

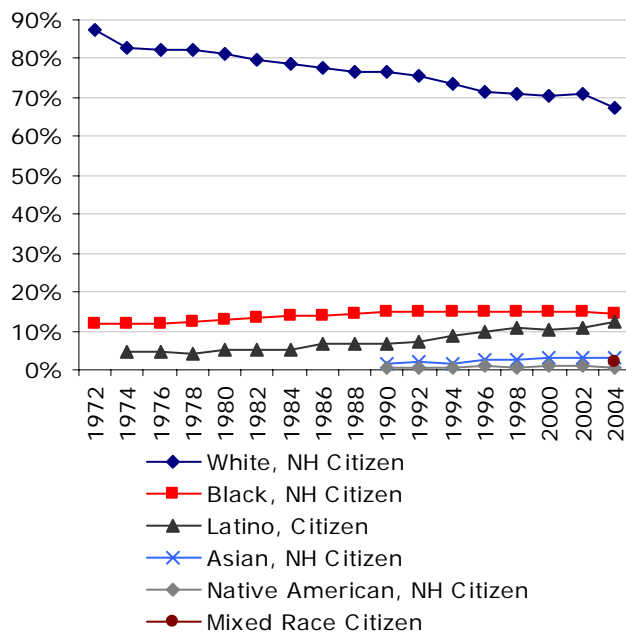
CIRCLE

The Center for Information & Research on
Civic Learning & Engagement

Electoral Engagement Among Minority Youth

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**Graph 1: Racial and Ethnic Composition
of Young U.S. Citizens Ages 18-24, 1972
to 2004**



Source: Current Population Survey, November Supplements, 1972-2004.

Youth voter turnout increased substantially in the 2004 presidential election. According to estimates from numerous sources, young people increased, relative to 2000, the number of votes they cast and their overall voter turnout rate.² This general trend in increased voter participation also appears to extend to all racial and ethnic minority groups. This fact sheet presents data on the characteristics of the youth population and youth voting trends through 2004 by race and ethnicity.

Growing Racial and Ethnic Diversity among Young People

The racial/ethnic composition of the youth population has shifted in recent years. Between 1972 and 2004, the percentage of young citizens who are white has steadily fallen from approximately 87 percent in 1972 to approximately 62 percent in 2004. During the same period, the percentage of young citizens

who are Latino has grown almost 10 percentage points from 5 percent in 1976 to 12 percent in 2004. Since 1972, the African-American population has remained relatively stable at 12% to 15% of the citizen population. Graph 1 displays the trend in the composition of the youth citizen population since 1972.³

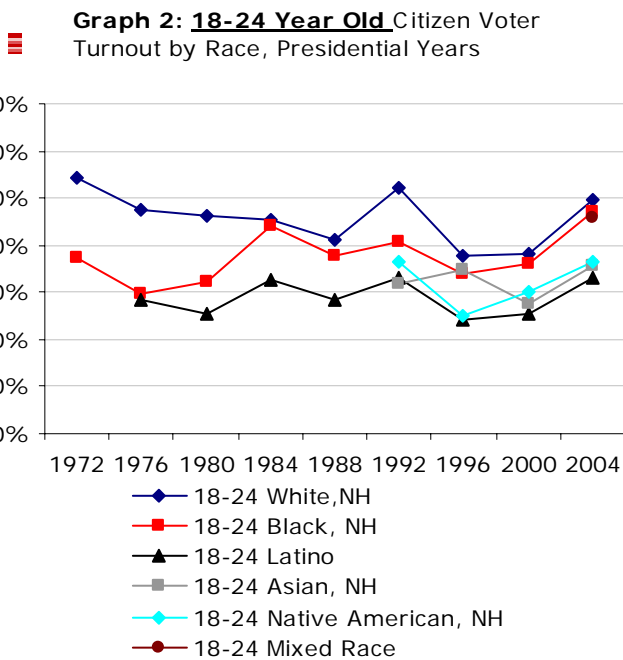
In 2004, there were an estimated 3.6 million young non-Hispanic African-Americans citizens⁴ between the ages of 18 and 24. This compares to an estimated 16.8 million young non-Hispanic white citizens and 3 million young Latino citizens.⁵ When non-citizens are included, the size of the Latino youth population is 4.9 million, larger than the resident non-Hispanic African-American population (3.8 million).

Voter Turnout

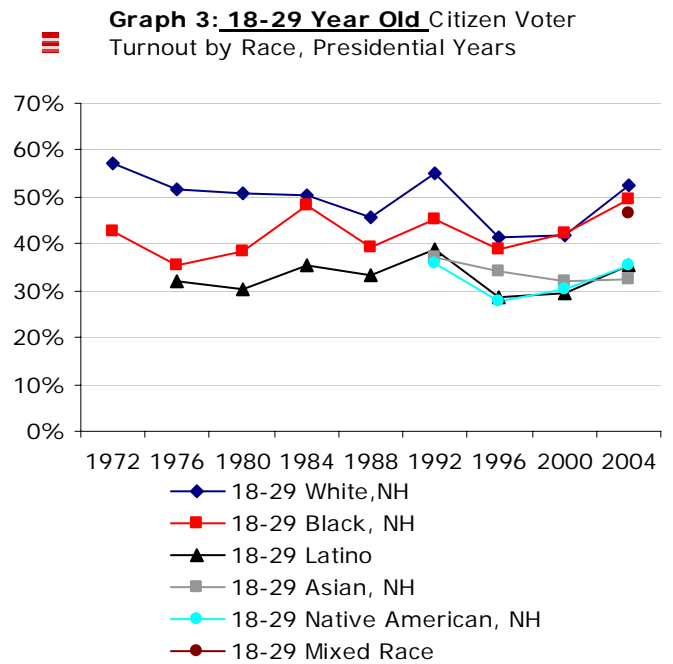
In 2004, youth voter turnout increased substantially and much of this increase was driven by an increase in voting among African-American youth. African-American turnout fell off in the 1988 election and remained relatively stable until the 2004 election, in which African-Americans experienced a jump in turnout of more than 11 percentage points over 2000—the greatest increase in turnout of any racial or ethnic minority group during the recent election cycle. Forty-seven percent of African-Americans voted in 2004, their highest level in three decades, just 2.5 percentage points fewer than whites.

While African-Americans experienced noteworthy increases in turnout over the past decade, other racial and ethnic groups also made significant strides. Turnout among whites increased by nearly 12 percentage points while Asians, Latinos, and Native Americans ages 18 to 24 all experienced gains of five to ten percentage points since the 2000 election.

Asians age 18-29 comprised the only group that experienced significant declines since 2000, and now have the lowest turnout percentage in that age category. Also, the turnout among the youngest Asian cohort – those aged 18-24 – increased to only 1996 levels in 2004. While Asians had the second greatest percentage turnout of any ethnic group in 1996, they sank to the second-lowest, just ahead of Latinos and behind Native Americans, in 2004. (See Table 1 in the appendix for a table with turnout figures by race/ethnicity.)



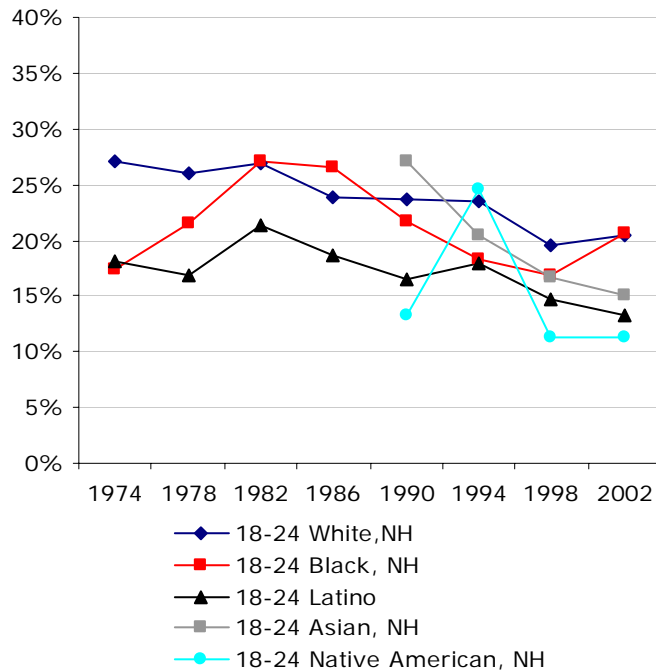
Source: CPS November Voting and Registration Supplements, 1972 to 2004.



Source: CPS November Voting and Registration Supplements, 1972 to 2004.

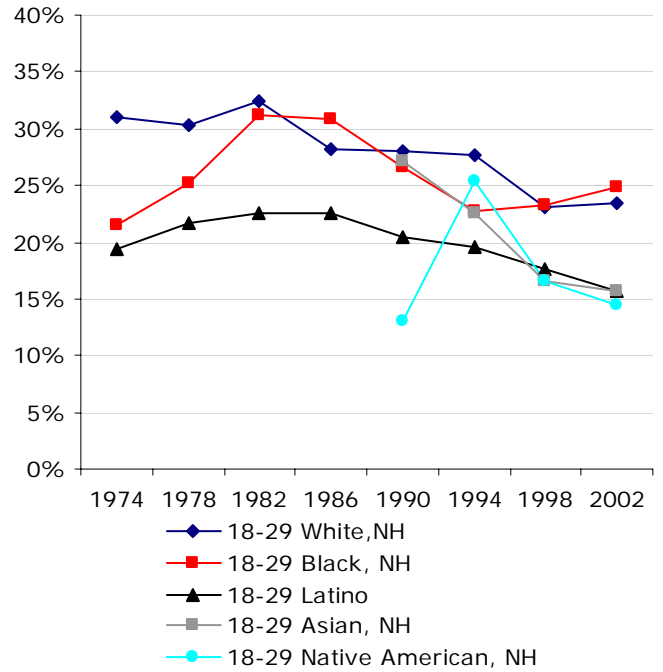
In midterm elections, the trend has been just the opposite. Native Americans were only about half as likely to vote in the 2002 Congressional elections as in 1994. Latinos, Asians, and whites have also experienced significant falloffs in turnout over the past two cycles. The only group to experience any gains in midterm elections was African-Americans. Black youth were more likely to vote in 2002 than any other race.

Graph 4: 18-24 Year Old Citizen Voter Turnout by Race, Midterm Years



Source: CPS November Voting and Registration Supplements, 1972 to 2004.

Graph 5: 18-29 Year Old Citizen Voter Turnout by Race, Midterm Years



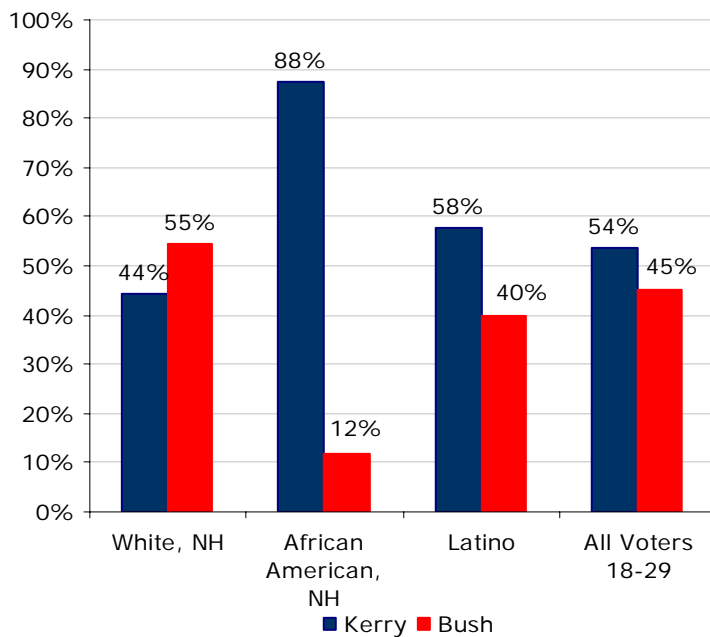
Source: CPS November Voting and Registration Supplements, 1972 to 2004.

Support for Presidential Candidates in 2004

Along with voters age 75 or older, voters ages 18 to 29 were the only other age group to support John Kerry in last fall's presidential election.⁶ However, while young people supported Kerry overall, that support was driven by the very strong support of African-American youth and the strong support of Latino youth. All African-American voters supported Kerry by a margin of 88 percent to 11 percent; that margin was the same for young and older African-Americans. All Latino voters supported Kerry 53 percent to 44 percent with support for Kerry stronger among young Latinos (58 percent to 40 percent) than among Latinos 30 and older (52 percent to 45 percent).⁷

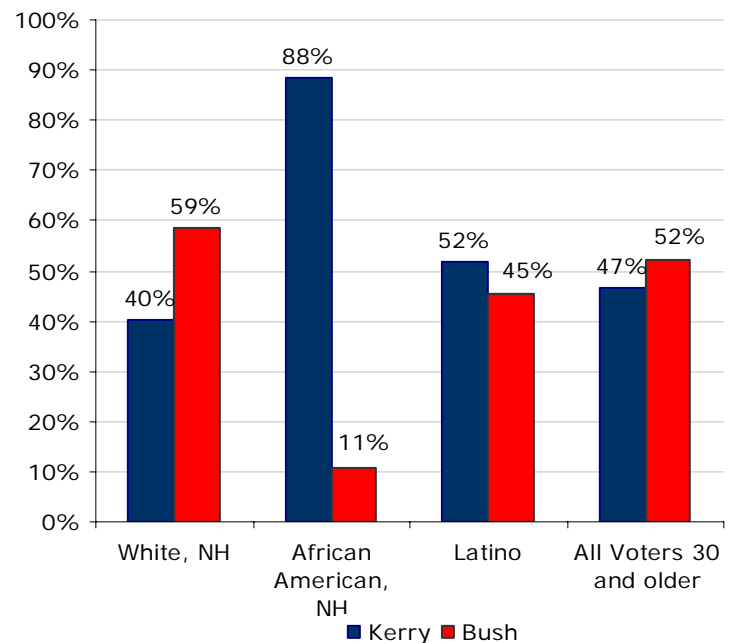
However, White non-Hispanic voters supported George W. Bush. For those White non-Hispanic voters between the ages of 18 and 29, the margin was 55 percent for Bush to 44 percent for Kerry; among those 30 and older, the margin was 59 percent to 40 percent. Voter support percentages for Bush and Kerry are displayed in Graphs 6 and 7, and Table 2 in the appendix.

Graph 6: 18-29 Year Old Voters, 2004
Support for Presidential Candidates



Source: 2004 National Exit Poll from the National Election Pool.

Graph 7: 30 and Older Voters, 2004
Support for Presidential Candidates

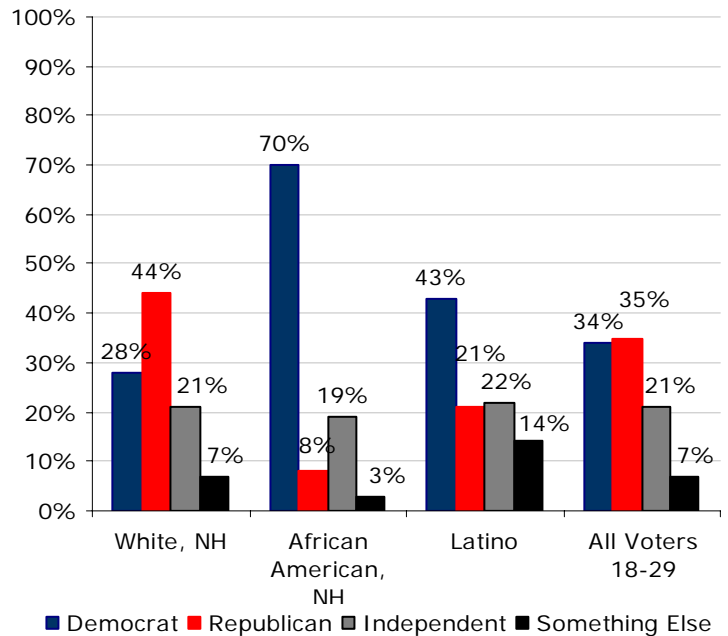


Source: 2004 National Exit Poll from the National Election Pool.

Political Party Identification

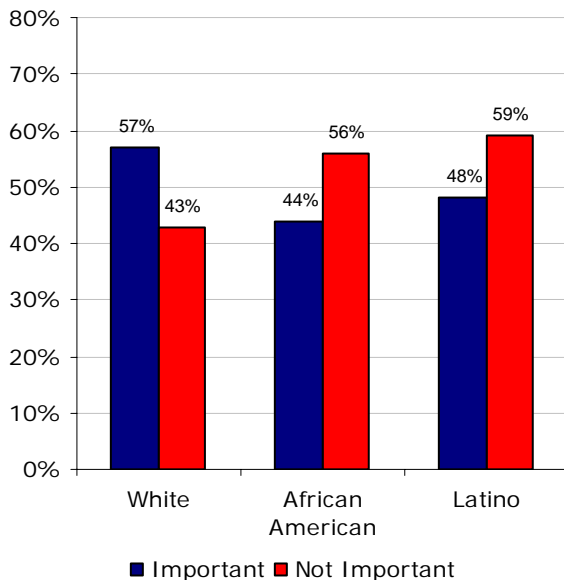
Young African-Americans voters were the most likely to identify themselves as Democrats and least likely to identify as Republican in the 2004 presidential election. About one fifth of white, African-American, and Latino youth identified as Independent.

Graph 8: 18-29 Year Old Voters, 2004
Political Party Identification



Source: 2004 National Exit Poll from the National Election Pool.

Graph 9: White Youth Ages 15-25 are Most Likely to View Voting as Important



Source: CIRCLE/Council for Excellence in Government National Youth Survey, Jan 2004

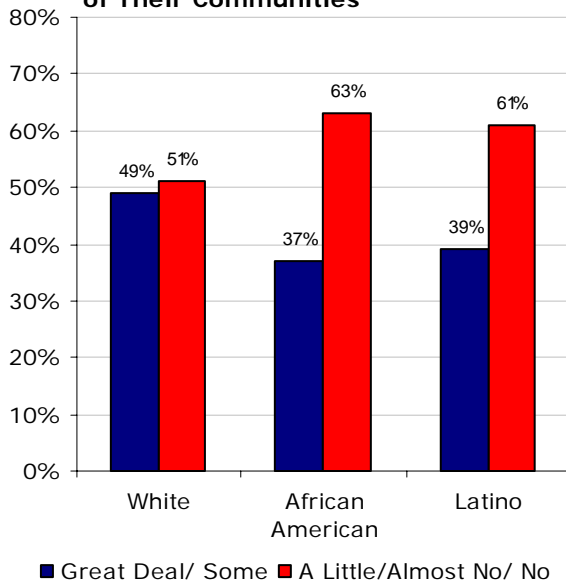
Views on Voting

In 2004 CIRCLE in collaboration with the Center for Democracy and Citizenship at the Council for Excellence in Government commissioned a survey of over 1,000 15-25 year olds called the 2004 *National Youth Survey*. The next section of the fact sheet presents findings from this survey.

White youth are most likely to view voting as important. Less than half of African-American and Latino youth view voting as important.

Research has shown that attitudes can be a predictor of voting. For example, young people who feel that they can make a difference, or feel efficacious, are more likely to vote. However, according to the *2004 National Youth Survey*, less than half of young people reported that they felt they could make a difference in their community which may partially explain why some young people chose not to vote. Young African-Americans and Latinos reported feeling less efficacious than their young white counterparts.

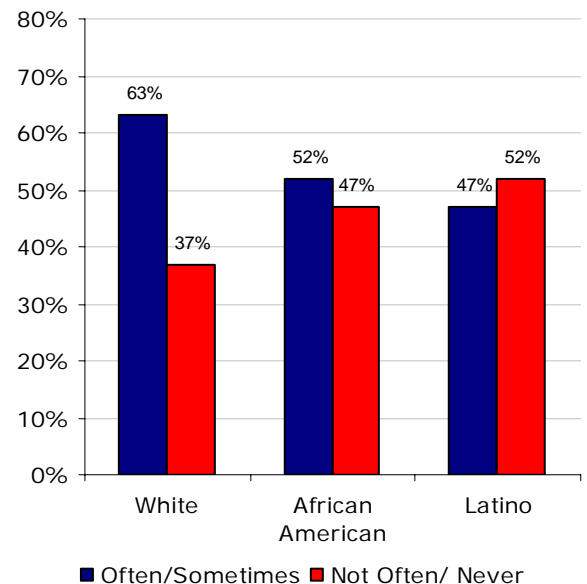
Graph 10: A Majority of Youth Ages 15-25 Feel They Can Make Little Difference in Solving the Problems of Their Communities



Source: CIRCLE/Council for Excellence in Government
National Youth Survey, Jan 2004

Discussing politics with parents also is correlated with higher voting rates. Latino young people are least likely to have discussed politics with their parents.

Graph 11: Talked About Politics with Parents, Young People Ages 15-25



Source: CIRCLE/Council for Excellence in Government
National Youth Survey, Jan 2004

Appendix

Table 1A: Voter Turnout Among White, Non-Hispanics Citizens, 1972-2004⁸				
	<i>18-24 Year Olds</i>	<i>25 and older</i>	<i>18-29 Year Olds</i>	<i>30 and older</i>
Midterm Election Years				
1974	27.0%	53.4%	31.1%	55.9%
1978	26.0%	55.8%	30.3%	58.8%
1982	26.8%	58.7%	32.3%	61.8%
1986	23.8%	55.1%	28.2%	58.5%
1990	23.7%	55.3%	28.1%	58.4%
1994	23.5%	54.7%	27.6%	57.2%
1998	19.5%	51.0%	23.0%	53.4%
2002	20.4%	52.7%	23.4%	54.9%
Presidential Election Years				
1972	54.2%	69.5%	57.1%	70.6%
1976	47.5%	67.3%	51.7%	68.7%
1980	46.4%	70.3%	50.9%	72.3%
1984	45.5%	70.2%	50.3%	72.5%
1988	41.3%	67.7%	45.6%	70.2%
1992	52.0%	72.6%	54.9%	74.4%
1996	37.7%	63.7%	41.4%	65.6%
2000	38.1%	65.0%	42.0%	66.6%
2004	49.8%	69.4%	52.3%	70.6%

Source: Authors' Tabulations from the CPS Nov. Voting and Registration Supplements, 1972-2004

Table 1B: Voter Turnout Among African-American, Non-Hispanics Citizens, 1972-2004⁹				
	<i>18-24 Year Olds</i>	<i>25 and older</i>	<i>18-29 Year Olds</i>	<i>30 and older</i>
Midterm Election Years				
1974	17.5%	40.4%	21.6%	42.2%
1978	21.6%	44.5%	25.2%	47.0%
1982	27.1%	50.7%	31.2%	53.5%
1986	26.6%	50.1%	30.8%	52.8%
1990	21.6%	46.9%	26.7%	49.4%
1994	18.3%	43.1%	22.7%	45.3%
1998	16.9%	46.5%	23.2%	48.7%
2002	20.7%	46.7%	24.8%	48.7%
Presidential Election Years				
1972	37.5%	59.1%	42.7%	60.1%
1976	29.8%	56.4%	35.5%	58.4%
1980	32.4%	59.9%	38.6%	62.1%

1984	44.1%	65.1%	48.3%	67.3%
1988	37.8%	58.9%	39.4%	62.3%
1992	40.6%	63.0%	45.2%	64.8%
1996	33.8%	56.7%	39.0%	58.3%
2000	36.2%	60.9%	42.0%	62.2%
2004	47.3%	62.8%	49.5%	64.1%

Source: Authors' Tabulations from the CPS Nov. Voting and Registration Supplements, 1972-2004

Table 1C: Voter Turnout Among Latino Citizens, 1972-2004¹⁰				
	<i>18-24 Year Olds</i>	<i>25 and older</i>	<i>18-29 Year Olds</i>	<i>30 and older</i>
Midterm Election Years				
1974	18.0%	37.0%	19.3%	40.4%
1978	16.9%	41.8%	21.6%	44.9%
1982	21.4%	43.7%	22.5%	47.9%
1986	18.6%	43.2%	22.5%	46.9%
1990	16.4%	40.3%	20.4%	43.2%
1994	18.0%	37.8%	19.6%	40.8%
1998	14.7%	37.3%	17.6%	39.6%
2002	13.2%	35.2%	15.7%	37.3%
Presidential Election Years				
1976	28.6%	48.3%	32.0%	50.7%
1980	25.6%	52.5%	30.2%	56.1%
1984	32.6%	55.1%	35.5%	59.0%
1988	28.3%	53.0%	33.4%	55.8%
1992	33.1%	55.8%	38.9%	57.4%
1996	24.0%	48.8%	28.4%	51.2%
2000	25.6%	49.7%	29.4%	51.7%
2004	33.0%	50.5%	35.5%	52.3%

Source: Authors' Tabulations from the CPS Nov. Voting and Registration Supplements, 1972-2004

Table 1D: Voter Turnout Among Asian, Non-Hispanics Citizens, 1972-2004¹¹				
	<i>18-24 Year Olds</i>	<i>25 and older</i>	<i>18-29 Year Olds</i>	<i>30 and older</i>
Midterm Election Years				
1990	27.0%	42.3%	27.1%	44.8%
1994	20.5%	42.6%	22.6%	44.8%
1998	16.6%	35.0%	16.5%	37.5%
2002	15.1%	33.7%	15.8%	35.8%
Presidential Election Years				
1992	31.7%	58.0%	36.9%	59.9%
1996	35.0%	47.8%	34.3%	50.0%
2000	27.8%	46.0%	31.8%	47.1%
2004	35.5%	45.9%	32.4%	48.1%

Source: Authors' Tabulations from the CPS Nov. Voting and Registration Supplements, 1972-2004

Table 1E: Voter Turnout Among Native American, Non-Hispanics Citizens, 1972-2004¹²

	<i>18-24 Year Olds</i>	<i>25 and older</i>	<i>18-29 Year Olds</i>	<i>30 and older</i>
Midterm Election Years				
1990	13.2%	40.4%	13.0%	44.8%
1994	24.6%	39.1%	25.3%	41.4%
1998	11.2%	38.8%	16.6%	42.6%
2002	11.3%	35.5%	14.5%	37.5%
Presidential Election Years				
1992	36.5%	56.0%	35.8%	58.9%
1996	25.0%	49.5%	27.5%	52.8%
2000	30.1%	49.5%	30.2%	52.3%
2004	36.6%	50.8%	35.4%	53.1%

Source: Authors' Tabulations from the CPS Nov. Voting and Registration Supplements, 1972-2004

Table 1F: Voter Turnout Among Mixed Race, Non-Hispanics Citizens, 1972-2004¹³

	<i>18-24 Year Olds</i>	<i>25 and older</i>	<i>18-29 Year Olds</i>	<i>30 and older</i>
2004	45.8%	62.8%	46.4%	65.3%

Source: Authors' Tabulations from the CPS Nov. Voting and Registration Supplements, 1972-2004

Table 2 – Support for Kerry and Bush by Racial/Ethnic Group and Age

November 2004 National Exit Poll

	<i>White, NH</i>	<i>African-American, NH</i>	<i>Latino</i>	<i>All Voters</i>
<i>Voters Ages 18 to 24</i>				
John Kerry	48%	89%	55%	56%
George W. Bush	51%	10%	43%	43%
Margin of Error	3.2% points	4.4% points	6.8% points	2.5% points
<i>Voters Ages 18 to 29</i>				
John Kerry	44%	88%	58%	54%
George W. Bush	55%	12%	40%	45%
Margin of Error	2.3% points	3.1% points	5.1% points	1.9% points
<i>Voters Ages 30 and Older</i>				
John Kerry	40%	89%	52%	47%
George W. Bush	59%	11%	45%	52%
Margin of Error	1% point	1.8% points	3.9% points	0.9% points
<i>All Voters Ages 18 and Older</i>				
John Kerry	41%	88%	53%	48%
George W. Bush	58%	11%	44%	51%
Margin of Error	1% point	1.6% points	3% points	0.6% points

Source: Author's tabulation, National Election Pool November 2004 National Exit Poll.

Notes

¹ We thank Michael Olander for excellent research assistance. We also thank Bill Galston, Deborah Both, Carrie Donovan and Peter Levine for helpful comments on previous drafts of this fact sheet. All errors in fact or interpretation are our own.

² For more information on youth voting rates see CIRCLE Fact Sheet "The Youth Vote 2004." For information on how CIRCLE calculates voter turnout rates please see "CIRCLE Working Paper 35: The Youth Vote 2004: With a Historical Look at Youth Voting Patterns, 1972-2004."

³ We have defined racial/ethnic groups in the 2004 CPS November Supplements by defining anyone with Hispanic background as Latino, single race or ethnicity individuals who are non-Hispanic as white, African-American, Asian American or Native American, and those of mixed race/ethnicity as a separate category. Since 2003, the CPS has allowed survey participants to mark more than once racial/ethnic category in describing their backgrounds. This potentially means that 2000 and 2004 may not be entirely comparable when identifying race and ethnicity categories of survey respondents.

Prior to 1990, the Current Population Survey allowed individuals to categorize their race/ethnicity as "other." Those classifications have been suppressed here since it is unclear what race/ethnicity people who identified themselves as "other" are. All programs used to generate race and ethnicity variables are available from the authors upon request.

⁴ All results are for non-Hispanic African-Americans, non-Hispanic whites, and Latinos.

⁵ These figures are estimates of the number of non-institutionalized young people in the U.S. Estimates are based on the 2004 November supplement of the Current Population Survey.

⁶ Exit polls are a good data source for estimating youth support for a particular candidate. We have chosen to present data on 18-29 year olds as opposed to 18-24 year olds since the sample sizes are larger and likely give a more accurate estimate.

⁷ There is some controversy regarding the accuracy of Latino presidential support estimates from this year's National Election Pool Exit Polls. Specifically, in the National Exit Poll, conservative Latinos may be over-represented. For more discussion on some of the controversy surrounding the representation of Latino voters in the 2004 National Exit Poll, see Roberto Suro, Richard Fry, and Jeffrey Passel ["Hispanics and the 2004 Election: Population, Electorate and Voters."](#)

⁸ See Endnote #3

⁹ See Endnote #3

¹⁰ See Endnote #3

¹¹ See Endnote #3

¹² See Endnote #3

¹³ See Endnote #3

youth, and youth from visible minority groups or from groups which are well established in the host country face different challenges from those from non-visible minority groups or groups from new immigrant groups (Pachi & Barrett, 2011d). Participation among both majority and ethnic minority/immigrant youth. Since the early 1990s, the national records of electoral registration and voter turnout in most European countries and the US, as well as studies on political participation, have shown that over recent decades there has been an unquestionable decline in the use of conventional forms of political participation among youth in general and especially among ethnic minority and immigrant youth (van Heelsum, 2002; Toole, Marsh & Jones, 2003; Phelps, 2005).

5 Political engagement

What constitutes a political activity? Barriers to participating in politics

How are young people engaging with the political process? Responses to the first voting opportunity

Voting behaviour at the 1997 General Election

Among those mentioned were: an interest in tax levels for those in work, or an interest in issues connected with childcare and education for parents.

Group 5

Highly interested and connected

The final group is the most interested in politics and have been classified as "very interested".

Third, the opportunity to engage in politics.

Electoral eligibility and the desire to fulfil a civic responsibility or duty was the key trigger to arousing interest. Other types of activities, however, were also identified as, sometimes, having a similar effect. Minority youth, especially Hispanic youth, volunteer at lower levels than their white counterparts.

3 This paper examines several key influences on volunteer behavior

social behaviors, such as church attendance, family involvement, and experience with service learning, and individual characteristics, such as school performance and attitudes about society to determine whether they differ among minority and non-minority youth.

Lopez, Mark Hugo, "Civic Engagement Among Minority Youth," CIRCLE: The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement, September 2002, pp. 8-10.

Neill, Michael, "Research on Giving and Volunteering: Methodological Concerns," Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, vol. 30, no. 3, September 2001.

Young ethnic minority are not less engaged in politics than other young people.

Credit: lottie45, CC BY 2.0

We found very diverse repertoires of action among our respondents, including but also beyond electoral engagement, and perspectives on engagement that support arguments concerning the emergence of "new grammars of action". Whilst our respondents did engage with mainstream politics, they were not strongly engaged in this arena. Despite having often very full political biographies, few saw electoral or party politics as the main terrain for the expression of their political interests.