

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).

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.

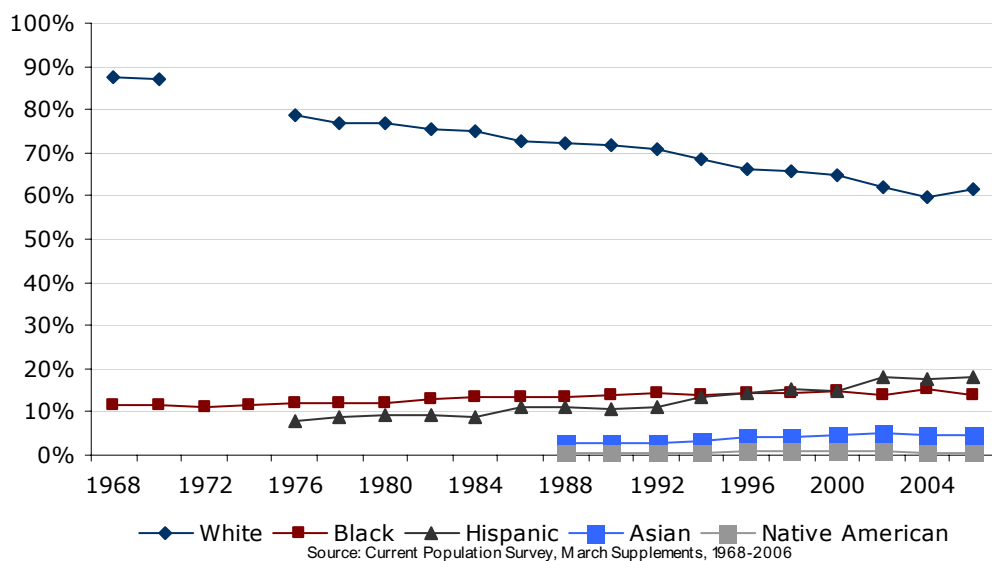
Despite the growth in the youth population, young people still represent a declining share of the adult population in the U.S. This is because youth cohorts of the past—such as the cohorts that comprise the baby boomer generation—were larger in size than the current youth cohort. (See Table 1 for an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

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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.