Chapter Five
The Choices Voters Make

In the previous chapter we began our discussion of the dynamics of congressional elections by focusing on the choices made by candidates and potential candidates for Congress. In this chapter we examine the choices made by voters (and potential voters) in response to the choices made by actual candidates.

Voters and candidates play quite different roles in congressional elections, as befits what each has to gain by participating in the electoral process. For a candidate — or potential candidate — a political career is at stake, and therefore candidates tend to devote considerable resources and time to understanding what other candidates are up to and what the electorate prefers. Candidates are positive actors in the system. For a typical voter, relatively little is at stake in a congressional election, particularly compared to other choices voters make about their lives. Therefore, voters tend to devote few resources and little time to understanding the alternatives presented them on election day. Consequently, voters tend to be relatively passive actors. In the language of previous chapters, candidates are strategic while voters are not.

Even though voters tend to be passive compared to candidates, they are not entirely passive — they do make choice after all. For whatever reason, many people are interested in politics generally, and congressional elections particularly, and they adopt low-cost strategies to inform themselves about the alternatives facing them on election day. It is the purpose of this chapter to explore what these strategies are, keeping our focus on the set of explanations that derive from the self-interest of voters.

There is a natural progression of topics that helps us focus on the choices that voters make in congressional elections. The first topic is the choice about whether to vote at all: with a
minority of the eligible electorate turning out to vote in most congressional elections, it is first important to understand what explains fluctuations in turnout. The second topic is the choice of which candidate to support, assuming that a citizen decides to vote. Finally, we will turn our attention to the special problem of voters evaluating candidates in two different types of electoral arenas, the general election and primary elections.

I. The Decision to Vote

A common conversational topic among professional and sidewalk political commentators is the low level of voter turnout in the United States. There is no denying that voting participation levels in the United States pale in comparison to virtually every other democracy in the world. Worse yet, the typical comparison that is made between the U.S. and other countries is between turnout in American presidential elections and turnout in other countries' parliamentary elections. Things are worse when we do the right comparison: between participation in congressional elections and other countries' parliamentary elections.

Fig. V-1 Turnout in American presidential elections has averaged 56% since the end of World War II. Turnout in congressional elections held concurrently with presidential elections (on-year elections) has averaged 52% in the same period. Turnout in intervening years (off-year elections) has been even worse — 39% since 1946. As Figure V-1 illustrates, turnout in all American national elections has drifted downward since 1960, so that in recent years most eligible citizens have not voted in congressional elections.¹

¹The reader is cautioned about the slipperiness of turnout statistics. The measure of voter turnout that most academic researchers and the Census Bureau use takes as the denominator the number of individuals who are eligible to vote, whether they have registered or not. The population of eligible voters is called the voting age population, or VAP. All turnout rates
Turnout in congressional elections has been low and getting lower, but not uniformly so. Even in off-year congressional elections, turnout in some congressional districts can be high, in others, low. Figure V-2 describes turnout across all House districts in 1994 and 1996 as a percentage of the voting age population in each district. In 1994, for instance, practically no one voted in two dozen districts, while a handful of districts saw over half the eligible voters come to the polls. Just as there is variation from year-to-year in the number of people who vote in congressional elections, there is as much variation from district-to-district in any election year. In order to understand voting turnout, we need to understand what gives rise to both this temporal and spatial variation.

Regardless of how we cut it, turnout is considered to be low in congressional elections. Yet even though popular punditry regards voter turnout as a glass half-empty, social scientists tend to view the glass as not only half-full, but miraculously so. That is because if we view citizens as rational egoists, then the glass should be totally empty. That is, no one should vote. The fact that anyone votes at all — indeed that millions of people vote every two years — is the puzzle to be explained, not the fact that most people stay home. Therefore, in examining turnout we will begin with this puzzle, argue why citizens should tend to stay home on election day, and then discuss possible explanations for why theory does not seem to square with the evidence.

The statistics discussed in this chapter are in terms of VAP. Local officials and secretaries of state, always eager to demonstrate the democratic fervor of their state and local populations, tend to report a less-revealing statistic: turnout as a percentage of registered voters. Of course, turnout as a percentage of registered voters will always be higher than turnout as a percentage of the voting age population. Because voter registration (until recently) was a high hurdle in many states, if someone registered at all, it demonstrated a commitment to vote on the part of that individual. Thus, the difference between the two turnout statistics was sometimes quite high. For instance, turnout in the 1992 presidential election in Massachusetts was 60% of its VAP. Turnout as a percentage of registered voters was a whopping 84%.
After examining the puzzle of turnout, we will then turn our attention to the practical political question that makes the question of turnout so important: What difference does it make that some people vote and others do not in congressional races?

The Calculus of Non-Voting

The puzzle of voting, or the calculus of non-voting, is a topic whose emergence coincided with the appearance of rational choice theory in political science in the 1960s. Before then, virtually everyone took for granted that good citizens generally wanted to vote, and would vote if given the opportunity. The failure of many people to vote in national elections was typically attributed to poor information or a lack of citizen duty among non-voters. (Of course, everyone recognized that the failure of African-Americans to vote in the south was due to the fiercely-enforced laws effectively barring their participation.) When economists began to take on the topic of voting, which had previously been in the sole domain of political scientists, they pointed out that most people, political scientists included, had thought about the problem all wrong. Rather than just taking for granted the proposition that all citizens naturally wanted to vote in congressional elections, these scholars reframed the question to ask, Under what conditions will a rational egoist vote?

The answer that this question elicited, "virtually never," has been provocative enough to animate many voting studies ever since. The goal in this section is to explore why this outrageous answer should be taken seriously and then to suggest ways in which the fact that many people do vote can be squared with the axiom that individuals are rational egoists.
The rational choice analysis of voter turnout can be divided into two general approaches, which I will term the *investment* and *consumption* approaches. The investment approach supposes that voters invest their time in voting in order to receive a future payback. This payback can be either directly tangible, such as getting a street paved or a local industry supported, or intangible, such as getting Congress to pass a law that codifies some general political principle. The consumption approach supposes that voters view participating in the electoral process as intrinsically rewarding, in much the same way that residents of a community enjoy rooting for the home team or an individual likes to drink Coca Cola.

The investment approach to the calculus of non-voting is the more pessimistic of the two and can be expressed as follows:²

Consider the cost-benefit analysis that a representative citizen, whom we will call Citizen, might conduct in deciding whether to vote in a two-candidate race. That cost-benefit analysis can be summarized as follows:

\[
(V-1) \quad \text{The expected net benefit of voting} =
\]

Citizen will vote if and only if the expected net benefit of voting is greater than zero. When will this be true? That is, when will Citizen vote?

In order to answer this question formally, we need to peer further inside the benefits a citizen would receive as the consequence of an election. Here, we make a couple of simple assumptions, which lead to some simple notation. Assume, first, that we are talking about an election that pits two candidates against each other, and that their names are D and R. Second, assume that if D is elected, Citizen will receive a stream of benefits for the term of office that D serves; we will write those benefits as $B^D_{\text{Citizen}}$. The benefits that Citizen will receive if R is elected will be similarly written as $B^R_{\text{Citizen}}$. Finally, assume that Citizen would (sincerely) prefer for D to beat R because $B^D_{\text{Citizen}} > B^R_{\text{Citizen}}$. If we abbreviate the cost of voting using the letter $c$, we are set in terms of notation.

Suppose Citizen abstains from voting. If Citizen abstains, then the cost of voting will be zero. The benefits Citizen will receive will depend on who wins, D or R. If D wins, he receives $B^D_{\text{Citizen}}$; if R wins, he receives $B^R_{\text{Citizen}}$. If D and R tie, the benefit is ambiguous, but by convention we can say that if the tie is resolved with a coin toss, then half the time he will receive $B^D_{\text{Citizen}}$, half the time he will receive $B^R_{\text{Citizen}}$, and thus on average he will receive $(B^D_{\text{Citizen}} + B^R_{\text{Citizen}})/2$. These net benefits for Citizen if he abstains are also summarized in the first column of Table V-1.

Now, keeping the world exactly the same as it was before, suppose Citizen votes. Two things change about the outcome. First, and most obviously, by voting Citizen must pay the cost of voting, whatever it may be. Second, and less obviously, Citizen has a chance to change the
outcome of the election, and thus he has the chance to change the benefit he associates with the
election. However, the chance of changing the outcome of the election is confined to two
situations: (1) If the election would be tied without Citizen's vote, then his vote tips the scales in
his direction, and the benefit to him increases, since by definition \( B_{\text{Citizen}}^D > (B_{\text{Citizen}}^D + B_{\text{Citizen}}^R)/2 \).
(2) If candidate R would win by precisely one vote if Citizen were to abstain, then Citizen's vote
for D would produce a tie, a tie would produce a coin toss, and on average the citizen would
receive \( (B_{\text{Citizen}}^D + B_{\text{Citizen}}^R)/2 \) in benefits, which is greater than \( B_{\text{Citizen}}^R \). The second column of
Table V-1 summarizes Citizen's net benefits should he vote, taking into account the fact that he
must pay the cost of voting in each situation and that he might change the outcome in two cases.

It is clear from Table V-1 that if Citizen were \textit{forced} to vote, he would never be worse off
by voting his sincere preference, and in two cases he would definitely be better off by voting for
D. That is, if he were forced to vote he would pay the cost of voting regardless of the outcome,
and therefore the cost of voting is irrelevant in figuring out how he should cast his ballot. In no
case does voting for D make it more likely that R will win, and in two cases D is more likely to
prevail.

Even here, though, we can glimpse the turnout problem: it is only if the outcome would
be tied without his vote or if R would win by one vote that Citizen's vote would make a material
difference to him. If a majority of people are already voting for D, then one more vote for D does
not make the outcome more likely nor does it grant any greater benefits to D. Likewise, if a
majority of voters (with one exception) favor R, then D's vote does not make a difference, either.

Ask yourself this: how often will Citizen's vote be so privileged that it will make a
difference in this way — how often will it be pivotal? In a House district or state, the probability
of a tie or a one-vote victory for the other side is virtually nil. Thus, if we forced Citizen to vote, to a first approximation his vote would never make a difference and we would have forced him to bear a cost for no benefit to him.

Of course, in this thought experiment we aren't forcing Citizen to vote, we are asking whether he will vote. But, the logic and mode of analysis in figuring out whether he will vote are virtually the same as it was when we were understanding the consequences of forcing Citizen to vote. If we read across each row of Table V-1 and compare the net benefits that arise when Citizen does and does not vote, we discover a few things. First, if majorities for D or R are "sufficiently large" (meaning any majority for D or a two-vote majority for R or larger), then Citizen is made worse off by voting. To see this, consider the first row of the table. The only difference to Citizen when the majority for D is already large is between paying the cost of voting or not. If $c$ is greater than zero, Citizen is worse off by voting. Second, if D and R would be otherwise tied without Citizen's vote, then Citizen is made better off by voting if and only if

$$(B_{\text{Citizen}}^D - B_{\text{Citizen}}^R)/2 > c.$$ Intuitively this means that Citizen is better off by voting to break a tie if D and R are sufficiently different from each other to overcome the cost of voting. Third, if R would win by one vote if Citizen abstained, then Citizen is also made better off by voting if and only if

$$(B_{\text{Citizen}}^D - B_{\text{Citizen}}^R)/2 > c,$$ with the same intuition attached.

Thus, for Citizen to vote in this world, two things must coincide: the outcome must be known to be a (virtual) tie and D and R must be "sufficiently" different. Even if we suppose the two candidates offer quite different visions of the future from Citizen's perspective, the chance of a tie is virtually zero, and hence the chance of Citizen voting is virtually zero.
At the risk of piling on, we can add the following feature onto congressional elections to make a prediction of abstention virtually guaranteed: Keep in mind that congressional elections involve electing hundreds of legislators to go to the capital and act in concert to produce policy. A congressional voter only gets to vote in one of hundreds of legislative elections. Even if a citizen in a congressional district could vote to break a tie in that district, it is unlikely that the legislator who was then elected would turn around and vote to break a tie in the legislature. Thus, not only is it the case that a single voter virtually never is pivotal in a district, that vote is even less often pivotal in determining the overall complexion of the legislature.

The reader is likely to stop at this point and say, "That's all fine and good, but it depends on Citizen knowing whether the election will be a tie if he does not vote. You never know the outcome of an election that precisely in any large electorate until all the votes are cast." True enough. It is possible to take this objection into account by taking into account the subjective probability in Citizen's mind that the outcome will be a tie if he doesn't vote. But, even if we do that, the strength of the analysis remains unchanged: the possibility that a single vote will make a material difference in an election is limited, and hence the pull for any individual to abstain is strong.  

This bald version of the investment calculus of non-voting is distasteful to many people for many reasons. Scientifically the theory is unsatisfying because the prediction that no one should vote flies in the face of the observation that many people do vote. Thus, the pure investment theory may need to be modified to account for the empirical observation of people voting. The most commonly-followed path of modifying this logic was first formally suggested by Riker and Ordeshook in 1968. The Riker/Ordeshook approach relies on positing that the act of voting itself brings satisfactions to many people. These satisfactions include:

! compliance with the ethic of voting and duties of citizenship;

! affirmation of allegiance to the political system;

---

3At the risk of piling on, we can add the following feature onto congressional elections to make a prediction of abstention virtually guaranteed: Keep in mind that congressional elections involve electing hundreds of legislators to go to the capital and act in concert to produce policy. A congressional voter only gets to vote in one of hundreds of legislative elections. Even if a citizen in a congressional district could vote to break a tie in that district, it is unlikely that the legislator who was then elected would turn around and vote to break a tie in the legislature. Thus, not only is it the case that a single voter virtually never is pivotal in a district, that vote is even less often pivotal in determining the overall complexion of the legislature.
affirmation of a partisan preference;

engaging in research, deliberation, discussion, etc.; and

affirming one's efficacy within the political system. (Riker and Ordeshook, 1968, p. 28)

Thus, we could modify equation (V-1) to read as follows:

\[
(V-2) \quad \text{The expected net benefit of voting} = \\
\text{The benefit the individual receives as a consequence of the election outcome} — \\
\text{The cost of voting} + \text{The immediate satisfaction of voting}
\]

Because the pure net benefit of voting is likely to be virtually zero, the expected net benefit of voting is primarily determined by the immediate satisfaction that people derive from the act of voting.

This appeal to "citizen duty" to explain voting has frequently been attacked as being *ad hoc*, that is, taken out of thin air to salvage a theoretical path that is so clearly off base. Nevertheless, this reformulation can help us organize our thinking about the turnout puzzle while retaining the lens of methodological individualism. If the material benefit from voting, compared to abstaining, is likely to be negligible, then the question of turnout becomes whether the immediate satisfaction from voting exceeds the immediate cost of voting. And if the immediate satisfaction does exceed the immediate cost, then the decision to vote is more of a decision about consumption than about investment.

The study of consumer behavior is full of examples where individuals make decisions that look irrational if they are taken as long-term investment strategies but look understandable if the benefit being derived is immediate. If cigarette-induced lung cancer is a leading cause of death in the United States, why do so many people smoke? If sugar is so bad for the teeth, why do so
many people drink Coke? If football is such a mindlessly violent game, why do so many people watch it? How can anyone stand to watch *Beevis and Butthead*?

There is no accounting for taste. Although we find it hard, at a deep philosophical level, to explain why individuals like cigarettes or particular brands of soda pop or television shows, we know it is not impossible to understand which cigarettes, colas, and shows they will consume or how much they will consume, assuming people want to consume these things. Economists have gained ground by putting bounds around the deeper questions of consumer choice so that they can ask much simpler (yet important) questions about that choice. For instance, we may not be able to explain why people watch *Beevis and Butthead*, but we do know that more people will watch it on free, broadcast television than if they must watch it through pay-for-view cable. Price influences quantity consumed.

In the same way we can make significant progress in predicting who will watch *Beevis and Butthead* (e.g., more 17 year-olds than 85 year-olds, more high school drop-outs than PhDs) and how many will stop watching when the cable company charges more to watch it, we can also predict who is likely to vote and how many will stop voting when the costs are raised.

Empirical research into voter turnout confirms that sometimes it appears to be an investment decision and other times it is like a consumption decision. Consider, first, evidence about investment behavior. The investment theory of turnout pins the probability of voting on the relative difference in the outcomes and the cost of voting. Evidence gleaned from public opinion surveys and other studies suggest that influences similar to these do have an impact on whether people vote.
Consider the difference between the candidates. Public opinion researchers rely on an ingenious measure, called the "feeling thermometer," to elicit a summary positive/negative evaluation about congressional candidates. The measure is called a feeling thermometer because the respondent is asked to rate, on a 0–100 scale (0 being "cold," 100 being "warm"), how she or he feels toward a candidate. When this is asked about the two congressional candidates in a respondent's district, the difference in the two rankings gives us a useful measure of how differently the two candidates are evaluated in the citizen's mind. In Table V-2 I report the likelihood of voting in the 1994 congressional election as a function of how differently the respondent evaluated the two parties' House candidates in that district. Barely half the respondents who saw virtually no difference between the two candidates reported having voted, whereas four-fifths of those noting big differences between the two candidates voted.4

The most comprehensive study of voter turnout, Wolfinger and Rosenstone's *Who Votes?* (1980) confirms that turnout is tied to the perceived tangible benefits one receives from the political system. The evidence they offered was not related to perceived candidate policy differences, however, but rather evidence about the relationship between the self-interest of voters and their tendency to participate in electoral politics. In particular, government employees vote at

---

4The most striking thing about Table V-2 may be the massive over-reporting of voting in the 1994 congressional election. In the 1994 American National Election Study, 57% of the respondents reported having voted for in the congressional election, compared to the actual turnout rate of 38%. Table V-2 exaggerates turnout even further because it is based only on the respondents who could give a thermometer rating to both candidates. Among those who could rate both candidate, 69% reported having voted. Among those who could provide a rating for neither candidate, only 25% reported having voted. Thus, we see demonstrated two important phenomena in public opinion research: (1) a significant fraction of respondents mis-report that they voted and (2) voting is strongly predicted by how much information a citizen has about the candidates.
much higher rates than employees in the private economy. While government employees may have stronger senses of civic duty than other people, what is most likely to be going on is that government employees have a greater immediate stake in the outcome of elections, and hence are more willing to bear the costs of voting than are voters in the private economy. Certain segments of government employees — particularly the largest segment, teachers — are well-organized, and thus have effective mechanisms to encourage higher turnout. Wolfinger and Rosen stone did not separately analyze the turnout patterns of retirees, yet it is entirely plausible that the extraordinarily high turnout levels among recent retirees is due to their reliance on two mammoth government benefit programs — Social Security and Medicare — that are increasingly under scrutiny from budget-cutters.

A great deal of scholarship has been done to measure the costs of voting and their effects on voter turnout. The United States stands virtually alone among democratic nations in erecting a large number of barriers between its citizens and the voting booth. Those barriers start with the overall philosophy about who is responsible for taking the initiative to register people to vote — citizens or the government — and end with particular laws that positively interfere with the ability of citizens to vote. There is nowhere in the United States where an eligible citizen is automatically registered to vote when she moves into the community. Registration requirements and procedures vary from state-to-state and sometimes from county-to-county. In a highly mobile society, therefore, citizens must bear real costs, no matter how small, to find out how to register and then to do it. Having registered, a voter then has to make sure she is not removed from the voter rolls because of the failure to vote in a series of elections.
In the political jurisdictions where the barriers to voting are highest, turnout tends to be the lowest. Earlier research by Wolfinger and Rosenthal (1972) showed a statistical relationship between lower voter turnout in the 1972 election and the condition of voter registration laws in the states. States that kept their registration books open until election day was imminent, mandated that election offices be open 40 hours per week, required that election offices be open evenings and weekends, and allowed absentee registration had higher turnout than states that did the opposite. From their statistical estimates Wolfinger and Rosenthal predicted that voter registration laws alone reduced turnout in the 1972 election by over 9 percentage points.

In 1993 Congress passed the National Voter Registration Act, popularly referred to as the "motor voter" law, because it mandated states to institute systems of mail-in registration and to make registration forms widely available in a wide range of government offices, including drivers license offices. An insufficient number of national elections (i.e., one) has occurred since the passage of the motor voter law to draw any firm conclusions about the long-term effect of making voter registration more accessible to citizens. Knack's (1995) study of the effects of state-level "motor voter" laws discovered that it took about five years for the full effect of the laws to be felt and that, in steady state, the laws increased registration levels by about ten percentage points overall.

To the degree that turnout is like an investment decision, anything that raises the electoral benefit or lowers the voting cost should increase voter turnout. One reason political reformers supported passage of the motor voter law was that they wanted to lower the cost of voting, and thus boost turnout. Congressional candidates, on the other hand, have mixed incentives as far as
When elections are predicted to be close, candidates invest more time and effort into GOVT activities, since the added effort is more likely to be pivotal. The payoff to GOVT activities in close races is illustrated in Figure V-3, which graphs turnout in House elections in 1994 and 1996 against the resulting percent of the vote received by the winner in each race. Notice that even in 1996, when a surge of turnout was generated by the presidential election, there was still a negative correlation between turnout and the winning percentage. Of course these two graphs also demonstrate a great deal of variability in turnout across House districts, and thus closeness is not the only influence on turnout levels. Still, closeness counts for something in turnout, as it does with hand grenades.⁵

⁵The lines drawn in each of the two graphs in Figure V-3 represent the results of a linear regression in which the dependent variable was turnout and the independent variable was the winning percentage. Here are the full results of those regressions (standard errors in the parentheses):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1994</th>
<th>1996</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>325,808</td>
<td>364,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(10,297)</td>
<td>(12,633)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winning pct.</td>
<td>-2,577</td>
<td>-2,624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(150)</td>
<td>(188)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In examining barriers to voting imposed by voter registration laws and attempts to overcome those barriers undertaken by candidates, we have treated the costs of voting as a concern largely beyond the control of the voter. Certainly all voters are not alike. Some can more easily overcome these costs; for others, the costs we have identified are not as great.

For instance, better-educated and higher-income citizens are more likely to vote than poorly-educated and lower-income ones. In their exhaustive study of voting in the 1972 election, Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980) reported that 53% of respondents to a Census Bureau survey who had not graduated from high school reported voting, 69% of high school graduates voted, and 83% of those who at least had some college turned out. Likewise, voter participation ranged from 46% within their lowest income category to 86% within the highest income category.

Well-educated and high-income individuals have advantages over others that aid them in overcoming the costs of voting. Most importantly, they know how to participate in democratic politics. At the same time, people with higher education and income levels have more flexibility with their lives, and thus participation in politics exacts lower opportunity costs.

One puzzle about the relationship between education and voter turnout emerges within the rational choice framework, however. Wolfinger and Rosenstone also report that highly-educated citizens express greater affinity to democratic symbols and more of a sense that their participation makes a difference in the political system. What is puzzling is that education should demystify the

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
  r^2 & .41 & .31 \\
\end{array}
\]

Hence, each one percent increase in winning percentage was associated with an average turnout drop of 1,776 in 1992 and 1,067 in 1994, compared to average turnouts in these two years of 214,000 and 164,000.
political system, so that well-educated citizens should be aware of the implications of the Riker/Ordeshook logic of non-voting. That the world seems to operate in the opposite direction is probably testimony to the strong socializing (and thus conservative) goals of civics education in the United States.

An important, and non-obvious, contributor to non-voting that Wolfinger and Rosenstone reported was the high levels of mobility among Americans. Whenever people move, they are required to bear the cost of registering and figuring out local election laws and politics yet again. Long-time residents of a community have already paid many of the costs of participating politically.

The idea that there is a consumption side of the turnout equation requires us to consider the link between a person's interest in politics, however it comes about, and the tendency to vote. At the most cursory level there is clearly a link between an interest in politics and voting. For instance, in 1994 77% of respondents to the American National Election Study who reported they followed public affairs "most of the time" voted in the congressional election; only 19% of respondents who followed public affairs "hardly at all" voted.

The Ordeshook/Riker argument requires us to examine a particular link between an interest in politics and voting — the link that runs from a sense of "civic duty" to the act of voting. Do some citizens reap a "psychic reward" for voting that transcends the long-term material benefit they derive? The psychic reward phenomenon is a little more difficult to demonstrate directly, since no national polls regularly ask people whether voting itself makes them "feel good" or not. However, if there is such a thing as psychic reward associated with the act of voting, that reward is also probably associated with things such as a person's feelings about
patriotism, national symbols, and the government. People who believe they are more patriotic than others, value national symbols such as the flag more than others, and trust the government to do the right thing more than others are also likely to derive greater pleasure from voting than are others.

Table V-3 shows how voting in the 1994 congressional election correlated with answers to questions intended to capture feelings of these sorts. (As with Table V-2, Table V-3 is based on responses to the 1994 American National Election Study.) In general, people who believed government was not too complicated, reported a strong love of country, and experienced an extremely good feeling when they saw the American flag voted at higher rates than people who expressed opposite feelings. These findings are consistent with other studies of voting that have had to rely on indirect measures of patriotism and civic duty (**citations**).

The effects of non-voting

Does it matter that some vote and not others? Like many questions in the social sciences, this one has an easy answer that dissolves under close scrutiny. The easy answer is that it must matter that some people vote and others don't, since voters and non-voters are dissimilar. If people with more education, higher incomes, and great social stability are more likely to vote, shouldn't that bias elections in a conservative direction?

While it is certainly true that the electorate (i.e., those who turn out to vote) is slightly more conservative than the general adult population, research aimed at gauging the effects of this bias has largely come up empty. Wolfinger and Rosenstone's (1980) analysis of voting in the 1972 election estimated that, on net, turnout patterns gave the Republican party a boost of a
couple of percentage points nationwide. Voters and non-voters are different, but they aren't *that* different from one another.

Research by DeNardo (198*) suggests another reason why differential rates of turnout in congressional elections may not bias outcomes in a conservative direction. As we have already suggested, turnout rates vary for two reasons, because of reasons particular to individuals (through education, income, interest in politics, etc.) and reasons particular to specific election campaigns (how close they are, how active the candidates are, etc.). For nearly half a century the Democratic party was the majority party as far as composition of Congress was concerned. This means that there were naturally more Democratic districts in which incumbents were relatively safe (i.e., won by large margins) than Republican districts. This balance of power produced relatively more districts in which Republicans ran poor candidates, thus drawing in fewer Republican voters to the polls. Thus, while demographic characteristics tended to advantage conservative Republican voters in terms of turnout, the nature of electoral competition in congressional districts tended to advantage Democrats.

Of course, with the recent success of Republicans in House elections, this countervailing Democratic advantage in turnout may have ended. The general point remains however: Demographics are not the only factor causing variations in turnout rates. The candidates themselves contribute significantly to these variations, and oftentimes they contribute in ways that counteract "natural" demographic factors.

Another way to focus the question about the effects of voter turnout in congressional elections is to ask about the different electorates in on and off year elections. At the dawn of public opinion studies in the 1950s, scholars coined a phrase to describe the difference in
presidential- and non-presidential year elections: "surge-and-decline" (Campbell 195*). The idea behind identifying the surge-and-decline phenomenon was to point out that the electorate in presidential years included many people who were usually not very interested in politics, who surged into the electorate in response to the unusually high level of political information surrounding the presidential election, but then who were absent two years hence in the off year congressional election. Because the hard core of voters, who participated in both off and on-year elections, appeared to be stable in its political attitudes, it was concluded that volatility in congressional elections from election-to-election was due to the fickleness of citizens who voted only in presidential years.

More recent scholarship has demonstrated that the earlier conjecture was largely incorrect. While the added increment to the electorate in presidential years is composed of voters who are different from the hardcore base, again the differences are not so great to account for the great swings that occur from election-to-election. Therefore, the regular midterm loss of seats to the president's party is not due directly to the ebb and flow of turnout. (**citations to the newer literature**)

Saying that fluctuating turnout at the national level from election-to-election does not have much of an effect on aggregate election outcomes is not the same thing as saying that fluctuating turnout in individual districts has no effect on outcomes. Indeed, it does. Safe incumbents tend to win in low-turnout elections, which leaves a pool of unmobilized voters in most districts who are ripe for the picking by the "right" challenger. Closely-contested races tend to be high-turnout affairs. Yet, when we survey all 435 House elections and the 33 or 34 Senate elections, we see that sometimes the turnout surge induced by a hot challenger helps the
Republican candidate, other times the Democrat; sometimes a liberal and sometimes a conservative. Therefore, the surge-and-decline effect that we should be more aware of when we examine individual congressional districts is the one that is independent of the ebb-and-flow of presidential politics per se.

II. Deciding Whom to Support

Among those who vote in congressional elections, how do they choose among the alternatives? The theory of public choice provides two general answers to this question, for which there is ample supporting evidence. The first answer is that voters should support candidates who are ideologically similar to them and oppose candidates who are ideologically dissimilar. This is no more than a restatement and application of the Downsian spatial model. The second answer is that, regardless of the criteria voter use to make up their minds, those criteria should be easy for voters to use, since a hard-to-use criterion would simply discourage citizens from voting altogether. These answers both point us toward two significant explanations for voting behavior in congressional elections: ideology and party identification.

Ideology

Ever since the French Revolution much of western politics has been summarized along a left-right continuum. In the United States this divide is often relabeled liberal and conservative. Whatever we call it, allusion to politics occurring along a dimension should alert us to a spatial explanation for voting in congressional elections. If the spatial model is at all relevant in explaining voting in congressional elections, liberal citizens should support liberal candidates, conservative citizens should support conservative candidates.
Evidence taken from the 1994 congressional election is typical of all public opinion research on the subject: when voters can identify themselves and the House candidates with an ideological label, they do in fact vote for the candidate whose ideology more closely aligns with their own. In the case of the 1994 election, respondents were asked to place themselves on a 7-point scale, with 7 indicating they were very conservative and 1 indicating they were very liberal. Respondents were also asked to rate the Democratic and Republican House candidates on this same scale. Eighty-nine percent of those who rated the Republican as being ideologically closer voted for the Republican candidate; 86% of those who rated the Democratic as being ideologically closer voted for the Democrat.\(^6\) (Virtually no one rated themselves equally close to both candidates.)

One implication of the Downsian spatial model of candidate competition that we examined in Chapter 1 was that candidates should converge toward each other and toward the median of the electorate. If there is evidence that voters support ideologically compatible candidates, is there also evidence that candidates in fact converge to the center? Here, data limitations hinder our ability to draw strong conclusions. Public opinion researchers have rarely administered the

---

\(^6\)One should be careful in interpreting the relationship between the estimates that voters make of candidates’ ideologies and their tendency to support those candidates. Psychologists use the term *projection* to describe the tendency of people to ascribe positive attributes to favored objects in the absence of concrete evidence. So, for instance, a respondent in a public opinion survey may already have decided whom she will vote for and then infer that her favored candidate must be ideologically close. Thus, the relationship between actual ideological distance and support for candidates is probably overstated in public opinion surveys. Still, it is telling that some respondents at least rationalize their support for candidates by bringing the ideology of their favored candidates in line with their own. In the end, more sophisticated analyses of the relationship between candidate ideology and candidate support, which try to purge the effects of projection from the analysis, find strong support for the spatial proximity model in voting. See **cites**.
same survey instruments to samples of voters and candidates, and therefore we have little direct evidence about whether both candidates in congressional races converge to each other and to the median voter. The most comprehensive data we have concerns the preferences of *winners* in congressional elections. We know, for instance, that liberal constituencies (measured using public opinion data or election returns for other offices) tend to elect liberal members of Congress (measured using survey instruments or roll call voting patterns). But, whether the *losers* also are more liberal in liberal constituencies is subject to speculation.  

*Party identification*

There is some evidence that the Downsian ideological proximity model works in explaining the decisions of congressional voters. Yet there is at least one problem with the evidence: the model works among voters who know the ideology of the candidates and who can place themselves ideologically. However, many people refuse to describe themselves in ideological terms and even more people are unable to describe the ideological disposition of congressional candidates. Still, many of these people vote. On what basis do they make up their minds?

---

7The most comprehensive study of the relationship between the policy preferences of constituents, compared to congressional candidates, is by Miller and Stokes (1964). This study, based on surveys of constituencies and candidates in the 1958 election, discovered varying levels of congruence between MCs and constituents on two domestic policy scales and little congruence on foreign policy. Achen (1978) re-examined the Miller and Stokes data and discovered something disturbing, from the perspective of the Downsian logic: *losers* in the 1958 election tended to be closer to the district mean opinion than winners. Further examination showed that *Republican* winners seemed particularly out of step with their constituents. The Miller and Stokes study is now so far out of date, and the findings so particular to one election, that it is difficult to know whether their data should fundamentally undermine our faith in the Downsian model.
A robust voting cue is the party membership of the candidates. It is a cue that is entirely consistent with the Downsian spatial voting model, since Democrats tend to be liberal and Republicans tend to be conservative. It is a robust cue in at least three senses: (1) all congressional candidates are identified by their party membership on the ballot, (2) most voters align themselves with one of the two major parties, and (3) party labels, of voters and of candidates, tend to be stable over time. Therefore, a busy electorate may be able to proxy its ideological leanings by relying on party as a voting cue.

Fig. V-4 In Chapter 4 we noted that in 1994 85% of self-described Democrats and 88% of Republicans voted for congressional candidates of their own parties. This degree of party loyalty has not always attended congressional elections. In Figure V-4 I show the percentage of voters in House and Senate elections whose votes were consistent with their party identification. The degree of party loyalty among congressional voters declined during the 1960s and 1970s, leveling-off in the 1980s. Evidence from the 1994 and 1996 elections suggests, however, that the degree of consistent party voting may have recently returned to pre-1960 levels.

Fig. V-5 A factor undermining the importance of party in congressional elections has been the decline in the percentage of voters identifying with one of the two political parties. (See Figure V-5.) In the 1960s and 1970s particularly, the percentage of voters who called themselves "independents" grew substantially. In the 1980s the decline of partisan identification reversed

---

This consistency has grown over time, as the conservative southern Democratic wing of that party has disappeared and the remaining southern Democrats have become more like northern Democrats. Yet, even in the era when there was a large conservative wing of the Democratic party, the party label was still consistent in this sense: southern Democrats tended to be more liberal (or at least less conservative) than southern Republicans. So long as voters confine their choices to the candidates before them, we can be less concerned about the heterogeneity of the parties at the national level.
course, so that now the documentation of the continued growth of independents depends on how one chooses to measure independents. If you take people at their word, and classify people who initially call themselves independent as independents, then the number of independents has started creeping up again. (This is the dotted line in Figure V-5.) If you give people who call themselves independents a chance to say which party they usually support, and then take the residual of "pure" independents as your measure of independence, then the number of independents has remained flat through the 1980s and 1990s. In any case, to the extent voters eschew party labels, they will have fewer obvious and commonly-shared cues on which to base their voting decisions. Since party identification in recent years is at a lower level than it was immediately after World War II, this suggests that voters may not be able to exercise informed judgements about congressional candidates like they once could.

Tab. V-4 Because partisanship and ideology are so closely linked, it is natural to ask about whether the effects of partisanship remain after controlling for ideology, and vice versa. The answer to this question is yes — the effects of ideological proximity remain after controlling for partisanship and vice versa. Representative results are reported in Table V-4, where I show the percentage of respondents to the 1994 American National Election Study who voted for the Democratic House candidate, as a function of their ideological proximity to the candidates and their party identification. Looking across all the rows, we see that within partisan categories, voters were

---

9One may ask why we would want to push survey respondents who initially call themselves independents into one of the partisan categories and then treating these "leaning independents" as partisans. The most common justification for treating leaning independents as partisans is that they tend to behave like partisans. Thus, it is likely that many people who are identified as "Independent Republicans" and "Independent Democrats" are averse to identifying with one of the parties because of a personal aversion to political parties, and not to an aversion to the ideas that the parties espouse.
more likely to stay loyal to their party's candidate when that candidate agreed with the voter ideologically. For instance, Democratic voters virtually always supported Democratic candidates who were ideologically close to them, and only supported ideologically distant Democrats 38 percent of the time. Looking down each column, we see that within ideological proximity categories, Democratic self-identifiers were more likely to vote for Democrats than Republican identifiers. For instance, among those for whom the Republican was ideologically closer, 97% of the Republican identifiers supported the Republican candidate, compared to 62% of Democratic identifiers.

Therefore, most of the time ideological proximity and partisan self-identification work together in the minds of voters. When ideology and partisanship work at cross-purposes, some voters opt for the partisan options, while others opt for ideological congruence. Either way, by relying on partisanship and ideology, voters can choose candidates who agree with them without investing too much effort in knowing the details of how candidates stand on particular issues.

III. The Problem of Multiple Constituencies: Primaries versus the General Election

The focus of this chapter has been on the general election. This is appropriate, since the greatest competition for congressional seats is typically in the general election, in which the Democratic nominee faces off against the Republican nominee, plus a loose collection of "third party" nominees. In cases where an incumbent is running for reelection, she rarely faces serious opposition for renomination. Primary contests for the opposition party are rarely hotly contested, either.
In the roughly ten percent of cases where the congressional seat has become open, more candidates are likely to file in an attempt to obtain their parties' nominations. In those cases there is likely to be at least one, and possibly two, hot congressional nomination battles in the district.

Unfortunately, neither the theoretical or empirical literatures about congressional elections help us very much in understanding primary elections. One of the two most important voting cues in the general election — party identification — is obviously missing in a nomination primary. Furthermore, the ideological space is truncated within the two parties, making it difficult both for candidates to distinguish themselves ideologically and for voters to base their choices on ideology.

Thus, while nomination battles generate much heat, there is little light shed on the candidates by which the average adherent of a party might make an informed choice. Not surprisingly, then, primaries are typically low-turnout affairs. Just how low is difficult to say, since there is not the same degree of centralized reporting of election results for primaries as there is for general elections. The 1992 California congressional primaries illustrate how low turnout is likely to be, however. In that year, which featured two senatorial primaries, plus a host of House primaries, roughly three million Democrats voted in that party's senatorial primaries, with two and a half million Republicans voting in the two Republican primaries.¹⁰ The five and a half million primary voters overall contrasts with the 13.6 million registered voters in California in 1992 and the roughly nine million voters who turned out in California to vote in the general election.

---

¹⁰California had two senatorial elections because one of its Senate seats had become vacant mid-term while the other was open at the end of a regular six-year cycle. Thus, the two seats were for the "full" term and the "short" term.
Turnout in the House primaries was lower still, with 1.5 million Republicans and 2.1 Democrats voting.\textsuperscript{11}

These prefatory comments about primaries suggests some generalizations that we can make about the contrast between the primary and the general electorates. The first is about turnout. Just as turnout in general elections fluctuates as a function of the closeness of the race, so does turnout in primaries. There is another factor influencing turnout in primaries: when the nomination "means something," turnout is likely to be up, too. Nominations are likely to be "meaningful" when there is a chance that the nominee might win the general election — either by defeating the incumbent from the other party or winning an open seat election. As with general elections, the higher turnout in "meaningful" primaries is partly due to voters believing their votes will "count" more, but it is mostly a result of candidates and their backers putting extra effort into turning out their supporters.

The second important point about primaries concerns the composition of the respective electorates. It is trivial to point out that the primary electorates are smaller than the general electorates, since primary electorates are by definition subsets of general electorates. But, dividing the electorate into partisan subsets does more than simply cut the general electorate in two. First, a certain fraction of the electorate does not identify with one of the political parties, so depending on the particular laws in each state and the willingness of people to register for a party they are not particularly fond of, roughly one-third of the citizenry (i.e., the Independents) are

\textsuperscript{11}The low turnout in House primaries is not due to the lack of candidates, since only two or three districts lacked any official candidates on the ballots.
excluded from the primary process by its very nature.\textsuperscript{12} By this fact alone the primary electorate is more ideologically polarized than the general electorate. Adding to the mechanical polarization of the electorate that primaries produce, voters in primaries tend to be ideologically extreme, both from the perspective of the entire electorate and from the perspective of co-partisans. That is, voters in Democratic primaries tend to be more liberal than Democrats generally; Republicans who vote in primaries tend to be more conservative than Republicans generally.

This pattern is easily interpreted within the cost-benefit analysis of voting that we examined early in this chapter. Primaries are generally low-information affairs for the general population in which the easiest voting cues are unavailable. Therefore, it makes no sense for an individual who is only casually interested in politics to vote. People with ideologically extreme views tend to intrinsically enjoy politics more than moderates, and thus are already disposed to gather the information necessary to participate in primaries.

Tab. V-5

A glimpse of this pattern is presented in Table V-5, which summarizes the ideological disposition of citizens in 1994, broken down according to their expressed interest in the 1994 election campaigns. Among those who expressed "very much" interest in the campaigns, 9\% placed themselves in one of the two extreme ideological categories, compared to 4\% of those who expressed some or no interest in the campaigns. At the same time, only one-quarter of those with very much interest in the campaigns called themselves moderates, while 44\% of those with the least interest in the campaigns labeled themselves such. Finally, and probably most telling of

\textsuperscript{12}Some states allow anyone to vote in a party's primary — these are so-called "open primary" states, such as Wisconsin. Research has shown that there is very little cross-party voting in these open primary states, as there is very little voting among pure independents.
all, among those who expressed the most interest in the 1994 campaigns, only about one-tenth
would not place themselves on the seven-point ideological scale, compared to two-fifths of those
who expressed the least interest in the campaigns.

The research that has been done on the characteristics of primary electorates compared to
general electorates has principally focused on presidential elections. Yet, because presidential
primaries are often held concurrently with congressional primaries and in any case appeal to the
same people, it is likely that we make few mistakes in generalizing from presidential elections to
congressional elections on this topic.

If primary electorates are more ideologically extreme than the general population, it is
natural to ask whether this has an effect on the types of candidates who are nominated for
Congress. A simple (or sincere) application of the Downsian model might suggest that there are
pressures for party candidates to try and appeal to the median within the primary electorate, and
thus for the parties' nominees to diverge from each other, contrary to the convergence predictions
of the pure Downsian model when applied to the general electorate. At the same time, primary
voters tend to be fairly politically sophisticated, and thus often recognize the value of picking a
moderate nominee in order to better compete in the general election. There is no empirical
research on this point in congressional primaries, but research about the behavior of partisan elites
in the presidential nomination process suggest that voters in presidential primaries are willing to
tradeoff the ideological purity of the candidates they support for their electability in the general
election.

The research that comes closest to this subject for congressional electorates has been done
by Lewis (1997), but applied to the California state legislature. Using a host of sophisticated
statistical techniques, Lewis has shown that the roll call voting patterns of members of the California Assembly more closely correlate with the preferences of the average preferences among Assembly members' co-partisans within a district than with the average preferences of the overall electorate. In doing this research, Lewis was able to rely on a feature of California state politics that is not shared with Congress — he was able to compare how constituencies voted on referendum items with how Assembly members voted in roll calls. Thus, it is unlikely that the U.S. Congress will ever be subject to this sort of research. Still, the underlying political logic facing members of the California Assembly is not much different from that facing members of the U.S. Congress, and thus Lewis's findings can probably be generalized to the national setting.

By ending this chapter with a discussion of primary electorates, we emphasize one frequently-overlooked feature of congressional elections: members of Congress must respond to different constituencies, just as different constituencies may respond differently to them.

In his 1974 book, *Home Style*, Richard Fenno examined the interaction between incumbent members of the House and their constituencies and discovered that MCs tended to think of four nested constituencies when they thought of their districts. The *geographic constituency* is the legally-defined constituency within the bounds of the district. It is the population the member is supposed to represent, but it is so heterogeneous that it is rarely useful to think of it as an undifferentiated mass. Nested inside the geographic constituency is the *reelection constituency*. This is the group of voters that the incumbent relies on in the general election. It is often a heterogeneous collection of voters, some of whom may be from the other party, which the incumbent has worked over the years to cultivate and expand.
Nesting down another level is the *primary constituency*. This is the core of voters the incumbent relies on year in and year out. It may literally be the constituency that turns out in the party primary to (re)nominate the candidate, but its most important characteristic is its core nature. It is the constituency that defines who the candidate is and is unlikely to change much from election to election. Finally, there is the group of family, friends, and close associates who constitute the *personal constituency*. These are the ones who the incumbent can rely on to give sage political advice and keep the candidate in tune with important developments in the district.

As we burrow down into this nested set of constituencies, we come upon collections of potential voters who evaluate congressional candidates differently. The personal and primary constituencies have the most information about the candidate and are likely to support him the most loyally. The reelection constituency is more likely to be fickle, being composed of many people who need to be reacquainted with the candidate each two or six years. Because much of the reelection constituency is politically inattentive most of the time, this is the group that the candidate works the hardest to maintain and expand. The danger, of course, comes in trying to expand out to new constituencies while maintaining the support of the primary supporters. As mentioned before, primary constituents tend to be more politically sophisticated than most voters, and therefore appreciate the need for candidates to reach to the district mainstream in order to shore-up political support. Still, the need to keep the primary constituents on board always provides a constraint on the political flexibility of incumbents.

*   *   *

In this chapter we have examined the world of congressional elections mostly through the eyes of voters. In the following chapter we return to the wider perspective of the district itself and
explore how the regulation of the electoral playing field can affect how congressional elections are contested.
Figure V-1
Turnout in Congressional Elections, 1930 – 1994

Figure V-2
Variation in Turnout among House Districts, 1994 and 1996

[Graph showing variation in turnout among House Districts, 1994 and 1996]
Figure V-3

Turnout and Winning Percentage of the Vote, House Elections, 1992 and 1994
Figure V-4
Level of Consistent Party Voting for House and Senate Candidates, 1952 — 1994

Ticket splitters among all voters

Figure V-5
Percentage of Survey Respondents Declining a Party Label, 1952 — 1994

Source: American National Election Study, various years.
### Table V-1
Benefit to Citizen from Abstaining or Voting in an Election

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State of the world without Citizen's vote:</th>
<th>Net benefit if Citizen abstains</th>
<th>Net benefit if Citizen votes</th>
<th>Condition under which Citizen should vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D wins by more than 1 vote</td>
<td>$B^D_{Citizen}$</td>
<td>$B^D_{Citizen} - c$</td>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D wins by exactly 1 vote</td>
<td>$B^D_{Citizen}$</td>
<td>$B^D_{Citizen} - c$</td>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D and R tie</td>
<td>$(B^D_{Citizen} + B^R_{Citizen})/2$</td>
<td>$B^D_{Citizen} - c$</td>
<td>$(B^D_{Citizen} - B^R_{Citizen})/2 &gt; c$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R wins by exactly 1 vote</td>
<td>$B^R_{Citizen}$</td>
<td>$(B^D_{Citizen} + B^R_{Citizen})/2 - c$</td>
<td>$(B^D_{Citizen} - B^R_{Citizen})/2 &gt; c$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R wins by more than 1 vote</td>
<td>$B^R_{Citizen}$</td>
<td>$B^R_{Citizen} - c$</td>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table V-2  
The Probability of Voting as a Function of House Candidate Evaluations, 1994

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difference in feeling thermometer ratings</th>
<th>Probability of voting in 1994</th>
<th>Number of observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small (0-10 points)</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium (11-35 points)</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large (36-100 points)</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note: Voting is measured by the respondent's self-report of whether s/he voted for one of the House candidates running for election in that district (v612). The underlying "feeling thermometer" ratings ask the respondent to rate, on a 0-100 scale, how s/he "feels" toward both the Democratic and Republican candidate in the district (v238 & v239). The difference is the absolute value of the difference in the two evaluations. Notice the dramatic over-report of turnout, which is typical of such survey results.
Table V-3
Relationship between Attitudes Toward the United States and Voting Turnout in the 1994 Congressional Election

Question: Sometimes politics or government seems so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on (agree/disagree):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agreement</th>
<th>Pct. voting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat agree</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree or disagree</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat disagree</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question: How do you feel... when you see the American flag flying?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feeling</th>
<th>Pct. voting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely good</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat good</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very good</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question: How strong is your love of country?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strength</th>
<th>Pct. voting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely strong</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very strong</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat strong</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very strong</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table V-4
Party and Ideological Distance as Explanatory Factors in 1994 House Elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party identification</th>
<th>Democrat</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Republican</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Entries in cells are the percentage of respondents reporting they voted for the Democratic candidate for the House. Independents leaning toward one of the parties are grouped with that party.

Table V-5
I ideological Extremity of Voters in 1994, By Interest in Politics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interest in political campaigns:</th>
<th>Very liberal or very conservative</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>No answer to ideology self-placement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very interested</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat interested</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not interested</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentages should be read across the rows. (For instance, 9% of those who were very interested in the 1994 campaigns were either very liberal or very conservative, 25% were moderate, and 11% could not answer the ideological self-placement question.) Percentages in the first two columns are based on all those able to place themselves on a seven-point scale. Percentages in the last column are based on all respondents.

Source: 1994 American National Election Study