

## Current State of Civic Education in the United States

In the 2022 midterm elections, only 52.2% of the eligible voters voted. This lack of voter turnout is because of the lack of ubiquitous civic education in America. Currently, only eight states require students in high school to take a full-year class on civics or politics. Furthermore, thirteen states have no civic education requirements at all.

A study done in 2016 by the Annenberg Public Policy Center found that knowledge about our political system is severely lacking. In the survey, only 26% of Americans could name all three branches of government. On standardized tests, this same idea of low political knowledge holds true. The national average on the AP U.S. Government exam is 2.64, placing it at the third lowest mean score out of 45 AP classes.

According to surveys conducted by CIRCLE, 64% of participants noted they had been encouraged to vote in high school, and 50% had been taught how to register to vote. Additionally, the survey found that those taught how to vote are more likely to do so and are “more knowledgeable about voting processes and more invested in elections.” Further, those taught about politics are half as likely to agree that “Voting is a waste of time.” One facet of civic education that must be addressed is the disparity in civic education between races. According to a CIRCLE survey, two out of every three white students remember being taught civics, while only one in two African American students do. This inequality is further demonstrated in national elections, as in the 2023 Presidential Election, 70.9% of eligible white voters voted compared to 58.4% of eligible non-white voters.

Given the current state of civic education and research about the importance of political engagement, Voters2Be finds it crucial to create more programs and connect with organizations to work towards a higher civic engagement in our youth population.

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