

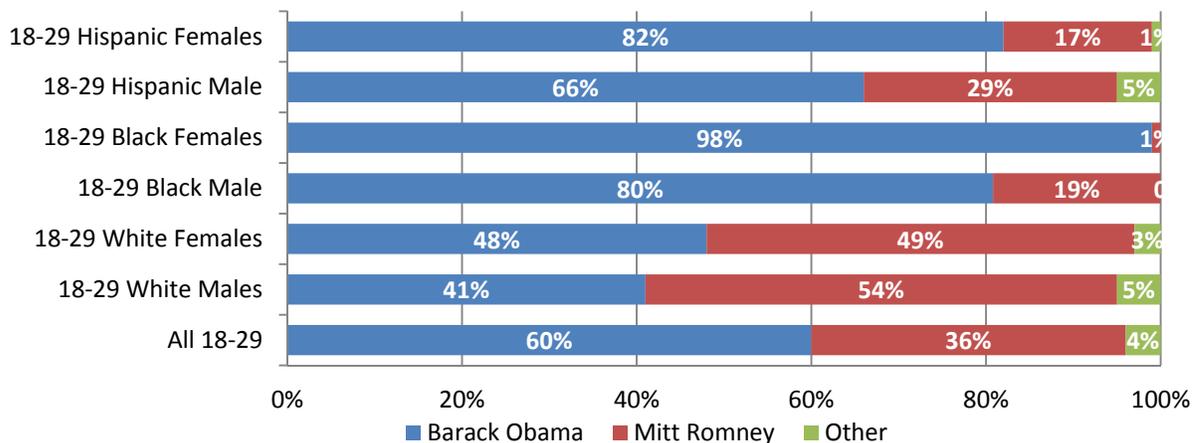
Diverse Electorate: A deeper look into the Millennial Vote

By CIRCLE Staff

November 14, 2012

Although young people showed an overall support for President Obama, their level of support for him varied greatly by gender and race, ranging from 98% among Black women to 41% among White men. This CIRCLE fact sheet takes a deeper look at how young men and women voters of different racial backgrounds voted, why they chose to vote the way they did, and how they differed from other groups. In this fact sheet, we summarize findings from the 2012 National Exit Poll conducted by Edison Research. The respondents are actual voters; citizens who did *not* vote are excluded. The exit polls do attempt to include early and absentee voters in proportion to their numbers. Unless otherwise noted, the phrase “young voters” refers to those between the ages of 18 and 29. “30+ voters” refers to ages 30 and older. “All voters” means ages 18 and older.

Figure 1: Youth Vote Choice for the 2012 Presidential Election by Race and Gender

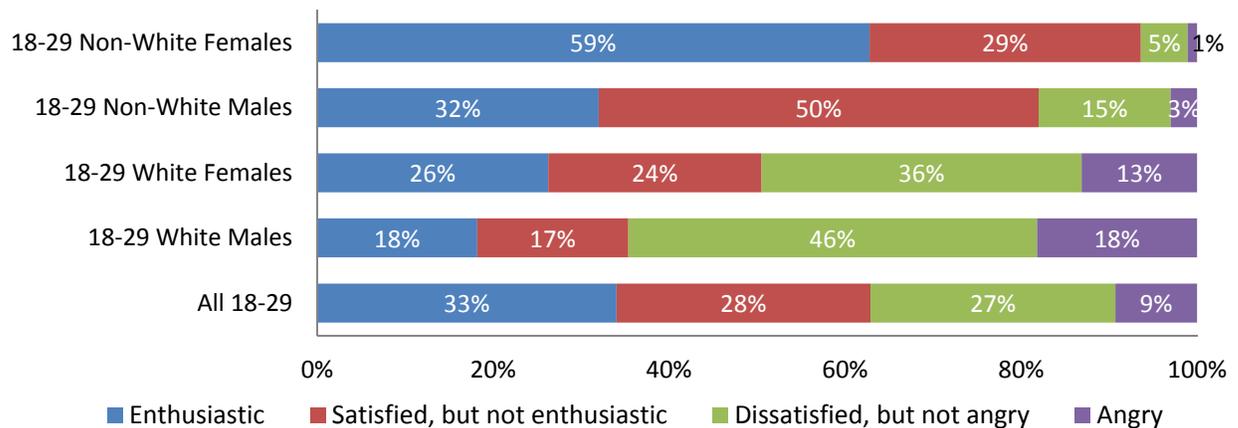


CIRCLE analysis of the National Election Day Exit Poll data (2012) collected by Edison Research

Figure 2 below indicates that the youth electorate as a whole was quite evenly divided among those who were enthusiastic, satisfied but not enthusiastic, and dissatisfied with

President Obama. However, when we break down the data by gender and race, we see that non-White women were generally enthusiastic, while non-White men were satisfied but not enthusiastic, and White men were dissatisfied, and even angry. Young White women were divided, with about half either dissatisfied or angry and the other half feeling at least satisfied. These differences in the way different groups of youth felt about President Obama were related to their vote choice, views of the government, opinions about the economy, and who they trusted to handle various challenges, as described in detail below.

Figure 2: Feelings about President Obama by Race and Gender, 2012



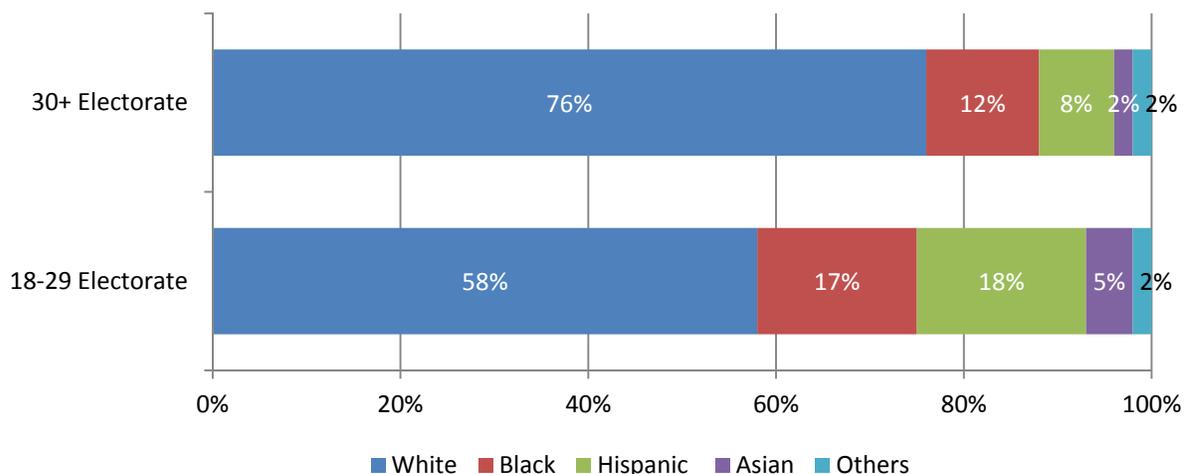
CIRCLE analysis of the National Election Day Exit Poll data (2012) collected by Edison Research

The major findings about race/gender groups:

- **Young Black and Hispanic women** provided the strongest support for President Obama (Figure 1). A majority admired him, much as they did in 2008 (Figure 2).
- **Young Hispanic women** voters were the most likely to identify as ideological liberals among all groups (Figure 6). Compared to older Hispanic voters, they were more liberal and less likely to be religious.
- **Women voters** were more liberal and supportive of President Obama than their same-race male counterparts (Figure 1). Women also considered President Obama’s response to Hurricane Sandy an important factor in deciding their votes.
- **Young White women**, the most influential youth constituency because of their size and turnout, were split in half on many issues that challenge our nation, including their choice for president, their view of the government, and abortion.
- **Young White men**, as a group, held a quite different view of the President (Figure 2), the role of the government (Figure 4), and how to move forward with immigration reform (Figure 7) than all the other groups. They were unhappy with the way the economy was and wanted Governor Romney to improve the economy (Table 1).

- **Young Hispanic men** cast 9% of the youth vote, up from 6% in 2008. Among the minority groups, they were most likely to affiliate with the Republican Party or consider themselves independents (Figure 8), but two-thirds of them voted for President Obama (Figure 1).
- Although a majority of **young Black male voters** supported President Obama again (Figure 1), a larger portion of them voted for the Republican candidate this year than 2008. Young Black male voters were somewhat more conservative, younger and more likely to identify as Republicans or Independents in 2012 than in 2008. They were less likely to vote for Obama than young Black women this year but Black male voters were already less excited about Obama than Black women voters back in 2008, implying a long-standing gender gap in enthusiasm among young Black voters.
- **Young White women's** influence in the youth electorate has decreased since 2008, while Hispanic influence has increased: 42% of young voters were persons of color and for the first time, the Hispanic vote share surpassed the Black vote share (Figure 3). In 2008, the Hispanic youth vote was 14% of the youth electorate. This year, it increased to 18%. Asian-American voters now represented five percent of the youth vote.
- **Male voters** were generally more conservative and less supportive of President Obama. Among male voters, the most notable trend was a decrease in support for President Obama among young Black men since 2008.
- **Young voters in general** were supportive of abortion and same-sex marriage regardless of gender and race.
- President Obama's response to Hurricane Sandy won back youth support, especially from **young women of color**.
- **White and minority youth split** on their view of "big government," as shown in Figure 4 at the end of the document.

Figure 3: Racial Composition of the 18-29 and 30+ Electorates



CIRCLE analysis of the National Election Day Exit Poll data (2012) collected by Edison Research

Women of Color – Continued commitment and enthusiasm for Obama: Touched by Obama’s hurricane response

Due to sample size restrictions, we were unable to obtain detailed data on how young women of color from each racial and ethnic background answered most of the exit poll questions. However, we do have information on a) how young women of color (non-White, including Black, Hispanic, Asian and other races) answered these questions; and b) how women of different ethnic backgrounds aged 30 and older responded. Using that information, we will describe trends for young women of color, and specify when Hispanic women and Black women age 30 and over differed on specific issues or views.

As noted earlier, young, Black women were the most solidly Democratic voting bloc (98% voted for President Obama), followed by Hispanic women, 82% of whom voted for President Obama. In general, young women of color felt that President Obama had only inherited economic problems from the previous administration (2% blamed Obama for the economic problems) and has been steadily improving the situation. They expressed commitment to President Obama’s policy and ideas. Fifty-nine percent were enthusiastic about President Obama, compared to only 33% of the entire youth electorate (Figure 2). This was in especially strong contrast with young male voters of color, 32% of whom felt enthusiastic about Obama. Similarly, 89% were in favor of President Obama, compared to the 57% of the youth electorate and 35% of young White male voters.

Women of color were more likely than other groups to consider President Obama’s hurricane response an important factor. 74% of young women of color considered it an important factor, while just 49% of the young electorate felt the same way (and 42% of the entire electorate).

Young women voters of color felt more optimistic about the economy than other groups: 59% believed it was getting better, and only 4% thought it was getting worse. This contrasts with young White male voters, 38% of whom thought it was getting better, and 33% believing it was getting worse. Among older women voters, Black women were particularly likely to believe that economy is getting better (73%), followed by Hispanic women voters (49%). Among the economic issues, employment was particularly important for women voters of color: 59% cited unemployment as the biggest economic issue, while 48% of the youth electorate did. These women’s concern about unemployment reflects the unemployment figures that suggest that Black women’s unemployment is on the rise¹ while unemployment rates are generally declining for other groups.

Young women of color expressed diverse views when it came to abortion though a great majority or 70% showed a general support. While one-third of women of color felt that abortion of be legal in *all* cases, a quarter of them said that it should be illegal in most or all cases, indicating that there are mixed opinions in this group (Figure 5).

A majority of young women of color were mothers (52%) and earned lower income than any other group (42% earning less than \$30,000 annually) and they are three times more likely than White women to be working mothers.

Below, we provide limited analysis of young Black women and Hispanic women separately based on available data.

¹ <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t02.htm>

Young Black women: The most committed Obama supporters

In 2012, 98% voted for Obama and 95% considered themselves Democrats. Young Black women are the single most solidly Democratic voting group. This is equivalent to their support for Obama in 2008 (96%). Although they were strongly committed to voting for a Democratic candidate and 82% identified as Democrats, half of them (49%) considered themselves ideological moderates rather than liberals (33%). Well over half (58%, the highest rate among all groups of young voters) were mothers, and 22% were married. 63% had college experience and 31% had completed college. 68% of Black women identified as Protestant, 10% Catholic, and 11% said they had no religious affiliations.

Young Hispanic Women: Strong Democratic base – most liberal of all groups.

Along with Hispanic men, Hispanic women represent a formidable voting bloc because they represent a larger proportion of the population than Black men and women. Hispanic women represent 8.4% of the citizen 18-29 population, the largest ethnic minority/gender group. This is a shift from 2008, when Hispanic women represented just 6.7% of the eligible youth population. Keeping with this trend, the share of votes cast by Hispanic women increased within the youth electorate, from 8% in 2008 to 9% in 2012.

65% of young Hispanic women voters identified as Democrats, 15% Republican, and 20% independent or something else. 45% of them considered themselves as liberal, the highest among all youth groups. Just 17% identified as conservative (Figure 6). Compared to older Hispanic women voters, young Hispanic women were more likely to vote for Obama (82% vs. 73%) and identify as liberals (45% vs. 29%).

Like Hispanic men, Hispanic women voters were younger than other groups – 67% of the young Hispanic voters were 18-24. And over half (53%) had children and 21% were married. 69% had at least some college experience and 31% had completed college. 42% were Catholic, 30% Protestant (including Evangelical). Compared to the older Hispanic voters, young Hispanic women voters were less likely to claim Catholicism as their religion, which may be reflected on young Hispanic women's liberal ideology.

Young Male Voters of Color: Strong Democratic base but some are skeptical of immigrants

Young male voters of color (Black, Hispanic, Asian and other races) cast 16% of the youth votes, three points less than their female counterparts (Women of color) who cast 19 % of the youth votes. Yet, they also contributed to the overall support for Obama by providing a solid Democratic base. As a group, 72% voted for Obama and 25% voted for Romney. As a group, they are more ideologically conservative than women of color (Figure 6). 27% identified as conservative, 37% for Black men and 26% for Hispanic men.

On the whole, they held more liberal beliefs than young White voters and believed strongly that the government should do more to solve problems (70% compared to 49% among young White men and women, Figure 4) and thought that the health care law should remain as is or expanded (75% compared to 53% for the youth electorate as a whole). They were also generally supportive of abortion, with 77% saying that it should be legal in most or all cases, which was the highest level of support among all groups (Figure 5). Male voters of color were overwhelmingly supportive of the way President Obama has handled health care issues: 88% believed that President Obama would handle Medicare issues well, and 76% felt that the 2010 health care law should either

stay as is or be expanded (compared to 53% of the youth vote). At the same time, they showed a surprisingly strict attitudes toward undocumented immigrants, with 32% saying that they should be deported (Figure 7).

Overall, young men of color held similar social values as women of color. Yet, more of their votes went to conservative candidates. At least part of this difference may be explained by their view of the current economy and how to improve it. First, young men of color were less likely to think that the economy is getting better (50%) than women of color (59%). Second, 33% of young men of color thought that Romney would handle the deficits and economy better, a much larger portions than those among women of color (Table 1). Finally, although young male voters of color did not fare better than other groups in terms of their income and education, a larger portion of them thought that the economy was good or excellent (51%) than other groups (15% of White men, 17% of White men, and 28% of women of color).

This group's turnout has lagged behind their female counterparts in the past, and they may be more difficult to reach by traditional campaign outreach strategies. 70% of them only had cell phones and 37% were non-college youth. Furthermore, they were not likely to be at places of worship regularly (just 25% said they attend religious service weekly or more) and only a small portion of them (17%) belonged to unions. In other words, young men of color were generally not in places that campaigns traditionally reach out to. The voters in this group also likely decided for whom to vote the last: 55% had decided for whom to vote by September, compared to at least 60% among other groups, and 15% had decided in the last few days leading up to the election. Perhaps neither Democrats nor Republicans are reaching out to this group well.

We provide limited analysis of young Black men and Hispanic men separately below based on available data.

Young Black Men: Younger and more conservative than the 2008 voters: Lack of excitement for Obama?

Ninety-four percent of young Black men voted for Obama in 2008. Just 48% of them were in the 18-24 year-old range, making them relatively old for an under-30 constituency. However, it was clear then that young Black men were not as excited about Barack Obama as their female counterparts. In 2008, 45% of young Black male voters said they would be excited to see Obama elected, and 41% felt optimistic but "not excited." Young Black women voters overwhelmingly said that they would be excited (86.5% and 6.8% optimistic but not excited). Evidence from 2012 exit poll suggests that young Black, male voters may have been quite different from the group that overwhelmingly supported then-Senator Obama in 2008.

In 2012, young Black men showed an overall strong support for Obama but possibly less so than 2008. Black male voters who responded to the Exit Polls were the least likely to identify as "liberal" among all groups of youth, including White men, meaning that this election may have energized a conservative base of young Black men. Compared to 2008², the portion of young Black male voters who identified as Democrats has decreased, while the proportions of voters who identified as Republicans and

² According to CIRCLE's analysis of National Exit Poll data from 2008. Data downloaded from the Roper Center Public Opinion Archives, at <http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/elections/common/exitpolls.html#.UKGuJGfqXmg>.

Independents have increased. The shift in party identification among those who cast votes does not suggest that the whole population of young Black men have become more conservative. It's more likely that this election did not inspire a large number of young Black men who came out to support Barack Obama in 2008.

They were also younger this year than 2008 as a group: 70% of this group was 18-24 years old this year – far younger as a whole than 2008, and younger than the rest of the youth electorate (58% are 18-24). Because data about young Black men who did *not* vote are not available in exit polls, it is not possible to explore why some young Black men did not turn out to vote. We did, however, explore feelings about President Obama for young male voters of color (including Hispanics, Asians and others) in the section above.

Young Hispanic Men: A growing influence

Young Hispanic men cast 9% of the youth vote, up from 6% in 2008. This is indicative of both the fast pace of population growth in this group, and possibly an increase in turnout. Either way, young Hispanic male voters had a bigger influence on the youth electorate as a whole than they did in the last presidential election. More than other minority groups, young Hispanic men favored the Republican Party (28%), Independent status (24%), or “some other party” (7%). Just 42% affiliated with the Democratic Party, compared to 58% of Black men, 65% of Hispanic women, and 82% of Black women (Figure 8). However, they were also one of the most liberal groups (35% consider themselves liberals), second only to Hispanic women (45%, Figure 6). Although a substantial minority affiliated with the Republican Party, 66% of young Hispanic men supported Obama (Figure 1), and they also supported Democratic House and Senate candidates by similar margins.

41% of the young Hispanic male votes were cast by non-college youth, the largest proportion among all groups. Compared to Hispanic women, a larger proportion of Hispanic men subscribed to Protestant or Evangelical faith (45% vs. 30%). Forty-percent of their votes were cast in the Western states, reflecting their geographic concentration.

Young White Women: Highly polarized but supported liberal policies

Young White women were split evenly on their choice for the President of the United States – 48% voted for Obama, 49% for Romney. They were however, more likely to support Obama than young White men, by 7 points.

Young White women were split exactly in half in their feelings about President Obama. Fifty percent felt positively about him while 49% felt negatively. Forty-seven percent said that the country is going in the right direction but 50% felt that it is on the wrong track. Similarly, they were split in thirds in their party affiliation: 33% were Democrats, 35% were Republicans, and 32% were independents or of some other affiliation (Figure 8). Forty-nine percent thought the government should do more and 47% thought that the government is doing too many things better left to businesses and individuals (Figure 4). However, they favored Obama more (55%) than Romney (46%, Figure 9) and they were generally supportive of the idea that undocumented immigrants should be offered a chance to apply for legal status (72%). 38% of the young White women were Evangelical voters, and perhaps reflecting the strong turnout by religious conservatives in this group, a plurality of young White women opposed abortion (43%, compared to

32% of the youth electorate), with 20% saying that abortion should be illegal in “all cases” (Figure 5).

Young White women were the most educated group of all: 43% of this group completed college and 81% had at least some college experience. This group had the largest portion of Evangelicals (38%, compared to 31% of youth overall). 29% were married (compared to 21% of youth overall) and 11% were working mothers (compared to 30% of women of color).

Young White Men – Disgruntled by the current economy, looking for change

Young White male voters were the second-largest group, only slightly less numerous than White women. Young White men represented 29% of the young voters in 2012, about the same as in 2008. However, the gap in share of voters within the youth electorate between White men and White women decreased from four points in 2008 to just one point in 2012.

Young White men held different beliefs and voted quite differently from other youth voting groups. They supported Obama by a small margin (52%) in 2008 but in 2012, they overwhelmingly supported Romney (54%) over Obama (40%). White men were the only group of youth who favored Governor Romney (Figure 9).

Young White men’s vote choice clearly reflects their negative feelings about President Obama (Figure 2) and strong disapproval of his policies. 18% are “angry” at President Obama, young White men blamed President Obama for the bad economy more than other groups (43%, compared to 27% of the youth electorate, and 38% of the entire electorate). At least a portion of young White men came out to vote against Obama, rather than for Romney (18% voted because they dislike the other candidate, the highest percentage). 63% were unfavorable to Obama compared to 38% unfavorable to Romney (Figure 10), and they overwhelmingly disapproved of the job that President Obama has been doing (59% compared to 35% of the entire youth electorate and 43% of White women). Although half of all young voters considered Obama’s response to Hurricane Sandy an important factor, only 34% of White men did. Compared to four years ago, 34% of young White men felt that their family’s financial situations were worse now, compared to just 23% of the youth electorate. Finally, 54% of young White male voters thought the new health care law should be repealed (compared to 41% of youth overall).

Another reason for their support is the difference in White men’s view of the current economy and how the economic system should operate. Young White male voters may have felt that the U.S. system was working well before the Obama Administration and that recent changes are making their economic conditions worse. Thirty-three percent said their economic conditions were getting worse, compared to 21% of the youth electorate, despite the fact that White male voters were most likely to have a job (67% compared to 59% for youth overall). A relatively large portion of young White men (41%) thought that the U.S. economic system is fair to most people. This compares to 34% of the youth electorate and 33% of White women. Young White male voters were relatively more concerned about the federal budget deficit (26% compared to 15% of the youth electorate). This may explain, in part, their support for Romney, since 57% of them believed that Romney would handle the deficit better. Unlike the rest of the youth electorate, young White men were most like to think Romney would handle the economy and deficit well and think that Romney’s policies would favor middleclass and the poor than the rest of the youth voting groups, as shown in Table 1.

Young White men were, however, more likely to believe that President Obama understands them than Mitt Romney. And yet, their vote choice was not dependent on understanding.

Although young White men were more likely to vote for Romney than for Obama, young White men were generally supportive of abortion (60%, Figure 5) and two-thirds (66%) supported same-sex marriage in their states (66% for youth overall). However, young White male voters stood out in their support for deporting undocumented immigrants who work in the United States. Forty-one percent thought they should be deported and 52% thought they should be able to apply for legal status. Somewhat surprisingly, their staunch position was less supportive of undocumented immigrants than that of the older White male voters, 56% of whom thought they should be able to apply for legal status (Figure 7).

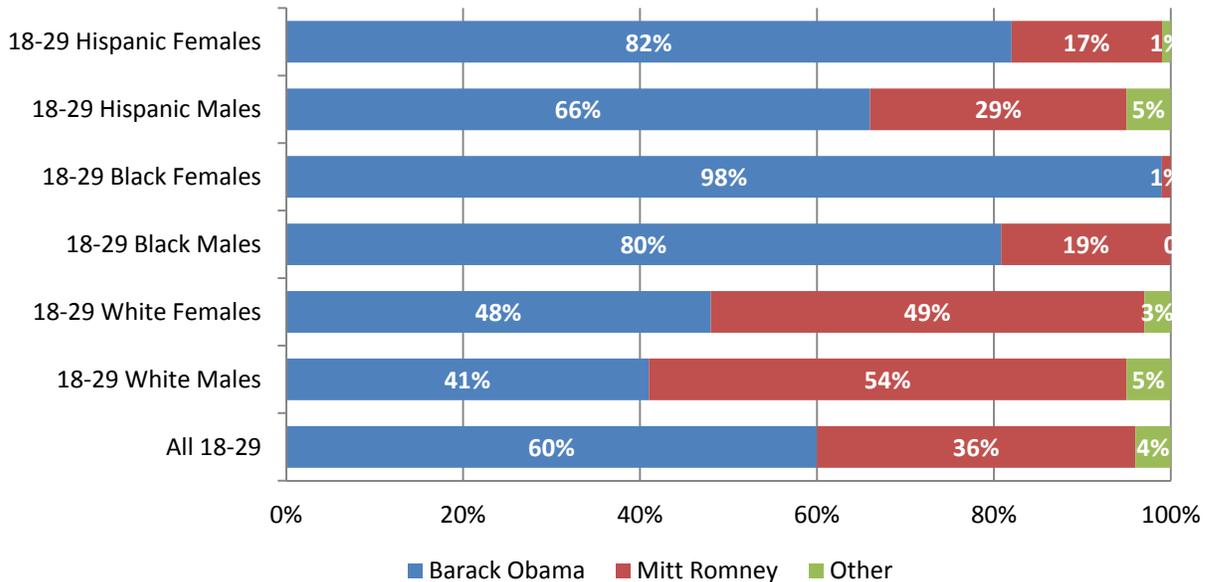
Young White male voters were least likely to have children living with them (19%, compared to 30% of the whole youth electorate, much lower than 58% of Black women). 37% were college graduates, which makes them the second-best-educated group, just after White women. 30% of young White male voters were non-college youth and two-thirds held a paying job (67%), above the average rate for 18-29's as a whole (59%).

Table and Figures

Table 1: Young People’s View on Governor Romney’s Economic Policy

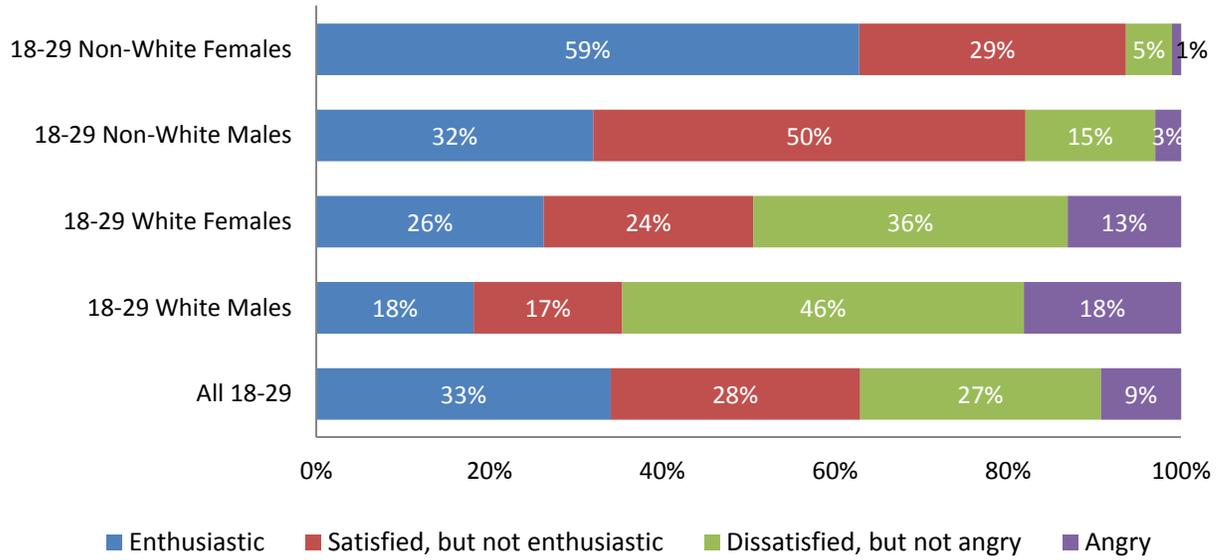
	all 18-29	White men 18-29	White women 18-29	Non-White men 18-29	Non-White women 18-29
Trusted Romney to handle economy better	42%	57%	50%	33%	12%
Trusted Romney to handle federal deficit better	40%	57%	50%	33%	12%
Romney’s policy favors the rich	58%	42%	55%	67%	84%
Romney’s policy favors middle class	32%	41%	38%	27%	11%
Romney’s policy favors the poor	4%	11%	0%	0%	1%

Figure 1: Youth Vote Choice for the 2012 Presidential Election by Race and Gender



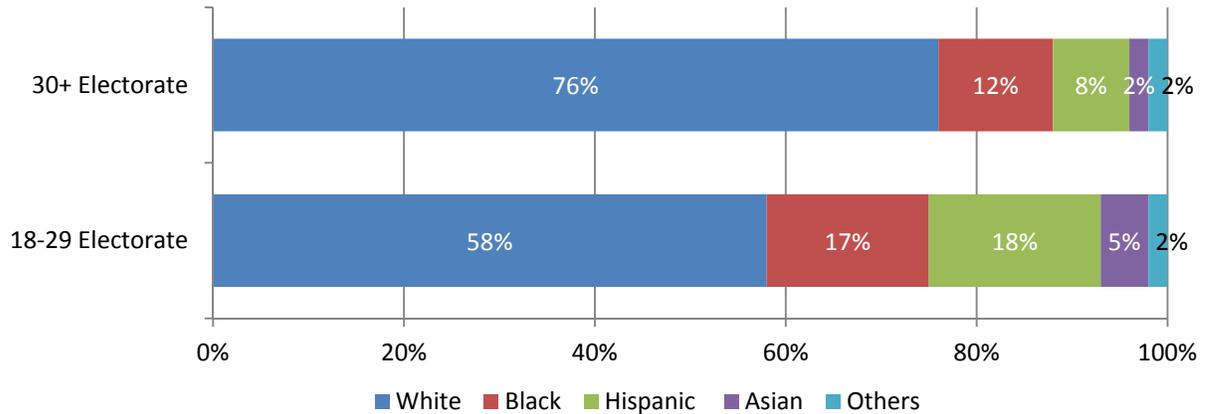
CIRCLE analysis of the National Election Day Exit Poll data (2012) collected by Edison Research

Figure 2: Feelings about President Obama by Race and Gender, 2012



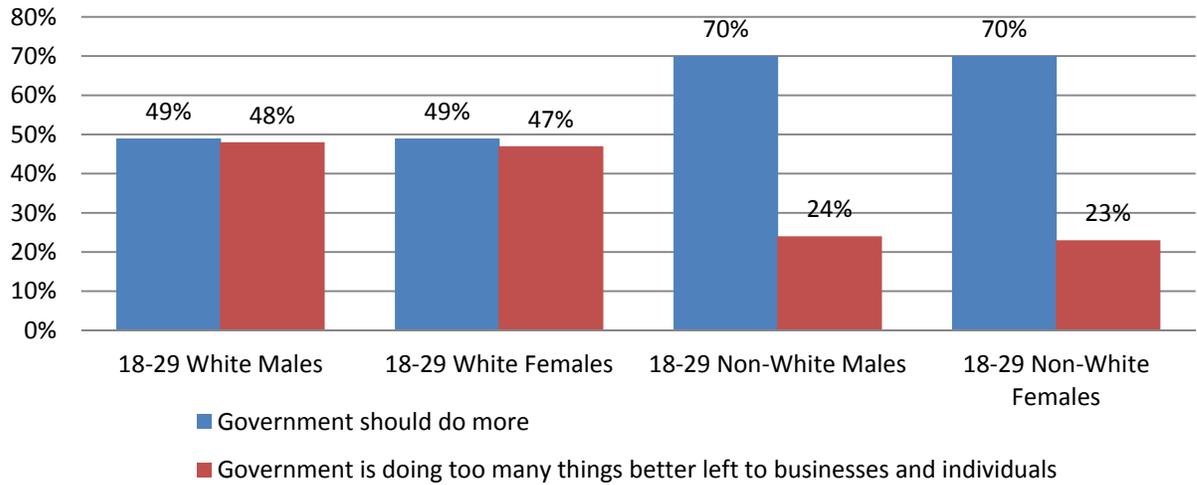
CIRCLE analysis of the National Election Day Exit Poll data (2012) collected by Edison Research

Figure 3: Racial Composition of the 18-29 and 30+ Electorates



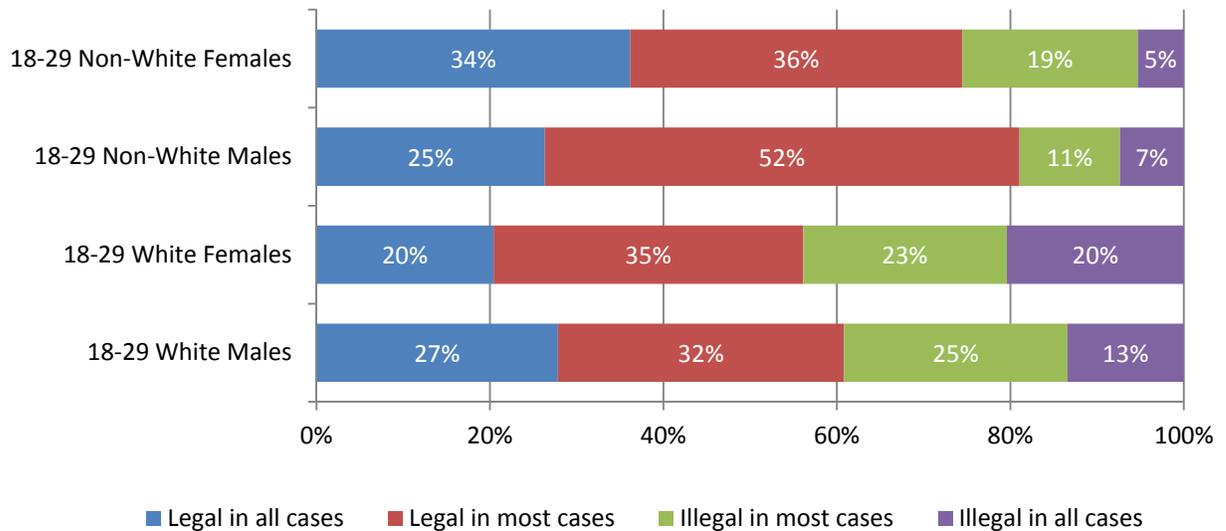
CIRCLE analysis of the National Election Day Exit Poll data (2012) collected by Edison Research

Figure 4: Young People’s Opinions on the Role of Government by Race and Gender, 2012



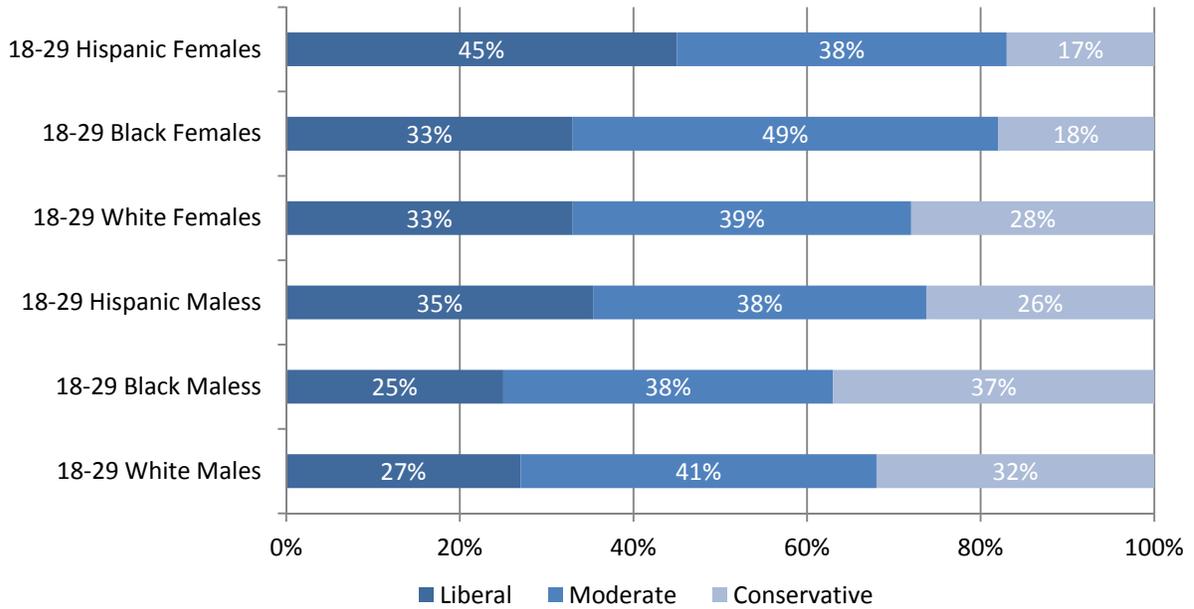
CIRCLE analysis of the National Election Day Exit Poll data (2012) collected by Edison Research

Figure 5: Opinions about Abortion by Race and Gender, 2012



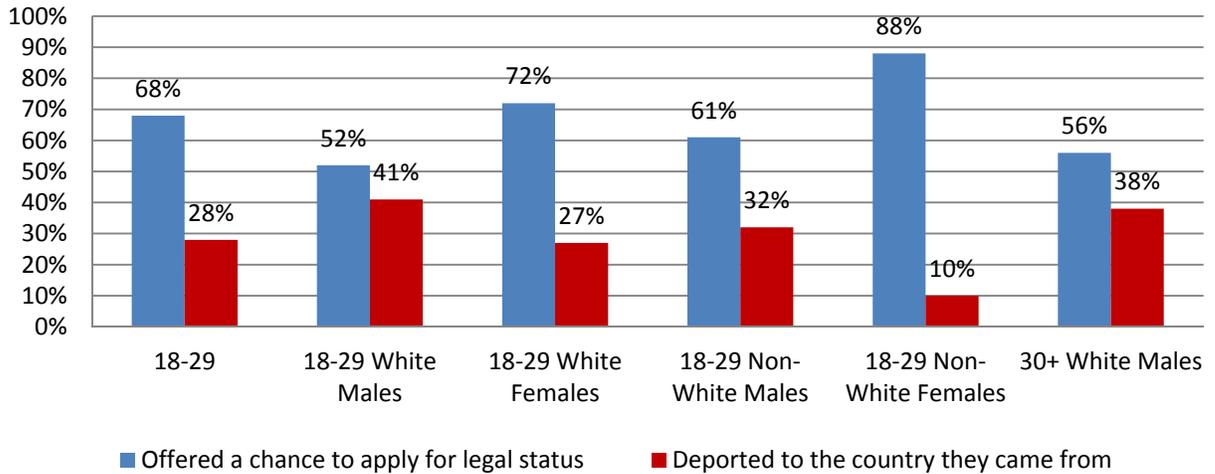
CIRCLE analysis of the National Election Day Exit Poll data (2012) collected by Edison Research

Figure 6: Youth Political Ideology by Race and Gender, 2012



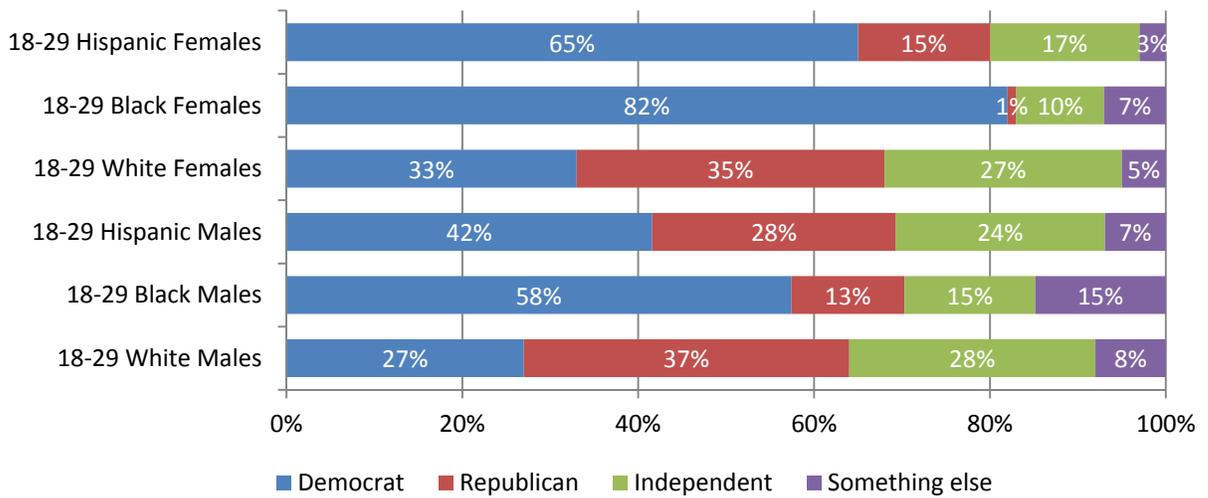
CIRCLE analysis of the National Election Day Exit Poll data (2012) collected by Edison Research

Figure 7: Opinions about Undocumented Immigrant Workers by Race, Gender and Age



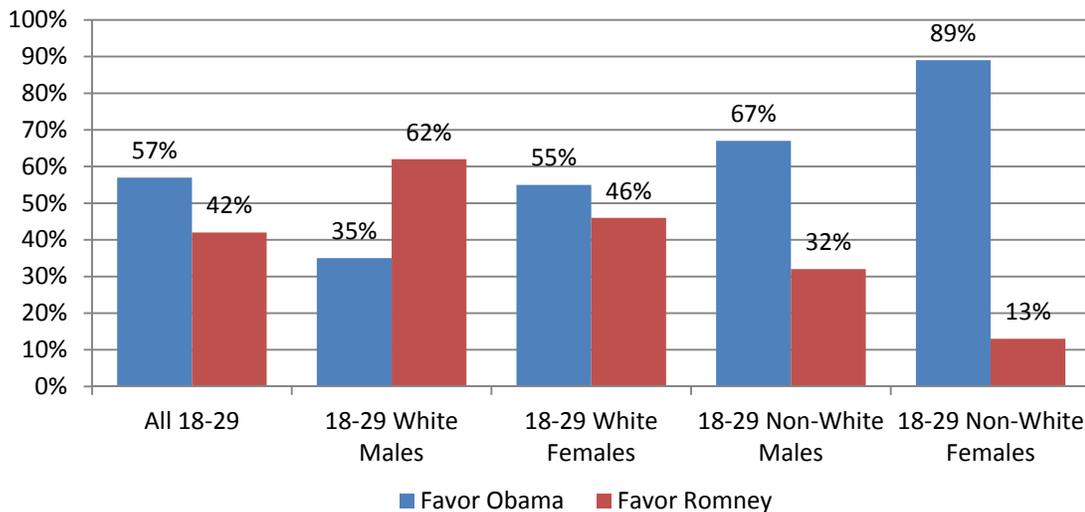
CIRCLE analysis of the National Election Day Exit Poll data (2012) collected by Edison Research

Figure 8: Youth party Identification by Race and Gender. 2012



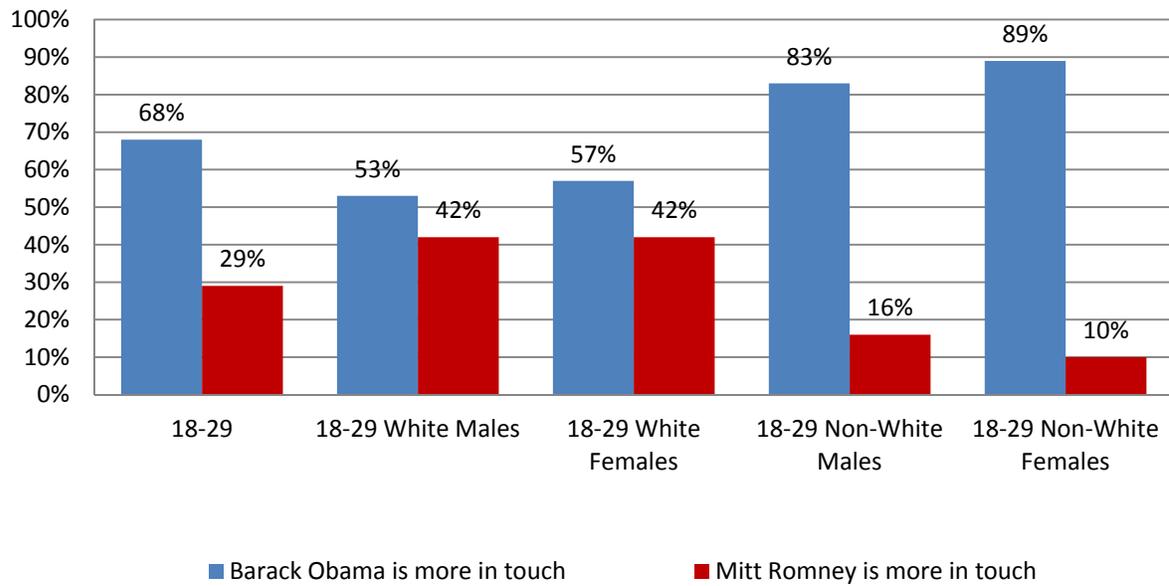
CIRCLE analysis of the National Election Day Exit Poll data (2012) collected by Edison Research

Figure 9: Presidential Candidate Favorability by Race and Gender, 2012



CIRCLE analysis of the National Election Day Exit Poll data (2012) collected by Edison Research. Figures are percentages of young people favoring each candidate: Percentages may add to more than 100%

Figure 10: Young People's Opinion about Candidates' Ability to Understand Them by Race and Gender



CIRCLE analysis of the National Election Day Exit Poll data (2012) collected by Edison Research

Methodology

CIRCLE Methodology for Estimating Youth Voter Turnout

Immediately after each national election, CIRCLE estimates voter turnout among young people (18-29 years old) based on the total vote count as reported by major news outlets, the National Election Pool's exit poll estimate of youth voter share (i.e., the proportion of the votes cast by young people), and the U.S. Census Current Population Survey's estimate of the 18-29 citizen population.

The estimated population size used in our estimates comes from the Census Bureau's March Demographic File. The following formula was used to calculate turnout percentages using the National Election Pool: Youth turnout = $[(\% \text{ votes cast by } 18\text{-}29) / (\text{total votes cast})] / \text{CPS citizen population for } 18\text{-}29 \text{ year old}$.

It is important to note that the voter turnout and youth vote count figures that CIRCLE publishes immediately after the election are estimates, because votes will be tallied for days after the election, and the exit poll data are subject to reweighting. Both of these variables can change the estimates. However, the exit polls are the only data source available for estimating youth voter turnout, and CIRCLE's estimates of presidential voter turnout have tracked the Census estimates of youth turnout well in the past.

Estimates based on both data sources data have some limitations. For example, the national exit poll consists of only a few thousand young voters, and although the exit poll by Edison Research captures early voters and absentee voters by contacting them via landline and cell phone, it is a small sample relative to the millions of young people who come out to vote. Because the data collection methods have changed over time we can only go back to 1992 data. The national poll's margin of error is approximately 3 percentage points. For more information about the exit polling by the National Election Pool and Edison Research, please refer to http://www.edisonresearch.com/exit_poll_faq.php. The Census Current Population Survey is a large, ongoing data collection of 50,000 households and about 150,000 individuals. In November of even years, the respondents are asked about voting and registration. Because of the large sample size, researchers can produce more reliable estimates of turnout and registration rates among smaller groups, such as young Hispanics or young men without college experience. We can also analyze data going back to 1972. This dataset also has some limitations. In particular, data about voting is self-reported and in some cases reported by members of the household. Self-reporting weeks after the election can cause some error or overreporting. Finally, because of the time it takes to prepare data, the CPS voting is will not be available until the following year. For more information about the Census Voting and Registration data, please refer to <http://www.census.gov/cps/>.