

## The Myth of the Vanishing Voter

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*The apparent decline in voter participation in national elections since 1972 is an illusion created by using the Bureau of the Census estimate of the voting-age population as the denominator of the turnout rate. We construct a more accurate estimate of those eligible to vote, from 1948–2000, using government statistical series to adjust for ineligible but included groups, such as noncitizens and felons, and eligible but excluded groups, such as overseas citizens. We show that the ineligible population, not the nonvoting, has been increasing since 1972. During the 1960s the turnout rate trended downward both nationally and outside the South. Although the average turnout rates for presidential and congressional elections are lower since 1972 than during 1948–70, the only pattern since 1972 is an increased turnout rate in southern congressional elections. While the voting age was lowered to 18 in 1971, the lower turnout rate of young voters accounts for less than one-fourth of reduced voter participation.*

The decline in voter participation is “the most important, most familiar, most analyzed, and most conjectured trend in recent American political history” (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993, 57). Researchers, theorists, pundits, politicians, and reformers are searching for causes or cures. It is claimed that less expensive campaigns, loftier political rhetoric, weightier journalism, public financing, easier registration, online voting, or more distinctive party platforms will bring voters back to the polls.

Beginning with the work of Walter Dean Burnham (1965, 1982, 1985, 1987), an extensive literature seeks to explain the decline in turnout rates (e.g., Abramson and Aldrich 1982; Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1995; Cassel and Luskin 1988; Cavanagh 1981; Franklin and de Mino 1998; Miller and Shanks 1996; Putnam 1995, 2000; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Shaffer 1981; Teixeira 1992). The paradox is that while certain factors favor higher turnout, notably increased education levels, the removal of structural impediments such as poll taxes and Jim Crow laws, and less restrictive voter registration, turnout rates still dropped (Brody 1978). Echoing those who attempt to uncover biases in turnout (Leighly and Nagler 1992; Shields and Goidel 1997; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980), Rosenstone and Hansen (1993, 248) warn “the more recent decline of citizen involvement in government has yielded a politically engaged class that is not only growing smaller and smaller but is also less and less representative of the American polity.”

Is electoral participation declining? Contrary to conventional wisdom, voters are not “disappearing” (Teixeira 1992). We show that although the turnout rate

outside the South is lower than in the 1950s and early 1960s, there has been no downward trend during the last 30 years. The apparent decline since 1972 is an artifact of using the voting-age population (VAP) to calculate the turnout rate. As Bureau of the Census documentation clearly states, the VAP includes people who are ineligible to vote, such as noncitizens, felons, and the mentally incompetent, and fails to include those living overseas but otherwise eligible (Day 1998).

It is widely acknowledged that the VAP is substantively different from the eligible population (Andrews 1966; Bruce 1997; Burnham 1985; Gans 1997; Plissner and Mitofsky 1981; Wolfinger 1993; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980), but no one has collected the data necessary to estimate the turnout rate over time among eligible voters. We calculate an accurate estimate of the voting-eligible population (VEP) from the VAP and show that, since 1972, the ineligible population is growing faster than the eligible population, which gives rise to the perception that voter participation is decreasing.

### CONSTRUCTING THE TURNOUT RATE

The turnout rate equals the total number of votes cast divided by the eligible electorate. As straightforward as this calculation may seem, a variety of measures for the numerator and denominator are used around the world (Lijphart 1997). In the United States, researchers primarily rely upon Census statistics of the VAP for the denominator. This is the most readily available number, but it does not constitute the eligible electorate by any but the most extreme definitions. More important, the errors that result are neither random nor constant over time.

We construct the turnout rate for post–World War II elections, 1948 to 2000, by carefully distinguishing the VEP from the VAP. We provide the numbers used in our adjustments so that anyone can redefine the VEP and recalculate the turnout rate to test whether a change in definitions or estimation procedures alters our conclusions.

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### Numerator: Total Votes Cast

Even a figure as apparently simple as the number of votes cast in an election must be constructed out of disparate data sources. Because the Constitution grants states the authority to regulate elections, there is no requirement of uniform reporting of comparable election data, and there is no national election commission to collect these data. We use information provided by the Congressional Research Service, which in turn contracts Election Data Services to collect voting statistics from each state (see note 8 below).

The ideal numerator for the turnout rate is the total number of voters who cast any ballot for any office, but this measure is not available for all states. Only 17 states reported total turnout in 1948, and 13 still do not report this measure. Using this number where available would bias historical as well as interstate comparisons. Historical studies avoid this problem by using a number reported by all states for all years, the vote for highest office. In presidential election years, this is simply the total number of persons who voted for the presidential candidates. In other election years, this is the largest number of people who cast a vote in a statewide race, usually either for governor or U.S. senator. If there is no statewide race, the vote cast in all U.S. House elections in a state is combined (Crocker 1997, 6).

Using total turnout instead of the vote for highest office would, of course, increase the level of turnout. Our data and the historical analysis of Burnham (1985) suggest that total turnout is on average 2.3% greater than the vote for highest office in presidential elections and 2.6% greater for congressional elections. Nevertheless, if we compare elections or states using the vote for highest office, we are not distorting any comparisons between election years. Until total turnout is routinely reported by all states, researchers concerned with exact turnout figures, either for comparisons with other countries or because of the normative importance attached to a turnout rate of more than 50%, should multiply (not add) the reported turnout rate by 1.023 or 1.026.

### Denominator: Voting-Age Population versus Voting-Eligible Population

The turnout rate is highly sensitive to the specification of the total eligible population; seemingly insignificant changes in the denominator can reverse conclusions about the turnout rate. Nearly all reports are based on the VAP from the Bureau of the Census. Both the Congressional Research Service (Crocker 1996, 1997, 1999) and the widely cited Center for the Study of the American Electorate (Gans 1997) rely on the P-25 series of the bureau's Current Population Reports, entitled "Projections of the Voting-Age Population for States," for November of each election year. Although the VAP is commonly treated as the "true" error-free denominator, it is an estimate, albeit the best available, of the number of persons of voting age who reside in the 50 states. For non-Census years, the bureau estimates the VAP by adjusting the last full Census to

account for deaths, the number of persons who reach voting age, immigration, and the number of people entering and leaving overseas military service. As defined by the bureau in 1998, "the voting-age population includes all U.S. residents 18 years and over. This consists of both people who are eligible to vote and those not eligible to vote, such as non-citizens, convicted felons, and prison inmates. These projections do not cover Americans living overseas who may vote" (Day 1998, 1).

**Eligibility.** Who is an eligible voter? Who should be included in the denominator? Is an eligible voter a registered citizen, a citizen who could register, any citizen at all, or any person in the country who could be made eligible to vote? We do not believe that there is a good argument for including only the registered, but all other possibilities have proponents.

Although registration figures are widely used for the denominator in Europe, few in the United States defend studies of turnout based on registered voters. Turnout based on registration is used in Europe because registration is synonymous with eligibility: It is generally done by the government or required by law (Powell 1986, 21). There is widespread agreement that such a restricted definition of eligibility gives a misleading picture of the turnout rate. If registered voters were to be used as the denominator in the United States, comparisons between elections and among states would be confusing, because registration laws vary substantially. Besides, it is virtually impossible to gather accurate registration figures due to outdated registration rolls.

The inclusion of everyone of voting age in the denominator has proponents on both normative and practical grounds. Teixeira (1992, 6) argues for the VAP because each person in the country of voting age could be allowed to vote, should the already eligible so decide: "At the most basic level, the voting-age population is the eligible electorate. Although it is little known, citizenship is not a constitutional requirement for voting in the United States. Both the time it takes to become a citizen (national) and the actual restrictions of suffrage to citizens (states) are matters of legislation." Teixeira (1992, 6) also makes a pragmatic argument: Adjusting the VAP to remove ineligible voters is a "difficult and imprecise process." Gans (1997, 46) defends the VAP on scholarly grounds, because "consistency and comparability are the only way that students and scholars of voting research can do comparative research."

Nevertheless, consistency and comparability do not force scholars to use the VAP. Burnham's (1985, 1987) pioneering work, for example, is based on straightforward methods for estimating the number of eligible voters in the country for every election. To be sure, collecting the data necessary for correcting the VAP is a difficult and onerous task, but there is little justification for making policy and normative claims on the basis of a statistical measure that we shall show is confounded in some surprising ways.

**Constructing the VEP.** The VAP both includes ineligible and excludes eligible voters. It includes noncitizens, disenfranchised felons, mental incompetents, and people who do not meet residency requirements. It excludes military personnel and civilians living outside the United States. Our more accurate VEP uses a variety of government statistical series to adjust the VAP. We remove noncitizens using estimates found in the Current Population Survey (CPS) and the full Census of Population. We remove persons who are ineligible due to criminality based on Department of Justice statistics on the correctional population. We add military and civilian personnel living overseas using statistics from the Bureau of the Census, Department of Defense, Office of Personnel Management, and the United States Consular Service.

We do not make two adjustments. We do not remove the number of people ineligible due to state residency requirements because the CPS question on mobility does not employ detailed response categories, so it is not possible to determine how various state residency requirements affect ineligibility. We believe that this number has remained approximately 1% of the VAP. We also do not remove the number of mentally incompetent persons because we lack a reliable source; we estimate that this number is approximately one-tenth of 1% of the VAP, or approximately 250,000 persons in 1995.<sup>1</sup>

The statistics we use are not fully reported for every year, and the various sources occasionally change their definitions. At times we must draw on different sources or impute missing data. The methods we employ are detailed in the Appendix. In every case we make a conservative adjustment to the VAP so that our corrections do not overstate the turnout rate.

**Further Correction: The Census Undercount.** The VAP estimate does not correct for the undercount of the population in the Census. The undercount is the net product of two errors: Some people are counted more than once (overcoverage), and others are not counted (undercoverage) (GAO 1997).<sup>2</sup> We do not correct for undercounting because we are not aware of a good way to determine how much this affects the VAP estimate generated between censuses. Correcting for undercoverage would actually strengthen the case that there is no ongoing decline in voter participation, as a more accurate count reduces the turnout rate, *ceteris paribus*. Therefore, by not making this correction we can be confident that we do not overstate trends.

<sup>1</sup> Mentally incompetent persons can be found in high-level care nursing homes that address their special needs. Our estimate is drawn from the 1995 National Nursing Home Survey, the most recent of four surveys conducted in 1974, 1977, 1985, and 1995 by the National Center for Health Statistics. The exact number of mentally incompetent residents of voting age is unknown, since there is no breakdown of residents by type or age.

<sup>2</sup> Overcoverage and undercoverage are estimated by the Bureau of the Census in a postenumeration survey. A sample of persons in representative areas are interviewed following the Census to determine whether they were recorded once, twice, or not at all. The responses are extrapolated to the entire country to derive estimates of the net errors.

The degree of undercoverage has declined since 1940. According to the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO 1997), the estimated net undercoverage was 5.8% of the total population in 1940; 4.1% in 1950, 3.1% in 1960, 2.7% in 1970, 1.2% in 1980, and 1.8% in 1990. This decline would create the impression of declining turnout rates. For example, suppose that among a constant adult population of 100 million, 50 million voted in both 1940 and 1990. The 5.8% undercount in the 1940 Census would result in a reported turnout rate of 50/94.2 or 52.2%. The same turnout in 1990, with a smaller undercount of 1.8%, would result in a reported turnout rate of 50/98.2 or 50.9%. The increased accuracy of the more recent Census would result in a decline of 1.3% in the reported turnout rate.

### The VAP and VEP Turnout Rates

In Table 1 we report the data necessary to construct the national turnout rate from 1948 to 2000 using the VAP and the VEP as the denominator. In addition, after 1971 we report an estimate of persons age 18–21 and the number who voted in order to account for the effects of the 26th Amendment. Below, we replicate our analysis within and outside the South to control for the dramatic rise in participation in that region.

In recent decades two major corrections to the VAP, noncitizens and ineligible felons, are segments that are increasing faster than the rate of population growth. The percentage of noncitizens among the voting-age population has risen steadily, from 2% in 1966 to 8.0% in 2000. As for ineligible felons, the historical average before 1982 was 0.5% of the voting-age population, and the figure rose to 1.4% in 2000. The number that needs to be added to the VAP—eligible voters living abroad—remained at nearly the same percentage throughout our analysis, about 1.5%, relative to the resident voting-age population; the percentage was higher during the Korean and Vietnam conflicts and at the peak of the Cold War in the 1980s. During the 1990s the overseas percentage slightly decreased as the U.S. military presence declined more than the number of civilians living abroad increased.

Figure 1 plots the VAP and VEP turnout rates for presidential elections since World War II. A glance at the VAP line shows why analysts who take the VAP turnout rate at face value are understandably worried about civic erosion, a possible dearth of social capital, and the decline of the public sphere in America. During the 1970s and 1980s there was a steady drop of nearly 10 percentage points from the high in 1960, and the lowest point in the postwar period—indeed, in the century—was reached in 1996. The post-1972 VEP turnout rate does not decline as much. Adjustments to the VAP do not simply move the VEP turnout rate upward a constant amount across time. The lines diverge after 1972, when the ineligible population began growing faster than the total population.

Although an informal view of the 1972–2000 figures in the figure may suggest continuing decline, a prudent and statistically sound assessment is that there is no

**TABLE 1. National Turnout Rates**

Year	Vote for Highest Office (1000s)	Voting-Age Population (1000s)	Turnout Rate VAP (%)	Noncitizens			Overseas			Turnout Rate VEP (%)	Citizens		Turnout Rate VEP Age 21+ (%)	
				Adj. (%)	Felons (1000s)	Adj. (%)	VEP (1000s)	Adj. (%)	Age 18-20 (1000s)		Age 18-20 (1000s)			
1948	48833	95573	51.1	2198	+1.2	348	+0.2	440	-0.2	52.2				
1950	41984	98134	42.8	1880	+0.8	372	+0.2	391	-0.2	43.6				
1952	61552	99929	61.6	1899	+1.2	379	+0.2	1131	-0.7	62.3				
1954	43854	102075	43.0	1939	+0.8	411	+0.2	987	-0.4	43.5				
1956	62027	104515	59.3	1986	+1.1	428	+0.2	981	-0.6	60.2				
1958	47203	106447	44.3	2129	+0.9	464	+0.2	951	-0.4	45.0				
1960	68838	109672	62.8	2193	+1.3	481	+0.3	912	-0.5	63.8				
1962	53141	112952	47.0	2259	+1.0	491	+0.2	1113	-0.5	47.7				
1964	70645	114090	61.9	2282	+1.3	478	+0.3	1212	-0.7	62.8				
1966	56188	116638	48.2	2363	+1.0	448	+0.2	1621	-0.7	48.7				
1968	73213	120285	60.9	2766	+1.4	421	+0.2	1856	-0.9	61.5				
1970	58014	124498	46.6	3148	+1.2	443	+0.2	1765	-0.7	47.3				
1972	77719	140777	55.2	3640	+1.5	443	+0.2	1581	-0.6	56.2	10725	4819	+1.0	57.2
1974	55944	146338	38.2	4148	+1.1	496	+0.1	1510	-0.4	39.1	11288	2126	+1.7	40.8
1976	81556	152308	53.5	4558	+1.7	588	+0.2	1562	-0.5	54.8	11706	4322	+1.6	56.4
1978	58918	155609	37.9	5780	+1.5	629	+0.2	1753	-0.4	39.0	11370	2062	+1.7	40.7
1980	86515	163945	52.8	6827	+2.3	803	+0.3	1803	-0.6	54.7	11538	4066	+1.5	56.2
1982	67616	166724	40.6	10554	+2.7	932	+0.2	1982	-0.5	43.0	10873	2028	+1.8	44.8
1984	92653	173995	53.3	13252	+4.4	1153	+0.4	2361	-0.7	57.2	10302	3799	+1.4	58.6
1986	64991	177922	36.5	12223	+2.7	1308	+0.3	2216	-0.4	39.0	9839	1625	+1.4	40.4
1988	91595	181956	50.3	13942	+4.2	1533	+0.4	2527	-0.7	54.2	9732	3206	+1.3	55.5
1990	67859	185888	36.5	16297	+3.5	1845	+0.4	2659	-0.5	39.8	9644	1629	+1.4	41.2
1992	104405	189687	55.0	17826	+5.7	2117	+0.6	2418	-0.7	60.6	8546	3445	+1.1	61.7
1994	75106	193163	38.9	13205	+2.9	2365	+0.5	2229	-0.4	41.8	9464	1502	+1.4	43.2
1996	96263	196928	48.9	13948	+3.7	2545	+0.6	2499	-0.6	52.6	10021	3081	+1.3	53.9
1998	72537	200929	36.1	15070	+2.9	2822	+0.5	2937	-0.5	39.0	10416	1378	+1.5	40.5
2000	105326	205813	51.2	16500	+4.5	2851	+0.7	3008	-0.7	55.6	10786	3208	+1.5	57.1

Sources: Vote for Highest Office: Congressional Research Service "Voter Registration and Turnout: 1948-1994" and memorandum, "Voter Registration and Turnout: 1996." For 1998 provided by Royce Crocker at Congressional Research Service; 2000 provided by ABC News Polling Unit, compiled by Associated Press. Voting-Age Population: Bureau of the Census Current Population Report P25-1132, "Projections of the Voting-Age Population for States: November 1998" and previous issues of same series, 2000 projection from Census Bureau, <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/voting.html>, accessed 25 May 2001. Noncitizens: Current Population Survey, Voter Supplement File (various years), Bureau of the Census publication series P-20, "Voting and Registration in the Election of [various years]" and Census of the Population (various years). Ineligible Felons: *Correctional Populations of the United States* (various years, as of December 31), Department of Justice reports (Beck 2000, 2001; U.S. Department of Justice, Department of Justice Statistics 2000), and ICPSR Study #8912 "Historical Statistics on Prisoners in State and Federal Institutions, Yearend 1925-1986." Overseas VEP: *Statistical Abstract of the United States* (various years), unpublished reports from United States Consular Services (various years), Military Personnel Historical Reports (various years), and Office of Personnel Management Manpower Reports (various years). Persons Age 18-20 and turnout estimates: Current Population Survey Voter Supplement File (various years).

Note: VAP is the voting-age population, a Bureau of the Census estimate of people of voting age living within the United States. VEP is the voting-eligible population, our estimate of people eligible to vote in U.S. elections. Numbers are subject to rounding. Data include Washington, DC, in 1964, 1968, and 1972-2000 as well as Alaska and Hawaii as of 1960. Excluded is Louisiana 1978 and 1982 (no statewide November election).

post-1971 trend in the presidential turnout rate among those eligible to vote. Regressing the 1972-2000 VEP presidential turnout rate on a linear trend variable produces estimates of a miniscule decline of 0.007 percentage points per election, or a total drop of 0.05 percentage points for the period. Yet, the standard error is so large (0.40) relative to the estimated trend that we cannot reject the null hypothesis of no trend in the presidential VEP turnout rate from 1972 to 2000.

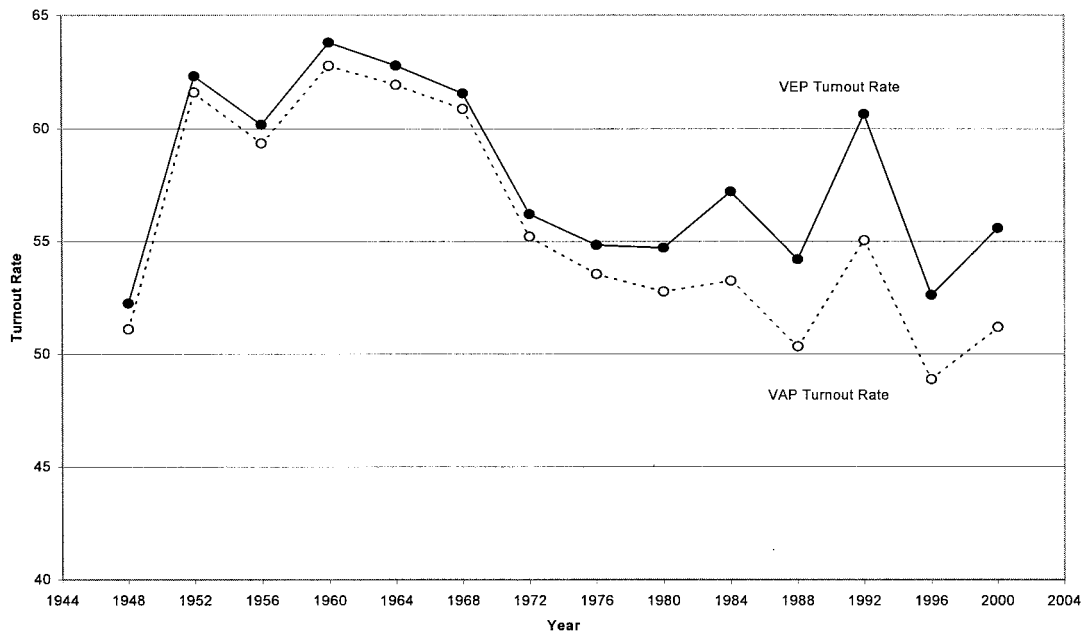
Recent rates are inconsistent and appear susceptible to short-term forces. The VEP in 1992 is no longer a minor deviation in a period of continual decline but is rather within the range of turnout rates in the 1950s and 1960s. Whatever else one may conclude about media, parties, campaigns, and civil society in the current era, turnout rates today can still attain their former level.

In 1996 the VAP rate reached its low since World War II, and the VEP rate dropped as well, to 52.7%, but that is slightly higher than the low of 52.2% in 1948. This is a small difference, but when the two VEP calculations are further corrected for the Census undercount, we find a difference of 2.5 percentage points.<sup>3</sup>

The low voter participation in 1948 is not given the attention it merits since the 1952 election is the starting point for most scholarly analyses. Although the decline from the 1950s and early 1960s buttresses the case for reform, the 1948 figure is not merely an aberration. Burnham (1987) adjusted turnout rates for the presence of noncitizens among the VAP before 1948, and his results show that voter participation from 1920

<sup>3</sup> After correcting for the undercount the 1948 turnout rate is 49.3% (52.2%/105.8) and the 1996 rate is 51.8% (52.7%/101.8), a difference of 2.5 percentage points.

**FIGURE 1. National VAP and VEP Presidential Turnout Rates, 1948–2000**



through 1948 is strikingly similar to the turnout rate after 1972. The highs in the 1950s and 1960s are actually quite unusual for the period after the weakening of political machines (Burnham 1987) and perhaps were more momentary than usually supposed.

**The Twenty-Sixth Amendment.** The drop in turnout between 1968 and 1972 is usually attributed to expansion of the franchise from age 21 to age 18 (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993, 57).<sup>4</sup> This is a plausible assumption, since turnout rates for younger persons are lower than for older persons. Table 1 shows the turnout rate excluding persons under age 21. The numerator is derived by using the CPS figures to calculate the proportion of all votes reported by persons age 21 and older, and then multiplying that proportion by the total number of votes cast for highest office; the denominator is derived by removing the number of citizens age 18–20 from the VEP (see the Appendix). The average effect of removing this group since 1971 is an increase of 1.3 percentage points in presidential elections and 1.7 percentage points in congressional elections. That is slightly more than one-fourth the decrease of 4.7 percentage points for the VEP turnout rate between 1948–68 and 1972–2000. Because a large drop in voter participation occurred between 1968 and 1972, it is assumed that the new voters were a significant factor in the decline. Yet, the downward trend of the 1960s carries through to the 1972 election even though people age 18–20 are not included prior to 1972. And the turnout rate of voters under age 21 was 49.2% in

1972, according to the CPS, so their presence in that election only lowered the rate by a single percentage point.

**Southern and Nonsouthern Turnout Rates.** We need to account for the dramatic rise in southern turnout rates during the 1960s to make comparisons of the aggregate turnout rate over time. The civil rights movement led to the Voting Rights Act, which effectively enfranchised blacks and poor whites in the South. Accordingly, voter participation rose dramatically in that region during the 1960s (Kousser 1999).

The increase in southern turnout masks some of the decline in the rest of the nation. The corrections performed in Table 1 are repeated in tables 2 and 3 for nonsouthern and southern states, respectively. Figure 2 plots the national, southern, and nonsouthern age 21+ VEP turnout rate for presidential elections since 1948, thereby controlling for the effects of the extended franchise and the elimination of Jim Crow laws. Turnout rates in the South rose precipitously as the electorate mobilized, but elsewhere the electorate contracted (DeNardo 1998).<sup>5</sup>

Nationally and regionally, using either VAP or VEP in the denominator of the turnout rate, there are two distinct eras of post-World War II turnout divided by 1971. The national VAP presidential turnout rate is an

<sup>4</sup> Before 1971, four states allowed persons under age 21 to vote: Georgia since 1944 (18+), Kentucky since 1956 (19+), Alaska since 1960 (19+), and Hawaii since 1960 (20+) (GAO 1997).

<sup>5</sup> Southern states are Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia. The contribution of the southern turnout rate to the national figure increased over the last half of the twentieth century. In 1960, approximately one in four eligible voters resided in the South. As in-migration to that region increased, the number rose to almost one out of three in 1996. Thus, decline in nonsouthern voter participation is offset by the shift in distribution of eligible voters across regions.

**TABLE 2. Nonsouthern Turnout Rates**

Year	Vote for Highest Office (1000s)	Voting-Age Population (1000s)	Turnout Rate VAP (%)	Noncitizens (1000s)	Adj. (%)	Ineligible Felons (1000s)	Adj. (%)	Overseas VEP (1000s)	Adj. (%)	Turnout Rate VEP (%)	Citizens Age 18-20 (1000s)	Voters Age 18-20 (1000s)	Adj. (%)	Turnout Rate VEP
														Age 21+ (%)
1948	44129	76182	57.9	1752	+1.4	131	+0.1	356	-0.3	59.1				
1950	39393	77254	51.0	1468	+1.0	134	+0.1	313	-0.2	51.9				
1952	53890	77710	69.3	1476	+1.3	151	+0.1	899	-0.8	70.0				
1954	40386	79734	50.7	1515	+1.0	159	+0.1	785	-0.5	51.2				
1956	54343	81823	66.4	1555	+1.3	178	+0.1	781	-0.6	67.2				
1958	43750	82649	52.9	1653	+1.1	184	+0.1	751	-0.5	53.6				
1960	59618	86289	69.1	1726	+1.4	190	+0.2	717	-0.6	70.1				
1962	47431	88711	53.5	1774	+1.1	178	+0.1	874	-0.5	54.1				
1964	59476	89221	66.7	1784	+1.4	169	+0.1	948	-0.7	67.4				
1966	47803	91018	52.5	1820	+1.1	147	+0.1	1265	-0.7	52.9				
1968	59658	93594	63.7	2153	+1.5	180	+0.1	1444	-1.0	64.4				
1970	48488	96520	50.2	2413	+1.3	212	+0.1	1368	-0.7	50.9				
1972	63485	108494	58.5	3038	+1.7	242	+0.1	1219	-0.6	59.6	8621	4000	+1.2	60.8
1974	47171	111878	42.2	3244	+1.3	293	+0.1	1155	-0.4	43.1	9090	1840	+2.0	45.1
1976	64689	115823	55.9	3475	+1.7	326	+0.2	1188	-0.6	57.1	9284	3429	+1.8	58.9
1978	48490	119832	40.5	4673	+1.6	361	+0.1	1326	-0.4	41.8	9408	1746	+2.1	43.8
1980	67453	123573	54.6	5314	+2.5	473	+0.2	1354	-0.6	56.6	9659	3238	+2.0	58.7
1982	54595	126707	43.1	8869	+3.2	517	+0.2	1478	-0.5	46.0	8557	1638	+2.1	48.0
1984	71034	129436	54.9	10484	+4.8	632	+0.3	1752	-0.7	59.2	7931	2912	+1.6	60.7
1986	49490	131994	37.5	9636	+3.0	706	+0.2	1638	-0.5	40.1	7399	1237	+1.5	41.6
1988	69977	134951	51.9	11066	+4.6	847	+0.3	1866	-0.7	56.0	7372	2449	+1.4	57.5
1990	51326	136703	37.5	12850	+3.9	1020	+0.3	1957	-0.5	41.1	7117	1180	+1.5	42.6
1992	78842	138934	56.7	14171	+6.4	1187	+0.5	1772	-0.7	62.9	6268	2602	+1.1	64.0
1994	57023	141438	40.3	10042	+3.1	1307	+0.4	1628	-0.5	43.3	6847	1140	+1.5	44.8
1996	71871	142889	50.3	10161	+3.9	1419	+0.5	1784	-0.6	54.0	7055	2223	+1.4	55.3
1998	55123	145081	38.0	11461	+3.3	1567	+0.4	2121	-0.5	41.1	7356	1047	+1.6	42.6
2000	77995	148695	52.5	12289	+4.7	1520	+0.5	2174	-0.8	56.9	7703	2322	+1.6	58.5

Note: Nonsouthern is the District of Columbia plus all states except those listed in Table 3 as "southern."

average 7.1 percentage points lower during 1972–2000 than during 1948–68. The VEP turnout rate is also on average lower, but by 4.7 percentage points. The gains in southern presidential turnout rates (an increase on average of 8.9 for VAP and 9.9 for VEP) are offset by losses outside the South (a decrease on average of 11.1 for VAP and 8.6 for VEP).

As shown in Table 2, the nonsouthern VAP turnout rate exhibits continued decline of greater magnitude than the national rate (Table 1), although both patterns are interrupted by the high turnout in the 1992 election.<sup>6</sup> The most noticeable disjunctures between the VAP and VEP nonsouthern turnout rates begin in 1972 (Table 2). For nonsouthern elections we estimate a small downward trend in VEP of 0.22 percentage points per election, with a standard error of 0.44, which implies no statistically significant trend. The southern presidential VEP turnout rate (Table 3) trends upward an estimated 0.87 percentage points per election, with a standard error of 0.37, which gives some confidence (90%) in the trend.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> For nonsouthern states, we estimate a downward trend of 0.79 percentage point per election, with a standard error of 0.31.

<sup>7</sup> We estimate an upward trend for the southern VAP presidential turnout rate of 0.38 percentage point per election, but with a relatively large standard error of 0.30.

## CONCLUSION

We attribute the apparent decline in turnout rate since 1972 to an increasing number of ineligible persons being counted among the VAP, which is the denominator for the calculations by the Bureau of the Census. We disagree with Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde (1998, 68), who contend that correcting the denominator leads only to "relatively small differences in the overall estimate of turnout." Correcting the data changes the level of the turnout rate sufficiently to come to some different conclusions about the trends. Contrary to Teixeira (1992, 25), we agree with Wolfinger (1993, 7) that use of the VAP leads to errors that are unevenly distributed geographically and chronologically and produces "quite misleading distortions."

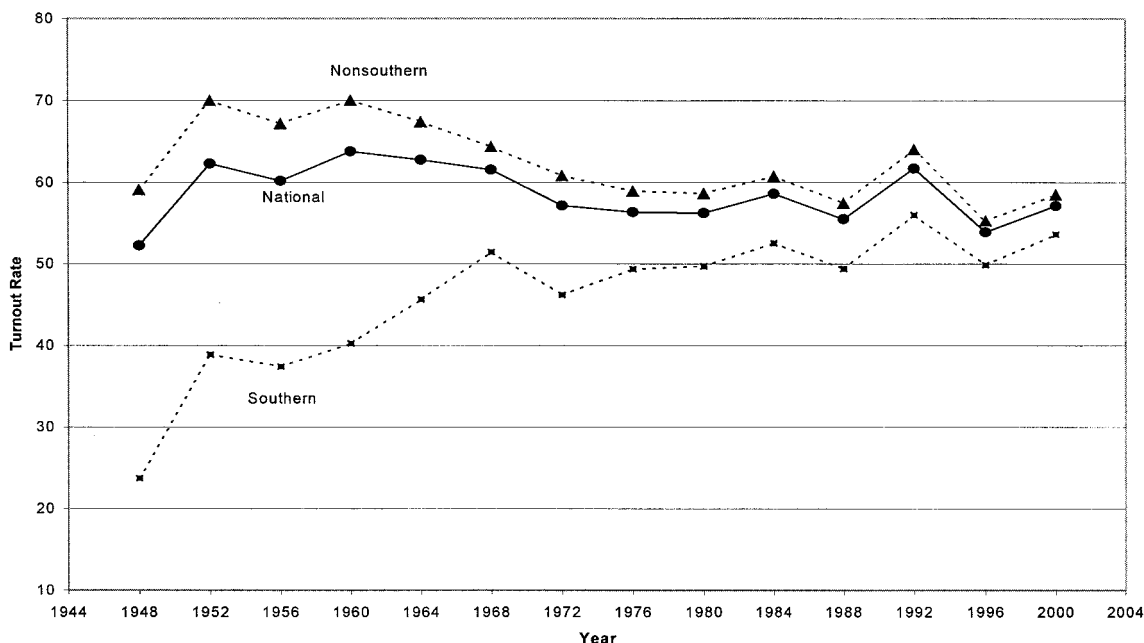
The great divide in the turnout rate is the 1972 election. Based on the VEP, with or without adjustments for the inclusion of younger voters, nationally and outside the South there are virtually no identifiable turnout trends from 1972 onward, and within the South there is a clear trend of increasing turnout rates. Our analysis points to a surge in nonsouthern voting in the 1950s, followed by a decline during the 1960s. Since then, turnout is lower, but there is no "downward trend." Absent further decline, divided govern-

**TABLE 3. Southern Turnout Rates**

Year	Vote for Highest Office (1000s)	Voting-Age Population (1000s)	Turnout Rate VAP (%)	Noncitizens (1000s)	Adj. (%)	Ineligible Felons (1000s)	Adj. (%)	Overseas VEP (1000s)	Adj. (%)	Turnout Rate VEP (%)	Citizens Age 18-20 (1000s)	Voters Age 18-20 (1000s)	Adj. (%)	Turnout Rate VEP Age 21+ (%)
1948	4132	17888	23.1	411	+0.5	132	+0.2	84	-0.1	23.7				
1950	2590	19417	13.3	369	+0.3	137	+0.1	79	-0.1	13.6				
1952	7661	20016	38.3	380	+0.7	155	+0.3	232	-0.4	38.9				
1954	3469	20489	16.9	389	+0.3	163	+0.1	202	-0.2	17.2				
1956	7684	20919	36.7	397	+0.7	184	+0.3	200	-0.3	37.4				
1958	3453	21934	15.7	439	+0.3	191	+0.1	199	-0.1	16.1				
1960	9220	23383	39.4	468	+0.8	195	+0.3	194	-0.3	40.2				
1962	5710	24239	23.6	485	+0.5	182	+0.2	239	-0.2	24.0				
1964	11168	24869	44.9	497	+0.9	171	+0.3	264	-0.5	45.6				
1966	8385	25620	32.7	512	+0.7	147	+0.2	356	-0.4	33.1				
1968	13555	26734	50.7	615	+1.2	181	+0.3	412	-0.8	51.4				
1970	9526	27980	34.0	700	+0.9	215	+0.3	397	-0.5	34.7				
1972	14234	32282	44.1	613	+0.9	271	+0.4	363	-0.5	44.8	2668	797	+1.4	46.2
1974	8772	34458	25.5	896	+0.7	329	+0.2	356	-0.3	26.1	2822	307	+1.4	27.5
1976	16866	36486	46.2	1095	+1.4	364	+0.5	374	-0.5	47.6	3010	877	+1.8	49.4
1978	10427	35781	29.1	1048	+0.9	390	+0.3	427	-0.3	30.0	2927	334	+1.2	31.7
1980	19062	41024	46.5	1518	+1.8	329	+0.4	449	-0.5	48.1	3000	858	+1.6	49.7
1982	13020	40312	32.3	1896	+1.6	415	+0.3	504	-0.3	33.8	2714	352	+1.7	35.4
1984	21618	45030	48.0	2792	+3.2	521	+0.6	609	-0.6	51.1	2872	886	+1.5	52.5
1986	15501	46571	33.3	2655	+2.0	602	+0.4	578	-0.4	35.3	2764	403	+1.4	36.7
1988	21617	47827	45.2	2870	+2.9	686	+0.7	661	-0.6	48.1	2694	757	+1.3	49.4
1990	16533	49109	33.7	3438	+2.5	826	+0.6	703	-0.5	36.3	2821	446	+1.4	37.7
1992	25563	50595	50.5	3693	+4.0	930	+0.9	645	-0.6	54.8	2471	844	+1.2	56.0
1994	18082	52212	34.6	3237	+2.3	1058	+0.7	601	-0.4	37.3	2760	362	+1.5	38.7
1996	24392	53609	45.5	3109	+2.8	1126	+1.0	715	-0.6	48.7	2645	732	+1.2	49.9
1998	17414	55848	31.2	3518	+2.1	1255	+0.7	816	-0.4	33.6	3054	279	+1.5	35.1
2000	27331	57118	47.9	4209	+3.8	1330	+1.1	834	-0.7	52.1	3083	883	+1.5	53.6

Note: Southern states are Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia

**FIGURE 2. Regional VEP Presidential Turnout Rate, Age 21+, 1948-2000**



ment (Franklin and de Mino 1998), negative campaigning (Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1995), and declining civic engagement (Putnam 2000) have not depressed turnout. Whether due to the Cold War, a popular military hero as president, the emergence of national television news media not yet cynical and distrustful of power, or other factors, it was the 1950s that were unusual in being the high point of twentieth-century voter participation outside the Jim Crow South. Old theories will have to be transformed or new theories will have to be developed to explain the decline in the turnout rate during the 1960s.

An explanation for lower turnout in America than in most other industrial democracies, we suggest, must begin with the institutional structure of the political system, not the psychology of the voters or the tactics of the parties and candidates. Powell (1986) notes that in contrast to parliamentary systems, which foster strong national parties and clear lines of responsibility for government performance, responsibility is divided between state and national governments in the United States, and between two legislatures and an executive at each level. Federalism and the separation of powers increase the costs to voters to gather and process the information about which vote, for which candidate, for which office, on which date, matters for a given issue, and registration is neither done by the government nor compulsory. Furthermore, the frequent primary and general elections required to fill the many elected offices increase the burden of democracy for the voter. Indeed, the other two industrialized democracies with chronically low turnout rates are Switzerland and Japan, countries with diffused lines of authority and responsibility.

## APPENDIX

The data and methods we used to construct our measure of the turnout rate among eligible voters are described below. Our sources do not report all the data we needed to construct fully each component measure for every year. When possible, we developed procedures for imputing the missing data, as detailed below.

When we analyze the effect of the 26th Amendment in 1971, we further adjust the VAP using estimates of the age distribution of the total population from the P-25 Current Population Reports. We use the Current Population Survey Voter Supplement File to determine the proportion of persons age 18–20 among eligible voters and remove this proportion from the vote for highest office.

## Turnout

The numerator of the turnout rate is the number of persons who vote in a given election. Our national and state data are drawn from a 1996 Congressional Research Service (CRS) report on turnout in the 1948–94 elections, a 1997 memorandum on 1996, and a 1999 memorandum on the 1998 election (Crocker 1996, 1997).<sup>8</sup> As described in the text, two

<sup>8</sup> Royce Crocker of the CRS provided the 1998 numbers to us as an Excel spreadsheet. Since 1986 the CRS has contracted with an outside vendor, Election Data Systems, to collect turnout and registration information from the states. Election Data Systems, in

numbers found in these reports are commonly used as the numerator in studies of turnout, vote for highest office and total vote. We use the vote for highest office in our analysis.

## Voting-Age Population

The base number for the denominator of the turnout rate is the national and state VAP estimates drawn from the P-25 series Current Population Reports.<sup>9</sup> The Bureau of the Census compiles these adjustments to the Census from various sources that report preliminary numbers. The bureau then releases final estimates. The 1994, 1996, 1998, and 2000 VAP estimates we use are preliminary figures still subject to minor changes.

## Noncitizens

We use two methods to estimate the number of noncitizens among the VAP. From 1948 through 1966, we use a technique proposed by Burnham (1985) in his study of turnout rates in the nineteenth century to interpolate the number of noncitizens for inter-Census years. We interpolate the percentage of noncitizens reported in the 1940 and 1950 Census and between the 1950 Census and the 1966 Current Population Survey (the 1960 Census did not include a citizenship question). Between 1950 and 1966 the number of noncitizens in the VAP was virtually unchanged, rising from 1.9% in 1950 to 2% in 1966. We are confident that this simple procedure does not miss an intervening wave of immigration, since legal inflows reported by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (1997) were small and stable from 1950 to 1966.

Beginning in 1966, we estimate the number of noncitizens in the VAP from the Current Population Survey Voter Supplement Files.<sup>10</sup> The CPS allows us to avoid the problems of interpolation during the wave of immigration that began in the 1970s and peaked in 1991.<sup>11</sup> Yet, use of the CPS introduces the sampling and measurement errors associated with surveys. In particular, there is a reported decline of 4.6 million noncitizens between the 1992 estimate of 17.8 million and the 1994 estimate of 13.2 million that is puzzling.<sup>12</sup> We believe the change in CPS methodologies is primarily responsible for the difference.

The CPS has used three different sets of citizenship questions. From 1966 to 1976, respondents were not directly asked if they were citizens but whether they were registered to vote. If not, they were asked why, and “not a citizen” was one of the options. From 1978 to 1992, respondents were queried directly about their citizenship status, and their “yes” or “no” answers were recorded. Between 1976 and 1978 the CPS revealed an increase in the number of noncitizens, from

consultation with the CRS, compiled data from the CRS records, *America Votes*, and information supplied by Curtis Gans to construct turnout figures dating back to 1948 (personal correspondence with Royce Crocker, April 22, 1999).

<sup>9</sup> There is a slight discrepancy between the modern published reports of the 1948 presidential vote totals and historical reports, such as in P25-185. We use the slightly larger P25-185 number.

<sup>10</sup> The first CPS Voter Supplement File questionnaire, in 1964, did not include a citizenship question.

<sup>11</sup> In 1991, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (1997) reports 1.8 million legal immigrants entered the country, the highest number in American history. Immigration has since declined slightly but still remains at historical highs.

<sup>12</sup> There is a spike in noncitizens between 1980 and 1982. Some of this is due to a flood of immigrants from Cuba who participated in the Mariel boatlift, as well as to new asylum laws that were introduced in late 1980.

4.5 million to 5.8 million. This is probably a true increase and not an artifact of changing survey methods. Although the increase is slightly larger than the 1970s trend, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (1997) reports a rise in legal immigration in 1978.

In 1994, the CPS citizenship item was changed again to determine possible types of status. Respondents were given five options: “Native, Born in the United States”; “Native, Born in Puerto Rico or U.S. Outlying Area”; “Native, Born Abroad of American Parent or Parents”; “Foreign Born, U.S. Citizen By Naturalization”; and “Foreign Born, Not a Citizen of the United States.” Moreover, there were significant methodological changes that may affect the CPS estimates. The 1994 CPS was the first in our analysis to use the 1990 Census as a baseline to construct weights and the first to use computer-aided interviews.<sup>13</sup>

Is it possible that the number of noncitizens declined between 1992 and 1994? We think not. In 1991 and 1992, there were 3.4 million legal immigrants who entered the country and 550,000 naturalizations. In 1993 and 1994, there were 1.9 million legal immigrants and 750,000 naturalizations (U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service 1997). Since the net changes in legal immigration and naturalization cannot account for the decline, could a decrease this large occur solely due to large changes in the rates of out-migration and illegal immigration? There was heightened emphasis on controlling illegal entry under the Clinton administration, as well as more anti-immigration legislation. There could have been a true decline in illegal entry or greater reluctance of noncitizens to acknowledge their status, but we cannot say whether the 1994 number is more or less accurate than previous numbers. We do know, however, that legal immigration statistics clearly reveal a rise in the number of legal entrants that began in the 1970s, peaked in 1991, and declined slightly thereafter, consistent with the overall CPS trend. The numbers are consistent with two possibilities: less overreporting of citizenship in 1994 than in 1992, or more underreporting in 1994 than in 1992. Thus, while our calculation of the VEP for any one election is susceptible to errors in the CPS survey methodology, we are confident that the overall character of the trends in noncitizens we discuss is correct.

## Ineligible Felons

Depending upon state law, felons may not vote if in prison, on probation, or on parole, and they may even be permanently disfranchised.<sup>14</sup> Four states, Maine, Massachusetts, Utah, and Vermont (now three, following the 2000 adoption of a restrictive constitutional amendment in Massachusetts), did not disfranchise even prisoners during the period of study. The first three categories of disfranchised felons (in prison, on parole, or on probation) are compiled for 1986–96 from the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, annual *Correctional Populations of the United States*.<sup>15</sup> Nearly all prisoners and parolees and half of all probationers have been convicted of a felony (U.S. Depart-

ment of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics 2000, 2). We assume that all prisoners, all parolees, and half of all probationers are felons. For pre-1986 data, we used ICSPR Study #8912, “Historical Statistics on Prisoners in State and Federal Institutions, Year End 1925–1986” (U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1997).<sup>16</sup> Some felony prisoners are noncitizens, although the exact number over time is unknown, so an adjustment is not made.<sup>17</sup>

We do not have a source for the number of felons on probation or parole before 1986, so we had to estimate this number. We calculate national and regional estimates for the number of ineligible felons using the ratio between the number of prisoners and the number on probation and parole for 1986 to 1996, for which all data are available. With the year as the unit of analysis, from 1986 to 1996 a regression estimates that nationally there were 1.50 ineligible felons on parole or probation for every ineligible felon in prison. The southern states had 2.18 ineligible probationers and parolees for every ineligible prisoner, and nonsouthern states had 1.13.<sup>18</sup>

Before 1972, we make one further adjustment to the estimate of the number of ineligible felons. We must calculate the percentage of felons age 18–20; otherwise, when we subtract felons from the VEP, we will overcorrect the denominator and overstate the true rate of turnout. We must estimate the unreported age distribution of felons. We begin by assuming that felons on probation and parole are older than 20. We then assume that 18-to-20-year-olds are 15% of the prison population.

It is more difficult to determine the numbers of felons permanently disenfranchised despite having completed probation or parole, and we have not included this group in our measure of ineligible felons.

The Sentencing Project and Human Rights Watch (Fellner and Mauer 1998) conducted an exhaustive study of state data and estimated that in 1996 there were approximately 1.39 million permanently disfranchised felons. They compiled the number of felons released since 1970 within states that have such laws and adjusted for recidivism. The study does not account for felons who vote despite being ineligible, moved or died.<sup>19</sup> Our measure of ineligible felons is most certainly an underestimate that probably is correlated with the actual number of disfranchised felons, since a felon must first go through the correctional system before becoming permanently disfranchised. If these 1996 reports are accurate, the permanently disfranchised number slightly more than one half of the 2.85 million disfranchised felons in prison, on probation, or on parole.

## Eligible Overseas Voters

Eligible voters living overseas are comprised of military personnel and their dependents, nonmilitary government

Delaware, Hawaii, and Rhode Island), plus the District of Columbia, tend to have small prison populations.

<sup>16</sup> No breakdown of federal prisoners among the states is available. We divide federal prisoners among states by assuming that states have the same share of federal prisoners that they have of state prisoners.

<sup>17</sup> In 1994, about 30,000, or 1.2%, of the felony prisoners were identified as noncitizens (U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1996).

<sup>18</sup> The regression estimate of this ratio is very consistent, with a standard error of less than .01. Unless major changes in incarceration patterns occurred in the past, we believe this imputation method is sound.

<sup>19</sup> A small number of permanently disfranchised felons have been granted the right to vote through pardons.

<sup>13</sup> Personal communication with Jennifer Day, May 8, 1999.

<sup>14</sup> See the Department of Justice report, “Civil Disabilities of Convicted Felons: A State-by-State Survey” (Love and Kuzma 1996).

<sup>15</sup> Footnotes in *Correctional Populations* detail that state agencies report their information with varying levels of accuracy, particularly the number of felons on parole and probation. States that do not report these data tend to be the same states that grant felons on probation or parole the right to vote. Additional error arises from the practice by some states of combining their prison and jail populations into one reported number. These five states (Alaska, Connecticut,

personnel, and nongovernment civilians. Our primary sources for these figures are the *Statistical Abstract of the United States* and the Census. Because the *Statistical Abstract* does not regularly report the total overseas population, let alone its age distribution, we must turn to other sources and make a number of assumptions. We supplement the *Statistical Abstract* and the Census with Department of Defense records, various Office of Personnel Management reports, and estimates provided by the U.S. Consular Services of the total number of civilians abroad (which includes those working for private companies).

The estimation procedures differ for the periods 1948–66, 1968–82, 1984–92, and 1994–96 because of changes in reporting. For some time periods there are separate numbers for military dependents, nonmilitary government personnel, and “other civilians,” while for other years all nonmilitary categories are combined. For all years, we have accurate numbers on overseas military personnel, available on-line from the Department of Defense web site.<sup>20</sup> The post-Vietnam high was 609,000 overseas personnel in 1988, while today there are 240,000. We assume the age distribution of soldiers overseas is the same as the domestic population. We must use different techniques, however, for the number of overseas civilians.

**1948–66.** To arrive at the number of eligible voters living overseas from 1948 to 1966, we estimate the nonmilitary number for the three years for which we have data: 1950, 1960, and 1968. We then interpolate that number for the years with missing data and add the number of eligible military personnel overseas (these data are available throughout the series).<sup>21</sup>

The 1950 Census reports the number of military personnel and their dependents living overseas. We do not know the age distribution of these groups, so we assume the relative proportions younger and older than 21 are the same as in the domestic population and that military personnel are at least 18 years old. We use the P-25 series report, which summarizes yearly estimates of the age distribution of the domestic population, to adjust the overseas population by removing the estimated number of persons under age 21.

The 1960 Census reports similar data and an additional category, the number of civilians living overseas. We make the same assumptions and adjustments as before for military personnel and their dependents. We assume that the age distribution of civilians living overseas is the same as the domestic population and remove persons under age 21.

**1968–82.** The overseas eligible voters from 1968 to 1982 are estimated from the 1984 *Statistical Abstract*, Table 4, “U.S. Population Living Abroad: 1968 to 1981.” Data are missing for some election years, so we use the closest year to fill in. Since there is little year-to-year variation in the numbers, we believe this is a good approximation. The *Statistical Abstract* provides the same categories as the 1960 Census, and we follow the same procedures to estimate the overseas civilian population, then use Department of Defense statistics to add the military personnel. For all adjustments, after 1971 we only remove an estimate of the number of persons under age 18.

**1984–92.** From 1984 to 1992, the *Statistical Abstract* reports Department of State statistics on the number of nonmilitary

persons who would need to be evacuated in the event of a crisis. We use this as the total of overseas civilians. Again, we make the same assumptions and adjustments for the age distribution of this group as before, and we use similar military statistics. We deflate these figures by an estimate of the number of persons under age 18.

**1994–98.** We estimate the number of eligible voters overseas for 1994 and 1996 using unpublished reports of the overseas civilian population provided by the U.S. Consular Service. We again deflate this number by the proportion of the domestic population under age 18. We then add the number of military personnel abroad, provided by the Department of Defense, and the number of nonmilitary government personnel, from Office of Personnel Management reports (we assume these employees are at least 18 years old) to arrive at an estimate of the eligible voters overseas.

**2000.** For 2000 we used the 1998 proportion of overseas citizens multiplied by the 2000 voting age population since the 2000 numbers were not available as of this writing.

The number of military and nonmilitary government employees living abroad is likely to be accurate, since these data are compiled and reported by the government. The estimates of civilians abroad is based on reports by consulates, which vary in the accuracy of their reporting. The total number of overseas civilians reported in 1998 was 3.1 million, a high since World War II. Footnotes that accompany data originating from the U.S. Consular Service (for 1968–81 in the 1984 *Statistical Abstract*, and unpublished data from 1987 through the present provided by the Consular Service) warn that the civilian population overseas is almost certainly underestimated.<sup>22</sup> A similar warning accompanies the 1960 Census, which stresses that participation in counting was voluntary. We are highly confident of the overseas military and government employee figures, but we are less confident about our estimates of overseas civilians.

## Persons Age 18–20

In order to control for the effect of the 26th Amendment, we calculate a turnout rate for persons at least 21 years old. From the CPS we calculate the proportion of voters age 18–20 and the proportion age 21 and older. We use this latter figure and the total votes for highest office to calculate the number of votes cast by persons older than 20. We remove the number of citizens age 18–20 from our measure of the VEP. We similarly remove estimates of persons in that age group among felons and the overseas population, where appropriate, in order to avoid double counting. We then calculate a new turnout rate using the adjusted numerator and denominator.

## Regional Analysis

In order to control for the effect of the civil rights movement on voter participation in the South, we estimate turnout rates for both southern and nonsouthern states. We have turnout statistics and VAP estimates for all states. We have the same information for ineligible felons, as described above, and make the same assumptions to arrive at regional numbers. The CPS is a survey of approximately 100,000 individuals and covers the entire country. We exploited the large regional

<sup>20</sup> See <http://web1.whs.osd.mil/mmids/mmidshome.htm> (accessed 3 October 2001).

<sup>21</sup> For 1948, we use our estimate of the 1950 number of overseas civilians.

<sup>22</sup> Based on information provided to us by the U.S. Department of State, consulates that serve a smaller number of people are less likely to report data, and this bias increases backward in time.

subsamples of the CPS to make all the same adjustments using the CPS from 1966 onward, as detailed above.

For the remainder of our adjustments, data are missing, and we must make some assumptions. Before 1966, we use the national estimate of the proportion of noncitizens among the VAP as the regional estimate. In 1966, when regional numbers became available, both the southern and nonsouthern proportions of noncitizens were 2% of the regional VAP, so we believe this is a reasonable assumption. Because we do not know the home state of eligible voters living abroad, we allocate the overseas population between the two regions in proportion to the VAP of each region.

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