



Voter Turnout Overview

2016 Results

League of Women Voters of Texas
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Data sources begin on page 8.

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The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, political organization of volunteers who believe that our representative democracy needs citizens involved in public decisions. Citizens can influence government policies and decisions that affect their lives by participating in politics, particularly voting and contacting their elected officials.

"Let each person do his or her part. If one citizen is unwilling to participate, all of us are going to suffer. For the American dream, though it is shared by all of us, is realized in each one of us."



LWVTexas.org

Barbara C. Jordan

Voting Eligible Population^a Turnout, 2016 Presidential Election

UNITED STATES	TEXAS
Percent Voter Turnout, 2016 Voting Eligible Population	
59%	51%
Short-Term Trend in Voter Turnout, 2012-2016 Voting Eligible Population	
Increased 0.2% in 4 years, 58.6%–58.8% Increased 1.6% in 4 years, 49.6%–51.2%	
Long-Term Trend in Voter Turnout, 1996-2016 Citizen Voting Age Population ^{b,c}	
Increased 1% in 20 years, 58%–59% Declined 2% in 20 years, 52%–50%	
Short-Term Trend in Voter Registration, 2012-2016 Voting Eligible Population	
Increased nearly 20% in 4 years, 69%–87% Increased 1% in 4 years, 85%–86%	
Gap Between Those Who Registered & Those Who Voted Voting Eligible Population	
Large: 28%	Larger: 35%

^a Voting eligible population (VEP) = voting age citizens not serving punishment for a felony.

^b Citizen voting age population (CVAP) = voting age citizens. CVAP was used because 1996 VEP data is not available for Texas.

^c If the CVAP rate were adjusted for percentage of the population serving punishment for a felony, the rate would be slightly higher. For the U.S., this adjustment changes the long-term trend from an increase of 1% to an increase of 7%.

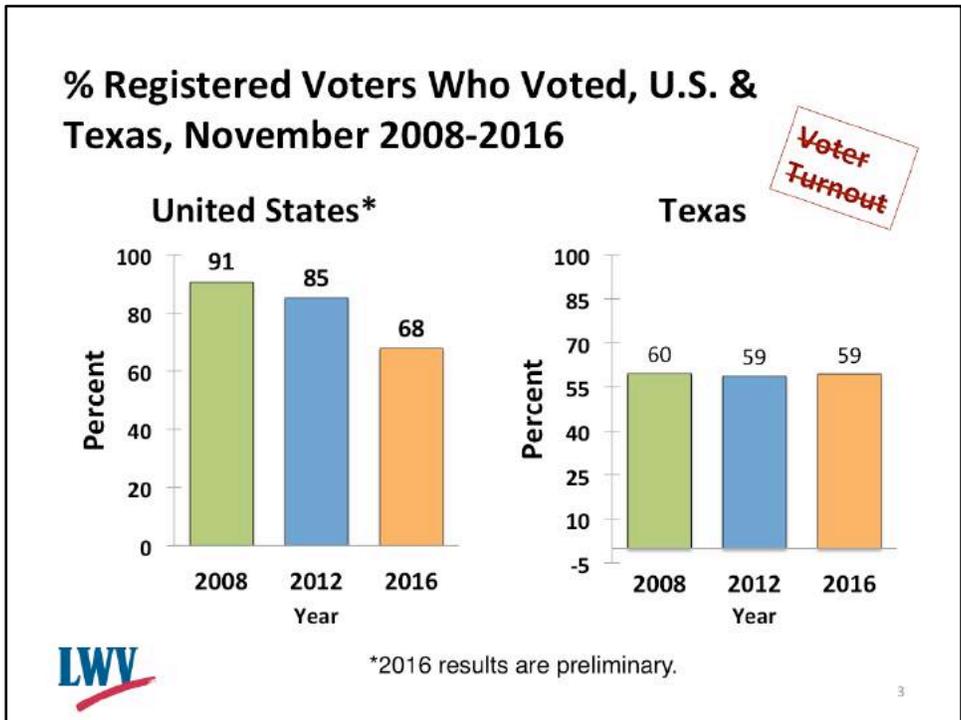
Top 5 States VEP Turnout for President 2016

- 1 – 74.1% Minnesota
- 2 – 71.5% New Hampshire
- 3 – 70.7% Maine
- 4 – 69.9% Colorado
- 5 – 69.3% Wisconsin

Bottom 5 States VEP Turnout for President 2016

- 46 – 52.0% Oklahoma
- 47** – 51.21% Texas
- 48 – 51.18% Tennessee
- 49 – 49.9% West Virginia
- 50 – 41.7% Hawaii

Data sources begin on page 8.



- The voter turnout rate commonly used by elections officials is the percentage of registered voters who voted in an election. While easy to calculate, it is not a valid measure of voter turnout. This is because the pool of registered voters does not include all eligible voters (missing are those eligible but not registered) and can be affected by changes in voter registration requirements. For example:
 - In Oregon automatic voter registration was in effect for the first time in the 2016 presidential election. Comparing November 2012 to 2016: The number of registered voters increased 17%, but the percentage of registered voters who voted decreased 4.9%. However, turnout among the voting eligible population increased 3.5%.*
 - For the United States as a whole, the number of registered voters increased by 30% from 2012 to 2016, increasing the voter registration pool. So without a comparable increase in voter turnout for this election, the turnout among registered voters decreased dramatically. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013; Whitaker, 2016 [see p. 9 for complete citation])
- The best measure of voter turnout is the proportion of the voting eligible population that voted. Eligible voters are mentally competent, voting age citizens not serving punishment for a felony. Because there is no available nationwide or state by state measure of population mental competency, the voting age population is adjusted only for noncitizens and ineligible felons.

***Oregon Data Sources**

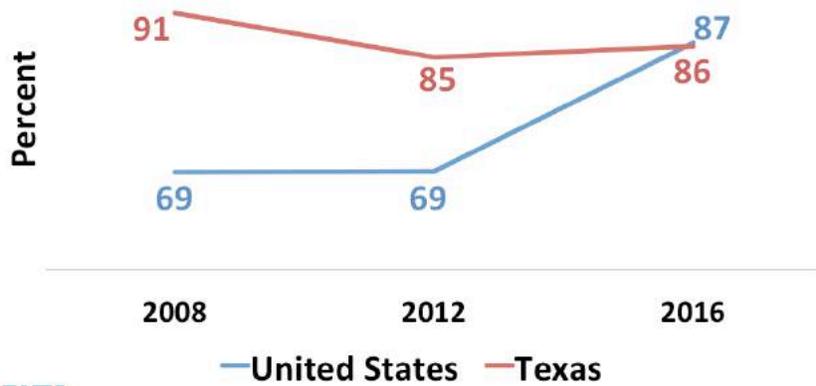
Oregon Secretary of State. (n.d.). Voter turnout history for general elections. *Election statistics: Voter registrations and election participation*. Retrieved November 21, 2016, from <http://sos.oregon.gov/elections/Pages/electionsstatistics.aspx>

Oregon Secretary of State. (2016, November 7). *Election statistics: Voter registrations and election participation*. Retrieved December 20, 2016, from <http://sos.oregon.gov/elections/Pages/electionsstatistics.aspx> (# registered voters 2016; registered voter turnout 2012)

U.S. Elections Project. (2014, September 3). 2012 November general election voter turnout [Data file]. Retrieved November 10, 2016, from www.electproject.org/2012g (VEP turnout 2012 Oregon)

U.S. Elections Project. (2016, November 10). 2016 November general election voter turnout [Data file]. Retrieved December 20, 2016, from <http://www.electproject.org/2016g> (# VEP and VEP turnout 2016 Oregon)

Voter Registration Rate (% VEP*), United States and Texas, November 2008-2016

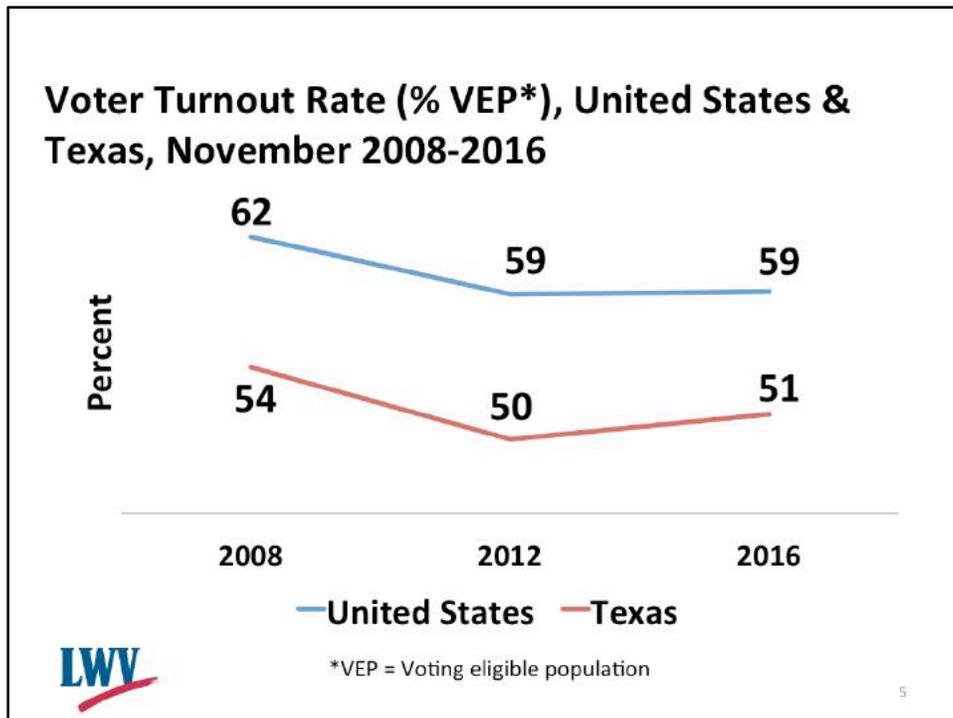


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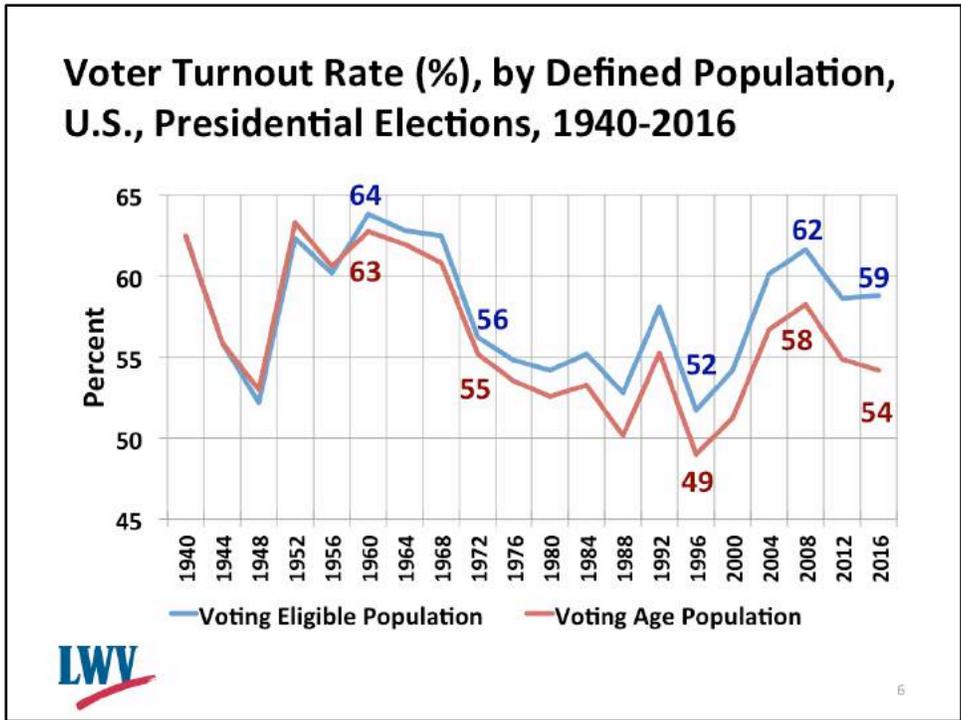
*VEP = Voting eligible population

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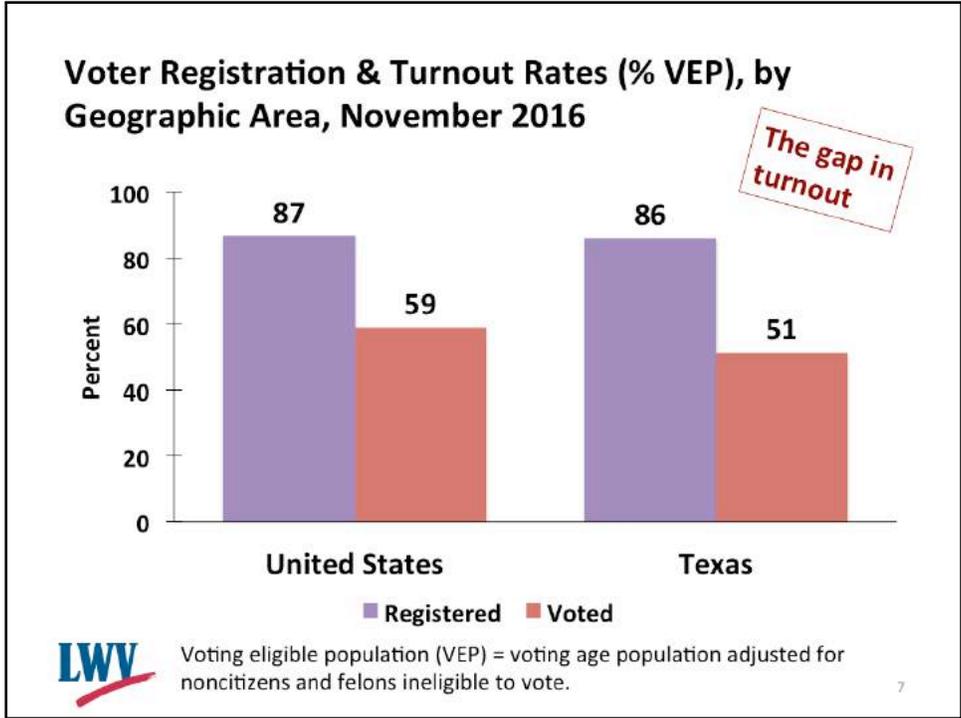
- Until this election, Texas had a higher rate of voter registration than the nation as a whole. In 2016, there was a soar in the national voter registration rate but not in Texas.
 - Automatic voter registration was implemented in five states since 2015 and in effect for the first time in a presidential election in those states. The increased pool of registered voters affected the national voter registration rate.
 - Oregon, California, Vermont, West Virginia, and Connecticut



- The percentage of the voting eligible population that voted in the last three presidential elections has varied little each election since 2008.
- Note that the Texas VEP turnout rate is consistently below the national turnout rate—in fact, Texas has ranked either 47th or 48th in the last three presidential elections.
- Many lament that voter participation has declined sharply over time. Following this presidential election, a number of news organizations and pundits published and broadcast such a false narrative.
 - On the Saturday after the election, *CNN Politics* headlined an online article with “Voter turnout at 20-year low in 2016.” The news brief went on to say, “Voter turnout this year dipped to nearly its lowest point in two decades. While election officials are still tabulating ballots...That measure of turnout is the lowest in a presidential election since 1996...But it would take another 18.7 million votes to reach the high point for turnout of 2008...” (Wallace & Yoon, 2016)
- Let’s take a look at historical data for a more realistic perspective on voter turnout over time.



- Until the 1990s the Census Bureau reported rates of voter registration and turnout using the voting age population as the denominator—anyone living stateside old enough to vote. This is the red line on the graph.
 - The voting age population estimate includes noncitizens and ineligible felons who cannot vote. It also excludes overseas eligible voters.
 - Although the more recent Census Bureau measure of the *citizen voting age population* excludes noncitizens, a more recently developed *voting eligible population* turnout rate adjusts for ineligible felons as well as noncitizens. And at the national level, it includes the overseas military and civilian population.
- Examining the voting eligible population turnout rate over time (the blue line) shows that:
 - Voter turnout is currently higher than it has been since 1972.
 - Voter turnout is 7% higher than 20 years ago, increasing from 52% in 1996 to 59% in 2016.
 - This is a much more optimistic scenario than the “20-year low” narrative.



- The lavender bars on this chart show the percentage of the voting eligible population registered to vote. The reddish bars show the percentage of the voting eligible population that voted.
- While a large majority of those eligible to vote were registered in 2016, only a small majority actually voted.

Voting Eligible Population ^a Turnout, 2016 Presidential Election	
UNITED STATES	TEXAS
Percent Voter Turnout, 2016	
59%	51%
Short-term Trend in Voter Turnout, 2012-2016	
Increased 0.2% in 4 years, 58.6% - 58.8%	Increased 1.6% in 4 years, 49.6% - 51.2%
Long-term Trend in Voter Turnout, 1996-2016	
Voting Age Population ^b	
Increased 5% in 20 years, 49% - 54% ^c	Increased 6% in 20 years, 41% - 47%
Short-term Trend in Voter Registration, 2012-2016	
Increased nearly 20% in 4 years, 69% - 87%	Increased 1% in 4 years, 85% - 86%
Gap Between Those Who Registered & Those Who Voted	
Large: 28%	Larger: 35%
<p>^a Voting age citizens not serving punishment for a felony. ^b Voting age citizens (VEP not available for Texas in 1996). ^c Among the voting eligible population, the turnout increased 7%.</p>	

^a Voting eligible population (VEP) = voting age citizens not serving punishment for a felony.

^b Voting age population (VAP) was used because 1996 VEP data is not available for Texas.

^c If the VAP rate were adjusted for % citizens not serving punishment for a felony, the rate would be somewhat higher. For the U.S., this adjustment changes the long-term trend from an increase of 5% to 7%.

Data Sources

Peters, G. (n.d.). Voter turnout in presidential elections: 1828-2012. *The American presidency project*. Retrieved from <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/data/turnout.php> (VAP turnout voter rate 1996 U.S.)

Texas Secretary of State. (n.d.) *Turnout and voter registration figures (1970-present)*. Retrieved December 20, 2016, from <http://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/historical/70-92.shtml> (VAP turnout 1996 & 2016 Texas)

U.S. Census Bureau. (2013, May). Table 1. Reported voting and registration, by sex and single years of age: November 2012. Retrieved November 10, 2016, from www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2012/tables.html (% registered voters 2012 U.S.)

U.S. Elections Project. (2014, September 3). 2012 November general election voter turnout [Data file]. Retrieved November 10, 2016, from www.electproject.org/2012q (# ballots cast 2012 U.S.)

U.S. Elections Project. (2016). U.S. Elections Project. (2016, November 10). 2016 November general election voter turnout [Data file]. Retrieved December 20, 2016, from <http://www.electproject.org/2016g> (VEP turnout 2016 Texas and U.S.; VAP turnout rate 2016 U.S.)

Whitaker, B. & Brill, C. (2016, October 25). SmartShot: National voter registration has hit 200,728,959! *TargetSmart*. Retrieved from <http://targetsmart.com/news-item/smartshot-hits-200728959/> (# registered voters 2016 U.S.)



Data Sources

Texas Secretary of State. (n.d.). *1992-Current election history*. Retrieved November 10, 2016, from <http://elections.sos.state.tx.us/index.htm> (# ballots cast 2008 and 2012 Texas)

Texas Secretary of State. (n.d.). *Voter registration figures 1991-present*. Retrieved November 10, 2016, from www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/historical/vrfig.shtml (# registered voters 2008 and 2012 Texas)

Texas Secretary of State. (2016, November 10). 2016 General election, election night returns: Statewide race summary. Retrieved December 6, 2016, from https://enpages.sos.state.tx.us/public/nov08_319.htm (# registered voters and votes cast 2016 Texas)

U.S. Census Bureau. (2009). Table 4a. Reported voting and registration of the citizen voting-age population, for states: November 2008. Voting and registration in the election of November 2008—Detailed tables. Retrieved November 14, 2016, from www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2008/tables.html (# registered voters 2008 U.S.)

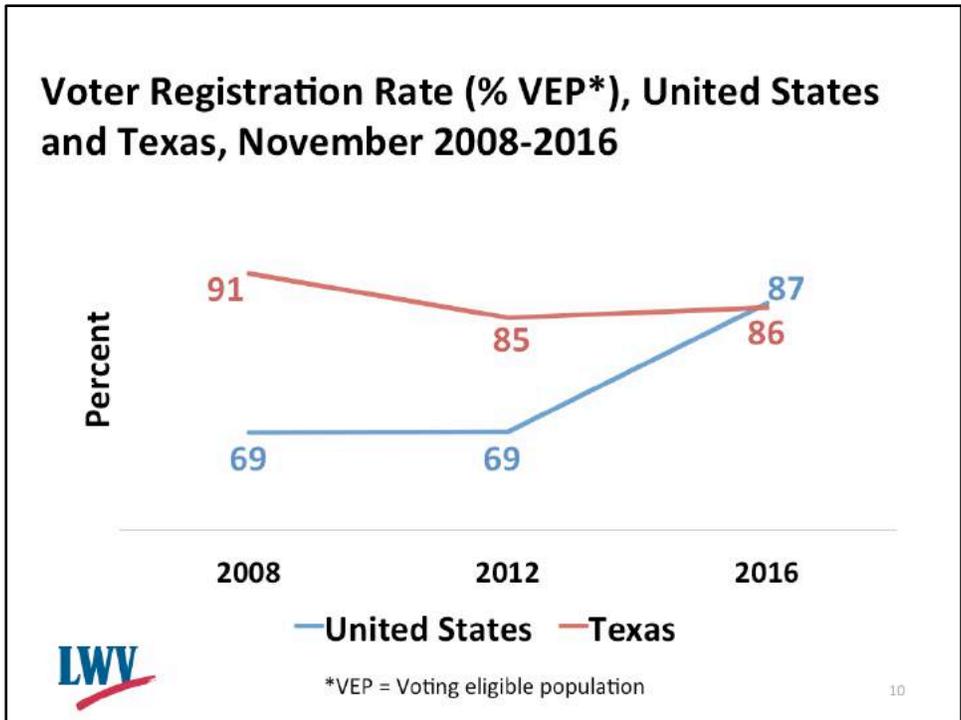
U.S. Census Bureau. (2013, May). Table 1. Reported voting and registration, by sex and single years of age: November 2012. Retrieved November 10, 2016, from www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2012/tables.html (# registered voters 2012 U.S.)

U.S. Elections Project. (2012, March 31). 2008 November general election voter turnout [Data file]. Retrieved November 14, 2016, from www.electproject.org/2008g (# voting eligible population 2008 Texas and U.S.)

U.S. Elections Project. (2014, September 3). 2012 November general election voter turnout [Data file]. Retrieved November 10, 2016, from www.electproject.org/2012g (# voting eligible population 2012 Texas and U.S.)

U.S. Elections Project. (2016, November 10). 2016 November general election voter turnout [Data file]. Retrieved December 20, 2016, from <http://www.electproject.org/2016g> (# voting eligible population 2016 U.S.; % citizens and ineligible felons 2016 Texas and U.S.)

Whitaker, B. & Brill, C. (2016, October 25). SmartShot: National voter registration has hit 200,728,959! *TargetSmart*. Retrieved from <http://targetsmart.com/news-item/smartshot-hits-200728959/> (# registered voters 2016 U.S.)



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Brennan Center for Justice. (2016, September 22). *Automatic voter registration*. Retrieved from <https://www.brennancenter.org/analysis/automatic-voter-registration> (list of states with automatic voter registration)

Texas Secretary of State. (n.d.). *Voter registration figures 1991-present*. Retrieved November 10, 2016, from www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/historical/vrfig.shtml (# registered voters 2008 and 2012 Texas)

Texas Secretary of State. (2016, November 10). 2016 General election, election night returns: Statewide race summary. Retrieved December 6, 2016, from https://enrpages.sos.state.tx.us/public/nov08_319.htm (# registered voters 2016 Texas)

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U.S. Elections Project. (2012, March 31). 2008 November general election voter turnout [Data file]. Retrieved November 14, 2016, from www.electproject.org/2008g (# voting eligible population 2008 Texas and U.S.)

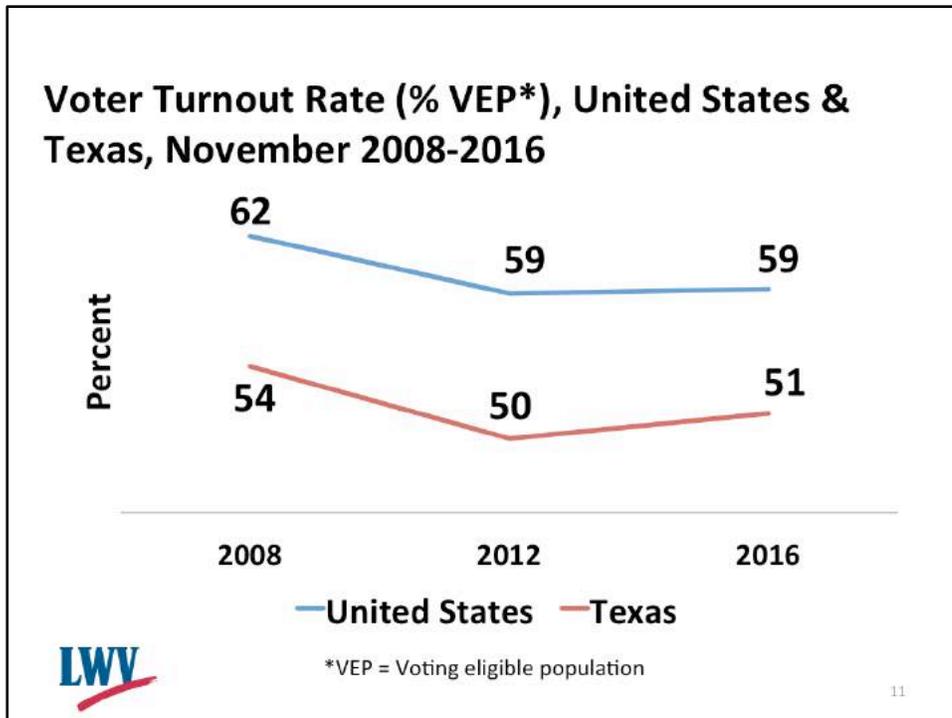
U.S. Elections Project. (2014, September 3). 2012 November general election voter turnout [Data file]. Retrieved November 10, 2016, from www.electproject.org/2012g (# voting eligible population 2012 Texas and U.S.)

U.S. Elections Project. (2016, November 10). 2016 November general election voter turnout [Data file]. Retrieved December 20, 2016, from <http://www.electproject.org/2016g> (# voting eligible population 2016 TX & U.S)

U.S. Census Bureau. (2009). Table 4a. Reported voting and registration of the citizen voting-age population, for states: November 2008. Voting and registration in the election of November 2008–Detailed tables. Retrieved November 14, 2016, from www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2008/tables.html (# registered voters 2008 U.S.)

U.S. Census Bureau. (2013, May). Table 1. Reported voting and registration, by sex and single years of age: November 2012. Retrieved November 10, 2016, from www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2012/tables.html (# registered voters 2012 U.S.)

Whitaker, B. & Brill, C. (2016, October 25). SmartShot: National voter registration has hit 200,728,959! *TargetSmart*. Retrieved from <http://targetsmart.com/news-item/smartshot-hits-200728959/> (# registered voters 2016 U.S.)



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Texas Secretary of State. (n.d.). *1992-Current election history*. Retrieved November 10, 2016, from <http://elections.sos.state.tx.us/index.htm> (# ballots counted 2008 and 2012 Texas)

Texas Secretary of State. (2016, November 10). 2016 General election, election night returns: Statewide race summary. Retrieved December 6, 2016, from https://enrpages.sos.state.tx.us/public/nov08_319.htm (# ballots counted 2016 Texas)

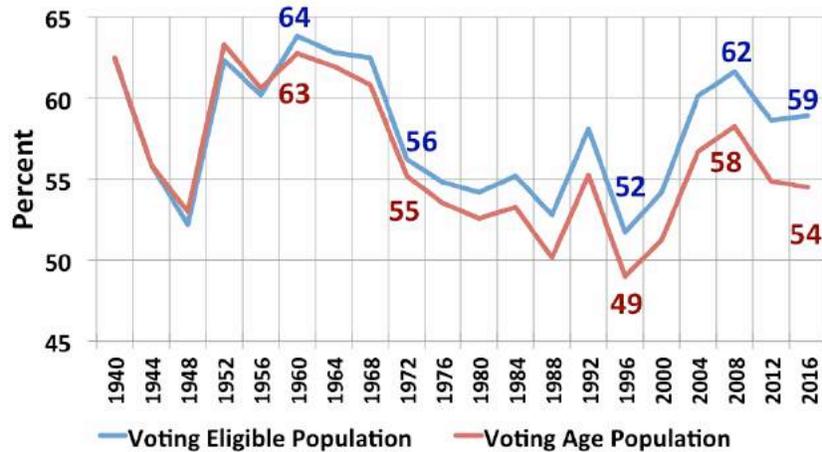
U.S. Elections Project. (2012, March 31). 2008 November general election voter turnout [Data file]. Retrieved November 14, 2016, from www.electproject.org/2008q (# voting eligible population 2008 Texas and U.S.)

U.S. Elections Project. (2014, September 3). 2012 November general election voter turnout [Data file]. Retrieved November 10, 2016, from www.electproject.org/2012q (# voting eligible population 2012 Texas and U.S.)

U.S. Elections Project. (2016, November 10). 2016 November general election voter turnout [Data file]. Retrieved December 20, 2016, from <http://www.electproject.org/2016q> (VEP turnout 2016 TX & U.S.)

Wallace G., & Yoon, R. (2016, November 12). Voter turnout at 20-year low in 2016. *CNN politics*. Retrieved from <http://www.cnn.com/2016/11/11/politics/popular-vote-turnout-2016/>

Voter Turnout Rate (%), by Defined Population, U.S., Presidential Elections, 1940-2016*



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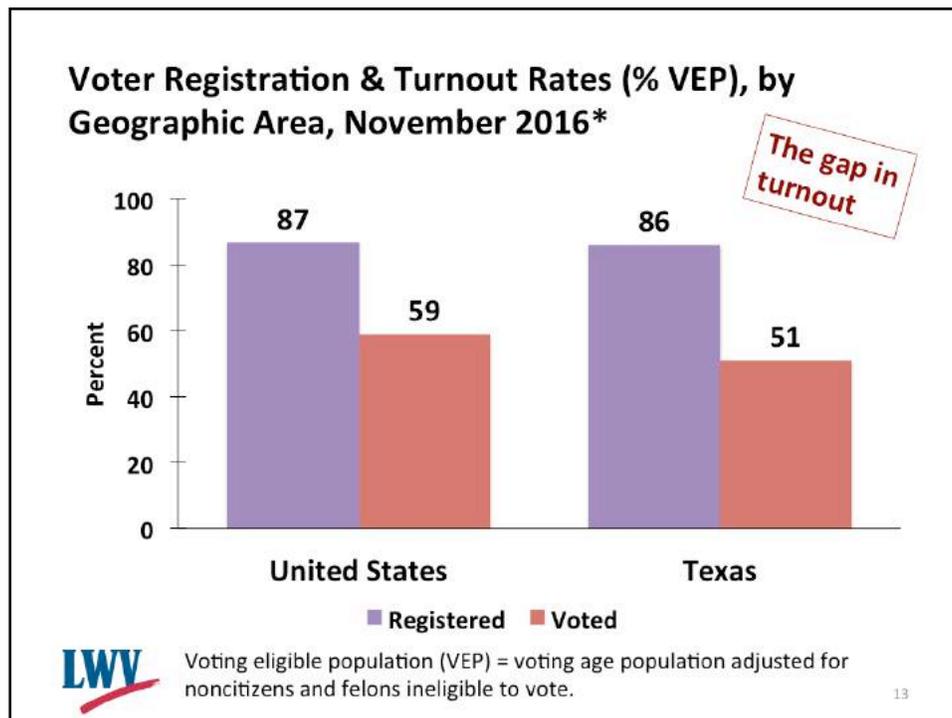
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Data Sources

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U.S. Elections Project. (2014, June 11). *National general election VEP turnout rates, 1789-present*. Retrieved November 16, 2016, from <http://www.electproject.org/national-1789-present> (VEP turnout voter rates 1940-2012 U.S.)

U.S. Elections Project. (2016, November 10). 2016 November general election voter turnout [Data file]. Retrieved December 20, 2016, from <http://www.electproject.org/2016q> (VEP and VAP turnout for highest office 2016 U.S.)



Data Sources

Texas Secretary of State. (2016, November 10). 2016 General election, election night returns: Statewide race summary. Retrieved November 10, 2016, from https://enpages.sos.state.tx.us/public/nov08_319.htm (# registered voters and # ballots cast 2016 Texas)

U.S. Elections Project. (2016, November 10). 2016 November general election voter turnout [Data file]. Retrieved December 20, 2016, from <http://www.electproject.org/2016q> (# VEP population and highest office ballots counted 2016 U.S.)

Whitaker, B. & Brill, C. (2016, October 25). SmartShot: National voter registration has hit 200,728,959! *TargetSmart*. Retrieved from <http://targetsmart.com/news-item/smartshot-hits-200728959/> (# registered voters U.S.)

Whyte, L., & Daniel, A. (2016, November 9). Here's where Texas voters turned out and where they didn't. *The Texas Tribune*. Retrieved November 10, 2016, from www.texastribune.org/2016/11/09/heres-where-texas-voters-turned-out-and-where-they/ (# voting age population 2016 Texas) (VEP = voting age population decreased by 15.8%, i.e., 13.5% noncitizens and 2.3% ineligible felons; rates from U.S. Elections Project, 2016)