

# Module 8: Politics

## Topic 4 Content: Voter Participation

### Introduction



**Demi Tracy:** Hello, America. Welcome to the show. Today's episode features an edition of *Concepts of Democracy* that focuses on voter participation.

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***Concepts of Democracy***



**Connie Demcray:** Welcome to *Concepts of Democracy*. I'm Connie Demcray, and today I would like to discuss voter participation. Countless Americans fought their entire lives to earn the right to vote. Because of their struggles, suffrage is available to more people than ever before, but many citizens choose not to exercise their right to vote. Let's examine some of the reasons why.

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**Negative Influences on Voter Turnout**



**Connie Demcra**y: There are several reasons why an American citizen may decide not to participate in the voting process. The most obvious answer is voter apathy. This explanation may seem simplistic, but that doesn't make it any less accurate. Voters' attitudes toward government are a major influence on whether or not they vote. If a voter feels that his or her efforts don't matter, why should they put forth the effort to participate?

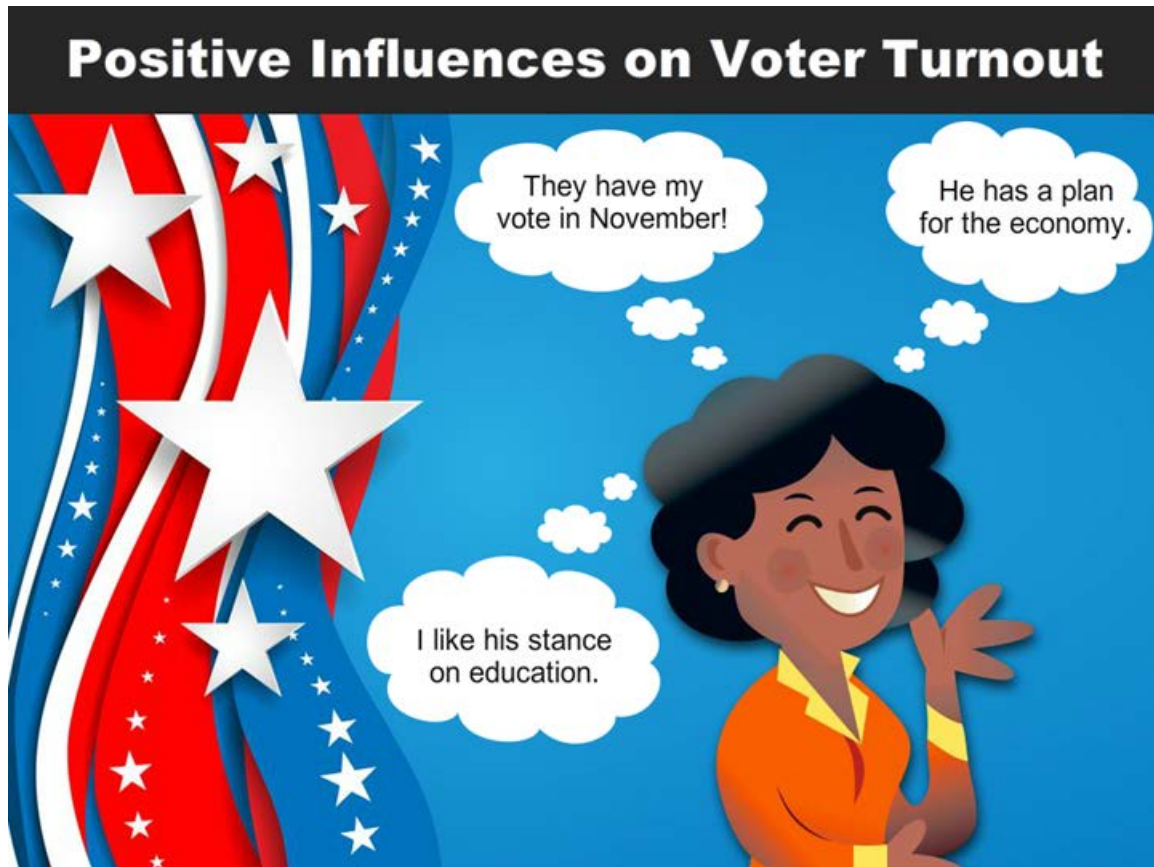
Voter registration could also be an issue. Some citizens may fail to meet voting requirements. If the registration process is lengthy, vague, or complicated, fewer people will register to vote. Similarly, if the actual process of voting is difficult, fewer people will participate. Some Americans are unable to travel to voting centers, while others are simply unable to leave work to cast their ballots.

Finally, the election itself could contribute to a decline in voter participation. Poor candidates fail to mobilize voters, as do noncompetitive races. If a candidate is not relatable or is running unopposed, can the voter be blamed for not participating?

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#### Positive Influences on Voter Turnout



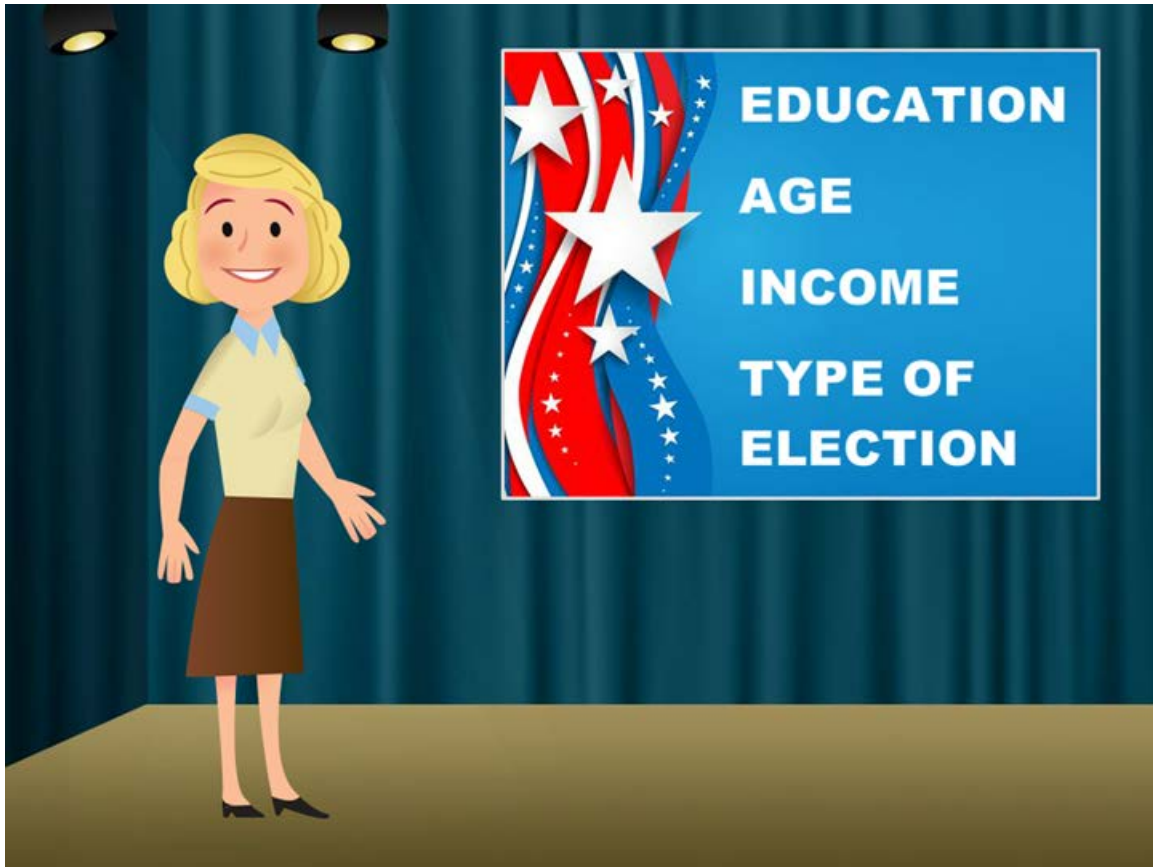
**Connie Demcra**y: A boring candidate or a noncompetitive race can cause voters to stay home, while a strong candidate in a competitive race will have the opposite effect. A charismatic, intelligent, and capable leader has the ability to get the attention of the American public and mobilize voters. If two strong candidates oppose each other in an election, the increased competition can lead to greater voter participation as well.

Two other factors that can influence voter participation are campaign issues and loyalty to political parties. Some voters are passionate about a particular issue. Issues like education, war, reproductive rights, health care, and the economy are known to mobilize voters. If a race involves any of these issues, voters are more likely to participate. The same idea applies to political parties. Some Americans are devoted Republicans or loyal Democrats. This party loyalty compels Democrats and Republicans to support their affiliations at the polls.

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#### Other Influences



**Connie Demcra**y: A voter's level of education, age, and income help predict whether he or she will participate in an election. People with a higher level of education and a higher income are more likely to vote. The younger a citizen is, the less likely it is that he or she will vote. The type of election can influence voter turnout as well. Presidential elections see the largest percentage of voter participation, more than any other national, state, or local government race. The level of voter participation in presidential elections was also in decline in recent years, until 2008. This election saw two strong candidates with major party support in a competitive race that dealt with important issues. That's all for me today. Thanks for watching!

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Ending of Episode



**Glover Mint:** Thank you, Connie. Thanks for tuning in for this episode of WUSG News. We'll see you soon.