

Voter Mobilization

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Definition:

Voter mobilization or Get-Out-the-Vote (GOTV) is the process in which groups try to motivate their supporters to participate in elections. Political parties, unions, special interest groups, nonprofits and others advocate and educate people to get them to vote a particular way.

Significance to Civic/Political Engagement:

Voter mobilization is an important piece of civic engagement. Once supporters of a cause are identified and join with the group, further actions like advocacy and voting for laws/politicians that support the mission are crucial to the success of the group.

Political science research shows that consistent voters tend to be more educated, richer, and older (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). Personal or face-to-face appeals tend to increase voter turnout (Gerber & Green, 2000). Therefore, the challenge remains for groups that represent or identify with people who are least likely to vote.

Key Ideas/Tools:

Tactics used in GOTV campaigns:

- Telephone calls, direct mail, text campaigns
- In person canvassing
- Voter registration drives
- Providing transportation to and from polling places
- Digital organizing and fundraising

Further Scholarly Resources:

Books:

Freedom Summer by Doug McAdam. (Oxford University Press, 1988).

Get Out the Vote: How to Increase Voter Turnout, by Donald P. Green and Alan S. Gerber. (Brookings Institute Press, 2019).

Making Young Voters: Converting Civic Attitudes into Civic Action, by John B. Holbein and D. Sunshine Hillygus. (Cambridge University Press, 2020).

Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics by Sidney Verba, Kay Schlozman and Henry E. Brady. (Harvard University Press, 1995).



Articles:

Biggers, D. R. (2019). Can the Backlash Against Voter ID Laws Activate Minority Voters? Experimental Evidence Examining Voter Mobilization Through Psychological Reactance. *Political Behavior*. DOI: 10.1007/s11109-019-09587-0

Condon, M., Larimer, C. W., & Panagopoulos, C. (2016). Partisan Social Pressure and Voter Mobilization. *American Politics Research*, 44(6), 982–1007.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1532673X15620482>

Gerber, A.S., and Green, D.P. (2000). "The Effects of Personal Canvassing, Telephone Calls, and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout: A Field Experiment." *American Political Science Review* 94(September): 653-64.

Gerber, A. S., & Green, D. P. (2017). Field Experiments on Voter Mobilization: An Overview of a Burgeoning Literature. In A. V. Banerjee & E. Duflo (Eds.), *Handbook of Economic Field Experiments* (Vol. 1, pp. 395–438). North-Holland. <https://doi.org/10.1016/bs.hefe.2016.09.002>

Keeter, S. & Igielnik, R. (2016). Can Likely Voter Models Be Improved? Pew Research Center, <https://www.pewresearch.org/methods/2016/01/07/can-likely-voter-models-be-improved/>

Mossberger, K., Tolbert, C. J., & Anderson, C. (2017). The mobile Internet and digital citizenship in African-American and Latino communities. *Information, Communication & Society*, 20(10), 1587–1606. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2016.1243142>

Websites:

American Bar Association,
https://www.americanbar.org/groups/crsj/publications/human_rights_magazine_home/voting-rights/how-to-help-protect-our-elections-and-get-out-the-vote/

APSA Raise the Vote, <https://connect.apsanet.org/raisethevote/>

Brennan Center for Justice,
<https://www.brennancenter.org/issues/ensure-every-american-can-vote>

Four Directions, <http://www.fourdirectionsvote.com/>

Movement Voter Project, <https://movement.vote/>

Rock the Vote, www.rockthevote.org

Yale University, Institution for Social and Policy Studies, Lessons from GOTV experiments, <https://isps.yale.edu/node/16698>

Developed in Collaboration with the Growing Democracy Project.
Learn more about the Growing Democracy Project at www.GrowingDemocracyOH.org

