



VOTING TRENDS IN AMERICA, 1964-2014

TEACHER VERSION

Subject Level:

Elementary School
History

Grade Level:

5-6

Approx. Time Required:

45-60 minutes

Learning Objectives:

- Students will be able to read and understand several years of data presented in bar graphs and line graphs.
- Students will be able to identify voting trends by race, year, and region.
- Students will be able to compare, analyze, and evaluate voter registration and voting information to write a response.

Activity Description

This activity is designed to be part of a unit on the U.S. Constitution, as it focuses on U.S. voting trends. Students will analyze bar and line graphs showing the percentages of people (by race, age, sex, region, and education) who voted in elections between 1964 and 2014. Students will use these data to respond to the question “Who votes in American elections?”

Suggested Grade Level:

5-6

Approximate Time Required:

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Topics:

- Bar graphs
- Line graphs
- U.S. Constitution
- Voting trends

Skills Taught:

- Drawing conclusions
- Reading and interpreting bar graphs and line graphs

Materials Required

- The student version of this activity, 11 pages; it contains images that should be printed in color.
- Teacher computer with Internet access and a projector to display web sites

Activity Items

The following items are part of this activity. Items, their sources, and any relevant instructions for viewing them online appear at the end of this teacher version.

- Item 1: Percent Voting by Race and Region of Total Voting-Age Population in Presidential Elections
- Item 2: Percent Registering and Voting by Race and Hispanic or Latino Origin, Presidential Elections
- Item 3: Voting and Registration Graphs, Congressional Elections, 2014

For more information to help you introduce your students to the U.S. Census Bureau, read [*"Census Bureau 101 for Students."*](#)

Standards Addressed

See charts below. For more information, read

[*"Overview of Education Standards and Guidelines Addressed in Statistics in Schools Activities."*](#)

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

| Standard | Strand | Cluster |
|--|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7 Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts. | RH 6-8 – History/Social Studies | Integration of Knowledge and Ideas |

UCLA National Standards for History: U.S. History Content Standards

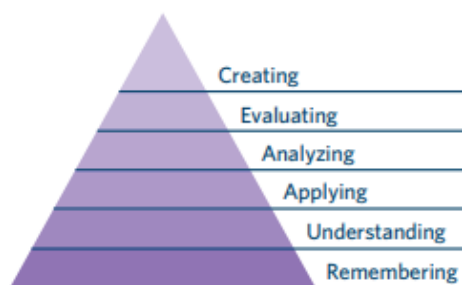
| Era | Standard |
|--|--|
| 3 – Revolution and the New Nation (1754–1820s) | Standard 3A: The student understands the issues involved in the creation and ratification of the U.S. Constitution and the new government it established. |

UCLA National Standards for History: Historical Thinking Standards

| Standard | Description |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Standard 2: Historical Comprehension | Utilize visual and mathematical data. Students will use data presented in bar and line graphs to determine who votes in American elections, considering race, year, and region. |

Bloom's Taxonomy

Students will **analyze** various graphs of census data to determine who votes in American elections and write a response supported by those data.



Teacher Notes

Before the Activity

Students must understand the following key terms:

- **Election** – a formal and organized process for choosing leaders and representatives for a group
- **Vote** – a formal way to choose between two or more people or things
- **Citizen** – a person who can vote in a specific state or nation
- **Suffrage** – the right to vote
- **Registered voter** – a person who signed up ahead of time to vote by proving citizenship
- **Presidential election** – an election, held every four years in the United States, to choose a president and vice president
- **Congressional election** – an election, held every two years in the United States, to choose certain members of Congress

Students should have the following skill:

- Ability to interpret bar and line graphs

Teachers should introduce students to the six amendments to the U.S. Constitution that relate to voting. They should explain that the original Constitution left the issue of voting rights to individual states, but that these amendments help inform state law:

- The 14th Amendment said that men older than 21 can vote.
- The 15th Amendment said that people of any race can vote.
- The 19th Amendment gave women the right to vote.
- The 23rd Amendment gave citizens in the District of Columbia the right to vote in presidential elections.
- The 24th Amendment got rid of poll taxes in elections for federal officials.
- The 26th Amendment lowered the voting age to 18.

Teachers should be aware that this activity is designed to be teacher-led. Teachers should display each activity item on the screen for students, walking students through the features of the graphs and explaining how to use them.

During the Activity

Teachers should guide students through the activity as part of a whole-group discussion.

Teachers should make sure students have a straight edge to help them read the data.

After the Activity

Teachers should ask students to reflect on what they learned.

Extension Ideas

- Teachers could organize a mock class election that reinforces the importance and process of voting.
- If this activity is completed during election time, teachers could assign students homework to find reports on real-time election results (e.g., online article, newspaper clipping, TV news story) for a specific geographic location, age group, race, sex, etc.

Student Activity

Click [here](#) to download a printable version for students.

Activity Items

The following items are part of this activity and appear at the end of this student version.

- Item 1: Percent Voting by Race and Region of Total Voting-Age Population in Presidential Elections
- Item 2: Percent Registering and Voting by Race and Hispanic or Latino Origin, Presidential Elections
- Item 3: Voting and Registration Graphs, Congressional Elections, 2014

Student Learning Objectives

- I will be able to read and understand several years of data presented in bar graphs and line graphs.
- I will be able to identify voting trends by race, year, and region.
- I will be able to compare, analyze, and evaluate voter registration and voting information to write a response.

Part 1 - Analyze the Data

Use **Item 1: Percent Voting by Race and Region of Total Voting-Age Population in Presidential Elections** to answer the following questions.

1. Look at the years on the line graph.
 - a. What is the first year and what is the last year?
The first year is 1964, and the last year is 2012.
 - b. How many years does it take to get from the first year to the next year, and so on? Why is the information in the graph available for only those years?
Four years, because the United States has presidential elections every four years.
 - c. How many election years does the graph show in total?
13
2. When you look at the line for black southern voters, what do you notice?
Student answers will vary but could include: Overall, between 1964 and 2012, the percentage of black southerners voting in presidential elections went up.

3. Between 1964 and 2012, which three groups' voting rates went down overall?

- **White voters not in the South**
- **Black voters not in the South**
- **White voters in the South**

4. Overall, which group's voting rate stayed mostly the same between 1964 and 2012?

White voters in the South

Teachers should point out to students that the percentage of black southern voters increased substantially and that the percentage of white nonsouthern voters decreased. Teachers should also mention that rates for black nonsouthern voters saw a sharp decline from 1964 to 1976, had periods of increases and decreases between 1976 and 1996, and increased steadily between 1996 and 2012.

Use **Item 2: Percent Registering and Voting by Race and Hispanic or Latino Origin, Presidential Elections** to answer the following questions.

5. What is the first year and what is the last year in the bar graph?

The first year is 1980, and the last year is 2012.

Teachers should point out to students that registration and voting data are available for white, black, and Hispanic voters for all these years, but that data for Asian voters are available only from 1992 to 2012.

6. What do the dark and light purple colors mean?

The light purple shows the percentage of registered voters who actually voted in presidential elections, and the dark purple shows the percentage of registered voters who did not.

7. Looking at the information for the four racial/ethnic groups side by side, what do you notice?

Student answers will vary but could include: Overall, white voters and black voters had higher voting rates, while the voting rates for Hispanic voters and Asian voters were lower.

8. Looking at the dark purple bars for 1992, rank the four racial/ethnic groups from highest to lowest according to the percentages of people who actually voted in the presidential election that year. You may need to use a straight edge to help you!

1. **White**
2. **Black**
3. **Asian**
4. **Hispanic**

9. Now, looking at the dark purple bars for 2012, rank the four racial/ethnic groups from highest to lowest according to the percentages of people who actually voted in the presidential election that year.

1. **Black**
2. **White**
3. **Hispanic**
4. **Asian**

10. Write a sentence that summarizes the voting trends of white voters and black voters during the presidential elections of 2004, 2008, and 2012.

From 2004 to 2012, the percentages of white people who voted went down and the percentages of black people who voted went up.

Use **Item 3: Voting and Registration Graphs, Congressional Elections, 2014** to answer the following questions.

11. Looking at the graph on voting and registration by age, how do the percentages change as you read the information going from younger to older voters?

The percentages of people who vote goes up from younger to older people.

12. Looking at the graph on voting and registration by sex, which percentage of voters is greater: male or female?

Female

13. Looking at the graph on voting and registration by education, how does education relate to voting and registration rates?

Voting and registration rates increase with higher levels of education.

Part 2 - Organize Your Ideas

Use the graphic organizer below to write notes (in bullet points) from what you learned, to help you answer the question "Who votes in American elections?"

| Six Voting Amendments Information | Presidential Election Voting History (from Items 1 and 2) | 2014 Congressional Election Voting Information (from Item 3) |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| Student notes will vary. | Student notes will vary. | Student notes will vary. |

Part 3 - Write Your Response

Use your points from part 2 to write a one-paragraph response to the question "Who votes in American elections?" Make sure you include a topic sentence and a concluding sentence.

Student responses will vary.