



**Women's Voices. Women Vote.**

February 11, 2008

## Unmarried Women Continue to Make Their Voices Heard

### Exit Surveys Show Unmarried Women Turnout Disproportionately High On Super Tuesday

**To:** Interested Parties  
**From:** Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research  
Women's Voices, Women Vote

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One trend many commentators have overlooked is the enormous contribution of unmarried women in participating in the primaries and driving the record turnout we have seen. In the 2008 primaries so far, unmarried women have turned out in record numbers, accounting for 26 percent of the vote share in the Democratic primary on February 5<sup>th</sup>.

While traditionally, they do not participate in the same numbers as their married sisters—in 2004, 20 million unmarried women did not vote—this is changing. In 2004, they were 22.4 percent of the electorate, while in 2000, they were 19 percent. Turnout in 2006 improved by 16 points, compared to 2002. As important, in looking at the results of early primary states<sup>1</sup> and on Super Tuesday, unmarried women have both turned out in record number, which is particularly important in the context of primary election where their turnout has historically been much less.

Overall, they made up 26 percent of the electorate in the February 5 Democratic primaries where marital status was asked, a number which exceeds their share of registered voters in these states. Indeed, in every state except three, unmarried women made up a larger proportion of the Democratic primary electorate than suggested by their current registration. Marital status has not been asked in Republican primaries except in New Hampshire.

Unmarried women gave their first real signal that something has changed this year in Iowa, where they accounted for 26 percent of Democratic caucus-goers, while representing only 22 percent of all registered voters. In New Hampshire, in another indication for their determination to participate, one out of every nine unmarried woman in the Democratic primary was an

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<sup>1</sup> Please see: <http://www.wv.org/2008/2/1/early-state-elections-identify-importance-of-unmarried-women-in-electorate>

unregistered voter the day before the event while one out of every 13 was an unregistered voter until the Republican primary.<sup>2</sup> On every primary election day since, they have continued to set records in turnout; we fully anticipate unmarried women to make sure their voices are heard in the primaries still to come and play a pivotal role in the general election to follow.

The data in this memo are drawn from the Edison/Mitofsky National Election Pool of exit surveys in Super Tuesday primary and caucus states. Unfortunately, marital status was not asked consistently in these surveys. On the Democratic side, marital status was not asked in Alaska, Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Minnesota and North Dakota. As indicated earlier, on the Republican side, marital status thus far has only been asked in New Hampshire and in none of the other primary states, making comparisons in Republican contests impossible. Marital status was not asked in 2004 primaries for Democrats or Republicans.

## Participation on Super Tuesday

Historically, unmarried women have not participated in our democracy to the same degree as other groups. In 2004, 41 percent of unmarried women (20 million in total) stayed home on Election Day. In 2006, however, things began to change and unmarried women's participation shot up by 16 points between 2002 and 2006. Greenberg Quinlan Rosner survey analysis has been monitoring huge and historic levels of interest among registered and (so far) unregistered women alike. Early primary states quantified this interest in the real world, and Super Tuesday provides convincing evidence that this interest and turnout has not abated.

Overall, unmarried women accounted for 26 percent of the Democratic primary electorate in the 16 states where marital status was asked.<sup>3</sup> This compares favorably to the 24 percent that unmarried women represent of registered voters in these states. Moreover, in 12 out of 16 states, unmarried women participated in greater numbers than registration figures would suggest.

Looking more specifically at the states, turnout for unmarried women in Georgia and New York state was particularly impressive.

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<sup>2</sup> New Hampshire allows same-day registrants to participate in the primary.

<sup>3</sup> Proportions of unmarried electorate represents an estimate from Edison/Mitofsky National Election Pool of exit survey results in Super Tuesday primary and caucus states where they asked marital status.

■ **Figure 1: Unmarried Women Participating in 2008 Super Tuesday Primaries<sup>4</sup>**

Unmarried Women

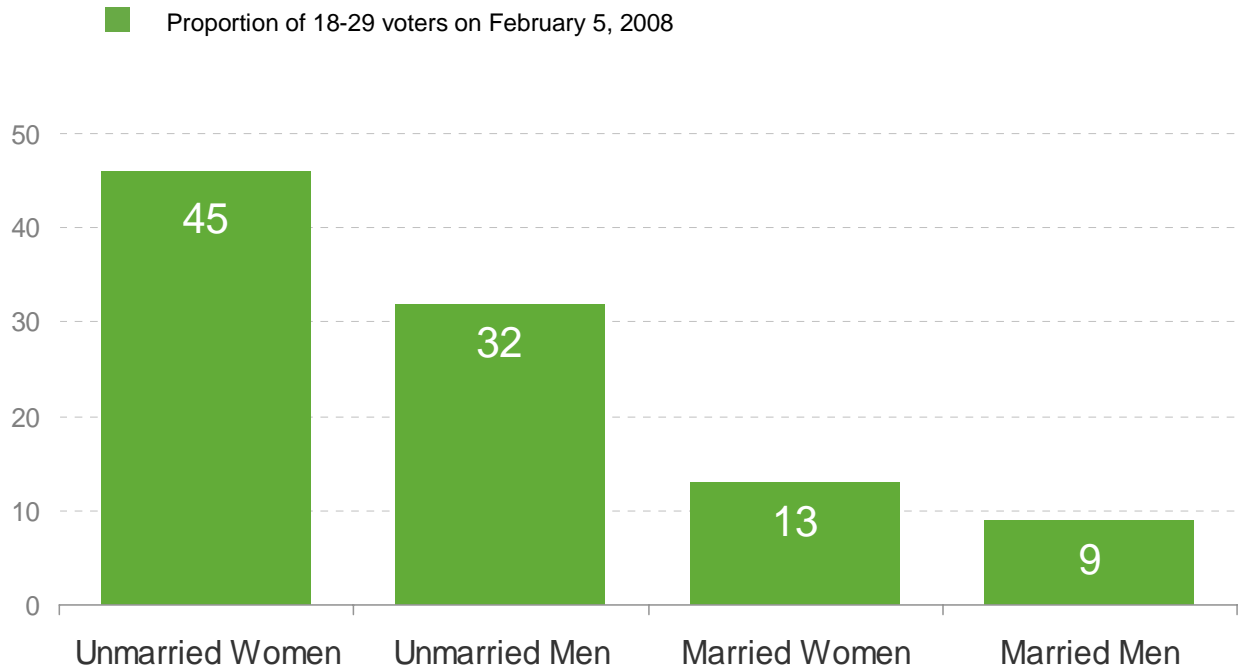
	Proportion of 2008 Democratic primary	Proportion of registered voters	Proportion of 2006 vote
Georgia	<b>34</b>	24	23
New York	<b>29</b>	25	24
Delaware	<b>29</b>	23	24
Illinois	<b>28</b>	25	23
Alabama	<b>28</b>	24	21
California	<b>25</b>	24	23
New Jersey	<b>25</b>	24	21
Arizona	<b>25</b>	21	19
Missouri	<b>25</b>	22	19
Tennessee	<b>24</b>	25	23
Massachusetts	<b>24</b>	24	23
New Mexico	<b>23</b>	22	21
Arkansas	<b>21</b>	20	18
Connecticut	<b>20</b>	23	21
Utah	<b>20</b>	16	14
Oklahoma	<b>15</b>	20	16

Without question, participation in Democratic primaries is amplified by the overall Democratic-leaning of this cohort, but the consistency of this turnout across the country geographically, in states with large minority percentages and low minority percentages, in primary states and caucus states, strongly suggest a broad trend of record participation.

Much has been made, about the turnout among both young people and women in the 2008 primaries, and rightly so. But this focus obscures the crucial role unmarried women have played in driving turnout for both women and young people. Although young people's interest in this contest has been truly historic, young people overall (ages 18-29) accounted for 15 percent of the total vote on February 5, compared to 26 percent among unmarried women. Moreover, fully 45 percent of young people who have turned out are unmarried women.

<sup>4</sup> Numbers showing proportion of registered voters and 2006 general election are from the 2006 Current Population Study.

## 2008 Youth Vote Driven by Unmarried Woman



Similarly, women accounted for 58 percent of the turnout in on February 5; unmarried women accounted for fully 26 percent.

### Conclusion

While this group may have been slow to take part in electoral politics in the past, so far in 2008 they are making their voices heard, and the available data points toward increased participation.