

# UNDERSTANDING A DIVERSE GENERATION

Youth Civic Engagement in the United States



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and CIRCLE staff



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CIRCLE (The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement) conducts research on the civic and political engagement of young Americans. CIRCLE is a nonpartisan, independent, academic research center and was founded in 2001 with a generous gift from the Pew Charitable Trusts. CIRCLE is part of the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University: [activecitizen.tufts.edu](http://activecitizen.tufts.edu)

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our analysis shows that young people should not be treated as a 

**UNIFORM GROUP.**

## US CENSUS: CURRENT POPULATION SURVEY

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Findings presented in this report are based on CIRCLE's analysis of the U.S. Census, Current Population Survey (CPS) data. Volunteering estimates are from the CPS September Volunteering Supplement (2002-2010) and voting and registration data come from the CPS November Voting/Registration Supplement, (1972-2010). All other civic engagement indicators, such as access to information and connection to others, come from the 2008, 2009 and 2010 CPS Civic Engagement Supplements. We used the most recent data available. However, some indicators (news access and some political engagement indicators) were only available as pooled estimates from 2008-2009 data.

**Y**outh civic engagement is critical to our democracy. Young people benefit personally by participating and communities need their voices and their energies to address problems. The future of our democracy depends on each new generation developing the skills, values and habits of participation.

In this report, CIRCLE provides an overview of young Americans' civic engagement: their service activities, membership in groups and associations, discussion of issues and political participation. Through its annual Current Population Survey (CPS), the US Census now provides data on these and other forms of civic engagement. Focusing on ages 18-29, we have analyzed this national survey data and examined the two most recent election years: 2008 and 2010.

Our analysis shows that young people should not be treated as a uniform group. Often called the "Millennial Generation," this cohort is extraordinarily heterogeneous. They are the most ethnically and racially diverse generation in American history. Some attend world-class universities while others attend high schools with dropout rates well above fifty percent. Thus it is no surprise that they differ greatly in their levels and types of civic engagement. Any generalizations about "youth voter turnout" or "young people's volunteering rates" conceal crucial differences within the cohort that anyone who hopes to engage young Americans should understand. Some young people will vote in 2012 and some will not. Instead of speculating about what the "youth vote" might be, we need to understand the differences among this diverse group so we can work to reduce the number of disengaged youth.



A majority of the Civically Alienated group held a high school diploma, only

**10 PERCENT  
WERE  
COLLEGE  
GRADUATES,**

and a majority were people of color.

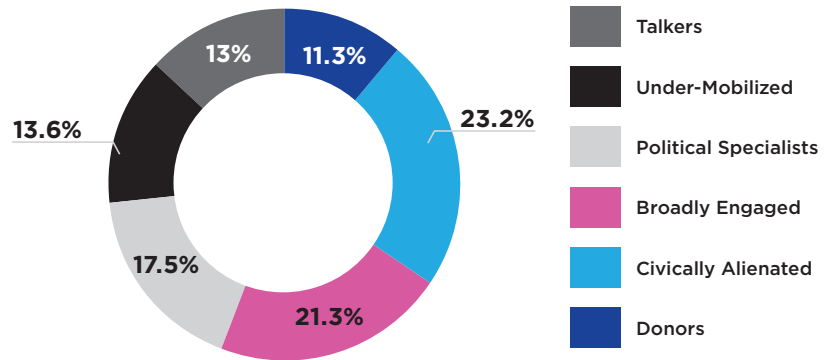
To explore these differences, CIRCLE conducted a cluster analysis of Census civic engagement data from 2008 and 2010. A statistical technique that divides a sample into distinct profiles, our cluster analysis identified groups of youth with different patterns and levels of civic engagement. Although some similar groups emerged in both 2008 and 2010, our findings from the two years differed in meaningful ways.

In 2008, the presidential election mobilized millions of young people to vote and got many talking about political and civic issues. Three of the six clusters that emerged in our analysis of that year's data reported voter turnout rates at or close to 100%. These clusters, Broadly Engaged (19%), Political Specialists (19%) and Only Voted (18%), differed mainly in whether and how they were engaged beyond voting. The rest of the youth population clustered into Civically Alienated (16%), Politically Marginalized (13%) and Engaged Non-Voters (14%). While largely comprised of non-voting youth, these three clusters also differed primarily by their engagement beyond voting. The 2008 clusters clearly reflect the excitement around the 2008 presidential race and overall high levels of civic - especially political - engagement among young Americans.

To illustrate how different these clusters were, consider the Broadly Engaged and Civically Alienated clusters. Almost everyone in the Broadly Engaged cluster voted and many also volunteered, worked with youth in their communities, attended public meetings or worked with neighbors to address community problems. Most had at least some college education and 70.6% were White. Meanwhile, the Civically Alienated group did not vote, volunteer, belong to any groups or otherwise participate in local civil society. A majority held a high school diploma or less, only ten percent were college graduates and a majority were people of color.

Policymakers and others responsible for civic education in schools,

## COMMUNITIES AND COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAMS SHOULD FOCUS ON THE SEVERE GAPS IN CIVIC PARTICIPATION.



The picture shifted in 2010, the most recent year in which political participation was measured. Young Americans fell into different clusters, collectively reflecting a different climate for civic and political engagement than in 2008.

We identified a Broadly Engaged cluster (21%) and a Political Specialists cluster (18%) which showed similar patterns of civic engagement to the 2008 clusters with the same labels. While these two groups were about the same size as the equivalent clusters from 2008, the Civically Alienated cluster grew to over one-fifth (23%) of the youth population. Additionally, three new clusters emerged in 2010, Under-Mobilized (14%), Talkers (13%) and Donors (11%). These new groups indicate that a substantial proportion of young people were missing opportunities to engage civically. Under-Mobilized youth were registered to vote but did not cast a ballot, all members of the Talkers cluster reported discussing political issues frequently but did very little else, while Donors gave money to civic or political causes but were not engaged beyond that.

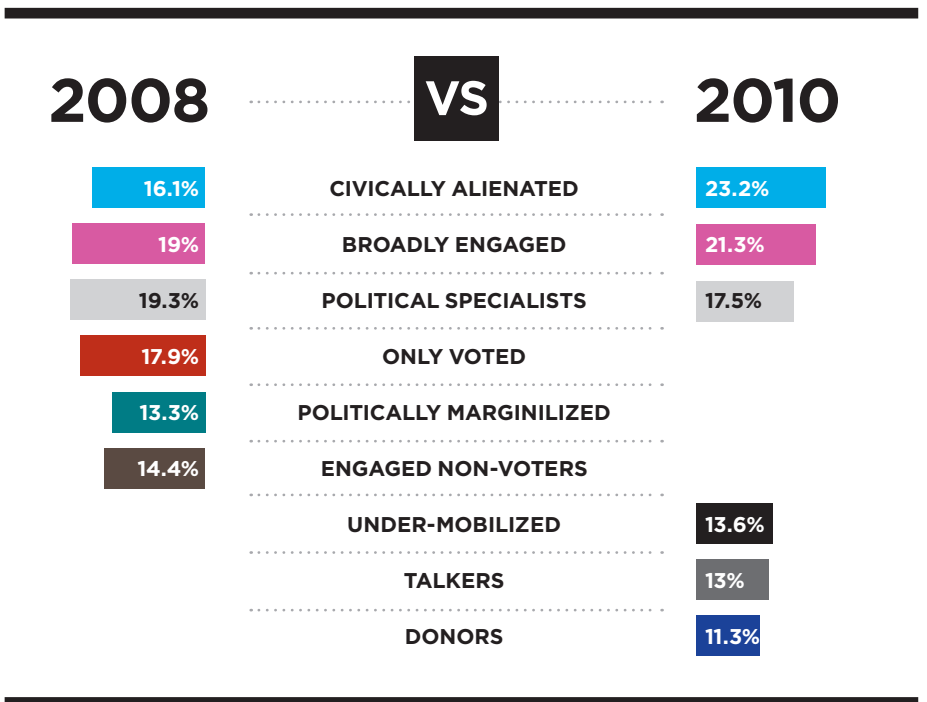
Although it is unlikely that 2012 will replicate either 2008 or 2010, our cluster analysis holds important lessons for the future:

- **Reflecting underlying inequalities in social circumstances and opportunity**, young people will probably divide into groups ranging from highly alienated to deeply engaged. Policymakers and others responsible for civic education in schools, communities and community service programs should focus on the severe gaps in civic participation.

## ENGAGING MORE YOUNG AMERICANS IN CIVIC AND POLITICAL LIFE

requires an awareness of how the young adult population is segmented and the engagement of those subgroups.

- **Engaging more young Americans** in civic and political life requires an awareness of how the young adult population is segmented and the engagement of those subgroups. For example, the Talkers cluster demonstrated interest in civic and political issues, but many did not vote 2010. Our own focus group research has found many disadvantaged young adults fit this profile. Other research suggests that some of these young people could be persuaded to vote if they were directly asked to participate or if voting seemed more accessible. Another important group consists of those who voted in 2008 but did virtually nothing else in the civic or political domain. Their interest in the 2008 election could be leveraged to get them involved in other ways.

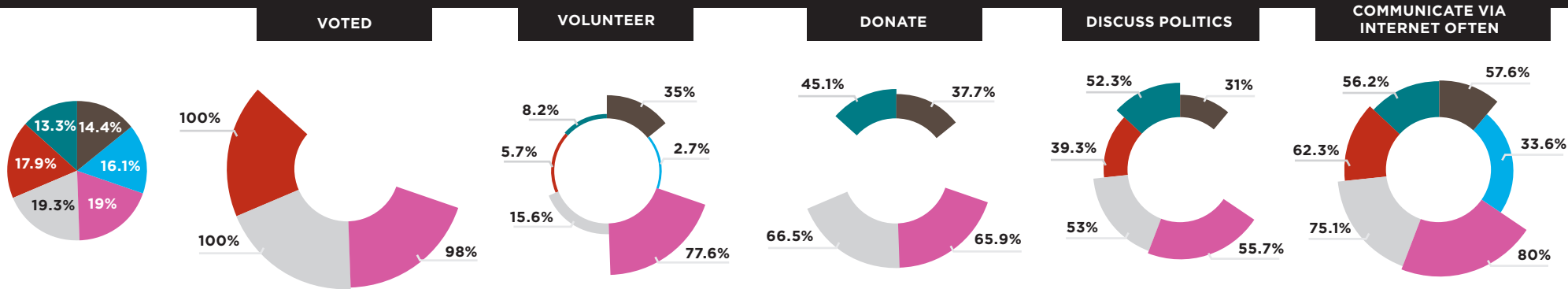




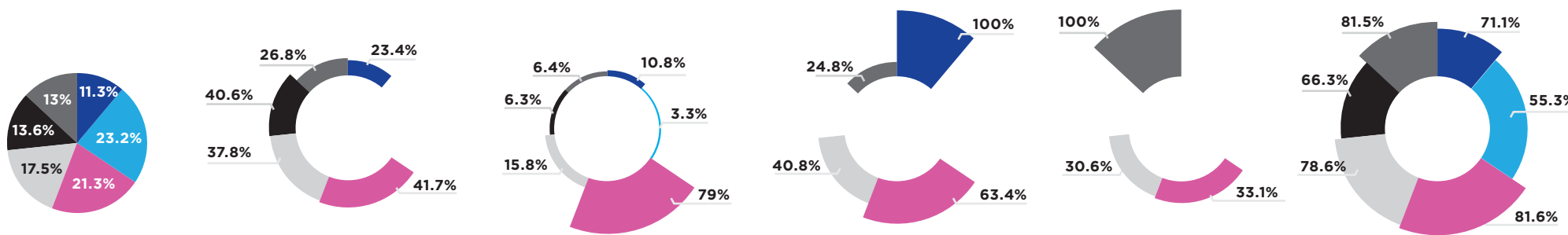
# THE DIVERSITY OF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Despite references to a single “youth vote,” CIRCLE’s analysis of American youth reveals diverse backgrounds and experiences, leading to a variety of forms and levels of political engagement. This infographic explores the results of a cluster analysis of American youth in 2008 and 2010. Graphs show each cluster’s level of engagement across five forms of participation.

2008 CLUSTERS



2010 CLUSTERS



## 2008 & 2010

- POLITICAL SPECIALISTS**  
Moderately high levels of political participation and relatively low levels of service participation
- BROADLY ENGAGED**  
Likely to engage in all types of civic behaviors
- CIVICALLY ALIENATED**  
Almost completely disengaged from civic and political life

## 2008 ONLY

- ONLY VOTED**  
Vote but are otherwise disengaged in civic activity
- ENGAGED NON-VOTERS**  
Moderately engaged in community activities, but do not vote
- POLITICALLY MARGINALIZED**  
Most are active in political discussions and groups, and may donate to causes, but none are registered to vote

## 2010 ONLY

- UNDER MOBILIZED**  
Do not vote, are not registered to vote, and are not civically engaged
- TALKERS**  
Stayed current with political discussions, may or may not vote, but otherwise disengaged
- DONORS**  
Donated money or goods, but were largely otherwise disengaged

# METHOD

We used eleven indicators of civic engagement that were available in the Current Population Survey in both 2008 and 2010 data to identify clusters of young people who show similar patterns of engagement. The sample consists of young adults (18-29) who responded to the CPS survey in that year.<sup>1</sup>

The eleven indicators were:

## **CIVIC ACTIVITIES**

- Volunteering for 25 or more hours a year
- Volunteering with youth (coaching, mentoring)
- Donating money/goods worth \$25 or more
- Working with neighbors to improve the community
- Being a member of an organization or association
- Serving as an officer or committee member of a group or association

## **ELECTORAL ACTIVITIES**

- Registering to vote
- Voting in the November election

## **POLITICAL VOICE ACTIVITIES**

- Attending a public meeting
- Discussing social/political issues with family and friends at least a few times a week
- Engaging in boycott/buycott and/or contact public officials about issues in the community<sup>2</sup>

It is important to note that these are the activities that the federal government measures through the CPS and do not capture all possible forms of civic engagement. Other forms of

engagement not measured here range from taking paid jobs that have social benefits to serving as role models for younger siblings—just to name two examples.

To analyze this survey data we used a cluster analysis, a statistical technique that divides a whole sample into groups that have distinct profiles of responses across multiple indicators. A more sophisticated method than classifying people into groups by using a rule or criterion, a cluster analysis uses mathematical techniques to reveal distinctive profiles based on similar types of behavior. Rarely can each cluster be defined by a rule, but each one has a distinctive profile.<sup>3</sup> For example, using a criterion-approach, one might classify young Americans into groups of people who only vote, who only volunteer, who do both, or who do neither. In contrast, for example, our Broadly Engaged cluster in 2008 shows relatively high rates of participation across the board, but members of this cluster do not all perform any one particular civic or political act. We imposed four-, five-, six- and seven-cluster models to the CPS data from 2008 and 2010 to find the best combination of theoretical utility, cluster cohesion/separation and cluster compatibility between the years. A six-cluster model provided the best overall fit based on these criteria and is therefore presented in this report.

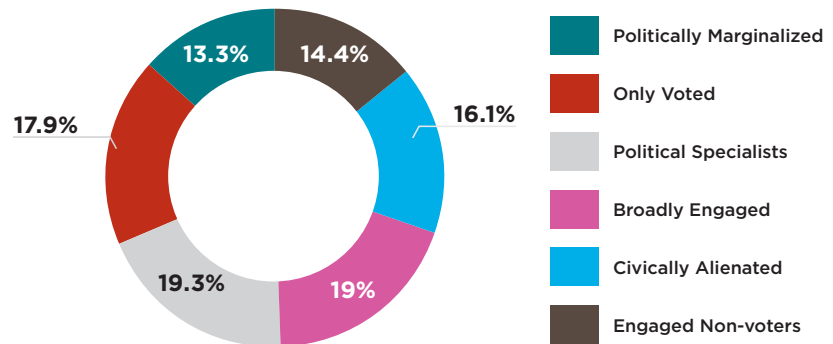
The clusters are not identical for 2008 and 2010, and the titles and explanations of the clusters had to vary between the two years. One reason for the change is a substantial shift in the prevalence of some behaviors, namely voting, registration and discussion of political issues. These behaviors were more common among youth in 2008 than 2010, and the importance of engaging in these behaviors differed significantly in 2010. For example, approximately half of young people voted in 2008 but only a quarter did so in 2010. While this large difference in youth voter turnout between presidential and midterm elections is common and expected, voting itself related to other civic behaviors in different ways in 2008 than it did in 2010. Generally speaking, the clusters that share the same name in 2008 and 2010 also share a common civic engagement profile, though they may not be exactly the same.

## SECTION I

Analysis shows that a **MAJORITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE WERE ENGAGED IN SOME WAY**, albeit at different levels and in different venues.

## SIX CLUSTERS OF YOUNG AMERICANS | 2008

**FIGURE 1**  
**YOUTH ENGAGEMENT CLUSTERS, 2008**



The youth voter turnout of 2008 was one of the highest in history, and was approximately twice as high as in 2010. Americans, including youth, were far more likely to discuss political issues on a regular basis in 2008 than 2010. Some of these differences are attributable to the fact that 2008 was a presidential election year while 2010 was a midterm election year. Notably, high investment in youth voting may have also boosted young people's access to opportunities for other forms of political and community engagement, as seen in more widespread engagement across clusters.

In 2008, young people (ages 18 to 29) split into six clusters, each of which had a distinct profile. We labeled the groups, in order of group size, Political Specialists (19.3%), Broadly Engaged (19.0%), Only Voted (17.9%), Civically Alienated (16.1%), Engaged Non-Voters (14.4%), and Politically Marginalized (13.3%). Each group will be described in more detail below. The good news is that the analysis shows that a majority of young people were engaged in some way, albeit at different levels and in different venues.

### Political Specialists ..... **19.3%**

Political Specialists, who made up 19.3% of the youth population, were marked by moderately high levels of political participation, especially voting, and relatively low levels of service participation. All members of this group voted in the November 2008 election, and 24.5% reported boycotting/

**SIX CLUSTERS OF YOUNG AMERICANS | 2008**

boycotting, and/or contacting public officials about public issues. They were also likely to donate money (66.5%) and half (49.5%) were involved in a group or organization. In contrast, none of these young people reported volunteering regularly, attending community meetings, working with neighbors or serving on committees or boards in the community. The young people in this cluster were highly educated, older (median age was 25), and likely to come from higher-income households.

In 2008, the CPS asked additional questions related to political engagement and access to news media that led us to label the cluster as Political Specialists. Although none of this group stated that they had attended a community meeting in September of 2008, 10.5% said they attended a political meeting by November 2008. Additionally, in this group, 18.3% boycotted or buycotted a product; 4.8% participated in marches or demonstrations; and 17.9% showed support for a candidate via donation or campaign volunteering. Furthermore, they were avid consumers of news: 57.3% watched TV everyday for news, 33.7% listened to the radio daily for news, and 41.4% read a newspaper daily. The Table below shows how clusters of young people varied in the additional political engagement and news consumption indicators.

**TABLE 1  
POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT AND NEWS CONSUMPTION INDICATORS  
ASKED IN THE CPS IN 2008 ONLY**

2008	Civically Alienated	Only Voted	Political Specialists	Broadly Engaged	Politically Marginalized	Engaged Non-voters	All Youth*
Political meeting	0.3%	2.0%	10.5%	24.2%	1.2%	5.5%	8.1%
Contact public official	0	0	10.3%	15.6%	0	7.7%	6.1%
Boycott or buycott	0	0	18.3%	22.0%	0	9.4%	9.2%
March and demonstration	.4%	1.1%	4.8%	10.1%	1.1%	1.7%	3.5%
Support campaign/candidate	1.2%	5.6%	17.9%	24.9%	3.0%	7.7%	11.0%
Obtained News Daily from Newspapers	12.6%	29.8%	41.4%	42.2%	28.0%	26.9%	31.2%
Obtained News Daily from TV	40.3%	52.2%	57.3%	52.0%	54.8%	44.9%	50.6%
Obtained News Daily from the Radio	16.8%	28.0%	33.7%	35.1%	29.0%	27.0%	28.8%
Obtained News Daily from News Magazines	1.6%	5.2%	6.7%	6.5%	4.6%	3.6%	4.7%
Obtained News Daily from Blogs	5.0%	11.5%	15.7%	19.7%	12.9%	10.3%	13.0%

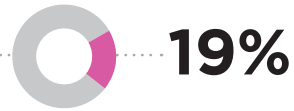
## SIX CLUSTERS OF YOUNG AMERICANS | 2008

These young people were

### **MORE LIKELY THAN AVERAGE TO ENGAGE IN ALL TYPES OF CIVIC BEHAVIORS**

and to take on leadership roles in the community.

#### **Broadly Engaged**



Nineteen percent of young people belonged to a group that we call Broadly Engaged in 2008. These young people were more likely than average to engage in all types of civic behaviors and to take on leadership roles in the community. Unlike other clusters in 2008, this group of young people are defined primarily by their engagement in service, community-change and political activities, rather than by their voting and registration rates. A majority of them (59.4%) were regular volunteers and many worked with youth in the community (40.5%). 62.6% were group members and 28.9% of them served as officers or members of a committee. A substantial minority of them (39%) worked with neighbors to fix issues in the community and/or attended public meetings. Consistent with their general commitment to civic matters, this group also turned out to vote at a very high rate (98.0%). Three quarters of them were White and more than 80% either held a college degree or had completed some college. Slightly over one-third of young people with a college degree fell into the Broadly Engaged cluster (Appendix Table 3).

#### **Only Voted**



In 2008, we identified a group we call Only Voted whose members voted (at a 100% rate) but were otherwise relatively disengaged. These young people represented nearly one fifth of all youth (17.9%), making them the third-largest group. None of them volunteered regularly, worked with neighbors, donated money, or took on community leadership roles. About one third of them, however, discussed politics frequently. Younger Americans who had some college experience but had yet to complete a degree, and African Americans, were overrepresented in this cluster. Notably, 30% of African American youth were classified in the Only Voted cluster. More than likely, this cluster included a number of young African Americans who were specifically targeted and mobilized to vote in the 2008 campaign or perhaps others who were inspired to vote because of the historic nature of the election.

The youngest group of American adults (ages 18-24) were more likely to be in the Only Voted category than any other clusters. This suggests that the 2008 electoral campaigns may

## SIX CLUSTERS OF YOUNG AMERICANS | 2008

### THE 2008 ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS MAY HAVE INSPIRED YOUNGER AMERICANS

who were otherwise not engaged to come out to the polls.

have inspired younger Americans who were otherwise not engaged to come out to the polls. In the 2010 data, we did not find a cluster that only voted. The most analogous group in 2010, whom we call the Under-Mobilized, were all registered but had a modest turnout rate.

#### Civically Alienated 16.1%

This group of young people was distinguished from the others by the fact that they were almost completely disengaged from civic and political life. This cluster constituted 16.1% of the youth population in 2008. Young people of non-White backgrounds, especially Latinos, males, non-citizens and people with less than a high school diploma or from lower-income households were over-represented. Unemployed youth were also more likely to be in this category, compared to employed youth and youth who were out of the labor force. This cluster's demographic profile clearly shows that disadvantaged and marginalized youth are at a very high risk for being completely disconnected from civic and political life, at least by measures used in the CPS to assess civic engagement. Notably, the young people in this group may also be on the wrong side of the digital divide. While 62% of all young people communicated with friends and family using the Internet, only 33.6% of young people in this cluster did so in 2008. This means that the young people in this cluster may not have received the Internet-based messages, information and other youth mobilization strategies that were prominently featured during the 2008 campaigns.

#### Engaged Non-Voters 14.4%

Another group encompassed young people who were likely to engage broadly in the community at a moderate rate but were unique in that they did not vote in the "Year of the Youth Vote." This group was the only one, apart from the Broadly Engaged, whose members were likely to be regular volunteers (21.5%), work with youth (16.1%), take leadership roles in the community (7.8%), attend meetings (8.1%) and fix something in the neighborhood (10.7%), suggesting that these were highly engaged young people in general. They were also more likely to engage in non-electoral political activity, such as contacting

## SIX CLUSTERS OF YOUNG AMERICANS | 2008

This may be a group that...has

### **GREATER POTENTIAL TO BECOME ENGAGED,**

given opportunities, relevance, and incentives

officials or boycotting products than average. Finally, 61.9% of them were registered to vote.

This group was likely made up of many subgroups of young people who did not vote for a variety of reasons. We examined reasons for not registering and not voting for citizens in this group to understand them better. First, slightly over one-third of this group said they did not register because they were not interested in politics. An additional 21% said they could not register because they did not meet the deadline. But relatively few were unable to vote because they did not meet the residency requirement (5%) or because they were not citizens (9%). Among those who were registered, a notable 13% said that they did not like any candidate and 13% said they didn't think their votes would count. In other words, there was a notable minority of young Americans who could have voted but chose not to for an explicit reason. Another third or so had conflicting schedules, had to work, or were out of town and did not cast an absentee ballot.

### Politically Marginalized



**13.3%**

This group of young people represented 13.3% of young adults. They were likely to discuss politics regularly (52.3%), somewhat likely to belong to a group or organization in the community (31.0%) and to donate money (45.1%), but were unique in that none of them were registered to vote in spite of their moderate levels of engagement. Thus, this group seemed to show interest in current events and community engagement, yet were almost completely disengaged in political activities, including voting, boycotting, contacting public officials, marches/protests, campaign support and political meetings.

This group's demographic profile suggests that these young people were some of the poorest, least educated, and most diverse. Only 11.5% of this group had completed college, and 20.7% did not complete high school. 45.8% of their households earned less than \$35,000 a year and 48.7% of this group consisted of youth of color, especially Latino youth (27.1%). Also, 30.5% were non-US citizens. These characteristics were quite similar to the Civically Alienated group, except that this group was more likely to be working (6.9% unemployed) and have children (30.8%) than the Civically Alienated group.



## SIX CLUSTERS OF YOUNG AMERICANS | 2008

### THE MAJORITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE WERE CIVICALLY ENGAGED.

However, they were active at different levels and in different venues.

This may be a group that is almost equally disadvantaged as the Civically Alienated group, yet has a greater potential to become engaged, given opportunities, relevance, and incentives. For example, this group of young people were the most likely to have children. Therefore, at least for some of them, children's schools or youth organizations may be able to reach out and get them involved.

### SUMMARY OF 2008 CLUSTERS

Our analysis of the 2008 Census data shows that the majority of young people were civically engaged. However, they were active at different levels and in different venues. Roughly one-third of young people fell either into the Broadly Engaged cluster or the Engaged Non-Voters. These two groups of young people were similar in that they performed the majority of civic work (volunteered, worked with youth, took leadership roles in the community, attended meetings, etc.); however, they differed in their political behaviors. Nearly 100% of the Broadly Engaged cluster voted, while the Engaged Non-Voters did not vote. Although we found that some of these Non-Voters may have made a conscious decision not to vote in 2008 and others missed deadlines, at least a portion of the Engaged Non-Voters may benefit from educational opportunities that teach about the political process and registration requirements.

Another 30% or so of young people made up the Civically Alienated and the Politically Marginalized clusters. These clusters were comprised of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. For the most part, the voices of these young people are being missed in the political process. The Politically Marginalized cluster shows a greater potential to become engaged if given relevant opportunities for engagement and incentives. Avenues for mobilizing the Civically Alienated are the most crucial given that these young people are completely disengaged from civic life. One promising way to reach these young people may be through technology and social media as rates of Internet usage to stay connected with family and friends were quite high even among the young people in the Civically Alienated cluster in 2010.

Finally, four in ten young people fell into two groups (the Political Specialists and the Only Voted clusters) whose uniqueness came from their strictly political behaviors.

These young people may have benefited from investments in mobilizing young voters in the 2008 election. It is worth noting that in the 2010 data, we did not find a cluster that only voted. The most analogous group in 2010, whom we call the Under-Mobilized, were all registered but had a modest turnout rate. This suggests that investment in mobilizing young voters must be made on a consistent basis if we want to continue to hear the political voices of our youngest citizens.

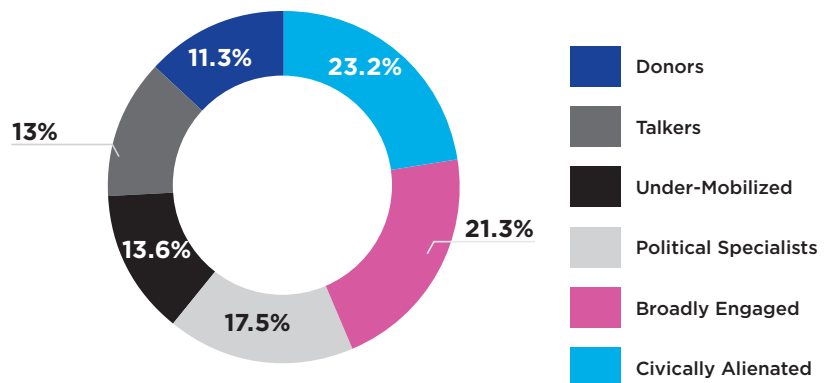
## 2010 WAS A MIDTERM ELECTION YEAR, WHICH ALWAYS DRAWS FAR FEWER YOUTH TO THE POLLS

(as well as older Americans) than presidential elections.

### SIX CLUSTERS OF YOUNG AMERICANS | 2010

The climate for civic and political engagement differed in 2010 from 2008 in some meaningful ways. First, 2010 was a midterm election year, which always draws far fewer youth to the polls (as well as older Americans) than presidential elections. Secondly, the 2010 election did not carry the same historical significance that the 2008 presidential race had. Investments made to mobilize young voters were also noticeably smaller. These differences were reflected in the data. Significantly more young Americans fell into the Civically Alienated cluster in 2010 (23%) than 2008 (16%) and the 2010 data did not include a group of young people who only voted. These and other differences discussed below provide us with insights into some challenges and opportunities for promoting civic and political engagement among young Americans.

**FIGURE 2**  
**YOUTH ENGAGEMENT CLUSTERS, 2010**



## SIX CLUSTERS OF YOUNG AMERICANS | 2010

Without sustained effort to provide young people with accessible and relevant opportunities,

**IT MAY BE DIFFICULT TO MAINTAIN HIGH LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT AMONG YOUTH.**

### Civically Alienated



**23.2%**

The largest group of young people in 2010 were those who were Civically Alienated, or completely disengaged using indicators measured in the CPS. These young people represented one quarter of the population. They did not vote in 2010, were not registered to vote, and did not volunteer regularly. Moreover, they did not work to improve the community, discuss politics, nor did they engage in other political activities. Latino, non-college-educated and low-income youth were overrepresented in this cluster. They also tended to be younger than other groups (median age was 23). The youth in this group were relatively unlikely to use the Internet to communicate with friends and family, compared to members of other clusters, although 55% still did so. Overall, the Civically Alienated cluster overwhelmingly represented marginalized youth, many of whom likely did not have equal access to opportunities to learn skills for civic engagement and did not encounter many opportunities to engage civically and politically as young adults. Latino and non-US citizen youth were particularly notable in this group: 38.6% of young Latinos and 52.9% of non-US citizen youth were in the Civically Alienated cluster.

It is a concern that less educated, poor, Latino, and non-US citizen youth are grossly overrepresented in this category because it suggests that our communities, schools and government may not be providing these young people with varied and relevant opportunities for civic learning and engagement. On the other hand, over half of them communicated with family and friends via the Internet. The Internet and electronic technologies might be one of the avenues by which we may reach these young people.

In comparing this cluster in 2008 with the equivalent cluster in 2010, two findings stand out. First, the Civically Alienated cluster is notably larger in 2010, meaning that more young people were completely disengaged, not even registered to vote. Secondly, members of the Civically Alienated cluster were less connected via the Internet with family and friends in 2008 than in 2010. These two findings reflect both a challenge and opportunity. First, it appears that enthusiasm among youth and investment in youth political engagement in 2008

## SIX CLUSTERS OF YOUNG AMERICANS | 2010

“Broadly Engaged” represented the 21% who were

### LIKELY TO BE THE YOUNG LEADERS IN THEIR COMMUNITIES.

was not sustained to 2010, resulting in fewer opportunities to engage. Without sustained effort to provide young people with accessible and relevant opportunities, it may be difficult to maintain high levels of engagement among youth. At the same time, young people, including Civically Alienated youth, are now connected via the Internet with their peers and family at higher rates than in 2008. This provides a new opening for young people to connect with civic opportunities through social networks and other Internet resources.

### Broadly Engaged 21.3%

The second largest group in 2010, which we termed Broadly Engaged, represented the 21.3% who were likely to be the young leaders in their communities. The group was defined by their engagement in a broad range of civic activities. They were the only young people who worked with neighbors, attended community meetings, took leadership roles in community organizations, and volunteered on a regular basis. Put differently, one-fifth of the youth population undertook a vast majority of community and volunteering work for the entire youth population. White, college-educated, high-income youth were overrepresented in this cluster. Almost three quarters of young people in this group attended college and more than 30% had completed a four-year degree. Women were also overrepresented in this group.

### Political Specialists 17.5%

The third largest cluster represented Political Specialists (17.5%). They were most likely to engage in non-electoral political acts such as boycotting a product or contacting public officials about issues in the community (34.0%) and to belong to a group or association (80.6%). Sixty-five percent of them were registered to vote and 37.8% voted. By contrast, young people in this cluster did not volunteer or work with neighbors on issues in the community (0% on both measures). Like members of the Broadly Engaged group, young people in the Political Specialists cluster were highly educated and had relatively high household incomes, and White youth were overrepresented. In contrast to the Broadly Engaged group, this cluster included a disproportionate number of males.

## SIX CLUSTERS OF YOUNG AMERICANS | 2010

Potential voters who were registered and perhaps voted in 2008

### DID NOT RETURN TO VOTE IN 2010.

Though the Political Specialists clusters in 2008 and 2010 were similar enough to bear the same label, they differ slightly. In both years, they specialized in political behaviors and showed little to no engagement in other domains. The Political Specialists of 2010 were more likely to engage in political activities than their Broadly Engaged peers, while in 2008, the Political Specialists engaged almost exclusively in political activities but at a lower rate than the Broadly Engaged cluster. This finding may suggest that the young people who fell into the Political Specialists cluster may have been mobilized specifically for the presidential campaigns that targeted young people who would not otherwise engage in political activism, particularly by leveraging social media. On the other hand, the 2010 Political Specialists cluster comprised a group of young people who engage in political activities more regularly, and independent of presidential campaigns.

### Under-Mobilized 13.6%

The fourth group (13.6%) included young people who were registered but relatively unmobilized to vote. This group was also unlikely to engage in any other way, including discussing politics with others. Within this group, 40.6% turned out to vote in 2010. Though they turned out at a higher rate than average, almost 60% of the registered voters in this group did not vote. We term this group Under-Mobilized, given their moderate turnout in comparison to their 100% registration rate. This group of young people might comprise voters who registered during the 2008 campaign and remained relatively unmobilized during the 2010 elections. The most notable feature of this group's demographic profile is that African-American youth were overrepresented in this group. 20.8% of all young people who fall into this category identified as African American (compared to about 10% in the overall sample).

We do not have definitive information about which of the youth in the Under-Mobilized cluster were new registrants during the 2008 election cycle. However, a cohort of people who were 19-21 years old in 2008 and 21-23 in 2010 were the most likely to be in the under-mobilized category in the latter year.<sup>5</sup> Thus, it is possible that the potential voters who were registered and perhaps voted in 2008 did not return to vote in 2010, and otherwise remained disengaged.

## SIX CLUSTERS OF YOUNG AMERICANS | 2010

Because this group is well-connected to family and friends through social media and the Internet, the young people in this cluster may have a potential to

**BE MOBILIZED USING NEWER INTERNET TECHNOLOGIES.**

**Talkers** .....  **13%**

The fifth group included young people (13.0%) who stayed current by discussing political issues with others but were otherwise disengaged. A little over half of them were registered to vote and slightly over one quarter (26.8%) turned out to vote. We label this cluster the Talkers. Its membership was not very different demographically from the 18-to 29-year-old cohort as a whole. However, they were more likely to be male, slightly younger, and less likely to have their own children. They were also very likely (81.5%) to be highly connected to family and friends via the Internet. This cluster might represent a group of young people who are interested in political issues but have not had a chance to participate or simply have not been asked to participate. Because this group is well-connected to family and friends through social media and the Internet, the young people in this cluster may have a potential to be mobilized using newer Internet technologies.

**Donors** .....  **11.3%**

Finally, a small group of youth (11.3%) donated money or goods to a cause or organization but were not likely to engage in other ways. This group, the Donors, was similar to the Talkers cluster in that they were very likely to engage in one way but were not highly engaged in other ways. Like the young people in the Talkers cluster, about half of this group were registered to vote, and about a quarter turned out to vote. This cluster represented older youth (median age was 25) and accordingly, the young people in this group were more likely to have children, to be married and working. This group likely represented young families who had completed their education and entered the work force. Many young adults in this cluster may have lacked the time for other types of civic engagement, yet they showed a willingness to help others through donation of goods and money.

## SECTION II

Here we describe the proportion and demographics of

### YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ENGAGE IN SPECIFIC CIVIC BEHAVIORS.

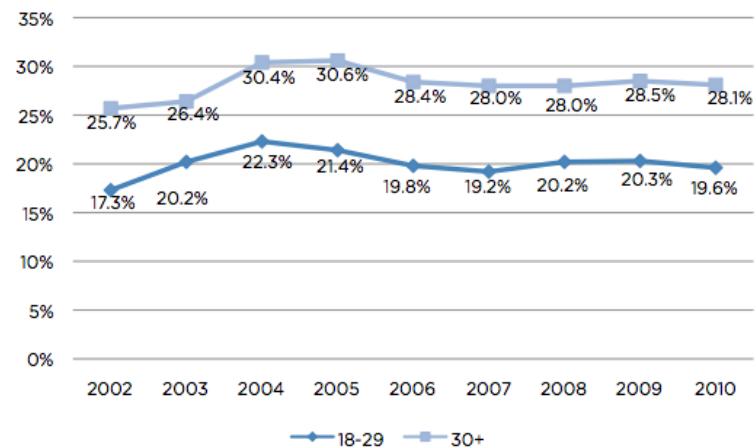
#### HOW YOUNG PEOPLE PERFORM ON SPECIFIC CIVIC INDICATORS

Civic clusters provide just one way to describe how young people are engaged in their communities. In the following sections, we adopt a different approach, describing the proportion and demographics of young people who engage in specific civic behaviors, from volunteering to protesting. Whenever possible, we describe changes over time.

#### VOLUNTEERING

Generally speaking, as a whole group, young Americans are less likely to participate in service-related activities than adults are. According to the latest U.S. Census, Current Population Survey (2010), 19.6% of 18-to 29-year-olds spent any time volunteering in the community, compared to 28.1% of their older counterparts. Youth volunteering has remained relatively stable over time (Figure 3), though there was a temporary uptick in volunteering between 2004 and 2005.

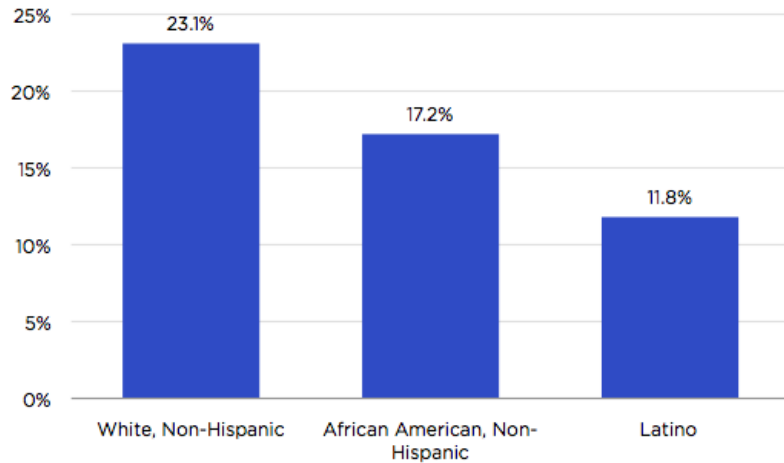
**FIGURE 3**  
**NATIONAL VOLUNTEERING RATE BY AGE, 2002-2010**



Source: Current Population Survey (CPS) September Supplements, 2002-2010

Volunteering rates among young people vary by demographic groups. In 2010, young Whites volunteered at twice the rate as their Latino counterparts. Breaking the data down by gender, we find that young women volunteered at substantially higher rates than their male counterparts (22.5% vs. 16.8%).

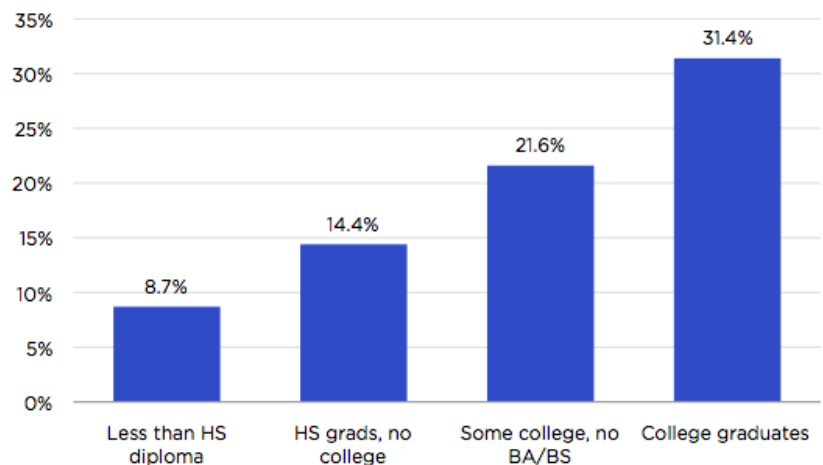
**FIGURE 4**  
**VOLUNTEERING RATES AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE BY RACE/ETHNICITY (2010)**



Source: Current Population Survey (CPS) September Supplements, 2010

Young people with higher levels of formal education volunteered at higher rates than those with less education. Young people with a bachelors degree or higher were three times more likely to volunteer than their counterparts who have achieved less than a high school diploma.

**FIGURE 5**  
**VOLUNTEERING RATES AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT (2010)**



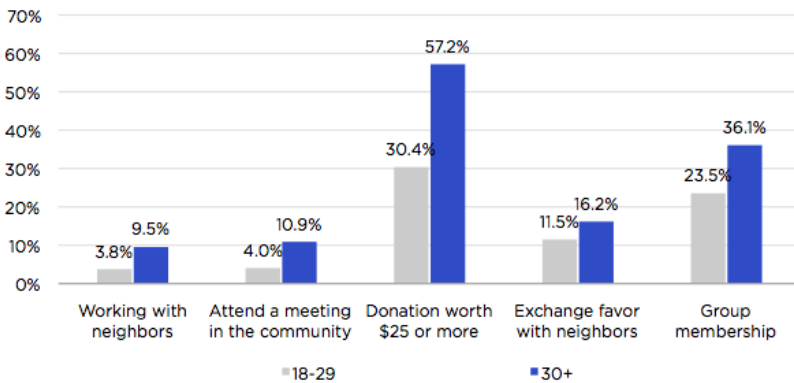
Source: Current Population Survey (CPS) September Supplement, 2010



### COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND CHARITABLE DONATIONS

The Census also asked a variety of questions to measure levels of community involvement, such as exchanging favors with neighbors and being active in community groups. As was the case with volunteering, youth participated in these activities at lower rates than their adult counterparts did (see Figure 6 below). Since young people often have less financial resources than older adults, it is understandable that they would have a much lower charitable donation rate (30% vs. 57%). The rate of community involvement was higher among 25 to 28 year-olds than 18 to 24 year-olds, though rates were generally low. One exception was charitable giving, which was far more common for older youth (25-to 29-year-olds, 39.0%) than 18 to 24 year-olds (24.1%).

**FIGURE 6**  
**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CHARITABLE DONATION BY AGE**



Source: Current Population Survey (CPS), Civic Engagement Supplement (2010)

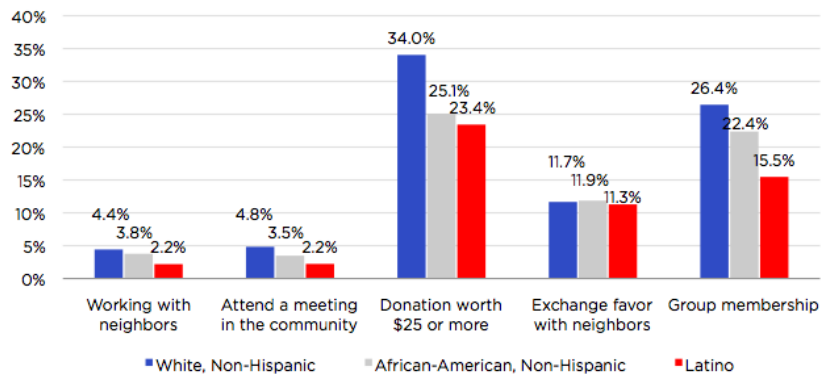
Group membership rates were about the same for men and women aged 18 to 24 (22.8% for both), but between the ages of 25 and 29 more women joined one or more groups than men (22.6% for men and 26.6% for women), and this gender gap persisted for the 30+ population (34.3% for men and 37.3% for women).

There were also disparities in participation by race/ethnicity. For example, young Whites were more likely to report attending a meeting of an organization than their African American or Latino counterparts. This was true of all activities except doing favors for neighbors, which did not show any differences by race.

## THE VOTER TURNOUT RATE AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE IN 2008 WAS ONE OF THE HIGHEST RECORDED.

The increase suggests that the confluence of extensive voter outreach efforts, a close election, and high levels of interest in the 2008 campaign all worked to drive voter turnout among young people to levels not seen since 1992.

**FIGURE 7**  
CIVIC ACTIVITIES BY RACE/ETHNICITY, AGE 18 TO 29

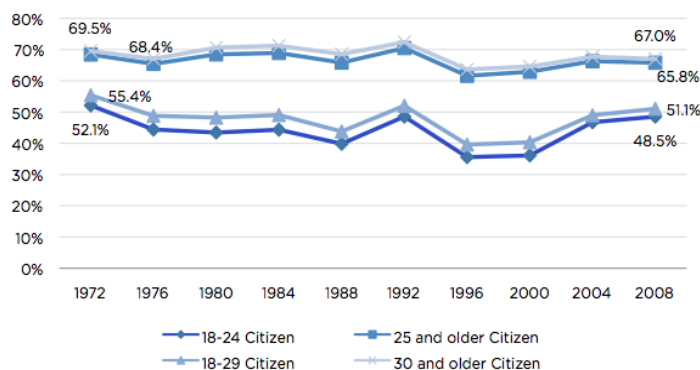


Source: Current Population Survey (CPS), Civic Engagement Supplement 2010

### VOTING: PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

The voter turnout rate among young people in 2008 was one of the highest recorded.<sup>6</sup> The increase suggests that the confluence of extensive voter outreach efforts, a close election, and high levels of interest in the 2008 campaign all worked to drive voter turnout among young people to levels not seen since 1992. The increase is a continuation of the trend observed in the 2004 and 2006 elections.<sup>7</sup> Young voters participate at significantly lower rates than older adults, but both registration and turnout rose significantly between age 18 and age 29. For example in 2008, turnout among 18 to 24 year-old citizens was 48.5%, while the turnout among 25 to 29 year-old citizens was 51.1%. Although young people increased their turnout significantly between 2000 and 2008, older adults voted at lower rates in 2008 than in 2004 and only slightly above their 2000 level.

**FIGURE 8**  
VOTER TURNOUT BY AGE IN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, 1972-2008



Source: Current Population Survey (CPS), November Supplements, 1972-2008 2010

## **YOUNG AFRICAN AMERICANS POSTED THE HIGHEST TURNOUT RATE EVER OBSERVED**

for any racial or ethnic group of young Americans since the voting age was lowered to 18 in 1972.

Although overall youth turnout was high in the 2008 presidential election, there were important differences in turnout rates. Young African Americans posted the highest turnout rate ever observed for any racial or ethnic group of young Americans since the voting age was lowered to 18 in 1972. The gap in turnout by educational attainment remained large; voter turnout of young people without college experience was 36%, compared to a 62% rate among young people with college experience. (About half of the young adult population has some college experience.) There was also a significant gender gap in turnout: young women voted at a rate eight points above young men.

Our 2008 cluster analysis identified three groups of young Americans in which almost everyone voted, and three other clusters in which almost no one voted (see Appendix Table 2). Of particular interest is the Only Voted group, in which African American youth were overrepresented. This was also the least affluent, least educated and youngest of the three clusters of voters. Given that civic engagement is usually highly correlated with education, income, and racial/ethnic background, it is important to note that the 2008 election inspired the types of young Americans who would have otherwise been disengaged entirely.

### **VOTING: MIDTERM ELECTIONS**

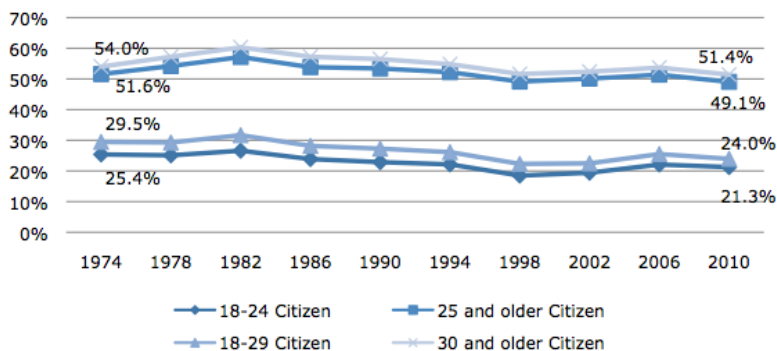
Voter turnout among young American citizens age 18 to 29 in the 2010 midterm election was 24.0%.<sup>8</sup> Voter turnout in midterm elections is typically half of what it is in presidential elections. While youth turnout declined slightly (down one and a half points) between 2006 and 2010, it remained similar to past midterm elections and tracks a similar decline in adult turnout.<sup>9</sup> In general, turnout rates in midterm elections are relatively stable. Historically, turnout estimates among 18 to 29 year-olds range between 20 and 30 percent, and turnout among those 30 and older ranges between 50 and 60 percent of the eligible population (see Figure 9).

In 2010, unlike in 2008, we did not identify an Only Voted cluster that was otherwise disengaged. Instead, in 2010, the young people who voted also tended to be civically engaged in other ways.

Registration is important because

**REGISTERING TO VOTE IS SOMETIMES MORE DIFFICULT THAN THE ACT OF VOTING ITSELF.**

**FIGURE 9**  
**VOTER TURNOUT BY AGE IN MIDTERM ELECTIONS, 1974-2010**

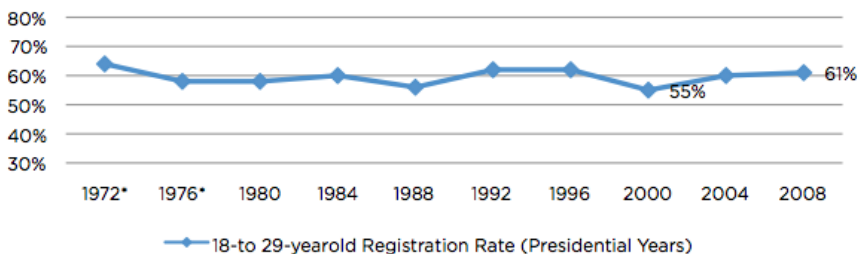


Source: Current Population Survey (CPS), November Supplements, 1974-2010

**VOTER REGISTRATION**

In 2000, voter registration among young people reached its lowest level (55%) for a presidential year—the rate is often lower in midterm years. Since then, young voters’ registration has been higher, and the rate stayed about the same in 2004 and 2008. 61% of young people age 18 to 29 registered to vote in the 2008 presidential election. Registration is important because registering to vote is sometimes more difficult than the act of voting itself.

**FIGURE 10**  
**VOTER REGISTRATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, 1972-2008**

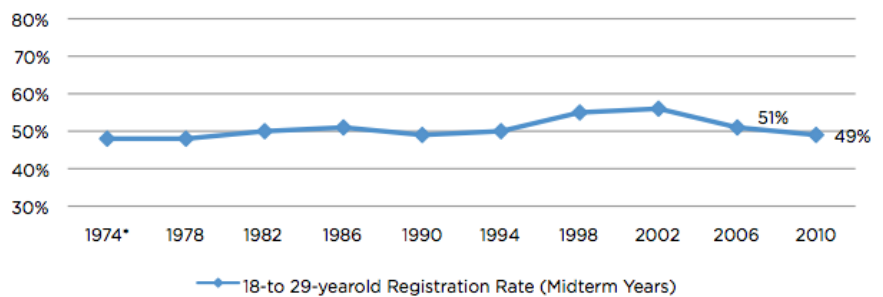


Source: Author’s tabulations from the Current Population Survey, November (Voting) Supplement, 1972-2008. \*1972-1976 registration rates are computed for residents.

## YOUTH WERE SLIGHTLY MORE LIKELY TO PARTICIPATE IN A MARCH

or demonstration than were older adults.

**FIGURE 11**  
**VOTER REGISTRATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN MIDTERM ELECTIONS, 1974-2010**



Source: Author's tabulations from the Current Population Survey, November (Voting) Supplement, 1974-2010. \*1974 registration rates are computed for residents.

### POLITICAL VOICE ACTIVITIES

Another group of civic engagement activities involves political voice: actions people take to express their political or social viewpoints. In 2008, the Census measured the following political voice activities: contacting an official, attending a meeting with a political topic, boycotting/buycotting, protesting/marching or demonstrating, and showing support for a candidate by making a donation or working on a campaign. In 2010, the Census only measured rates of contacting an official and boycotting/buycotting. The results are in the table below.

Youth lagged behind older adults when it came to actually participating in political activities such as contacting public officials, making contributions for a political cause, or making a purchasing decision based on their own principles (boycotting or buycotting). However, youth were slightly more likely to participate in a march or demonstration than older adults were.

**TABLE 2**  
**POLITICAL VOICE ACTIVITIES, BY AGE**

	2008	2008	2010	2010
	18-29	30+	18-29	30+
Contact official	5.0%	11.9%	4.0%	11.6%
Attend meeting with a political topic*	7.4%	11.1%	N/A	N/A
Boycott or buycott	7.9%	11.5%	7.2%	10.9%
Protest, march or demonstrationa	3.7%	2.9%	N/A	N/A
Showed support for a candidate by making donation or working on a campaign*	11.2%	15.9%	N/A	N/A

Source: Author's tabulations from the Current Population Survey, November (Voting) Supplement, 1974-2010. \*1974 registration rates are computed for residents.

## **YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE INDEED ENGAGED IN THEIR COMMUNITIES**

in diverse and often specialized roles.

### **IMPLICATIONS**

Our analysis of the Census data on civic engagement shows that young people have indeed engaged in their communities in diverse and often specialized roles. Only a fairly small minority (16.1% in 2008; 23.2% in 2010) have been fundamentally disengaged on the indicators used here. Most of their peers have contributed to American civic life in at least one way. Some have voted, donated to charity, engaged in frequent discussions about politics and current issues, or engaged in multiple activities. This is an indication that there are many ways in which youth can participate, and for the most part, they do.

On the other hand, the Civically Alienated cluster requires attention. In both years, it comprised disproportionate numbers of young people who had not completed high school or gone to college, who earned low incomes, and who may not have had the same opportunities for civic skills acquisition and participation as their contemporaries. Providing young people of all backgrounds with more comprehensive civic learning and participation opportunities continues to be a serious need.

Most of the civic activities that take time, commitment and advanced skills were undertaken primarily by young people in two clusters: the Broadly Engaged and the Political Specialists. Broadly Engaged youth took on the bulk of sustained service and community problem-solving activities accomplished by youth, and also contributed much to political participation, while Political Specialists were responsible for much of the political activism. These two clusters made up approximately one-third of the youth population.

On one hand, literally millions of young people belong to these clusters, and we only need so many leaders. On the other, our democracy calls for active participation by young people who represent the diverse interests of America's multi-cultural youth population. The two most engaged clusters included largely highly educated, predominantly White youth who came from households that earn higher incomes.

Research summarized recently in *Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools* shows that opportunities to develop civic skills, knowledge, and interests are unequally distributed,

## THE TWO MOST ENGAGED CLUSTERS ARE

highly educated, predominantly White youth who came from households that earn higher incomes

being much more common for students of privileged backgrounds and for students who are on successful academic tracks than for their peers.<sup>10</sup> Yet civic education in schools and community settings can have disproportionately positive effects on disadvantaged students. Only about half of our young people go on to higher education, and for their young adult peers who are outside of educational institutions, the opportunities for civic learning are particularly scarce. Gaps in civic opportunities for youth and young adults must be addressed.<sup>11</sup>

For leaders, organizations, and youth who hope to boost youth civic engagement, our analysis suggests some opportunities.

The Talkers cluster has not participated in civic life, but they show interest in issues. They are also heavy users of the Internet to connect to their own friends and families. Other research finds that people who are asked to participate are often willing to do so. Asking members of this group to vote, volunteer, and join organizations seems especially promising, since they have demonstrated concern about issues and are connected to other people whom they might recruit.

The Only Voted cluster from 2008 and the Under-Mobilized cluster in 2010 represent another opportunity. The Only Voted cluster showed they would participate if an election or a particular campaign moved them. On the other hand, the existence of an Under-Mobilized cluster in 2010 showed that young people may not participate unless they are directly asked to participate. In 2012, candidates and political campaigns should reach out to them again. Their demonstrated concern for public issues in 2008 also suggests that they may be ready to be recruited into non-political forms of civic participation.

# APPENDIX

**APPENDIX TABLE 1**  
**CIVIC ENGAGEMENT INDICATORS INCLUDED IN THE MODEL AND DATA SOURCE**

Indicator	Source	Response Options
Volunteering for 25 or more hours a year	Volunteering	Yes/No
Volunteering with youth (coaching, mentoring)	Volunteering	Yes/No
Donating money/goods worth \$25 or more	Volunteering	Yes/No
Working with neighbors to improve the community	Volunteering	Yes/No
Attending a public meeting	Volunteering	Yes/No
Member of an organization or association	Civic Engagement	Yes/No
Serving as an officer or committee member of a group or association	Civic Engagement	Yes/No
Registered to vote	Voting & Registration	Yes/No
Voted in the November Election	Voting & Registration	Yes/No
Discussing social/political issues with family and friends at least a few times a week	Civic Engagement	Yes/No
Engaging in boycott/buycott and/or contact public officials about issues in the community	Civic Engagement	Yes/No



**APPENDIX TABLE 2**  
**2008 CLUSTERS ENGAGEMENT BY INDICATORS**

	<b>Civically Alienated (16.1%)</b>	<b>Only voted (17.9%)</b>	<b>Political Specialists (19.3%)</b>	<b>Broadly engaged (19.0%)</b>	<b>Politically Marginalized (13.3%)</b>	<b>Engaged non-voters (14.4%)</b>	<b>All Youth<sup>13</sup></b>
Volunteering (any)	2.7%	5.7%	15.6%	77.6%	8.2%	35.0%	25.4%
Regular volunteering	0%	0%	0%	59.4%	0%	21.5%	14.4%
Volunteer with youth	0%	0%	0%	40.5%	0%	16.1%	10.0%
Attend public meetings	0%	0%	0%	26.7%	0%	8.1%	6.3%
Worked with neighbors	0%	0%	0%	24.7%	0%	10.7%	6.2%
Donation	0%	0%	66.5%	65.9%	45.1%	37.7%	36.8%
Discuss politics	0%	39.3%	53.0%	55.7%	52.3%	31.0%	39.3%
Registration 2008	0%	100%	100%	99.9%	0%	61.9%	65.1%
Voting 2008	0%	100%	100%	98.0%	0%	0%	55.8%
Contacted Officials	0%	0%	10.2%	15.3%	0%	7.5%	6.0%
Boycott/Buycott	0%	0%	18.3%	21.6%	0%	9.2%	9.0%
Group membership	0%	0%	49.5%	62.6%	31.0%	29.6%	29.9%
Officer or committee member	0%	0%	0%	28.9%	0%	7.8%	6.6%
Communicate via Internet often	33.6%	62.3%	75.1%	80.0%	56.2%	57.6%	62.0%

**APPENDIX TABLE 3**  
**CLUSTER BREAK-DOWN BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS (2008)**

2008	Political Specialists	Broadly engaged	Only voted	Civically Alienated	Engaged non-voters	Politically Marginalized	Total
All youth	19.3%	19.0%	17.9%	16.1%	14.4%	13.3%	100%
Male	18.3%	16.3%	18.4%	18.2%	14.4%	14.5%	100%
Female	20.3%	21.5%	17.3%	14.2%	14.4%	12.2%	100%
Age 18-24	16.5%	16.7%	20.9%	17.6%	14.8%	13.4%	100%
Age 25-29	22.5%	21.5%	14.5%	14.4%	14.0%	13.1%	100%
Household income less than \$35k	14.1%	15.5%	17.7%	21.5%	16.3%	14.9%	100%
Household income \$75K or more	28.7%	25.8%	15.1%	8.9%	12.9%	8.5%	100%
City	19.4%	20.6%	16.4%	16.6%	12.1%	14.9%	100%
Suburban	22.3%	15.2%	18.7%	15.2%	15.3%	13.4%	100%
Rural	16.6%	19.6%	16.6%	18.0%	16.6%	12.7%	100%
Less than HS	6.4%	5.6%	13.4%	36.8%	15.8%	22.0%	100%
HS diploma	14.6%	10.3%	20.3%	21.6%	16.6%	16.7%	100%
Some College	21.4%	20.4%	21.2%	10.7%	14.8%	11.4%	100%
College degree	29.2%	35.3%	11.8%	6.4%	10.1%	7.1%	100%
No College	12.2%	8.9%	18.2%	26.0%	16.4%	18.2%	100%
At least some college	24.4%	26.2%	17.6%	9.1%	13.0%	9.8%	100%
Single, never married	17.8%	17.7%	20.4%	17.1%	13.9%	13.1%	100%
Married	22.9%	22.9%	11.5%	13.6%	15.5%	13.5%	100%
No child	19.6%	19.7%	18.9%	15.8%	13.6%	12.4%	100%
Has children	18.7%	17.0%	15.0%	16.9%	16.6%	15.7%	100%
Employed	21.6%	20.9%	17.5%	13.7%	13.8%	12.5%	100%
Unemployed	15.0%	13.0%	18.6%	23.3%	16.5%	13.6%	100%
White, Non-Hispanic	21.8%	22.6%	18.2%	12.2%	15.0%	10.2%	100%
African-American, Non-Hispanic	19.9%	17.5%	29.7%	12.4%	10.0%	10.5%	100%
Asian, Non-Hispanic <sup>13</sup>	7.8%	8.7%	6.4%	34.7%	13.2%	29.2%	100%
Latino, any race	13.4%	7.5%	13.0%	29.9%	13.4%	22.6%	100%
Non-US citizen				47.5%	12.6%	39.9%	100%
US citizen	21.4%	21.0%	19.8%	12.7%	14.6%	10.5%	100%
Median age	25	24	23	23	23	24	24

**\*How to use this Table:** This table shows how each subgroup of young people with a shared demographic characteristic (e.g., male) broke down into each civic engagement cluster. The top row contains percentage break-downs for the whole youth population. In order to find out whether a specific demographic group was over- or under-represented in a cluster, a reader should compare the “all youth” percentage to the percentage that applies to a specific group. For example, 16.1% of all youth were in the Civically Alienated cluster, while 36.8% of young people with less than high school education were in that group. This comparison leads a conclusion that young people with less than a HS degree were overrepresented in the Civically Alienated category.

**APPENDIX TABLE 4**  
**2010 CLUSTERS ENGAGEMENT BY INDICATORS**

2010	Civically Alienated (23.2%)	Broadly Engaged (21.3%)	Political Specialists (17.5%)	Under-mobilized (13.6%)	Talkers (13.0%)	Donors (11.3%)	All Youth <sup>14</sup>
Volunteering (any)	3.3%	79.0%	15.8%	6.3%	6.4%	10.8%	23.3%
Regular volunteering	0%	61.6%	0%	0%	0%	0%	13.1%
Volunteer with youth	0%	39.1%	0%	0%	.4%	0%	8.4%
Attend public meetings	0%	23.1%	0%	0%	.1%	0%	4.9%
Worked with neighbors	0%	23.1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	4.9%
Donation	0%	63.4%	40.8%	0%	24.8%	100%	35.2%
Discuss politics	0%	33.1%	30.6%	0%	100%	0%	25.4%
Registration 2010	0%	69.9%	65.0%	100%	51.9%	54.9%	52.9%
Voting 2010	0%	41.7%	37.8%	40.6%	26.8%	23.4%	27.2%
Contacted Officials	0%	11.0%	11.9%	0%	0%	0%	4.4%
Boycott/Buycott	0%	16.0%	27.2%	0%	0%	0%	8.2%
Group membership	0%	59.8%	80.6%	0%	4.0%	0%	27.4%
Officer or committee member	0%	22.3%	1.6%	0%	0%	0%	5.0%
Communicate via Internet often	55.3%	81.6%	78.6%	66.3%	81.5%	71.1%	71.7%

**APPENDIX TABLE 5**  
**CLUSTER BREAK-DOWN BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS (2010)**

	<b>Civically Alienated</b>	<b>Broadly Engaged</b>	<b>Political Specialists</b>	<b>Under-mobilized</b>	<b>Talkers</b>	<b>Donors</b>	<b>Total</b>
All youth	23.2%	21.3%	17.5%	13.6%	13.0%	11.3%	100%
Male	25.0%	19.3%	18.6%	14.0%	14.0%	9.1%	100%
Female	21.5%	23.2%	16.6%	13.3%	12.1%	13.4%	100%
Age 18-24	26.4%	20.1%	16.1%	14.2%	13.9%	9.3%	100%
Age 25-29	19.2%	22.9%	19.4%	12.9%	11.8%	13.9%	100%
Household income less than \$35k	29.9%	18.1%	15.3%	14.1%	12.6%	10.1%	100%
Household income \$75K or more	14.8%	25.5%	20.7%	13.6%	13.7%	11.6%	100%
City	24.3%	18.9%	18.7%	13.4%	13.3%	11.5%	100%
Suburban	22.6%	20.8%	16.9%	14.3%	13.9%	11.5%	100%
Rural	24.8%	23.1%	16.2%	13.5%	12.0%	10.3%	100%
Less than HS	43.9%	11.0%	14.3%	9.7%	12.9%	8.2%	100%
HS diploma	32.0%	14.6%	13.3%	15.5%	14.2%	10.4%	100%
Some College	17.1%	23.1%	18.8%	15.7%	12.6%	12.7%	100%
College degree	10.3%	32.9%	22.8%	10.0%	12.1%	12.0%	100%
No College	35.7%	13.5%	13.6%	13.7%	13.8%	9.7%	100%
At least some college	14.6%	26.7%	20.3%	13.6%	12.4%	12.4%	100%
Single, never married	24.4%	19.5%	17.2%	15.3%	13.7%	9.9%	100%
Married	18.2%	26.6%	19.6%	9.6%	10.9%	15.1%	100%
No child	22.8%	21.8%	17.4%	14.0%	13.9%	10.0%	100%
Has children	24.4%	19.9%	17.8%	12.4%	10.2%	15.3%	100%
Employed	20.0%	23.1%	17.6%	13.7%	12.3%	13.3%	100%
Unemployed	27.6%	19.1%	16.0%	17.2%	13.2%	6.9%	100%
White, Non-Hispanic	18.9%	24.9%	19.1%	13.4%	12.4%	11.3%	100%
African-American, Non-Hispanic <sup>13</sup>	22.5%	17.5%	15.4%	21.1%	13.8%	9.7%	100%
Asian, Non-Hispanic	31.5%	12.6%	17.4%	8.1%	13.3%	17.0%	100%
Latino, any race	38.6%	11.1%	13.4%	10.8%	15.3%	10.8%	100%
Non-US citizen	52.9%	6.3%	13.3%	0%	16.9%	10.6%	100%
US citizen	20.5%	22.7%	17.9%	14.9%	12.6%	11.4%	100%
Median age	23	24	24	23	23	25	24

**\*How to use this Table:** This table shows how each subgroup of young people with a shared demographic characteristic (e.g., male) broke down into each civic engagement cluster. The top row contains percentage break-downs for the whole youth population. In order to find out whether a specific demographic group was over- or under-represented in a cluster, a reader should compare the “all youth” percentage to the percentage that applies to a specific group. For example, 21.3% of all youth were in the Broadly Engaged cluster, while 11.1% of Latino youth in that group. This comparison leads a conclusion that Latino youth were under-represented in the Broadly Engaged cluster.

# TECHNICAL NOTES

**F**indings presented above are based on CIRCLE’s analysis of the Census Current Population Survey (CPS) data. For the cluster analyses, the September Volunteering Supplement and the November Voting and Civic Engagement supplements were merged together to create one dataset that contains all available civic indicators. This procedure was done for 2008 and 2010 and CIRCLE ran two-step cluster analysis procedure in each year’s data separately. For estimation of youth civic engagement by individual indicators, volunteering estimates are from the CPS September Volunteering Supplement (2002-2010) and voting and registration data come from the CPS November Voting/Registration Supplement (1972-2010), and all other civic engagement indicators, such as access to information and connection to others, come from the pooled 2008-2009 and single-year 2010 CPS Civic Engagement Supplement. There were some civic engagement indicators that were only assessed in the 2008-2009 data collection. In order to achieve optimal reliability and sample size, the 2008-2009 data were pooled.

There are some caveats about the data and interpretations that readers should be aware of. First, each cluster by no means represents a homogeneous group of young people. Though they are similar to each other and, as a group, distinct from other clusters, they still vary in the ways they engage in various behaviors and they are also likely to vary on other measures of civic engagement that the Census did not measure. It is a different approach than defining a “typology” by specific behaviors or cut-offs. Furthermore, readers should not assume that the same individuals are represented in 2008 and 2010 data. The Current Population Survey collects data from about 50,000 households annually, and the households represented in the 2010 data do not overlap with the households that were sampled in 2008. Thus, readers should not interpret the findings as *individual change* over time. Instead, the differences between 2008 and 2010 should be interpreted as a shift in the ways in which young people engage in civic and political life at different times.

# END NOTES

<sup>1</sup>The September and November data for each year were merged in order to create a dataset that contains all 11 indicators coming from three different CPS supplements (Volunteering in September, Civic Engagement in November, and Voting and Registration in November). Therefore, only the respondents who were in both the September and November samples of each year were used in the analysis. In 2008, the total (unweighted) sample size was 8,740, and in 2010 the sample size was 8,611.

<sup>2</sup>Boycotting/buycotting and contacting public officials were the only two types of non-electoral political activities that were asked in 2008 and 2010 CPS Civic Engagement Supplement. Because the prevalence of each of these activities were quite low among young people, we set the criteria so that a young person who engaged in at least one of these activities was considered to be politically active.

<sup>3</sup>In several clusters, 100% of the respondents said that they had voted, but that was not the only factor used when assigning them to a cluster. For example, in the 2008 “only voted” group 100% of respondents reported voting but this group was also united by the fact that they responded “no” to other questions, not just by the fact that they voted.

<sup>4</sup>Estimates are based on a within-year longitudinal sample, which represents a group of youth who responded to both the September and November CPS data collection in 2008. Thus the total estimates for indicators in this report are slightly different from the published estimates from various reports.

<sup>5</sup>Readers should note that the CPS data not longitudinal from year to year. Thus, we cannot make a direct statement about how the same sample changed from 2008 to 2010. However, because the Current Population Survey maintains a large and representative sample, we are able to make statements about youth population as a whole and how young people have changed as a group between 2008 and 2010.

<sup>6</sup>The three highest years for youth turnout were 1972 (55.4%), 1992 (52.0%) and 2008 (51.1%). 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.

<sup>7</sup>For more information on the level of interest among young people prior to the November 2008 election, see the CIRCLE Fact Sheet “Quick Facts about U.S. Young Voters: The Presidential Election Year 2008” [http://www.civicyouth.org/PopUps/FS\\_08\\_quick\\_facts\\_national.pdf](http://www.civicyouth.org/PopUps/FS_08_quick_facts_national.pdf). See CIRCLE Fact Sheets “The Youth Vote 2004”, July 2005. [http://www.civicyouth.org/PopUps/FactSheets/FS\\_Youth\\_Voting\\_72-04.pdf](http://www.civicyouth.org/PopUps/FactSheets/FS_Youth_Voting_72-04.pdf) and “Youth Voter Turnout Increases in 2006,” June 2007. <http://www.civicyouth.org/youth-voter-turnout-increases-in-2006/>

<sup>8</sup> CIRCLE calculates turnout among eligible citizens by dividing the number of votes cast by the count of American citizens aged 18 and over.

<sup>9</sup> Based on the calculations using the Census Bureau's Source and Accuracy Statement (2008), the estimated 95% margin of error for the youth turnout estimate is +/- 0.70%. In other words, we are 95% confident that the true youth turnout would be between 23.3% and 24.7%.

<sup>10</sup> Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, CIRCLE, American Bar Association Division of Public Education, Lenore Annenberg Institute for Civics, and National Conference on Citizenship, *Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools* (2011) at [www.civicmissionofschools.org/site/guardianofdemocracy](http://www.civicmissionofschools.org/site/guardianofdemocracy)

<sup>11</sup> See CIRCLE's "quick facts" page on Non-College Youth: [www.civicyouth.org/quick-facts/non-college-youth/](http://www.civicyouth.org/quick-facts/non-college-youth/)

<sup>12</sup> Estimates are based on the longitudinal sample, which represents a group of youth who responded to both the September and November CPS data collection in 2008. Thus the total estimates for indicators in this report are slightly different from the published estimates from various reports.

<sup>13</sup> In both 2008 and 2010, we observed that Asian American youth, as a whole, were most likely to fall under the Civically Alienated cluster. However, we believe that the general label "Asian Americans" do not fully represent the linguistic, religious, cultural and socioeconomic diversity within this group. Therefore, readers should interpret statistics about the Asian Americans with caution.

<sup>14</sup> Based on the longitudinal sample, which represents a group of youth who responded to both the September and November CPS data collection in 2010. Thus the total estimates for indicators in this report are slightly different from the published estimates from various reports.