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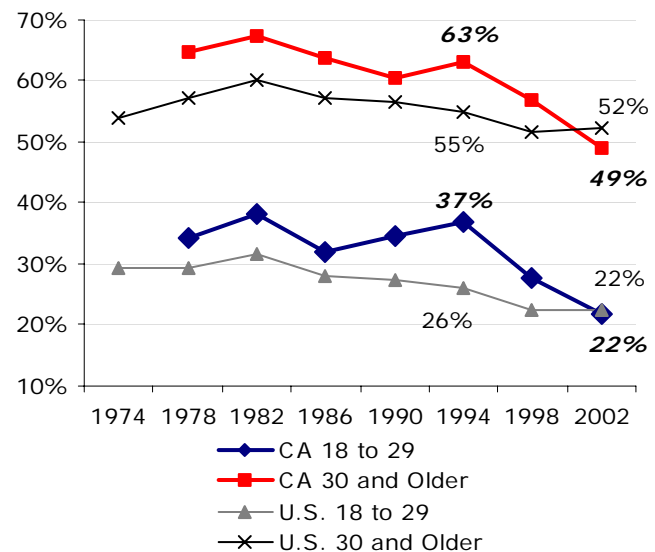
The Center for Information & Research on
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Quick Facts about Young Voters in California: The Midterm Election Year 2006

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This year's elections follow a presidential election that witnessed the highest level of national youth voter participation in over a decade, and a youth voter turnout rate of 46 percent in California, up 6 percentage points over 2000. Compared to other states in 2004, the turnout rate among 18 to 29 year olds in California ranked 36th overall. However, despite a rise youth voter participation in California in 2004 relative to 2000, whether this voter mobilization momentum continues into 2006 remains unpredictable. Furthermore, it would be a mistake to compare either state-level or national youth voter turnout in 2006 to 2004 since presidential elections generally draw more voters to the polls, and hence have higher voter turnout rates. Instead, the two appropriate comparisons are 2002, the last time midterm elections occurred, and 1994, the last time midterm elections followed a surge in youth voting in a presidential election (1992).

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



Source: Current Population Survey, November Supplements, 1974-2002.

This fact sheet reports the characteristics of young voters for the state of California, including estimates of the number of young voters, voter turnout in 2002 and 1994 for various sub-groups of young people, and a listing of voter registration and election day laws that may affect young voters. While the general trend in national voter turnout among young people during midterm elections was down between 1980 and 2002, California could see a higher level of voter participation among all voters in 2006 relative to 2002 because of a high profile gubernatorial race, a U.S. Senate race, and numerous statewide ballot propositions. The trends in voter turnout in midterm elections in California and the U.S. as a whole are shown in Graph 1.² Until 2002, Californians exhibited greater levels of turnout in midterm election years than their counterparts nationwide. This was particularly true in 1994, when the gap in voter turnout between California's young people and young people nationwide was 11 percentage points. It is likely that this difference in electoral participation was driven by high profile gubernatorial and ballot elections in midterm years, and is likely to again be driven by these factors in 2006.

Estimates of Eligible Young Voters, 2006

In 2006, a midterm election year, there are an estimated 4.6 million young people in California who are eligible to vote in U.S. elections. Table 1A shows voting statistics for the years 2002, the last midterm election year, and 1994, the last midterm election year that followed a surge in youth voting in a presidential election year (1992).³ California's youth voter turnout rate was in the middle of all states in 2002, but it had the sixth highest youth turnout rate in 1994 among all 50 states and the District of Columbia.⁴

California's population is among the most diverse in the U.S. This diversity is especially reflected in the youth population of California. Table 1B shows the racial/ethnic characteristics of young people in California. While California's population is more diverse than the U.S. population, its youth population is more diverse than its adult population. Among young citizens ages 18-29, less than half are White non-Hispanic, over one-third are Latino, and over 10 percent are Asian non-Hispanic.

Table 1A – California Voter Turnout Statistics, 2006, 2002, and 1994

	Young People 18 to 29	Adults 30 and Older
2006		
Number of Citizens Eligible to Vote in 2006	4.6 million	16.4 million
2002		
Number of Votes Cast	999 thousand	7.9 million
Citizen Voter Turnout Rate	22 percent	49 percent
Share of all Voters	11 percent	89 percent
1994		
Number of Votes Cast	1.5 million	8.9 million
Citizen Voter Turnout Rate	37 percent	63 percent
Share of all Voters	14 percent	86 percent

Source: Author's tabulations, Current Population Survey, March Supplement 2006 and November Supplement 2002 and 1994

Table 1B – 2006 Population Proportion of Young People and Adults by Citizenship and Race/Ethnicity

	White non- Hispanics	Black non- Hispanics	Latinos	Asian non- Hispanics
Young People, 18 to 29				
Residents	36.9 percent	5.7 percent	42.8 percent	12.2 percent
Citizens	44.8 percent	6.7 percent	34.1 percent	11.3 percent
Adults, 30 and older				
Residents	52.2 percent	6.0 percent	27.3 percent	13.0 percent
Citizens	61.1 percent	6.9 percent	18.7 percent	11.6 percent

Source: Author's tabulations, Current Population Survey, March Supplement 2006

Voter Turnout Rates in 2002 and 1994 Among Eligible Young Citizens

Table 2 displays voter turnout rates for various groups of young people in 2002 and 1994 in California. In 2002, voter turnout among many youth groups in California was very low. Only among young people with a BA or more was the voter turnout rate at 40 percent or higher. In contrast, the midterm election year 1994 was a year of high voter turnout for all youth groups in California relative to 2002. Also in 1994, relative to the nation as a whole, youth in California were among the most engaged electorally.

Table 2 – California Voter Turnout Rates Among Young Citizens ages 18 to 29, 2002 and 1994

Voter Turnout Rate Among:	2002	1994
<i>Race/Ethnicity⁵</i>		
White non-Hispanics	25 percent	41 percent
Black non-Hispanics	23 percent	30 percent
Latinos	17 percent	30 percent
Asian non-Hispanics	16 percent	29 percent
Native American non-Hispanics	***	***
<i>Gender</i>		
Women	25 percent	38 percent
Men	19 percent	36 percent
<i>Educational Attainment</i>		
Less than High School	6 percent	14 percent
High School	11 percent	22 percent
Some College	25 percent	46 percent
BA or more	40 percent	57 percent
<i>Marital Status</i>		
Single Men	17 percent	35 percent
Single Women	24 percent	39 percent
Married Men	25 percent	38 percent
Married Women	28 percent	41 percent
Registered Voter	50 percent	70 percent
All Youth, California	22 percent	37 percent
All Youth, National	22 percent	26 percent

Source: Author's Tabulations from the 2002 and 1994 November Supplements of the Current Population Survey. *** indicates a sample size is too small to produce a reliable estimate.

Voter Registration and Election Day Laws in California

Table 3 displays important Voter Registration and Election Day Laws for the state of California. For more information on elections in California, contact the Elections Division of California at 916-657-2166 or www.ss.ca.gov.

Table 3 – California Voter Registration and Election Day Laws, 2006

Registration Day Laws	
Registration Deadline for all Elections	15 days before an election
Unrestricted Absentee Voting	Yes
In Person Early Voting	No
Election Day Registration	No
Allows 17 Year Olds to Vote in Primaries	No
Election Day Laws	
Polls Open	7am to 8pm
Time off to Vote (Private Sector)	Yes
Mail Information on Poll Location	Yes
Mail Sample Ballots	Yes

Source: CIRCLE Fact Sheet "State Voter Registration and Election Day Laws", June 2004 and NAACP Voter Empowerment Guide "Value Our Vote" July 2006

Notes

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² For more information on the voter turnout rates of young people in presidential years, see "CIRCLE Working Paper 35: The Youth Voter 2004: With a Historical Look at Youth Voting Patterns 1972-2004."

³ For a full discussion of the different ways voter turnout can be calculated please see "CIRCLE Working Paper 35: The Youth Voter 2004: With a Historical Look at Youth Voting Patterns 1972-2004." All voter turnout estimates presented in this fact sheet are calculated for U.S. citizens only, and according to the "Census Citizen Method" described in CIRCLE Working Paper 35.

⁴ For state-by-state comparisons of voter turnout rates, see the CIRCLE fact sheet "Youth Voter Turnout in the States during the 2004 Presidential Election and the 2002 Midterm Elections."

⁵ 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.