

VOTERS AND POLITICAL BEHAVIOR

Comparative Politics

Guillermo Toral

IE University

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- Exercise: Mobilizing voters

Any remaining questions / concerns about the midterm?

Political behavior

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- Outcomes of interest have largely been at the macro level

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Varieties of political behavior: Behaviors of interest

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- **Legal vs illegal:** depending on the extent to which it falls within what's legally allowed

Political behavior as a field of study: Classic questions

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- Who joins social movements, and other costlier forms of political engagement?

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- The **role of identity and emotion** (e.g., how identity shapes vote choice)
- The **role of elites** (e.g., how political entrepreneurs can influence individuals' political behavior)

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- Because the unit of observation is often an individual citizen / politician / bureaucrat, it is easier to design and implement **randomized experiments**
 - Remember: by randomly assigning a treatment of interest and comparing outcomes across the treatment and the control group, **we can credibly draw causal inferences** (i.e., learn about the causal effect of a given intervention such as a campaign ad or a misinformation campaign)

Why do people participate in politics?

Political behavior is costly

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- May also involve social and emotional costs, especially in polarized societies

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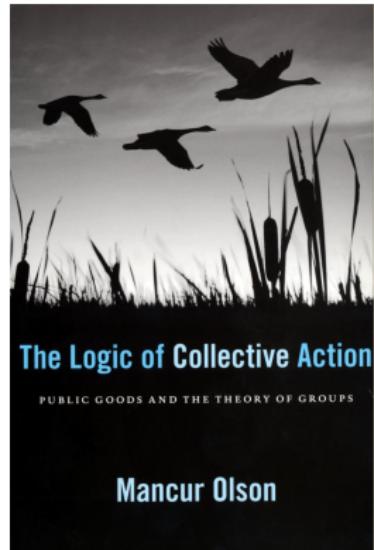
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- The other key feature of public goods is that they are **non-rivalrous**: consumption of the good by one individual does not reduce the amount available for consumption by others

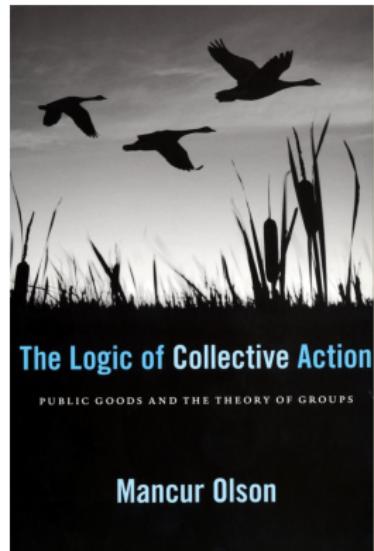
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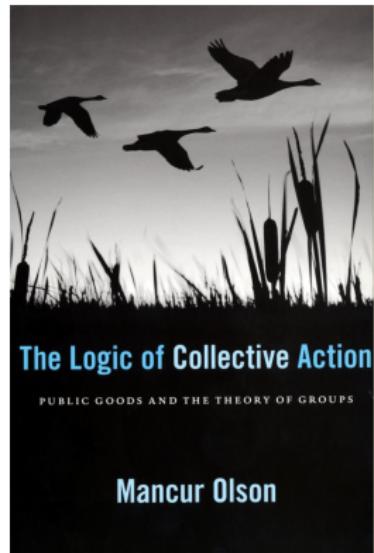
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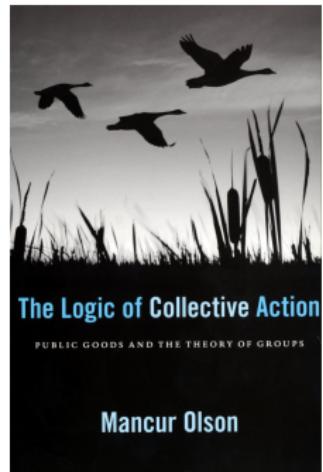
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- The existence of a common interest among a set of people (one that could be advanced through collective action) does not lead to voluntary collective action to advance the interest.
- Olson highlighted how rational individuals would therefore fail to contribute to the production of public goods, and groups will therefore not produce optimal results



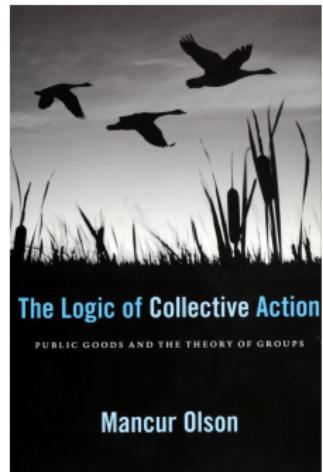
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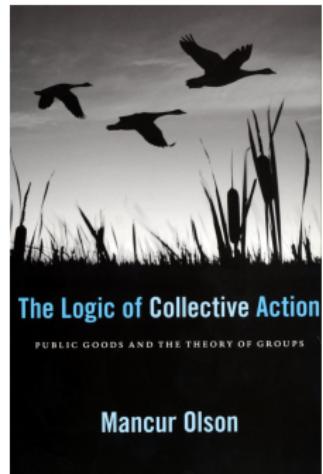
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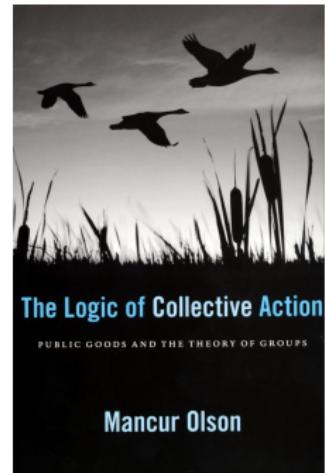
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- From his perspective, the majority is likely unorganized



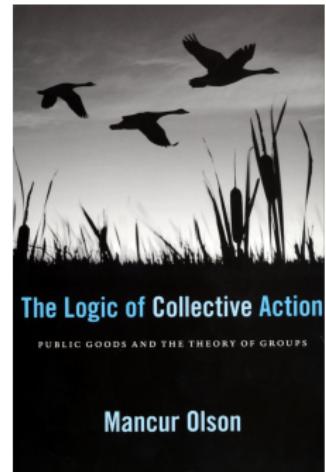
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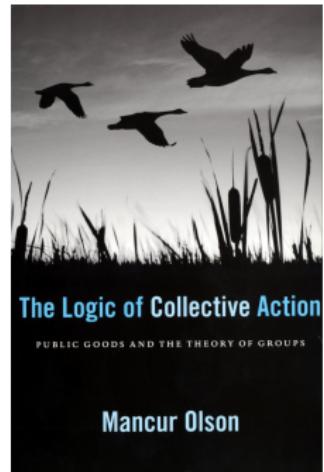
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- Olson thought collective action problems are solved, in large enough groups, mostly through either coercion or selective incentives



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- **Social psychology**: feelings of belonging and other intrinsic benefits of participation

Vote choice: How do people choose who to vote for?

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 - Understanding the rise of extremist parties
- What drives people to vote for one party or another, and changes in those reasons, may shape dynamics of democratic governance and accountability

Three perspectives on elections and vote choice

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- **Elections as an expression of identity**
 - People’s belonging and identity drive their vote (and their opinions)

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- **How this view seeks to improve elections:** give more power to voters; strengthen deliberation; direct democracy; civic education

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- **Expressed preferences are very sensitive to question wording**
- When given opportunities of more direct democracy (e.g., referenda, participatory budgeting), **participation is often low** and biased

One plot vs elections as popular sovereignty



DEMOCRACY
FOR
REALISTS

*Why Elections Do Not Produce
Responsive Government*

CHRISTOPHER H. ACHEN
& LARRY M. BARTELS

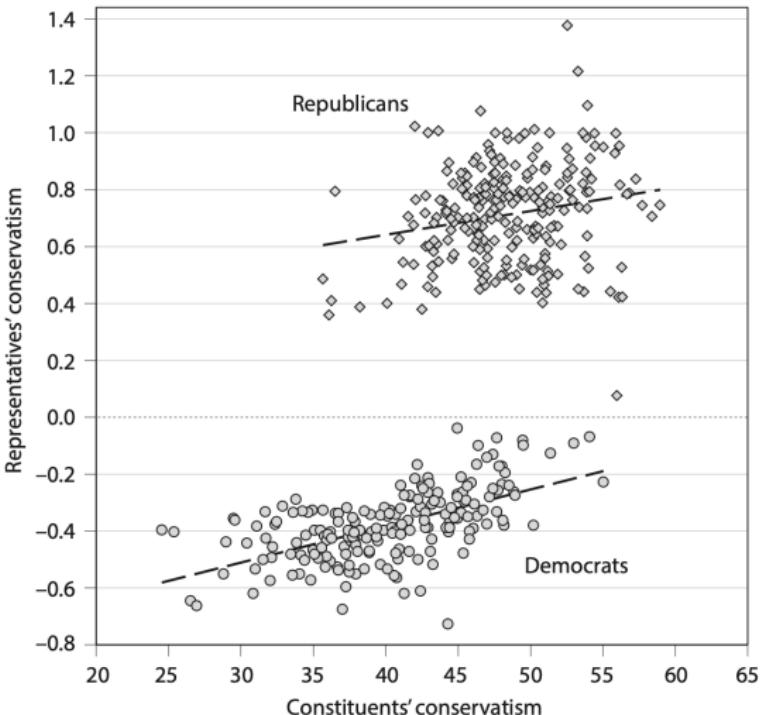


Figure 2.1. District Opinion and Representatives' Roll Call Votes, 2011–2013

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- This bias is even stronger among more informed and educated people

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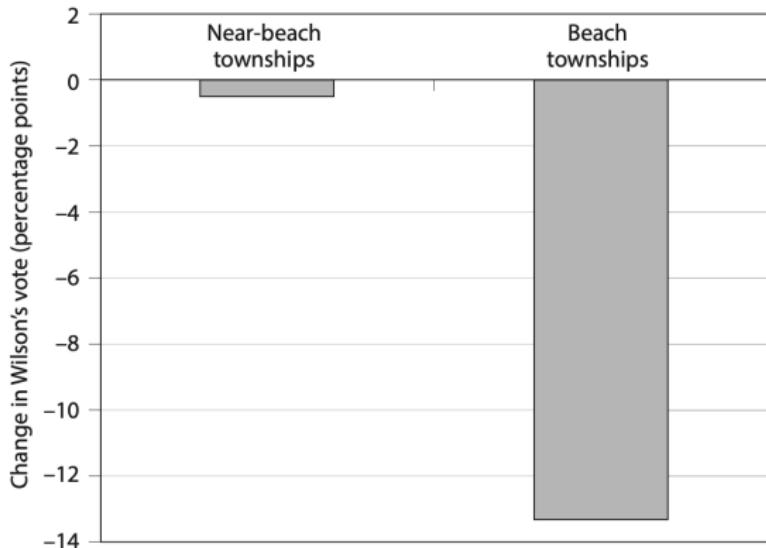


Figure 5.3. Change in Woodrow Wilson's Vote Share (1912–1916) in Ocean County Townships

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- **How this view seeks to improve elections:** facilitate the work of political parties and interest groups; limit the influence of money in politics; organize the unorganized

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- Normatively, **problematic in terms of polarization and the power of elites** (political as well as cultural)

Elections as expression of identity: Limitations

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Elections as expression of identity: Limitations

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- **Many voters have weak(er) identities**, or less clear ideas of which group / party is consistent with their identities
- **Swing voters are often the most relevant** for electoral outcomes
- **Obstacles for the organization of certain groups** (or the activation of their identities)

Two plots on elections as expression of identity

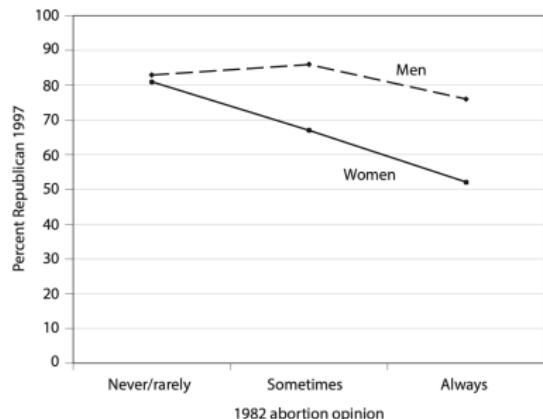


Figure 9.6. Retention of 1982 Republican Identifiers in 1997

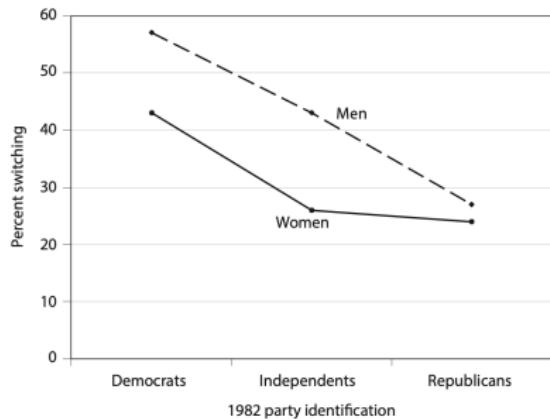


Figure 9.7. Conversion to 1997 Pro-Choice Views by 1982 Pro-Life Respondents

Turnout: Who participates in elections, and how does it matter?

Why is turnout important?

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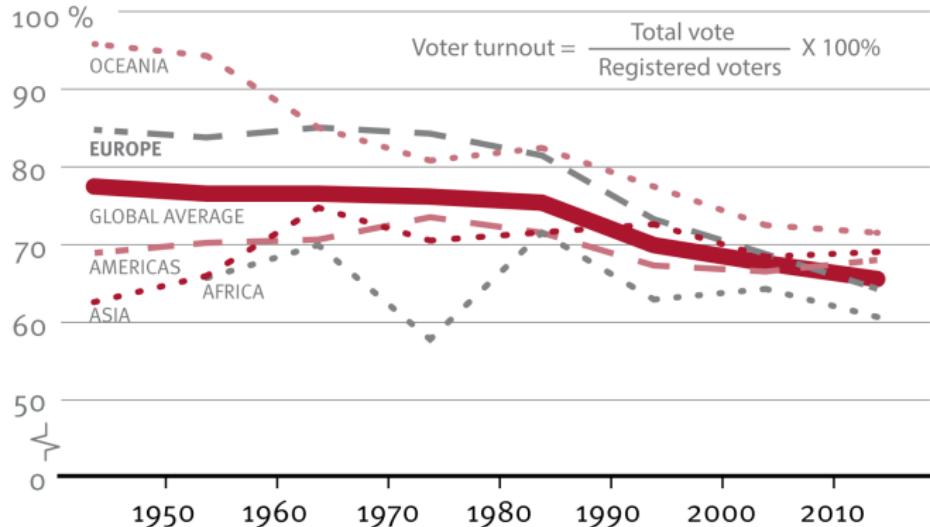
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- Yet there is wide variation across and within countries in rates of turnout, with systematic correlates (both at the macro- and the micro-levels) of the decision to vote.
- Differential propensities in turnout bias who gets elected into office and how they behave.

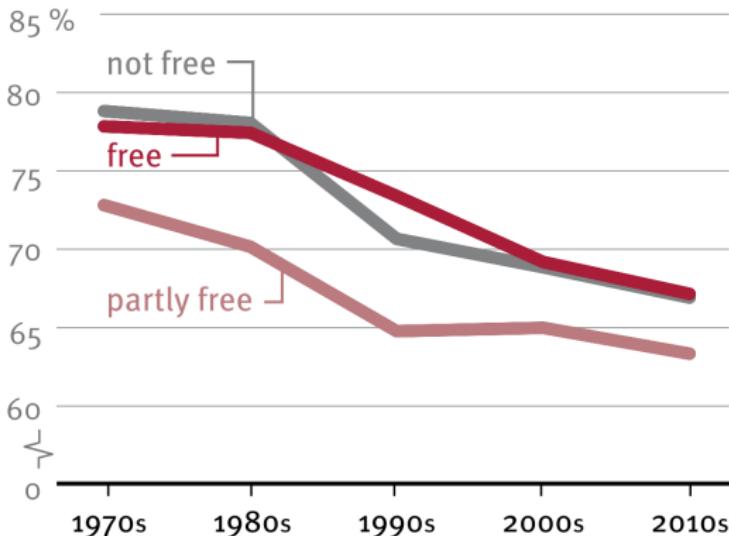
Global patterns in turnout



Source: Voter Turnout Database, www.idea.int/data-tools/data/voter-turnout

Notes: Data is for Legislative (Lower House) Elections that took place across the globe since 1945 and covers 1,833 elections in total.

Global patterns in turnout



Source: www.idea.int/data-tools/data/voter-turnout

Notes: Freedom House indicators have been used to group countries as free, partly free and not free. Freedom House data are available from the 1970s until 2015.

Why is turnout decreasing over time?

- Post-materialism has fundamentally transformed political behavior, with lower levels of trust and interest in formal political processes

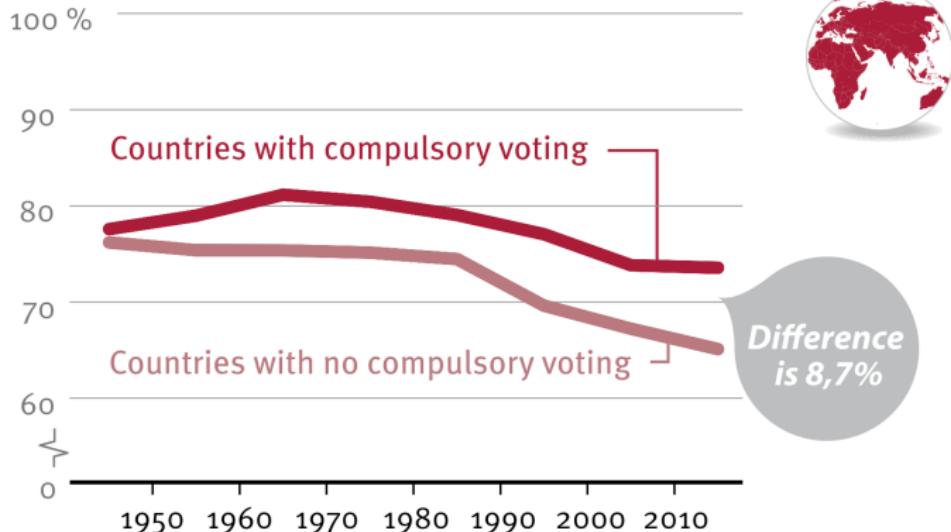
Why is turnout decreasing over time?

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- Political behavior has diversified, taking a wider range of forms, including online

Why is turnout decreasing over time?

- Post-materialism has fundamentally transformed political behavior, with lower levels of trust and interest in formal political processes
- Political behavior has diversified, taking a wider range of forms, including online
- Political allegiances and identities have been transforming, leading some to disengage from traditional parties and their competition

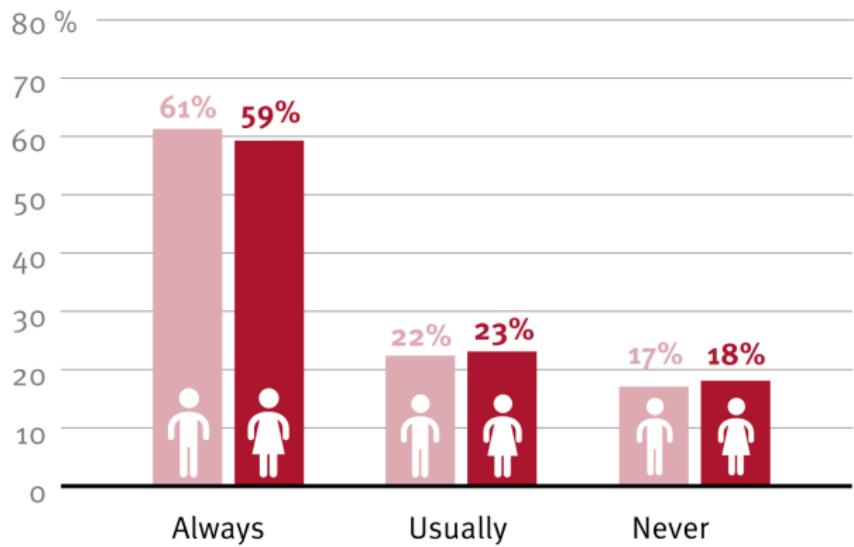
Global patterns in turnout



Source: Voter Turnout Database, www.idea.int/data-tools/data/voter-turnout

Global patterns in turnout

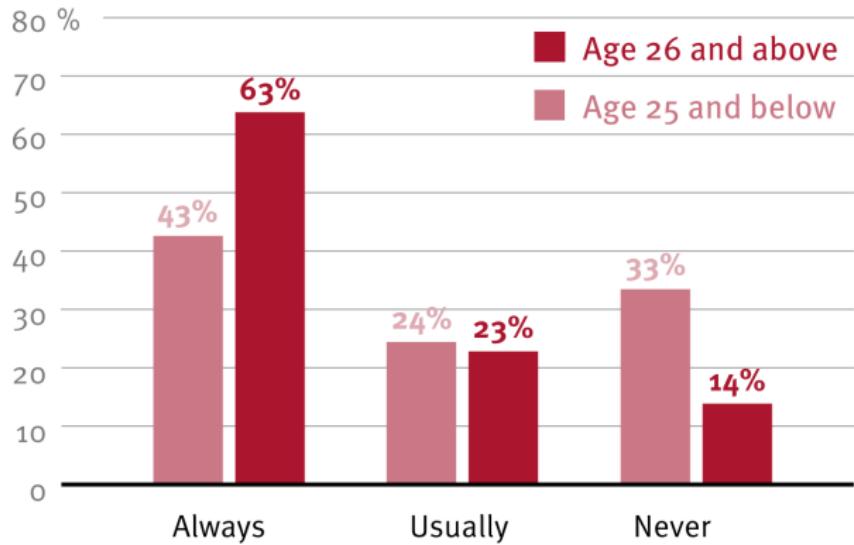
Do you vote in national elections?



Source: World Values Survey, Sixth wave (2010–14). Data were collected from 59 countries.

Global patterns in turnout

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USA patterns in turnout

From an **article** using administrative (rather than survey) data

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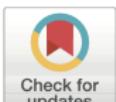
400 million voting records show profound racial and geographic disparities in voter turnout in the United States

Michael Barber^{1*}, John B. Holbein²

1 Department of Political Science, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, United States of America, **2** Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA, United States of America

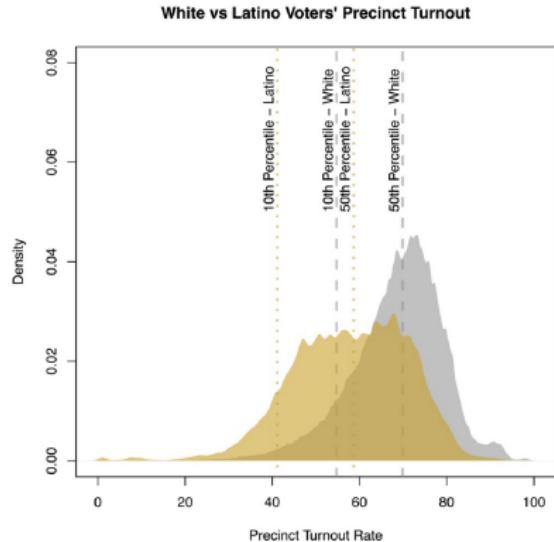
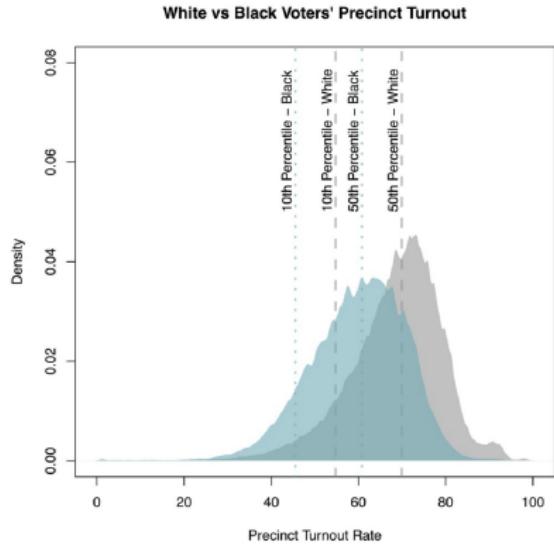
* These authors contributed equally to this work.

* barber@byu.edu



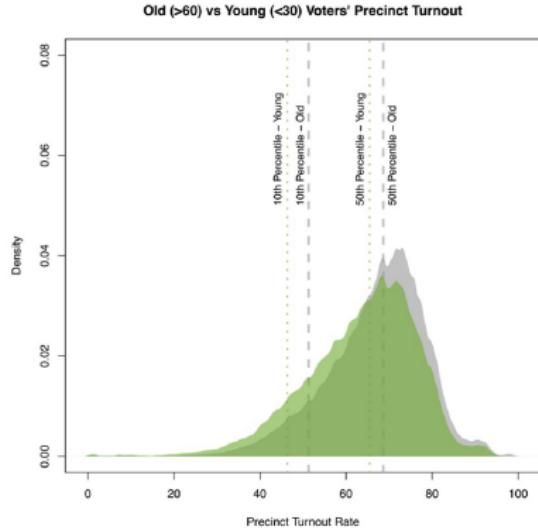
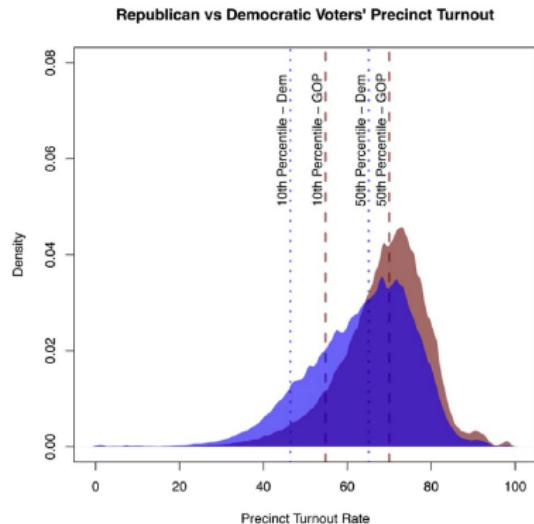
USA patterns in turnout

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Correlates of turnout: Micro-level

- Gender

Correlates of turnout: Micro-level

- Gender
- Age

Correlates of turnout: Micro-level

- Gender
- Age
- Socioeconomic background

Correlates of turnout: Micro-level

- Gender
- Age
- Socioeconomic background
- Income

Correlates of turnout: Micro-level

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- Age
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- Income
- Race

Correlates of turnout: Micro-level

- Gender
- Age
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- Income
- Race
- Turnout at previous election

Correlates of turnout: Micro-level

- Gender
- Age
- Socioeconomic background
- Income
- Race
- Turnout at previous election
- Party identification

Correlates of turnout: Micro-level

- Gender
- Age
- Socioeconomic background
- Income
- Race
- Turnout at previous election
- Party identification
- Union membership

Correlates of turnout: Micro-level

- Gender
- Age
- Socioeconomic background
- Income
- Race
- Turnout at previous election
- Party identification
- Union membership
- Attendance of religious services

Correlates of turnout: Micro-level

- Gender
- Age
- Socioeconomic background
- Income
- Race
- Turnout at previous election
- Party identification
- Union membership
- Attendance of religious services
- Social networks

Correlates of turnout: Macro-level

- Ease of voting (automatic registration, early voting, etc.)

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- Ease of voting (automatic registration, early voting, etc.)
- Proportional representation electoral systems

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- Nature of the election (first-order)

Correlates of turnout: Macro-level

- Ease of voting (automatic registration, early voting, etc.)
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- Nature of the election (first-order)
- Timing of the election (weekend, concurrent)

Correlates of turnout: Macro-level

- Ease of voting (automatic registration, early voting, etc.)
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- Expensive electoral campaign

How do these biases in turnout matter?

- Bias in the selectorate (who influences the election of public officials)

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- Bias in the selectorate (who influences the election of public officials)
- Bias in political selection (who is elected to public office)
- Bias in elites' perceptions of citizen preferences
- Bias in public policies

What can be done to increase turnout? Policymakers

- Scheduling elections on weekends, or concurrently

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- Phone campaigns and robo-calls

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- Social media campaigns
- E-mail campaigns
- Traditional mail campaigns
- Phone campaigns and robo-calls
- Door-to-door canvassing

How effective are get out the vote (GOTV) strategies?

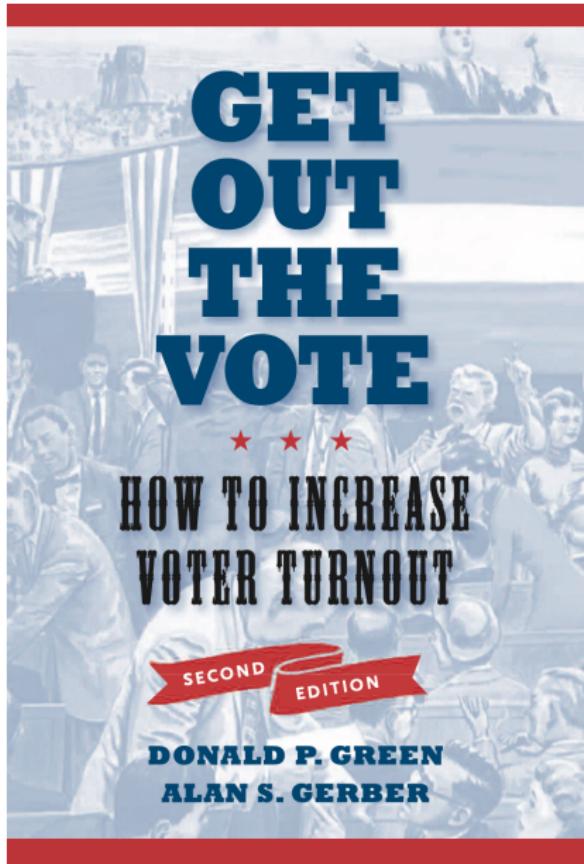


Table 10-1. Cost-Effectiveness of Get-Out-the-Vote Tactics^a
Updated for *Get Out the Vote*, second edition

GOTV effort	Start-up and overhead costs	Ongoing management	Effectiveness per contact ^b	Is effect statistically reliable?	Dollar cost per vote (excluding start-up and management costs)
Door-to-door	Labor intensive; recruit, prepare walk lists	Substantial ongoing training and supervision	One vote per 14 contacts (plus effects of spillover)	Yes	At \$16 per hour and 6 contacts per hour, one vote costs \$29
Leafleting	Labor intensive; recruit, prepare walk lists and leaflets, determine polling locations	Minimal: monitor walkers, check work	One vote per 189 voters reached by leaflets	Not significantly greater than zero	*
Direct mail, partisan	Resource intensive; design, print, mail	Intensive during start-up, then postal service takes over	No detectable effect	Large number of studies show average effect cannot be large	*
Direct mail, nonpartisan	Resource intensive; design, print, mail	Intensive work with consultants, then postal service takes over	One vote per 200 recipients	Yes, but borderline significant	At \$0.50 per piece, one vote costs \$67
Phone, volunteer	Labor intensive: amass enthusiastic callers and secure phone bank	Ongoing training and supervision	One vote per 38 contacts	Yes	At \$16 an hour and 16 contacts per hour, one vote costs \$38
Commercial live calls, without special coaching	Resource intensive; obtain phone list	Ongoing or sporadic monitoring	One vote per 180 contacts	Yes	At \$0.50 per contact, one vote costs \$90
Commercial live calls, with special coaching, long scripts	Resource intensive; obtain phone list, carefully select calling firm	Extensive monitoring	One vote per 35 contacts	Yes, but based on few studies	At \$1.50 per contact, one vote costs \$53
Robo calls	Obtain phone list, recording talent	None	One vote per 900 individuals called	Not significantly greater than zero	*
E-mail	Moderately labor intensive: amass e-mail lists, compose message(s)	Most of the work is in the start-up	No detectable effect	Large numbers of studies show average effect cannot be large	*
Election Day festivals	Labor intensive; arrange advertising and organization	Requires staff on hand to host and supervise events	Raises precinct-wide turnout by 1-2 percentage points	Yes, but based on few studies	Roughly \$28 per vote
Television	Resource intensive; hire consultants	None	Raises zip-code-wide turnout by 0.5 percentage point	Not significantly greater than zero	*
Radio	Resource intensive	None	Raises city-wide turnout by 0.8 percentage point	Not significantly greater than zero	*

a. Costs may vary due to local circumstances and market conditions.

b. "Contact" is defined as follows: for door-to-door canvassing, talking to target voter; for phone calls, talking to target voter; for mail sent; for leaflets, leaflet dropped at door. For leafleting and door-to-door canvassing, calculations assume that the average household has 1.5 voters.

* Cost-effectiveness is not calculated for tactics that are not proven to raise turnout.

10. Voters and political behavior

How effective are TV ads?

From an **article** using quasi-experimental designs

American Political Science Review (2022) 116, 2, 702–718

doi:10.1017/S000305542100112X

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The Effect of Television Advertising in United States Elections

JOHN SIDES *Vanderbilt University, United States*

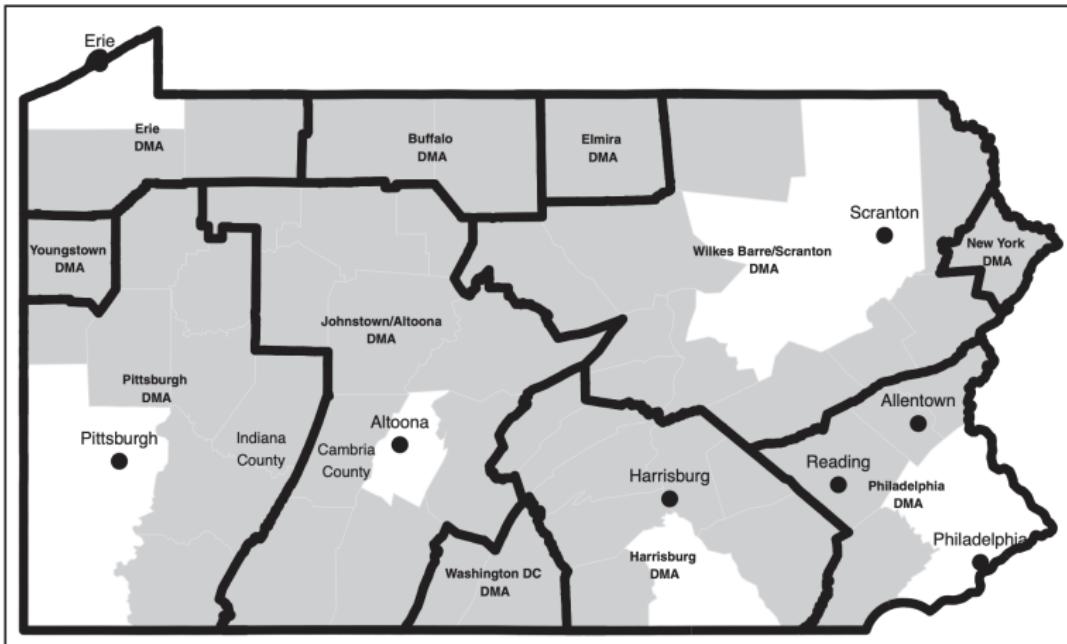
LYNN VAVRECK *University of California, Los Angeles, United States*

CHRISTOPHER WARSHAW *George Washington University, United States*

We provide a comprehensive assessment of the influence of television advertising on United States election outcomes from 2000–2018. We expand on previous research by including presidential, Senate, House, gubernatorial, Attorney General, and state Treasurer elections and using both difference-in-differences and border-discontinuity research designs to help identify the causal effect of advertising. We find that televised broadcast campaign advertising matters up and down the ballot, but it has much larger effects in down-ballot elections than in presidential elections. Using survey and voter registration data from multiple election cycles, we also show that the primary mechanism for ad effects is persuasion, not the mobilization of partisans. Our results have implications for the study of campaigns and elections as well as voter decision making and information processing.

How effective are TV ads?

FIGURE 2. Illustration of the Border Counties Design in Pennsylvania



Note: The dark lines indicate media market boundaries. The shaded counties, which lie along a media market boundary next to another county in Pennsylvania, are the ones included in the border county sample.

How effective are TV ads?

TABLE 2. The Effects of Television Advertising in Last Two Months of Presidential Elections (2000–2016)

	Dependent variable: Dem. vote share						
	All counties				Border counties		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Dem. ad adv. (100 ads)	0.158** (0.036)	0.043** (0.013)	0.037** (0.007)	0.027** (0.008)	0.027** (0.005)	0.020** (0.006)	0.018** (0.005)
Year FE	X	X			X	X	
State-year FE			X	X	X	X	
County FE		X		X		X	X
Lagged outcome			X		X		X
Border-pair-year FE							X
Observations	12,652	12,652	12,650	12,652	17,652	17,689	17,689
R ²	0.076	0.930	0.953	0.962	0.956	0.968	0.993

Note: The treatment variable is Democratic ad advantage in terms of hundreds of ads. Standard errors are clustered by county and DMA-year in the left panel and by county and DMA border-year in the right panel. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

How effective are TV ads?

TABLE 3. Effects of Aggregate Television Advertising in Last Two Months of Election across Offices (2000–2018)

	Dependent variable: Dem. vote share					
	President	Senate	Governor	House	Attorney gen.	Treasurer
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
All counties						
Dem. ad adv. (100 ads)	0.027** (0.008)	0.055** (0.010)	0.087** (0.014)	0.091** (0.018)	0.260** (0.046)	0.337** (0.087)
County FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
State-year FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Observations	12,652	17,133	11,373	28,641	7,984	5,331
R ²	0.962	0.960	0.941	0.953	0.967	0.971
Border counties						
Dem. ad adv. (100 ads)	0.018** (0.005)	0.038** (0.007)	0.055** (0.010)	0.084** (0.022)	0.192** (0.031)	0.352** (0.056)
County FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Border-pair-year FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Observations	17,689	23,910	15,880	38,131	11,557	7,520
R ²	0.993	0.990	0.986	0.991	0.991	0.993

Note: The treatment variable is Democratic ad advantage in terms of hundreds of ads. Standard errors are clustered by county and DMA-year in the top panel and by county and DMA border-year in the bottom panel. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

Group exercise

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- **Choose a client in an upcoming election** (it could be legislative or executive office, local or national, in presidentialism or parliamentarism, under democracy or competitive authoritarianism)

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- **Design an electoral campaign** to help that client win the election through legal means

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 - **Be mindful of costs** – whatever the setting, resources are limited
 - **Engage with issues of rationality, identity, collective action**

Next steps

- Next we will turn to **subnational authorities**:

Next steps

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 - *When and how is authority divided territorially?*

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 - *How do federalism and bicameralism impact state capacity?*

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 - *Foundations of comparative politics* – chapter 11

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