



Lesson 1: Voting—Past and Present

ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

How has our country's history of limiting voting rights changed over time and impacted current voting patterns?

LESSON OBJECTIVES:

- Students will be able to identify major milestones and changes in voting rights in the U.S. from the nation's founding to the present.
- Students will be able to describe differences in voter turnout between different demographic groups and explore root causes.

STANDARDS ADDRESSED:

- PA 5.1.C.C. Evaluate the application of the principles and ideals in contemporary civic life.
 - Liberty / Freedom
 - Democracy
 - Justice
 - Equality

LESSON DURATION:

50-60 minutes

TYPE OF ACTIVITIES:

- ✓ Synthesizing information from multimedia sources (video, timeline, and infographic)
- ✓ Constructing an argument using information from sources
- ✓ Exploring the impact of past policies on present trends

MATERIALS:

- Projector or smartboard and speakers for [video](#)
- Student handout (pp. 3-4)
- Supplementary materials (see pages 5-11; copies can be shared within small groups if necessary)

HOOK (5 MINUTES)

Show the video "[History of Voting!](http://bit.ly/voting70)" at <http://bit.ly/voting70>.

As students watch, they should respond to the following focus prompt in their handout: "Based on the video, list three groups that were excluded from voting at some point in the U.S.' history."

After viewing, review students' responses (possible answers: African Americans and other people of color, women, young people under 21, non-land-owners).

Introduce today's essential question and lesson objectives.

TIMELINE SCAVENGER HUNT (15 MINUTES)

Have students work in pairs or groups to complete the scavenger hunt activity using the "[U.S. Voting Rights Timeline](#)" (attached in student materials). Friendly competition between groups is encouraged! Most groups should need no more than 10 minutes to complete all questions.

Review correct answers with students:

1. Property owners (mostly white male Protestants over 21)
2. 1856, when North Carolina removed the land ownership Requirement
3. 1868 with the 14th Amendment, although women were still excluded and many African Americans were still barred from voting through discriminatory tactics
4. 1920 with the 19th Amendment, although many women of color were still excluded through discriminatory tactics
5. 1965 with the Voting Rights Act
6. 1971 with the 26th Amendment

Note: students may express surprise, anger, hurt, or cynicism about past voting discrimination, including discrimination against Asian Americans and Native Americans not covered in the scavenger hunt. Affirm and allow space for their reactions, as these inequities are unfair and continue to affect us in the present, and we want students to examine them critically.

EVIDENCE-BASED ARGUMENTATION (15-20 MINUTES)

Ask students to respond in writing or through discussion to the prompt: "Agree or disagree with the statement, 'The United States has always been committed to the principle of 'one person, one vote.'" Support your argument with evidence from the video and timeline."

Push students to support their arguments with evidence and to strengthen their arguments based on the group discussion.



VOTER TURNOUT INFOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS (10-15 MINUTES)

Have students work in small groups (3-4 students) to analyze the [voter turnout infographic](#) (attached in student materials). Students should discuss: How does voter turnout differ between different groups? What factors might help explain these differences? Push students to support their answers with specific statistics and make connections back to the previous sources when examining root causes.

After students have discussed in small groups for ten minutes, ask groups to share out to the whole class for five minutes.

Students may note that many groups that have been historically excluded from the voting process (e.g., African Americans, young people) vote in lower numbers now, potentially due to distrust of or disengagement from the electoral process. Students may also note barriers that make it harder for some groups (e.g., lower income, less education, recently moved to state) to register to vote or vote on election day.

EXIT TICKET (5 MINUTES)

Give students a few minutes to respond to the exit ticket prompts: “One surprising thing I learned today” and “One question I have after today.” If time allows, ask volunteers to share their responses.



Name _____

Date _____

Period _____

Day 1: Voting—Past and Present

Video: “History of Voting!”

Based on the video, list three groups that were excluded from voting at some point in the U.S.’ history.

Timeline: “U.S. Voting Rights”

Use the timeline of U.S. voting rights to complete the scavenger hunt below:

1. Who was allowed to vote when the U.S. was founded?
2. When did all non-land-owning white men first get the right to vote?
3. When did African Americans or former slaves legally get the right to vote?
4. When did all women first get the right to vote?
5. When did the federal government pass legislation to protect the right to vote for all people, especially African Americans in the south?
6. When did young people ages 18-20 first get the right to vote?

Evidence-Based Argumentation

Agree or disagree with the statement, “The United States has always been committed to the principle of ‘one person, one vote.’” Support your argument with evidence from the video and timeline.

My answer	Supporting Evidence

U.S. Voting Rights Timeline

1776	<p>Only people who own land can vote Declaration of Independence signed. Right to vote during the Colonial and Revolutionary periods is restricted to property owners—most of whom are white male Protestants over the age of 21.</p>
1787	<p>No federal voting standard—states decide who can vote U.S. Constitution adopted. Because there is no agreement on a national standard for voting rights, states are given the power to regulate their own voting laws. In most cases, voting remains in the hands of white male landowners.</p>
1789	<p>George Washington elected president. Only 6% of the population can vote.</p>
1790	<p>Citizen=White 1790 Naturalization Law passed. It explicitly states that only “free white” immigrants can become naturalized citizens.</p>
1848	<p>Activists for ending slavery and women’s rights join together Women’s rights convention held in Seneca Falls, NY. Frederick Douglass, a newspaper editor and former slave, attends the event and gives a speech supporting universal voting rights. His speech helps convince the convention to adopt a resolution calling for voting rights for women.</p>
1848	<p>Citizenship granted, but voting denied The Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo ends the Mexican-American War and guarantees U.S. citizenship to Mexicans living in the territories conquered by the U.S. However, English language requirements and violent intimidation limit access to voting rights.</p>
1856	<p>Vote expanded to all white men North Carolina is the last state to remove property ownership as a requirement to vote.</p>
1866	<p>Movements unite and divide Two women’s rights activists, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, form an organization for white and black women and men dedicated to the goal of universal voting rights. The organization later divides and regroups over disagreements in strategies to gain the vote for women and African Americans.</p>
1868	<p>Former slaves granted citizenship 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution passed. Citizenship is defined and granted to former slaves. Voters, however, are explicitly defined as male. Although the</p>

U.S. Voting Rights Timeline

	amendment forbids states from denying any rights of citizenship, voting regulation is still left in the hands of the states.
1870	Vote cannot be denied because of race, explicitly – so other discriminatory tactics used 15th Amendment passed. It states that the right to vote cannot be denied by the federal or state governments based on race. However, soon after, some states begin to enact measures such as voting taxes and literacy tests that restrict the actual ability of African Americans to register to vote. Violence and other intimidation tactics are also used.
1872	Women try to vote Susan B. Anthony is arrested and brought to trial in Rochester, New York, for attempting to vote in the presidential election. At the same time, Sojourner Truth, a former slave and advocate for justice and equality, appears at a polling booth in Grand Rapids, Michigan, demanding a ballot but she is turned away.
1876	Indigenous people cannot vote The Supreme Court rules that Native Americans are not citizens as defined by the 14th Amendment and, thus, cannot vote.
1882	The Chinese Exclusion Act bars people of Chinese ancestry from naturalizing to become U.S. citizens.
1887	Assimilation=Right to Vote Dawes Act passed. It grants citizenship to Native Americans who give up their tribal affiliations
1890	Wyoming admitted to statehood and becomes first state to legislate voting for women in its constitution.
1890	Indigenous people must apply for citizenship The Indian Naturalization Act grants citizenship to Native Americans whose applications are approved—similar to the process of immigrant naturalization.
1912-13	Women lead voting rights marches through New York and Washington, D.C.
1919	Military Service=Citizenship for Native Americans Native Americans who served in the military during World War I are granted U.S. citizenship.

U.S. Voting Rights Timeline

1920	<p>Right to vote extended to women 19th Amendment passed, giving women right to vote in both state and federal elections.</p>
1922	<p>Asian≠White≠Citizen Supreme Court rules that people of Japanese heritage are ineligible to become naturalized citizens. In the next year, the Court finds that Asian Indians are also not eligible to naturalize.</p>
1924	<p>Again, citizenship granted but voting denied The Indian Citizenship Act grants citizenship to Native Americans, but many states nonetheless make laws and policies which prohibit Native Americans from voting.</p>
1925	<p>Military Service=Citizenship for Filipinos Congress bars Filipinos from U.S. citizenship unless they have served three years in the Navy.</p>
1926	<p>State violence used to prevent people from exercising their right to vote While attempting to register to vote in Birmingham, Alabama, a group of African American women are beaten by election officials.</p>
1947	<p>Legal barriers to Native American voting removed Miguel Trujillo, a Native American and former Marine, sues New Mexico for not allowing him to vote. He wins and New Mexico and Arizona are required to give the vote to all Native Americans.</p>
1952	<p>McCarran-Walter Act grants all people of Asian ancestry the right to become citizens.</p>
1961	<p>23rd amendment passed. It gives citizens of Washington, D.C. the right to vote for U.S. president. But to this day, the district's residents—most of whom are African American—still do not have voting representation in Congress.</p>
1963-64	<p>Voting rights as civil rights Large-scale efforts in the South to register African Americans to vote are intensified. However, state officials refuse to allow African Americans to register by using voting taxes, literacy tests and violent intimidation. Among the efforts launched is Freedom Summer, where close to a thousand civil rights workers of all races and backgrounds converge on the South to support voting rights.</p>

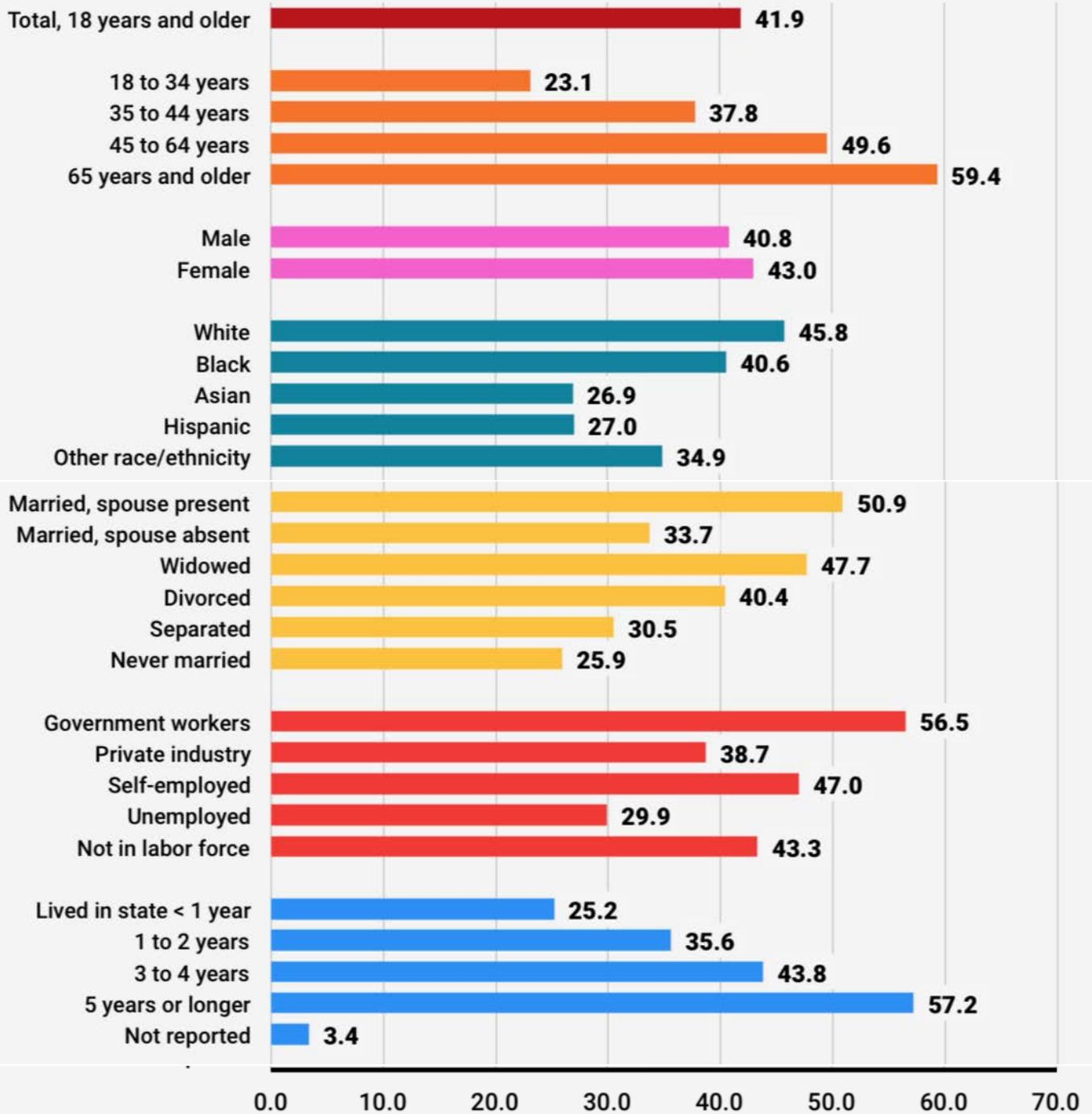
U.S. Voting Rights Timeline

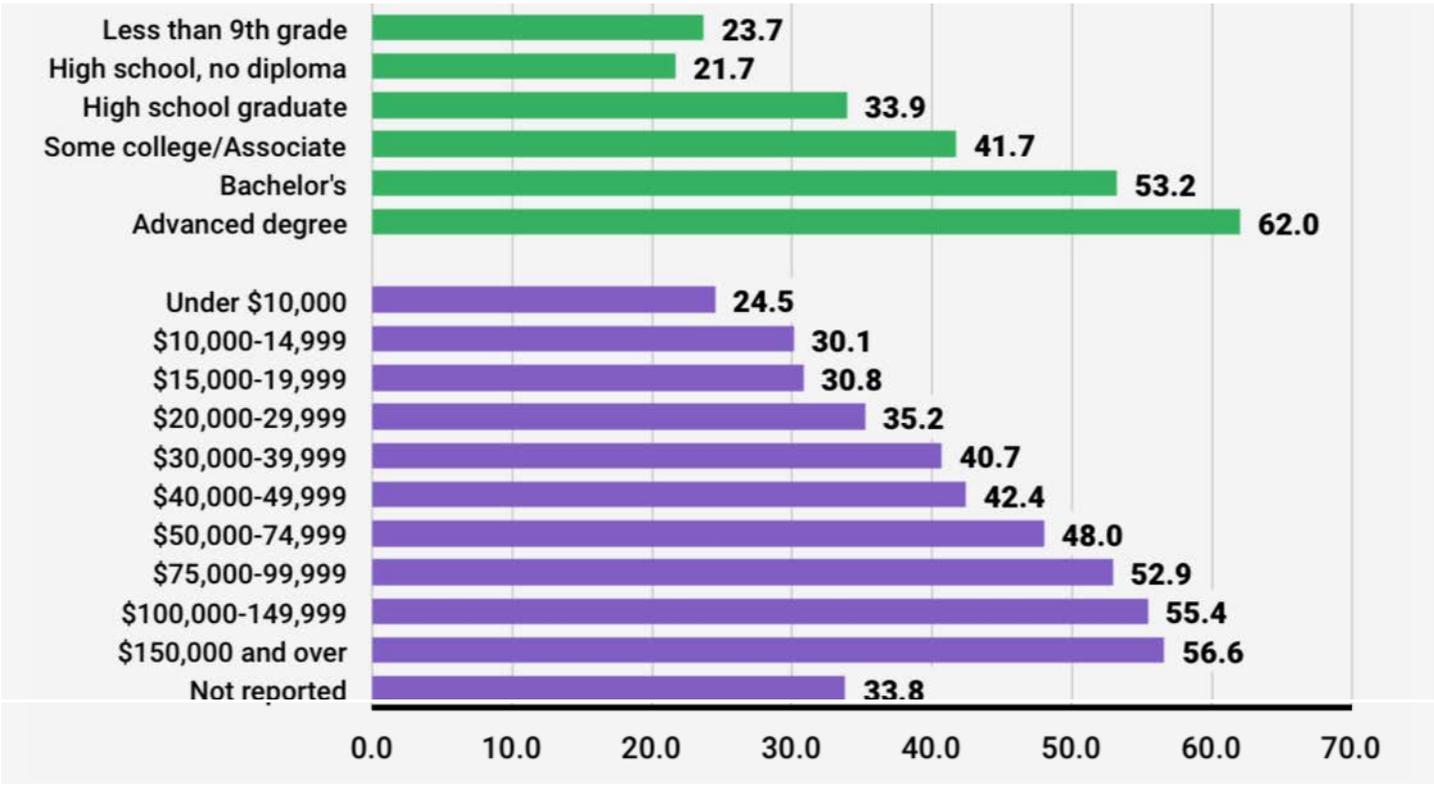
1964	<p>No special tax to vote 24th Amendment passed. It guarantees that the right to vote in federal elections will not be denied for failure to pay any tax.</p>
1965	<p>Grassroots movement forces change in law Voting Rights Act passed. It forbids states from imposing discriminatory restrictions on who can vote, and provides mechanisms for the federal government to enforce its provisions. The legislation is passed largely under pressure from protests and marches earlier that year challenging Alabama officials who injured and killed people during African American voter registration efforts.</p>
1966	<p>After the legal change, struggle continues for social change Civil rights activist James Meredith is wounded by a sniper during a solo “Walk Against Fear” voter registration march between Tennessee and Mississippi. The next day, nearly 4,000 African Americans register to vote. And other civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and Stokely Carmichael continue the march while Meredith heals. Meredith rejoins March at its conclusion in Mississippi.</p>
1971	<p>Voting age lowered to 18 26th Amendment passed, granting voting rights to 18-year-olds. The amendment is largely a result of Vietnam War-protests demanding a lowering of the voting age on the premise that people who are old enough to fight are old enough to vote.</p>
1975	<p>Voting materials in various languages Amendments to Voting Rights Act require that certain voting materials be printed in languages besides English so that people who do not read English can participate in the voting process.</p>
1993	<p>Making voter registration easier National Voter Registration Act passed. Intends to increase the number of eligible citizens who register to vote by making registration available at the Department of Motor Vehicles, and public assistance and disabilities agencies.</p>
2000	<p>Residents of U.S. colonies are citizens, but cannot vote A month prior to the presidential election, a federal court decides that Puerto Ricans living in Puerto Rico, though U.S. citizens, cannot vote for U.S. president. Residents of U.S. territories including Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa and the U.S. Virgin</p>

U.S. Voting Rights Timeline

	<p>Islands—nearly 4.1 million people total—cannot vote in presidential elections and do not have voting representation in the U.S Congress.</p>
<p>2001</p>	<p>Debate—Should voting rights be taken away from felons? For how long? The National Commission on Federal Election Reform recommends that all states allow felons to regain their right to vote after completing their criminal sentences. Nearly 4 million US citizens cannot vote because of past felony convictions. In California, felons are prohibited from voting while they are in prison or on parole. But, in other states, especially in the South, a person with a felony conviction is forever prohibited from voting in that state. These laws are a legacy of post-Civil War attempts to prevent African Americans from voting. Ex-felons are largely poor and of color.</p>
<p>2002</p>	<p>Trying to solve election inconsistency with more federal voting standards Help America Vote Act (HAVA) passed in response to disputed 2000 presidential election. Massive voting reform effort requires states comply with federal mandate for provisional ballots, disability access, centralized, computerized voting lists, electronic voting and requirement that first-time voters present identification before voting.</p>

PERCENT OF CITIZENS WHO VOTED IN 2014





SOURCE: US Census Bureau, "Who Votes? Congressional Elections and the American Electorate: 1978-2014"

BUSINESS INSIDER