



CIRCLE

The Center for Information & Research
on Civic Learning & Engagement

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180,000 Citizens Under the Age of Thirty Participate in Kentucky and Oregon Democratic Primary Youth Support Candidate Clinton in Kentucky and Obama in Oregon

**Youth Voter Experts Available for Interviews
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Washington, DC – At least 12 percent of eligible Kentucky citizens and 18 percent Oregon citizens under the age of 30 participated in last night’s Democratic primary, according to preliminary estimates by CIRCLE (The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement). Young voters supported Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton in Kentucky and Barack Obama in Oregon. In Kentucky and Oregon, unlike most other states, we can only estimate the level of participation in the Democratic primary since there were no Republican exit polls conducted.

**Table 1 –Presidential Democratic Primary Participation in 2008
Citizens Under 30**

State	Youth Turnout Rate	Number of Youth Who Voted	Youth as Share of All Voters
Kentucky (17-29)	12%*	89,303	13%
Oregon (18-29)	18%*	90,635	16%

Source: The share of primary voters is obtained from the 2008 Kentucky and Oregon Democratic exit polls conducted by Edison/Mitofsky. The number of votes cast is obtained from the washingtonpost.com (as of 7 am eastern time, 5/21/2008; 100% of precincts reporting in Kentucky; 88% of precincts reporting in Oregon.)

*The youth turnout rate present in Table 1 is the *overall* turnout rate for the state. Because no Republican exit polls were conducted in KY and OR, 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 states of Kentucky and Oregon (Democrats, Republicans and Independents). Thus the turnout rate does not reflect the full participation of young people in the states’ primaries.

See p.2 for definitions.

The results from last night in Kentucky and Oregon punctuate the findings of national focus groups that CIRCLE conducted last fall. The research showed that college students are deeply concerned about issues, involved personally as volunteers, and ready to consider voting. But they want political leaders to be positive, to address real problems, and to call on all Americans to be constructively involved.

"Young Americans have been turning out to vote at remarkable rates in these primaries. This reflects their deep concern about the critical issues at stake and the impact of this election on our country’s future," said CIRCLE Director, Peter Levine. "Since 2000, young people have been volunteering at high rates and are becoming more interested in news and public affairs. Now they are ready to consider voting as a way of addressing major problems. The Millennials are beginning to make their distinctive and lasting mark on American politics."

Because there is no actual count of the number of votes cast by young people in the Kentucky and Oregon 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 of votes cast by young people in the Democratic primary by the estimated number of young citizens (source: 2008 March Demographic File, US Census).

Page 2/ 180,000 Kentucky and Oregon Youth Vote in Democratic Primary

Any comparisons of youth voter turnout among states should be made with caution since each state has different rules governing who can participate in their primaries. Furthermore, we cannot compare youth turnout levels Kentucky and Oregon in 2008 to youth turnout to 2004 or 2000 since no exit polls were conducted for those years.

Youth turnout has been much higher in the 2008 primaries than in recent years. In some states, youth turnout has tripled or quadrupled. Approximately six million young Americans have voted in the primaries to date.

Barack Obama was the clear choice among youth voters in the Democratic primaries. He garnered support from the majority of youth voters in 34 of the 45 states. In Kentucky youth supported Clinton and in Oregon youth supported Obama.



	Clinton	Obama
Kentucky	54%	41%
Oregon	21%	79%

Source: www.cnn.com

The increase in youth turnout observed in most primaries so far continues a 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. In 2004, under-30-year-olds were registered to vote at the highest rate in 30 years.

Definitions

Youth: For the purpose of the Kentucky and Oregon primaries, we define “youth” as citizens between the ages of 18 and 29 on May 21, 2008.

Number of youth who voted: An estimate of how many youth participated.

Youth share primary participants: An estimate of the number of young people who participated in the primaries as a percentage of the number of *all people* who participated in the primaries.

Youth turnout rate: An estimate of the number of young people who participated in the Democratic primary as a percentage of the total number of young people who were eligible to participate in either primary.

The youth turnout rate is the best indicator of how young Americans are engaging in the political process. The other statistics—the sheer number of youth participants and the youth share of the electorate—can change because of factors unrelated to youth engagement.

CIRCLE (The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement) promotes research on the civic and political engagement of Americans between the ages of 15 and 25. Since 2001, CIRCLE has conducted, collected, and funded research on the civic and political participation of young Americans. CIRCLE is based in the University of Kentucky and Oregon’s School of Public Policy and is funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts, Carnegie Corporation of New York and several other foundations.