

# ELECTIONS AND VOTING BEHAVIOR

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# Three Types of Elections

- **Primary Elections-** voters select party nominees
- **General Elections-** the contest between the candidates from different parties
- **Initiatives and Referendums-** voters engage in making or ratifying legislation at the state level only



# Specific policy elections

- Many U.S. states vote on their policies
  - **Referendum**- ratifying a policy proposed by the state legislature
  - **Initiative petition**- citizens proposing legislation (usually by gaining signatures on a proposed law equal to 1/10 of number of voters in previous election)
  - **Recall**-removing a state or local official before the end of his or her term

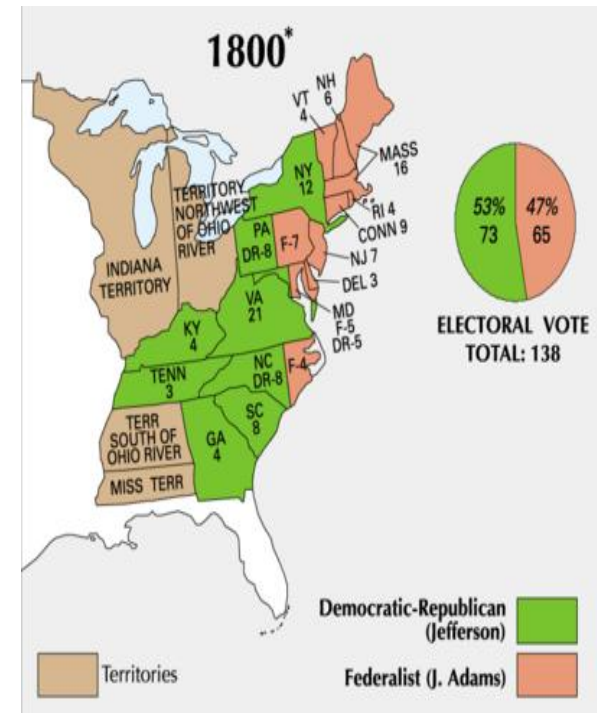


# 1800: The First Electoral Transition of Power

No primaries, no nominating conventions, no candidate speeches, and no entourage of reporters

- State and local organizations promoted their causes
  - Presidents were excluded from campaigns- seen as undignified for office
  - Newspapers didn't care about dignity or honesty
  - Focus was on state legislatures, which chose electors
  - Each elector cast two votes, and Jefferson tied with Aaron Burr
  - House decided election
  - Led to amendment calling for running mates (12th)

This was the first peaceful transfer of power between parties.



# 2000: Election

- Al Gore wins the popular vote, but Bush wins in the Electoral College
- Presidency decided by Florida
  - Florida law mandated recount because a margin of less than 1000
  - Florida Supreme court ruled in favor of the recount requested by Gore
  - (*Bush vs. Gore*) U.S. Supreme Court rules that if one country is recounted, they all need to be recounted, but there is not enough time remaining.
  - BUSH WINS



# Whether to Vote: A Citizen's First Choice

- Deciding Whether to Vote
  - Legitimacy- the people's belief that the government has the right to rule
  - Political Efficacy: The belief that one's political participation really matters.
  - Civic Duty: The belief that in order to support democratic government, a citizen should always vote.



# Registering to Vote

- In 1888, West Virginia had 159,000 votes but only 147,000 eligible voters
- States adopted voter registration to prevent fraud (North Dakota has no registration)
- Biggest indicator of voting is voter registration
- Motor Voter Act 1993 required states to offer voter registration when citizens obtain their driver's licenses.
- Recent proposals would require ID

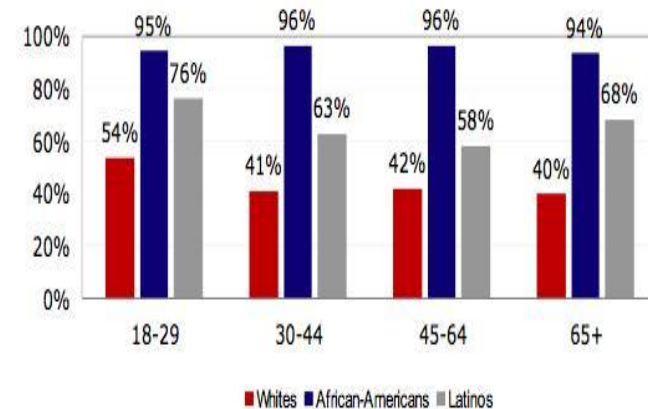


# Whether to Vote: A Citizen's First C



- Who Votes?
- These factors increase the likelihood of voting:
  - Age
  - Income
  - Education
  - Marriage
  - Caucasian
  - Female
  - Union Member
  - Government Worker
  - Northerner

Figure 6: Percent Voted for Obama by Race and Age



ce: 2008 National Election Pool, National Exit Poll





# Sample Question

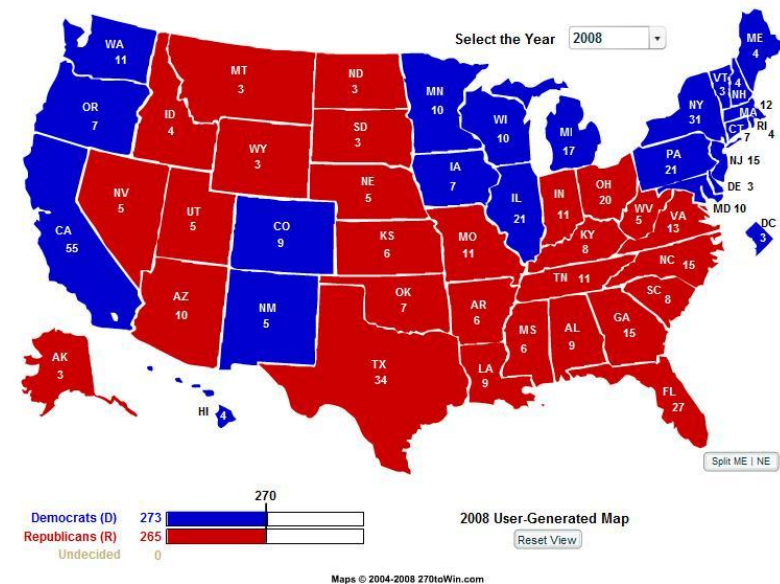
- Which of these would be most likely to vote?
- A. a middle-aged professor at a private university
- B. a young southerner without a high school diploma
- C. a northerner with a high school diploma who is a union member
- D. a 63-year-old government worker with a doctorate
- E. a well-educated senior citizen who used to work for a big corporation
- Answer: D

# The Mandate Theory of Elections

- The Mandate Theory of Elections is the idea that the winning candidate has a mandate (widespread support) from the people to carry out his or her policies.
- Policy voting is the idea that electoral choices are based on voters' policy preferences and where the candidate stands on policy issues.
- Retrospective voting is the idea that incumbents who have provided desired results are rewarded with a new term and those who fail are not reelected. “What have you done for me lately”?

# The Last Battle: The Electoral College

- Electoral College actually elects the President—founders wanted him chosen by the elite of the country
- States choose the electors
- Winner-Take-All system gives bigger emphasis to more populated states
- battleground states



# The Last Battle: The Electoral College

- How it works today:
  - Each state has as many votes as it does Representatives and Senators.
  - Winner of popular vote typically gets ALL the Electoral College votes.
  - Electors meet in December, votes are reported by the vice president in January.
  - If no candidate gets 270 votes (a majority), the House of Representatives votes for president, with each state getting ONE vote.

