

4.4 VOTER TURNOUT IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Essential Question(s): What needs to change to increase voter turnout?

Overview

After every election, regardless of the outcome, people wonder how many people showed up at the polls to vote. The number is never as high as people would like, especially during midterm elections. In the 2016 Presidential election, 60.1% of the population eligible to vote showed up to the polls. During the midterm elections in 2018, only 50.3% of those eligible voted. While thousands of dollars are spent marketing the importance of voting, a large percent of eligible voters do not go to the polls.

Snapshot

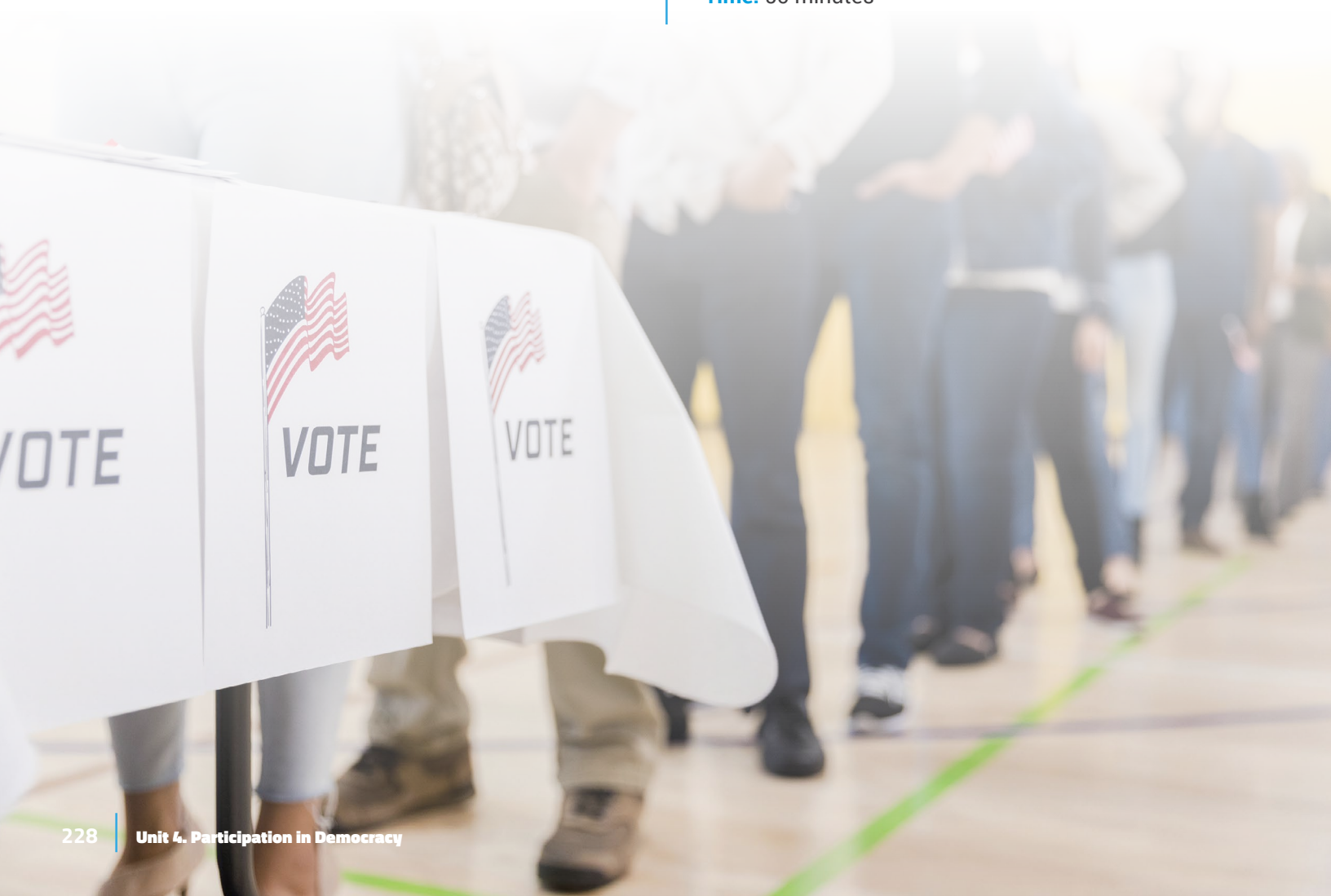
What Students Will Learn:

In this lesson, students will learn about strategies and practices for increasing voter turnout by making it more accessible. Students will then create their own plan of action for increasing voter turnout.

Standard(s):

D2. Civ.9.9-12

Time: 50 minutes



Objective

Create a plan and action to increase voter turnout.

Differentiation

Students can find a partner to complete the work.

What's Needed

- Writing utensil and paper or 1:1 technology
- WiFi, internet, computer, screen or projector, speakers
- Board/Smart board
- "There's no such thing as not voting" TED Talk video (2016, 13:25 min., Eric Liu, www.ted.com/talks/eric_liu_there_s_no_such_thing_as_not_voting?)
- Make enough copies of "There's No Such Thing as Not Voting Watcher's Guide," one for each student.

Classroom Setup

This lesson can be configured either for individual or for paired work. Desks should be set up to best support whichever option you pick.

Direct Teaching

1. Welcome students to class. Have them respond to the following prompt, either in journals or as a whole class:
During elections, why do you think some people decide not to vote? Do you think the decision not to vote is taking a stand? Why or why not?
2. Distribute "There's No Such Thing as Not Voting Watcher's Guide" to each student. Explain that they are going to watch a Ted Talk by Eric Liu. During this talk, they should fill in the Watcher's Guide.
3. Show students the TED Talk video "There's no such thing as not voting."
4. Use the following questions to facilitate a large group discussion with students:
 - How do you think we could get 100% of those who are eligible to vote in the election? What would we have to do?
 - Is it important to increase voter turnout across diverse identity groups? If so, why?
 - Can you think of the barriers that keep people from voting?

Key Vocabulary

voting



5. Share the following information:

Voter turnout is the number of registered voters who cast a ballot in an election. The voter turnout in the United States is low compared to other countries. Belgium, which has the highest voter turnout has laws that require its people to vote. This is called compulsory voting. Other countries automatically register those eligible to vote. In the U.S. voting is voluntary and it is up to each eligible voter to register.

6. Divide students into small groups. Share the following prompts and ask students to brainstorm responses in their groups:

What are some ways we could make voting easier?

...more user-friendly?

...more joyful?

...more motivating?

...more comfortable?

...more connected to the needs and issues people have?

...more meaningful?

7. After students have a chance to brainstorm, ask each group to share out a few of their ideas.

8. Explain to students that they are going to create a plan that will increase voter turnout in the U.S. with the goal of reaching 100% of eligible people voting in the next election. They can build on an idea from the small group brainstorm, or come up with a new idea. Students can also consider how to overcome barriers to voting. Tell students that they need to describe what their plan is based on—how it will increase voter turnout.

A few examples you can share:

- Create an app that allows voters to vote from their phones (convenience).
- Create a media campaign that persuades people to vote (representation on issues that matter to them).
- Create an automatic registration machine (user-friendly).
- Make Election Day a holiday.

9. Provide time for students to work on their projects and finish them the next day in class, or for homework. Students can work individually or in pairs.

10. Provide an opportunity for students to share their projects with each other. Some options might be:

Small group share outs: Groups of 4–5 students get together and share about their projects with each other. Each group then selects one of their group members to summarize the various projects to the larger group.

Gallery Walk: The projects are posted on the wall or on desk tops. Students (independently or in pairs) move around the room exploring the various projects. They can put sticky notes on the projects, with a prompt telling them to note things they appreciate or questions they have about the various projects.

Closing

Have students share one word about the importance of voting, or a deterrent to voting.

THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS NOT VOTING WATCHER'S GUIDE

Directions: As you watch the TED Talk video, “[There’s no such thing as not voting](#),” write your responses to the questions below.

1. What does Eric Liu believe?
2. What has killed the face-to-face culture of voting?
3. What does Liu believe needs to happen to the electoral culture?
4. Who is Atomico? What does he do?
5. Who are the Wandering Aesthetics? What do they do?
6. Why is voting important to Liu?
7. Answer Liu’s question, “In your mind, how do we mobilize 100% of the people to vote?”
8. What is one thing you appreciated about Liu’s TED Talk?
9. What is one question you would ask Eric Liu about his ideas?