



# CIRCLE

The Center for Information & Research  
on Civic Learning & Engagement

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## Trends Suggest Young Voters May Be Key in 2008

### Youth Voter Registration Set All-Time High in 2004 Iraq War, Get-Out-The-Vote Efforts Impacting 'Motor Voter' Kids

#### CIRCLE Countdown to 2008 To Provide Key Data & Research on the Youth Vote

**Washington**— Recent youth voter trends, innovative get-out-the-vote efforts, effective voter registration legislation, and concerns about the Iraq war all suggest the youth vote should have a major impact on the 2008 presidential election.

According to research released by the Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement (CIRCLE), since 1972 when youth voter registration rates increased from one presidential election to the next, the youth voter turnout also increased with one exception in 1996. The registration rate for voters ages 18 to 29 reached an all-time high of 70 percent for the 2004 presidential election.

“With recent polls showing the Iraq war, the economy, and jobs are major issues for young voters and the trends in youth voting, registration rates for 2008 should reach new highs,” said CIRCLE Director Peter Levine. “With more than 41 million potential young voters, it will be critical for candidates to mobilize this key voting bloc.”

This research is the first in a series of data, fact sheets, and findings on youth voter issues that CIRCLE will be releasing as part of the CIRCLE Countdown to 2008 campaign. All CIRCLE materials including this fact sheet showing statistical breakdown on these and other trends on voter registration among young people can be found at [www.civicyouth.org](http://www.civicyouth.org).

CIRCLE’s research also examined how both young and older prospective voters register to vote and why some don’t register. Young people were found to register most often at the Department of Motor Vehicle while older voters were more likely to register at their local government offices.

“Federal, state and local governments have begun to make it somewhat easier for voters both young and old to register,” said Levine. “Fourteen years after the Motor Voter Act was passed, thirty percent of young people registered at their local DMV.”

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Conventional wisdom suggests that young people are more apathetic towards politics and elections than their adult counterparts. However, the research shows that *both* young (38 percent) and older (39 percent) voters say the number one reason for not registering to vote is because they are “not interested in election or politics.” Young people were more likely to fail to meet registration deadlines than adults (22 percent versus 4 percent) and to not know how and where to register (6 percent versus 4 percent).

The research also breaks down youth voter registration trends by gender, race, ethnicity, education, marital status, and urban and city. In the past two election cycles, young women were more likely to register to vote than were young men. Another interesting trend in the past two presidential elections (2000 and 2004) finds young African-Americans with higher registration rates than their white, Latino and Asian American counterparts.

The research is based on an analysis by CIRCLE researchers of the Current Population Survey (CPS), November (Voting) Supplement.

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CIRCLE (The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement) promotes research on the civic and political engagement of young Americans. 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 Maryland’s School of Public Policy and is funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts, Carnegie Corporation of New York and other foundations.