Essential Question

Why do voters act as they do?

Guiding Question
Section 1 How have voting rights changed over the course of American history?

Guiding Question
Section 2 What are the qualifications for voting, and how have they changed over time?

Guiding Question
Section 3 How did the U.S. fulfill the promise of the 15th Amendment?

Guiding Question
Section 4 What factors influence voter behavior?
• Section 4: Voter Behavior
  – What factors influence voter behavior?
  • Voters are influenced by sociological factors, such as income, religion, gender, age, and ethnic background, as well as by psychological factors, such as party identification, candidates, and issues.
Key Terms

• **off-year election**: a congressional election held in the even years between presidential elections

• **ballot fatigue**: a phenomenon that results in fewer votes being cast for offices at the end of an election ballot

• **political efficacy**: having an influence on politics

• **political socialization**: the process by which people gain their political attitudes and opinions
Key Terms, cont.

• **gender gap**: the difference between the political choices of men and women

• **party identification**: the loyalty of people to a specific party

• **straight-ticket voting**: the practice of voting for candidates from only one party

• **split-ticket voting**: the practice of voting for candidates of more than one party

• **independent**: a person with no party affiliation
Objectives

1. Examine the problem of nonvoting in this country.
2. Identify those people who typically do not vote.
3. Examine the behavior of those who vote and those who do not.
4. Understand the sociological and psychological factors that affect voting and voter behavior.
Introduction

• What factors influence voter behavior?
  – Voters are influenced by **sociological** factors such as income, occupation, education, gender, age, religion, ethnic background, geography, and family.
  – Voters are also influenced by **psychological** factors such as political party identification, specific candidates, and key issues.
Nonvoting

• Millions of Americans do not vote.
• Many people who do vote do not cast votes for every candidate on the ballot.
  – These people are called “nonvoting voters.”
  – Statewide offices and the presidency receive the most votes.
• Voter turnout is highest in presidential election years.
  – More people vote in general state elections than in primaries or special elections.
Voter Turnout

• Nonvoters
  • 2008 election: 62.3% of eligible people voted
  • 2010 election: 37.8% of eligible people voted
    – Voting decreases even further in off-year elections
  • 2012 election: 57.5% of eligible people voted
  • Why is turnout so low?
Historical Presidential Primary Turnout 1964-2008
People Who Cannot Vote

• Cannot-Voters:
  – Many people cannot legally vote.
  • This includes resident aliens, people with disabling mental conditions, and adults in prison.
People Who Cannot Vote

• Actual NonVoters:
  – Many others simply cannot vote.
    • Some 5-6 million people are too ill or disabled to vote.
    • Other people do not vote due to their religious beliefs or because they are traveling.
  – Don’t believe it’s necessary
    • “Time-zone fallout”: affects western/Pacific states
  – Voting is inconvenient
    • Bad weather, hard to take time off of work, no childcare, too much of a time commitment
  – Do not believe their vote will make a difference
    • Low sense of political efficacy
  – Distrust of politics & political candidates
  – Uninformed/don’t care/no interest in politics
  – Others may not be able to vote due to discrimination aimed at them.
Actual Nonvoters

• Checkpoint: Why do people choose not to vote?
  – They may feel that their votes will not influence local or national government or they may not trust political institutions.
  – They may believe that conditions will remain fine even if they do not vote.
  – Western voters in presidential elections may feel that the election has been decided by eastern and central states before they can vote.
• Why People Do Not Vote
  – Comparing Voters & Nonvoters
    • More likely to vote:
      – Educated/higher income status
      – Older/female
      – Connected to local/community issues
      – High sense of political efficacy
    • Less likely to vote:
      – Low income/education
      – Younger/male
      – Unaware/uninformed about issues
      – Low sense of political efficacy
Studying Voter Behavior

– Results of particular elections
  • Focus on demographic groups
– Field of survey research
  • Polling of cross-sections of the population
– Studies of political socialization
  • How do people gain their political attitudes and opinions?
• Factors That Influence Voters
  – Personal characteristics
    • Age, race, income, occupation, education, religion, etc.
  – Group affiliations
    • Family, co-workers, friends, teachers, etc.
Ch6.4 Voter Behavior

### These groups TEND to vote:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Democrat</th>
<th>Republican</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income/Occupation</strong></td>
<td>Lower income “Blue-collar” workers</td>
<td>Higher income “White-collar” workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td>Less education</td>
<td>More education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender/Age</strong></td>
<td>Women Younger (under 30)</td>
<td>Men Older (over 50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Religious/Ethnic Background</strong></td>
<td>Catholics, Jews, African-Americans, Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans</td>
<td>Protestants Cuban-Americans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Geography</strong></td>
<td>Urban areas Coastal cities/States, North, East</td>
<td>Rural areas South, West, inland cities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is NOT all-inclusive! Who is NOT represented on this chart?
• Voters are influenced by a combination of sociological and psychological factors.
  – **Sociology** includes a voter’s personal qualities and their group affiliations.
  – **Psychology** includes how a voter sees politics.
Sociological Influences

• Every voter has several qualities that combine to influence their votes.

• A majority of the following groups tend to vote Republican:
  – Voters with higher incomes (such as professional and business people)
  – Voters with higher levels of education
  – Older voters (though this has varied in the past 30 years)
  – Protestants
A majority of the following groups tend to vote for Democrats.

- Women (by a 5-10 percent margin)
- African Americans (by large margins since the 1930s)
- Latinos (this varies among Latino groups)
- Catholics and Jews
Sociological Influences, cont.

- **Geography** affects voting:
  - Southerners once voted heavily Democratic, but now Republicans win many southern elections.
  - A majority of voters in big cities tend to vote for Democrats.
  - A majority of voters in the suburbs, small cities, and rural areas tend to vote Republican.

- In general, family members tend to vote in similar ways.
• **Party Identification**
  
  – Majority of Americans identify with one of the major parties early in life
    
    • **Party identification**: loyalty of people to a particular political party
  
  – Many engage in **straight-ticket voting**
    
    • Practice of voting for candidates of only one party in an election
  
  – Party identification has lost impact in recent years
    
    • More instances of **split-ticket voting**
      
      – Practice of voting for candidates of more than one party in an election
    
    • More people identifying as **independents** (~30%)
      
      – People who have no official party affiliation
• Independents

– It is estimated that from one quarter to one third of all voters today are independents.

– Independent voters once tended to be less concerned, less informed, and less active in politics than Democrats or Republicans.

– In recent years, a rising number of independents are young people with above average levels of education, income, and job status.
Candidates & Issues

– Short-term factors such as particular candidates or key issues can swing voters in any specific election.

  • The image projected by a candidate—personality, style, character, appearance, and ability—influences voters.
  
  • Emotional, publicized issues such as civil rights, war, scandals, or the economy can also sway voters.
Why Do We Vote the Way We Do?

• **Sociological Factors**
  - Education
  - Income, Occupation
  - Gender, Age
  - Religious, Ethnic Background
  - Geography
  - Family and Other Groups

• **Psychological Factors**
  - Party Identity
  - Independents
  - Candidates and Issues
Psychological Factors

• Party identification is the strongest predictor of how a person will vote.
  • Majority of Americans identify with one of the major parties early in life
    – **Party identification**: loyalty of people to a particular political party
  • Many engage in **straight-ticket voting**
    – Practice of voting for candidates of only one party in an election
  • Party identification has lost impact in recent years
    – More instances of **split-ticket voting**
      » Practice of voting for candidates of more than one party in an election
    – More people identifying as **independents** (~30%)
      » People who have no official party affiliation
Independents

• It is estimated that from one fourth to one third of all voters today are independents.

• Independent voters once tended to be less concerned, less informed, and less active in politics than Democrats or Republicans.

• In recent years, a rising number of independents are young people with above average levels of education, income, and job status.
Candidates and Issues

• Short-term factors such as particular candidates or key issues can swing voters in any specific election.

  – The image projected by a candidate—personality, style, character, appearance, and ability—influences voters.

  – Emotional, publicized issues such as civil rights, war, scandals, or the economy can also sway voters.
Why Vote?

• Is it really true that only those persons who vote have a right to complain? Why or why not?
• Now that you have learned about the factors that influence voter behavior, go back and answer the Chapter Essential Question.

  – Why do voters act as they do?