



## The Iowa Youth Vote

### 2008 Caucus Media Backgrounder

Talk of how young voters will impact the Iowa caucuses has been all over the news. Given this attention, Rock the Vote created this factsheet as a quick and easy resource outlining many of the key facts about the Iowa youth vote:

#### The Iowa Picture

There are 460,000 18-29 year olds in Iowa, 21% of the voting eligible population. (U.S. Census Bureau) Within the youngest group, there are approximately 40,000 17-18 year old high school seniors eligible to vote in the caucuses.

**Who are they?** Although it's easy to equate "youth vote" with "college vote," most young Iowans are not college students. Nearly two-thirds (62%) of 18-29 year olds in Iowa are not currently in college or high school; 31% are currently attending college and 7% are in high school. (U.S. Census Bureau) In other words, there are 140,000 Iowa college students and another 285,000 18-29 year olds neither in college nor in high school.

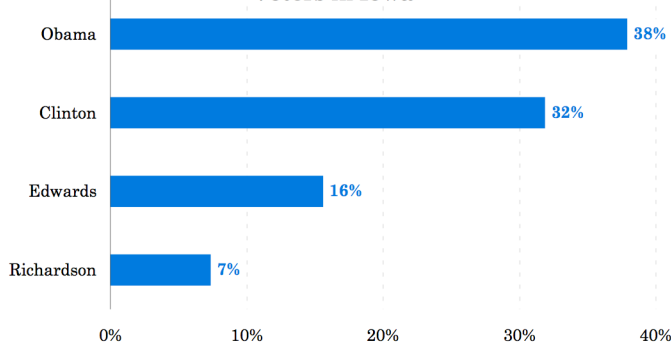
#### Caucus Participation:

- In 2004, over 21,000 17-29 year old Iowans turned out to the presidential caucuses. They were **17% of all caucus-goers in 2004**, a share nearly as large as their proportion of the voting age population (21%) and larger than 30-44 year olds' caucus share (15%). (National Election Pool Entrance Poll, Iowa 2004)
- Under-30 participation at the 2004 Democratic<sup>1</sup> caucus was **four times larger** than 2000 caucus levels. (Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, University of Maryland)
- In 2004, 288 17-18 year olds participated in the Iowa caucuses.

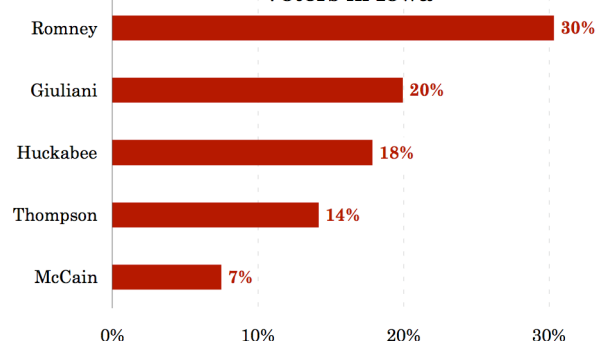
#### Who do they vote for?

- **2004:** In the 2004 caucus, despite conventional wisdom that Dean lost Iowa because young voters failed to show, **the facts prove otherwise:**
  - Youth turnout to the caucuses quadrupled in 2004, making up nearly one-fifth of caucus-goers.
  - In 2004, the youth vote went for Kerry. Among 17-29 year old Iowans, 35% voted for John Kerry, followed by Howard Dean (25%) and John Edwards (20%). (NEP Entrance Poll, Iowa 2004)
- **2008:** The most recent Iowa polling indicates 18-29-year-olds are splitting their vote among several candidates. Young Democrats favor Barack Obama (38%) and Hillary Clinton (32%), followed by John Edwards (16%), while young Republicans favor Mitt Romney (30%), followed by Rudy Giuliani (20%) and Mike Huckabee (18%).<sup>2</sup>

Vote Choice of 18-29 Year Old Democratic Likely Voters in Iowa



Vote Choice of 18-29 Year Old Republican Likely Voters in Iowa



<sup>1</sup> Democratic numbers only because Republicans had an incumbent running for re-election.

## The Bigger Picture

Young Iowans' strong 2004 caucus turnout didn't happen in a vacuum – it is part of a larger phenomenon of growing young voter turnout happening across the country and over the past several years.

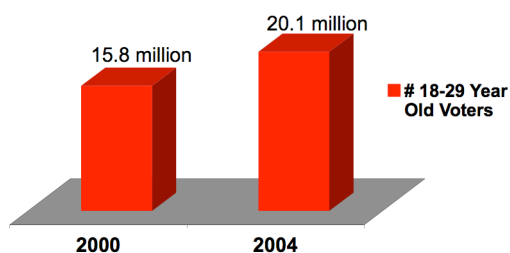
**2004 and 2006:** After a nearly continuous downward turnout trend since 1972, turnout among 18-29 year olds was up significantly in 2004 and 2006.

- In 2004, **20.1 million 18-29 year olds voted, a 4.3 million jump over 2000**. The turnout increase (9% points) among young voters was **more than double** that of the overall electorate (4% points). (U.S. Census Bureau)
- In 2006, the **youth increased by 1.9 million over 2002 levels**. Turnout among the youngest voters grew by 3% points over 2002, twice the turnout increase (1.7% points) of older voters. (U.S. Census Bureau)

In fact, in 2004 the turnout rate of 18-29 year olds was higher than all but one year (1992) since 18-20 year olds got voting rights in 1972, and **the number of 18-29 year old voters (20.1 million) rivaled the number of the much-coveted over-65 voting bloc (22.3 million)**. (U.S. Census Bureau)

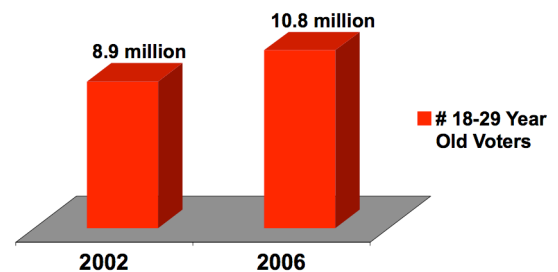
**2004 vs. 2000 turnout of young voters**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



**2006 vs. 2002 turnout of young voters**

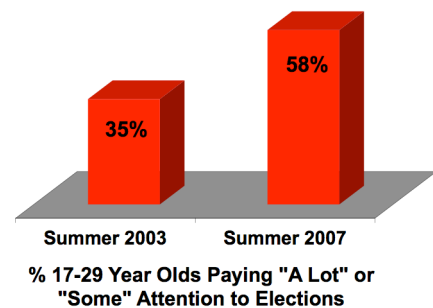
Source: U.S. Census Bureau



**2008?** While we can't predict the future, a number of factors indicate that 18-29-year-old turnout is poised to be strong in 2008.

- **2006:** Turnout rose again in 2006 - **the first increase in 18-29 year old turnout in a midterm election in 24 years** – and also the first in 24 years to sustain over two elections. (U.S. Census Bureau)
- **Engagement:** Reams of research on today's youth vote shows that they are paying more attention to politics and elections than they were before the 2004 elections. (See chart for one example)
- **Mobilization:** Higher youth turnout in 2004 and 2006 was in part the result of increased outreach efforts from nonpartisan groups and campaigns, which will continue in 2008.
  - In 2004, nonpartisan groups invested \$40 million in registering and turning out young voters. In 2006, these groups again invested millions in mobilization efforts.
  - Research proves that outreach increases turnout – **if campaigns work the youth vote, it works**. Phones calls and canvassing increase turnout by 5-10 points and 81% of youth who get registered end up voting.

**Young voters' election attention up**  
CBS News-N.Y. Times-MTV Polls



**About Rock the Vote:** *Rock the Vote's mission is to build the political clout and engagement of young people in order to achieve progressive change in our country. Rock the Vote uses music, popular culture and new technologies to engage and incite young people to register and vote in every election. And we give young people the tools to identify, learn about, and take action on the issues that affect their lives, and leverage their power in the political process. Rock the Vote is creative, effective, and controlled by nobody's agenda but our own – we tell it like it is and pride ourselves on being a trusted source for information on politics. We empower the 45 million young people in America who want to step up, claim their voice in the political process, and change the way politics is done. [www.RockTheVote.com](http://www.RockTheVote.com)*

**For more research on young voters, see [www.RockTheVote.com/Research](http://www.RockTheVote.com/Research). Media contact: Kat Barr [kat@rockthevote.com](mailto:kat@rockthevote.com), 202-223-1520 x120 (o), 202-236-4865 (m)**

<sup>2</sup> Source: Rock the Vote aggregated October and November 2007 polls to produce the charts below. Polls used in the aggregation (for a total sample of 363 Democrats and 252 Republicans) are from Rasmussen Reports, University of Iowa, and CBS News/NY Times.