

Lesson Plan: Voter Turnout in the 2016 Presidential Election

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Featured resources

[The Lowdown: How Young People Voted](#)

[Washington Post: 2016 Exit Polls interactive](#)

[Vox: 9 Ways to Make Voting Better](#) (extension)



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Opening quick write prompt:

List at least 2 to 3 reasons (more, if you can) why an eligible voter (an 18+ citizen) wouldn't vote in an election? What do you think we could do as a country to increase voter turnout?

A quick write allows students to write down their thoughts before discussing the opening question in order to increase participation and make the discussion more accessible to English Language Learners.

Objective

- Students will analyze the results of the 2016 presidential election through the lens of demographic data and voter turnout.
- Students will reflect on ways that voter turnout can determine election outcomes and will consider how to increase voter turnout in future elections.

Essential Question and Lesson Context

How did various demographic groups vote in the 2016 election? How can voter turnout and voter participation across demographic groups influence the outcome of elections?

In this lesson, students will analyze voter demographics and turnout in the 2016 presidential election and compare that both to previous elections and to voter turnout internationally. This is an opportunity for students to practice data analysis skills as well as reflect on the relative influence of various voters blocs throughout the country.

The extension activity is designed around the question of increasing voter turnout in future elections.

Key vocabulary

Pre-teach key vocabulary before students do the activity, especially if you have English Language Learners. After going over the simple definition, consider providing a visual aid or having students draw one. More ideas for how to pre-teach vocabulary can be found [here](#).

Word	Simple definition
Coalition (n.)	A group of people, voter blocs or countries who join together for a common purpose
Compulsory (adj.)	Required by law
Demographic (adj.)	Relating to the makeup of human populations and how they change over time
Electorate (n.)	All the people in a place or country who can legally vote in an election
Perspective (n.)	An attitude or point of view

Activity

- Discuss the first half of the quick write prompt and make a list of factors that might keep qualified voters from casting ballots. Frame the factors neutrally when possible.
 - Example: “Long lines at the polls” rather than “People don’t feel like waiting in line.”
- As a class, individually or in small groups, students read [this Lowdown post](#) and explore the charts in the [Washington Post’s exit poll interactive](#) and the [Pew Research Center’s chart on international voter turnout](#).
- Use the following list to help guide student exploration:
 - Using The Lowdown post:
 - What percentage of young voters (18-29) voted for Trump /Clinton?
 - How did that change from the 2012 election?
 - Using the Washington Post exit poll:
 - Adjust the voter demographic information at the top of the interactive at least three times and record percentages for or against each candidate. (**Model:** Use your own demographic information as an example.
 - Choose three other groups and record percentages for each candidate.
 - What important issue do Trump and Clinton voters most agree on? Which issue do they most disagree on?

- Using Pew Research’s international voter turnout chart:
 - Which three countries have the highest voter turnout?
 - Which countries rank directly above and below the United States?

Discussion questions

- Reflect on the exit poll and other graphs you explored: What stood out? What surprised you? What did you expect? What did you learn about the election from digging deeper into the voter turnout data?
- Do you think increasing voter turnout would have changed the outcome of this election? Why or why not?
- In some countries, voting is compulsory. Do you think Americans should be legally required to vote?
- Given the reasons (brainstormed at the beginning of class) for why voters may not cast ballots, what are some other ways of increasing voter turnout (other than making voting compulsory)?

Circle chats, small-group discussions and [think-pair-share](#) provide a safer space for students to practice speaking and listening, and also boost participation during whole-class discussions.

Extension activities

Voter turnout action plan: Have students read the Vox article: [9 Ways to Make Voting Better](#) and research 1-2 suggestions. Students can present their research to the class using a variety of multimedia platforms, such as [piktochart](#) or [prezi](#), or create an action plan around ways to increase voter turnout in their communities. Further resources on voting rights and voter access can be found in [The Lowdown’s Voting Rights and Rules section](#).

Common Core standards

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1	Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7	Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W1	Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH7	Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g. charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text.