

10 Reason Why People Do Not Vote Laura Goldman (October 2018)

In the past five presidential election years, more than one-third of voting-age Americans didn't bother to cast a ballot. In fact, only 65 percent of Americans are registered to vote. When comparing voter turnout rates among 35 developed democracies, the United States ranked 27th. Unfortunately, the reasons people commonly give for not voting are terrible — especially when so much is at stake, as it is in this election. Here are some of the most common reasons people give for not voting — and why they're not good excuses.

1. MY VOTE DOESN'T MATTER.

Not true. “One vote can make a difference,” says Common Cause, a grassroots organization whose mission is upholding the core values of American democracy. “Many voters, together deciding they will make a difference, can change an election.” The group notes that some local, state and presidential elections have been decided by only “a handful of votes. “Your vote is important for influencing public policy decisions. According to the 2015 report “Why Voting Matters,” voting “plays a significant role in the distribution of government resources as well as the size of government and who benefits from public policies.” The lower voter turnout of young, poor or otherwise marginalized groups has a definite impact on how they're represented in government.

2. I DON'T LIKE THE CANDIDATES AND HATE THE “LESSER OF TWO EVILS” STRATEGY.

If you really didn't want to vote for Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump — they were the most unpopular presidential candidates in recent history — you could've instead voted for a third party, independent or write-in candidate. It's important to also vote for the other candidates on your ballot, including those running for Congress and your state legislature. As noted above, your vote truly will influence these lawmakers. As for the lesser of two evils strategy, you should consider what's at stake in this election — including important issues like gun control, climate change, affordable health care and much more — and vote to support what you believe in.

3. IT'S TOO RAINY/SNOWY/HOT/COLD OUTSIDE.

Studies have found that Republicans usually win on rainy Election Days. “The traditional Democratic base tends to include lower-income people and the elderly,” explains Wendy Schiller, a political science professor at Brown University. “Both of those demographic groups have a hard time getting to the polls.” One way of avoiding having to venture out in inclement weather on Election Day is to apply for an absentee ballot. You can mail in your completed ballot — or, if the weather happens to be pleasant on Election Day, drop it off at your polling place.

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4. IT TAKES TOO LONG. I HATE WAITING IN LINE.

Voting takes less than 14 minutes on average, yet it can affect the next four or more years. To save time at your polling place, complete and bring your sample ballot with you. If possible, go when it's not too busy — which is usually in the middle of either the morning or afternoon. Avoid going early in the morning or in the early evening, which are usually the busiest times.

5. I DON'T KNOW IF I'M REGISTERED.

You can check online to see if you're registered to vote at your current address. Go to a website like Vote.org and select your state to get started. If you're not registered, these 13 states allow you to register up to and on Election Day. You can even text to register to vote – it only takes a minute.

6. I DON'T KNOW WHERE MY POLLING PLACE IS.

Go to RockTheVote.org, and enter your registered voting address. The address of your polling place will display. This information is available two to four weeks before Election Day.

7. MY POLLING PLACE IS TOO FAR AWAY TO WALK THERE, AND I HAVE NO TRANSPORTATION.

It's true that the number of polling places has been reduced in some parts of the country. If public transportation, a ride-sharing service or carpooling aren't options, you can instead vote at home by absentee ballot. Lyft and Uber are both offering free rides to the polls in cities where they operate.

8. MY WORK WON'T GIVE ME TIME OFF TO VOTE.

Many states require employers to give employees paid time off to vote if they can't do so before or after work. Most polling places are open from 6 or 7 a.m. to 7 or 8 p.m.

9. I'LL BE OUT OF TOWN ON ELECTION DAY.

If you know you won't be near your polling place on Election Day, vote by absentee ballot. If you live abroad, you can receive a ballot electronically.

10. I'M A STUDENT IN A SCHOOL IN ANOTHER STATE.

Since you have dual residency, you can register back home or on campus — but you can't register in both states, according to Vote.org. If you use your home address, you can vote by absentee ballot.