

MATHEMATICS REGARDING INDIVIDUAL TURNOUT

$$PB + D > C$$

P - probability that an individual's vote will affect the outcome (nears zero in most general elections)

B - personal or societal benefit of electing favored political party or candidate

D - originally democracy or civic duty, now elements of gratification of participation

- 1) complying with social obligation to vote
- 2) affirming an allegiance to the political system
- 3) expressive voting (affirming a partisan preference or candidate support)
- 4) affirming one's importance to the political system
- 5) entertainment value (interest in researching and making a choice)

C - convenience or the time, effort and financial cost in voting

REASONS FOR DECLINING VOTER PARTICIPATION IN UTAH

Two-thirds of Utah's decline in election participation can be attributed to eligibility and registration problems.

There is a decline in those eligible to vote:

1. Higher immigration population
2. Change in law regarding felons
3. Still the youngest state in the nation with the highest proportion underage

Registration is more difficult and not timely:

1. NVRA (aka "Motor Voter") has not offset declines created by changes in other Utah laws. Indeed, many without any interest may be registered while those who gain some political interest find it more difficult to register.
2. Imposition of ID requirements
3. Thirty day by mail registration deadline
4. Elimination of neighborhood registrars
5. Consolidation of precincts requiring few pollworkers as a percentage of the population
6. Candidate and Party registration drives have declined as fewer people volunteer and timelines for registration have changed outside the normal canvassing period

Other factors:

- Utahns are more mobile and less married which negatively affects turnout.
- Changing polling locations. One voter reported having five different polling locations in five years despite living in the same house the entire time.
- Voter fatigue can lower turnout if there are many elections in close succession. Utah had five high profile elections between October 2007 and November 2008.
- Decreased belief in the efficacy of voting:
 1. elections are not competitive;
 2. elected officials are incapable of taking actions to effect education, healthcare, economic development;
 3. the system is rigged (redistricting, ballot order, voter fraud, black box voting);
 4. nominations are rigged (caucus/convention);
 5. government is the problem; alienation following occasional scandals;
 6. campaigns that are seen as character attacks instead of substantive attacks;
 7. campaign tactics that move to mass communication and away from personal communication;and

- 8. lack of focus by news media on local politics and constant message that an individual vote does not matter.
- “Bowling Alone” phenomenon has decreased civic engagement, voluntary participation in political parties and the attendance of observers at town meetings is down. The decline in voting has also accompanied a general decline in civic participation, such as church attendance, membership in professional, fraternal, and student societies, youth groups, and parent-teacher associations. Partisanship is an important impetus to turnout, with the highly partisan more likely to vote. (This is a warning to changing the caucus/convention system which further decreases partisan activity.)
- Election timing, education, income and government employment levels have not had significant impact.

FACTORS SUPPORTING INCREASED PARTICIPATION IN UTAH

No-excuse absentee voting, vote-by-mail, an increased number of polling locations, accessible voting locations (parking / handicapped), early vote, decreased wait times, and requiring companies to give workers some time off on voting days have shown increases in turnout.

Campaigns returning to more highly personalized communications. (Gerber and Green)

PRESCRIPTIONS FOR INCREASING PARTICIPATION

1. Same-day voter registration
2. Legislation that allows better timing for voter registration drives
3. Increased vote-by-mail
4. Perceived fairness of electoral system:
 - a. State Election Commission (not overseen by one party)
 - b. Redistricting Commission
 - c. Ballot order random or based on candidate filing date/time
5. Increased levels of partisanship are highly correlated to increased participation.
 - a. Political parties need to be strengthened in a manner that encourages participation.
 - b. The entertainment value of local politics needs to be heightened leading to an increased culture of political giving and participation.
 - c. Increased direct subsidies (like check-off) need to be encouraged.
 - d. Longer candidate filing period.