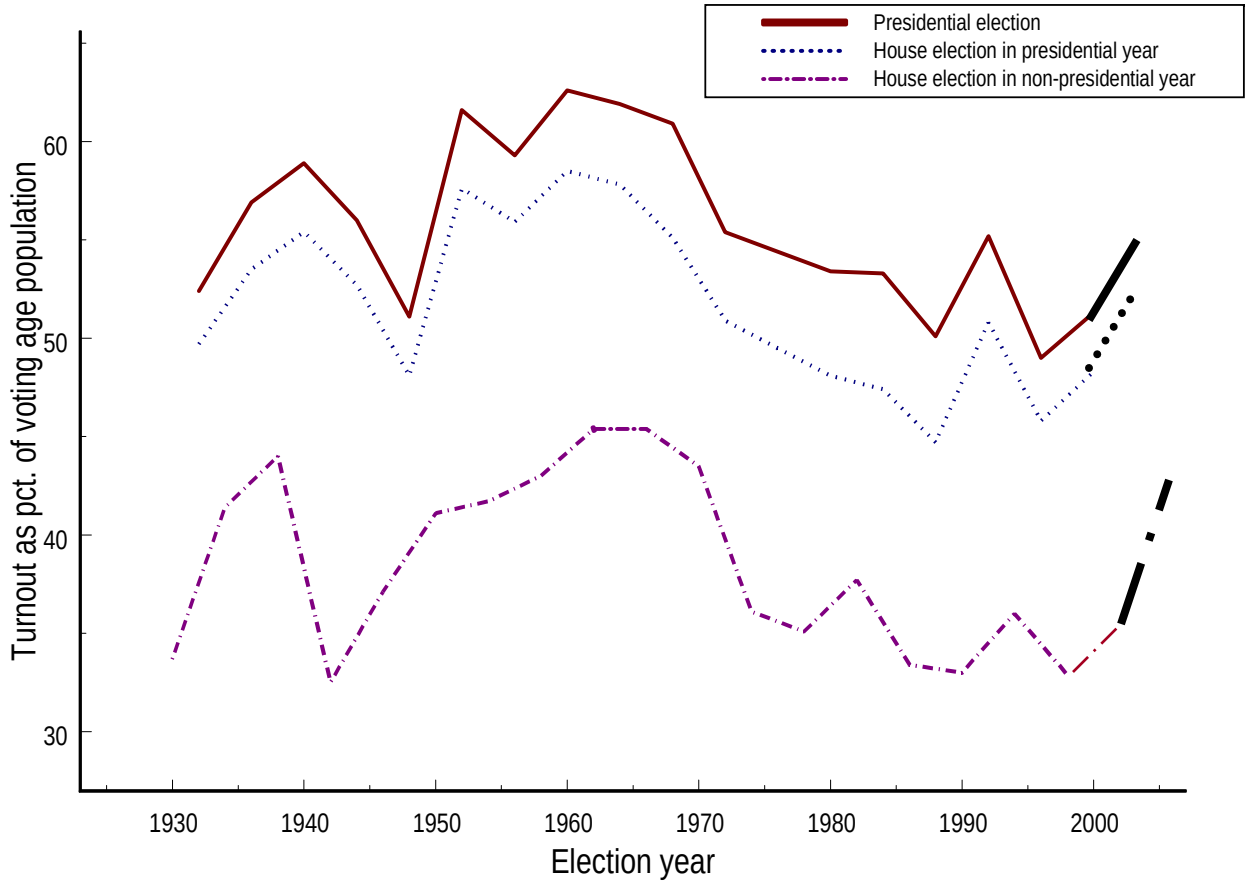
Congressional Voters

17.251/252

Fall 2008

Turnout


Presidential election
House election in presidential year
House election in non-presidential year
Turnout as pct. of voting age population
60
50
40
30
1930
1940
1950
1960
1970
1980
1990
2000
Election year

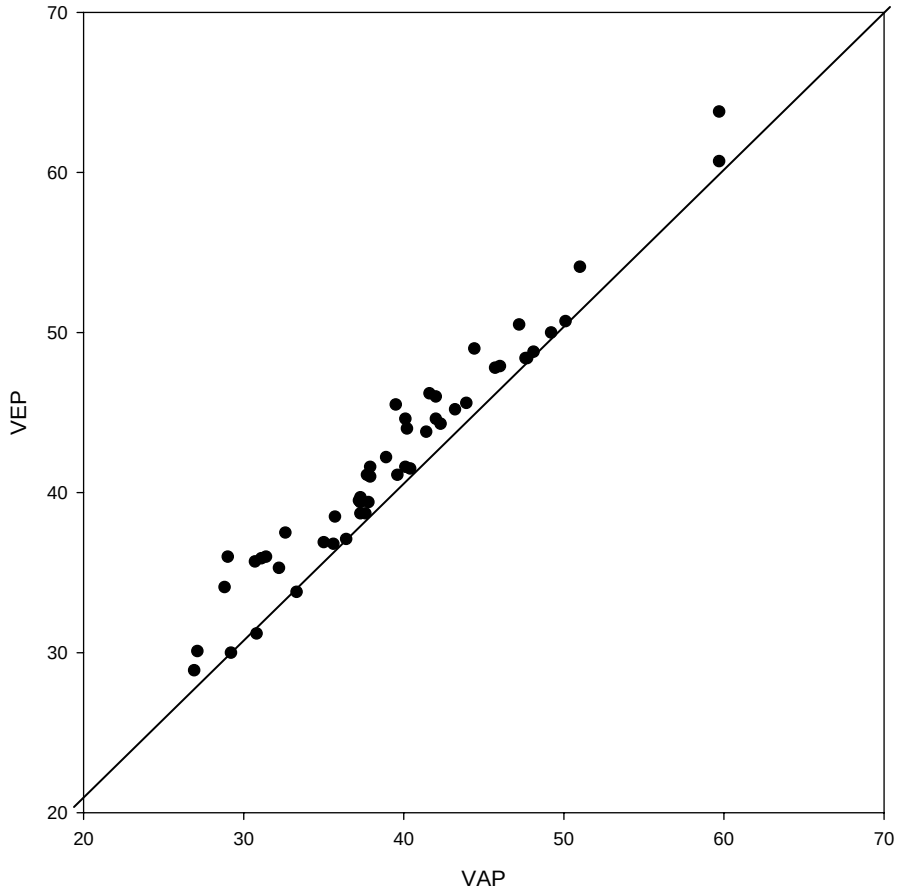
How to Calculate Turnout Pct.

- Turnout Pct. = Turnout / VAP

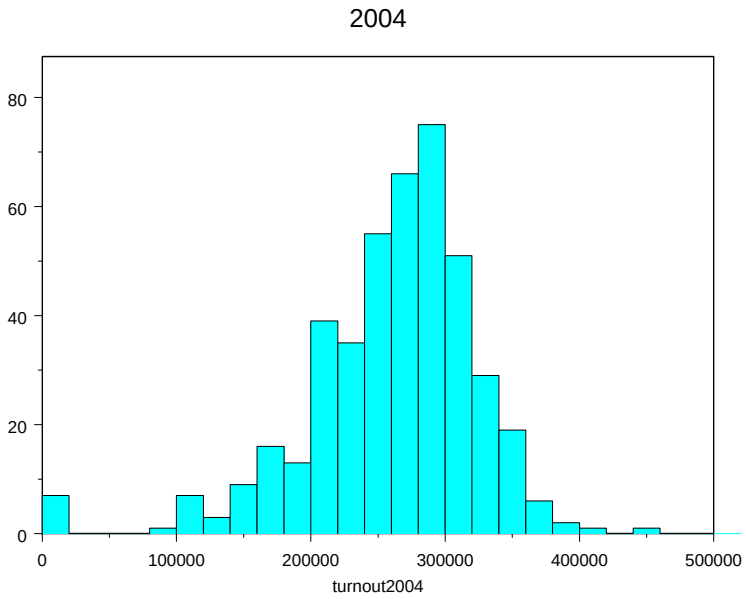
not

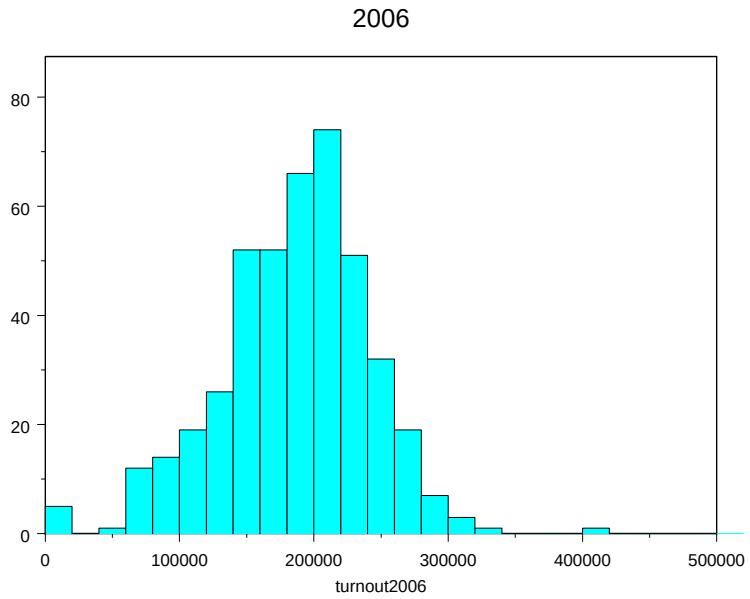
- Turnout / Registered
- New measure: Turnout / Voting eligible population

Turnout/VEP vs. Turnout/VAP



Variation in Turnout 2004 & 2006

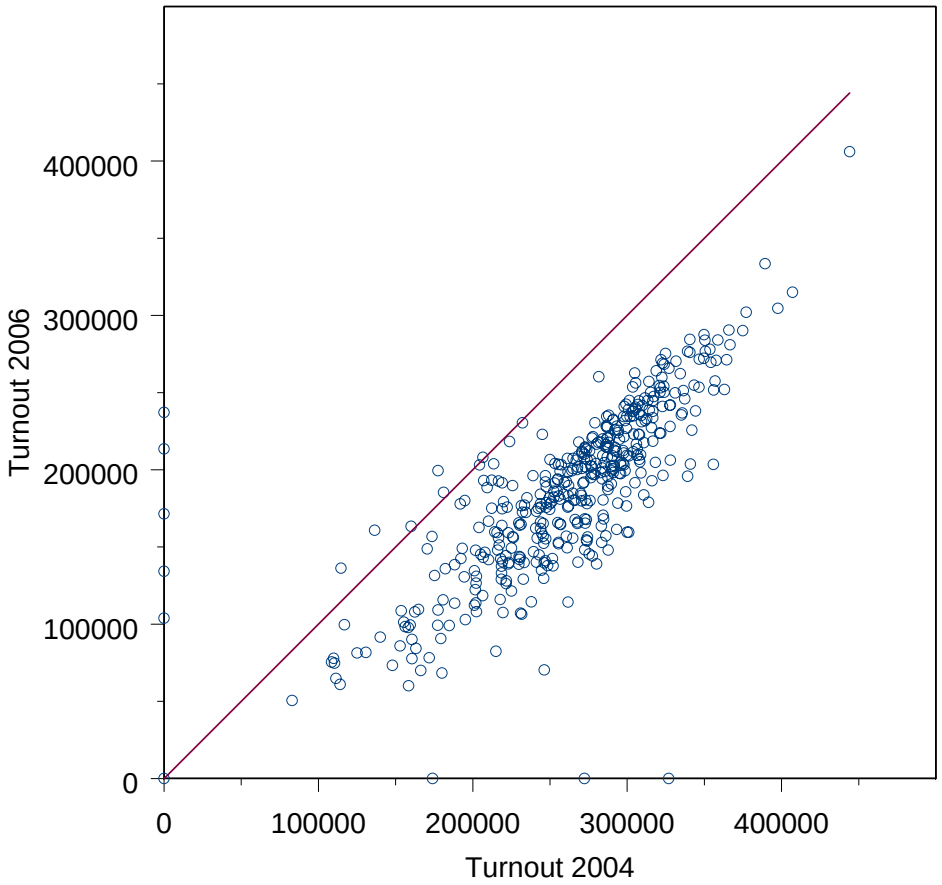




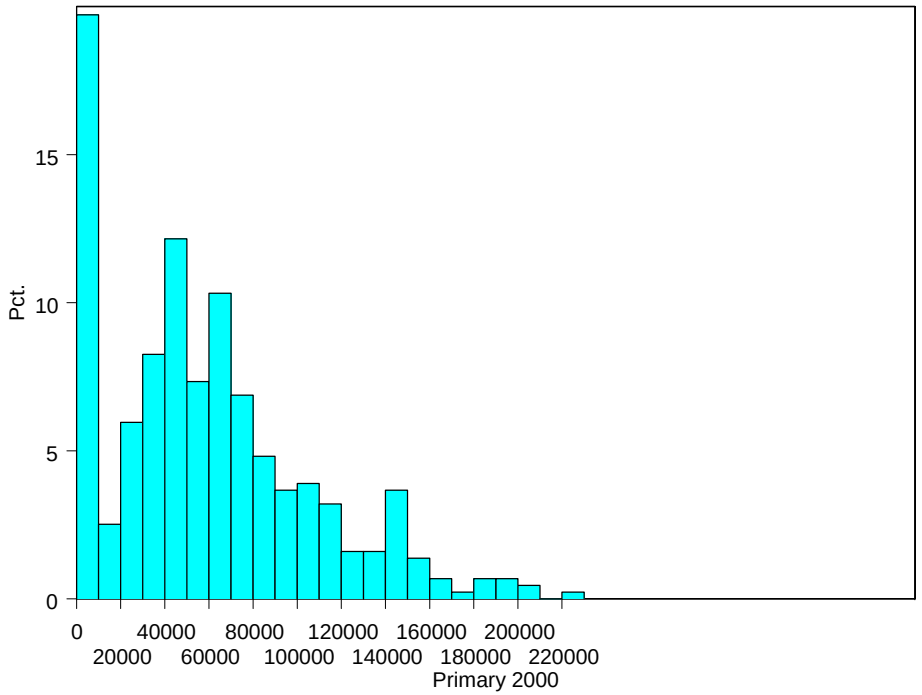
Mean = 260,000

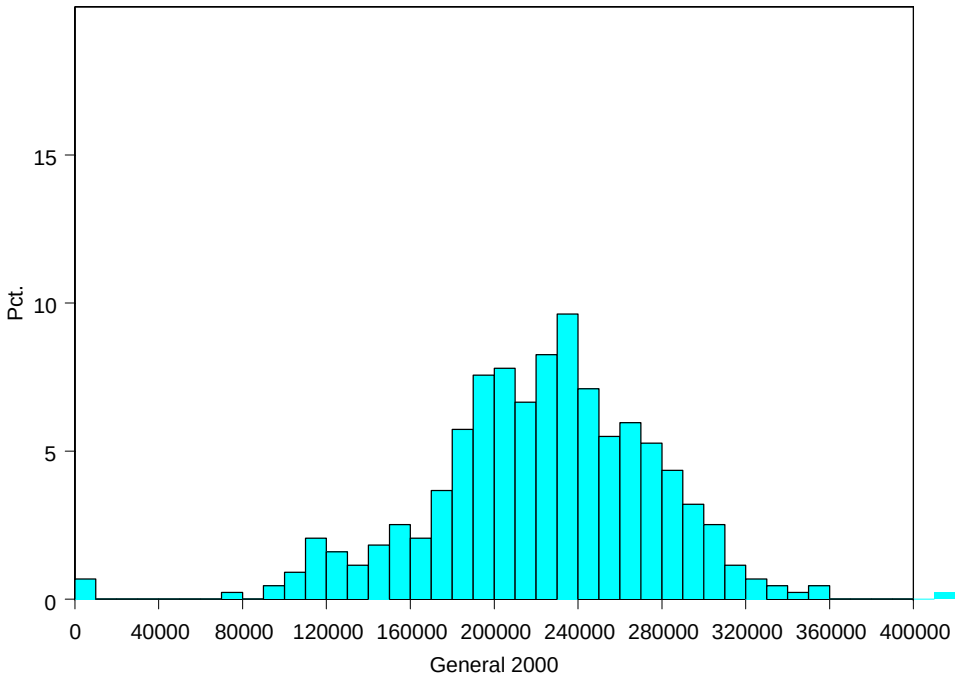
Mean = 186,000

Correlation in Turnout 2004 to 2006



Primary & General Election Turnout, 2000





Explaining (Non-)Voting

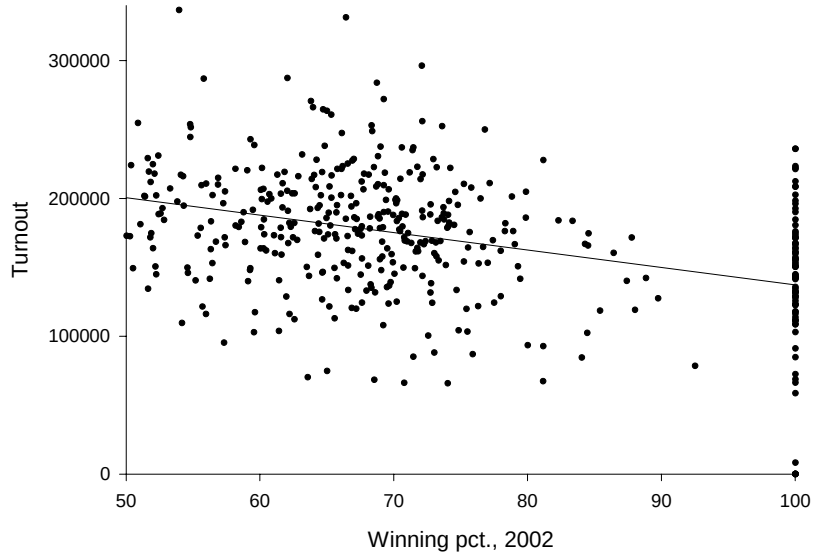
- Expected value of voting =
  - Benefit the individual receives as a consequence of the election outcome
  - Minus the cost of voting

Explaining (Non-)Voting

State of the World w/out Citizen's Vote	Net Benefit if Citizen Abstains	Net Benefit if Citizen Votes	Condition under which Citizen Should Vote
D wins by more than 1 vote	$B^D_{Citizen}$	$B^D_{Citizen} - c$	Never
D wins by exactly 1 vote	$B^D_{Citizen}$	$B^D_{Citizen} - c$	Never
D and *R* tie	$(B^D_{Citizen} + B^R_{Citizen})/2$	$B^D_{Citizen} - c$	$(B^D_{Citizen} - B^R_{Citizen})/2 > c$
R wins by exactly 1 vote	$B^R_{Citizen}$	$(B^D_{Citizen} + B^R_{Citizen})/2 - c$	$(B^D_{Citizen} - B^R_{Citizen})/2 > c$
R wins by more than 1 vote	$B^R_{Citizen}$	$B^R_{Citizen} - c$	Never

Salvaging the Calculus

- Citizen duty
- Think about it probablistically, not deterministically
  - Candidate differenial
  - Costs of voting
  - Closeness of election
    - Voter attention
    - GOTV

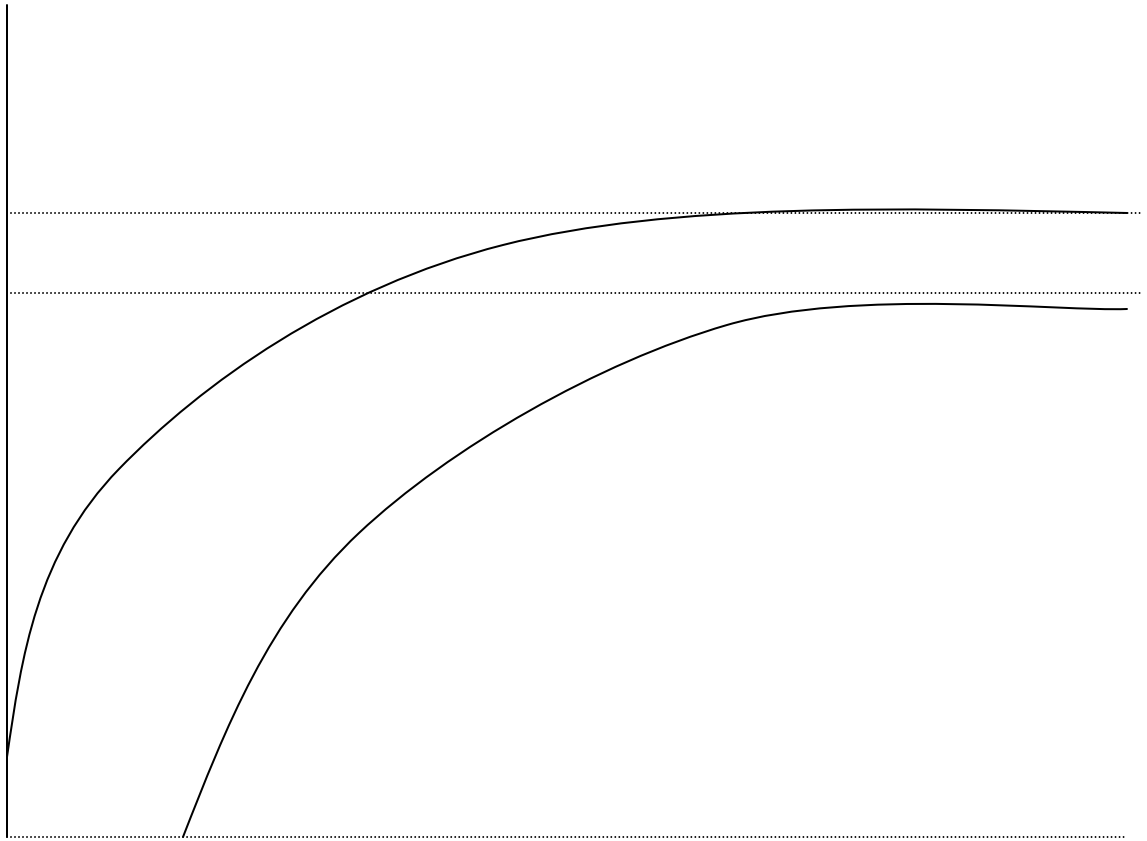


Who is hurt/helped by turnout

- Naïve view: Dems helped by turnout

Who is hurt/helped by turnout

- District view: the “out party”



Campaign intensity

Deciding whom to support

- Ideology
  - Downsian logic directly
- Party ID
  - Downsian logic by proxy

PID x IDEO in 2006

	Dem	Ind	Rep
Liberal	5,510	2,228	277
Moderate	4,920	5,304	2,446
Conserv.	757	2,681	8,224

Missing PID: 6%
Missing ideo: 8%

Source: 2006 Cooperative Congressional Election Study

Party and Ideology Distance as Explanatory Factors in 2006 Cong'l Elections

House	Ideology of voter			
Party ID	Lib.	Mod.	Con.	Total
Dem	.95	.88	.66	.90
Ind.	.90	.71	.20	.61
Rep	.40	.30	.07	.12
Total	.92	.70	.13	.54

Senate	Ideology of voter			
Party ID	Lib.	Mod.	Con.	Total
Dem	.97	.92	.66	.93
Ind.	.94	.72	.18	.62
Rep	.37	.32	.05	.12
Total	.95	.73	.11	.56

Source: 2006 CCES

Overall voting effect, 2002 House election

Party identification	Effect of changing from an Ind. to a Dem.	0.25 (0.02)
Ideology	Effect of changing from a mod. To a lib.	0.07 (0.02)
Democratic incumbent	Effect of changing from a open seat race to a Dem. Inc.	0.18 (0.02)
Constant		0.54 (0.02)
R^2		.49
N		586

Note: Incumbency not coded in 2006 CCES

A Word about Primaries

- Party not a useful cue
- Not much research, but…..
  - Primary voters are different from general election voters
    - Primary voters are more ideologically extreme, but
    - Primary voters are more strategically sophisticated than general election voters