

Elections and Voting

Emma Goldman: If voting changed anything, they'd make it illegal.

Winston Churchill: The best argument against democracy is a five-minute conversation with the average voter.

George Carlin: I stopped voting when I stopped taking drugs. I believe both of those acts are closely related to delusional behavior.

Anonymous: Many Americans have two cars, two computers, two televisions, two credit cards, and two bank accounts, but have to be persuaded to vote once.

1. Voter Turnout

A. 2012 Presidential election = 53.6% (VAP)

B. 2010 Midterm/ Off-year election = 37.8% VAP)

2. Voter Turnout—Long-term Decline since Late 19th Century

A. Voter registration rules

B. Exclusion of black Americans from voting in the South

C. Introduction of secret ballot (32 states by 1892) eliminated social pressure of public voting

D. Extension of vote to women

E. Weakening of political party organizations that once mobilized voters

3. Forms of Political Participation

A. Voting in federal, state, and local elections

B. Discussing politics and government with other people

- C. Belonging to a politically relevant organization
- D. Contacting public officials by telephone, letter, fax, email, visit etc.
- E. Wearing a button or showing a bumper sticker
- F. Making campaign contributions
- G. Attending political meetings
- H. Working on a political campaign
- I. Participating in a public protest, boycott, or demonstration
- J. Engaging in civil disobedience
- K. Running for public office
- L. Assassinating a public official or bombing a public facility

4. Constitutional Expansions of the Electorate

- A. Amendment XV (1870): all races
- B. Amendment XI (1920): women
- C. Amendment XXIII (1961): Washington, D.C., residents for presidential elections
- D. Amendment XXIV (1964): abolition of poll taxes
- E. Amendment XXVI (1971): all citizens age 18 and above

5. Major Federal Voting Rights and Protections Statutes

- A. Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA)
- B. National Voter Registration Act of 1963 (Motor Voter)

C. Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA)

- 1) Voting accessibility for persons with disabilities
- 2) Computerized statewide voter registration
- 3) Photo ID for any previously non-voting person who registers by mail or copy of a current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck, or other government document showing person's name and address
- 4) Provisional voting if lacking ID
- 5) States must use federal funding aid to replace punch-card and lever voting systems with new voting machines that meet HAVA's standards.
- 6) U.S. Election Assistance Commission

6. Important Voting Rights Issues

- A. Felon disenfranchisement
- B. Mentally incompetent (formerly idiots and insane)

7. Key Party Difference Over Voting Rules

- A. Democrats favor quantity
- B. Republicans favor quality

8. Rules to win elections

- A. Majority: 50% plus 1
- B. Plurality: Most number of votes even if less than majority
- C. Proportional: Votes distributed according to percentage distribution

9. Types of Elections

A. Primary elections: rank-in-file members choose the party's candidates

- 1) Closed primary
- 2) Open primary
- 3) Runoff primary
- 4) Nonpartisan blanket primary (or jungle primary): all candidates for elected office run in the general election regardless of political party. If no candidate receives a majority of the votes, the two candidates who get the most votes advance to a runoff election. This is used in Louisiana.

B. General election—federal and most state elections are in November

10. Presidential Elections (run by state and local governments, which set most of the rules)

A. Winner-take-all primary: all of a state's delegates must vote for the same candidate

B. Proportional representation primary: a state's delegates are apportioned according to each candidate's percent of the popular vote

C. Nearly all states have a *binding* primary

D. Caucuses

E. Electoral College

- 1) Total electoral college votes = 538
- 2) Needed to win the presidency = 270
- 3) 48 states plus D.C. award all their electoral votes to the candidate who wins the statewide vote
- 4) Only Maine and Nebraska use the "congressional district method," in which one elector is selected in each congressional district by popular

vote and the remaining two electors are awarded to the candidate who wins the statewide popular vote

5) Faithless elector

11. Congressional Elections

A. Incumbents usually win because

- 1) More visibility and name recognition
- 2) Gerrymandered districts
- 3) More fund-raising ability
- 4) Staff resources
- 5) Prior campaign experience
- 6) Party support
- 7) Scare-off effect

B. Incumbents occasionally lose because

- 1) Gerrymandered districting
- 2) Scandal (e.g., Anthony Wiener, D-NY, in 2011)
- 3) Presidential coattails
- 4) Mid-term doldrums

12. Why do people vote for particular candidates?

A. Party affiliation

B. Ideology—conservative vs. liberal

C. Issues

D. Candidate characteristics

E. Income: low-income = Democrat / high-income = Republican

F. Education: most and least educated = Democrat / middle educated = Republican

G. Race: African-American = 93% Democratic in 2012 presidential election

H. Ethnicity:

1) Hispanic = 71% Democratic in 2012 presidential election

2) Cuban = Republican but trending Democratic

3) Puerto Rican = Democrat

4) Asian = 73% Democratic in 2012 presidential election

5) American Indian = Democrat

I. Gender

1) Women = 55% Democratic in 2012 presidential election

2) Men = 55% Republican in 2012 presidential election

J. Religion

1) Jews = 69% Democratic in 2012 presidential election

2) Roman Catholics = 50% Democratic and 50% Republican in 2012 election

3) Protestants = 57% Republican in 2012 presidential election

4) Born-again Protestants = 78% Republican in 2012 presidential election

K. Ballot Order Effect (derived from primacy effect)

- 1) Being listed first at the top of the ballot captures extra votes
- 2) A study in California found that 10% of city-council and school-board officials elected during 1995-2008 won because they were first on the ballot; however, they were also the most likely to lose their seat in the next election.
- 3) Many states use a single randomized ballot, though some states place the incumbent first on the ballot

L. Lifestyle

- 1) Volvo owner = Democrat / Pick-up truck owner = Republican
- 2) Starbucks coffee = Democrat / McDonald's coffee = Republican
- 3) Weekly Wal-Mart shopper = Republican / Whole Foods shopper = Democrat

M. Voters more likely to support a sales-tax increase for education if their voting place is in a school.

13. Voter Turnout

- A. Income: higher income = higher turnout
- B. Education: higher education = higher turnout
- C. Race: whites generally vote at higher rates than blacks, Hispanics, and other minorities
 - 1) Therefore, Republicans pray for rain on election day
- D. Gender: women vote slightly more than do men
- E. Age: 18-30 year-olds have lowest voting rate
 - 1) Possible contributing reasons:

- a. Low income
 - b. Not married
 - c. No homeownership
 - d. Focus on establishing career and adulthood
- F. Civic, social, union, professional, and religious involvement = higher voter turnout
- G. Interest in politics = higher voter turnout

14. Reasons for Not Voting: 2008 election

A. Too busy =	17.5%
B. Illness or emergency =	14.9%
C. Not interested =	13.4%
D. Did not like candidates =	12.9%
E. Out of town =	8.8%
F. Don't know =	7.0%
G. Registration problems =	6.0%
H. Inconvenient polling place =	2.7%
I. Forgot to vote =	2.6%
J. Transportation problem =	2.6%
K. Bad weather =	0.2%

15. Proposals to Increase Voter Turnout

- A. Make election day a national holiday
- B. Open the polls for a two-day election

- C. Make early voting available
- D. Allow voting by mail as in Oregon, Washington, and parts of California
- E. Allow voting by Internet
- F. Allow election-day registration
- G. Have voting also be a lottery with prizes given to lucky voters
- H. Require high-school students to register in order to receive diploma
- I. Require local governments to register all voting age residents
- J. Institute compulsory voting
- K. Convert to a multi-party system