

Background Information

The United States is designed as a representative democracy. Among the essential elements of a representative democracy are the ideas of:

- **popular sovereignty** where the people are the ultimate source of authority.
- government derives its right to govern from the **consent of the people**.
- **majority rules** with protection of **minority's rights**.
- government's **powers are limited by law**.
- the country has a **constitution** obeyed by those in power.

In Lincoln's Gettysburg Address Abraham Lincoln called our democracy a "government of the people, by the people and for the people." This means that we are not here to serve our government, but our government is here to serve us. This means we have the right to decide who will represent us. As a people, we have one of the greatest rights in the world today, the right to vote. However, in 2016, only about 56% of the registered voters voted in the Presidential election. The United States ranked 26th among 35 industrialized nations in terms of voter participation. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/05/21/u-s-voter-turnout-trails-most-developed-countries/>

Some Important Dates in Voting History

1600-early 1700s Voting was often restricted to property owners, white males, and might include a religious qualification.

1787 The U.S. Constitution gave white, male, property owners, age 21 and over; the right to vote.

1807 - 1843 Series of acts that changed voting requirements so that all white men 21 and older could vote.

1870 After the Civil War, the 15th Amendment guaranteed the right to vote to all men that were 21 or older regardless of race or ethnic background. This amendment granted voting rights to Native Americans who were considered "citizens" which meant that not all male Native Americans could vote.

1920 The 19th Amendment gave women, age 21 and older, the right to vote.

1964 The 24th Amendment made it illegal for states to charge poll taxes to voters.

1965 The Voting Rights Act authorized the federal government to take over registration of voters in areas where state officials had regularly prevented blacks and other minorities (including Native Americans) from registering to vote or cast their ballots through usage of literacy tests, grandfather clauses, and intimidation tactics. This Act enforced provisions previously guaranteed in the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments almost a century earlier.

1971 The 26th Amendment lowered the voting age across the nation to 18.

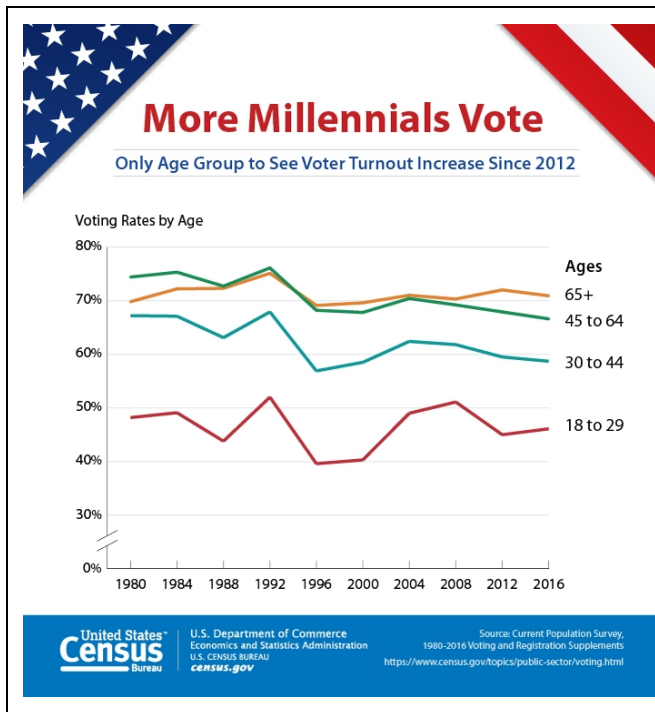
1982 The Voting Rights Act Amendments extended right to vote guarantees given in the 1965 legislation. Further provisions for Americans with disabilities, voters not able to read and write, and those not fluent in English were added to insure their freedoms.

All of these milestones represent significant changes in people's right to vote and decide who governs which ultimately decides how we spend our money and what services the government provides.

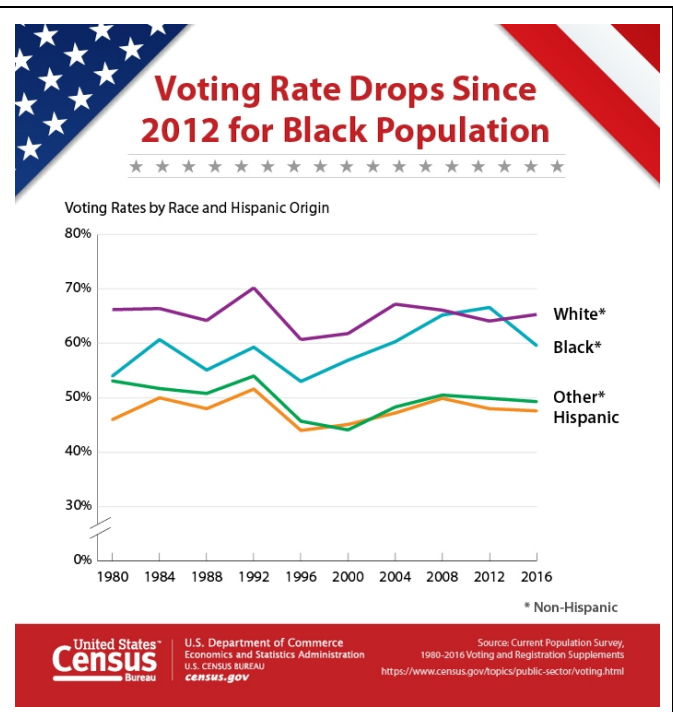
Therefore, citizens should understand and appreciate their rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Citizenship is the common thread that connects all Americans. We are a nation bound not by race or religion but by the shared values of freedom, liberty, and equality. Among these responsibilities is the idea that we should participate in the democratic process. Citizens need to know that they should support and defend the Constitution of the United States, the basic law of the land. Additionally they should stay informed of the issues affecting their nation and be able to respect the rights, beliefs, and opinions of others, and participate in their local community.

And possibly the most important of these rights is the right to vote. By voting, the people have a voice in the government or their school. The people decide who will represent them in the government just as students decide who will represent them in student government. Every person's vote counts.

Voter Turn Out by Age Groups



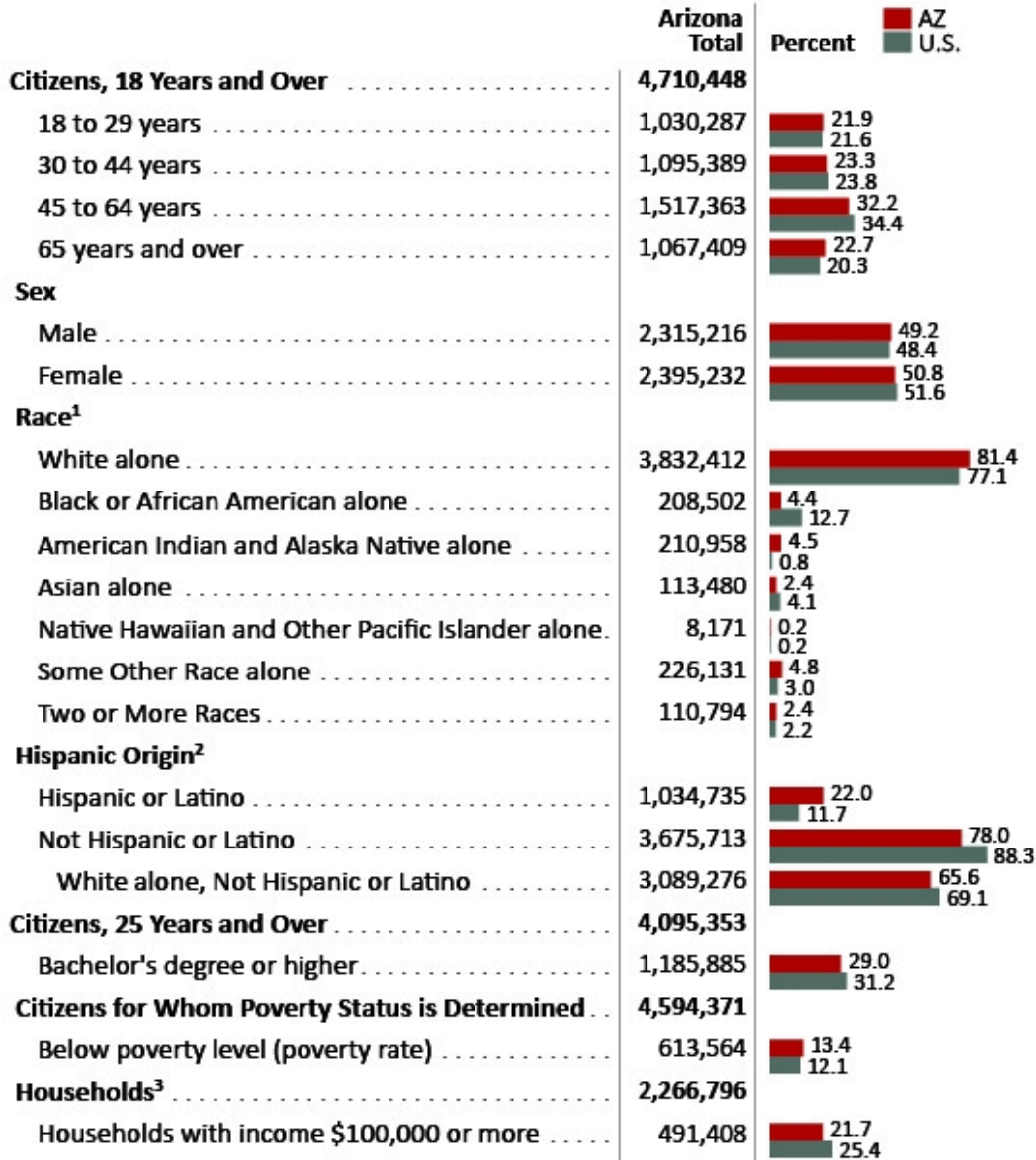
Voter Turn Out by Race and Origin





Citizen Voting-Age Population

Selected Characteristics: Arizona



¹ Except where noted, "race" refers to people reporting only one race.
² Hispanic refers to the ethnicity category and may be of any race.
³ Households with citizen householders.



U.S. Department of Commerce
 Economics and Statistics Administration
 U.S. CENSUS BUREAU
census.gov

Source: 2015 American Community Survey
www.census.gov/acs

For congressional district estimates and more information visit:
<http://census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/voting-and-registration/electorate-profiles-2016.html>



Reading Voting Information Charts and Graphs

Name _____

Answer the following questions using the graphs and charts provided.

More Millennials Vote

Which age group in 2012 and 2016 had the most voters? _____ Why do you
think this is? _____

Which age group had the least voters 1980-2016? _____ Why do you
think this is? _____

What scale is this graph's information? national state local

Voting Rate Drops Since 2012 for Black Population

What percentage rate did White voters have on the graph for 2016? _____

What percentage rate did Black voters have on the graph for 2016? _____

What percentage rate did Other voters have on the graph for 2016? _____

What percentage rate did Hispanic voters have on the graph for 2016? _____

What scale is this graph's information? national state local

Citizen Voting-Age Population—Arizona

What is the largest group of Arizona citizens, 18 years and older? _____ Is this
the largest group of citizens for the U.S. as well? _____

What percentage of Arizonans are American Indian or Alaska Native alone? _____

What percentage of Americans are American Indian or Alaska Native alone? _____

What percentage of Arizonans are Black or African-American alone? _____

What percentage of Americans are Black or African-American alone? _____

What percentage of Arizonans are Hispanic or Latino? _____

What percentage of Americans are Hispanic or Latino? _____

What surprised you about this information? _____

What 2 scales is this graph's information? national state local

Reading Voting Information Charts and Graphs **Answer Key**

More Millennials Vote

Which age group in 2012 and 2016 had the most voters? 65+ Why do you think this is?
More time to learn the issues, more time to vote, older and care more, any other reasonable answer

Which age group had the least voters 1980-2016? 18-29 Why do you think this is?
Too busy going to school or work, don't care, don't listen to news or read newspapers, any other reasonable answer

What scale is this graph's information? **national** state local

Voting Rate Drops Since 2012 for Black Population (Approx percentages)

What percentage rate did White voters have on the graph for 2016? 65-70%

What percentage rate did Black voters have on the graph for 2016? 60%

What percentage rate did Other voters have on the graph for 2016? 50%

What percentage rate did Hispanic voters have on the graph for 2016? 45-50%

What scale is this graph's information? **national** state local

Citizen Voting-Age Population—Arizona

What is the largest group of Arizona citizens, 18 years and older? 45-64 years Is this the largest group of citizens for the U.S. as well? yes

What percentage of Arizonans are American Indian or Alaska Native alone? 4.5

What percentage of Americans are American Indian or Alaska Native alone? .8

What percentage of Arizonans are Black or African American alone? 4.4

What percentage of Americans are Black or African American alone? 12.7

What percentage of Arizonans are Hispanic or Latino? 22

What percentage of Americans are Hispanic or Latino? 11.7

What surprised you about this information? any reasonable answer

What 2 scales is this graph's information? **national** state local

Writing Assignments

Name _____

Read the following 2 writing assignments. Answer both of these in essay form. They will be graded using the 6 Traits Writing Rubric for Ideas and Organization.



1. Why Vote?

Elections for your school's Student Council are just around the corner. You must decide if you are going to participate in voting or let the decisions be made by other people. What are 2 advantages and 2 disadvantages of voting in the Student Council election? What is your decision. Will you vote in the upcoming election? What scale is a school election? (national, state, local)

2. Which Candidate Would You Vote For?

The Student Council has \$5000 to spend this year. Here are the candidates for Student Council President and their platforms for spending the money. Who will you support and 2 reasons why this candidate is your choice?

Bill

Bill is in the honors classes. He is a solid "A" student who does not participate in extracurricular activities. He has a lot of friends across the school and has been in Student Council. Bill wants to spend most of the money on technology materials (computers, software, etc.).

Yvette

Yvette is an average student grade-wise but is very active in school. She serves on the Student Council and participates in school sports. Yvette wants to spend most of the money on sports equipment and events and on school dances so everyone has safe social experiences.

Juan

Juan is an "A-B" student with lots of friends and two brothers at the school. He participates in school sports. For students who have not been in trouble: Juan wants to take the 7th graders to the water park at the end of the year and have a DJ Day for the 8th graders with free ice cream. Juan also has lots of ideas for dress-up days at school.

Tanya

Tanya is an average student. Instead of having one way to spend the money on the whole school, she wants each classroom to get an equal amount of the money to spend as they please. Tanya likes extracurricular activities like sports and was the lead in the school play. She is very popular.