

# Why do significant numbers of american fail to vote?

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Between 1960 and 1996, the turnout of American's voting in a presidential election had fallen by 14%. This brought the percentage to 51% of Americans turning up to vote. This decline in turnout is due to a number of reasons;

- > The Decline in numbers of party Activists
- > Loss of Political Efficacy
- > Many elections have low-stimulus characters
- > Most elections are uncompetitive
- > Poor Turnout among young people
- > People are happy with what they have
- > It is difficult to understand the voting system

Out of these reasons, I feel some stand out the strongest. These include; the understanding of the voting system, poor turnout among young people and that people are happy with what they have.

### Understanding of the Voting System

All Voting systems can be fairly difficult to understand and this includes the very democratic American System. It is no longer just the people with learning difficulties that find the system hard to understand, as it is no longer the person with the majority vote wins, therefore because people don't understand it, they tend to stay away rather than get confused and

embarrass themselves. This also links with the ability of people having to register to vote. To register they have to attend a government building, and some people do not have the time, or means of transport too do this, therefore they decide as it's not a law too vote, they don't bother. Also, even if people do register the ability to get too a polling station is a problem.

As everything is very spaced out in America, and generally a car is needed to travel between places, if a potential voter does not have a car, they will not bother too vote. This can also be linked with the 2000 Presidential Election, when roadblocks were put in place in parts of Florida, stopping people from reaching the polling stations, this not only ensured a particular candidate won the vote of Florida, it also stopped a significant number of voters voting.

#### Poor Turnout among Young People

In 2004, the turnout of young people aged 18 - 24 was at a low of 47%. The possible reasons for this could be that as politics is not considered an essential subject at school, many youths do not understand or care about it. This then creates a generation of people who do not care about politics and do not want too vote, which then means that when that generation stops being considered youths, they still aren't voting, and neither are the new generation of youths. The reason for low turnout could also be that

Political campaigns are generally aimed at an older generation, meaning it becomes something that youths don't bother to focus on. Politicians know that the turnout among youths is low so do not bother wasting their money campaigning to them if they have a limited amount of money.

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This then causes the campaigns too become something that youths don't have to focus on and as it doesn't have much interest to them because they don't understand it, they tend not too waste their time getting involved in it.

People are Happy with what they have

'If it ain't broke, don't fix it', This is the way that many people feel about politics. For many potential voters, they feel they have everything they need and could ask for from the government and feel that voting to change that would take away some of the things they enjoy in life. As long as there are no wars on their own soil, their kids have a good education, they have good jobs and healthcare and reasonable taxes then they feel that the government is doing a good job and they don't want too risk that by potentially giving another party or candidate office.

Solutions To these Problems

These problems can be solved and would increase voter turnout by a considerable amount. By handing out and posting leaflets that explain the voting system and how each and every vote matters and counts, as well as having lectures in easy to reach places, would increase turnout because people would understand the system and the importance of voting. Also by creating postal ballots etc, it would be easier for people who would otherwise find it difficult to vote and also by making registering to vote easier.

To tackle the youth problem, politics would need to be taught as part fo the curriculum in schools, this problem has already started too be solved, as was

seen during the 2004 election when various celebrities had a campaign with MTV urging people to vote, if this continues on a wider scale, as well as making parts of party conferences for Youths only and aiming campaigns directly at them, this would increase turnout in forth coming elections but also elections in the distant future. Finally, by trying to show flaws in the system and how to make improvements (which is already done, but could be issued in a more one to one with the voter method) would show potential voters why they need to vote because of the changes they can make and the added benefits they could receive.