

**OneUpAction International**  
Healing the Earth, one action at a time.



# VOTING ACROSS THE WORLD

*WHY IS IT IMPORTANT AND  
HOW IS IT DONE GLOBALLY?*

07

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3 INTRODUCTION
- 4 HISTORY OF VOTING - USA
- 5 HISTORY OF VOTING - GLOBAL
- 6 IMPORTANCE
- 7 COUNTRY VOTING BREAKDOWN
- 9 INTERSECTION
- 10 MORE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
- 11 CITATIONS

# INTRODUCTION

2020 has marked a year of groundbreaking achievements, global difficulties, and multiple twists and turns. Citizens across the world have mobilized to unite and combat issues — Black Lives Matter movements, COVID-19 support, gender justice, environmental justice — and the momentum is still growing.

And the heart of many of these issues in the United States has lied in the pearly white structure and sealed papers: politics. With 38 million young people active in this election, and millions more older participating, much of the new generation has yet to completely grasp an understanding of the local and national political systems. During an era of mobilization and direct action, it is imperative that we educate, incentivize, and act.

This guidebook will concisely describe the history of voting across the world with a focus on the United States, the importance of voting, and its intersection. OneUpAction is dedicated to helping youth, and that begins here.




(David McNew, November 2016)

# history of voting

## United States of America

The American governmental system relies on a democratic structure that provides everyone the right to vote regardless of one's race, gender, socioeconomic status, or ethnicity. However, it has been a long fight full of suppression that still continues today, for the right to vote for every American. For some historical background here is the progression of the fight to vote for every American.

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- 1789 Just 6% of those in New America were eligible to vote to elect the first president, George Washington.
  - 1856 North Carolina became the last state to remove property ownership as a requirement for voting, meaning all white men could vote by this time.
  - 1870 The 15th Amendment prevents federal or state governments from denying the right to vote to citizens based on race.
  - 1920 The 19th Amendment grants suffrage to women, but not all Native American and Asian women have citizenship.
  - 1924 The Indian Citizenship Act is passed, giving Native Americans full citizenship, but many states still disenfranchise them at the polls.
  - 1952 The McCarran-Walter Act grants all Asian Americans the right to become citizens and vote.
  - 1961 The 23rd Amendment gives residents of the District of Columbia the right to vote for presidents, but not Congressional representation.
  - 1965 Congress passes the historic Voting Rights Act, removing discriminatory barriers that kept many people of color from voting.
    - The 2013 Supreme Court decision in *Shelby County v. Holder* rolled back the pre-clearance provision of Section 5 the VRA, which no longer required counties with histories of racial discrimination to be "covered" under the act.
  - 1971 The voting age is lowered from 21 to 18 in light of the Vietnam War to ensure that those old enough to fight could vote.
  - 2000 A federal court rules that citizens of US territories like Puerto Rico and Guam cannot vote in federal elections.



# history of voting

## Globally

The history of voting begins during the **Greek Empire**, specifically in Athens, Greece, where the first democracy was established by its people. However, only free male citizens were guaranteed the right to vote and representation in government.

The right to vote was then transformed and adapted during the **Roman Republic** when the monarch was overthrown. As empires began to expand and civilizations continued to develop and flourish, **England established the Magna Carta in 1215** by the King John of England.

Through the foundational democracies established over the past couple of centuries, philosophers during the **Enlightenment**, which occurred during the 17th and 18th centuries, began to establish the fundamental principles of voting rights and democracy.

After the Enlightenment Period, individuals across the world realized the importance of representation and freedom of speech within their governments, which led to **a wave of revolutions led by the Proletariats**, or the working class, who demanded for democracies and rights.

For example **in 1789, the French revolution** occurred to combat the injustices being directed by the upper class citizens. And, inspired by their French occupiers who did not fulfil the promise of freedom, **in 1791, the Haitian Revolution** began and the enslaved people of Haiti demanded freedom from slavery and justice, leading to the development of the first Black republic in 1804.

Political action, voter suppression, and injustice have existed since time immemorial. However, these events prove that **it does not need to be this way today**.

# importance of voting

Voting is an intrinsic right that is necessary for every single person on earth regardless of where you live.

Installing a democracy that is composed of people representative of the region is impertinent to having just representation and just elections. For centuries, countries and individuals have fought for democracies around the world to ensure that everyone's voices are heard. **It is essential to exercise your right to vote if you live in a society that has a democracy.** The lengths that people have gone to secure your right are extreme as lives were lost within the fight. Voting today will ensure that all voices are heard when policies are implemented, which will affect your daily lives. From gun laws to healthcare, your vote impacts what policies are made.

**Voter suppression**, however, has prevented millions of people living in "democratic" countries from voicing their opinion and acting on their given rights. Citizens across the world from the United States to India and South Africa have been forced to wait in excruciatingly long lines because "no other option is available from the government" or have had their votes ruled illegitimate because of a small mark or hour delay in submission. It is important to note that the fight for democracy and equality is still not over, despite centuries of work, and that we must unite as a globe to combat it.



(John Schneider, 2011)

## COUNTRY BREAKDOWN

### The United States

#### Voter Turn Out

- In the 2020 general election, there was a 73.7% turnout which was the highest in 210 years.
- 239 million people were eligible to vote and over 160 million people voted in the 2020 election.
- However, this came nothing close to the record turnout that was recorded in 1876, when 81.8 percent of voters cast their ballot. That election was between Republican Rutherford B. Hayes and Democratic opponent Samuel Tilden.

#### Voter Suppression

- More than 6 million Americans in 2016 were prohibited from voting due to a felony conviction, according to the Sentencing Project. That included more than 20 percent of all potential Black voters in Florida, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia at the time.

### India

#### Voter Turn Out

- In the 2019 election, 830 million people were eligible to vote. Only 550 million people casted their ballots which is less than two-thirds.

#### Voter Suppression

- There are one million polling stations, meaning that is is a logistical challenge for people to go vote. Without clear directions, locations, or assignments, this decreases the amount of votes and voices being input in this impertinent decision

#### Representation

- There are 464 political parties, which suggests that representation is essential. It also highlights that every Indian's political beliefs are represented on the ballot, and on just a select few.

# COUNTRY BREAKDOWN

## South Africa

### Voter Turn Out

- In 2019, 10 million South Africans who are eligible to vote weren't at the ballot stations because they did not register.
- However, registered voters in 2019 increased to 26.7 million, and the eligible population has increased to about 35.9 million.

### Voter Suppression

- From the beginning of European occupation, white settlers denied the native African majority economic and political power. Only members of the white minority could vote and hold political office.
- In the 1970s, the white South African government established tribal "homelands" in the poorest parts of the country, depriving Black people their South African citizenship.
- Apartheid may have ended, but the power imbalance between white and Black South Africans is still posing problems in voting access and representation.



## Mexico

### Voter Turn Out

- All Mexican citizens above 18 years old are required vote, but enforcement is nonexistent
- Voter turn out is typically 60%

### Representation

- The top political party is the Institutional Revolutionary Party.
  - The PRI was in charge from 1929 until the late 20th century (creating a one-party system as they never lost a presidential election). It was suggested that the PRI rigged votes.



# intersection of voting

Exercising one's right to vote ties directly to helping stop the climate crisis from accelerating and getting worse.

My registering to vote and going to the polls wherever you live ensures that politicians and policies will be put in place to help stop the climate crisis from intensifying. Voting is essential to implementing direct policies that will protect every single one of us from the dangers and effects of climate change. Politicians can give funding to cities that experience increased flooding and storms due to climate change or provide subsidies, money given by the government to citizens to help pay for electric cars and solar panels.

Political action from citizens can help all of us stop climate change. For those who can, all it takes is registering yourself, friends, and family to vote.



(Stephanie Ott, 2016)

# resources to explore

2016 U.S. Election Examination of Voting:

<https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2018/08/09/an-examination-of-the-2016-electorate-based-on-validated-voters/>

Young Adult Voting Analysis: <https://www.census.gov/prod/2014pubs/p20-573.pdf>

2020 Young Voting: <https://www.npr.org/2020/09/12/909131065/will-2020-be-the-year-of-the-young-voter>

Young Voter Turnouts: <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/early-natl-data-shows-strong-turnout-of-young-voters-301158912.html>

Why Vote?: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mms1zJe1Bm0>

Virginia House Single Vote Difference:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/19/us/virginia-house-of-delegates-single-vote.html>

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