

Political Participation in Texas: A passive citizenry? Part II



The worst illiterate is the political illiterate.
He hears nothing, sees nothing, takes no part in political life.
He doesn't seem to know that the cost of living, the price of beans, of flour,
of rent, of medicines all depends on political decisions.
He even prides himself on his political ignorance, sticks out his chest and
says he hates politics.
He doesn't know, the imbecile, that from his political non-participation
comes the prostitute, the abandoned child, the robber and, worst of all,
corrupt officials, the lackeys of exploitative multinational corporations.

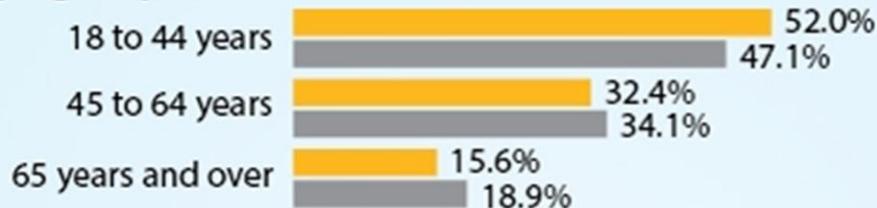
Bertolt Brecht

Patterns of Texas Political Participation: Characteristics of Texas' Voting Age Population

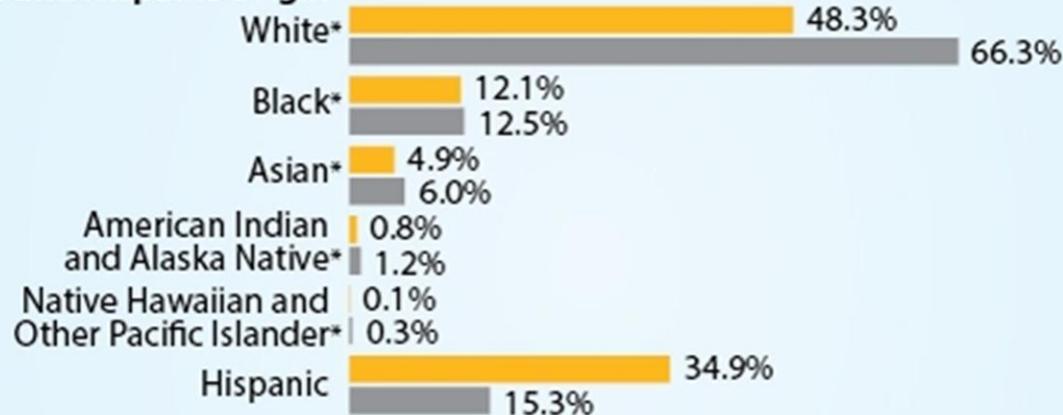


■ Texas 19,841,344
 ■ U.S. 245,273,438

Voting-Age Population



Race and Hispanic Origin



Source: US Census, 2014

Patterns of Texas Political Participation



Characteristics of Eligible Voters in Texas, by Race and Ethnicity, 2014

% of eligible voters (unless otherwise noted)

Source: Pew Research Center, 2016

	Hispanic	White	Black	Asian
Total population (thousands)	10,405	11,716	3,149	1,151
Eligible voter population (thousands)	4,818	9,246	2,240	573
Age				
18-29	32.3	18.8	25.6	20.6
30-44	29.1	23.7	29.2	31.4
45-54	15.8	17.8	18.3	20.3
55-64	11.8	18.0	14.9	14.8
65 and older	11.0	21.7	12.0	13.0
Millennial (ages 18-33)	40.7	25.3	33.5	27.8
Gender				
Male	49.0	49.0	46.8	47.3
Female	51.0	51.0	53.2	52.7
Type of citizen				
Citizen by birth	83.7	98.1	95.9	22.9
Naturalized citizen	16.3	1.9	4.1	77.1
Language				
Speaks only English at home	27.2	96.1	95.1	20.5
Does not speak only English at home	72.8	3.9	4.9	79.5
Speaks Spanish at home	72.7	2.0	1.5	0.3
Educational attainment				
Less than high school graduate	24.0	7.0	12.1	10.9
High school graduate	29.9	24.8	30.5	14.3
Two-year degree/Some college	32.3	34.6	38.5	22.8
Bachelor's degree or more	13.8	33.6	18.8	52.0
Marital status				
Married	45.3	56.5	34.0	63.5
Never married	35.9	22.1	41.7	24.9
Divorced/separated/widowed	18.9	21.4	24.3	11.5
With child younger than 18 in home	30.9	24.0	24.6	33.2
Homeownership rate	65.0	71.5	45.8	77.7
Household income (in 2014 \$)				
Less than \$30,000	24.0	15.8	30.2	12.8
\$30,000-\$49,999	19.9	15.3	19.9	11.9
\$50,000-\$74,999	21.0	17.6	18.5	14.7
\$75,000-\$99,999	14.7	14.8	12.0	14.7
\$100,000 or more	20.4	36.5	19.4	46.0

Patterns of Texas Political Participation



Characteristics of Eligible Voters in Texas and the United States, 2014

% of eligible voters (unless otherwise noted)

Source: Pew Research Center, 2016

	U.S.		Texas	
	All	Hispanics	All	Hispanics
Total population (thousands)	318,857	55,251	26,957	10,405
Eligible voter population (thousands)	224,963	25,486	17,169	4,818
Age				
18-29	21.6	32.9	23.8	32.3
30-44	24.0	28.6	26.3	29.1
45-54	17.6	15.9	17.3	15.8
55-64	16.9	11.6	15.7	11.8
65 and older	19.8	11.0	16.9	11.0
Millennial (ages 18-33)	28.2	41.4	31.0	40.7
Gender				
Male	48.4	48.9	48.7	49.0
Female	51.6	51.1	51.3	51.0
Type of citizen				
Citizen by birth	91.4	75.2	91.2	83.7
Naturalized citizen	8.6	24.8	8.8	16.3
Language				
Speaks only English at home	85.2	31.7	73.9	27.2
Does not speak only English at home	14.8	68.3	26.1	72.8
Speaks Spanish at home	8.5	67.8	21.7	72.7
Educational attainment				
Less than high school graduate	10.9	22.0	12.6	24.0
High school graduate	28.4	29.0	26.6	29.9
Two-year degree/Some college	32.7	33.5	34.2	32.3
Bachelor's degree or more	28.1	15.6	26.6	13.8
Marital status				
Married	49.6	42.5	50.5	45.3
Never married	29.9	40.1	28.8	35.9
Divorced/separated/widowed	20.6	17.4	20.7	18.9
With child younger than 18 in home	23.5	28.7	26.4	30.9
Homeownership rate	66.7	55.2	66.3	65.0
Hispanic origin				
Mexican	-	59.2	-	87.5
Puerto Rican	-	14.1	-	2.4
Cuban	-	4.6	-	0.6
Salvadoran	-	2.6	-	1.5
Dominican	-	3.4	-	0.2
Other	-	16.1	-	7.7
Household income (in 2014 \$)				
Less than \$30,000	20.7	22.8	20.0	24.0
\$30,000-\$49,999	17.2	19.6	17.1	19.9
\$50,000-\$74,999	18.7	20.1	18.6	21.0
\$75,000-\$99,999	14.0	14.4	14.4	14.7
\$100,000 or more	29.5	23.1	30.0	20.4

Patterns of Texas Political Participation



How many Texans cast a ballot and register to vote

Adult Texans registered to vote aren't necessarily voters. Millions of registered voters did not cast ballots in previous presidential elections.



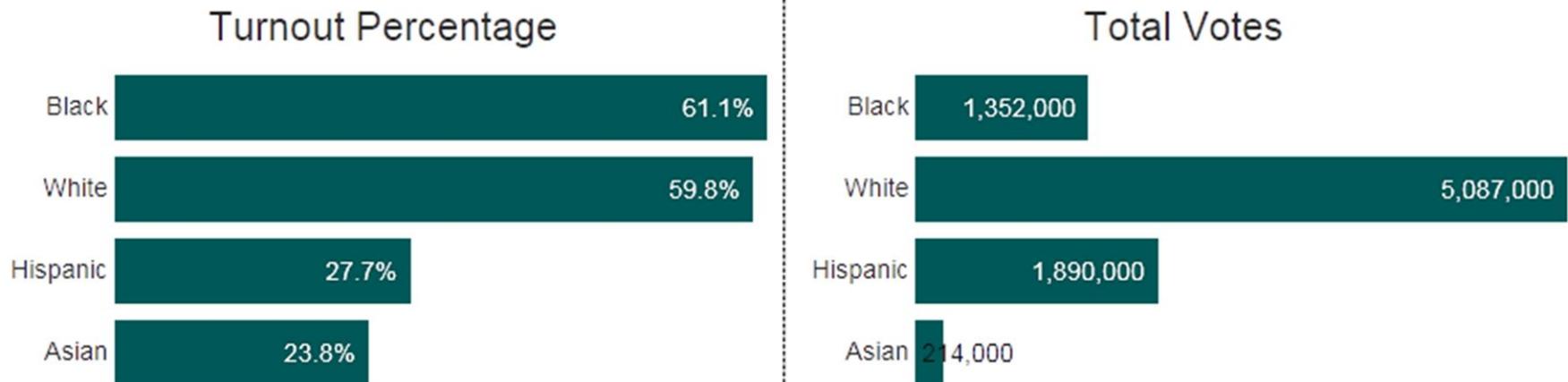
Source: Texas Secretary of State, Texas Demographic Center

Patterns of Texas Political Participation



Turnout by race in the 2012 presidential election

A larger share of adult black Texans voted than any other race, but both whites and Hispanics cast more ballots.



Note: White individuals include only those categorized by the U.S. Census as non-Hispanic.

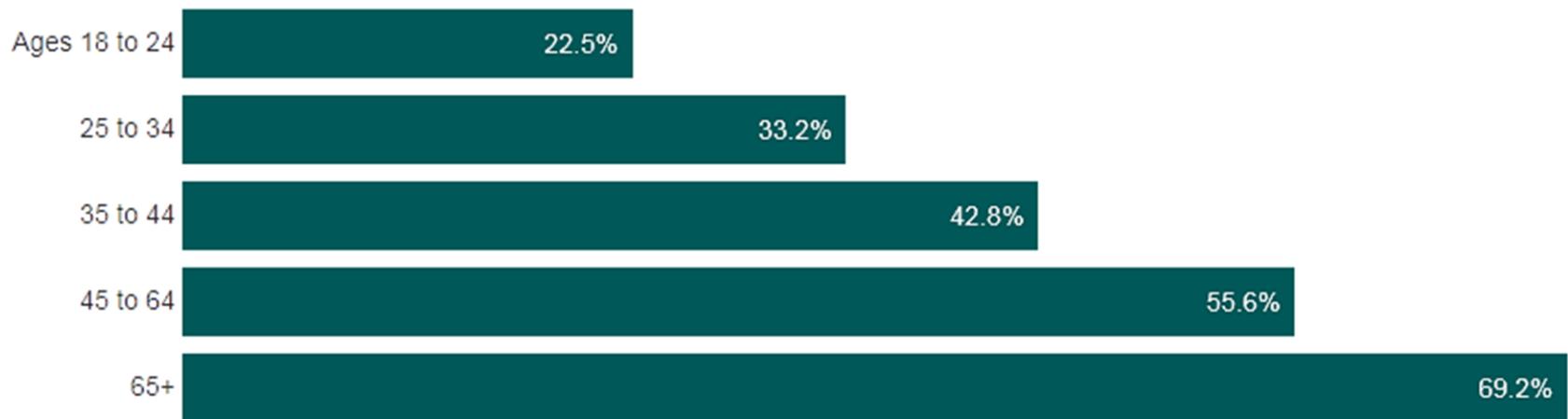
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey 2012

Patterns of Texas Political Participation



Turnout by age group in the 2012 presidential election

Less than a quarter of adult Texans under 25 turned out for the 2012 presidential election, compared to 70 percent of Texans 65 and older.



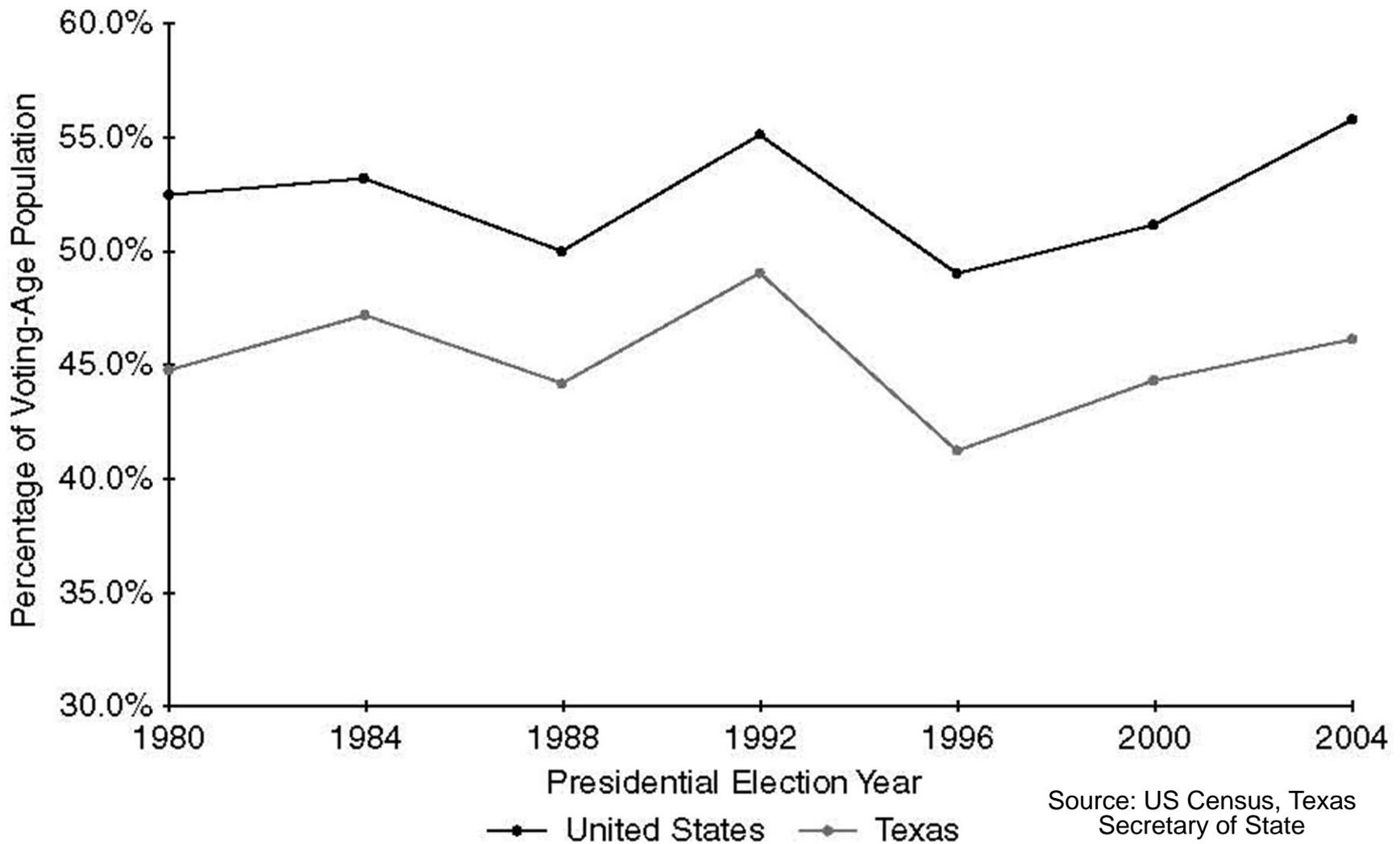
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey 2012

Patterns of Texas Political Participation



- Compared with other states, the level of participation in Texas is relatively low, at least in terms of voter turnout.
 - Less than 50% of the state's voting age population turned out to vote in every presidential election from 1980 to 2004. (See next slide.)
 - In 2004, the voter turnout rate in Texas was the fourth lowest in the nation.
- High levels of participation, however, are associated with older, better educated populations with relatively high incomes. Texans are younger, less educated and have lower incomes.
- The weakness of political parties and labor unions in Texas may also be associated with relatively low levels of voter turnout.

Patterns of Texas Political Participation

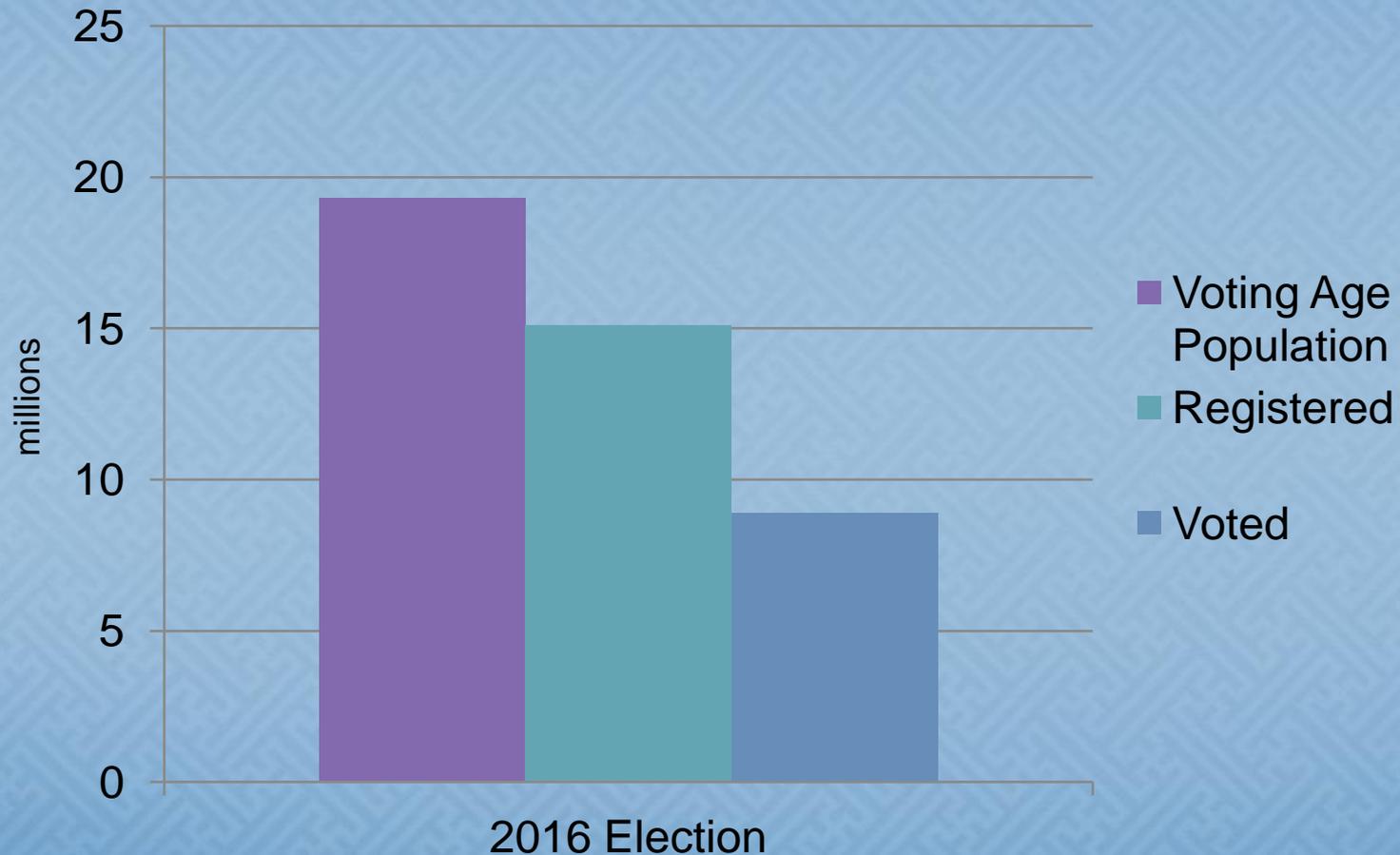


Patterns of Texas Political Participation



- Voter turnout was not very high for the state in 2016. (See next slide.)
 - Voting age population equaled 19,307,355
 - Registered voters equaled 15,101,087
 - Voter turnout equaled 8,969,226, 46.45% of the VAP
- [Why Don't Texans Vote?](#)

Patterns of Texas Political Participation

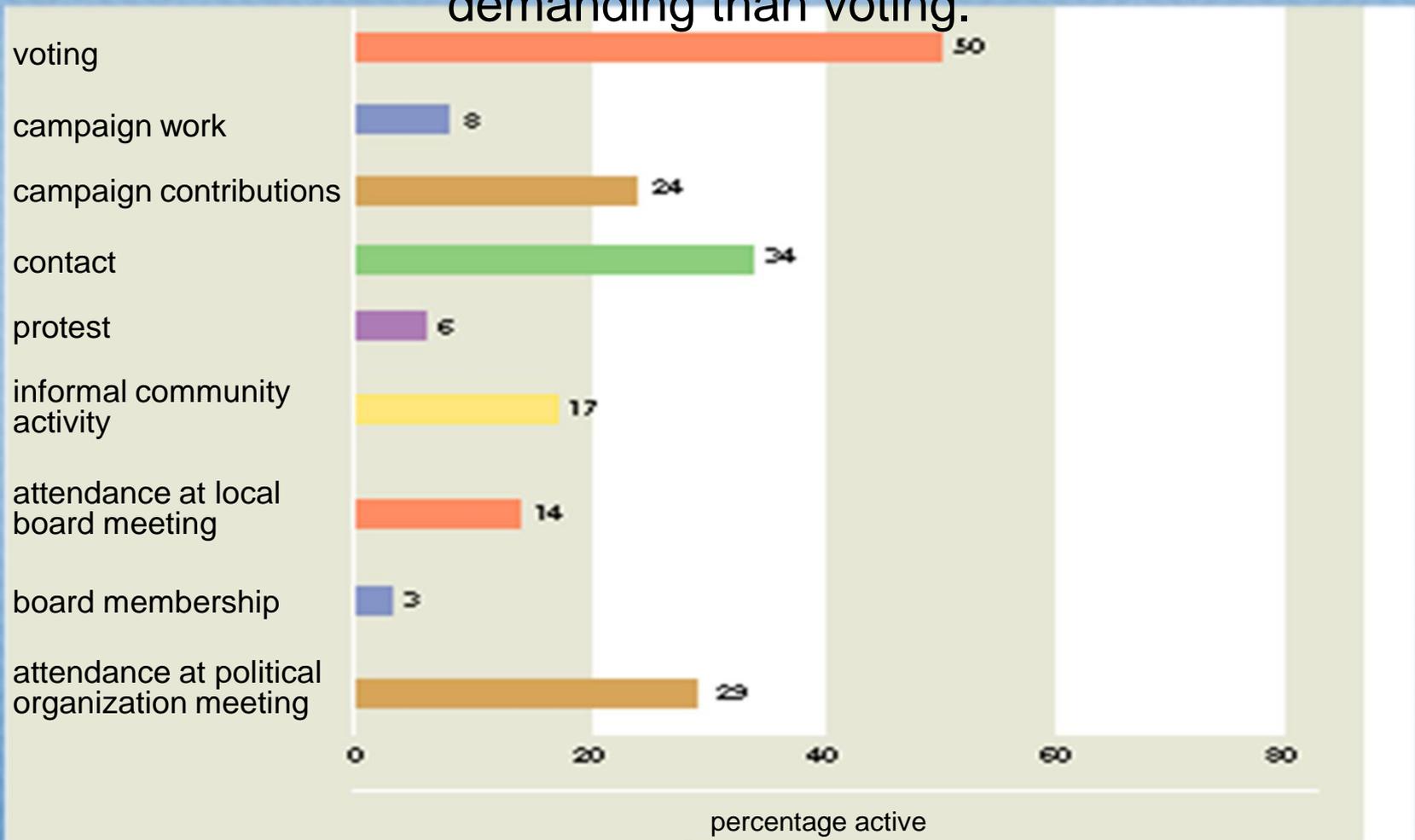


Source: Texas Secretary of State

Patterns of US Political Participation



Americans are even *less* likely to participate in ways more demanding than voting.



Patterns of US Political Participation



- 82% watch campaigns on TV
- 73% vote in elections (These statistics can be deceptive because they reflect how people say they participate. For example, although 73% say they vote, only about 50% actually do.)
- 34% try to influence how others vote
- 10% put stickers on their car or wear buttons
- 9% give money to help campaigns
- 5% attend political meetings
- 3% work for a party or candidates
- <3% participate in protests



Patterns of Texas Political Participation. Participation and Representation



- The Texas electorate is less representative of the population than the average state electorate, especially in terms of income and education.
- The proportion of the poor people in the electorate in Texas is only 50% as large as it is in the state's adult population.
- The underrepresentation of Texans who are poor is the legacy of the state's long history of public policies designed to limit the right to vote to middle-class and upper-income white people. The white primary, poll tax, restrictive voter registration requirements and voter ID requirements all discourage or prevent poor Texans from voting.

Patterns of Texas Political Participation: Participation and Representation



The table below compares the scales scores for Texas with the national mean for the 50 states.

Population Characteristic	Texas	Mean of 50 States
Income	50	67
Education	46	58
Age	43	47

Source: Robert A. Jackson, Robert D. Brown, and Gerald C. Wright, "Representation, Turnout, and the Electoral Representatives of U.S. State Electorates," *American Politics Quarterly* 26 (July 1998), 259-287.

Patterns of Texas Political Participation



- Texas Civic Health Index: the first nonpartisan, comprehensive evaluation of community and political engagement in Texas.
- Texas has one of the nation's lowest political and civic participation rates.



- Texas ranks 51st in voter turnout, 42nd in voter registration, 49th in the number of citizens who contact public officials and 44th in the number of people who discuss politics a few times a week or more.

Patterns of Texas Political Participation



- Texas Civic Health Index:
 - Rates of civic involvement are also relatively low, with Texas ranking 43rd in donating, 42nd in volunteering and 37th in group membership. Income, education, age, race/ethnicity and citizenship status correlate with civic involvement. Gender matters as well, with women more likely to be civically involved than men.
 - Texas ranks 16th in the number of people who help their neighbors by exchanging favors a few times a week or more, and this neighborliness is higher among those in lower socioeconomic brackets. However, Texas ranks 47th in terms of neighborhood trust.

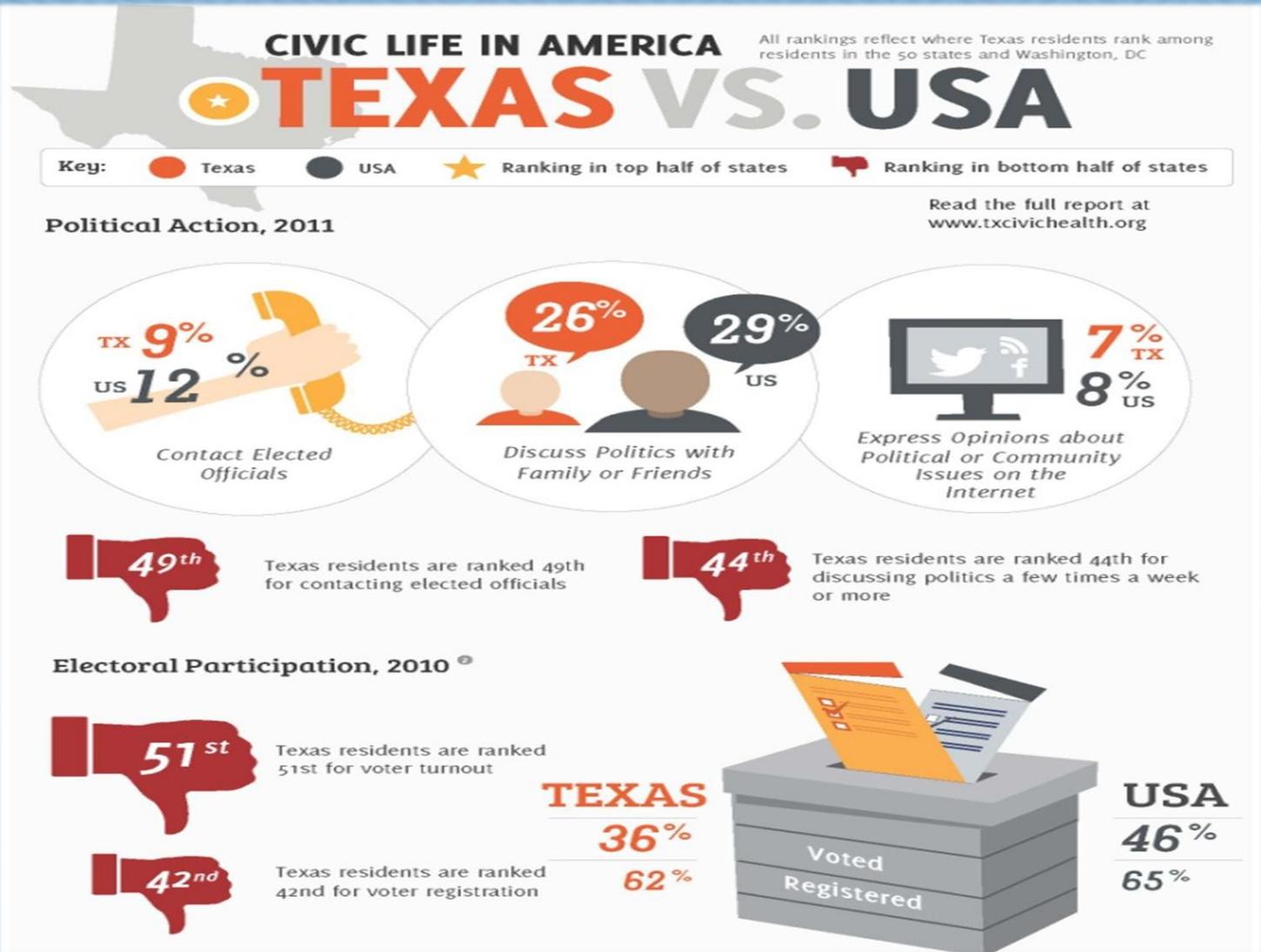
Patterns of Texas Political Participation



- Texas Civic Health Index:
 - Higher levels of education correlate with higher levels of almost every measure of political participation and civic involvement analyzed in the Civic Health Index.
 - Hispanic Texans and immigrants are significantly less likely to participate in almost every form of civic engagement, highlighting the importance of efforts to more fully involve these groups in the state's civic life.



Patterns of Texas Political Participation



Patterns of Texas Political Participation



- Large-scale and individual recommendations include
 - improving civic literacy through schools
 - increasing access to higher education
 - increasing the supply of and demand for public affairs information
 - engaging citizens through digital and social media platforms
 - creatively engaging legislators
 - reaching out to friends and neighbors to join in election-related activities

Changes in Political Participation

- Traditional forms of political participation are declining.
 - membership in political parties
 - membership in trade unions
 - voting in elections
- Other forms of participation have, however, increased.
 - participation in single interest pressure group campaigns, eg against closing hospitals, building airports, etc
 - involvement in new social movements, eg anti-capitalist movement, animal rights movement, etc



Explanations of Changes in Political Participation



- Globalization means some issues are dealt with at the international level, eg Greenpeace campaigns to protect the environment.
- The emergence of new forms of politics in post-industrial society means traditional parties and trade unions are seen as less relevant.
 - Class is seen as less important in politics. Issues relating to the environment, human and animal rights are seen as more relevant.
- Voting is seen as making little difference so some people turn to unconventional forms of political action rather than voting.

Explanations of Changes in Political Participation



- voter registration: In the US, registration is an individual responsibility. Registered voters represent a much smaller share of potential voters in the US than just about any other democratic country. Only about 64% of the US voting age population was registered in 2016, compared with 91% in Canada and the UK, 96% in Sweden and nearly 99% in Japan.



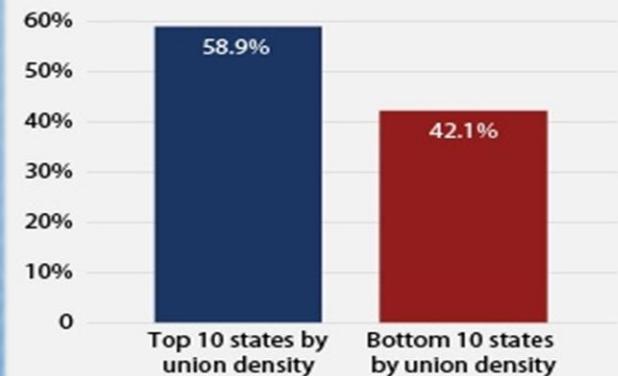
- not automatic
- requires foresight
- residency requirements for a mobile electorate
- Voting percentage of registered voters rivals the voter turnout in other countries.

Explanations of Changes in Political Participation



- education: most important factor ... Voter turnout in Texas closely linked to lack of education in Texas.
- lack of political interest
- political efficacy: beliefs about one's own competence to understand and participate in politics, and about the responsiveness of governmental authorities and institutions to citizen demands
- lack of political knowledge
- lack of civic skills
- lower unionization

Voter turnout is higher in states with greater levels of unionization



Sources: Unionstats.com, United States Elections Project
(Both are averages of 1980-2010. Elections are all federal elections during the period.)

Explanations of Changes in Political Participation

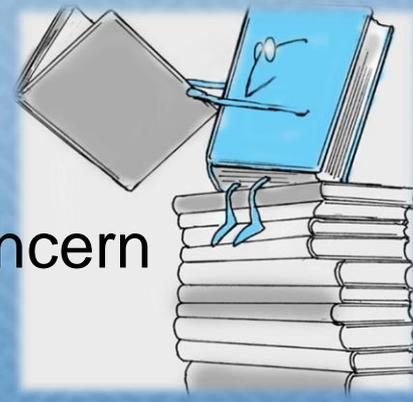


- Institutional context, especially the party system, has a clear impact on electoral or other forms of political participation.
- Political parties are weaker.
 - lack of party mobilization: mobilization of civilian population as part of contentious politics
- Texas is a poor state: 17%+ in poverty, poor and less educated tend not to vote.
- Texas is a minority state: 55%+ are minorities, who tend to vote at lower rates than Anglos.
- generational change: Civic duty has declined.

Explanations of Changes in Political Participation



- political culture: How does Texas's political culture contribute to low voter turnout? Individualistic and traditionalistic political cultures do not promote participation in politics.
- There are too many elections in the US and even more in Texas when you include the constitutional amendment elections.
- high information costs: finding out how to register, when, where and how to vote, etc
- Election day is usually on Tuesday, a work day.
- voter apathy: lack of interest, enthusiasm or concern



Explanations of Changes in Political Participation



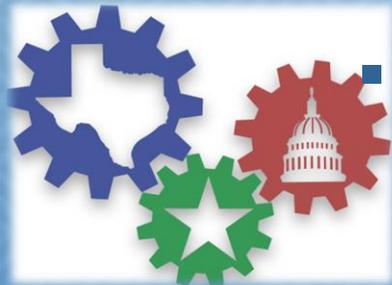
- People believe they gain few personal benefits for themselves by voting.
- public alienation: caused by a decline in civility and bipartisanship, and a rapid increase in hostility between those who have differing opinions
- opportunity costs: value of what is given up in order to vote
- irrational to vote: very little chance of affecting the outcome of an election
- weather: too hot, too cold, too wet, too dry



Political Participation and Policymaking



- Demographic changes in Texas in terms of income, race and ethnicity are associated with changes in political participation that influence every stage of policymaking, including agenda building, policy formulation and adoption, and policy implementation and evaluation.
- Texans can participate in the policy process through a number of ways: voting, campaigning, joining political groups, contacting public officials and participating in protest demonstrations and unconventional political acts. Unfortunately, they don't always do so.



- [How grassroots groups are mobilizing Texans on top issues](#)

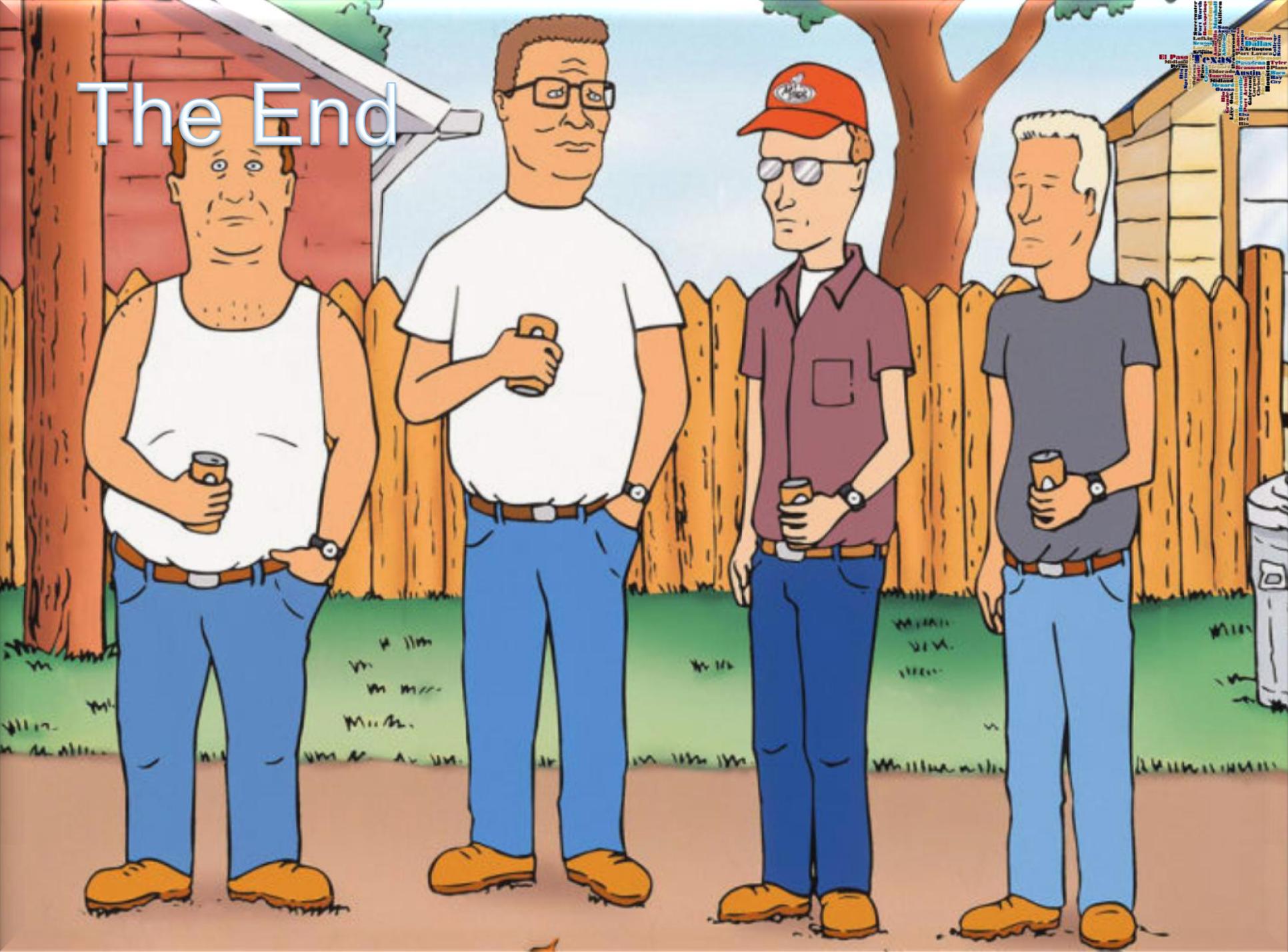
Political Participation and Policymaking



- Voters' preferences differing systematically across groups and who votes affect the type of policies that the government implements, including those policies that fundamentally shape the nature of society.
- More involved democratic participation is likely to lead not only to different policy outcomes but also to *superior policy outcomes* because of participation's role in aggregating information and preferences.



The End



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