

Youth voter turnout analysis shows across-the-board increases in 2018 midterms

Youth turnout went up in all 34 states for which data are available; exceeded increase for general electorate in 26 of 34 states, including in key battlegrounds

Data on voter turnout for the 2018 midterms is available for 34 states so far (Map courtesy of CIRCLE)

April 2, 2019

MEDFORD/SOMERVILLE, Mass. (April 2, 2019)—Youth voter turnout (ages 18-29) increased in the 2018 midterm election in all 34 states for which data are available, according to two new analyses from the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning & Engagement ([CIRCLE](#)). Additionally, in most states, these increases exceeded the increases in turnout among the overall (all ages) electorate, according to the researchers.

CIRCLE, based at Tufts University's [Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life](#), is the preeminent, non-partisan research center on youth civic and political engagement.

The results of their research confirm that youth voters played a significant role in the 2018 midterm election.

Last month, CIRCLE released 2018 [youth turnout estimates for an initial batch of 17 states](#), including states with competitive statewide races like Georgia, Nevada and Florida. Today, CIRCLE published youth turnout [estimates for 17 additional states](#), including Texas, Tennessee, Michigan and Virginia.

Taken together, these analyses show that:

- Compared to the 2014 midterm elections, youth voter turnout increased for every state for which data are available so far in 2018;
- In 32 of the 34 states, youth turnout increased by at least 7 percentage points, and in 27 of them it increased by at least 10 percentage points ([see map](#)). In some cases, such as Massachusetts, Michigan, Texas, Tennessee and Virginia, youth turnout doubled or tripled; and
- In 26 of the 34 states, the increase in youth turnout exceeded the increase in turnout among the overall (all ages) electorate.

“These findings—including double-digit percentage point increases in turnout in many states—confirm the power of the youth vote in the 2018 midterms,” said Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg, CIRCLE director. “We believe that outreach by campaigns, and especially by peers in youth-centered and youth-led movements, contributed to this nationwide phenomenon. But we also know that some groups of young people are being left out and that investments are needed to support ongoing engagement among those who did use their voice in 2018. These findings should encourage a wide range of stakeholders – political parties, candidates, educators, and youth-serving organizations – to undertake the ongoing work necessary to sustain and build on this momentous year.”

States of interest include:

- **Georgia.** Youth voter turnout in Georgia went from 13 percent in 2014 to 33 percent in 2018, a 20 percentage-point increase. The state's surprisingly close gubernatorial race, in which Democrat Stacey Abrams nearly upset Republican Brian Kemp, likely led to greater investment in youth and helped motivate young people to head to the polls. In our [post-election analysis](#), we found that counties with high percentages of youth and African Americans voted for Abrams by 22 points above the state average.
- **Texas.** Just 8.2 percent of Texas youth turned out to vote in 2014, but young people tripled their turnout rate to 25.8 percent in 2018. In Texas' U.S. Senate race, Democratic challenger Rep. Beto O'Rourke nearly upset Republican incumbent Senator Ted Cruz, in part due to extensive youth support at the polls. According to an earlier [CIRCLE post-election analysis](#), O'Rourke earned his greatest support in counties with high proportions of young people, especially Latino youth. O'Rourke's narrow margin of defeat draws attention to the fact that the youth increase did not exceed the increase among the general electorate, as both went up by 17 percentage points.
- **Maine.** Youth voter turnout in Maine rose by 5.8 percentage points between 2014 and 2018, a more modest increase than in other states. However, it is still significant given that the 2014 youth turnout rate was already relatively high (30.5 percent), and the increase to 36.4 percent puts Maine among the states with the highest 2018 turnout rate. Maine allows pre-registration of 17 year-olds and has ranked-choice-voting. Young people may be especially encouraged to participate when they feel certain that their vote matters.

Read the full analyses here:

- First analysis of [youth turnout estimates for initial batch of 17 states](#) including Georgia, Nevada and Florida.
- Newest analysis of [youth turnout estimates for 17 additional states](#), including Texas, Tennessee, Michigan and Virginia.

[CIRCLE](#) is a nonpartisan, independent, academic research center that studies young people's civic and political engagement and produces detailed data on young voters in all 50 states. CIRCLE is part of the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life. CIRCLE is a co-lead on the [22x20 campaign](#), which is a network of education, media literacy and media partners working to mesh media literacy with voter engagement before the 2020 election.

Researchers are available for interviews, including live television interviews from Tufts' on-campus studio. Media outlets should contact Jen McAndrew at jennifer.mcandrew@tufts.edu or 617-627-2029.

#

About Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life at Tufts University

The only university-wide college of its kind, the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life (<http://tischcollege.tufts.edu/>) offers transformational student learning and service opportunities, conducts groundbreaking research on young people's civic and political participation, and forges innovative community partnerships. Its work is guided by two core beliefs: that communities, nations and the world are stronger, more prosperous, and more just when citizens actively participate in civic and democratic life; and that higher education has a responsibility to develop the next generation of active citizens.