



# State-by-State Youth Voter Turnout Data and the Impact of Election Laws in 2022

April 6, 2023

Many of the states with high youth voter turnout in the 2022 midterm elections had strong policies that make it easier to register and vote.

**Note:** Updated on 5/2 with newly released turnout data for South Carolina.

New estimates of youth voter turnout in the 2022 midterm elections highlight major variations and inequities in young people's electoral participation across the country. Youth turnout ranged from as high as 37% in some states to as low as 13% in others.

These new estimates are out today from the Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) at Tufts University's Tisch College of Civic Life, the preeminent national research center on youth voting. They are based on voter file data from 40 states for which age-specific voter file data has been aggregated by Catalist. We define turnout as the percentage of all voting-eligible youth (as opposed to just registered youth), ages 18-29, who cast a ballot in 2022.

According to this new data, **Michigan** (37%), **Maine**, **Minnesota**, **Oregon** (all 36%), **Colorado** (33%), and **Pennsylvania** (32%) had the highest youth turnout rates in the country. **Louisiana** (16%), **Oklahoma**, **Indiana**, **Alabama** (all 15%), **West Virginia** (14%), and **Tennessee** (13%) had the lowest youth turnout rates. CIRCLE's analyses suggest that, along with issues and electoral competitiveness, election laws may be playing a central role in shaping whether youth cast a ballot in national elections.

## Youth Voter Turnout in Recent Midterm Elections: State by State

CIRACLE estimates of youth voter turnout (ages 18-29) in the past three midterm elections. Turnout is the percentage of eligible voters (whether or not they were registered) who cast a ballot.

 Page 1 of 3 >

State	2014 Youth Turnout Rate	2018 Youth Turnout Rate	2022 Youth Turnout Rate	Change in Youth Turnout, 2018-2022
	Rate	Rate	Rate	Rate
Michigan	15.3%	32.7%	36.5%	3.8
Maine	30.5%	36.4%	35.8%	-0.6
Minnesota	23.1%	43.7%	35.5%	-8.2
Oregon	27.4%	39.2%	35.5%	-3.7
Colorado	27.6%	40.8%	33.1%	-7.7
Pennsylvania	12.2%	30.0%	31.7%	1.7
Washington	16.4%	35.0%	28.7%	-6.3
Montana	17.6%	42.1%	28.2%	-13.9
Georgia	13.3%	33.0%	26.0%	-7
Iowa	22.1%	34.7%	26.0%	-8.7
Vermont	10.6%	29.0%	25.7%	-3.3
Arizona	9.8%	25.9%	24.8%	-1.1
Nevada	8.8%	28.7%	24.5%	-4.2
North Carolina	16.2%	25.8%	23.1%	-2.7

**Indiana:** According to technical documentation provided by Catalist, the number of voters in the aggregated voter file for Indiana is smaller than the total number of votes cast as documented by the office of the Indiana Secretary of State by -8.57% (162,000 fewer votes cast) due to 15 counties that are missing votes. We have adjusted our estimate accordingly to account for this variance.

**Massachusetts:** According to technical documentation provided by Catalist, the number of voters in the aggregated voter file for Massachusetts is smaller than the total number of votes cast as documented by the office of the Massachusetts Secretary of State by -9.55% (240,000 fewer votes cast) due to incomplete data provided by some townships. We have adjusted our estimate accordingly to account for this variance.

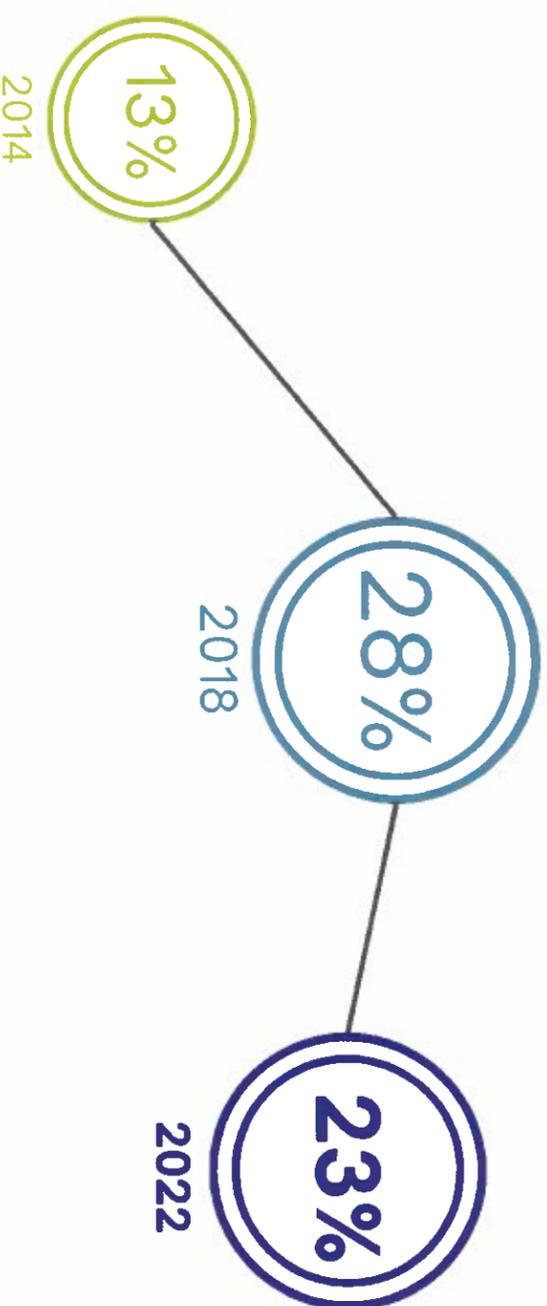
**Data is not currently available for all states.**

Nationally, CIRACLE estimates that 23% of eligible young Americans cast a ballot in the 2022 midterm elections. CIRACLE's analysis of youth voting trends and other data sources suggests that last year's election had one of the highest youth voter turnouts in a midterm election since the voting age was lowered to 18. Youth turnout was 28% in 2018, but 2022's turnout rate is a large improvement over 2014, when CIRACLE estimates just 13% of youth cast a ballot.

"While nationally youth turnout in 2022 did not match the historic high point in 2018, young people's electoral engagement remains high compared to other recent midterms and reflects an upward trend in the youth vote over the past decade," **says Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg, Newhouse Director of CIRACLE.** "But the differences in

turnout by state, as well as stubborn inequities by race and education, underscore that our institutions and communities have a lot of work to do to support all young people's engagement in democracy.”

# National Youth Voter Turnout in Recent Midterm Elections



Other highlights from this new CIRACLE data include:

**Four States Surpass 2018:** Michigan, Pennsylvania, New York, and Arkansas were the only states to have a higher youth turnout in 2022 than in 2018. In those first three states, Democrats won competitive statewide races for governor and/or U.S. Senate.

**Upward Trend Since 2014:** All but one state for which we have data (Louisiana) had higher youth turnout in 2022 than in 2014, suggesting a broad trend of increased youth voting over the past decade.

**Registration Matters:** Michigan, which led the nation in youth voter turnout, also had the highest increase in the number of youth registered to vote between 2018 and 2022 (<https://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/youth-voter-registration-compared-2018-especially-key-battlegrounds>). Minnesota, Colorado, and Washington, all among the top-7 states for 2022 youth turnout, also had double-digit increases in registration.

This new data on youth turnout across the country also underscores some of the key issues, electoral policies, and institutional support that can shape young people's electoral participation.

## Election Laws Help (Or Hurt) Youth Participation

**Michigan**, which had the highest youth voter turnout in 2022, stands out as a state that has made it easier to register to vote in recent years. The state, which also has online voter registration and same-day registration, implemented automatic voter registration in 2019, and it had the largest increase in the number of youth (ages 18-24) registered to vote (<https://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/youth-voter-registration-compared-2018-especially-key-battlegrounds>) between 2018 and 2022.

Data is available for 6 of the 8 states that automatically sent mail-in ballots to all registered voters in 2022. Three of them—**Colorado, Oregon, and Washington**, all of which have had all vote-by-mail elections since 2014 or earlier—were among the top 7 states with the highest youth turnout in the midterms. Two other states, **Vermont and Nevada**, ranked in the top 15.

On the other hand, some of the states with low 2022 youth turnout are notable for their lack of facilitative voting and registration policies. **Tennessee** (13%), **Alabama** (15%), and **Oklahoma** (15%) do not have same-day, automatic, or pre-registration. Oklahoma is one of only 10 states in the country without fully online voter registration; Tennessee has a strict photo ID requirement to cast a regular ballot; and Alabama is one of a handful of states that does not offer early, in-person voting. Other states are currently passing restrictive laws: **Idaho has banned the use of student IDs**

[\(https://idahocapitalsun.com/2023/03/09/Idaho-senate-votes-to-eliminate-use-of-student-ids-for-voting/\)](https://idahocapitalsun.com/2023/03/09/Idaho-senate-votes-to-eliminate-use-of-student-ids-for-voting/)

**as a form of voter identification, and Arkansas has banned ballot drop-off boxes**

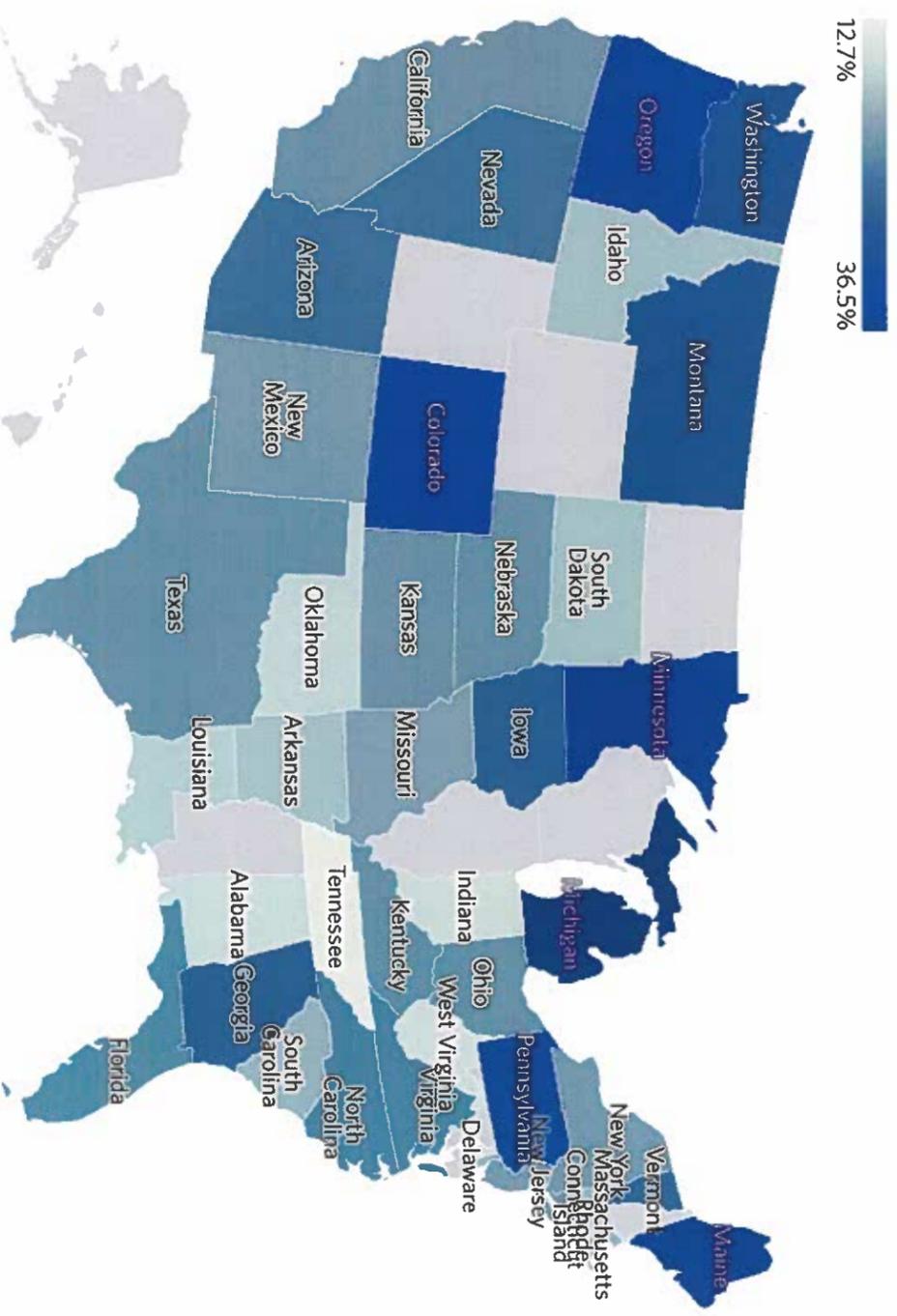
[\(https://www.democracymonitor.com/news-alerts/arkansas-legislature-sends-two-anti-voting-bills-to-governor/\)](https://www.democracymonitor.com/news-alerts/arkansas-legislature-sends-two-anti-voting-bills-to-governor/)

A recent analysis from CIRACLE's post-election youth survey found that young people in states without online registration, automatic registration, or same-day registration were more likely to say they ran out of time or missed the deadline to register to vote

[. \(https://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/voting-laws-and-other-access-issues-shaped-youth-vote-2022\)](https://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/voting-laws-and-other-access-issues-shaped-youth-vote-2022)

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**CIRCLE** Tufts University Tisch College - CIRCLE

Source: CIRCLE analysis of voter file data aggregated by Catalist.

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## Issues and Competitive Races Drive Young Voters

Throughout the election cycle, CIRCLE research highlighted that abortion was a major motivating issue [for young people.](https://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/abortion-election-how-youth-prioritized-and-voted-based-issues)

**Michigan**, where voters enshrined abortion rights in 2022, was one of a handful of states where there was an abortion-related measure on the ballot. In **Montana**, which had the 8th highest youth turnout in 2022, voters defeated a measure that would have criminalized abortion. In **Arkansas**, one of four states to surpass its 2018 youth voter turnout, there was a ballot measure to legalize marijuana which did not pass.

Before the 2022 midterms, CIRCLE's research also ranked statewide elections in Georgia, Arizona, Pennsylvania, Nevada, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Kansas as the [top races where young voters could influence the results](https://circle.tufts.edu/yes2022)

**. All of those states for which we have data ranked among the top 15 in youth voter turnout in 2022.**

Electoral competitiveness usually results in more resources, attention, and outreach to young potential voters; their higher turnout in these states suggest what may happen if that level of support were afforded to youth everywhere, not just where races are expected to be close.

"Young people continue to prove that they'll turn out to vote to influence election results and have an impact on issues they care about," **says Abby Kiesa, CIRCLE's deputy director.** "But in some places, and for some youth, electoral policies and other structural factors can make that harder. It's imperative to understand all young people's interests, needs, and potential barriers in order to make sure they're ready to vote in 2024 and in all future elections."

### Media Inquiries

CIRCLE experts are available to discuss our data, analyses, and insights about youth participation in the 2022 midterm elections. To ask a question, request an interview, or set up an informational conversation, email us at [circle@tufts.edu](mailto:circle@tufts.edu).

Contact CIRCLE

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