Quick Facts about Young Voters in Illinois: The Midterm Election Year 2006

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The 2006 midterm election was the second major election in a row that saw an increase in the electoral participation of young people ages 18-29. Between 2002 and 2006, the percentage of eligible young people who voted increased by 3 percentage points to 25 percent, the single largest increase among all age groups nationally. However, while youth electoral participation improved between 2002 and 2006 nationally, in Illinois, the youth voter turnout rate remained unchanged at 23 percentage points. Overall, Illinois ranked 34th (tied with AZ, IN, and TN) among all states and the District of Columbia in 2006, down from 23rd in 2002, and was two percentage points lower than the nation as a whole.

Graph 1: Illinois Voter Turnout in Midterm Years Among Citizens, by Age

This fact sheet reports the characteristics of young voters for the state of Illinois, including estimates of the number of young voters, and voter turnout rates in 2006 and 2002 for various sub-groups of young people.
Youth Turnout Estimates, 2006

In 2006, a midterm election year, an estimated 1.9 million young people in Illinois were eligible to vote in U.S. elections. Table 1 shows voting statistics for the years 2006 and 2002, the last midterm election year.

Voter Turnout Rates in 2006 and 2002 Among Eligible Young Citizens

Table 2 displays voter turnout rates for various groups of young people in 2006 and 2002 in Illinois. In 2006, voter turnout among many youth groups in Illinois was low. Black non-Hispanics had a substantial decrease in voter turnout 2002 and 2006. The trend of increasing youth voter participation in midterm election years for Black youth has taken a sudden drop in 2006. (See Graph 2.)

For all other groups of young people, voter turnout rates were relatively unchanged between 2002 and 2006, with increases evident for young whites (up 4 points), young Latinos (up 2 points), and young people with a B.A. or more (up 8 points).

Partisanship Among Young Voters in 2006

According to analysis of the Election Pool, Exit Poll data, the majority (55 percent) of young voters (ages 18 to 29) in Illinois identified as Democrat, regardless of how they voted in the 2006 elections.
Notes

1 Research Director, Research Associate, and Research Assistant, respectively. We also thank Peter Levine, Emily Kirby, Abby Kiesa, and Deborah Both for comments on previous drafts of this fact sheet.

2 See “Youth Voter Turnout Increases in 2006” by Mark Hugo Lopez, Karlo Barrios Marcelo, and Emily Hoban Kirby for a longer discussion of youth voter turnout trends in 2006.

3 We have defined racial/ethnic groups in the Current Population Survey November Supplements by defining anyone with Hispanic background as Latino; individuals who cite a single non-Hispanic race or ethnicity are identified as non-Hispanic white, African American, Asian American or Native American.