

Sociological Factors that affect Voter Turnout in Elections



Factors that affect voter turnout:

- Age
- Education
- Income
- Gender
- Race



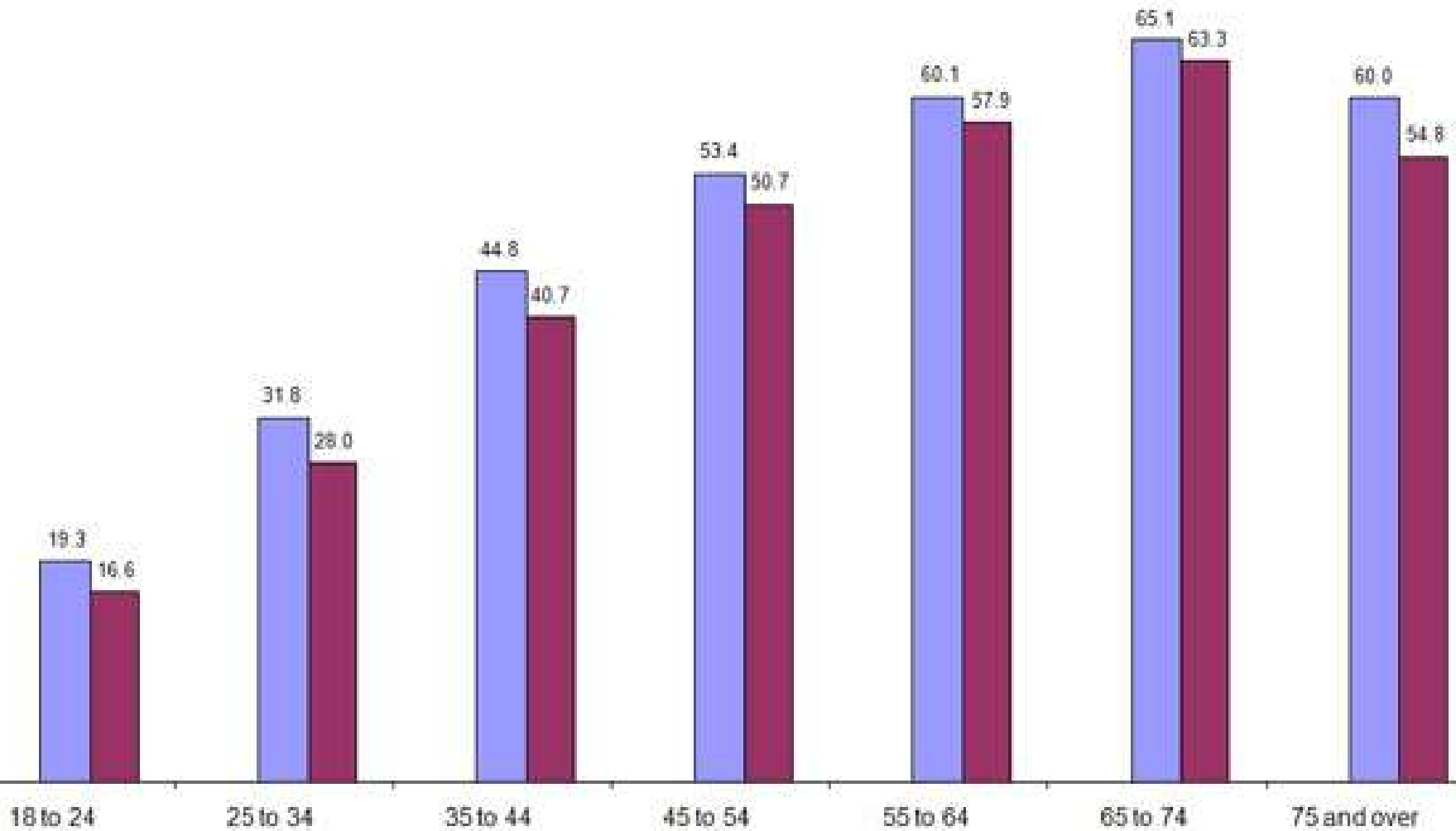
Age

- **Older Americans are more likely to vote than are younger Americans**
- Higher degree of political efficacy (my vote really matters and counts...makes a difference)
- More knowledge of political issues and history
- Generally more free time as compared to the youth
- Higher sense of patriotic duty to your country

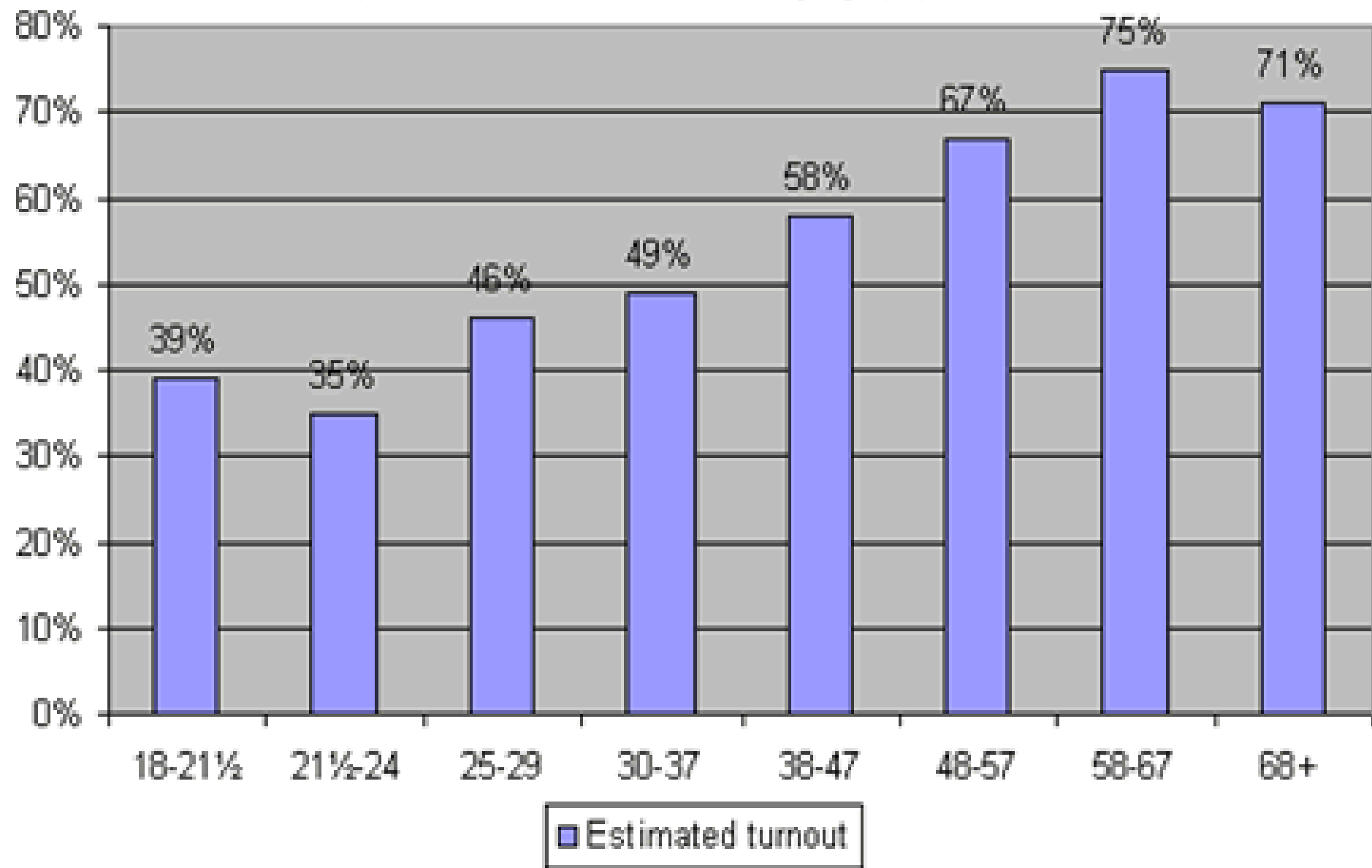




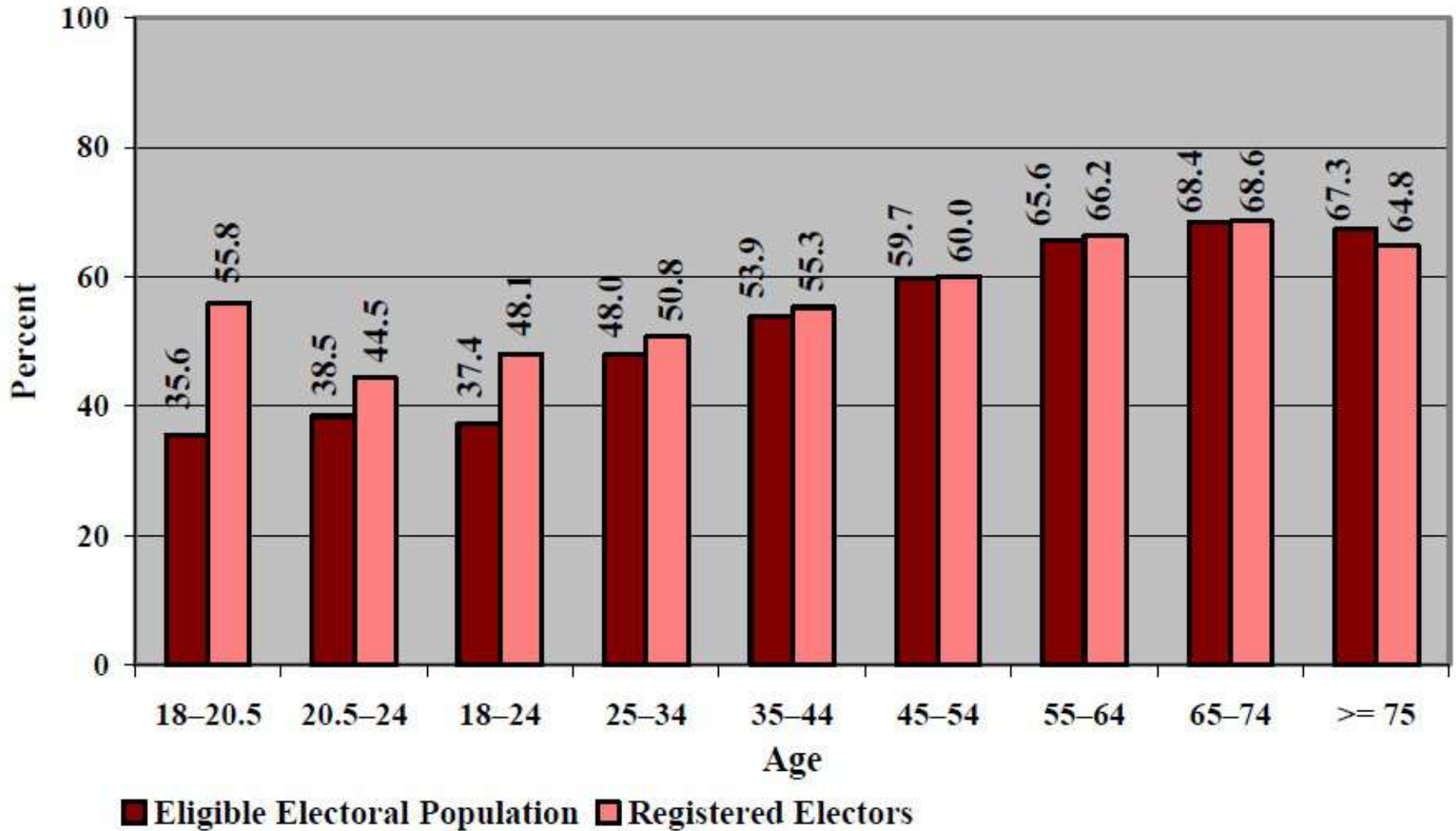
Voting by Age: Congressional Elections 1998-2002 (Percent who voted of the voting-age citizen population)



2004 Presidential Election

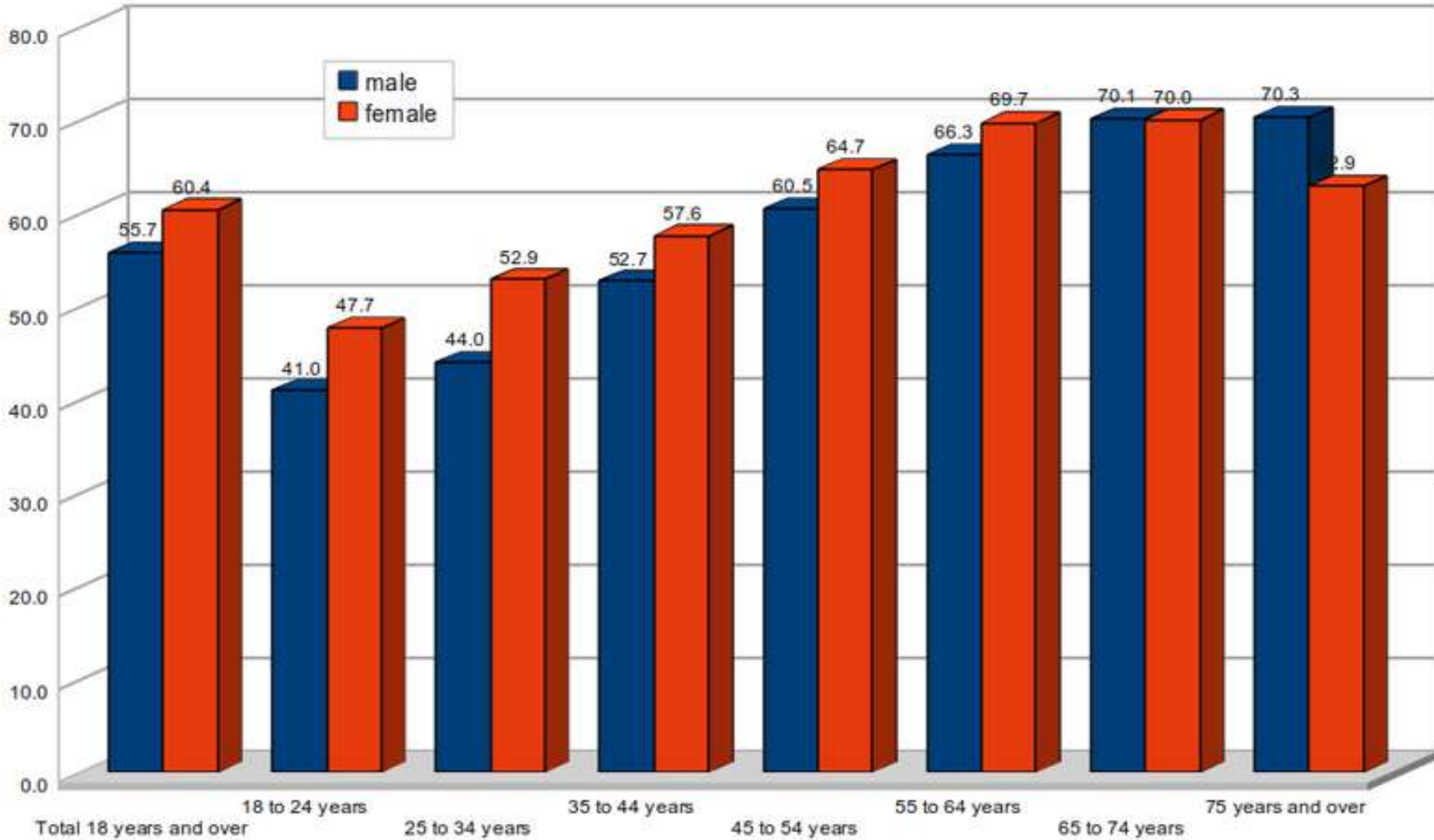


2008 Presidential Election

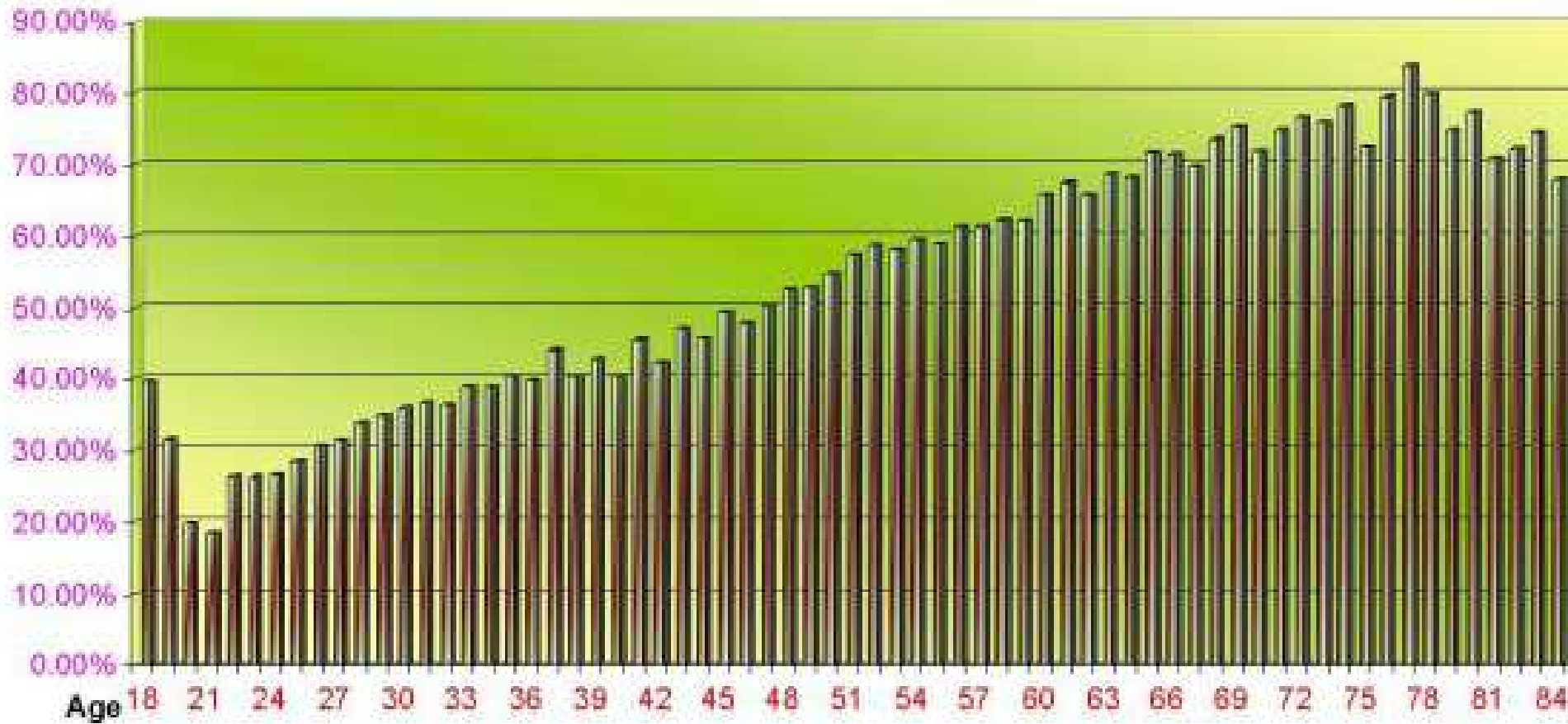


Voter Turnout by Sex and Age, 2008 U.S. Presidential Election.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.



Percentage of Voter Participation by Age November 2, 2010 General Election

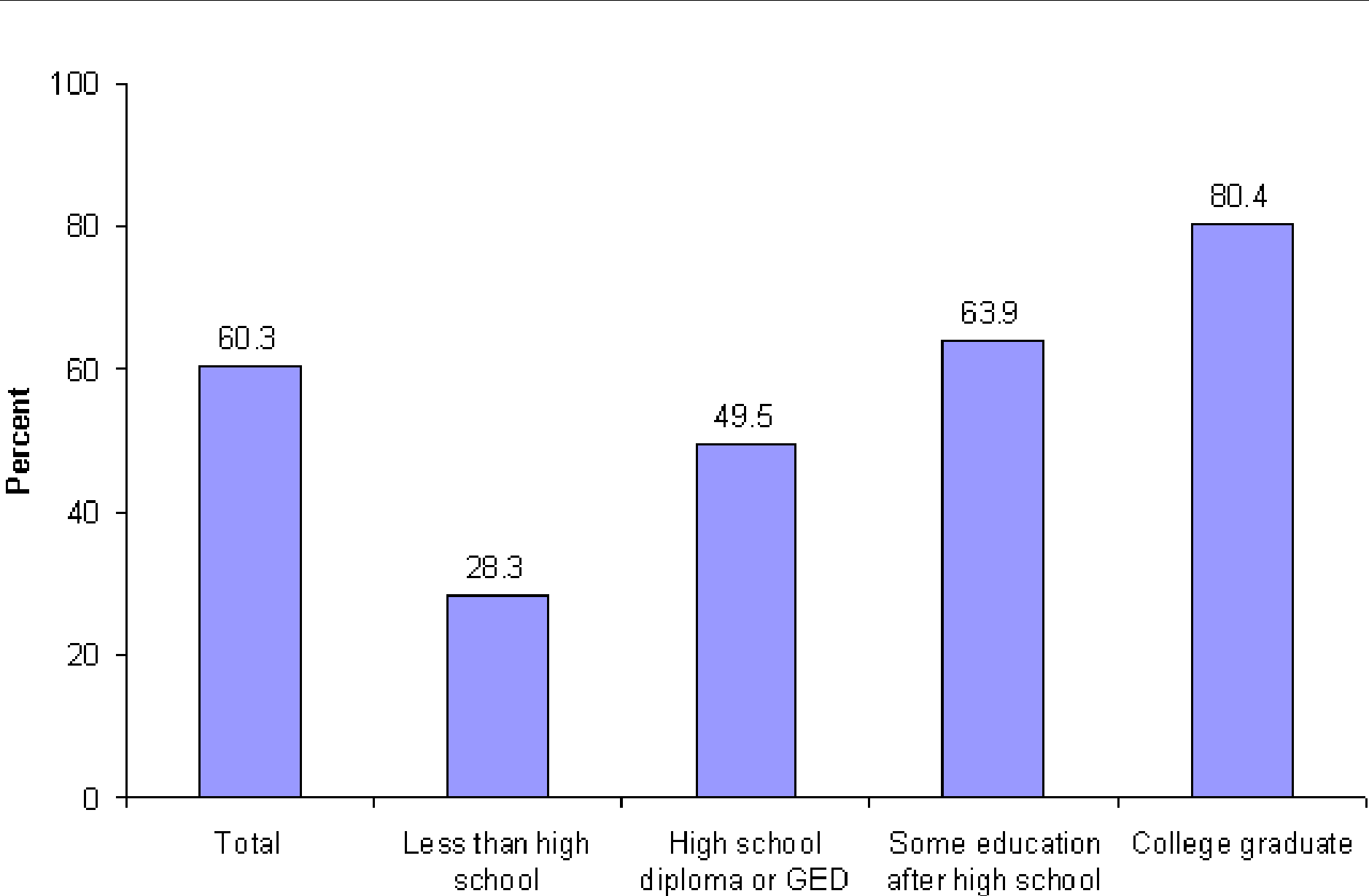


Education Level

- **People with a higher level of education are more likely to vote than people with little or no education**
- More knowledge and understanding of complex political issues and laws
- More knowledge of what the major parties stand for (political ideology = liberal and conservative)



2000 Presidential Election



Voter Turnout by Educational Attainment, 2008 US Presidential Election

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

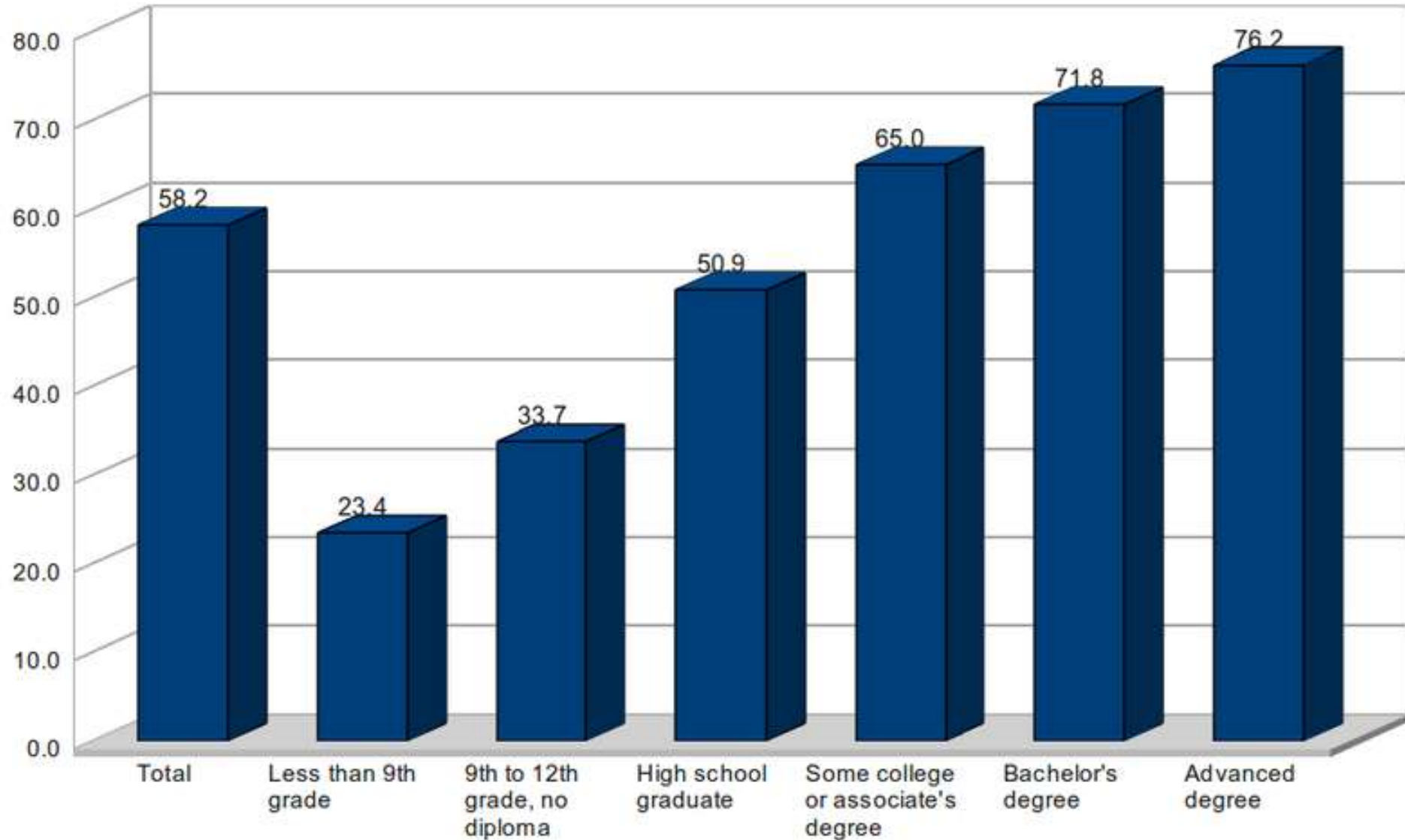
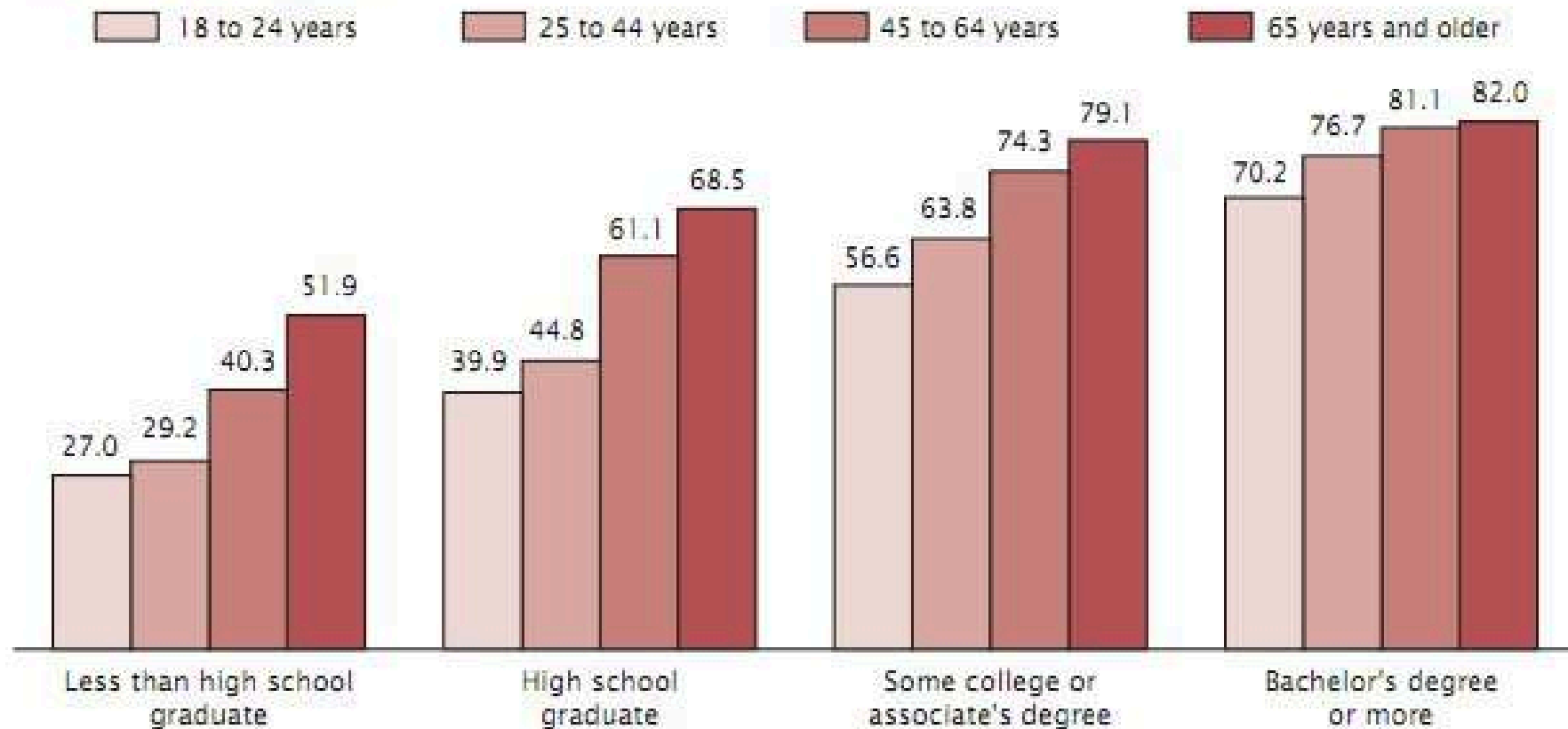


Figure 3.

Voting Rates by Educational Attainment and Age Groups: 2008

(Citizens 18 and older, in percent)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2008.

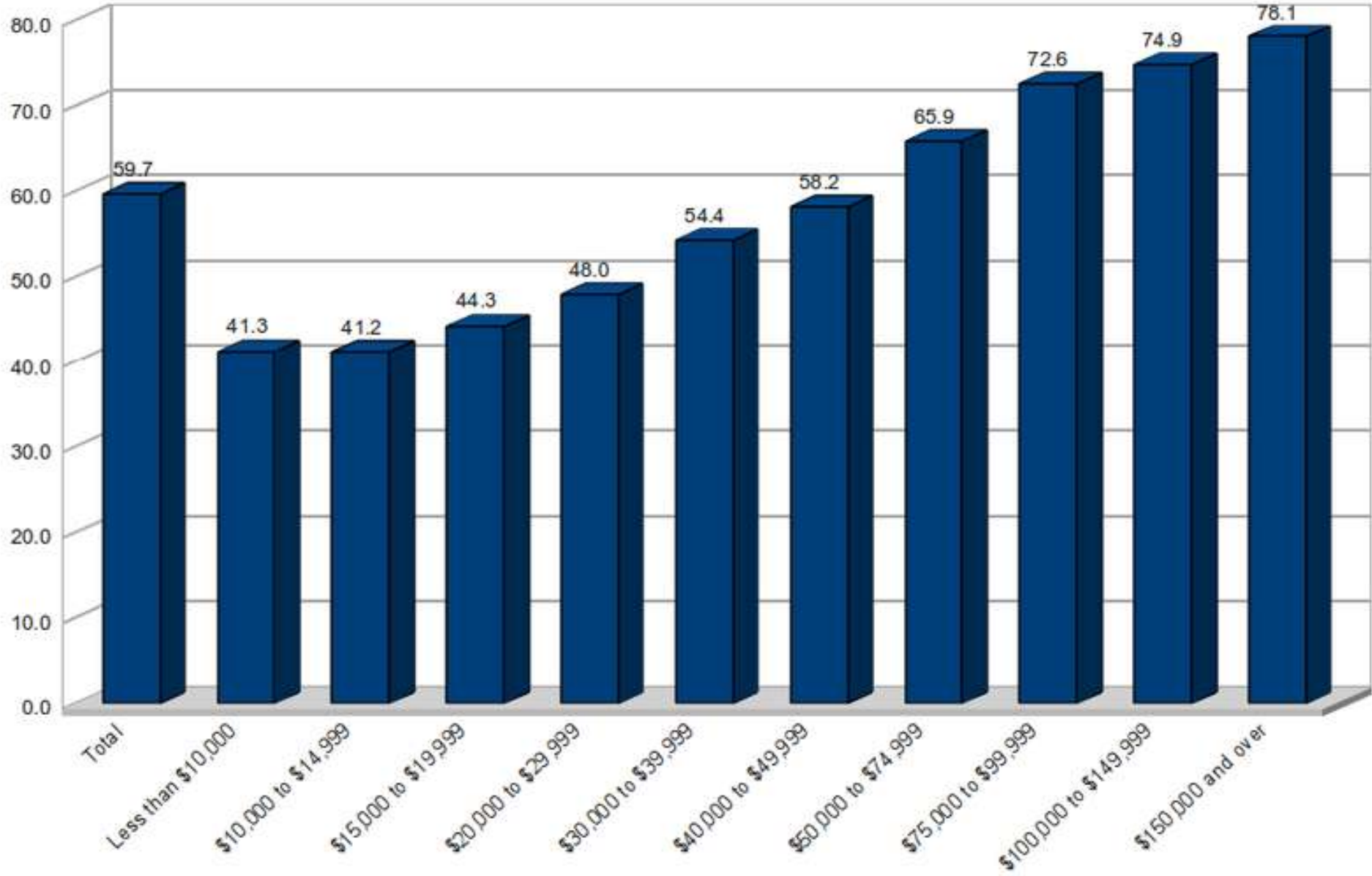
Income

- **People with more income are more likely to vote as compared to people with little or no income**
- Historically, higher income voters tend to vote for Republican candidates, lower income tend to vote for Democrats



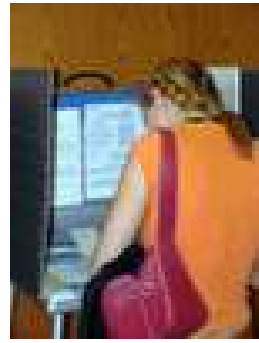
Voter Turnout by Income, 2008 US Presidential Election.

Source: US Census Bureau.



Gender

- **Gender Gap: in modern elections, women have a higher voter turnout than men**
- Historically women have favored the Democratic party

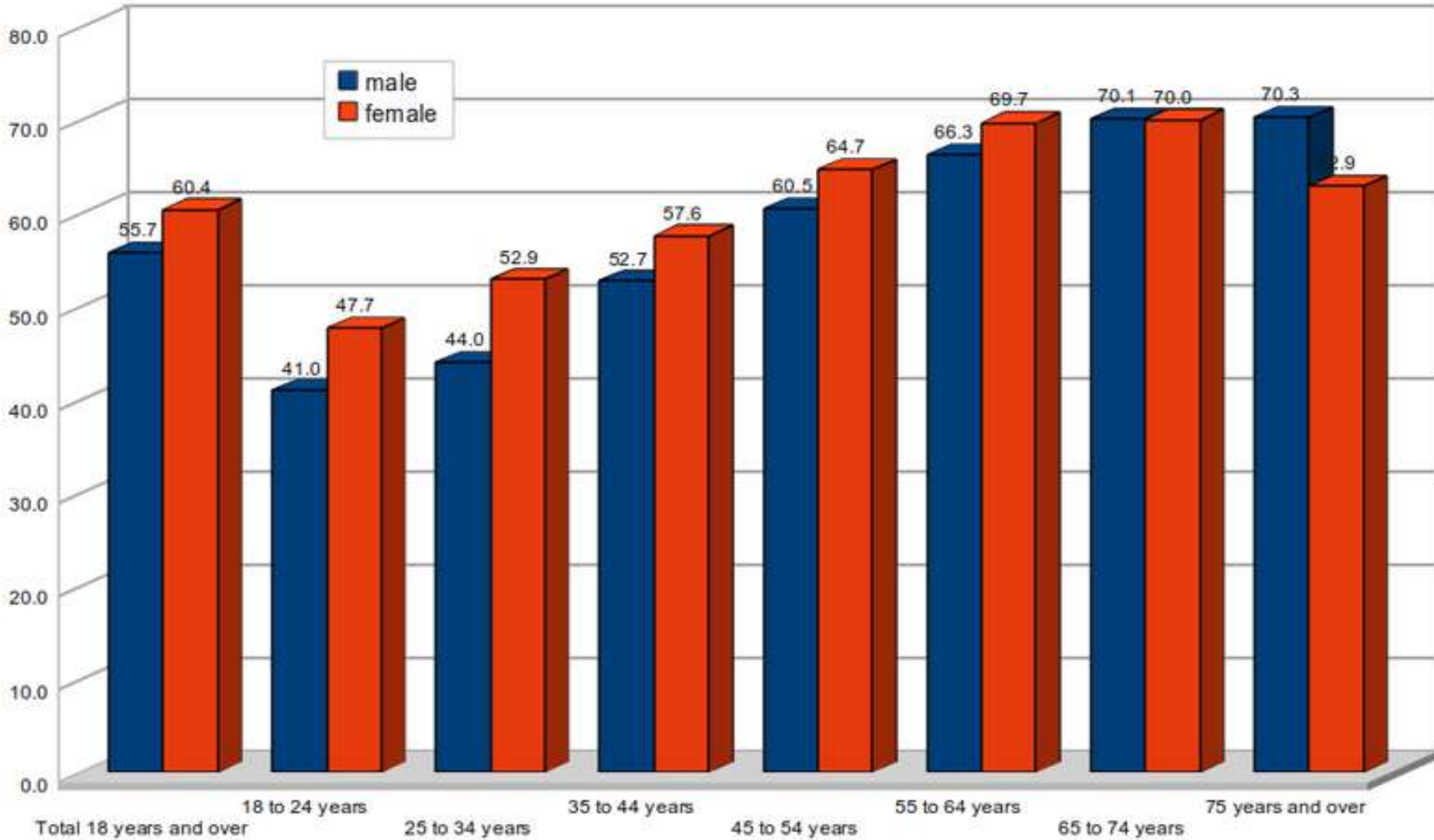


WOMEN'S
SUFFRAGE
at pppst.com



Voter Turnout by Sex and Age, 2008 U.S. Presidential Election.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.



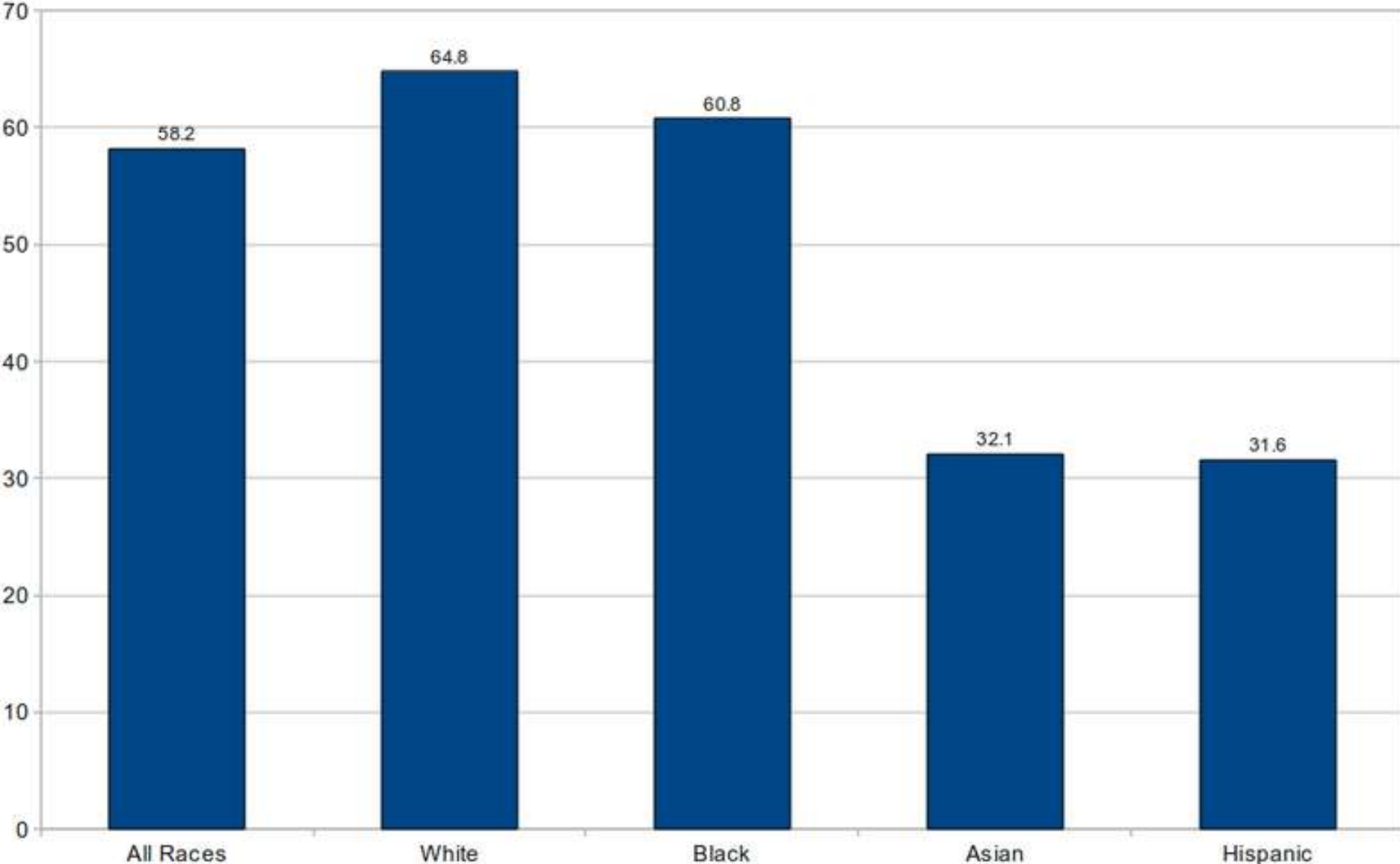
Race

- **White voters have a higher voter turnout than Black, Hispanic, and Asian voters**
- The majority race in the United States is white
- History of discrimination against minority voters

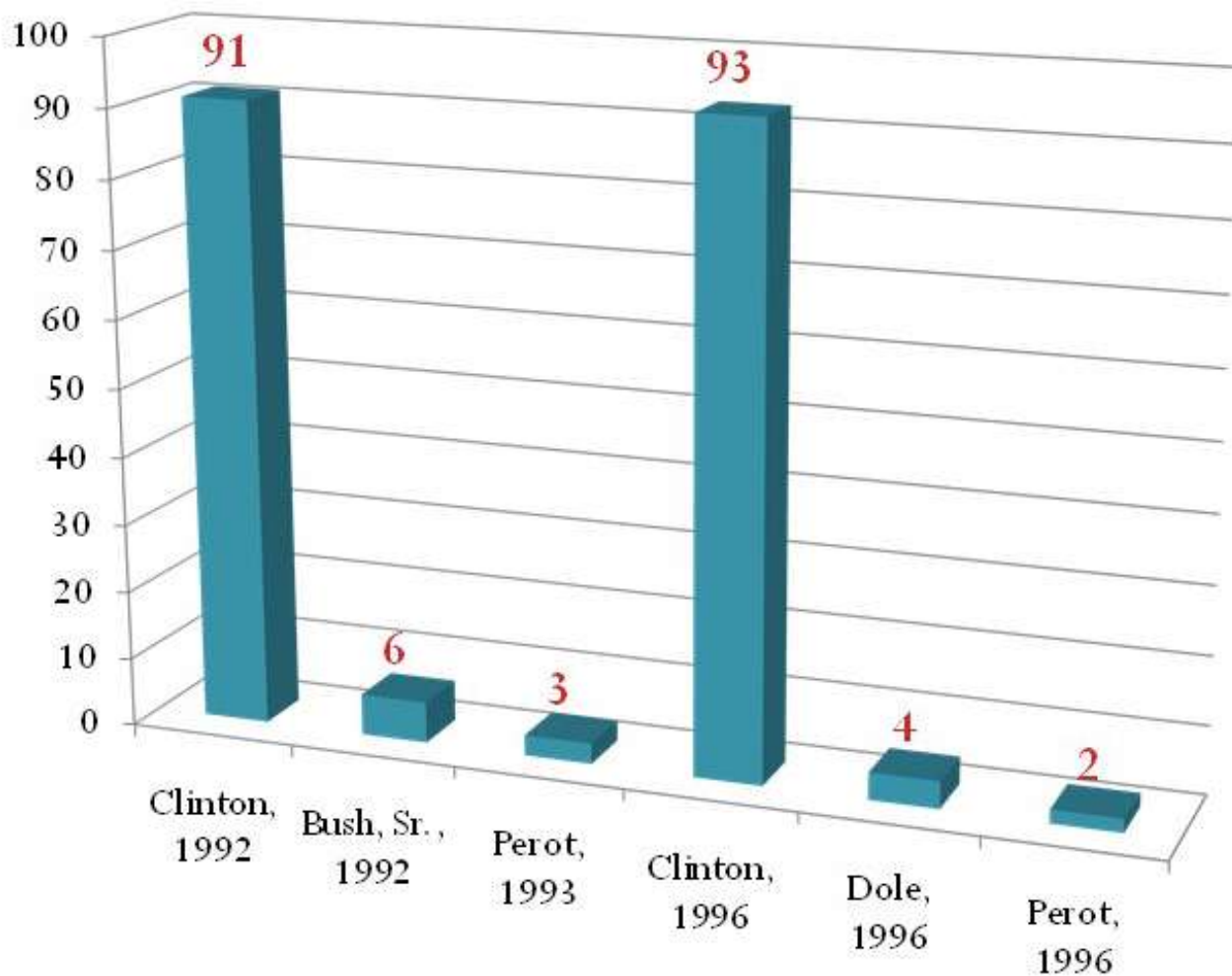


Voter Turnout by Race/Ethnicity, 2008 US Presidential Election.

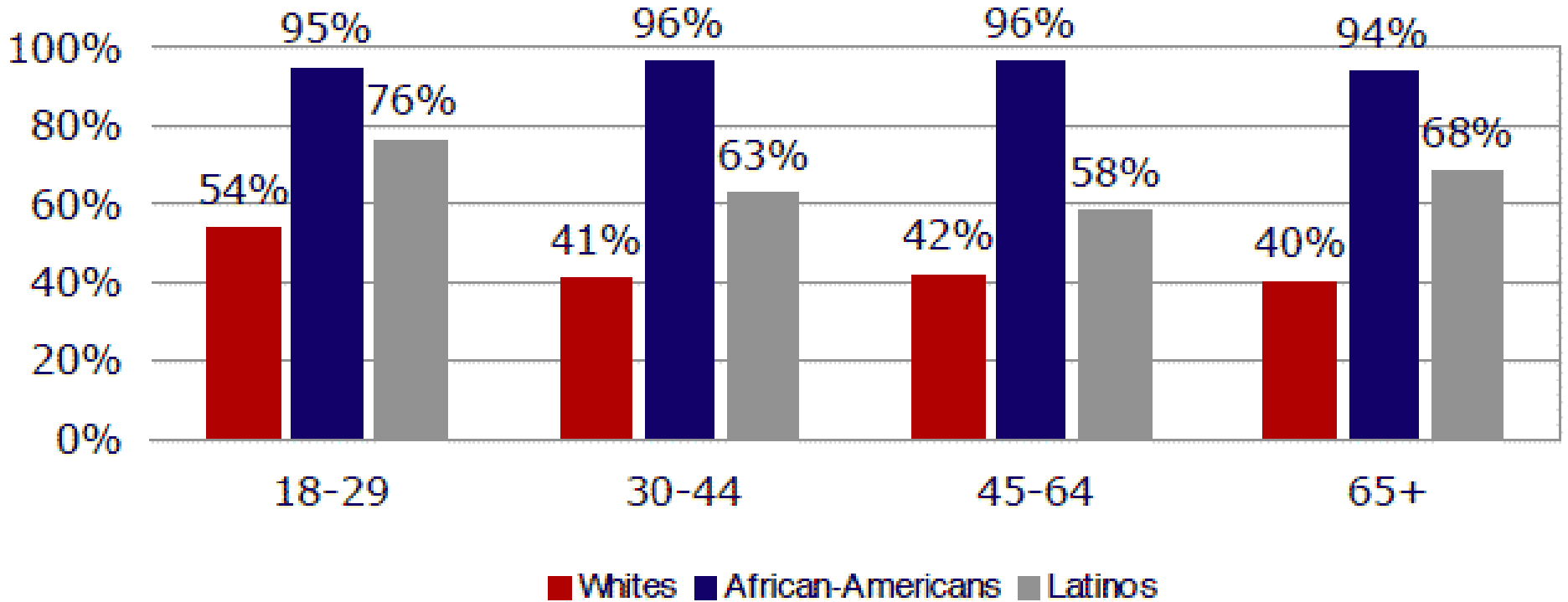
Source: U.S. Census Bureau.



Black Vote in 1992 & 1996 Presidential Election



Percent Voted for Obama by Race and Age



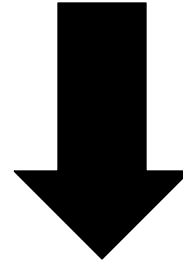
Non-Voting (Key Statistics)

- Only about **55-60%** of the eligible voters actually vote in Presidential elections
- Voter turnout is much lower in non-Presidential elections such as Congressional “Off-year” elections and the Primaries
- Voter turnout in the United States is lower than in most other Western Democracies



Factors that Decrease Voter Turnout

1. Voter Registration Laws
2. Burden of Registration
3. Voter Apathy
4. Frequent Elections, Long Ballot
5. Election Days
6. State Laws
7. Long Lines
8. Satisfaction



Why Vote...it really doesn't matter!

**VOTER
APATHY**



ARE YOU REGISTERED TO
VOTE?

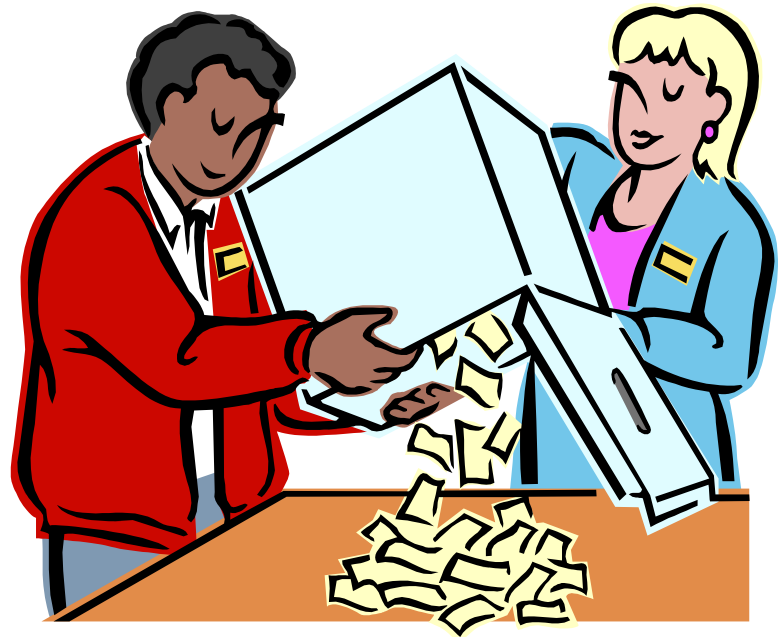
Voter Registration

1. With the exception of North Dakota, all states have voter registration laws
2. Some states require you to register to vote up to **30 days** prior to the election (GA law 26 – 29 days)
3. Before the passage of the NVRA (1993) Motor Voter law, the only way to register was to go to your county voter office
4. If you move, you must change your voter registration



Why Register to Vote?

- Prevents voter fraud
- Ensure that the person meets the requirements to vote
- Maintain voter statistics and identify trends



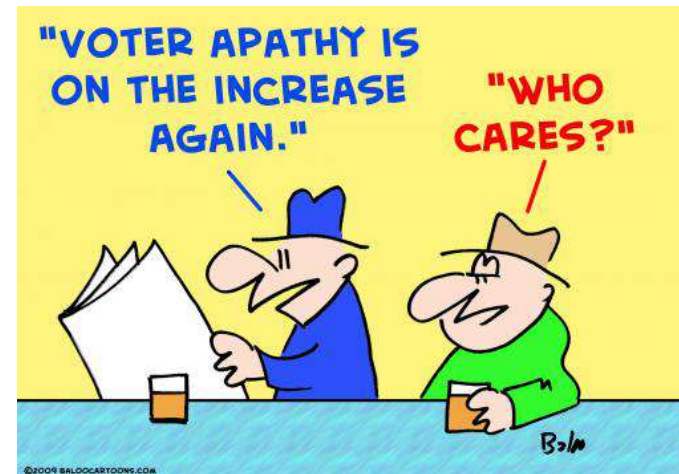
The Burden of Registration

- In the United States, the burden to register to vote rests on the **individual citizen**
- In many European countries, the government automatically registers you to vote when you reach the voting age



Voter Apathy

- A decline in **political efficacy** (the belief that voting makes a difference and matters)
- Not caring about voting, my vote will not make a difference (*lack of political efficacy*)
- A rising level of cynicism and a decline in the trust of government has led to increased voter apathy
- Politics as usual “nothing will change”



Frequent Elections, Long Ballot

- America's ***federal system*** produces more elections than any other democracy (federal, state, local)
- The large number of elections reduces voter turnout by making it difficult for voters to keep up with all the candidates running for office

Federal Elections:

President and VP

US Senate

US House

State Elections:

Governor

LT Governor

Executive Departments

State Senate

State House

Ballot Measures

Local Elections:

Mayor

County Council

Sheriff

City Council

School Board

Ballot Measures

Election Days

- Federal elections for President held on the **Tuesday after the 1st Monday in November** (usually a work day for most people)
- The date and day state's hold their primaries will vary
- For state and local elections, individual states are not required to hold their election on the same date as the federal election



State Laws

- Many states do not allow mentally incompetent people, or people with felony convictions to vote
- Many states require you to be a **resident** of the state up to 30 days in order to vote
- Many states require you to **register** to vote 30 days prior to the election
- Many states have strict voter I.D. laws (Photo I.D.)



Long Lines, Long Wait

- Some polling locations have just a few voting machines and some do not work or have problems on the election day
- Some polling locations have a large number of registered voters assigned to that location making the wait longer
- Some voters wait between 2 - 8 hours to vote



Satisfaction with the way things are

- A belief that non-voting will keep the status quo or keep things the way they are now
- Some people do not vote because they are happy with the way things are going now





Types of Voting



- **Straight Ticket Voting:** person who votes for only candidates of the same political party (example: voting for all Democrats for every office) This type of voting is common for voters who are far right or far left of the political spectrum.
- **Split Ticket Voting:** person who vote for candidates of different parties (example: vote for a Republican for President, but a Democrat for US Senate) This type of voting is common for moderates and independents

