

Name: _____

Pol 231
Assignment 4, Due March 2, 2006

Measuring Turnout

Turnout in an election is measured as the number of votes cast divided by the number of eligible voters. In the United States, the number of eligible voters in each state is estimated by the Census Bureau with a figure called the voting age population (VAP). This includes everyone in a state (or the country) age 18 or older. However, not everyone over 18 is eligible to vote or even to register to vote. Noncitizens cannot vote. Most states also prevent those serving prison terms from voting, and some states do not allow felons who have completed their sentences to vote.

Professor Michael P. McDonald of George Mason University has gathered the information to adjust turnout figures for a variety of concerns and posted his results for the 2004 election on his webpage at http://elections.gmu.edu/Voter_Turnout_2004.htm.

Use the information from McDonald's webpage to answer the following questions. Use the information from the first line listed as "United States"

What is the Voting-Age Population (VAP) of the United States?

What percent of these individuals would be ineligible to vote due to not being citizens? _____

How many individuals currently are serving prison sentences and cannot vote? _____

How many individuals are currently on probation and not eligible to vote? _____

How many individuals are on parole and not eligible to vote? _____

What is the total ineligible felon figure? _____

After making the adjustments for felons and noncitizens (and a few other factors), Professor McDonald computes a new figure for the eligible electorate, which he calls the Voting-Eligible Population (VEP).

What is the voting eligible population (VEP) for the United States? _____

Is this number larger or smaller than the voting age population? _____

Another discrepancy that can occur when calculating turnout in the U.S. is to use the votes cast for the highest office (typically the presidency) rather than using a figure for all ballots cast.

How many votes were cast for the highest office (President) in 2004? _____

How many total votes (labeled total turnout) were cast in 2004? _____

What is the turnout in US election if it is calculated as the number of votes cast for the highest office divided by the voting age population (VAP)? _____

What is turnout in the US election if it is calculated as the number of votes cast for the highest office divided by the voting eligible electorate (VEP)? _____

What is the turnout rate for the US if it is calculated as the total number of votes cast divided by the voting eligible electorate (VEP)? _____

Why is the value of this last number greater than the value for the other two measures of turnout?