



Polling Young Voters, Volume IV

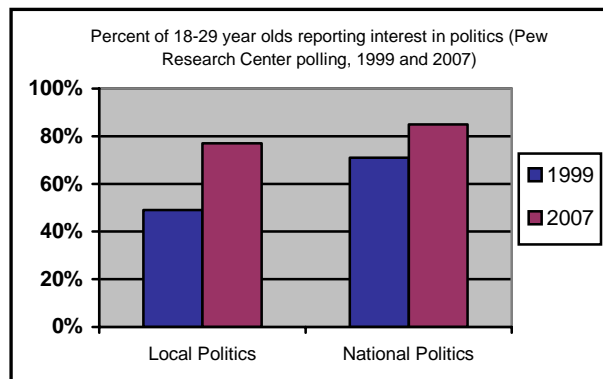
The Youth Electorate's Mood: Engaged, Concerned & Undecided

In our fourth in a series of regular analyses of young voter polling, we find that today's youth electorate is expressing unprecedented levels of interest in politics and is increasingly unhappy with the direction of this country's foreign and domestic policy. But 19 full months until the 2008 elections, young voters are keeping their options open when it comes to choosing presidential favorites.

Engaged in Politics

A recent Pew Research Center study¹ reports that 18-29 year olds are paying more attention to politics than they were eight years ago, in the months leading up to the 2000 elections.

According to the study, 77% of 18-29 year olds say they are interested in local politics, up 28 points from 49% in 1999 - the highest increase of any age group surveyed. The 2007 survey also found that 85% of 18-29 year olds report they are "interested in keeping up with national affairs," a 14 point increase from 71% in 1999 and nearly the same level of interest as adults of all ages (89%).



In addition, a March 2007 poll of 18-24 year olds commissioned by Harvard's Institute of Politics (IOP) found that 55% of respondents had talked about U.S. politics with their friends in the past few weeks, 57% had talked about Iraq, and 56% about the 2008 presidential election. Among respondents attending four-year colleges, a full 66% reported talking about U.S. politics with their friends in the past few weeks.²

Concerned about Iraq, Education, Jobs, Health Care

A bipartisan March 2007 poll of 18-29 year olds³ finds that young adults' top issues in the 2008 presidential election are education (36%), Iraq (34%), and health care (30%).⁴ (multiple responses accepted) Young women clearly have education on the mind: 42% listed it as a top election issue, compared to just 21% of young men. More young men cited jobs and the economy as a top issue (31%) than women (20%), second only to Iraq (35%) for the men.

The March 2007 IOP poll also found young adults strongly concerned with Iraq and economic issues. When asked which two issues were of most concern, respondents ranked Iraq and War at the top, followed by the economy, health care, environment/global warming, and education. The IOP poll asked respondents about several issue positions. The two receiving the most support concerned health care and the environment: 61% of 18-24 year olds surveyed agreed that "Basic health insurance is a right for all people, and if someone has no means of paying for it, the government should provide it," while 68% agreed that "Protecting the environment should be as high a priority for government as protecting jobs."

Undecided

This early in the game, young voters' 2008 presidential primary preferences are up for grabs. Since February, when we last produced *Polling Young Voters*,⁵ to April, movement among young voters from one candidate to another indicates that, at this early stage of the race, all candidates have a chance to win over the youth cohort. Of course, it is important to have realistic expectations about young voters and the primaries. Primary voters

¹ The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, *Trends in Political Values and Core Attitudes: 1987-2007*, March 22, 2007. N=2,007 adults, 18 years of age or older.

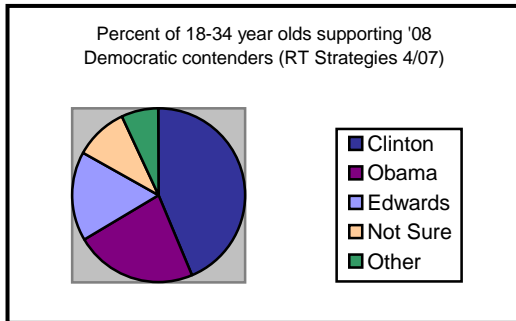
² Harvard University Institute of Politics, *The 12th Biannual Youth Survey on Politics and Public Service*, Mar. 8-26, 2007. N=2,923.

³ *Lifetime Women's Pulse Poll*, conducted by Lake Research Partners (Celinda Lake) and the WomanTrend division of The Polling Company, Inc (Kellyanne Conway). Nationwide survey of 500 18-29 year old women and 200 18-29 year old men, March 4-8, 2007.

⁴ Question: "Thinking forward to the presidential election next year, which of the following issues will be most important to you when deciding who to vote for?" Accepted up to three responses.

⁵ *Polling Young Voters III: Early 2008 Presidential Picks*, Young Voter Strategies, February 2007

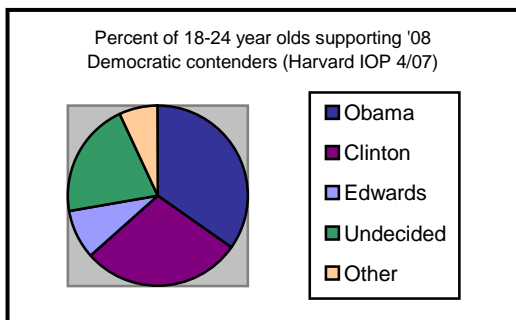
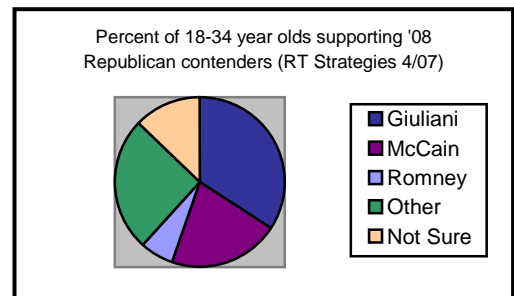
are the strongest partisans – a characterization quite rare among the youngest voters. A plurality of young adults are not registered with a party, while even those who are are unlikely to have a strong partisan affiliation yet.⁶ Therefore, we shouldn't expect a huge youth turnout in the presidential primaries or take the lack thereof as an indication of what young voters will do in the general election. Primaries are not predictive of general elections. That said, campaigns could be benefited by mobilizing young voters in the primary – given the persuadability of young voters and the fact that campaign outreach can mobilize new voters, each candidate should be reaching out to young voters now with both sets of elections in mind.



18-34 Year Olds

Polling of 18-34 year olds shows an increase in support for Hillary Clinton and Rudy Giuliani over the past two months. Comparing a February RT Strategies poll to an April RT Strategies poll, we find that while Barack Obama is still polling slightly higher with 18-34 year olds than with older voters, Hillary Clinton now commands approximately the same level of support from young voters (44%) as from all ages (41%). Her overall support from 18-34 year olds has risen from 38% in February to 44% in April.⁷ Barack Obama's has dropped from 31% to 23%, while John Edwards went from 16% to 17%. No other candidate garners more than 3%.

Of 18 to 34 year old Republicans polled in April, 32% say that Rudy Giuliani is their first choice for the Republican nomination, while 20% say John McCain is their number one choice. This is a six point jump from February for Giuliani and a six point drop for McCain. (see *PYV Volume III*) Mitt Romney held steady from February to April at six percent. The group of undecided voters (12%) combined with those who support lesser-known or undeclared candidates (24% total) is quite large, leaving room for a lot of movement in the coming months.

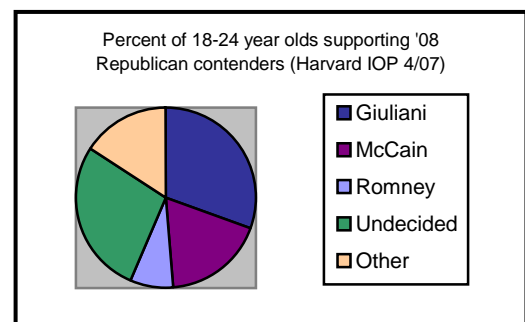


18-24 Year Olds

New polling from the Harvard Institute of Politics tells a similar story for 18-24 year olds, with slight differences. Among likely 18-24 year old Democratic primary voters, Obama wins out with 35% of respondents' support to Clinton's 29%. John Edwards garners nine percent of respondents' support, while a myriad of other candidates and "undecided" make up nearly a quarter (21%) of responses. Among 18-24 year olds currently attending a four-year college, support for Obama is higher (41%) than among non-college youth (33%), while support for Clinton is higher among non-college youth (30%) than among students (24%). Support for

John Edwards is also slightly higher among non-college youth (10%) than among college students (8%).

For the youngest Republicans, support for Rudy Giuliani is strong (31%), although nearly as many (28%) of 18-24 year olds say they have not yet decided who to support in the Republican primary. John McCain comes in with 18% (with 23% support from students and 15% from non-students) and Mitt Romney with eight percent of 18-24 year olds' support.



Although any polling this far ahead of an election must be taken with a grain of salt, these figures give us insight into how young adults are thinking about the upcoming elections – primarily that they *are* thinking about the elections, talking about politics, and paying attention to the field of candidates. And, as one might expect so many months before the first primaries, young adults aren't wed to one candidate or another, but are quite open to outreach from campaigns and candidates.

⁶ See YVS's *Partisanship: A Lifelong Loyalty that Develops Early*

⁷ Question: "I am going to read a list of people who might seek the Democratic nomination for President in 2008...I would like you to tell me who would be your FIRST CHOICE for the nomination?" Asked of those self-identified with each party. April 2007: N=143 for 18-34 year old Democrats and N=138 for 18-34 year old Republicans.