**Voter Turnout**

**Teacher directions: The quote below is from page 257 from the HS teacher’s edition. Have students read this quote and highlight or write down any terms they don’t understand. Students will discuss with a neighbor possible meanings. Students reread the quote and explain in own words. For discussion: would this election cycle support this statement? Why or why not?**

Political scientist Michael X. Delli Carpini and public affairs analyst Scott Keeter argue as follows:

Campaigns and elections are intended as periods of public deliberation and as broad referenda on the state of American society….The quality and range of this dialectic depends on the quality of the periodic national conversations….The public’s knowledge of politics sets up the parameters of public discourse. The less informed citizens are, the more likely that campaigns will devolve into sensationalism and demagoguery, as the media and political leaders play for the public’s lesser instincts or seek to capitalize on their inability to distinguish between fact and fiction.

**NY Times 2016 Primary Election Turnout:** <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/08/01/us/elections/nine-percent-of-america-selected-trump-and-clinton.html?_r=1>

* **What does the chart show?**
* **Why is it important?**

**SC Voter Turnout:** [**https://www.facingsouth.org/2016/03/2016-elections-gop-turnout-soars-democratic-turnou**](https://www.facingsouth.org/2016/03/2016-elections-gop-turnout-soars-democratic-turnou)

* **What does the chart show?**
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**Discussion question: what have you learned about voter turnout? Is this a problem for democracy?**

**Critical Thinking Exercise (page 258 in old HS book is typed below)**

**How can greater voter participation be encouraged?**

The United States Census Bureau compiles voting statistics. According to the Bureau,

* Between 1960 and 2004 turnout of voting age citizens in elections for national officials ranged from a low of 36.4% (1998 and 1986) to a high of 63.1% (1960). Turnout typically was lower in state elections and dramatically lower in local elections.
* Non-Hispanic whites had the highest level of voter turnout in the November 2004 election (67%), followed by the African Americans (60%), Hispanics (47%), and Asian Americans (44%). More native-born citizens vote than naturalized.
* At each successive level of educational attainment, voting rates increase.
* The voting rate is highest among citizens age 55 and older and among those with annual household incomes greater than $50,000 per year.
* Young adults had the lowest voting rate in 2004 but the greatest increase in rate since 2000.

In small groups, respond to the following questions and be prepared to discuss your responses with the class.

1. What factors might account for higher rates of turnout among older, better-educated, wealthier voters than among other types of voters?
2. What might be done to improve voting rates among younger voters?
3. To encourage voting among many counties throughout the US are printing ballots in languages other than English if their area has large numbers of registered voters for whom English is not their first language. Is this a good policy? Why or why not?
4. What factors might explain why voter turnout is lowest for the units of government closest to the people? What steps could be taken to increase voter turnout in state and local elections?
5. Some localities permit resident aliens to vote in local elections. What are the advantages and disadvantages of doing so?