*The Logic of American Politics*, 7th Edition

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Data Literacy Exercises: Chapter 11

Suffrage for women:

**Learning objective:** 11.2 Describe how different segments of American society obtained the right to vote.

Rules governing who has the right to vote have constitutionally and historically been left to the states. The only original Constitutional provision can be found in Article I Section II, requiring that any resident (citizenship was not always a requirement) who, under a state’s constitution or laws, could vote for members of their state’s lower house be allowed to vote for members of the U.S. House of Representatives. Constitutional amendments have granted voting rights *nationally* to certain groups in society (blacks, in word if not deed, by the 15th Amendment, women by the 19th, and 18-20 year olds by the 26th). This does not imply that members of these groups could not vote before the relevant amendment was ratified as many states allowed such rights before amendments nationalized them. Amendments just enforce a national code on the states that otherwise always had the ability to extend the franchise themselves. A small number of black Americans could vote in many northern states before state Constitutions codified an “all adult white male” limitation (see Chapter 4 for more on black enfranchisement). Kentucky and Georgia guaranteed the franchise to 18-20 year olds before the 19th Amendment was ratified in 1971.

Woman gained the suffrage in many states before being guaranteed that right nationally. The limits of that franchise varied by states, as depicted in the following map. Once New York (1917) and Michigan (1918) granted the total franchise to women, their sizeable U.S. house delegations, now subject to reelection choices by women) became committed to a national amendment that was ratified when Tennessee (by one hesitant vote) guaranteed ratification (1920).



**Questions to Consider:**

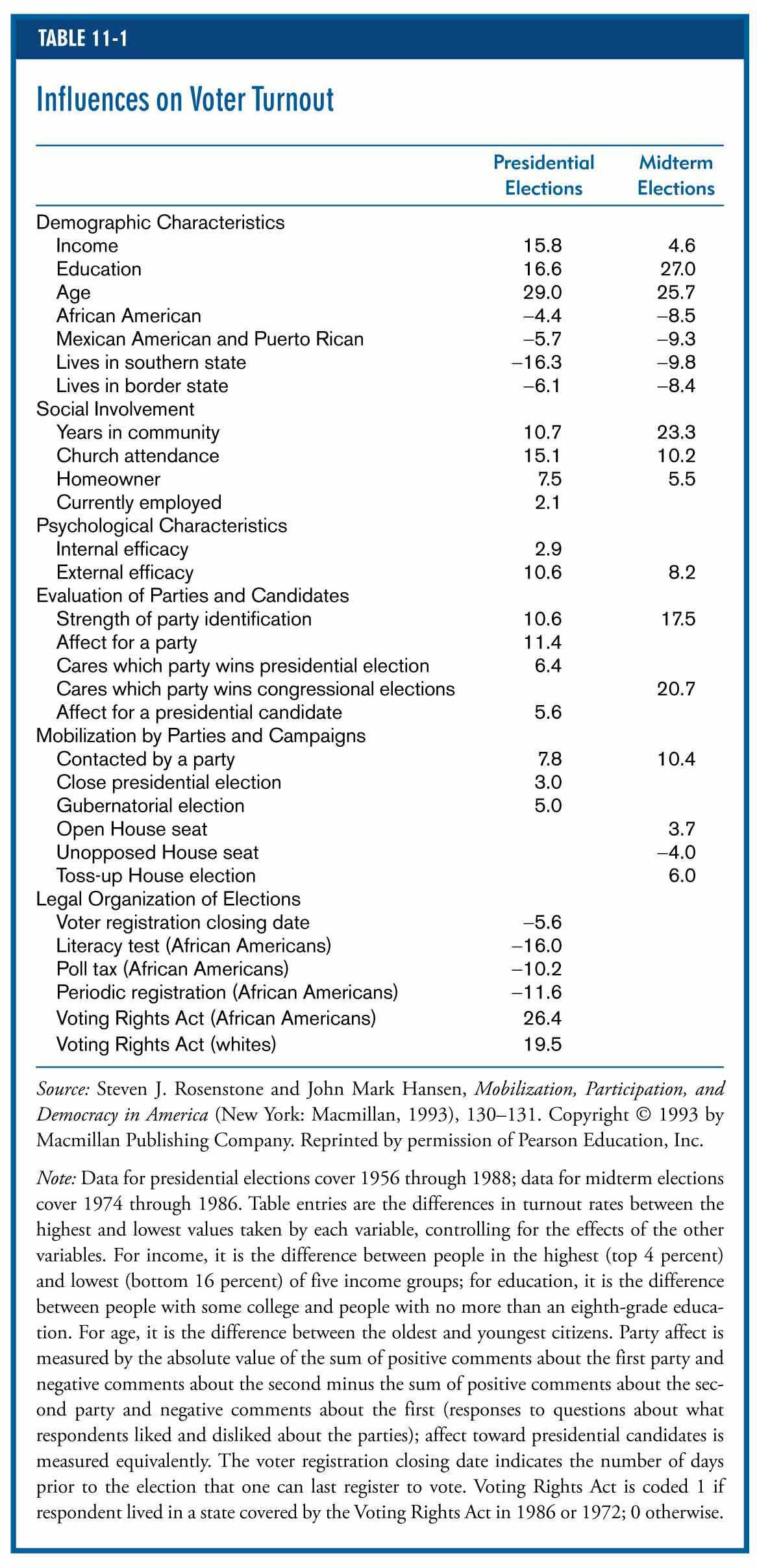
1. According to the discussion of women’s suffrage (and the associated map), women received the right to vote only after ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment.

a. True

\*b. False

@ Feedback: Although the amendment nationalized that right, many states had already allowed, many states had already granted some or full voting rights to women before ratification.

Table 11-1



Who Uses the Right to Vote—Individual and Institutional Factors:

**Learning Objective: 11.3** Discuss the factors that affect how people vote.

The two demographic factors that have for many decades predicted whether or not someone will vote are age and education.

* AGE

Turnout increases linearly as one gets older. In 2012, those who most recently were Constitutionally granted the franchise, 18-20 year olds, turned out to vote at a dismal 41.2%. Over 70% of 65 and older reported doing so. Even given the potential tendency for older citizens to be more likely to claim to have voted than younger ones (due to a greater sense of civic responsibility), the difference is rather dramatic.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, “Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2012 - Detailed Tables” <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2012/tables.html>

Only with advancing years does turnout start to decline, most likely due to the infirmities that inevitably come with age (this most likely varies with access to absentee ballots). Only 3.1% of those under 24 claimed illness or disability as a reason for not voting. That figure climbs to 42.0% for those 65 and older.

* EDUCATION

The more formally educated one is, the more likely one is to vote. This linear trend is even more dramatic than that demonstrated by age differences. Those with higher educations are more likely and willing to understand (or think they do) politics, and thus are more confident of their ability to absorb the information costs associated with voting.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, “Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2012 - Detailed Tables” <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2012/tables.html>

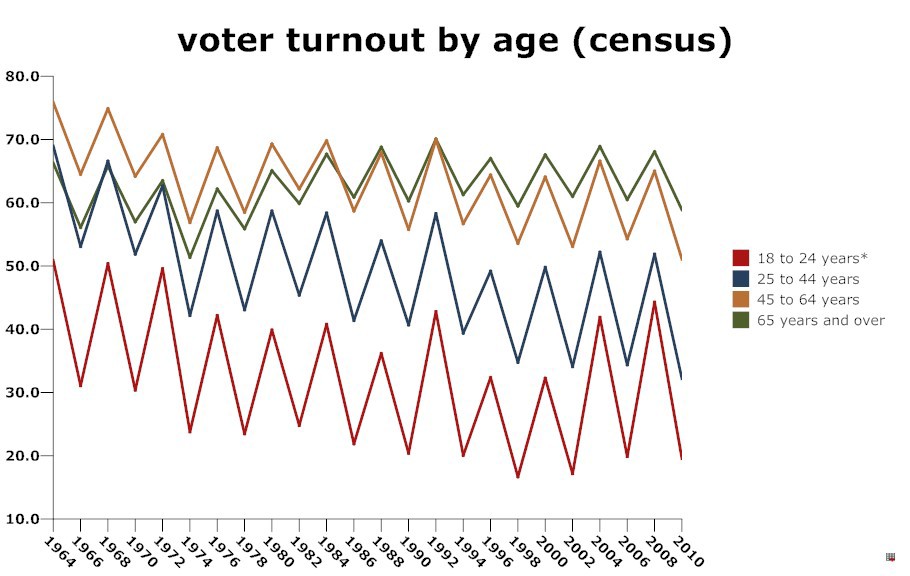
The relationship between education and voting participation is, given both contemporary and historical reviews of voting, somewhat paradoxical. Education levels were much lower in the 19th century, yet voting turnout was higher, a counterintuitive fact at least partially explained by the higher mobilization activity of political party organizations in that earlier period. Education levels also tend to be lower today for older citizens for whom educational opportunities were less available. Yet older citizens are more likely to vote than younger ones.

Two explanations can be offered for this age bias in voting. The life-cycle explanation basically states that one becomes more likely to vote as one gets older because one's interest in what government does and does not do becomes more salient. Taxes and mortgage deductions become more relevant, as does educational policy, business regulation, medical policies, and social security benefits. Additionally, age brings a form of education gained through experience if not formal training. Although not a perfect relationship, as one gets older, one is also less likely to move, thus decreasing the time and effort necessary to re-register (most countries have national voter IDs) and learn about the local political terrain. This life-cycle explanation helps to explain the decline in voting turnout in the late 1960s. Two events coincided to increase the proportion of potential young voters during this period. The first was the coming of age of the baby-boom generation, i.e., those born in exceptionally high numbers following the return of troops after World War II and the Korean conflict. The second was the previously mentioned enfranchisement of 18-20 year olds. In essence, a large cohort of young citizens, those least inclined to participate, flooded the political marketplace, much like the enfranchisement of women had done in the 1920s. Unfortunately, unlike the history of women's suffrage, these newly enfranchised citizens did not vote as they got older in the proportions that the life cycle theory would predict. If they had, voting turnout would have increased in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, rather than continuing to decline.

The second explanation, the generational theory, helps to explain this seeming anomaly. Older citizens are not more likely to vote because they are older. They were also highly likely to vote when they were young, with life-cycle tendencies only increasing their turnout marginally. Perhaps partisan politics seemed more salient, with differences over New Deal policies offering clear choices to voters coming of age. More importantly, however, older citizens are more likely to vote because they have, and most importantly, have always had a higher sense of civic duty. The oldest, now quickly passing on, came of age during the Great Depression and World War II, when a sense of civic community, born of surviving two long-term dramatic events, was much more prevalent than has been the case since. Additionally, this adherence to democratic perspectives was passed down to the next generation (baby boomers), even if at a somewhat diminished level. By the time that the grandchildren of the "greatest generation" were born, this democratic transmission was all but lost.

* CYCLE-MIDTERM VERSUS PRESIDENTIAL

Most of us are familiar with the saw pattern of voting that occurs between presidential and midterm elections (see figure 12-3). The following chart, also derived from census data, shows the differences for different age groups.



Note the greater shift among the youngest group between presidential and midterm elections. In particular, note the dramatic decline among young people between the presidential election of 2008 and the subsequent turnout in the subsequent midterm (2010). But how does this line up with the data presented in Table 11-1? In that table, age seems to have less of an influence on voter turnout in midterm than presidential years. Part of the discrepancy may have to do with the more limited time period used for the chart’s data. The main reason, however, is that the numbers represent the turnout differences between the oldest and youngest group, *controlling for all other factors*. Age is associated with factors such as strength of partisanship, education, social involvement and the like, all of which contribute more to the voter turnout equation in midterms.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. According to the text (including Table 11-1) and the discussion in this section, which demographic differences best predict voting turnout?

a. age and race

\*b. age and education

c. education and region

d. income and education

@ Feedback: Almost every analysis suggests that age and education are the best predictors of voting turnout. Many other critical factors are partially subsumed under these two variables.

2. According to the chart in this section, which of the following is most true?

\*a. voting turnout in midterm elections is always lower than in presidential elections, and the difference is most pronounced for the youngest age groups.

b. voting turnout in midterm elections is always lower than in presidential elections, and the difference is most pronounced for the oldest age groups.

c. voting turnout in midterm elections is always lower than in presidential elections, and the difference is the same regardless of age group.

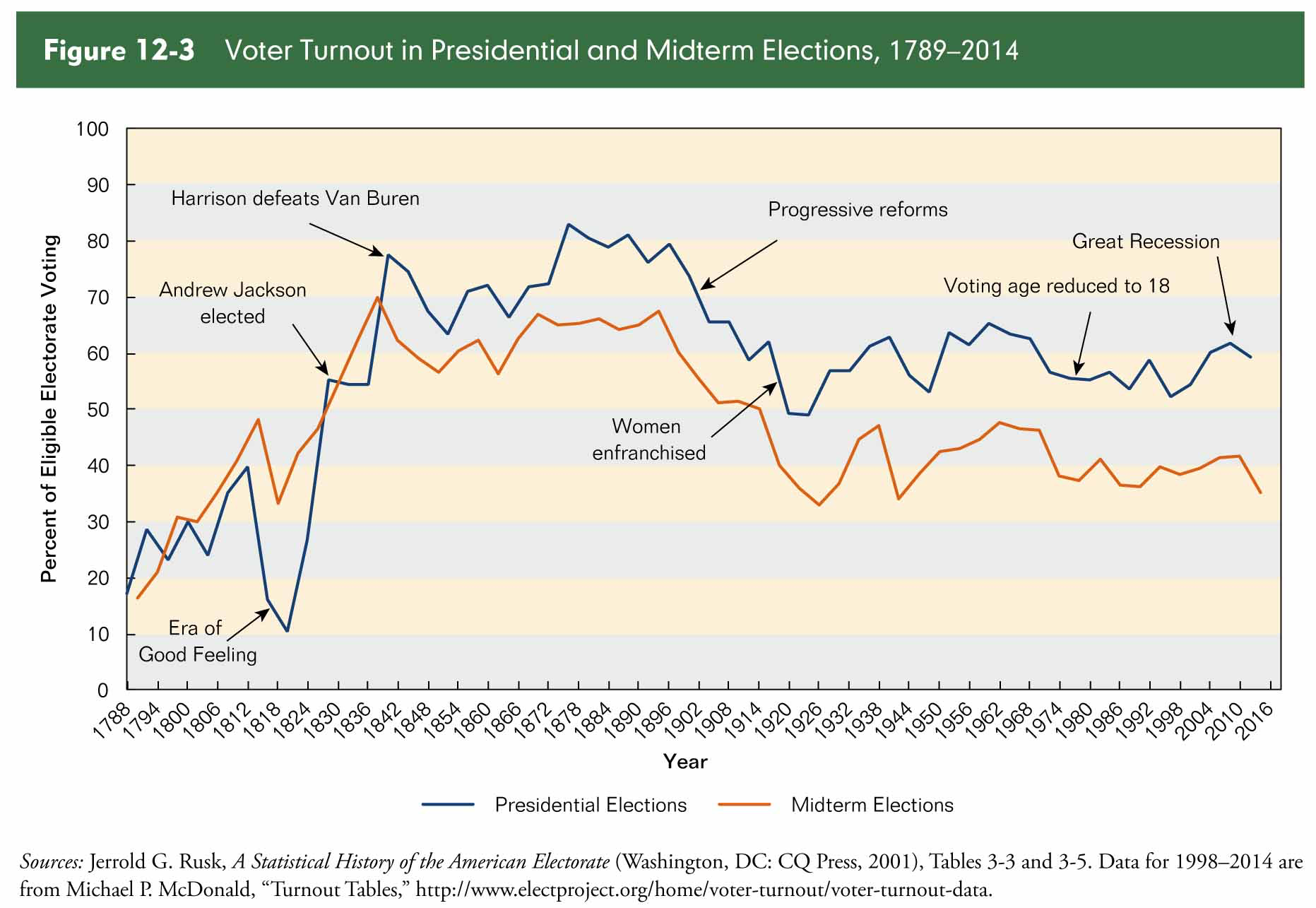
@ Feedback: Viewed as less salient and exciting, midterm elections have lower turnout than presidential ones (a phenomenon called “drop off”). This drop off in turnout has been consistently greater for those between 18 and 44 than those between 45-64, even though the former have less to “drop off” from.

Variations in turnout over time:

**Learning objective:** 11.3Discuss the factors that affect how people vote.

Voting turnout has varied widely over our history. Much is made of the decline in turnout from the 1950s to the 1980s. We have perhaps concentrated on that time period as that is the period in which we first had survey data available that could help us to explain why some people voted and others did not. But, as our entire history goes, change in turnout during that period, explained by the disproportionate entry of young citizens into the election rolls and a decrease in government trust, pales in comparison to changes after 1896 (dramatic decline) and before 1840 (dramatic increase).

Figure 12-3 demonstrates this pattern.



Even concentrating on the “modern era,” there is still a possibility that the 1950s-1980s decline was overestimated by many. In 2001, political scientists Michael McDonald and Samuel Popkin determined that much of the decline was a function of an increasingly invalid method of estimating voter turnout by dividing actual turnout by the “voting age population (VAP). The VAP includes all residents 18 and over. That includes non-citizens and, in many states, convicted felons who cannot vote. Had those groups’ proportion of the VAP been consistent throughout time, then turnout would have been overestimated but consistently so. But both the proportion of legal immigrants and, especially, currently or previously incarcerated felons has increased during the period in question, this making the VAP calculation of turnout increasingly invalid. In rather painstaking fashion (especially for estimating felony disenfranchisement), Popkin and McDonald create a new base for turnout that excludes those groups, the “Voting Eligible Population (VEP).” The following chart, derived from McDonald’s data website, for presidential election years, displays the difference. Turnout has indeed decreased, but not by the level previously thought. Notice that the difference between the two estimates has increased since the 1960s

Figure taken from Peter Galderisi, (2015), *Understanding Political Science Statistics*, Routledge.

Data source: Dr. Michael McDonald’s *United States Election Project*, “National Turnout Rates, 1787-2012” <http://www.electproject.org/home/voter-turnout/voter-turnout-data>

**Questions to Consider:**

1. According to McDonald and Popkin, the decline in voting turnout in the second half of the 20th century was overestimated (choose the best answer)

a. because it didn't take into account the coming of age of the "baby boomers."

b. because most analysts used the voting age population (VAP) rather than the voting eligible population (VEP), and the difference in turnout percentages were equally different throughout the period.

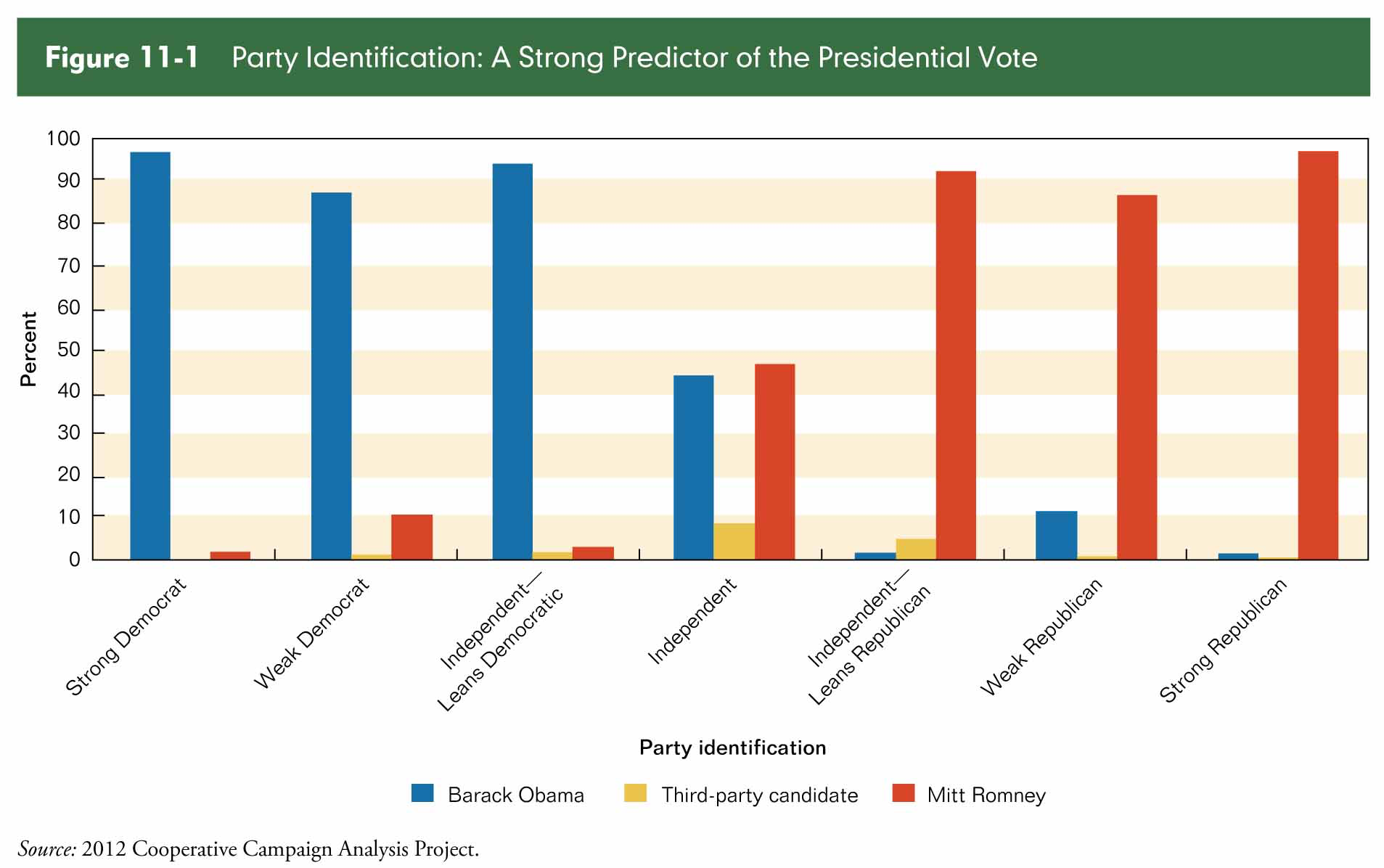
\*c. because most analysts used the voting age population (VAP) rather than the voting eligible population (VEP), and the difference between those two increased during the period in question.

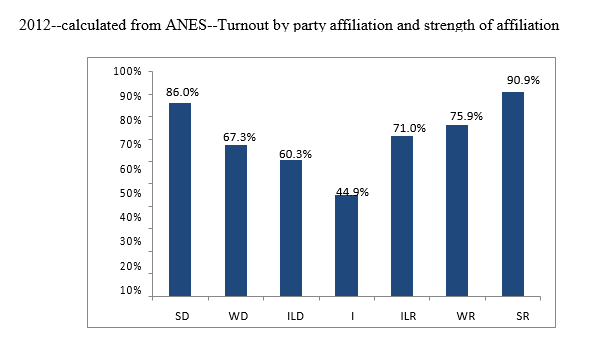
@ Feedback: A consistent difference would equally underestimate turnout using the VAP throughout the period. The bias was, however, greater towards the end as the proportion of the VAP comprised of legal immigrants and non-eligible felons increased.

The Power of Part Identification:

**Learning Objective:** 11.3 Discuss the factors that affect how people vote.

As Figure 11-1 indicates, one’s party identification strongly predicts and explains one’s vote. Independents are much less likely to vote than those who associate with a party, especially strongly so. This “partisan” inclination is enhanced by the fact that partisans are also more likely to turn out to vote, as demonstrated by the following graph. Candidates, based on their party affiliation can count on their affiliates to turn out and to strongly support them. This does not, however, mean that the turnout and votes of independents are inconsequential. When elections are highly competitive, it is usually the votes of these independents, low turnout and all that can alter the electoral outcome:





**Questions to Consider:**

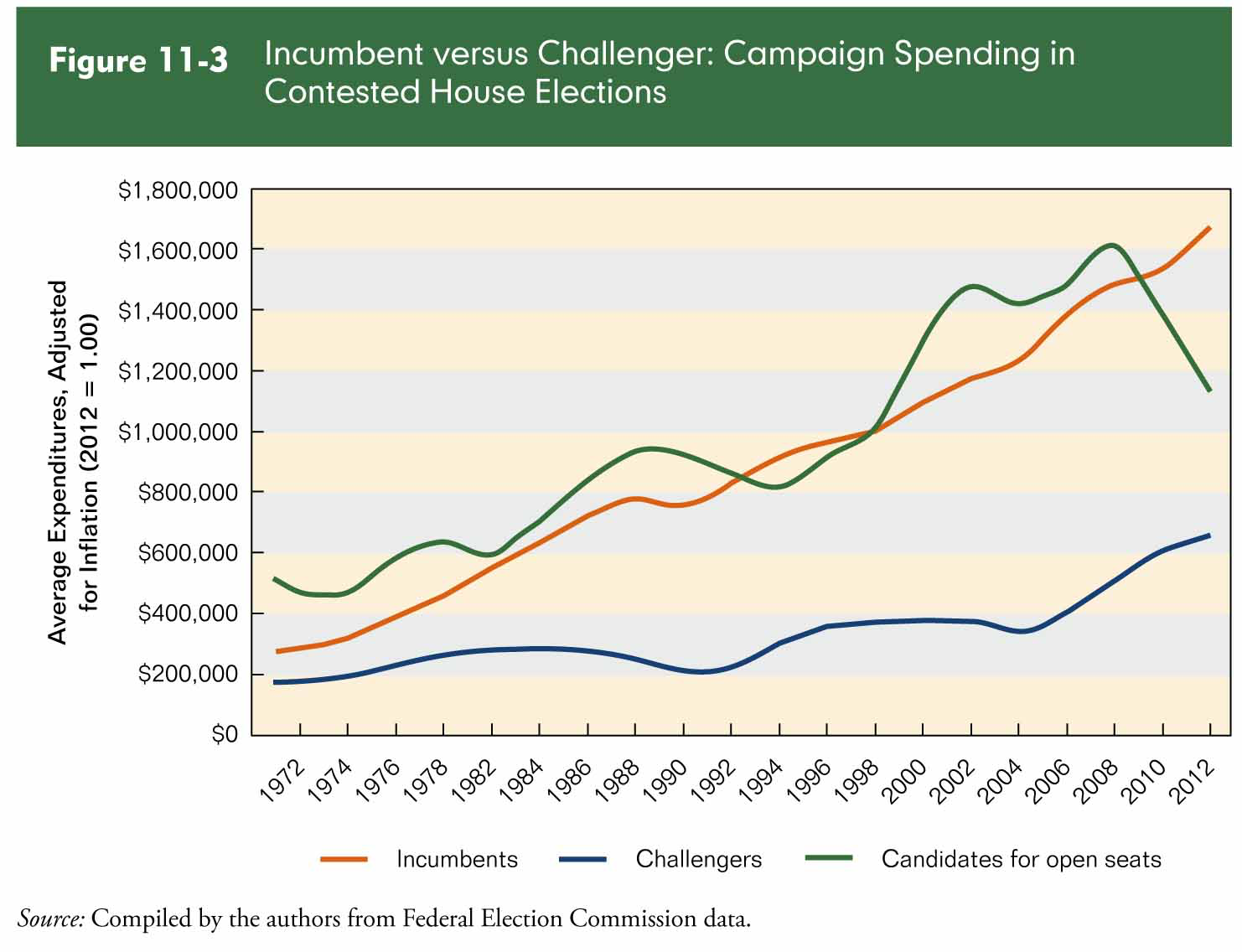
1. According to Figure 11-1 (text) and the chart in this section, partisanship has a direct influence on how one votes but not whether one votes

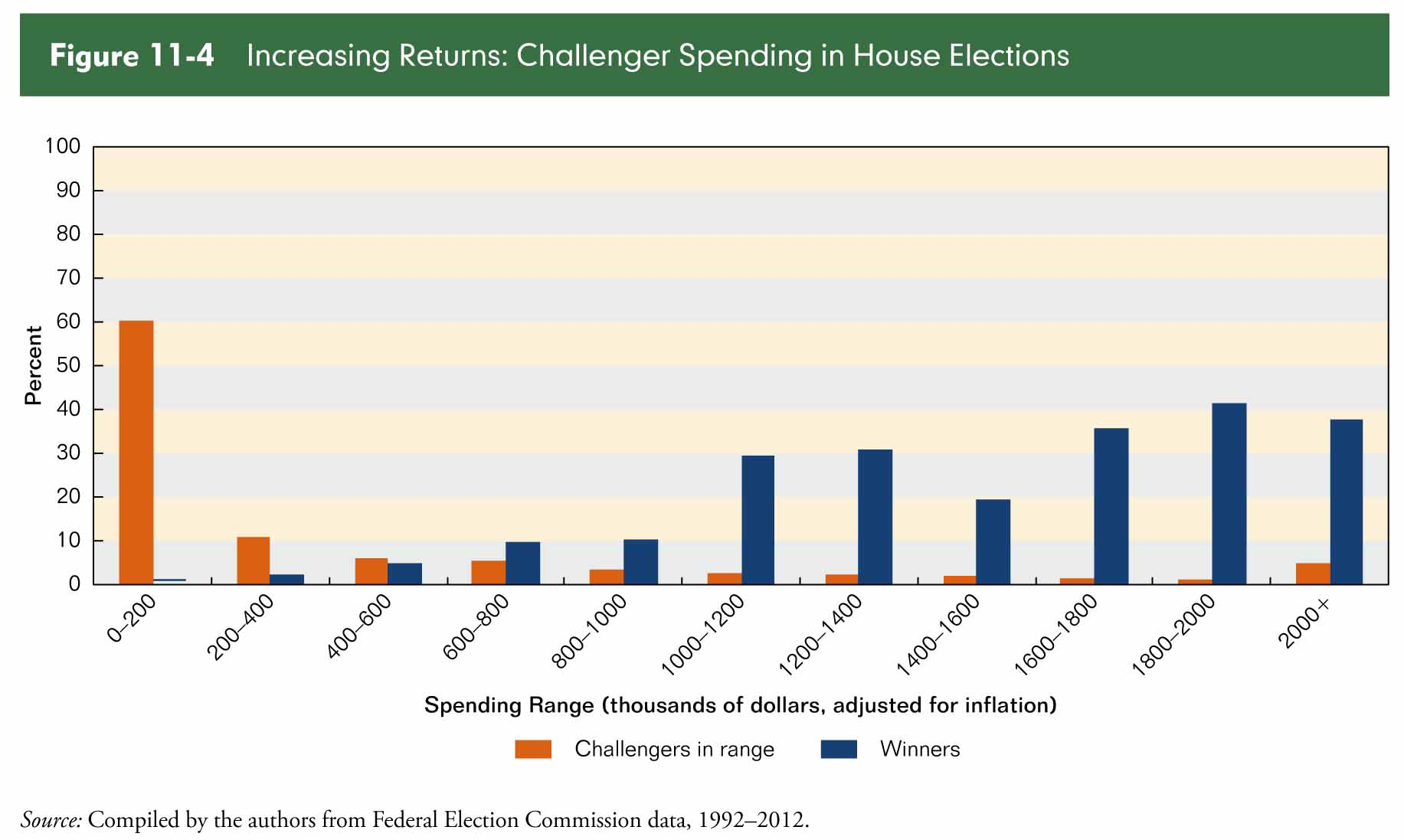
a. True

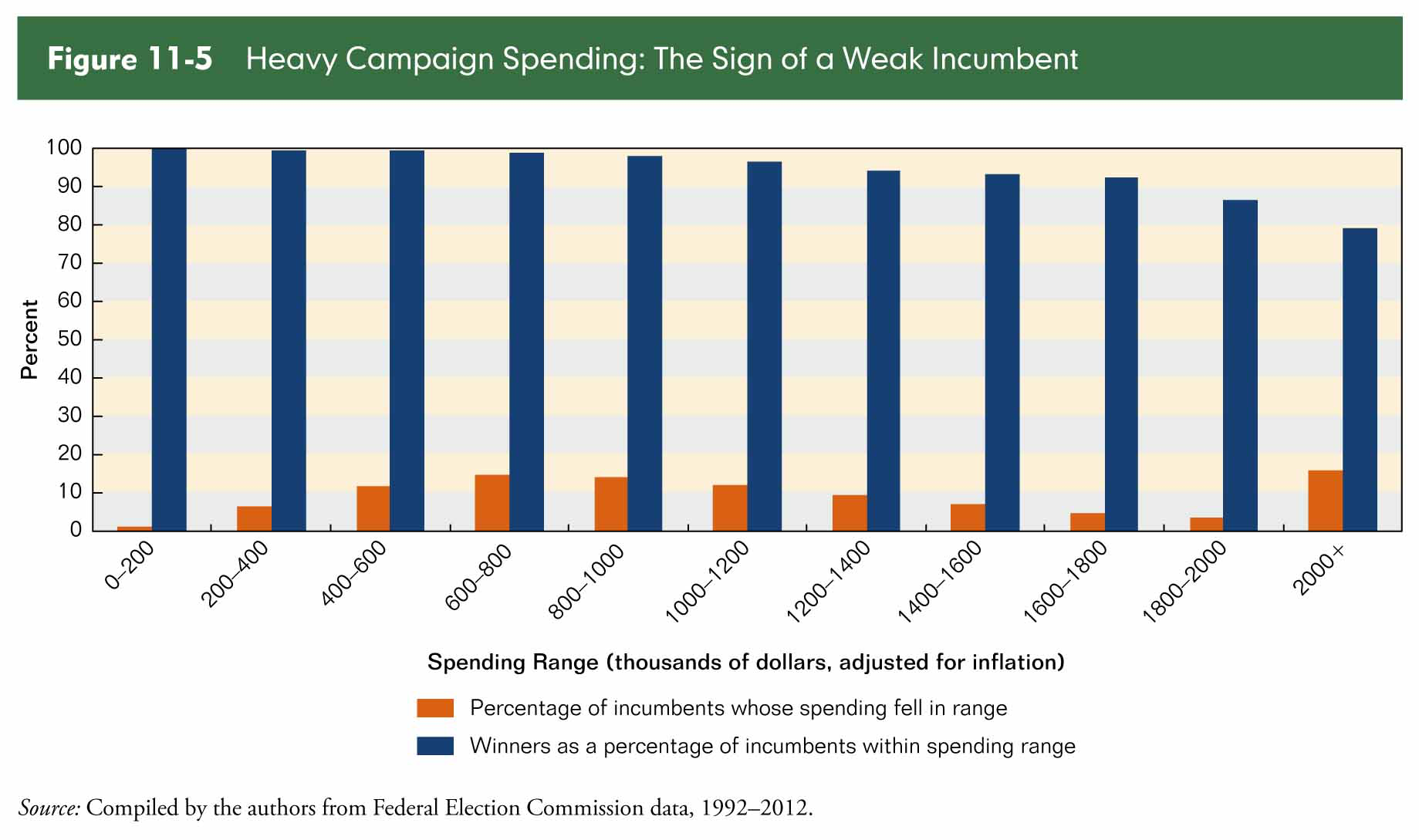
\*b. False

@ Feedback: The more strongly partisan one is, the more likely one is to vote. Strong partisans are also the most likely to vote for candidates of their party.

**Figures 11-3 to 11-5:**

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**Learning objective:** 11.4 Summarize the role of campaigns in elections.

The expression “money is the mother’s milk of politics” predates even this author who is nearing Medicare age. It is almost impossible to win an election without viable campaign finances, the collection of which, at least for candidates, became increasingly difficult since contribution limitations were imposed by the Federal Election Campaign Act (1971) and its major amendments (1974). In 1976, however, the U.S. Supreme Court invalidated spending limits, causing candidates to raise ever increasing amounts of campaign funding from smaller individual and group contributions.

According to the Center for Responsive Politics (opensecrets.org), the average amount spent by house incumbents who ran for reelection (as most in the U.S. House do) has risen from roughly $886,000 in 2000 to almost double, $1.6 million by 2012, much beyond inflationary adjustments (roughly 28%). These figures do not include funds spent to beat primary challengers. In the U.S Senate, average spending grew from approximately $5.6 million to $11.8 million. One could argue that the difference for the Senate in any two years is a function of which 33 or 34 states hold Senate elections, but in 2000 and 2012 the states were the same. The CRP has also estimated that the cost of successfully beating an incumbent has increased at an astounding rate. *Accounting for inflation*, successful house challengers spent roughly one-quarter million dollars in 1974, $2.4 million in 2012.

Money, however, does not guarantee victory. Although incumbents generally win and can do so because they generally face underfunded and not well known challengers (see text box “To Run or Not to Run” in Chapter 6), increased spending, counterintuitively, seem to decrease reelection chances. It is not that money promotes defeat, but, incumbents who feel vulnerable are more likely to raise far above what is generally needed. We therefore have an example of what statisticians call a “*spurious relationship*.” Both the amount spent, and the chances of victory are caused by a third factor—the quality of the challenger and the problems that a particular incumbent might be facing (scandal, bad year for party, close previous election).

$SPENT Probability of Winning

(-)

(+) (-)

Incumbent Vulnerability

**Questions to Consider:**

1. On mean average, which group of candidates spends the least in contested house elections?

a. incumbents

\*b. challengers

c. candidates for open seats

@ Feedback: Incumbents have an easy time raising money, while their challengers, less likely to win, have greater difficulty. Open seats are generally the most likely to change partisan hands, thus making them targets for campaign contributions from both partisan sides.

2. According to Figures 11-4 and 11-5:

a. increased spending seems to benefit the electoral chances of both incumbents and challengers

b. increased spending seems to benefit the electoral chances of neither incumbents nor challengers

c. increased spending seems to benefit the electoral chances of incumbents but not challengers

\*d. increased spending seems to benefit the electoral chances of challengers but not incumbents

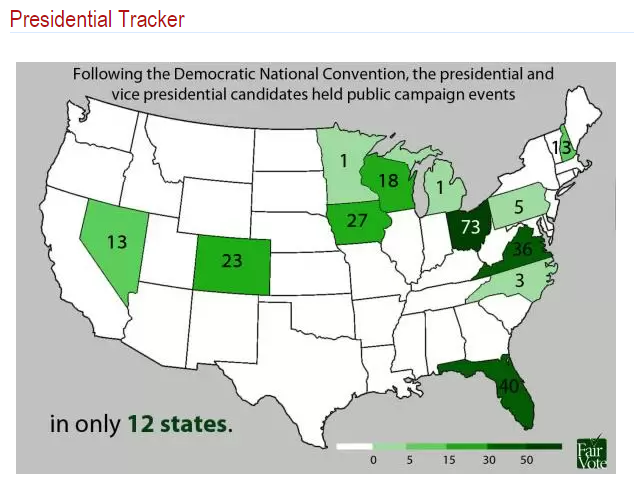
@ Feedback: Incumbents who feel vulnerable feel that they need to raise even more funds to stay in office. By the same logic, those challenging them find it easier to raise funds as their chances of victory are viewed as substantial. “Vulnerability” influences both fundraising and the chances of winning.

The Electoral College:

**Learning objectives:** 11.3 Discuss the factors that affect how people vote. 11.4 Summarize the role of campaigns in elections.

Clearly, a presidential candidate is advantaged if he/she can win a majority of the most populated states as they carry a huge proportion of the 270 electoral votes needed to claim victory. Yet, as the video “The Electoral College, the Final Frontier” demonstrates, smaller states, because of the method of apportioning electoral votes, carry a disproportionate electoral advantage.

How does this influence campaigning? One would assume that a presidential candidate would spend most of his time in states in which he can garner the most votes. Yet, except for early fundraising campaigns, 2012 candidates Obama and Romney spent limited if any time in California or Texas, the two largest Democratic and Republican electoral vote states. Rather, as all but two states distribute their electoral votes on a winner-take-all basis, candidates will spend their time in those states, low or high population, that are competitive. The following map shows where the 2012 candidates made the most appearances during the general election season. Population might matter, but only if a visit can make a difference. On a per capita basis, Nevada received more attention with for its six electoral votes as Florida did with its 29.



Source: FairVote <http://www.fairvote.org/research-and-analysis/presidential-elections/presidential-tracker/>

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Presidential candidates invariably spend more time campaigning in electoral vote rich states than in those with few electoral votes.

a. True

\*b. False

@ Feedback: Generally the answer is “false.” After the primary and initial fund raising season, candidates spend their time in states whose electoral votes are up for grabs. Of course, with the same level of competitiveness, we would assume candidates would spend more time in electoral vote rich states. The two states with the largest vote counts (California and Texas) are basically non-competitive. Neither received much if any attention ion 2012.

Multiple Choice:

According to the video (and basic logic), one can win the presidential popular vote, but lose the electoral vote because:

(1) In all but two states, electoral votes are counted on a winner-take-all basis regardless of the

margin of victory.

(2) Electoral votes are malapportioned, giving the less populated states a proportionate advantage in the Electoral Vote count

**(3) both (1) and (2)**

(4) neither (1) nor (2)

Although we normally attribute this modern day paradox to (1), (2) can also cause this outcome.