

MR. POGREBA, PARKER SCHOOL

Unit 8: Political Participation

Voting and Participation



A photograph of a crowd of people at what appears to be a protest or rally. The central focus is a large, hand-drawn sign on a piece of cardboard. The sign reads "YOU GONNA VOTE THIS TIME?" in blue and red marker. The word "VOTE" is written in large, red, 3D-style block letters, while the other words are in blue. The background is filled with the heads and shoulders of many people, some wearing hats, and green foliage is visible in the distance. The overall atmosphere suggests a public gathering focused on civic participation.

YOU GONNA
VOTE
THIS TIME?

Voting Rates

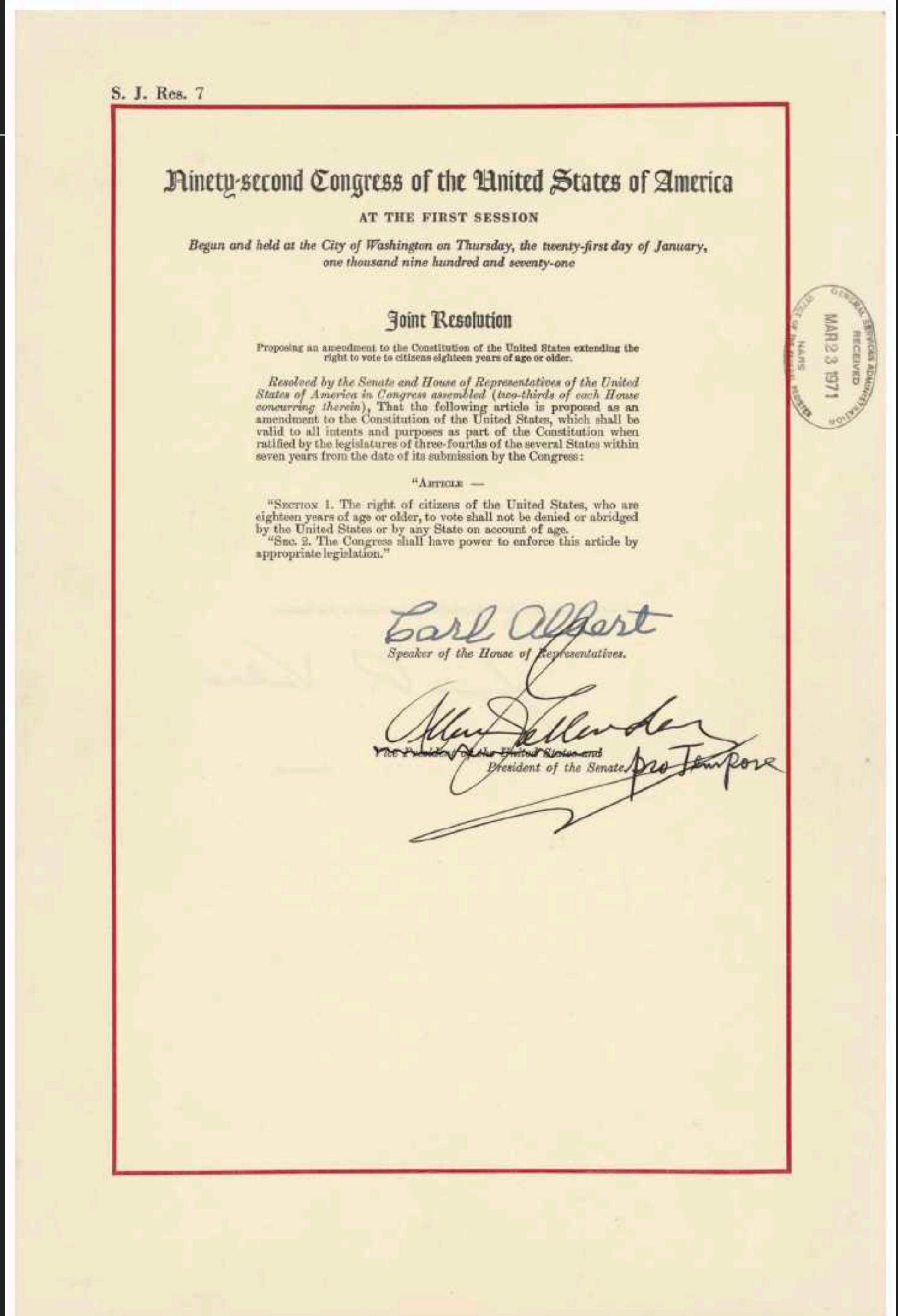
QUICK REVIEW

- ▶ When we talk about elections for national office, we generally refer to:
 - ▶ **General elections**
 - ▶ **Primary elections**
 - ▶ **Mid-term elections**
- ▶ What is each?



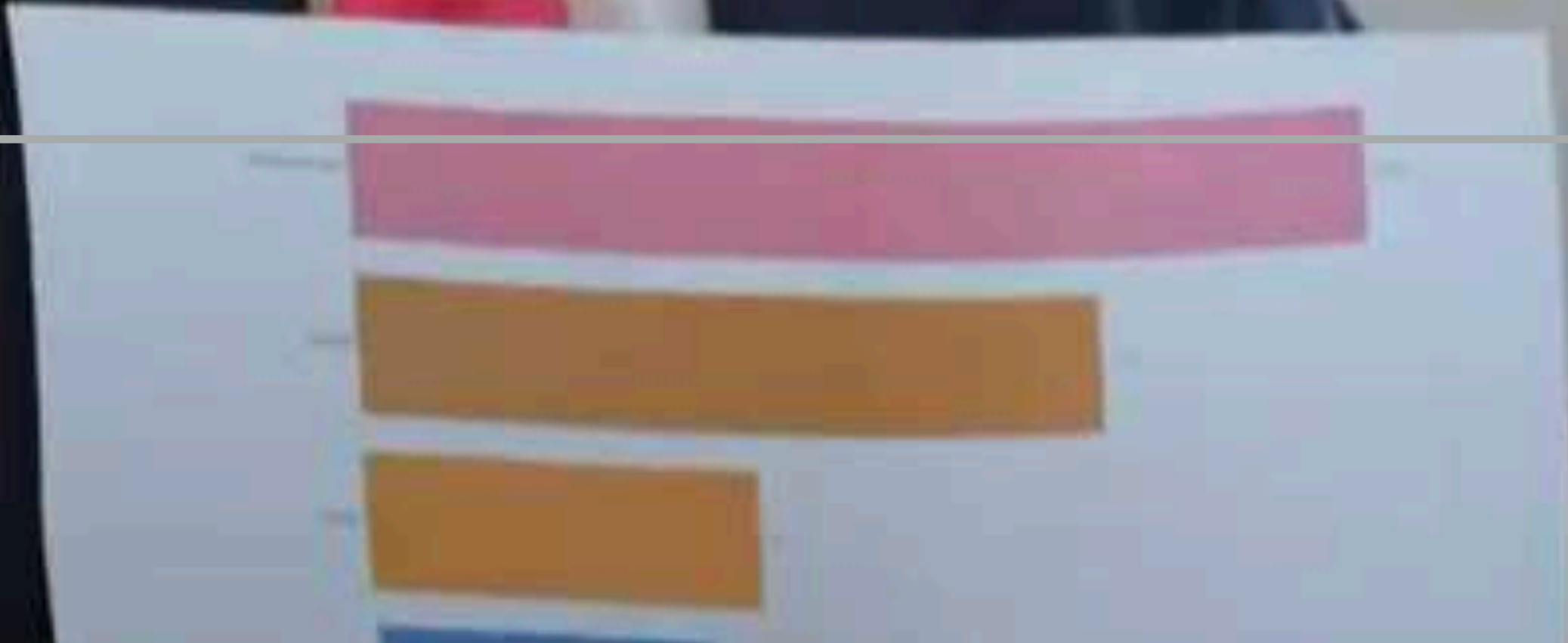
IMPORTANT CONCEPTS

- ▶ The right to vote is often referred to as the **franchise**.
- ▶ Only about 7% of Americans were eligible to vote in the first national election.
- ▶ Over time **suffrage**, or qualifications for voting, expanded.
 - ▶ **Fifteenth Amendment (1870)**
 - ▶ **Nineteenth Amendment (1920)**
 - ▶ **Twenty-fourth Amendment (1964)**
 - ▶ **Twenty-sixth Amendment (1971)**

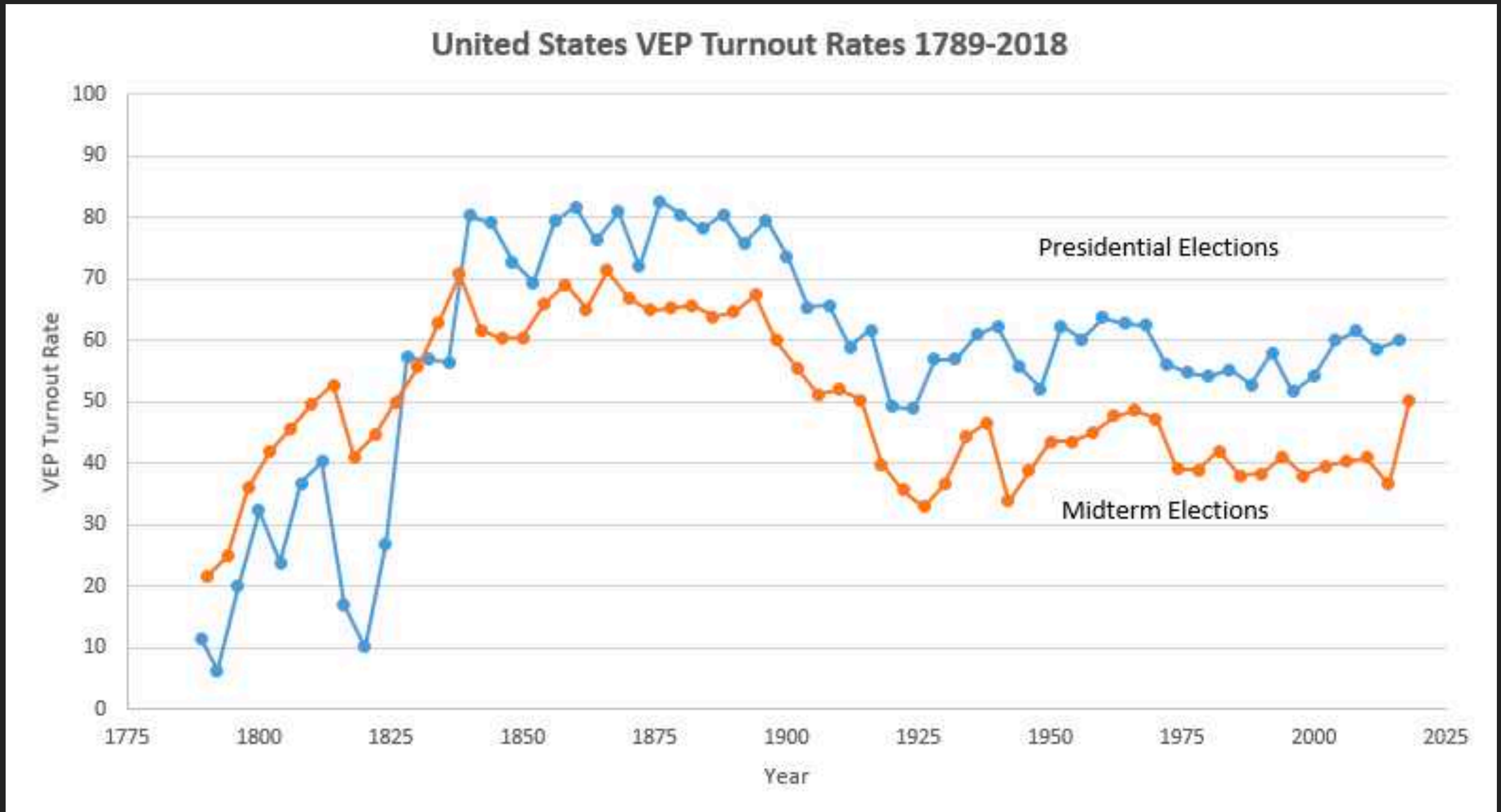


A photograph of Donald Trump in a dark suit and red tie, holding a white sheet of paper with a bar chart. The chart has three bars: a long pink one at the top, a shorter orange one in the middle, and a shorter orange one at the bottom. A black horizontal bar is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the text 'Chart Time!' in pink. A thin white horizontal line is visible at the bottom of the image.

Chart Time!



VOTER TURNOUT OVER TIME



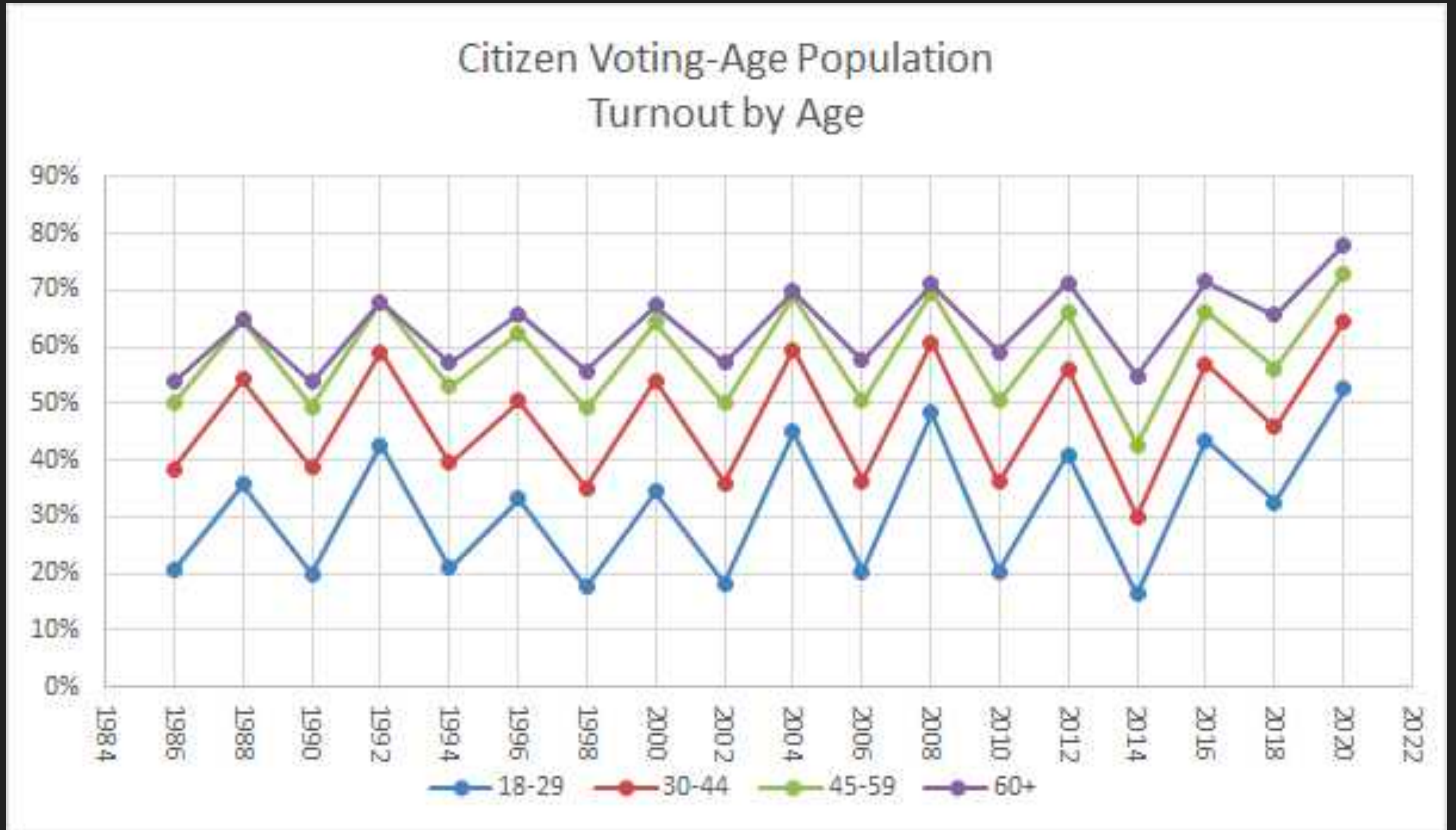
WHAT ARE SOME INTERESTING TRENDS? CHANGES?

ANY REASONS TO BE SKEPTICAL OF ANY OF THESE NUMBERS?

ANY HISTORICAL FACTORS THAT MIGHT EXPLAIN?

NON-VOTING

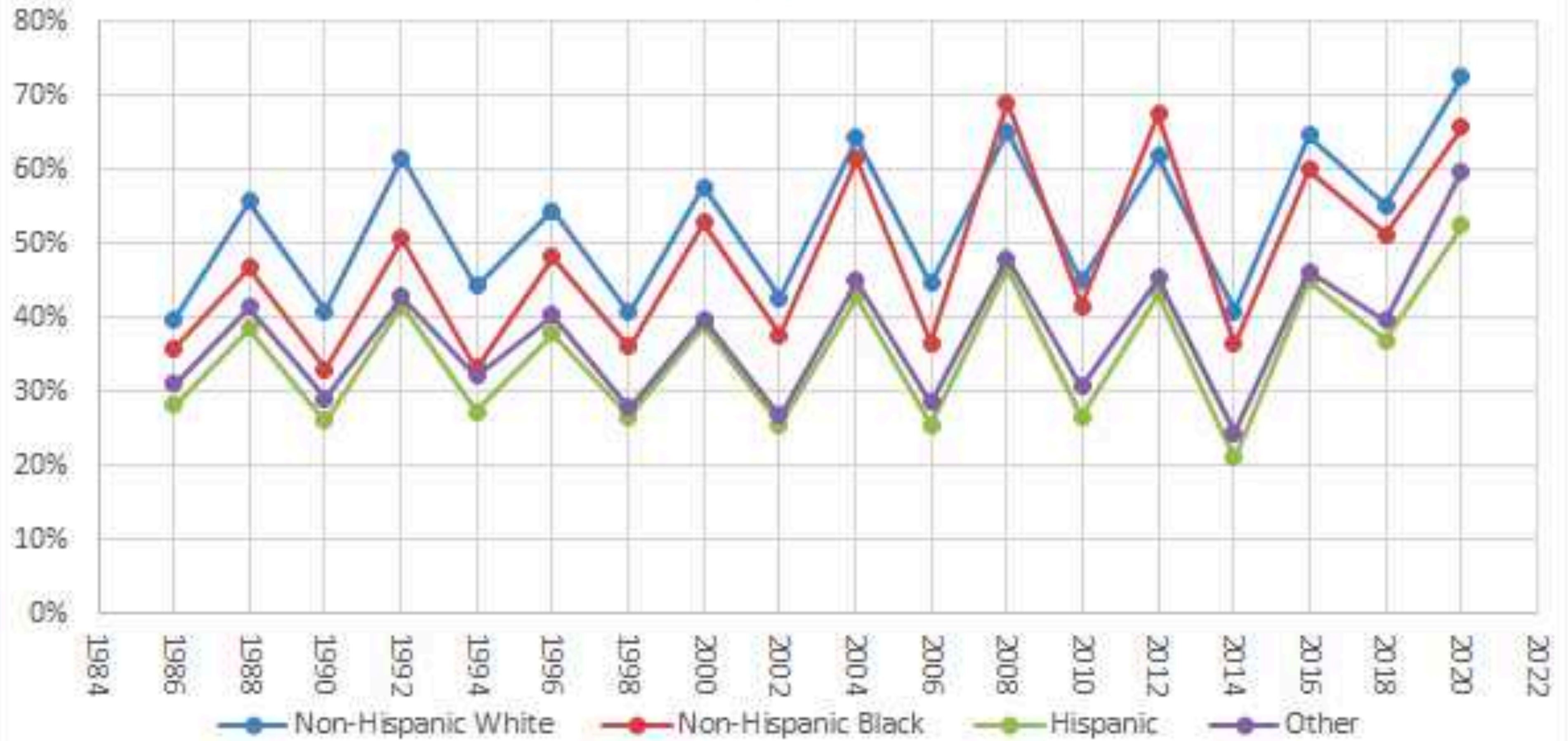
TURNOUT BY AGE



NON-VOTING

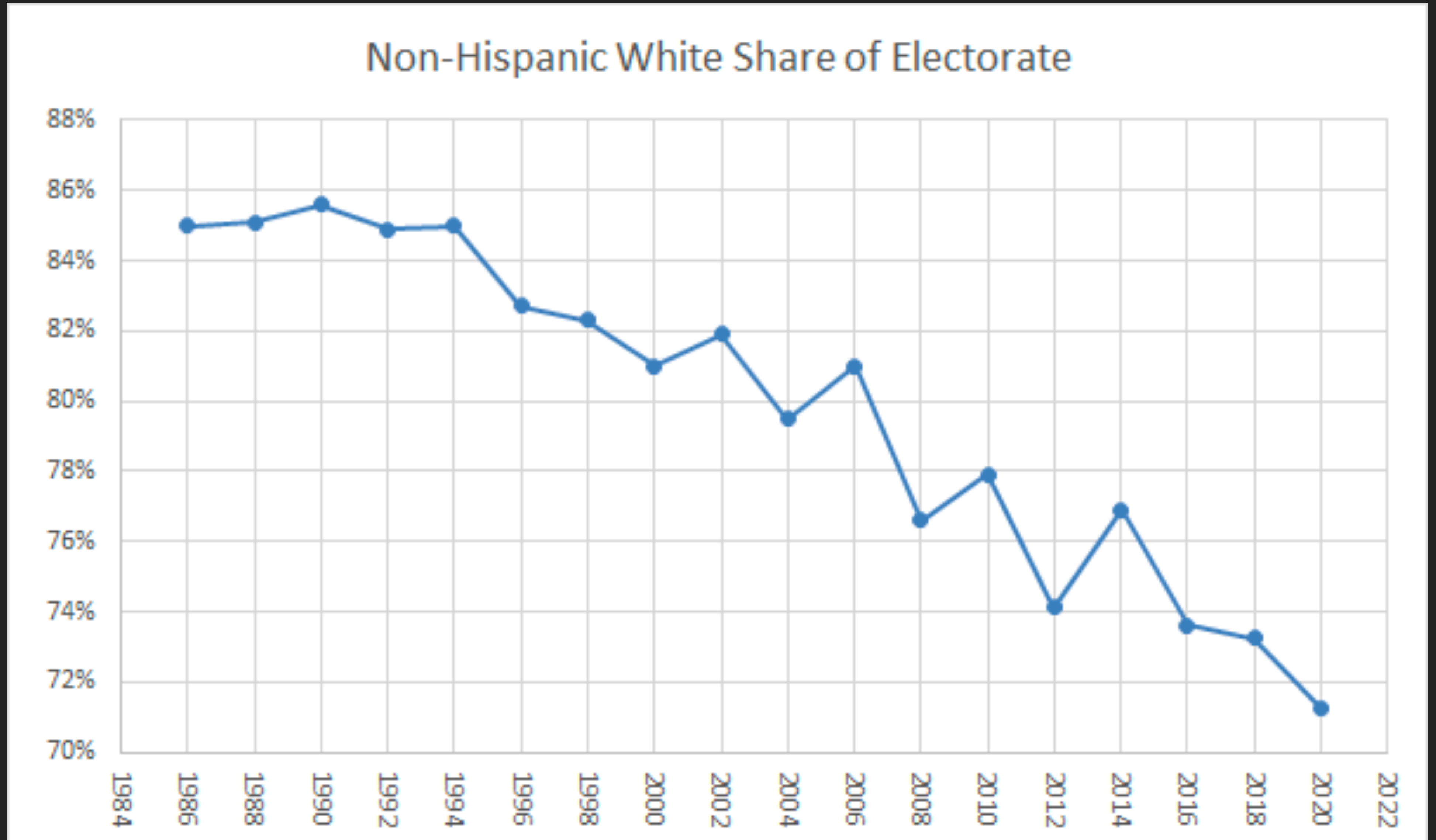
TURNOUT BY RACE

Citizen Voting-Age Population Turnout Rates by Race and Ethnicity



NON-VOTING

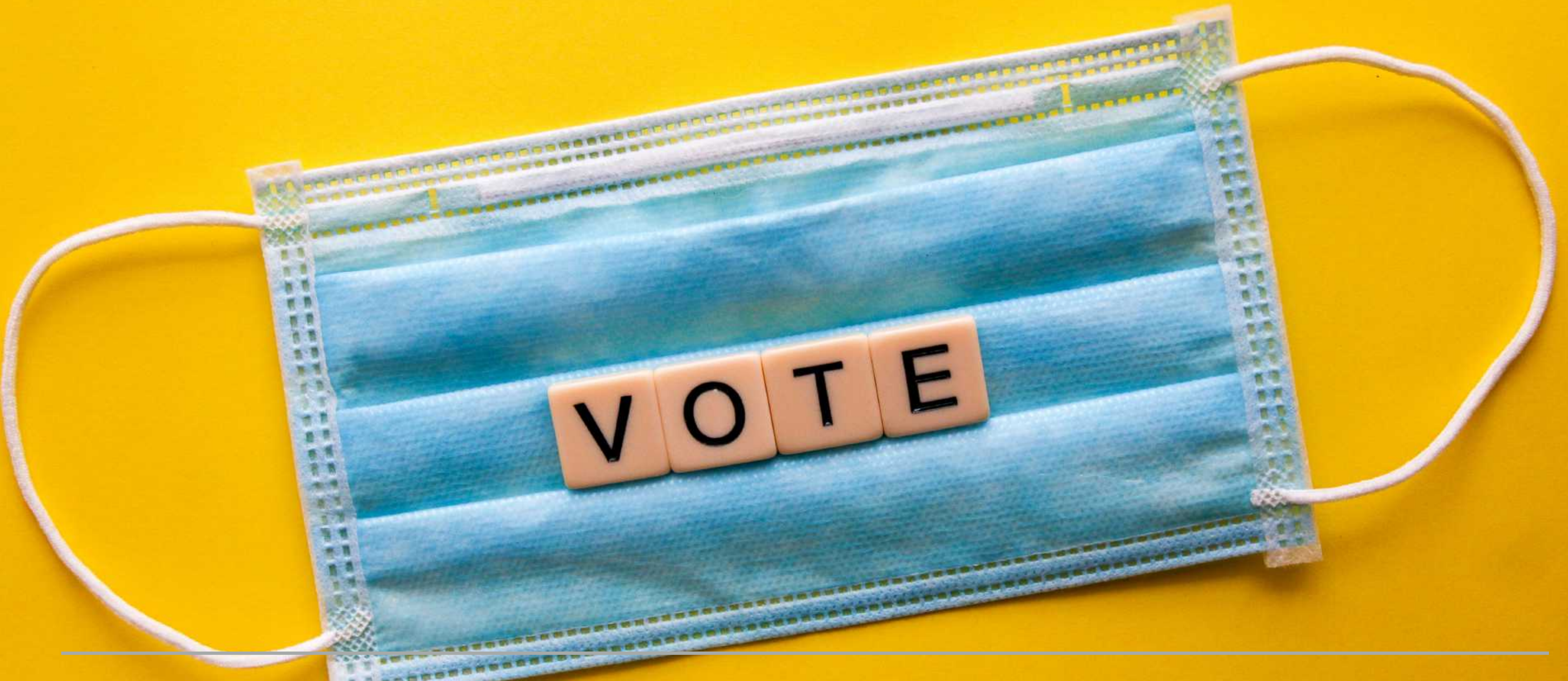
NON-WHITE VOTERS



VOTER TURNOUT IN THE US

- ▶ US voter turnout is low compared to other democracies. In 2016, the US ranked 30 of 35 nations.
 - ▶ But we did beat Latvia, 55%-53%.
- ▶ **Who votes more often?**
 - ▶ Women over men
 - ▶ Older Americans over younger
 - ▶ Whiter Americans over POC
 - ▶ Educated over less-educated
 - ▶ Wealthy over less wealthy





Voter Suppression

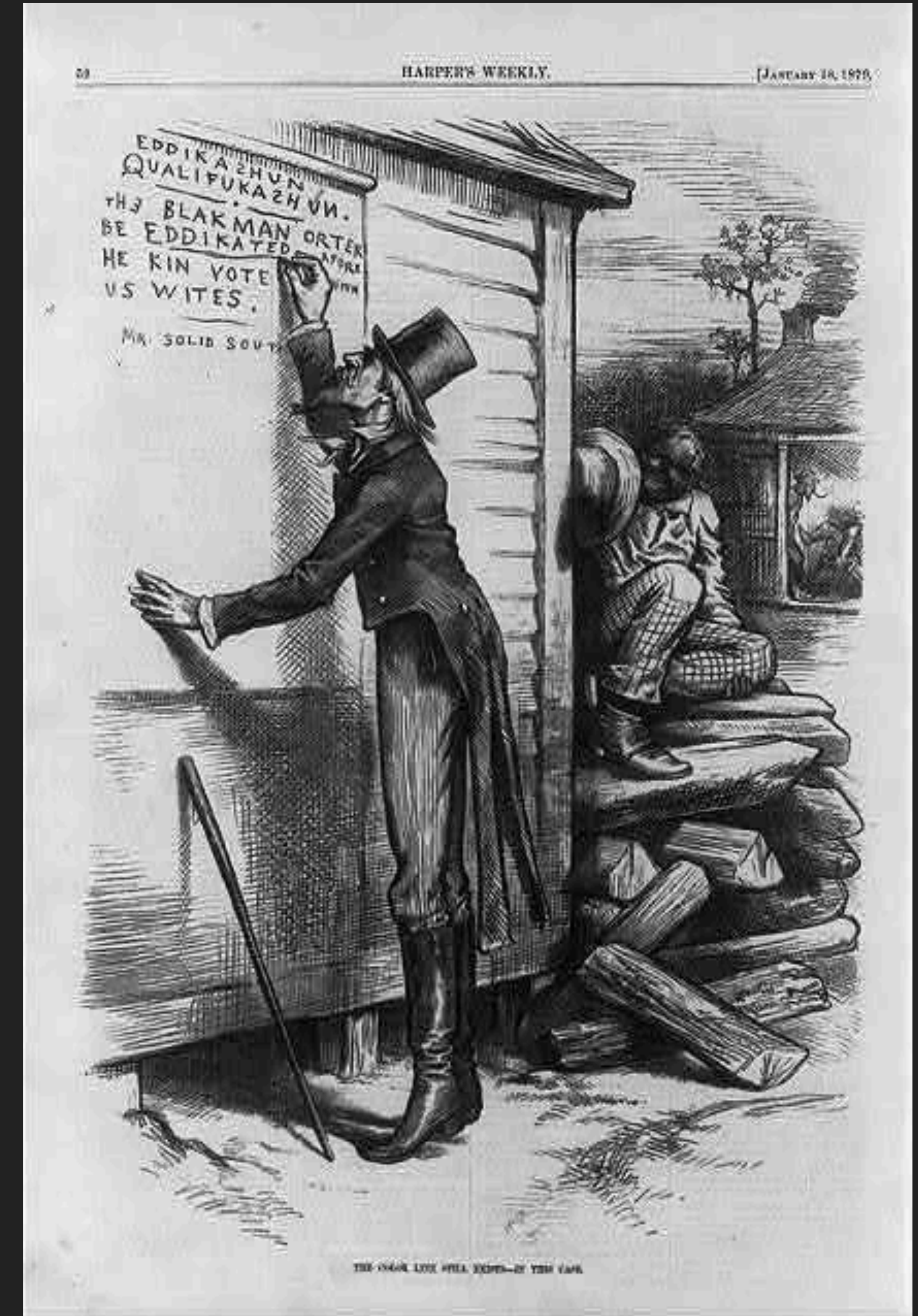
WHY DON'T MORE PEOPLE VOTE?

- ▶ People claim they are too busy
- ▶ People believe their vote does not count.
- ▶ About 10% of voters believe that neither political party represents them.
- ▶ Some states have been accused of racist practices in their polling stations, registration programs, and Voter ID requirements.



LEGACY OF RACIST PRACTICE

- ▶ After Black Americans got the right to vote, Reconstruction was a brief window where they could (and did!) vote.
- ▶ After the 1876 abandonment of Reconstruction, Black Americans were systematically stripped of the franchise.
 - ▶ Poll taxes
 - ▶ Literacy tests
 - ▶ Grandfather Clause
 - ▶ White Primary
- ▶ In 1944, **Smith v. Allwright** ended the **white primary**, ruling that parties could not use race to close primaries

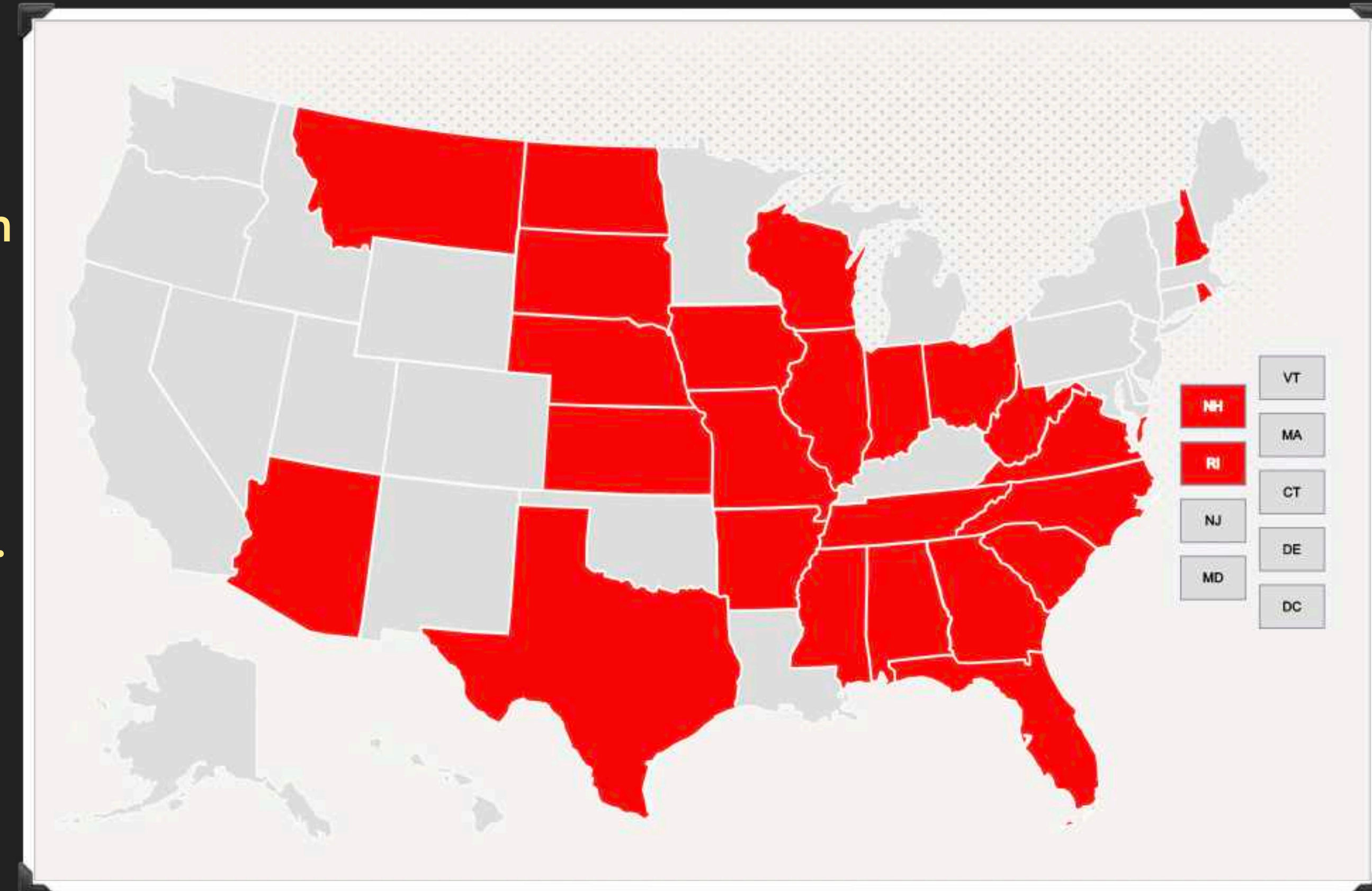


As late as 1962, only 5% of eligible Black voters were registered in Mississippi. Eleven Southern counties with majority-black populations had no registered black voters, and one county in Louisiana had not registered a Black voter since 1900.

Jeff Wiltse, *Contested Waters: A Social History of Swimming Pools in America*

VOTING RESTRICTIONS TODAY

- ▶ **Voter suppression** continues today.
 - ▶ In 2013, the Supreme Court voted 5-4 to free jurisdictions with histories of racial discrimination in voting from having to gain federal approval, called "**preclearance**," before changing their election laws.
 - ▶ This led to a surge in **voter suppression** laws.
 - ▶ In 2016, Black and Hispanic voters were twice as likely as White voters to be told they lacked proper ID to vote.
 - ▶ Across the country, 1 in 16 Black Americans cannot vote due to disenfranchisement laws.



STATES WITH NEW VOTER RESTRICTIONS SINCE 2010

"Data from 2016 show that there are good reasons for those fears. In the same year that a federal court decried North Carolina's voter-ID laws as deliberately discriminatory machinations that "target African Americans with almost surgical precision," similar laws—which require identification at the ballot box that low-income, black, and Latino voters are less likely than middle-class whites to have—changed electoral outcomes in other states."

Vann Newkirk, 2018

VOTER SUPPRESSION TACTICS

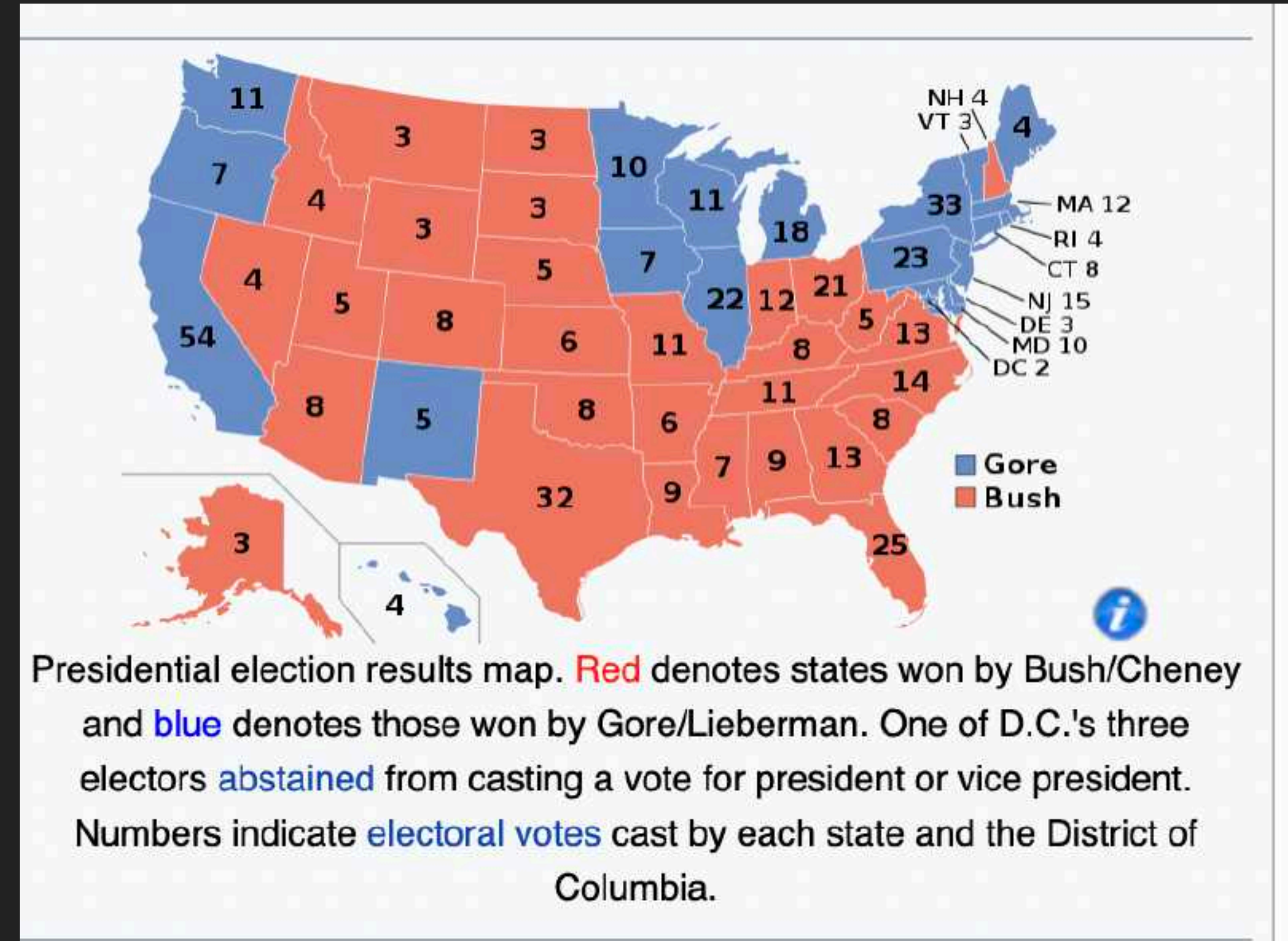
- ▶ **Restrictive voter ID laws** that disproportionately target people of color.
 - ▶ According to the ACLU, 25 percent of voting-age Black Americans do not have a government-issued photo ID.
- ▶ **Nuisance laws** that criminalize poll worker actions ranging from feeding people in line to collecting ballots.
- ▶ **Voter roll purges** that wrongly remove voters from the rolls.
- ▶ **Felon disenfranchisement**
- ▶ **Unequal allocation** of polling stations. People of color are six times more likely to have 2+ hour waits at polling stations.

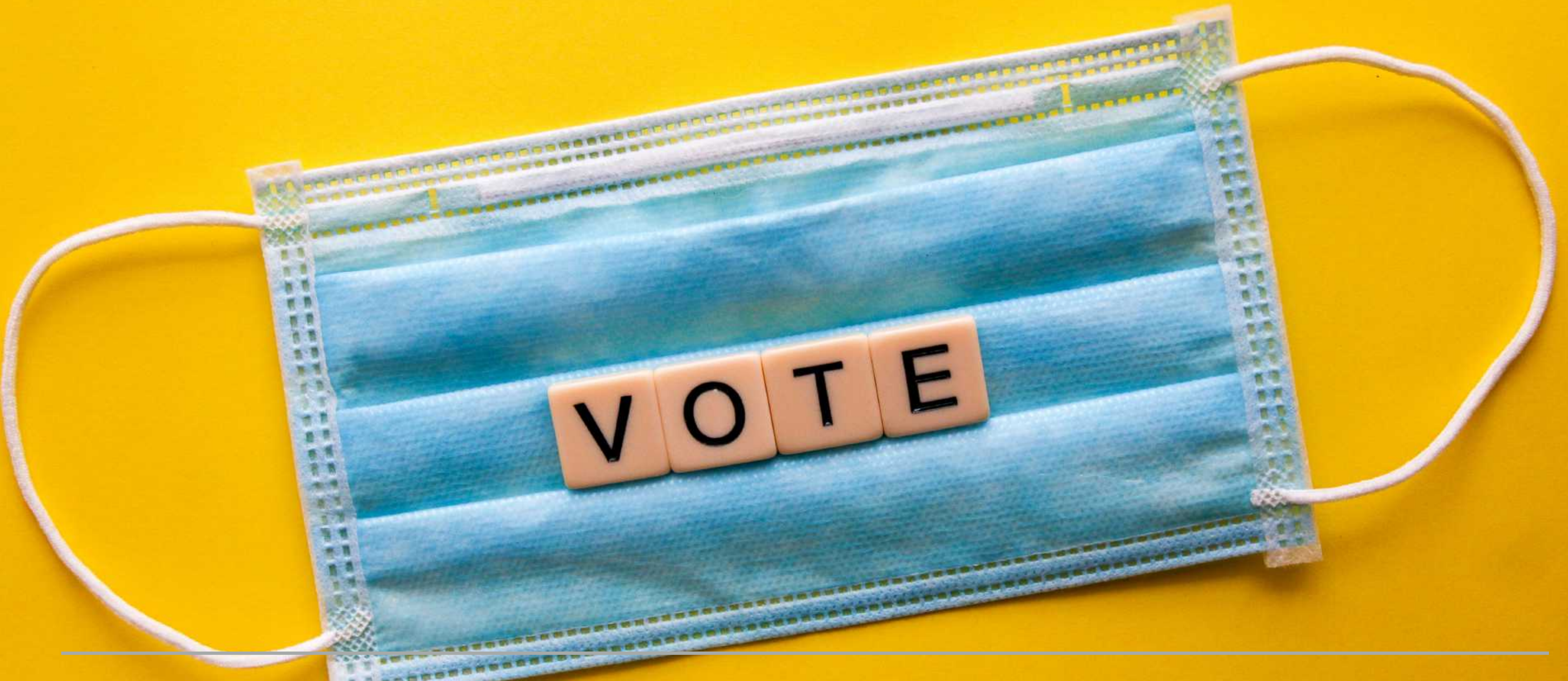


STACEY ABRAMS

DOES FRAUD JUSTIFY THESE LAWS?

- ▶ Claims that the American election system is rife with **voter fraud** provide justification for these laws.
- ▶ The 2020 election supercharged these claims, with a 2021 survey finding that 66% of Republicans believe the 2020 election was not legitimate.
- ▶ Academic research does not back these claims.
 - ▶ The Brennan Center found “incident rates between 0.0003 percent and 0.0025 percent. It is **more likely that an American will be struck by lightning than that he will impersonate another voter at the polls.**”
- ▶ A review of the 2016 election found four cases of voter fraud in the entire country.





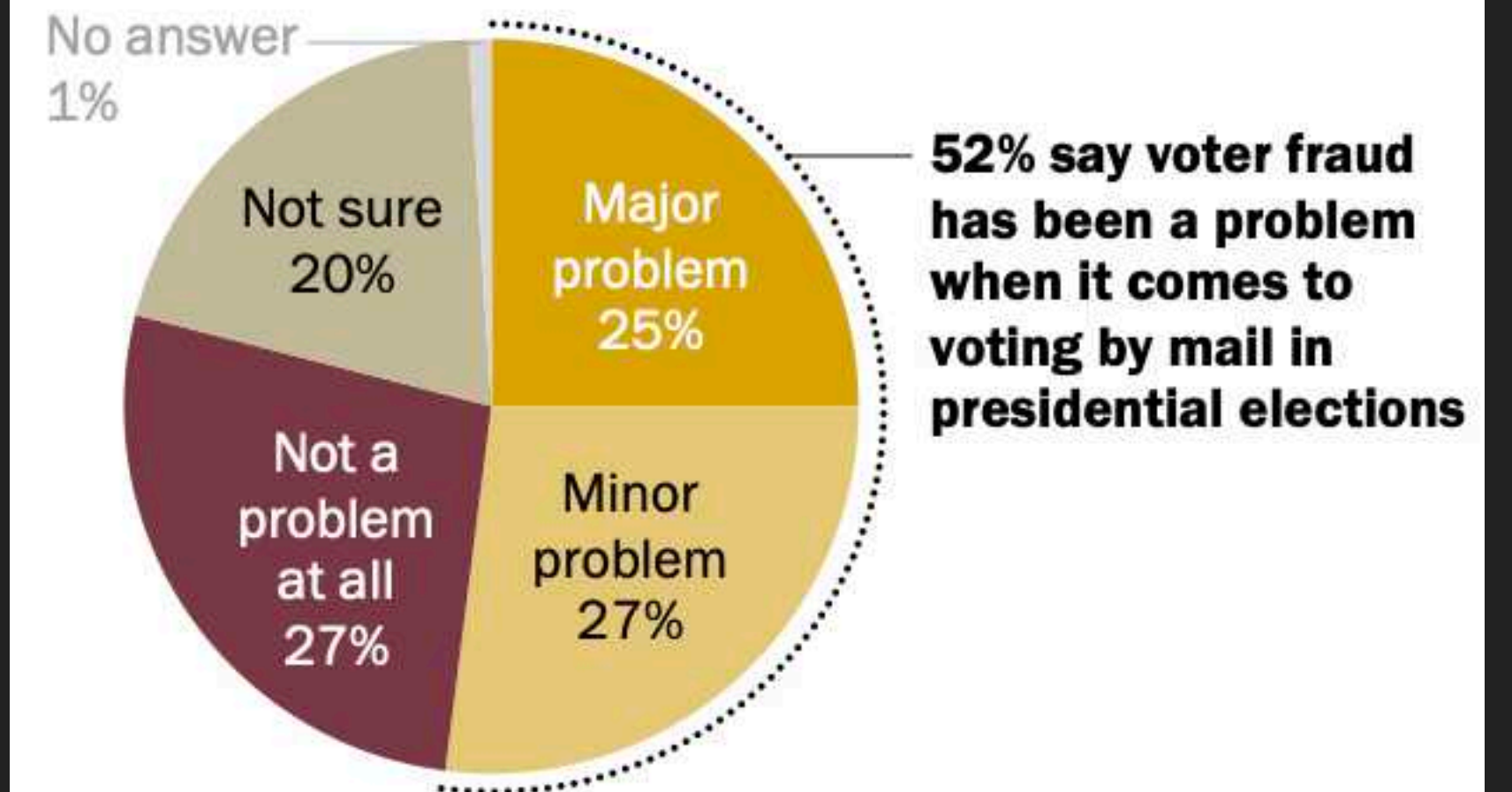
Efforts to Fix the Vote

2000 ELECTION

- ▶ In 1993, the National Voter Registration Act encouraged voter registration, most notably with **motor voter**.
- ▶ The contested 2000 election between George Bush and Al Gore spurred reforms.
- ▶ Most notable was the **HAVA (Help America Vote Act)**, which:
 - ▶ Required upgrades to state voting systems
 - ▶ Required verification of identity (not ID, though)
 - ▶ Funded upgrades
- ▶ Democrats are currently advancing the **John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act**, but it is stalled in the Senate.

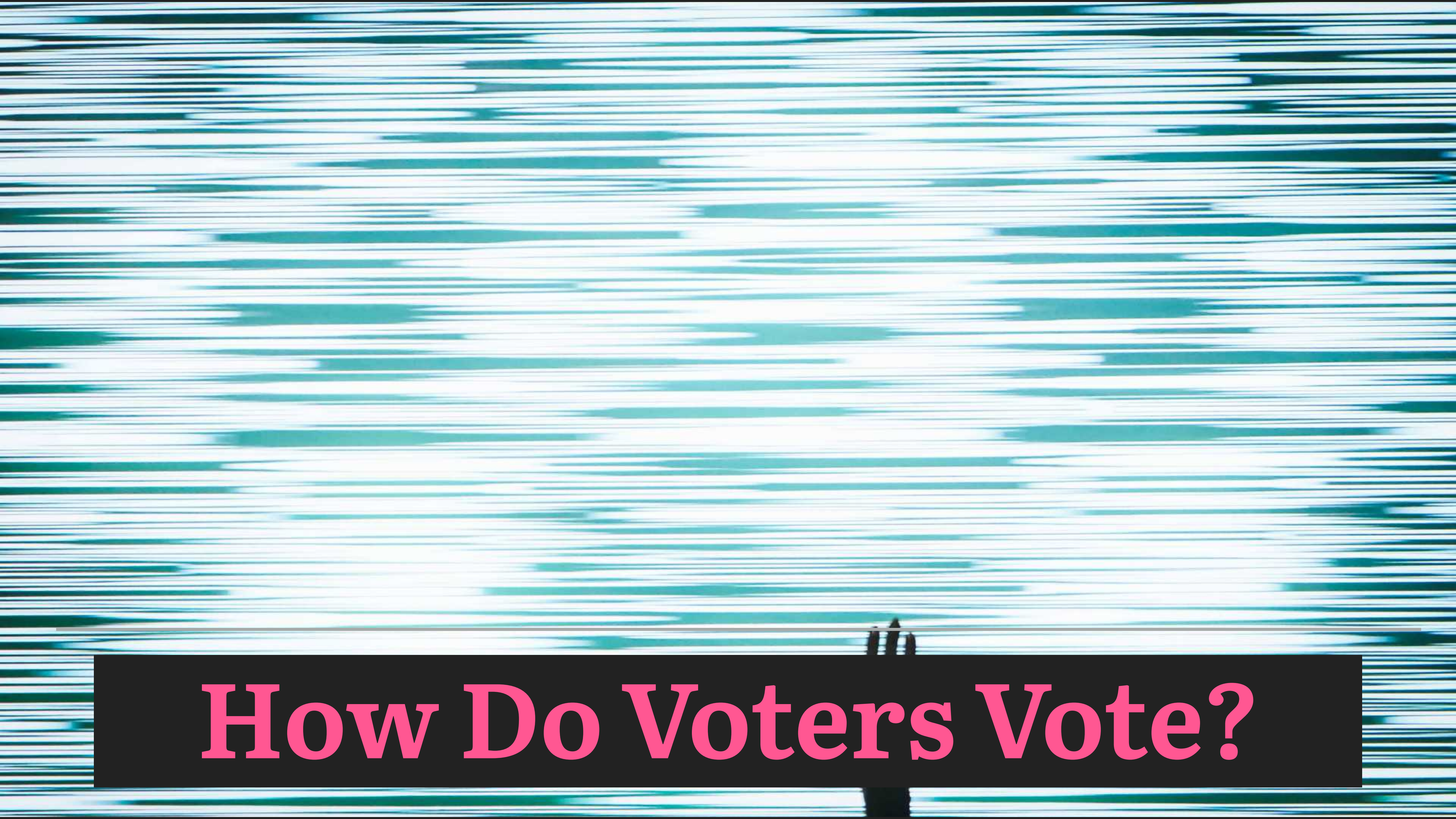
One-in-four Americans think voter fraud has been a major problem with voting by mail, contrary to evidence

% of U.S. adults who say voter fraud has been a _____ when it comes to voting by mail in U.S. presidential elections



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Aug. 31-Sept. 7, 2020.
"Political Divides, Conspiracy Theories and Divergent News Sources Heading Into 2020 Election"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER




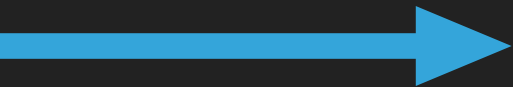
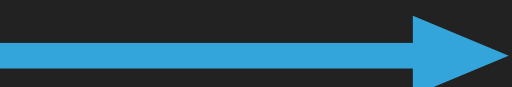
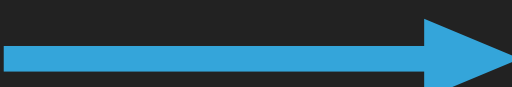
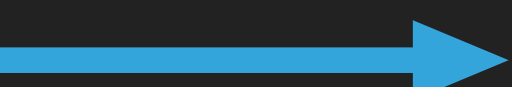
How Do Voters Vote?

VOTING MECHANICS

- ▶ Most voters in the US are registered in a **precinct** (up to 1000 voters). At a typical **polling place**, voters from many precincts will vote.
- ▶ Before voting, voters must **register**. Nearly 40 states permit online voter registration and 19 states plus the District of Columbia permit **same-day registration**. Montana just ended it. :(
- ▶ Elections in the US use the **Australian ballot**. Ballots must show all candidates and be voted in private.
- ▶ More Americans (especially in 2020) are using **absentee ballots**. These used to be reserved for special circumstances, but many states now encourage them.
- ▶ If there is a question about a voter, her vote is a **provisional ballot**, subject to later verification.



FIVE TYPES OF VOTERS

- ▶ **Rational choice voters:** voters who decide that ideology matters less than policy.  Some voters, though, vote against their economic interests in ways that puzzle political scientists.
- ▶ **Retrospective Voters** look back to a candidate's record.  This is why incumbents spend so much time on promoting district level successes.
- ▶ **Prospective voters** focus on future policy changes.  Voters who supported Obama for healthcare, Biden for student loans
- ▶ **Party-line voters** rarely deviate from the Republican or Democratic Party  These voters tend to be some of the least-informed AND the most engaged/informed.
- ▶ **Single-issues voters,** as you might guess, are driven primarily by one issue.  What are some of the strongest issues?