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Young Voter Turnout

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Introduction to Research

Franklin Delano Roosevelt once said “nobody will ever deprive the American people of the right to vote except the American people themselves - and the only way they could do this is by not voting”. Voting is your greatest right as a citizen of the United States, yet why is there such a low voter turnout, especially in the young? The young do not realize that they can change an outcome of an election. This study analyzes why the young do not vote. It will explore the realms of education, income and apathy.

Education

Scholars such as Jan Leighley and Jonathan Nagler (2013) posit that education increases the chances of voter turnout by amplifying one’s cognitive skills, the fulfillment an individual receives from politics, and by providing experience that is helpful when it comes to the costs of voting, such as the inconvenience of the process of voting. They also argue the idea of self-selection process, meaning that those who choose to have a higher education will likely choose to vote. Other research suggests the concept of “civic education” theory, which states that as an individual’s education matures, subsequently there are increased civic skills and knowledge that aid to greater political insight.

Income

Researchers have also argued that economic status is also a variable that impacts voter turnout. When you have resources to fight for and protect such as money, you will attempt to protect them by voting. Raymond Wolfinger and Steven Rosenstone (1980) propose five general reasons why economic status and voter turnout are related. First, poorer people have less time to commit to matters that are not imperative to everyday existence. In contrast, wealthy people have jobs that gravitate to boost one’s political engagement, regardless of education level. Thirdly, income determines one’s social context, and results in the wealthy finding their social norm to engage in civic duty and be more exposed to like-minded social networks. A fourth idea argues that the wealthy became affluent by being aggressive in their social and political pursuits. Finally they posit that the wealthy have a “greater stake in the system”.

Apathy

Research also suggests that lower turnout amongst young voters can correlate to their just not caring about politics. Thomas File conducted an analysis on young adult voting. By also using the current population survey, he found that the young (18-29) account for 21.2% of the eligible population, however only 15.4% of them voted.

Hypotheses:

H 1: Citizens who have a higher level of educational attainment are likelier to turnout to vote.
H 2: The higher the citizen’s economic status, the more likely that citizen is to vote.
H 3: The young do not vote because they do not have interest in political matters

Findings

H 1: Education
The findings show that the higher one’s income level is, the higher the voter turnout. Again, there is a gradual incline in voter turnout as you move up in each of the levels of income. For example, in the group high school credential, there was a 82.7% turnout rate compared to the graduate degree who showed a 93.6% turnout rate.

H 2: Income
The findings show that the higher one’s income level is, the higher the voter turnout. Again, there is a gradual incline in voter turnout as you move up in each of the levels of income. For example, in the group that makes $49,000 or less showed a 82.5% voter turnout, while a family who makes $250,000 or more showed a 94.8% voter turnout rate.

H 3: Apathy
The findings show that age is has the greatest effect on interest in campaign standards when compared to the other two variables of education and income. Age obtained the highest beta of (.215).

Conclusions

• There are different variables that contribute to voter turnout.
• Educational Attainment shows a linking between voter turnout. This relates to the young because they lack maturity and experience.
• The higher the income level, the higher the voter turnout. This corresponds to the young because most young people out of college have low income and have to work multiple jobs to survive.
• The young show to not have much interest in political matter because it is not appealing to their social network.

References