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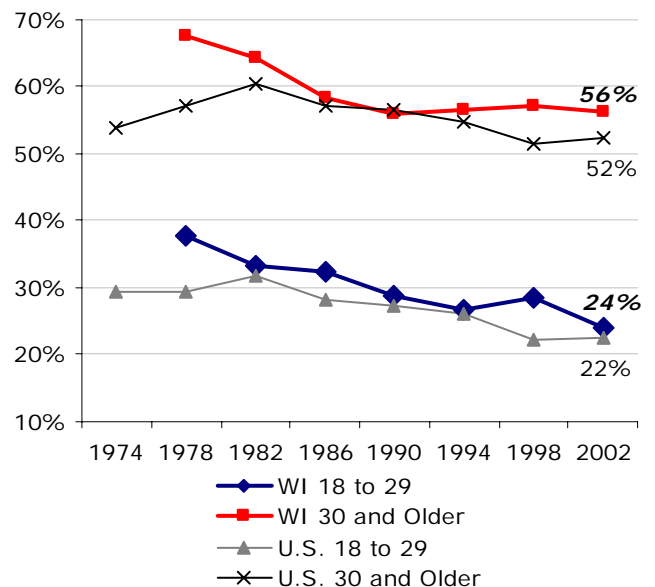
The Center for Information & Research on
Civic Learning & Engagement

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

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September 2006

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 65 percent in Wisconsin, up an impressive 14 percentage points over 2000. Compared to other states in 2004, the turnout rate among 18 to 29 year olds in Wisconsin ranked 2nd overall. However, despite high youth voter participation in Wisconsin 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).

Graph 1: Wisconsin 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 Wisconsin, 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), Wisconsin's youth voter turnout rate in midterm election years has been steadily declining, although it has been above the national average. This year, Wisconsin could see a higher level of voter participation among all voters relative to 2002 because of high profile gubernatorial and House (8th District) races.

Estimates of Eligible Young Voters, 2006

In 2006, a midterm election year, there are an estimated 758,000 young people in Wisconsin 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 – Wisconsin Voter Turnout Statistics, 2006, 2002, and 1994

	Young People 18 to 29	Adults 30 and Older
2006		
Number of Citizens	758 thousand	3.3 million
Eligible to Vote in 2006		
2002		
Number of Votes Cast	176 thousand	1.8 million
Citizen Voter Turnout Rate	24 percent	56 percent
Share of all Voters	9 percent	91 percent
1994		
Number of Votes Cast	207 thousand	1.6 million
Citizen Voter Turnout Rate	27 percent	57 percent
Share of all Voters	11 percent	89 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 Wisconsin. In 2002, voter turnout among many youth groups in Wisconsin was down from 1994. Only among young people with a BA or more was the voter turnout rate at 40 percent or higher.

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

Voter Turnout Rate Among:	2002	1994
Gender		
Women	24 percent	28 percent
Men	24 percent	25 percent
Educational Attainment		
Less than High School	13 percent	4 percent
High School	18 percent	18 percent
Some College	25 percent	35 percent
BA or more	44 percent	46 percent
Marital Status		
Single Men	21 percent	25 percent
Single Women	20 percent	29 percent
Married Men	30 percent	***
Married Women	39 percent	31 percent
Registered Voter	52 percent	43 percent
All Youth, Wisconsin	24 percent	27 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 Wisconsin

Table 3 displays important Voter Registration and Election Day Laws for the state of Wisconsin. For more information on elections in Wisconsin, contact the Elections Division of Wisconsin at 608-266-8005 or elections.state.wi.us.

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

Registration Day Laws	
Registration Deadline for all Elections	Election Day
Unrestricted Absentee Voting	Yes
In Person Early Voting	No
Election Day Registration	Yes
Allows 17 Year Olds to Vote in Primaries	No
Election Day Laws	
Polls Open	7/9am to 8pm
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.