

# Who Gets to Vote?

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## Voting and Suffrage in the U.S.

# Objectives:

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Summarize the history of voting rights in the United States.

Identify and explain constitutional restrictions on the States' power to set voting qualifications.

Identify the universal requirements for voting in the United States.

# Voting

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Is it a right?

....a responsibility?

.....a privilege?

# What is the electorate?

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The potential voting population.

All those who are eligible  
(allowed) to vote.

# The electorate in 1789

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Who could vote when the Constitution was ratified in 1789?

White, male property owners.  
Why?

# Suffrage: The right to vote

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**What were the five main stages of suffrage expansion in the U.S. ?**

**(pages 149-150)**

1. Early 1800s: religious qualifications disappeared; states eliminate property ownership & tax payment qualifications
2. Post-Civil War: 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment (1870) → all citizens granted right to vote, but African Americans still prevented from voting in many places
3. 1920: 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment granted women right to vote
4. 1960s: securing African Americans right to vote (Voting Rights Act of 1965), 23<sup>rd</sup> Amendment: DC voters; 24<sup>th</sup> Amendment: 1964, eliminate poll tax
5. 26<sup>th</sup> amendment in 1971: minimum age to vote is 18 years old

# What determines suffrage?

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## **What are the three most basic qualifications you must meet to vote in the U.S.?**

- Age
- Citizenship
- Residency

# Why do most States require voter registration?

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Proves age, citizenship, residence

It gives election officials a list of those persons who are qualified to vote in an election

To prevent fraudulent voting

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- **Beyond those three, who gets to decide voting qualifications?**
    - **The Federal Government?**
    - **States?**
    - **Localities?**
  
  - **What five restrictions does the Federal Government place on states in setting voting qualifications?**

# States must comply with these....

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1. Each State allows voters to vote in all elections within state
2. Cannot deprive vote based on race, color (15<sup>th</sup> Am.)
3. Cannot deprive vote based on sex (19<sup>th</sup> Am.)
4. Cannot require tax payment in order to vote (24<sup>th</sup> Am.)
5. Cannot deprive vote based on a person's age under 18 yrs old (26<sup>th</sup> AM.)

# Can states deny the right to vote based on other things?

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People in mental institutions

Anyone who has been legally found to be mentally incompetent

People convicted of a serious crime

Some states don't allow anyone who was dishonorably discharged from the armed forces to vote

# So who doesn't vote?

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## “Cannot Voters”

- People who are not eligible based on their state's rules

## Nonvoters

- People who deliberately choose not to vote
- They don't think it makes a real difference who wins a certain election
- Some distrust politics and politicians
- Some lack **political efficacy** – the belief that your individual vote counts/matters/makes a difference

## Want to vote, but....ers

- What might stop someone from voting who wants to?

# “Want to vote...but”

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What factors might affect registration and turnout rates?

Election Interest— Midterm or Off-year elections have lower interest (Congressional elections that don't take place during a Presidential Election year.)

Ballot Fatigue—As a vote ballot increases in length, voters tend to run out of patience and may not be sure what they are voting on.

Inconvenient or confusing registration requirements

Physical access to polling places (times, locations)

“Time Zone Fallout” —Reports East coast time zone can ruin the vote for the west coast.

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How important is the right to  
vote?

# How important is the right to vote?

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Look at the expansion of suffrage list.  
What was the most important expansion?

## 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment:

- Declares the right to vote cannot be denied to any American citizen.
- The amendment was intended to ensure that African American **men** could vote.
- It did not include a means for enforcing it and had loopholes.

Demographic factors that affect turnout...

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**Why do you think these factors affect turnout this way?**