During the event CIRCLE presented the overall findings from the 2006 *Civic and Political Health of the Nation* survey and facilitated small group discussions on particular topics related to youth civic engagement practice. Topics included: (1) how young people inform themselves and why it matters, (2) youth electoral engagement and political voice, (3) the civic engagement of youth of color, (4) young people's attitudes about and trust in government, and, (5) youth community service and volunteering.

The small group discussions were organized around the following questions:

- Does this research echo your experiences with young people in your work? If not, what surprises you about it?
- What may cause the patterns revealed by the survey?
- Based on this research, what opportunities are there to measure youth engagement more accurately?
- What questions do these research findings raise about youth civic education and engagement practice?

Feedback from the Practitioners' Forum on the CPHS findings provided CIRCLE with critical comments for incorporation into future research. "Listening to the large and very engaged group reinforced our view that practitioners are eager to use and to influence research," said CIRCLE Director Peter Levine. "Dialogue with practitioners is one of our fundamental purposes."

The Forum closed with a focus on practical ways that participants could use the CPHS in their work. This discussion generated tangible ideas such as using specific research findings in grant

#### HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2006 CPHS

- ★ 26% of young Americans say they vote regularly (age 20-25 only).
- ★ 30% have boycotted a product because of the conditions under which it was made or the values of the company that made it.
- ★ 72% of young Americans say they follow what's going on in government and public affairs at least some of the time.
- ★ 67% say they have confronted someone who said something that they considered offensive, such as a racist or other prejudiced comment.
- ★ Although young people remain more favorable toward immigrants and gays than their elders, there has been a decline in youth tolerance for those two groups since 2002.
- ★ Young people who are more engaged in their communities have more positive views of government than those who are less involved. However, substantial numbers of young people, no matter their level of engagement, say government is almost always wasteful and inefficient."

**For more findings from the 2006 CPHS go to:**

[www.civicyouth.org/research/products/youth\\_index\\_2006.htm](http://www.civicyouth.org/research/products/youth_index_2006.htm)

## RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

applications, distributing the CPHS report at board of directors' meetings, and using the CPHS as a tool for staff discussion and critical reflection.

*CIRCLE promotes and conducts research that has practical implications for those who work to increase young people's engagement in politics and civic life. The Practitioners' Forum was one way in which CIRCLE is striving to provide opportunities to make the connection between youth civic engagement research and practice.*

Additionally, forum participants received a copy of the pen-and-paper survey CIRCLE has developed that allows people to assess their own civic engagement, or that of a group. This survey is available on CIRCLE's website ([www.civicyouth.org/research/products/youth\\_index\\_2006.htm](http://www.civicyouth.org/research/products/youth_index_2006.htm)) along with suggestions for its use and a way to easily compare results to the national findings.

CIRCLE promotes and conducts research that has practical implications for those who work to increase young people's engagement in politics and civic life. The Practitioners' Forum was one way in which CIRCLE is striving to provide opportunities to make the connection between youth civic engagement research and practice. ★

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY

The Civic and Political Health Survey (CPHS) can be a helpful tool for organizations interested in promoting civic engagement. CIRCLE staff are available to make presentations about the CPHS and other research findings. Please contact Abby Kiesa ([akiesa@umd.edu](mailto:akiesa@umd.edu)), youth coordinator at CIRCLE, if you are interested in finding out more about customizing a professional development and/or reflection opportunity for your organization.

## CIRCLE IN THE NEWS

## RECENT NEWS ARTICLES CITING CIRCLE RESEARCH...

- ≡ "Few U.S. youths involved in civic life," by D. Alexander, **Reuters**, 10/03/2006
- ≡ "American youth largely uninvolved in civic activities," by L. Linn, **Fox News**, 10/03/2006
- ≡ "Civic involvement tied to education: high school dropouts unlikely to vote," by Amy Goldstein **The Washington Post**, 09/19/2006
- ≡ "Youth movement at the polls" by Z. Goldfarb & P. Slevin **The Washington Post** 11/12/2006
- ≡ "Generation Y gets involved" by S. Jayson **USA Today** 10/12/2006
- ≡ "Civic Priorities" by J. Bridgeland & P. Levine, **Washington Times** 10/05/2006
- ≡ "More and more, governing has become a process that leaves ordinary Americans watching from the sidelines," by M. Hill, **The Baltimore Sun**, 11/05/2006
- ≡ "Young voters are back" by G. Kim, **The Sacramento Bee** 11/04/2006
- ≡ "America's youth becoming engaged in community, political activity" by M. Stearns **San Jose Mercury News** 10/04/2006
- ≡ "Young voters turn out, shape midterm vote" **Indianapolis Star** 11/10/2006
- ≡ "Younger voters get first taste of victory" by R. Dissel **Cleveland Plain Dealer** 11/13/2006

Continued from page 3

They also found students of different racial/ethnic groups participated in civic engagement activities at different rates. Overall, Asian students were the most engaged, while Hispanics were the least engaged. Factors associated with immigration do not appear to contribute to the lower participation rates of young Hispanics. The authors conclude, "We do not find evidence that immigrants are any more or less civically engaged than U.S.-born students. As such, the relatively low civic participation rates among Hispanic teenagers appear to be driven by relatively low educational expectations and tight time constraints instead of the fact that this group has a higher share of immigrants than non-Hispanics whites."

The complete findings are contained in CIRCLE Working Papers (#52) "Civic Engagement and High School Academic Progress" and (#53) "Do Gender and Ethnicity Affect Civic Engagement and Academic Progress?" In addition, a new CIRCLE Fact

Sheet, An Assessment of Civic Engagement and High School Academic Progress, contains a summary of the two papers. All three products can be downloaded from CIRCLE's homepage at [www.civicyouth.org](http://www.civicyouth.org). ■

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The Center for Information & Research  
on Civic Learning & Engagement

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