



VOTER SURVEY

(Time varies)

OBJECTIVE

Students survey adults to learn why they vote or don't vote.

MATERIALS

Paper and writing implements (pencils, pens)

GET READY

- ✓ Arrange for your students to have access to the Internet, if possible.

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ As a class, decide how many adults each student will survey — each student should plan to talk to 5-10 adults to provide adequate data. Require students to go beyond just their parents or other relatives and to attempt to reach a diverse spectrum of the general voting public. (A more time efficient way to collect data might be to use e-mail; some parents might be willing to provide their children with e-mail addresses of their friends and/or co-workers for this purpose.)
- ✓ Have your students brainstorm possible questions to ask on the survey. Be sure that students' questions are clear and neutral. Questions might include the following:
 - ✓ Did you vote in the last presidential election?
 - ✓ If yes, what were your reasons for voting?
 - ✓ If no, why did you decide not to vote?
- ✓ Have the class determine what demographic information to collect along with answers to the survey questions. Possibilities include: gender, age, ethnicity, occupation, and education level.

- ✓ Make sure students keep accurate records of their survey results. A common form should be made and copied to ensure this outcome.
- ✓ In small groups, have students compare their survey results.
- ✓ Compiling all the information from the class, have students develop a profile of the typical voter from their community. Compare this profile with data from local exit polls (contact your local voter registration office) or with national survey data from a Web site.
- ✓ Have students reflect on what they learned from this activity.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *What percentage of people voted? Does there seem to be any relationship between any of the demographic information collected and whether a person voted or not? What are the most common reasons adults gave for voting? What reasons did they give for not voting?*
- ★ *Based on the reasons adults gave for voting and not voting, what are some strategies for increasing voter participation?*
- ★ *What other ideas might hold promise for increasing the number of voters in future U.S. elections?*
- ★ *Is voting a right, a responsibility, or both?*