

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE RECORD 2008 YOUTH VOTE

An estimated 23 million young Americans under the age of 30 voted in the 2008 presidential election, 3.4 million more voters as compared to the 2004. CIRCLE estimated youth voter turnout rose to between 52 percent and 53 percent, an increase of four to five percentage points. Compared to 2000, the increase in youth turnout is at least 11 percentage points.

EDUCATIONAL GAP REMAINS

Continuing the trend observed in the past elections, young people with no college experience were underrepresented in this election. For instance, while just 57 percent of U.S. citizens under 30 have ever attended college, 70 percent of all young voters had gone to college.¹ The same disproportion can be seen when looking at those without a high school diploma. While youth with no high school diploma make up 14 percent of the general youth population, only six percent of young voters in 2008 had no high school diploma (see Figure 2 on page 7).

Young people with no high school diplomas showed lower trust in the electoral process (14% “not at all” confident that votes would be counted accurately compared to 1-2% for youths with high school diploma or higher), showed higher levels of support for health-care coverage than other groups (18% compared to 9% overall), were more racially diverse and more likely to be African-American (27%) or Latino (22%), while less likely to be white (47%).

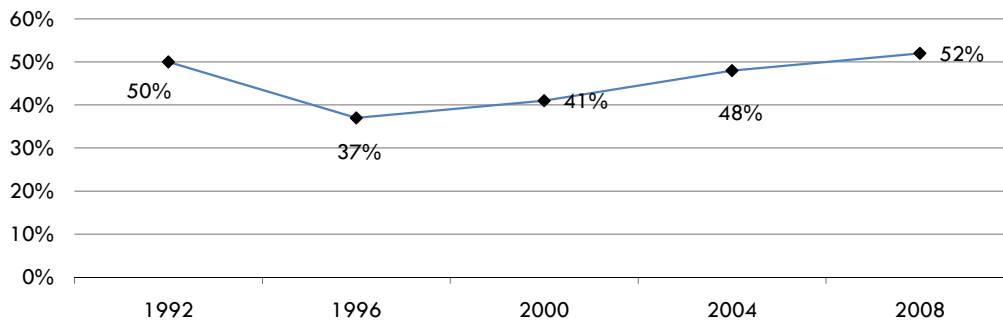
YOUNG VOTERS STRONGLY SUPPORT BARACK OBAMA AND THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Barack Obama received his strongest support from the 18-to-29 year-old voting bloc; more than two-thirds of these voters cast their ballot for the Obama/Biden ticket. Senator McCain received about a third of the youth votes. Moreover, young people were more likely to self-identify as a “Democrat” (45%) than an “Independent or Something Else” (29%) or a “Republican” (26%).

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One of the most striking characteristics of this election was young people’s united support for Barack Obama, regardless of their political affiliations. Thirty-three percent of young white voters self-identified as “Democrat,” and yet, 54 percent voted for the Democratic candidate. Similar trends were seen with African Americans and Latinos, where a large number of youth self-identified as Republicans yet voted for Barack Obama, signifying youth support for Obama seemed to cross racial and partisan lines.

Figure 1: Voter Turnout Among 18-to-29 Year-Olds, 1992-2008



◆ NEP National Exit Poll Day After Vote Tally