



AP[®] United States Government & Politics 2002 Sample Student Responses

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In the last half of the twentieth century, the percentage of eligible voters voting in federal elections has declined greatly. In addition, many more voters tend to vote in presidential elections than in midterm elections. There are many reasons for both the decline in overall voter turnout and the low rate for midterm elections.

Since the years of the Vietnam War, the people's mistrust in the government has ~~increased drastically~~ been on the rise, but after the Watergate scandal, it increased drastically. The people have no trust in the government, and are thus less likely to vote. If all politicians are crooked, the voters do not want to aid them.

During this same period, the population's sense of external efficacy, the degree to which people believe they can have an effect on the government, has declined as well. Although the voters' sense of internal efficacy, the degree to which they can comprehend the issues at stake, is still high, many people do not vote simply because they believe their vote cannot affect anything.

The media has played a critical role in the declining voter turnout for midterm elections as opposed to presidential elections. Presidential campaigns receive a greater ~~total~~ amount of media coverage, and thus visibility, to the voting

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public. A greater proportion of voters being aware and concerned with the issues results in a higher voter turnout.

In addition, the high incumbency rates of Congressmen leads voters to think they can not affect the election results. Over 90% of House incumbents are re-elected, and 90% of Senators as well. In contrast, the President is restricted by law to no more than ten years in office, and the people feel that in that arena, their vote may be felt.

The decline in voter turnout is not ~~not~~ President due, as President Carter stated, to "the growing malaise of the American people," but rather to a declining sense of external efficacy and a growing mistrust in the federal government.

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Scholars have offered a plethora of reasons for the decline in voter turnout over the years. One factor is that Americans have become more apathetic towards government, and feel that their one vote will not affect ~~how~~ the election outcome. A second explanation is that US citizens are actually content with how the government is run, and therefore feel no compelling force to go and vote to change things. A third reason is that in recent years, there has been no large political movements, such as the civil rights movement in the 1960s, that compell persons in large numbers to flock to the polls to change how government is run.

A reason why voter turnout has been higher in presidential elections than midterm elections is that presidential elections receive much more media attention. With the aid of federal matching funds, presidential candidates have a much greater sum of money to spend on advertising + promotion ~~than~~ than do Congressional candidates. In addition to this, voters feel that presidential elections are much more important than mid-term elections because a president has a much greater chance of single-handedly influencing political decisions.

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There are a number of reasons why voter turnout for federal elections is significantly lower. Let's look at a few of them.

First of all, and maybe the most important reason, is that people just don't care anymore. Mid-term elections usually end up just re-electing the same candidates back into office year after year, and there are not normally any large issues, so people just let others do it.

Another reason for decreasement is that many people are just too busy. Voting is quite far down on their list of priorities. The last thing many people want to do when they get home from a hard day at work is get up, drive to the election booth place, stand in line for 20 minutes, vote, then go all the way back home, which depending where they live, could be for a way.

However, we are also seeing a great rise in voting for presidential elections. ~~The~~ ~~most~~ The most obvious reason ~~is~~ for that is that in more recent years, we have seen a large increase in the number of major issues that presidential candidates push for. Things such as abortion, social security, and taxes all come up, and many groups of people, such as different churches want to vote, to influence the outcomes.

Another reason for the increase is that, with the advancements of technology, and communications, people become more informed about candidates and their policies. This information provides them with incentives for voting by finding out about some of the issues listed above.

Voting in elections is important to our society,

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because if some people don't the decisions made don't reflect the whole country, that's why it's important to learn about the candidates and their issues, so you can put your mark, in american government.