



Voters and Voter Behavior

Chapter 6

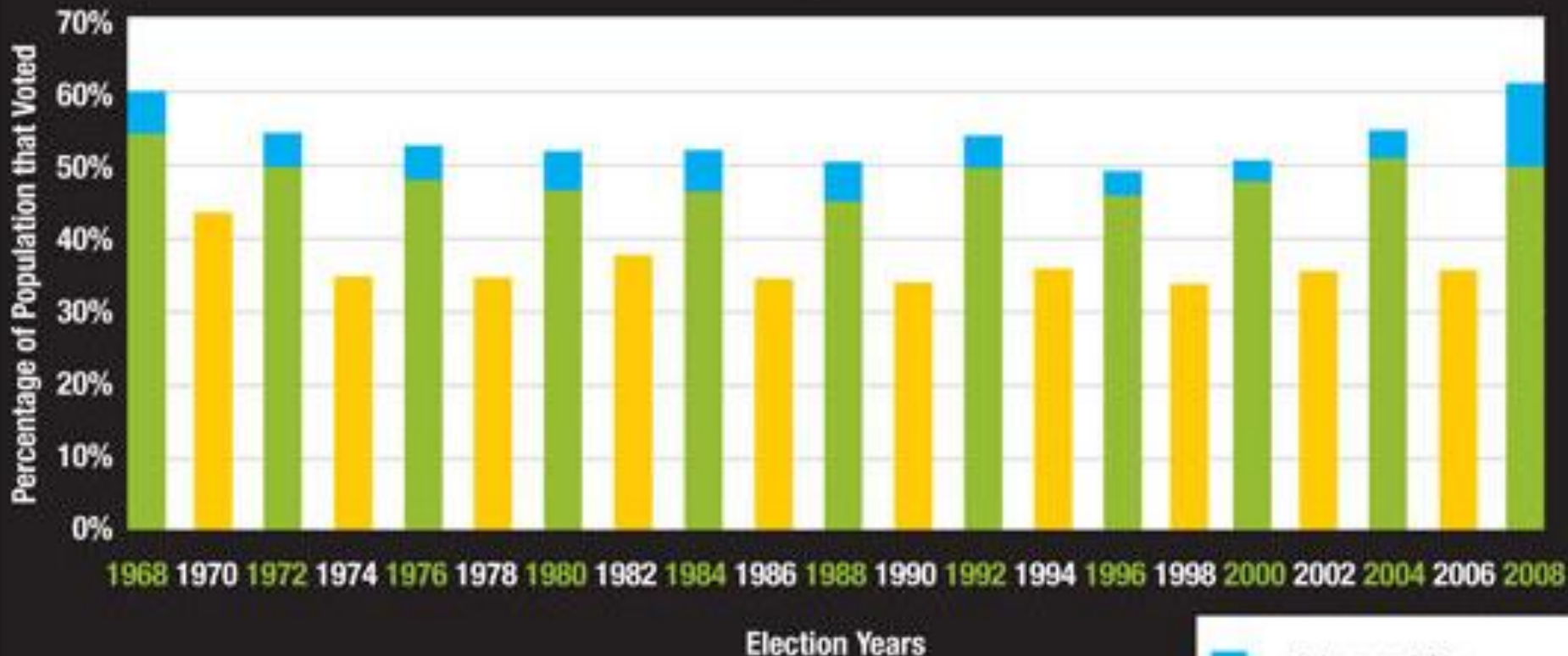
Section 4

VOTER BEHAVIOR

Nonvoting

- The word idiot comes from the Greek *idiotes* – citizens who do not vote or participate in public life.
 - 2008 there were appx 228 million eligible voters and only 131 (60%) participants.
 - Voters tend to turn out in smaller number for off-year elections. (national elections for congress in which a presidential seat is not open for election)
 - *Ballot fatigue* – the lower the level of office, the lower level of voter participation
 - nonvoting voters – are those who choose to cast a ballot for some officials and not cast a ballot for others.

Voter Turnout, 1968–2008



SOURCES: Statistical Abstract of the United States; Federal Election Commission; Clerk of the House of Representatives

-  Votes cast for President
-  Votes cast for U.S. Representatives during presidential elections
-  Votes cast for U.S. Representatives

Why People Do Not Vote

- Cannot-Voters – Included in the number of non-voters some people who cannot cast a ballot.
 - Resident aliens (10 million)
 - Ill or physically disabled (5-6 million)
 - Unexpectedly traveling for work or family (2-3 million)
 - Mental health facility patients (.5 million)
 - Incarcerated individuals (2 million)
 - Religious adherents who's religion forbids voting (.1 million)
 - Racial or religious discrimination through 1. the purposeful administration of election laws or 2. local pressures that prevent people from voting.

Actual Nonvoters

- This still leaves 80 million American voters who were eligible to cast ballots who did not.
 - People who are largely pleased with government no matter who is in office
 - People who are largely dissatisfied with government no matter who is in office.
 - People with little political efficacy – who don't think their vote has an impact.
 - Inconvenience of election requirements and processes
 - Voter indifference

Voters v Nonvoters

Voters

- Voters tend to have higher levels of income, education, and occupational status.
- Tend to be long time residents
- Tend to have strong party identification
- Likely to live in areas where laws, customs, and competition promote turnout.

Nonvoters

- Younger than 35, unmarried, and unskilled.
- Tend to be from the south or rural areas.
- People with low political efficacy.

Voters and Voting Behavior

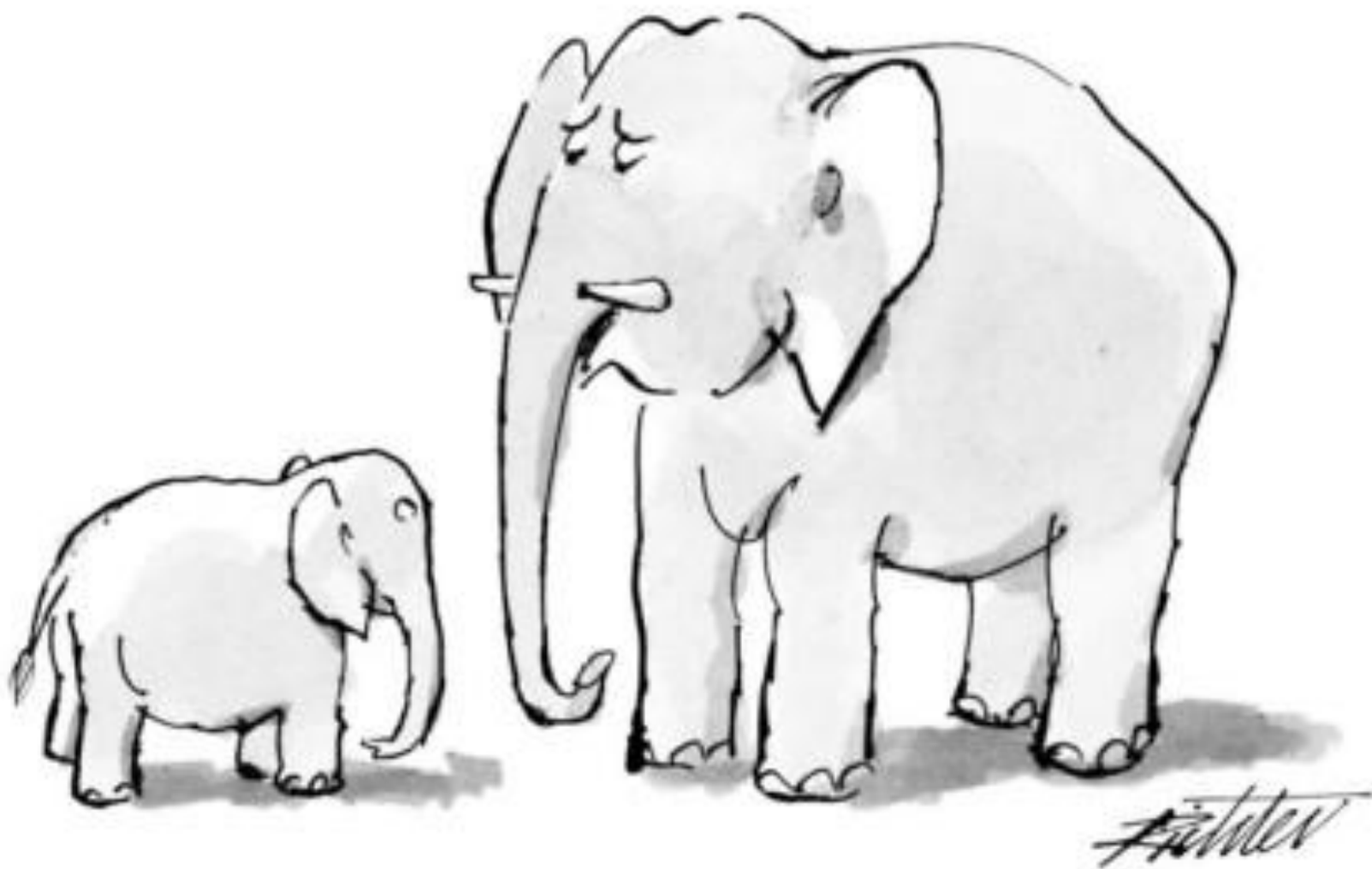
- Three sources of info about voter behavior
 - Election results
 - Survey research
 - Studies of political socialization (the process by which people gain their political attitudes and opinions)
- Social factors
 - Voters' personal characteristics (age, race, income, occupation, education, religion, etc)
 - Voters' group affiliations (family, friends, co-workers)
- Psychological factors
 - Perceptions of politics, issues, candidates

Sociological Factors

- Income and Occupation
 - Lower income tend to vote Democratic; High income tend to vote Republican
 - Professional and business people tend to vote Republican; laborers tend to vote Democratic.
- Education
 - Higher education levels tend to favor Republicans except for among post-baccalaureate degree holders.
- Gender, Age
 - Women generally favor Democrats, studies show this is reversed amongst many married, white women.
 - Young voters tend to vote for Democrats.

Sociological Factors cont...

- Religion, Ethnic Background
 - Protestants tend to vote for the Republican candidate; Catholics and Jews tend to support Democrats.
 - African Americans vote for Democrats in overwhelming majorities; Native Americans and Latinos tend to support Democrats also.
- Geography
 - Southerners vote for Republicans
 - Urban areas tend to favor Democrats; Suburban areas tend to favor Republicans; Rural areas tend to favor Republicans.
- Family and other Groups
 - 90% of married couples vote in the same ways
 - 2/3 of voters follow the political leanings of their parents.
 - Groups of friends tend to favor similar political views.



"Yes, son, we're Republicans."

Question?

- How would a 55 year old African American with a bachelor's degree who is a member of the AFL-CIO vote?

Group Voting, 2008 Presidential Election

► **Analyzing Charts** This chart reports the voting behavior of several major segments of the American electorate in the most recent presidential election. As you analyze this data, remember that every voter belongs to not just one, but all of these groups. *How might a 45-year-old, college-educated, Hispanic woman who makes \$60,000 per year vote? Explain your reasoning.*

	GROUPS (percentage of total)	REPUBLICAN	DEMOCRATIC
	All voters (100%)*	45%	53%
GENDER Women vote Democratic more often than men.	Men (46%)	48%	49%
	Women (54%)	43%	56%
RACE African Americans vote heavily Democratic.	White (74%)	55%	43%
	African American (13%)	4%	95%
	Latino/a (9%)	31%	67%
	Asian (2%)	35%	62%
AGE Older people vote more heavily Republican.	18–29 years (18%)	32%	66%
	30–44 years (29%)	46%	52%
	45–64 years (37%)	49%	50%
	65 years (16%)	53%	45%
INCOME People with higher incomes tend to vote Republican.	Less than \$50,000/year (38%)	38%	60%
	\$50,000 or more/year (62%)	49%	49%
EDUCATION Republican voting tends to increase with level of education.	No high school (4%)	35%	63%
	High school graduate (20%)	46%	52%
	Some college (31%)	47%	51%
	College graduate (28%)	48%	50%
	Postgraduate study (17%)	40%	58%
PARTY IDENTIFICATION Most significant predictor of how one will vote.	Democratic (39%)	10%	89%
	Republican (32%)	90%	9%
	Independent (29%)	44%	52%



Psychological Factors

- Party Identification
 - Voters tend to identify with a particular party early in life and then continue to support that party and its candidates throughout their life.
 - Voting for candidates of only one party is known as straight-ticket voting.
 - Split-ticket voting – voting for candidates of more than one party is increasing.
 - Perhaps due to the large number of independent voters.
- Candidates and Issues
 - Candidates and their ability to attract voters as well as important national issues impact voting behavior.