



**CLASSROOM LAW PROJECT
PRESENTS**

ELECTION 2022: ENVISIONING OREGON'S FUTURE

Section 3: Voting Behavior



Voting Behavior

Essential Questions:

- How does a person's political socialization affect their vote?
- How does a person's political efficacy affect their vote?
- What factors influence voter turnout of a democratic nation?
- How should democratic societies respond to poor voter turnout?

Objectives:

Students will:

- Identify the influences that form a person's political socialization.
- Distinguish between internal and external political efficacy.
- Examine their own political socialization and efficacy.
- Compare democratic countries voter turnout statistics.
- Evaluate proposed voting reforms.
- Conduct a personal interview with a community member on voting behaviors.

Vocabulary:

politics

political socialization

internal political efficacy

external political efficacy

voter turnout



Voting Behavior

Overview:

Who votes? Why do they bother? What affects their beliefs and therefore their behaviors regarding political participation? For the disengaged, why are they in the background? This unit helps students examine both their own political socialization and political efficacy, national trends, and comparing voter turnout globally.

Preparation:

As the teacher, you will know better what academic vocabulary you may need to pre teach. One word you'll definitely need to start with is **politics**. Several definitions:

- ★ Politics is the set of activities that are associated with making decisions in groups, or other forms of power relations among individuals, such as the distribution of resources or status.
- ★ Politics includes the activities associated with the governance of a country or other area, especially the debate or conflict among individuals or parties having or hoping to achieve power.
- ★ Politics is basically about who gets what, when and how.

Opener: As a warm up, have students silently write a list of people whose opinions they trust. They can be personal acquaintances or public figures, or anyone in between. Next, have students write what makes those people trustworthy. Then have them complete the grid on the handout **What Influences my Political Opinions?** to rank how much influence types of people have.

Direct Instruction: Using a projector, show the overview film clip on Political Socialization: <https://youtu.be/yS0eJJGuQaw> alternatively, you could have them do a reading on it: <https://www.thoughtco.com/political-socialization-5104843> Check for understanding. Have students then answer the question below the grid on What **Influences My Political Opinions?** handout. Discuss as a class the comparisons between students' answers and the video.

Transition from who influences people to how likely they are to get involved in shaping their communities. Have students read the **Political Efficacy** sheet then watch the short video of the definition. Then direct students do the survey questions to assess their own political efficacy. Assist them in determining what their answers for each question indicate.

Inquiry: Have students read the linked articles and explore the data on who votes and answer the analytical questions on Parts 1 and 2 of **Who Votes?**. Have students debate compulsory voting after they complete Part 3 of **Who Votes?**.

Assessment: Move on to Part 4 of **Who Votes?** to the proposed reforms to increase voter turnout by first reading the Fair Votes website, then give a personal response on paper. Discuss as a class. Move from discussion to decision making. See if you can get them to come to consensus on a reform that the entire class agrees with.

Extension: Have students interview a person in their community about their voting behavior using the **Interview Form**.

Activity 3.1

What Influences My Political Opinions?

Rate the following values and areas of your life that most influence your political opinions and ideas by checking the box that most applies (you can fill in some of your own at the bottom).

Issue/Value	5 Really Important	4 Sort of Important	3 Neutral	2 Very little Importance	1 Not important at all
My family's opinions					
My age					
My education level					
My job/job plans					
My religious beliefs					
My race/ethnicity					
My gender identity					
My family's income level					
What my favorite celebrities think					
Who the current president is					
My friends' opinions					
Where I live					
Other (write in)					
Other (write in)					

Now, watch this overview of Political Socialization: <https://youtu.be/yS0eJJGuQaw>

Compare: how similar are your influences to what the video presents?

Activity 3.2

Political Efficacy

Maybe you've heard someone say that 'the system is rigged,' that their 'vote won't affect anything,' or that 'politics are too complicated to follow.' The way you feel about your role in the political process indicates your level of political efficacy.

Political efficacy is the feeling that individual political action does or can have an impact on the political process. It has two parts:

- **internal efficacy:** the comfort a person has in their own skills and knowledge about the political system in order to engage in it
- **external efficacy:** the belief that the government will respond to an individual's input and reflect their needs and concerns

For some explanation, watch this overview: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6dN1UKY7FDw>

Survey: Answer with: **strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree**

Internal Efficacy

1. I feel that I could do as good of a job in public office as most other people.
2. I think I am as well-informed about politics and government as most people.
3. I don't often feel sure of myself when talking with other people about politics and government.
4. I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country.
5. I consider myself well-qualified to participate in politics.
6. Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on.

External Efficacy

1. There are many legal ways for citizens to successfully influence what the government does.
2. If public officials are not interested in hearing what the people think, there is really no way to make them listen.
3. Under our form of government, the people have the final say about how the country is run, no matter who is in office.
4. People like me don't have any say about what the government does.

Given which statements you most agreed with, do you have high or low efficacy?

- High internal and high external
- High internal low external
- Low internal and low external
- Low internal and high external

Looking to the future, what could change your internal or external political efficacy?

Activity 3.3

Who Votes?

Part 1: *Examine the graphics on the United States Election Project's overview of the last presidential election:*
<http://www.electproject.org/home/voter-turnout/demographics>

According to the graphs, who is most likely to vote in the US?

- In terms of race/ethnicity?
- In terms of age?
- In terms of education level?

What do you think are the reasons for these differences?

Look at the way the graphs were made. How could you change the x or y axis to affect the impression a person gets from reading the very same data?

Part 2: *Now take a look at how 2020 differed from the past. According to the Census Bureau, here's how the election went:*
<https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2021/2020-presidential-election-voting-and-registration-tables-now-available.html>

In what ways did voter turnout in the 2020 election differ from prior elections?

What do you think were the factors that contributed to these results?

Part 3: *There is a wide range of democratic systems around the world. Take a look at the voter turnouts of some of these countries, then do some analysis. Start with the Council on Foreign Relations Brief:*

<https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/how-does-us-voter-turnout-compare-rest-world>

How does the U.S. voter turnout compare to the rest of the world?

According to the article, what factors affect voter turnout?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of low voter turnout in a democratic nation?

Part 4: *According to their website, “FairVote is a nonpartisan organization seeking better elections for all. We research and advance voting reforms that make democracy more functional and representative for every American.” This organization proposes several ways to increase voter turnout. Take a look:*

https://www.fairvote.org/voter_turnout#how_can_we_increase_voter_turnout

Which of these reforms do you think would be effective, if any?

Is there something else you think needs to change to get more Americans to vote?

Activity 3.4

Interview Form

Interviewer Name:

Date of Interview:

Interviewee Name (optional):

Interview method: _____ in person _____ phone/text _____ email

1. What is your role in the community (student, parent, business person, volunteer, teacher, etc.)

2. Age?

3. Education level?

4. Do you plan to vote in the 2022 November Election? (circle one): YES / NO

5. What are your thoughts on Oregon's vote by mail system?

6. Why do you or don't you participate in elections?

7. Who/what influences your political opinions?

8. What do you think the biggest issue will be for voters in the 2022 election (either in Oregon or the whole country)?

