



**CIRCLE**

The Center for Information & Research  
on Civic Learning & Engagement

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## **First Presidential Contests Show Young-Voter Potential for 2004** ***Iowa Youth Turnout Surged, NH Youth Diverge from Older Voters***

Washington, DC – Analysis of entrance and exit polls in Iowa and New Hampshire show there were clear differences between how young people participated in the first two battleground states, according to the Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement (CIRCLE).

Youth participation quadrupled in the Iowa Caucuses between 2000 and 2004, and their share of the overall caucus participants rose from nine to 17 percent. In New Hampshire, the youth share of the vote increased slightly in the Democratic Primary, from 13 percent in 2000 to 14 percent in 2004.

While Iowa youth preferences tracked the choices made by older voters, New Hampshire young people charted a different course. In New Hampshire, under-30 voters gave the edge to Howard Dean. Their candidate picks were:

- Howard Dean – 34 %
- John Kerry – 33 %
- Wesley Clark – 11 %
- John Edwards – 10 %
- Joe Lieberman – 8 %
- Dennis Kucinich – 2 %

Dean did eight points better among young voters than among all voters, while Kerry did six points worse than his overall performance among this age group. Interestingly, Edwards also had a poorer showing with younger voters than older voters.

In Iowa, young voters had picked Kerry (35%) over Dean (25%) and Edwards (20%).

“What we’re seeing may be the start of a promising trend that could carry through to November,” said William A. Galston, Director of CIRCLE. “While it’s too early to tell, we do know that the last time we saw a spike in youth participation in the primaries and caucuses, it translated into a similar spike in the General Election. Candidates should pay attention to this large pool of citizens – the nearly 40 million eligible voters in the 18-29 age range. It’s clear that so far young people are paying more attention and are more engaged.”

Other exit-poll findings from New Hampshire that may relate to younger voters are:

- Dean did six points better among first-time voters than returning voters, while Kerry did six points worse.
- Dean did slightly better than Kerry, 35-32 percent, among voters who visit candidate sites frequently.

It is likely that a higher share of first-time voters were young, and earlier studies show that the “DotNet Generation” of young people appreciate the Internet as a source of information.

In the Iowa Democratic Caucuses, approximately 21,000 people under the age of 30 participated. This was a *fourfold increase* over the approximately 5,500 who had participated in the Iowa Democratic Caucuses in 2000.

CIRCLE calculates the number of youth voters by combining exit polls (which estimate the percentage of voters who are younger than 30) with data on the total number of votes cast. In 2004, exit poll data come from the National Election Pool, conducted by Edison/Mitofsky. In previous years, exit polls were conducted by Voter News Service. The total number of votes cast is provided by Secretaries of State in each state.

### **Nationally, Young Voters Are Up for Grabs**

According to a recent poll conducted by the Center for Democracy and Citizenship at the Council for Excellence in Government and CIRCLE, young people are divided roughly equally among Democrats, Republicans, and Independents. But Democrats currently lead among college students, and Republicans lead among those of high school age. Republicans and Democrats split the population of non-college 18-25-year olds evenly.

This survey of 1,000 people between the ages of 15 and 25 was conducted November 17-24, 2003, and has a margin of error of +/- 3.1 percent. CIRCLE, The Pew Charitable Trusts, Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Gill Foundation, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, and the W.T. Grant Foundation supported it.

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Funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts and Carnegie Corporation of New York, and housed at the University of Maryland’s School of Public Affairs, **CIRCLE** ([www.civicyouth.org](http://www.civicyouth.org)) is a premier source of impartial, nonpartisan, and comprehensive data, research, and analysis on the civic engagement of young people.