

Political Participation

American Government - Chapter 6

Define the following terms:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. voting-age population | 4. literacy test | 7. white primary |
| 2. registered voters | 5. poll tax | 8. Australian ballot |
| 3. motor-voter law | 6. grandfather clause | 9. activists |

Answer the following questions:

1. Why is apathy on Election Day clearly not the source of the nonvoting problem?
2. Why is voter registration low in the U.S. compared to Western Europe?
3. Is low voter turnout a symptom of political disease or a sign of political good health?
4. What systems were initially used to choose members of the House of Representatives?
5. How were presidential electors initially chosen?
6. What stratagems were used by states to disenfranchise blacks?
7. What law finally enfranchised most blacks?
8. When did most women get the franchise?
9. How and when was the franchise extended to 18-year-old citizens?
10. What was the impact of the youth vote on the 1972 presidential election?

[“For many of you this will be your first vote. I hope years from now you’ll look back on it and consider it your best vote.” – President Richard Nixon to youth volunteers at the RNC in Miami in 1972. Ugh.]

11. What did the 23rd Amendment do?
12. What are two competing interpretations of the decline in voter participation?
13. How does schooling affect political participation?
14. How does churchgoing affect political participation?
15. How is race correlated with political participation (before and after controlling for SES¹)?
16. How is distrust correlated with voter turnout?
17. According to Wilson, what are five “small things” that explain nonvoting?

[Note: Your teacher finds Wilson confused here. He says he is discussing increases in nonvoting, but reasons three and four clearly are not related to the trend in nonvoting. They may be – in fact, certainly are – related to nonvoting, but not to increases in nonvoting. Do you see the difference? And if we’re trying to explain nonvoting, perhaps we should first ask ourselves why anyone bothers to vote in the first place?]

18. Which party generally believes that increasing turnout will help them?
19. What is the trend in political participation beyond voting?
20. How does the number of votes cast by an American compare with those of a citizen of a European country?
21. What is a possible explanation for low participation by Latinos?

¹ SES is socio-economic status.

Complete the chart below using the “How Things Work” box on page 137 of your text.

Voter Turnout: Some Myths and Realities		
	Myth	Reality
1	Turnout is declining because the poor are dropping out of politics.	
2	Today's voters see no differences between Democrats and Republicans.	
3	Nonvoters don't vote because the policies they prefer haven't been debated or adopted.	
4	Many elections are decided by levels of voter turnout.	
5	Registration reform would definitely help the Democrats and hurt the Republicans.	

Use the information on pages 138 to fill in the following chart, based on the Verba and Nie study.

	Definition	Group Characteristics
inactives		
voting specialists		
campaigners		
communalists		
parochial participants		
activists		