

ROCK THE VOTE

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Youth Modeling Summary

To: Interested Parties
From: Rock the Vote
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Public Opinion Strategies

Mobilizing the youth vote this November will be an important part of both political parties' strategies. As the 2008 primaries and the past two general elections have proven, voters age 18-29 are poised to vote in greater numbers than ever before.¹

In order to compete for this growing portion of the electorate, candidates and parties must understand young voters and how to target them in their 2008 campaign plans. Young voters often lack vote history and other traditional targeting information, so understanding which young adults are most likely to vote, and which are most likely to vote Democrat or Republican, must come from other sources and methods.

To address this concern, Greenberg Quinlan Rosner and Public Opinion Strategies conducted an ambitious young voter modeling project for Rock the Vote. The project was intended to:

- A) Determine if it is possible to model young (18-29 year old) voters and, if so:
- B) Create two models of young voters and a supplemental set of "typologies:"

Vote Choice Model: Predict a young adults' likelihood of voting Republican or Democratic.

Turnout Model: Predict a young adults' likelihood of voting.

Young Voter Typologies: Use political and lifestyle information gathered during the project to segment young adults into "typologies" that provide a more granular understanding of the young adults political behavior and preferences.

The project largely succeeded in meeting its goals. The following summary² is for campaigns, candidates, parties, and GOTV groups considering youth outreach, and shows how modeling can improve their work. This report is one of many resources Rock the Vote has for organizations, campaigns, and candidates interested in mobilizing the youth vote, all available at www.rockthevote.com.

¹ In 2004, 49 percent of adults aged 18-29 voted, a significant jump from the 2000 elections (40 percent). Youth turnout increased again in 2006 – by 2 million over the previous midterms – and has doubled or tripled in nearly every 2008 primary to date.

² Full results are available at www.RockTheVote.com or by contacting Rock the Vote at 202-719-9910.

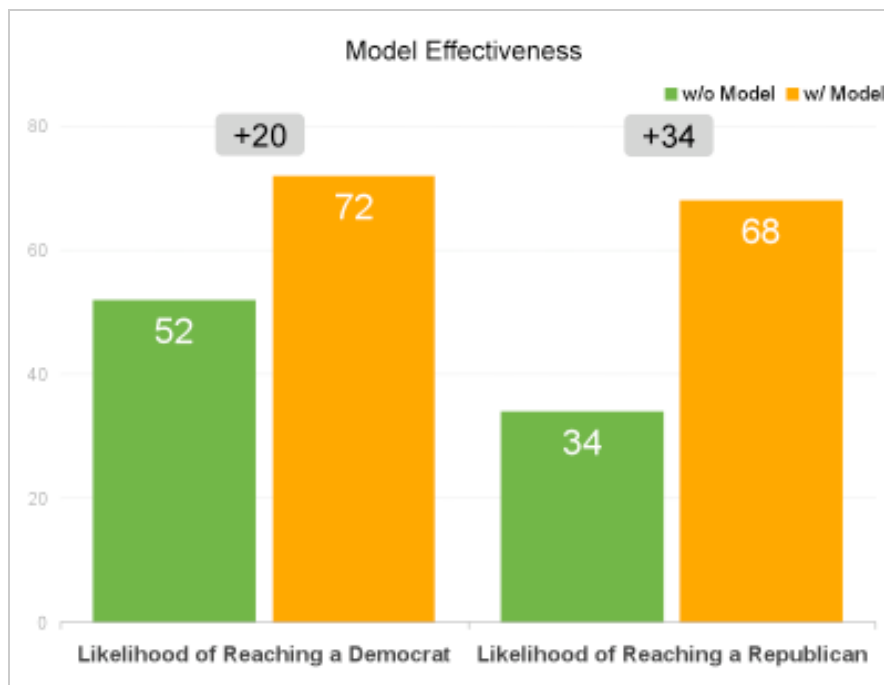
The Results

We determined that it is possible to successfully model young adults' voter turnout and vote choice using survey data, consumer files, and voter files, and from this work created two models that are predictive of young adults' turnout and vote choice:

1. Vote Choice Model:

Democrats: Targeting with this model, the chances of reaching a young Democratic voter increase from 52% (by chance) to 72%, a **20% point increase**.

Republicans: Targeting with this model, the chances of reaching a young Republican voter increase from 34% (by chance) to 68%, a **34% point increase**.



2. Young Voter Turnout Model:

This model allows one to target likely voters, unlikely voters, and/or "on-the-verge" voters. Using this model, a campaign can increase the likelihood of reaching the type of voter they wish to reach, though the model works better at finding non-likely voters.

Likely Voters: Targeting with this model, the chances of reaching likely voters (people reported 8 to 10 on vote likelihood question) increase from 76 percent (by chance) to 79 percent, a **3 point increase**.

“On-the-Verge” Voters: Targeting with this model, the chances of reaching on-the-verge voter (people reported 5 to 7 on vote likelihood question) increase from 12 percent (by chance) to 20 percent, a **8 point increase**.

Unlikely Voters: Targeting with this model, the chances of reaching unlikely voter (people reported 0 to 4 on vote likelihood question) increase from 12 percent (by chance) to 27 percent a **15 point increase**.

3. Young Voter Typologies

If a campaign cannot undertake a modeling project, it can use survey data to refine targeting among young people.

In addition to the two models, we used survey data to segment the youth vote into 11 different segments—ranging from non-college Democrats to anti-war Republicans—based on young people’s survey responses to questions about key political issues.

A relatively small number of issues mattered when segmenting, and using these issues, a fairly tight and short survey can be constructed to differentiate youth. The issues that best politically differentiate youth include:

- The Iraq war
- Abortion
- Size of government
- Immigration
- Gay marriage
- Global warming
- Whether a young person finds political information online

By segmenting young adults using these questions, we can make predictions about their likelihood of voting Democratic or Republican. This kind of analysis will help campaigns fine-tune targeting efforts among young people, particularly when looking at more independent or swing elements, such as disengaged Independents or anti-war Republicans.

	% Youth	% Democratic Vote	% Republican Vote	Read Politics Online	Issue Positions
Base Democrats	16	81	11	100	Stop Iraq, Pro-choice
Pro-life African Americans	5	81	18	46	Stop Iraq, Pro-life
Pro-war Democrats	2	75	18	64	Pro-Iraq, Pro-choice
Non-college Democrats	13	66	15	0	Stop Iraq, Pro-choice
Democratic GW Doubters	8	63	24	98	Stop Iraq, Pro-choice
Conflicted Independents	11	51	27	54	Stop Iraq, Pro-life
Disengaged Independents	4	41	41	0	Pro-Iraq, Pro-choice

Big Issue					
"Republicans"	6	48	35	50	Pro-Iraq, Pro-life
Anti-war					Stop Iraq, Pro-life
Republicans	10	33	48	52	
Cyber Republicans	9	38	54	99	Pro-Iraq, Pro-choice
Base Republicans	15	15	75	60	Pro-Iraq, Pro-life

How You Can Use These Results

Voter Turnout Model

In the this modeling project, the strongest predictors of voting were:

- General election vote history (voter file)
- Predicted party identification³
- Race (consumer file)
- Age (consumer file)
- Whether there is a child in the household (Census)
- Having health insurance (consumer file)

In short, those who voted before, were older, had health insurance, or had children were more likely to score high (more likely to vote) on our model.

Vote Choice Model

In the modeling party registration is, of course, the strongest predictor of the vote. However, party registration is missing from many records, reflecting that many young people are not registered, that there is missing data from records, and the fact that some states do not require party registration. Therefore, we modeled party identification and applied the results to the young people in the dataset. We then modeled vote choice.

The strongest predictors of vote choice were:

- Predicted by party identification
- Race (consumer file)
- Age (consumer file)
- Party registration (voter file)
- Presence of child in household (consumer file)

Republican identification tended to grow—and Democratic identification tended to fall—among households that were relatively older and had children.

Why You Should Use These Results

³ Predicted party identification is, essentially, a model within a model. Because the vote history and party registration records are so thin, we needed to model predicted party identification and apply that to the data set to make this model work. Otherwise, young people with missing records would fall out of the model.

Because using turnout and vote choice models increases the likelihood of reaching the desired young adults, these models can increase the cost-efficiency of one's outreach program:

To use a hypothetical example, imagine three different groups with the goal of reaching:

- a) one million young Democrats.
- b) one million young Republicans.
- c) one million young people "on the verge" of voting.

For the sake of this example, assume the total cost of each treatment (assuming a limited number of contacts) is five dollars. **These groups would save \$3 million, \$8 million, and \$12 million dollars respectively using a similar young voter model.**⁴



⁴ For this hypothetical example, we assumed turnout of 2008 will be around 56% (equivalent of those who responded 8 to 10 on a 10-point likelihood to vote question, where 0 means not at all likely, and 10 means almost certain), and defined a GOTV target for those who described their likelihood of voting as a 5, 6 or 7, on this scale. This will account for 29% of youth.

Conclusion

Young adults are a diverse group and their political attitudes are just as varied. Some political campaigns or party organizations may not want to target young voters en masse – perhaps they only want to target high-propensity voters who support Republicans, or perhaps they only want to target “on-the-verge” voters who will vote for Democrats.

The results of this innovative modeling project show such a step is possible. Using survey results, voter file information, and consumer data, organizations and campaigns can create models to guide their young voter targeting.

For more information, please visit www.RocktheVote.com or contact us at 202-719-9910. Also check out “**Winning Young Voters**,” our guide for candidates, campaigns, and political parties that outlines – one you have your targets – how to find and register, educate, persuade, and mobilize young voters.