## CHAPTER 8

## Political Participation

## REVIEWING THE CHAPTER

## CHAPTER FOCUS

This chapter reviews the much-discussed lack of voter turnout and other forms of political participation in the United States, and concludes that individual Americans may not be at fault for their seeming nonparticipation but that other factors may be at work. After reading and reviewing the material in this chapter, you should be able to do each of the following:

1. Explain why the text believes that the description, the analysis, and the proposed remedy for low voter turnout rates in this country are off base.
2. Compare the way turnout statistics are tabulated for this country and for other countries, and explain the significance of these differences.
3. Describe how the control of elections has shifted from the states to the federal government, and explain what effects this shift has had on blacks, women, and youths.
4. State both sides of the debate over whether voter turnout has declined over the past century, and describe those factors that tend to hold down voter turnout in this country.
5. List and explain Nie and Verba's four categories of political participation.
6. Discuss those factors that appear to be associated with high or low political participation.
7. Compare participation rates in various forms of political activity here and in other countries.

## STUDY OUTLINE

I. Introduction
A. 80 percent voter turnout in European countries
B. Low turnout in America blamed on apathy
C. Calls for action by government or private groups to mobilize voters
II. A closer look at nonvoting
A. Alleged problem: low turnout compared with Europeans, but this compares registered voters with the eligible adult population
B. Common explanation: voter apathy on Election Day, but the real problem is low registration rates
C. Proposed solution: get-out-the-vote drives

1. 2004 study found little impact in relation to such efforts
2. If anything, get-out-the-vote appeals may mobilize those who usually vote in low turnout elections
D. Apathy not the only cause of nonregistration
3. Costs here versus no costs in European countries where registration is automatic
4. Motor-voter law of 1993 (which took effect in 1995)
a) 630,000 new voters in two months
b) Accounted for almost 40 percent of applications in 2001-2002
c) Scant evidence of impact on turnout or election outcomes
E. Voting is not the only way of participating
III. The rise of the American electorate
A. From state to federal control
5. Initially, states decided nearly everything
6. This led to wide variation in federal elections
7. Congress has since reduced state prerogatives
a) 1842 law: House members elected by district
b) Suffrage to women
c) Suffrage to blacks
d) Suffrage to eighteen- to twenty-year-olds
e) Direct popular election of U.S. senators
8. Black voting rights
a) Fifteenth Amendment gutted by Supreme Court as not conferring a right to vote
b) Southern states then use evasive strategies
(1) Literacy test
(2) Poll tax
(3) White primaries
(4) Grandfather clauses
(5) Intimidation of black voters
c) Most of these strategies ruled out by Supreme Court
d) Major change with 1965 Voting Rights Act; black vote increases
9. Women's voting rights
a) Western states permit women to vote
b) Nineteenth Amendment ratified 1920
c) No dramatic changes in outcomes
10. Youth vote
a) Voting Rights Act of 1970
b) Twenty-sixth Amendment ratified 1971
c) Lower turnout rate initially and no evident party loyalty
d) Turnout remains lower than that of other age groups although rates of political participation generally are at an all time high
11. National standards now govern most aspects
B. Voting turnout
12. Debate over declining percentages: two theories
a) The percentages are real and the result of a decline in popular interest in elections and competitiveness of the two parties
(1) Parties originally worked hard to increase turnout among all voters
(2) The election of 1896 locked Democrats in the South and Republicans in the North
(3) Lopsided Republican victories caused citizens to lose interest
(4) Leadership in the major parties became conservative and resisted mass participation
b) The percentages represent an apparent decline induced, in part, by more honest ballot counts of today
(1) Parties once printed ballots
(2) Ballots cast in public
(3) Parties controlled counting
c) Most scholars see several reasons for some real decline
(1) Registration more difficult: longer residency, educational qualifications, and discrimination
(2) Continuing drop after 1960 cannot be explained
(3) Refinement of VAP data to VEP data also reveals a decline
d) Universal turnout probably would not alter election outcomes
IV. Who participates in politics?
A. Forms of participation
13. Voting the most common, but 8 to 10 percent misreport it
14. Verba and Nie's six types of participants
a) Inactives
b) Voting specialists
c) Campaigners
d) Communalists
e) Parochial participants
f) Complete activists
B. Causes of participation
15. Schooling, or political information, more likely to vote
16. Church-goers vote more
17. Men and women vote same rate
18. Race
a) Black participation lower than that of whites overall
b) But controlling for SES, higher than whites
19. Level of trust in government?
a) Studies show no correlation
20. Difficulty of registering: as turnout declines, registration gets easier
21. Several small factors decrease turnout
a) More youths, blacks, and other minorities
b) Decreasing effectiveness of parties
c) Remaining impediments to registration
d) Voting compulsory in other nations
e) Ethnic minorities encounter language barriers, whereas blacks are involved in nonpolitical institutions
f) May feel that elections do not matter
22. Democrats and Republicans fight over solutions
a) No one really knows who would be helped
b) Nonvoters tend to be poor, black, and so on
c) But an increasing percentage of college graduates are also not voting
d) Hard to be sure that turnout efforts produce gains for either party: Jesse Jackson in 1984
C. The meaning of participation rates
23. Americans vote less but participate more
a) Other forms of activity becoming more common
b) Some forms more common here than in other countries
24. Americans elect more officials than Europeans do and have more elections
25. U.S. turnout rates heavily skewed to higher status; meaning of this is unclear

## KEY TERMS MATCH

Match the following terms and descriptions:

1. The lack of interest among the citizenry in participating in elections
2. Those citizens who have filled out the proper forms and are qualified to vote in an election
3. Requirement that voters be able to read; formerly used in the South to disenfranchise blacks
4. Proof of tax payment, to be produced when voting; used to disenfranchise blacks
5. A southern expedient to keep blacks from participating in primary elections
6. Requirement that for an individual to automatically qualify to vote, his or her grandparents had to have voted (excluded former slaves and their descendants)
7. Party supporters that generally favor efforts to make voting easier, suspecting that a higher turnout will benefit them
8. Legislation that made it illegal to exclude potential voters on the basis of race
9. Legislation that extended suffrage to women
10. Legislation that gave eighteen-year-olds the right to vote in federal elections
11. Legislation that gave eighteen-year-olds the right to vote in all U.S. elections
12. A document that is government printed, of uniform size, and cast in secret
13. Those who avoid all forms of political participation
14. Those who restrict their political participation to voting in elections
15. An estimate that results from excluding prisoners, felons and aliens
16. Those who both vote in elections and get involved in campaigns
a. activist
b. Australian ballot
c. campaigners
d. communalists
e. complete activists
f. Democrats
g. Fifteenth Amendment
h. grandfather clauses
i. inactives
j. literacy tests
k. motor-voter law
l. Nineteenth Amendment
m. parochial participants
n. poll tax
o. registered voters
p. Republicans
q. Twenty-sixth Amendment
r. voter apathy
s. voting-age population
t. voting-eligible population
u. Voting Rights Act of 1970
v. voting specialists
w. white primaries
17. Those who join organizations and participate in politics but not in partisan campaigns
18. Those who avoid elections and civic organizations but will contact officials regarding specific problems
19. Those who take part in all forms of political activity
20. An individual who actively promotes a political party, philosophy, or issue she or he cares personally about
21. A bill that requires states to allow voter registration by mail, when applying for a driver's license, and at some state offices that serve the disabled or poor
22. Estimate (based on the census) of the number of citizens who are eligible to vote after reaching a minimum age requirement

## DATA CHECK

## Table 8.1 (Page 174): Two Ways of Calculating Voter Turnout, 1996-2001 Elections, Selected Countries

1. What percentage of the voting age population in America voted in these elections?
2. What percentage of registered voters in America voted in these elections?
3. Where is the turnout of the voting age population above 80 percent or higher?
4. Where is the turnout of registered voters above 90 percent or higher?

## Figure 8.1 (Page 175): Sources of Voter Registration Applications, 1999-2004

5. What was the largest source of voter applications in this time period?
6. What is the second largest source of voter applications in this time period?

Figure 8.2 (Page 179): Voter Participation in Presidential Elections, 1860-2004
7. How does voter turnout in the twentieth century compare with that of the nineteenth?
$\qquad$
8. Identify two time periods of considerable length that are characterized by a steady, general decrease in voter turnout.
$\qquad$
9. Describe trends in turnout in the last two elections.
$\qquad$

## Table 8.3 (Page 181): Two Methods of Calculating Turnout in Presidential Elections, 1948-2000

10. In how many years does the VAP reach 60 percent?
11. In how many years does the VEP reach 60 percent?
12. According to the VEP measure, what percentage of eligible voters participated in the 2004 presidential election?
$\qquad$
Figure 8.3 (Page 184): Voter Turnout in Presidential Elections by Age, Schooling, and Race 1964-2000
13. Which age group is least likely to vote in a presidential election?
$\qquad$
14. Which group is least likely to vote according to their schooling, or level of education?
$\qquad$
15. Describe voter turnout among blacks and Hispanics.
$\qquad$
$\qquad$

## PRACTICING FOR EXAMS

## TRUE/FALSE QUESTIONS

Read each statement carefully. Mark true statements $T$. If any part of the statement is false, mark it $F$, and write in the space provided a concise explanation of why the statement is false.

1. T F The percentage of the adult population in America that is registered to vote is remarkably high.
2. T F Research suggests get-out-the-vote drives are generally successful.
3. T F Motor-voter registrants are more likely to vote than other new registrants.
4. T F Low rates of voter registration may indicate people are reasonably well satisfied with how the country is being governed.
5. T F At the time the Constitution was ratified, the only qualifications for voters were that they be white and male.
6. T F At one time, Chinese Americans were widely denied the right to vote.
7. T F According to law, federal elections must be held in even numbered years and on the Tuesday following the first Monday in November.
8. T F The Supreme Court declared grandfather clauses unconstitutional.
9. T F The 1965 Civil Rights Act suspended the use of literacy tests.
10. T F The Nineteenth Amendment nearly doubled the number of eligible voters in the United States.
11. T F When the Voting Rights Act of 1970 extended the right of eighteen-year-olds to vote in state elections, the Supreme Court declared the law unconstitutional.
12. T F Voter turnout for those 18 to 21 has steadily improved since 1972.
13. T F States may not have a residency requirement of more than 60 days.
14. T F Before 1961, residents of the District of Columbia could not vote in presidential elections.
15. T F Turnout in U.S. presidential elections has never been above 70 percent.
16. T F Most scholars believe voter turnout did decrease somewhere around the 1890s.
17. T F Calls to overhaul the nation's voting system were even greater in 2004 than they were in 2000.
18. T F The problem with VEP measures is that they contain a lot of people who cannot vote.
19. T F Voting is by far the most common form of political participation.
20. T F In a typical survey, 20 to 25 percent of Americans misrepresent their voting habits.
21. T F Older persons are more likely than younger persons to misreport their voting habits.
22. T F Political "activists" constitute about 11 percent of the population.
23. T F Parochial participants vote frequently but participate very little in the political process otherwise.
24. T F Research has found little or no correlation between religious involvement and political participation.
25. T F Men and women vote at about the same rate.
26. T F Four states allow voters to register and vote all in the same day.
$\qquad$
27. T F Political parties are more effective at mobilizing voters than they once were.
$\qquad$
28. T F In Australia and other countries, fines can be levied on nonvoters.
29. T F Democrats usually suspect higher turnout would work to their advantage.
30. T F Nonvoters are more likely to be poor than voters.
31. T F Public demonstrations and sit-ins and protest marches are much less common in recent decades.
32. T F The kinds of people who vote here are different from the kinds of people who vote abroad.
33. T F In the United States, voter turnout is heavily skewed toward higher status persons in professional, managerial and other white-collar occupations.
34. T F Blacks are more likely to be members of churches that stimulate political interests, activity, and mobilization than Latinos.

## MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Circle the letter of the response that best answers the question or completes the statement.

1. In this country about $\qquad$ of the voting age population is registered to vote.
a. one-eighth
b. one-quarter
c. one-half
d. two-thirds
e. ninety-five percent
2. Which of the following statements about the motor-voter law is accurate?
a. It encouraged about 80 million more people to vote.
b. It requires states to allow people to register to vote when applying for driver's licenses.
c. It took effect in 1993.
d. It has changed the balance of registrants in favor of the Democrats.
e. It allows illegal aliens and convicted felons to register to vote.
3. A 2001 study found that motor-voter registrants were less likely than other new registrants to
a. vote.
b. vote Republican.
c. vote Democrat.
d. support Independent candidates.
e. support incumbents.
4. At the time the Constitution was ratified, voting was limited to
a. most white males.
b. most males.
c. property owners or taxpayers.
d. the commercial class.
e. farmers.
5. The most important changes in elections have included all of the following except
a. extension of suffrage to women.
b. extension of suffrage to African Americans.
c. extension of suffrage to eighteen-year-olds.
d. direct popular election of Senators.
e. direct popular election of Representatives in the House.
6. Which of the following was employed to discriminate against African Americans who wanted to vote?
a. Literacy tests.
b. Poll taxes.
c. Grandfather clauses.
d. White primaries.
e. All of the above.
7. Initially, following passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, women
a. voted as often as men, but generally in the same manner.
b. voted less often than men, but generally in the same manner.
c. voted more often than men, but generally in the same manner.
d. voted more often than men, but quite independently.
e. voted as often as men, but quite independently.
8. The Voting Rights Act of 1970, which gave eighteen-year-olds the right to vote in state and federal elections
a. was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.
b. was vetoed by the president.
c. was opposed by a large majority of Americans.
d. was upheld by the Supreme Court but revoked by Congress.
e. was never considered on the floor of either the House or the Senate.
9. Individuals between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one could vote in a presidential election for the first time in
a. 1964.
b. 1968.
c. 1972.
d. 1976.
e. 1980.
10. In the first presidential election where those between eighteen and twenty-one could vote, the turnout rate for the new voters was about
a. 20 percent.
b. 30 percent.
c. 40 percent.
d. 50 percent.
e. 60 percent.
11. One explanation for the apparent decline in voter turnout suggests the political parties are no longer attempting to mobilize the mass of voters and are too
a. conservative.
b. liberal.
c. moderate.
d. disorganized.
e. ideological.
12. Until about 1890 ballots were printed by the
a. candidates.
b. House of Representatives.
c. state legislatures.
d. political parties.
e. local government.
13. Adoption of the Australian ballot enabled United States citizens to vote
a. early and often
b. more easily.
c. by absentee ballot.
d. without being informed.
e. in secret.
14. After the 1890s voter-registration regulations became more burdensome because
a. they had longer residency requirements.
b. it became harder for African Americans to vote.
c. educational qualifications were added in some states.
d. voters were required to register far in advance of the election.
e. all of the above.
15. In 2002, Congress passed legislation which did all of the following except
a. required states to have a system in place for counting disputed ballots.
b. provided federal funds to upgrade voting equipment.
c. created a uniform national voting system.
d. provided federal funds for training election officials.
e. B and D.
16. VEP measures of turnout may have an advantage over VAP measures because
a. VEP measures attempt to remove ineligible voters from the data.
b. VEP measures are based on actual census data.
c. VEP measures include prisoners, but not felons or aliens.
d. VEP measures include felons, but not prisoners or aliens.
e. VEP measures are verified by each state legislature.
17. When one refocuses analyses of voter turnout in the last fourteen presidential elections to VEP measures, it is clear that
a. there never has been anything like a turnout problem in America.
b. the voter turnout problem disappeared in the most recent elections.
c. voters are participating more now than ever before.
d. voter turnout has generally declined in the most recent elections.
e. voter turnout has generally remained the same.
18. Studies of non-voters suggest that, had they voted in recent presidential elections,
a. the Democrats would have won more often.
b. the Republicans would have won more often.
c. the Democrats would have won more of the elections by "landslides."
d. the Republicans would have won more of the elections by "landslides."
e. the outcome of most elections would have been about the same.
19. In surveys, about what percentage of respondents claim to have voted in an election when they did not do so?
a. 2 to 3 percent
b. 8 to 10 percent
c. 20 to 25 percent
d. 30 to 35 percent
e. 40 to 50 percent
20. Americans that are $\qquad$ are not so likely to misreport voting?
a. young
b. low-income
c. nonwhite
d. less-educated
e. elderly
21. About __ percent of the American population are completely inactive (they rarely discuss politics or vote and are not involved in organizations).
a. 10
b. 20
c. 40
d. 50
e. 60
22. Those who are inactive in politics tend to
a. have lower levels of education.
b. have lower levels of incomes.
c. be relatively young.
d. all of the above.
e. be extremely liberal or conservative.
23. Those who cast ballots in elections but engage in no other form of political participation are called
a. voting specialists.
b. campaigners.
c. issue belligerents.
d. communalists.
e. parochial participants.
24. Those who prefer to participate in politics by forming and joining nonpartisan groups and dealing with various issues in them are referred to as
a. voting specialists.
b. campaigners.
c. communalists.
d. issue belligerents.
e. parochial participants.
25. Those who stay out of electoral contests and community organizations but will contact officials to deal with specific problems are called
a. voting specialists.
b. campaigners.
c. communalists.
d. parochial participants.
e. issue belligerents.
26. Which of the following are more likely to vote and otherwise take part in politics?
a. Fans of professional sports.
b. Midwesterners.
c. Bowlers.
d. Regular church goers.
e. Musicians and poets.
27. Studies show that feelings of distrust toward political leaders have $\qquad$ effect on voter turnout.
a. a stimulating
b. a depressing
c. an impressive
d. no
e. an unpredictable
28. In states that have instituted same-day voter registration, the effect on voter turnout has been
a. a major decline.
b. a slight decline.
c. a slight increase.
d. a major increase.
e. no effect at all.
29. Two careful studies of voter turnout in twenty-four democratic nations found that almost all of the difference in voter turnout could be explained by
a. the degree of party strength.
b. the presence or absence of automatic registration.
c. the presence or absence of compulsory voting laws.
d. all of the above.
e. none of the above.
30. Who tends to think that they will benefit from increases in registration and voting?
a. Democrats
b. Republicans
c. Incumbents
d. State officials
e. Senators
31. When Jesse Jackson ran for the presidency in 1984,
a. registration of southern blacks decreased.
b. registration of southern whites decreased.
c. registration of southern blacks and whites decreased.
d. registration of southern blacks and whites increased.
e. there was no noticeable effect on voter registration.
32. The best evidence suggests Americans
a. are voting less and participating in politics less.
b. are voting less and participating in politics more.
c. are voting and participating in politics at about the same rate.
d. are voting more and participating less in politics.
e. are voting more and participating more in politics.
33. Political demonstrations have been used by
a. antiwar activists.
b. farmers.
c. truckers.
d. civil rights activists.
e. all of the above.
34. The number of elective offices in the United States, compared with European nations, is
a. much lower.
b. slightly lower.
c. about the same.
d. slightly higher.
e. much higher.
35. Compared with Europeans, American voters are offered the opportunity to vote
a. much less frequently.
b. slightly less frequently.
c. more frequently.
d. just as often.
e. much less frequently, but their vote counts more.
36. Compared with European turnout, American turnout is more skewed toward $\qquad$ persons.
a. informed
b. ideological
c. higher-status
d. secular
e. alienated

## ESSAY QUESTIONS

Practice writing extended answers to the following questions. These test your ability to integrate and express the ideas that you have been studying in this chapter.

1. Explain what the motor-voter law is. Describe its impact on registration, turnout and election outcomes.
2. What are the four most important changes that have occurred in elections since the founding?
3. Identify some of the ways that African Americans were kept from voting even after ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment.
4. Describe trends in the voting behavior of 18-21 year olds from 1972 to today.
5. Summarize the two major views with respect to the apparent long-term decline in voter turnout in the United States.
6. Explain how Congress addressed the complaints that followed the 2000 presidential election.
7. What is the difference between the VAP and VEP? Explain how these measures may (or may not) affect our thinking about the apparent decline in voter turnout.
8. Summarize the results of the classic study of political participation in the United States by Verba and Nie.
9. How are the kinds of people who typically vote in the United States differ from the types of people who typically vote in Europe?

## ANSWERS TO KEY TERMS MATCH QUESTIONS

1. r
2. 0
3. j
4. n
5. w
6. $h$
7. f
8. $g$
9. l
10. u
11. q
12. b
13. i
14. v
15. t
16. c
17. d
18. m
19. e
20. a
21. k
22. s

## ANSWERS TO DATA CHECK QUESTIONS

1. 47.2 percent.
2. $\quad 63.4$ percent.
3. Australia, Denmark and Belgium.
4. Belgium and Australia.
5. Motor vehicle offices.
6. Mail.
7. It is about 25 percent lower in the twentieth century.
8. 1896 to $1920 / 1960$ to 1988.
9. Turnout has increased in the last two presidential elections, although it remains well below pre1960s levels.
10. Four (1952, 1960, 1964, and 1968).
11. Seven (1952, 1956, 1960, 1964, 1968, 1992 and 2004).
12. 60 percent.
13. 18 to 24 .
14. Less than high school.
15. Turnout for blacks and Hispanics is lower than that of whites with Hispanics having the lowest rates for the three groups.

## ANSWERS TO TRUE/FALSE QUESTIONS

1. F About $1 / 3$ are not registered.
2. F A 2004 study found the results of such efforts to be small, or nil.
3. F A 2001 study found they are less likely to vote.
4. T
5. F At that point in time, suffrage was extended to white, male property holders.
6. T
7. T
8. T
9. T
10. T
11. T
12. F It started somewhat low and has, for the most part, declined since.
13. F States may not have such requirements longer than 30 days.
14. T
15. F It was very often about 70 percent in the 1800s.
16. T
17. F Calls for reform were almost nonexistence in 2004 because the election was not a close as it was in 2000.
18. F VAP measures contain a lot people who cannot vote, not VEP measures.
19. T
20. F In a typical survey $8-10$ percent will misrepresent voting.
21. F Younger persons are more likely to misreport.
22. T
23. F They do not vote, but feel free to contact officials about problems.
24. F Those who are actively involved in religion are much more likely to participate in politics than those who are not.
25. T
26. T
27. F They are much less effective than they used to be at this.
28. T
29. T
30. T
31. F

They have become much more common.
32. T
33. T
34. T

## ANSWERS TO MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. d
2. $b$
3. a
4. C
5. e
6. e
7. b
8. a
9. C
10. C
11. a
12. d
13. e
14. e
15. c
16. a
17. e
18. e
19. b
20. e
21. b
22. d
23. a
24. C
25. d
26. d
27. d
28. с
29. d
30. a
31. d
32. b
33. e
34. e
35. с
36. c
