



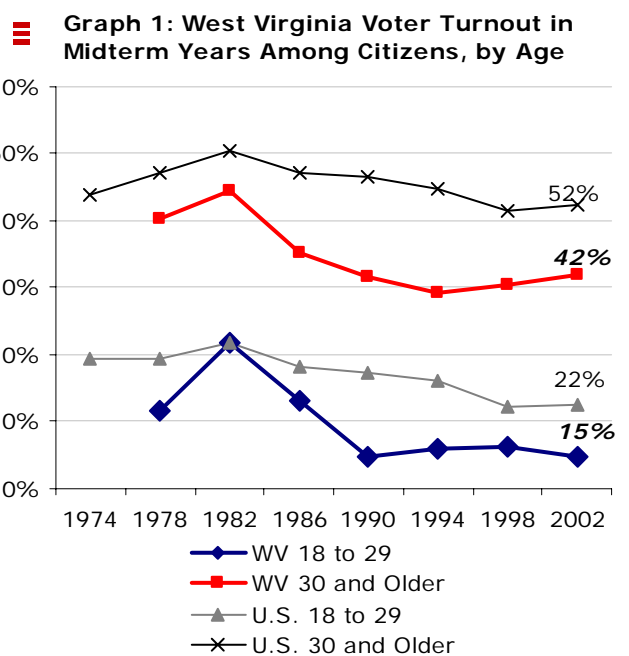
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Quick Facts about Young Voters in West Virginia: The Midterm Election Year 2006

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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 49 percent in West Virginia, up 10 percentage points over 2000. Compared to other states in 2004, the turnout rate among 18 to 29 year olds in West Virginia ranked 30th overall. However, despite high youth voter participation in West Virginia in 2004, 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).



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

This fact sheet reports the characteristics of young voters for the state of West Virginia, 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. Just as the general trend in national voter turnout among young people during midterm elections was down between 1982 and 2002 (see Graph 1), West Virginia's youth voter turnout rate in midterm election years declined from 1982 to 1990 and has been relatively flat—below the national average—from 1990 to 2002. This year, West Virginia might not see a higher level of voter participation among all voters relative to 2002 because of the lack of a highly contested Senate race.

Estimates of Eligible Young Voters, 2006

In 2006, a midterm election year, there are an estimated 263,000 young people in West Virginia who are eligible to vote in U.S. elections. Table 1 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).²

Table 1 – West Virginia Voter Turnout Statistics, 2006, 2002, and 1994

	Young People 18 to 29	Adults 30 and Older
2006		
Number of Citizens	263 thousand	1.1 million
Eligible to Vote in 2006		
2002		
Number of Votes Cast	40 thousand	471 thousand
Citizen Voter Turnout Rate	15 percent	42 percent
Share of all Voters	8 percent	92 percent
1994		
Number of Votes Cast	48 thousand	427 thousand
Citizen Voter Turnout Rate	16 percent	39 percent
Share of all Voters	10 percent	90 percent

Source: Authors' Tabulations, Current Population Survey, March Supplement 2006 and November Supplement 2002 and 1994

Voter Turnout Rates in 2002 and 1994 Among Eligible Young Citizens, Ages 18-29

Table 2 displays voter turnout rates for various groups of young people ages 18 to 29 in 2002 and 1994 in West Virginia. In 2002, voter turnout among many youth groups in West Virginia was down slightly from 1994. Only among young people with a BA or more was the voter turnout rate at 40 percent or higher. Also in 1994 and 2002, relative to the nation as a whole, youth in West Virginia were less engaged electorally.

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

Voter Turnout Rate Among:	2002	1994
Gender		
Women	13 percent	17 percent
Men	17 percent	15 percent
Educational Attainment		
Less than High School	6 percent	4 percent
High School	7 percent	12 percent
Some College	19 percent	22 percent
BA or more	45 percent	40 percent
Marital Status		
Single Men	18 percent	15 percent
Single Women	15 percent	19 percent
Married Men	18 percent	17 percent
Married Women	11 percent	16 percent
Registered Voter	35 percent	38 percent
All Youth, West Virginia		
All Youth, National	15 percent	16 percent
All Youth, National	22 percent	26 percent

Source: Authors' 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 West Virginia

Table 3 displays important Voter Registration and Election Day Laws for the state of West Virginia. For more information on elections in West Virginia, contact the West Virginia Secretary of State at 304-558-6000 or www.wvsos.com.

Table 3 – West Virginia Voter Registration and Election Day Laws, 2006

Registration Day Laws	
Registration Deadline for all Elections	20 days before an election
Unrestricted Absentee Voting	Yes
In Person Early Voting	Yes
Election Day Registration	No
Allows 17 Year Olds to Vote in Primaries	Yes
Election Day Laws	
Polls Open	6:30am to 7:30pm
Time off to Vote (Private Sector)	Yes
Mail Information on Poll Location	No
Mail Sample Ballots	No

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

Notes

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

² 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.