

# Citizenship In Our Changing Democracy

## WHAT'S TO COME

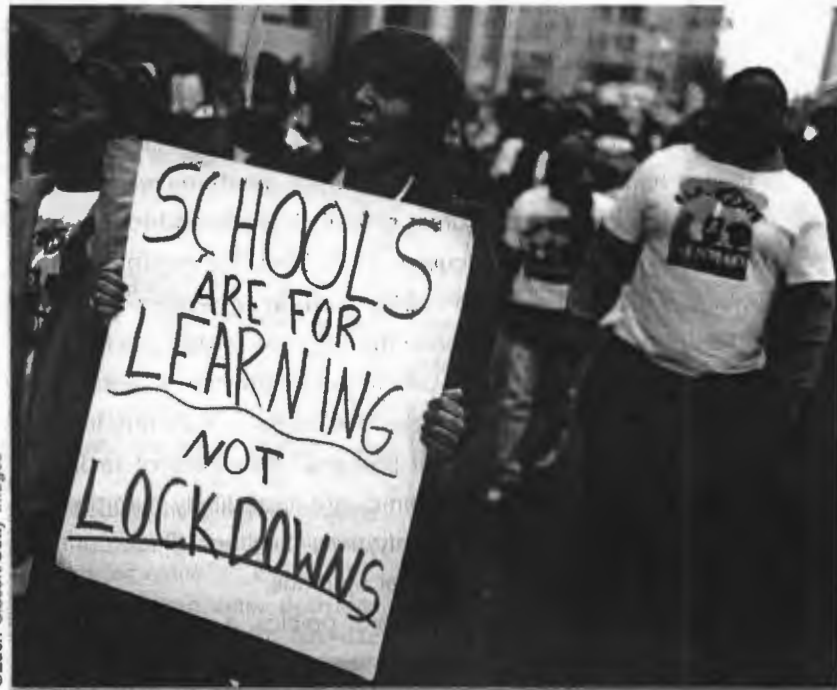
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## MILLENNIALS: YOU'RE IN CHARGE NOW. WHERE WILL YOU TAKE US?

Millennials, young adults between 18 and 34 years of age, are now the largest living generation in the United States. They have surpassed in numbers the generation of baby boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964) who long dominated American politics and culture. The millennial population, already at 83.1 million and representing more than a quarter of the U.S. population, is projected to peak in 2036, surpassing the baby boom generation, which reached 78.8 million in 1999.<sup>1</sup>

The millennial generation is the most diverse generation in U.S. history, with 44.2 percent being members of a minority race or ethnic group.<sup>2</sup> Millennials are better educated than previous generations as well. Four in ten millennial workers ages 25 to 29 had at least a bachelor's degree in 2016, compared with smaller percentages of earlier generational cohorts. Women, in particular, have made substantial education gains; almost half (46 percent) of employed millennial women ages 25 to 29 hold at least a bachelor's degree, up substantially from previous generations.<sup>3</sup>

This group is having a substantial effect on the way the country works and lives. Young people in large numbers are substituting bikes for cars, multiple job holding in the gig economy for full time employment, Amazon for Macy's,



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Tens of thousands of students across the nation walked out of class in protest of school violence in Parkland, Florida following the shooting death of 17 students at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. The students made clear by their actions that they will "never again" tolerate government inaction on gun control and school safety

streaming for network TV, and Facebook posts for newspaper subscriptions. As we learn more about this emerging majority, some of the stereotypes associated with them are falling away. For example, although the Great Recession forced millennials to postpone some life choices, recent data show the older members of this cohort are now forming families, buying homes, and settling into communities just as their elders did.<sup>4</sup> Although voter turnout among millennials had been sluggish, this age group was the only one to see turnout increases since 2012, especially among older members. This is what political scientists would expect, and it fits the pattern that turnout increases with age.<sup>5</sup>

## As You READ

- What kinds of citizen involvement fuel democracies?
- What ideals fuel American democracy?
- What are some of the changes and challenges facing America today?

Millennials who are attending college or who are college age, remain more civic minded than their immediate predecessors in Generation X. Compared to their elders, they volunteer in their communities at higher rates, are more tolerant of lifestyle differences, are more supportive of equal opportunities for all, and are less likely to support military solutions to international problems.<sup>6</sup> They are also more likely to express support for nontraditional forms of participation. For example, hundreds of thousands of millennial women have joined women's marches across the country in recent years demanding that their voices be heard on policy issues from health care to sexual harassment. And even younger adults have shown their political prowess by organizing demonstrations across the country to protest school violence and to lobby for gun reform.

Social media are particularly useful tools for engaging millennials. They allow young people to disseminate their views, mobilize like-minded others, and circumvent traditional gatekeepers of information.<sup>7</sup> Hashtags like #MeToo and #NEVERAGAIN became powerful symbols of strength for young women combating sexual assault and harassment and for young men and women combatting the scourge of gun violence. Millennials are also prone to register their political views through the marketplace; fully one-third have used their buying power expressly to reward or punish companies for social policies.<sup>8</sup> Members of racial and ethnic minorities display their own participatory strengths. For example, Hispanics are more likely than their white counterparts to attend political protests; African American youth are more likely than their non-black contemporaries to contact radio stations, TV stations, and newspapers to express political opinions.<sup>9</sup>

Yet, when it comes to electoral politics, a majority of millennials have been turned off by what they see and hear in the political arena. In one study, 60 percent said they believe elected officials are motivated by selfish reasons. Only 15 percent reported that they believe politicians are interested in helping people like themselves.<sup>10</sup> As a result, they actively avoid politics. Todd, a high school junior, responded to researchers asking if he had ever thought about running for political office this way: "It's about lying, cheating, getting nothing done. That's not how I want to spend my time."<sup>11</sup> Todd's views may seem unsurprising given the divisiveness of political dialogue in recent years and the negative images of political leaders portrayed in the media. This attitude might be changing, however, in the wake of dissatisfaction with recent government policies. Thousands of young people, particularly women, have expressed interest in running for offices at every level of government.

It is the millennials who will bear the brunt of political decisions made today. They face an uncertain future threatened by fiscal debt, rising levels of economic inequality, and environmental crisis. For that reason, it is more important than ever that millennials sustain active interest and participation in the political process and that we find ways to overcome disparities in income, education, ethnicity, and gender to ensure that all sectors of society get a fair hearing.

Now, as the largest voting bloc in the nation, it is your turn: your turn to make sense of our political choices, to formulate public policies, to run for office, to vote, and to serve in government. What will you make of this opportunity? Where will you take us?

Throughout this text, we will introduce you to young people already making a difference in the traditional political arena as well as through new forms of political participation. It is our hope that by learning about youth who are changing the face of American politics, you too will take a greater interest in exercising the powers you have as a citizen to effect change. In a democracy, citizenship is a two-sided coin: It confers rights and protections on members of the political community, but in return it requires allegiance and involvement. Each of us must weigh the costs and benefits of participation. The benefits may be policies we support; the costs involve our time and attention. Often, involvement is achieved only through the active encouragement of others.

As you will see throughout this book, citizenship today is in a precarious state. For much of the past half-century, voter turnout has remained well below that of other advanced democracies, and the level of trust between citizens and elected national leaders has reached historic lows.<sup>12</sup> We believe that citizenship today is at a crossroads: We can strengthen the reciprocal bonds of trust between citizen and government, or we can watch these bonds continue to fray. We can either work at finding solutions to the pressing problems that endanger our future or watch these problems worsen. There are signs that young people are ready to open a dialogue about how to construct a more vibrant democracy that works for all citizens. That is the central hope of this book. ■

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## POLITICS, POWER, AND PARTICIPATION

We all live in communities in which we participate in a wide range of activities with our neighbors (see “Citizen Activities in a Democratic Society”). We attend school board meetings with some and go to church services with others. We play softball with neighborhood friends, and our siblings may attend scout meetings with others. These relationships make up **civic life**, the constellation of relationships that keep us connected with others and make our communities vital places to live and work. By voluntarily participating in civic life, we build what is called **social capital**, bonds of trust and reciprocity between citizens that form the glue holding societies together. No one forces us to attend a community meeting or to volunteer for environmental clean-up activities, or to contribute to a community foundation; but when we do, our communities are better for it and we feel a stronger connection to our neighbors.

Civic life includes institutions of **government**—the body or bodies charged with making official policies for citizens. Citizens participate in government by acts like voting, attending political meetings, and campaigning for candidates they support for office.

**Politics** is the process by which we choose government officials and make decisions about public policy. In a democracy, citizens play a primary role in this process, but—like being a good neighbor—it is a role they must choose to play. Americans are not forced to leave the pleasures and obligations of private life to engage in political or community service. Yet the vitality of our social and political institutions depends on our willingness as citizens to step outside of our private lives and to work with others voluntarily in making our neighborhoods safe, our communities strong, and our government work effectively for all.

If our engagement in voluntary associations with others builds social capital and gives rise to civic and political involvement, then is it better to be engaged in more voluntary associations? Some social scientists regard the number and kind of voluntary associations sustained in society as a sign of a nation’s well-being.<sup>13</sup> That is why some of them, like Harvard’s Robert Putnam, worry about what they see as a decline in civic activities ranging from attendance at school board meetings to meeting with one’s neighbors to sitting down to dinner with our families. Putnam argues that a decline in civic life has led to falling interest in political activities from attending campaign rallies to voting. Some critics challenge Putnam’s findings, noting that participation in new forms of civic activity like soccer leagues has replaced older associations and that young people have turned to electronic networking rather than face-to-face encounters in building social capital.<sup>14</sup> Still others claim that globalization and the pace of life are simply altering the ways citizens

**civic life** Participation in the collective life of the community.

**social capital** Bonds of trust and reciprocity between citizens that form the glue that holds modern societies together.

**government** The body (or bodies) charged with making official policies for citizens.

**politics** The process by which we choose government officials and make decisions about public policy.



# Citizen Activities in a Democratic Society

	PRIVATE LIFE	CIVIC LIFE	
	<b>Individual activities</b>	<b>Civic engagement activities</b>	
		<b>Nonpolitical activities</b>	<b>Political participation</b>
	Family School Work	Recycling Fellowship meetings Service activities	Voting Attending political meetings Political campaigning
<b>Functions</b>	Cultivates personal relationships, serves individual needs—e.g., getting an education, earning a living	Provides community services and acts as a training ground for political participation	Fulfills demands of democratic citizenship

*Citizens have many opportunities to participate in the civic life of their communities.*

**direct democracy** A form of government in which decisions about public policy extend to the entire citizenry.

**representative democracy** A form of government in which popular decision making is restricted to electing or appointing the public officials who make public policy.

**majority rule** The requirement that electoral majorities determine who is elected to office and that majorities in power determine our laws and how they are administered.

**minority rights** Protections beyond the reach of majority control guaranteed to all citizens.

*The National Security Agency determined Facebook was used by foreign agents to influence the 2016 presidential election. Should the U.S. government mandate that Facebook report the source of political ads during political campaigns?*

almost every facet of our daily lives, from the quality of the water we drink to the type and quality of education we receive. Therefore, it is important that the choice of individuals controlling those levers be distributed widely and fairly. Democracy thrives when citizen participation is robust. But political and civic involvement is not evenly spread across the entire population. This has serious consequences for ensuring an equal voice for all citizens.

Your authors believe there is ample reason for optimism about the future of civic life in America, but there is vast room for improvement as well. We will highlight some promising avenues in the chapters that follow.

## Types of Government

Governments may take a variety of forms, but a key distinction between them is how widely power is shared among the citizens. In a monarchy or dictatorship, a single person exercises absolute power. By contrast, in a **direct democracy**, political decision making extends to the entire citizenry. Some ancient Greek city-states, for example, made decisions about the use of power in open-air assemblies involving thousands of citizens. Only free males, however, were counted as citizens. Few modern nations employ direct democracy; most free nations prefer instead to restrict popular decision making to electing or appointing officials who make public policy. This type of government is properly called a **representative democracy**. Citizens in a representative democracy hold public officials accountable through periodic elections and the rule of law. America's representative democracy is characterized by **majority rule** and protections for **minority rights**. Electoral majorities determine who is elected to office, and majorities in power determine our laws and how they are administered. However, certain rights, like freedom of speech and religion, are beyond the reach of majority control. A majority of citizens may not deny to a minority those rights that are protected for all. We will discuss these features of our political system in more detail in Chapter 2.

Democratic societies also enshrine certain individual rights and place limits on the actions government officials can undertake. For example, our Constitution's Fourth Amendment outlaws unreasonable

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searches and seizures. Of course, potential clashes between government authorities and individual rights are legion. Sometimes government actions presumably undertaken for our own protection may threaten individual rights. The National Security Agency, the Federal Intelligence Surveillance Court, and even local law enforcement agencies annually make thousands of requests to Facebook for information regarding users it suspects of terrorism or crime. These requests are made without the knowledge of users and include a nondisclosure agreement that prohibits Facebook from notifying its users of the government's action. Civil libertarians, and many Americans generally, believe such government actions threaten our privacy and our ability to protect ourselves from legal jeopardy. How best to balance the interests of personal freedom and national security is an important topic to which we will have many occasions to return throughout this text.

## Political Power

The legitimate use of force and political power by a representative government rests on either explicit contracts establishing the relationship between governors and the governed—such as the U.S. Constitution—or on certain shared values and standards that citizens have come to accept over time. Although citizens may not agree with specific government policies, they will support as legitimate, or lawful, policies founded on accepted contracts and standards. For example, many Americans opposed the U.S. invasion of Iraq following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, but few disputed the right of the president and Congress to wage war. Most Americans accept their duty to pay a fair share in taxes; but they would surely balk if the government tried to confiscate all of our wealth.

Even in democratic societies, questions frequently arise about who exercises real **political power** by influencing or controlling the institutions of government. One school of thought, the **ruling elite theory**, argues that wealthy and well-educated citizens exercise a disproportionate amount of influence over political decision making, despite the existence of institutions that encourage widespread participation. These individuals are more likely to have access to government officials or to become government officials themselves. They are also more informed about political issues and more interested in the outcome of these issues. The wealthy have a vested interest, for example, in reducing the amount of taxes they pay and creating favorable political and economic conditions for their investments. Some versions of ruling elite theory, however, suggest that elites actually are an important force for social advancement.<sup>16</sup> Empirical studies demonstrate that wealthier and better-educated citizens show a greater commitment to values such as fair play, diversity, and respect for civil liberties than those with less income or education. They are also more alert to threats to basic democratic values and more likely to insist on enforcement of individual rights.

A competing theory called **pluralism** asserts that various groups and coalitions constantly vie for government favor and the ability to exercise political power but none enjoys long-term dominance.<sup>17</sup> In this view, groups that get their way today may be on the losing end tomorrow. When a group of like-minded citizens is determined to change public policy or to fight a proposed policy that it finds threatening, it can organize into interest groups that employ a wide array of tactics, from supporting candidates who promise to advance their cause to developing sophisticated public relations campaigns and legal challenges to rally support (see Chapter 8). For example, for years opponents of same-sex marriage prevailed in outlawing the practice in most states. Over the years, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) groups were able to mobilize support for their cause and to challenge these laws in court. In 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court, reflecting a swift change in political attitudes toward the LGBT community, legalized same-sex marriage nationwide. As long as the rules guiding interest group competition are fair and fairly enforced, pluralists claim, no one group is permanently disadvantaged.

A recent study testing these competing theories proposed a hybrid theory that its authors believe comes closest to describing the actual flow of power in America. Researchers concluded that economic elites and organized groups representing business interests have substantially greater independent impact on government policies than average citizens. Yet,

**political power** The ability to get things done by controlling or influencing the institutions of government.

**ruling elite theory** The view positing that wealthy and well-educated citizens exercise a disproportionate amount of influence over political decision making.

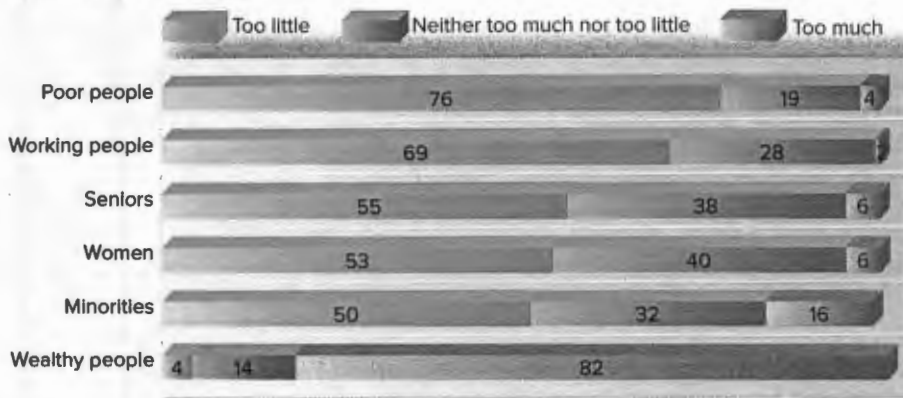
**pluralism** The view positing that various groups and coalitions constantly vie for government favor and the ability to exercise political power but none enjoys long-term dominance.



# Opinions About Power and Influence

## Most Americans Agree That They Do Not Have Enough Power And Influence in Washington

% Who Say Each Group has...



Most Americans are convinced that the wealthy exercise too much power in Washington while the poor and minorities are left behind.

**biased pluralism** The view positing that power and public policies tilt largely in the direction of the well-off.

trated into fewer and fewer hands. As a result, the interests of the wealthy and the average American may begin to diverge more sharply while the influence of the wealthy continues to rise. Opinion polls indicate the public is well aware of these disparities in power (see "Opinions About Power and Influence").

In this book, we are most concerned about increasing popular participation in ways that bring us closer to achieving genuinely pluralistic outcomes. Some sectors of the American population already participate at very high levels and can be sure their voices are heard, if not always heeded. Others are barely heard at all; throughout this book, we will identify ways to increase their volume.

## Participation and Democracy

Active citizen participation is a cornerstone of democratic theory. The Greek philosopher Aristotle (384–322, B.C.E.) felt that citizens should not simply sit back and enjoy the benefits of society; they must also take responsibility for its operation. In Aristotle's time, policy decisions were formulated by assemblies of free citizens numbering in the thousands. Enlightenment thinkers who influenced the Framers of our Constitution generally agreed that democratic success depends on widespread participation. British philosopher John Locke (1632–1704) argued that the power of the government comes from the consent of its citizens and that consent is possible only when the citizenry is informed and engaged. Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826), in his more radical moments, called for periodic citizen uprisings to reinvigorate the spirit of democracy. Much of American history confirms the importance of citizen participation. Throughout our nation's history, many Americans fought long and hard to gain the opportunity to participate in democratic practices that were previously closed to them.

Many states provide expanded opportunities for citizen participation. A procedure called "initiative," available in twenty-six states, enables citizens to draft their own laws and propose constitutional amendments for voter approval if the sponsors of the measure gather enough signatures. There are two types of initiatives: **direct initiatives**, available in some states, allow proposals backed by a sufficient number of citizen signatures to go directly on the ballot; **indirect initiatives** are first submitted to lawmakers for approval before being submitted to the voters. Similarly, twenty-four states allow for **popular referendum**, which allows citizens to approve or repeal measures already on the books. **Legislative referendum** is another form of referendum, available in all fifty states, that requires legislative bodies to take some proposed measures directly to the voters for approval before taking

**direct initiatives** Procedure that enables citizens to place proposals for laws and amendments directly on the ballot for voter approval.

**indirect initiatives** Citizen-initiated procedure for placing proposals on the ballot, requiring legislative action before submission to voters.

**popular referendum** A device that allows citizens to approve or repeal measures already acted on by legislative bodies.

**Legislative referendum** Ballot measure aimed at securing voter approval for some legislative acts, such as changes to a state's constitution.

the preferences of these economic elites and those of ordinary citizens often coincide. In such cases, both groups win when the policies favored by the elite are enacted. But when elite proposals and the interests of ordinary Americans conflict, it is often the economic elite who come out on top. The authors concluded that power in America—at least in recent years—is best characterized as a kind of **biased pluralism** in which the wealthy play a larger role in determining policies—especially economic policies—than do typical citizens, but that both wealthy and average Americans are well served when their interests intersect.<sup>18</sup>

What is worrisome, however, is that income inequality is on the rise with wealth becoming concentrated



## Declining Social Trust Around the World—Is This the Beginning of a New Generation of Critical Citizens?

Source: NASA/JPL

**M**any factors influence the bonds of trust between citizens and governments that are vital for effective governance. The chart shown here tracks levels of trust reported by adults ages 18 and older in ten nations representing some of the world's largest economies.

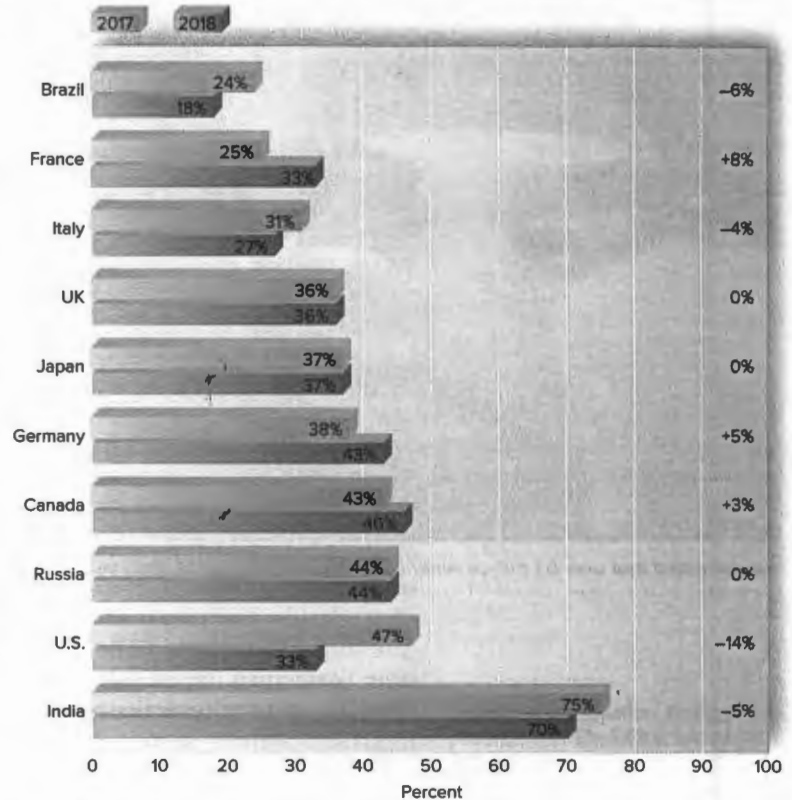
Most nations—especially in the West—have surprisingly low levels of trust in their national leaders. They seem to have experienced “a flight from politics, or what the Germans call *Politikverdrossenheit*: a weakness about its debates, disbelief about its claims, skepticism about its results, cynicism about its practitioners.”\* Political scientist Pippa Norris believes widespread cynicism about government signals the emergence of a new type of “critical citizen, dissatisfied democrats who adhere strongly to democratic values but who find existing structures of representative government invented in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to be wanting. . . .”† But these younger, well-educated citizens are not apathetic; they are more responsive to non-traditional means of participation like demonstrations or product boycotts than more traditional methods like voting because these alternative approaches promote a greater sense of social solidarity.

### Questions:

1. What factors do you believe explain the generally low levels of trust in most of the world's richest nations?
2. What factors might account for the changes in trust levels in Western democracies between 2017 to 2018? Are these changes significant?
3. Does the graph support Pippa Norris's arguments? Why or why not?

### Trust in National Government

How Much Do You Trust the National Government to Do What Is Right?



Source: 2018 Edelman Trust Barometer <https://www.edelman.com/trust-barometer>.

\*Norris, Pippa, “Introduction: The Growth of Critical Citizens?” in Norris, Pippa, ed., *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Government* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 6; see also Ronald Inglehart, *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

†Norris, 27.

effect. Changes in state constitutions usually fall into this category. Finally, nineteen states plus the District of Columbia permit **recall**, in which citizens can remove and replace a public official before the end of a term. Wisconsin held recall elections in 2012 for several legislators and the governor following an unpopular effort by these political leaders to limit collective bargaining rights for public employees.

A free society relies heavily on the voluntary activities of free individuals outside of government as well. Our nation accomplishes many of its social needs through the work of charitable organizations, religious congregations, and professional groups. Thousands of charities and foundations provide money and personnel for programs ranging from support for the arts to sheltering the homeless. Volunteers power these organizations by devoting their time and energy to improve the quality of life in our communities. As we will see, these organizations also serve as training grounds for developing the skills we need to become full and active participants in our nation's political system. Government can encourage

**recall** Procedure whereby citizens can remove and replace a public official before the end of a term.





It is estimated that over 61 million Americans volunteer their time each year to help those less fortunate than themselves.

John Locke (1632–1704) argued that the power of the government comes from the consent of its citizens.

civic voluntarism by establishing networks of volunteers like AmeriCorps, the nation's domestic community service program. Though such programs have typically received strong bipartisan support, some believe that providing government incentives for volunteering diminishes the genuine spirit of giving. Whether or not volunteer activities are sponsored by government, free democratic societies depend on the readiness of individuals to take the time to get involved. They rely on the leadership skills of citizens to help find acceptable solutions to problems. They also require that a set of principles or ideals be adopted that extols the worth and contributions of citizens.



## AMERICAN POLITICAL IDEALS

Ideas, values, and beliefs about how governments should operate are known as **ideologies**. Ideologies describe the basic principles political communities support and hope to advance (like democracy, equality, and freedom) as well as the extent of power governments should have in pursuing these ends. Some ideologies, like communism, for example, call for an expansive role of government in the everyday lives of citizens, one that may limit economic opportunities and freedom of expression. Other ideologies, like **liberal democracy**, the ideology that guided the Framers of our constitution, call for a more limited role for government.

In our liberal democracy, the primary role of government is to protect individual rights. It rests on three essential notions: natural rights, the formation of a social contract by consent of the governed, and majority rule. The



most influential advocate of this ideology was John Locke. A physician by training, Locke became involved in the politics of Whig radicals who challenged the authority of the British Stuart monarchy in the late seventeenth century. These radicals, who favored placing more power into the hands of an elected Parliament, succeeded in pulling off a bloodless revolution in 1688.

Locke speculated that humans at one time probably had little need for authority because there was little competition for resources. Resources were plentiful, and most individuals found ways to avoid conflict. Each individual, to the extent possible, guarded his or her own life, liberty, and property to which he had a God-granted natural right. Over time, however, populations grew, creating competition for diminishing resources. Conflicts over ownership of property led to the need for a neutral arbiter to settle disputes peacefully. That arbiter was government. Locke believed that free and equal persons willingly entered into social contracts to establish governments in order to avoid the “incommodities” of war and conflict with others. On our own, we have a limited capacity to protect our life, liberty, and property. If we band together in government, we come to each other’s aid in the protection of these natural rights.

In his *Second Treatise of Government*, Locke articulated the underlying philosophy of liberal democracy.<sup>19</sup> He argued that humans are born naturally free and equal; no one is born subject to another’s will, and no one can control another without that person’s consent. People place themselves under the control of a government because of the mutual advantages it offers its citizens. Under such an arrangement, majority rule provides a reasonable basis for making decisions. In this way, each member of the community has an equal voice in decision making, and decisions reflect the consensus of most citizens. Governments, however, derive authority from the consent of those who form them, and they hold our allegiance only if they protect our life, liberty, and property better than we could on our own. If government becomes a threat to citizens’ rights, the social contract fails, and the people have the option of dissolving it and beginning anew.

The authors of our Declaration of Independence drew heavily on the ideas of Locke in drafting that document and making the case for independence from British rule. Ideas alone, however, do not make history; they must be advanced by proponents with the skills and determination to see them achieved. American history offers many examples of individuals like Susan B. Anthony and Martin Luther King, Jr., who worked tirelessly to bring opportunities for **political participation** like voting and running for office to a wider and more diverse population than originally envisioned by the Framers.

**ideology** Ideas, values, and beliefs about how governments should operate.

**liberal democracy** An ideology stressing individual rights and expressing faith in popular control of government.

**political participation** Taking part in activities aimed at influencing the policies or leadership of government.

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## THE CHANGING FACE OF THE AMERICAN CITIZENRY

As we seek ways to increase the engagement of today’s citizens, we must be aware that our citizenry is rapidly becoming older and more diverse. At the same time, the gap between those with substantial resources and those with few is increasing. Forces of globalization are intensifying these divisions.

When the U.S. Constitution was ratified at the end of the eighteenth century, more than four million white Europeans and their descendants lived in the United States. (This figure does not include Native Americans, whose population some researchers place at about 600,000,<sup>20</sup> although estimates vary greatly; nor does it include over a half-million black slaves and an estimated sixty thousand free blacks.) Today the U.S. population is over 325 million, drawn from all corners of the world. Hispanic Americans are the nation’s fastest-growing minority group, now making up over 16 percent of the population. African Americans are a close second at about 13 percent, and Asian Americans represent about 5 percent of the population. A growing number represent multiethnic roots. Despite the progress these groups have made in securing civil rights, many are still not well integrated into American civic life.

## Growing Diversity

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that minorities from all backgrounds, now roughly one-third of the U.S. population, are expected to become the majority by 2044. The combined minority population in Texas, California, Hawaii, and New Mexico already exceeds the white non-Hispanic population in these states.

Fifty years ago, just over a third of all Americans lived in the suburbs; today that figure is about 55 percent. Once the preserve of mostly non-Hispanic whites, the suburbs today are growing increasingly racially and ethnically diverse (see "The People in Your Neighborhood Most Likely Look Like You"). According to a recent report, the number of diverse suburbs in the nation's fifty largest metropolitan areas increased to 1,376 in 2010, a 37 percent jump since 2000 with the greatest diversity found in the nation's older suburbs. During the same period, the share of metropolitan area residents who live in predominantly white suburbs (more than 80 percent white) slipped from 26 percent to 18 percent. However, the study also points out that diverse suburbs often have a hard time staying that way as populations continue to migrate. Many central cities remain racially divided with some minority groups facing apartheid levels of segregation and civic dysfunction.<sup>21</sup>

Although many neighborhoods may be experiencing greater racial diversity, these same neighborhoods may be becoming less diverse economically. Largely as a result of growing income inequality, the share of neighborhoods across the United States that are predominantly middle class or mixed income had fallen to 76 percent in 2010, down from 85 percent in 1980. At the same time, the share that are majority lower income had risen to 28 percent in 2010, up from 23 percent in 1980, and the share of majority upper income neighborhoods had grown from 9 percent in 1980 to 18 percent in 2010.<sup>22</sup> This pattern of growing income segregation can breed distrust, and it makes it harder to solve some of the social and economic problems facing our nation. There is also evidence that economic segregation depresses voter turnout in all but the wealthiest communities. Concentration of poverty in an area, for example, clusters together individuals with fewer political skills for addressing community issues and may lead residents to withdraw from engagement out of despair of ever changing conditions for the better.<sup>23</sup>

The past few decades have also witnessed a greater openness about sexual preferences that has produced a more politically active gay and lesbian community. In recent years, same-sex

partners have pressed for the same rights as those afforded married couples, and the Supreme Court has legalized same-sex marriages in the United States. Still, many states continue to discriminate against LGBT individuals when it comes to employment, housing, and the use of public accommodations like access to public housing. The battle by the LGBT community for the right to the same protections as heterosexuals is likely to continue in a nation increasingly polarized over the role of government in personal choice. In general, young Americans are more accepting of racial, ethnic, and gender differences than are their elders.<sup>24</sup>

## The People in Your Neighborhood Most Likely Look Like You

People Who Live in Your Neighborhood: More Racially Diverse, More Alike Economically (with Growing Income Segregation)			
	Living in Racially Diverse* Neighborhoods	People Living in Predominantly** Lower-Income Neighborhoods	People Living in Predominantly** Upper-Income Neighborhoods
1980	NA	23%	9%
2000	26%	NA	NA
2010	30%	28%	18%

Neighborhood ethnic diversity is on the rise, but so is income segregation.

\*Data from fifty largest metropolitan areas. Diverse defined as non-whites making up 20–60% of population. Source: Myron Orfield and Thomas Luce, *America's Racially Diverse Suburbs: Opportunities and Challenges* (Minneapolis: Institute for Metropolitan Opportunity, University of Minnesota Law School, July 20, 2012), 2, [http://www.law.umn.edu/uploads/e0/65/e065d82a1c1da0bfef7d86f72ec5391e/Diverse\\_Suburbs\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.law.umn.edu/uploads/e0/65/e065d82a1c1da0bfef7d86f72ec5391e/Diverse_Suburbs_FINAL.pdf).

\*\*Based on census tracts from 942 metropolitan and metropolitan statistical areas. Source: Paul Taylor and Richard Fry, "The Rise of Residential Segregation by Income," Pew Research Center, August 1, 2012, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2012/08/01/the-rise-of-residential-segregation-by-income/>.

Source: Taylor, Paul and Fry, Richard, "The Rise of Residential Segregation by Income," Pew Research Center, August 1, 2012, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2012/08/01/the-rise-of-residential-segregation-by-income/>.

## Growing Older

The elderly population is expected to double by 2050, when one in five Americans will be over age 65 (see "The Graying of America"). The aging of the population poses some special problems. The Social Security and Medicare Boards of Trustees project substantial shortfalls for Social



Security and Medicare as fewer able-bodied working-age adults work to support the needs of the growing number of elderly Americans. How will we meet this growing need for financial support and medical services? No doubt the elderly, who vote in much higher numbers than young people, will exert political pressure to keep or even increase their benefits. How will the younger generation respond? Given the scale of the coming elder boom, will young people still be willing to support generous government programs that provide for the needs of elderly Americans?

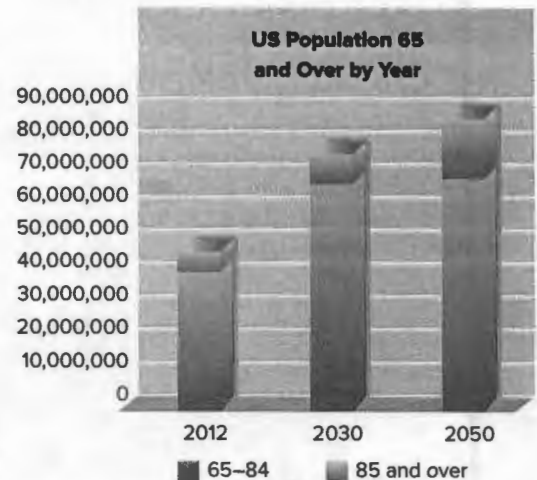
## Growing Apart

When the U.S. Constitution was written, social class divisions among Americans were much more visible than they are today. They manifested themselves through distinctions in dress, social stature, and political power. For example, workmen wore functional clothing of washable unbleached linen; by contrast, gentlemen regularly sported wool coats and jackets, and donned powdered wigs on special occasions. More than two centuries later, class divisions are not so obvious. In a world in which even those with few resources own cell phones and the wealthy wear jeans and sweat suits, it is increasingly difficult to tell someone's status by looking at his or her clothes. During the boom years at the beginning of this century, easily available credit and the flattening of prices for technology gave many Americans access to high-end consumer items. Today, nearly three-quarters of Americans own smartphones<sup>25</sup> and the number of wireless devices in use in America actually exceeds our total population, with many people using more than one device.<sup>26</sup>

Yet the gap between rich and poor is growing. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, income inequality in the United States is the fifth highest among the organization's 34 member nations.<sup>27</sup> (Only Turkey, Chile, Costa Rica, and South Africa have higher rates of income inequality.) Rich households in America are leaving behind both middle- and lower-income groups. The top 10 percent of income earners took home more than half of the nation's total income in 2012, with the top 1 percent alone taking in almost a quarter (24 percent) of all income, the highest levels recorded since 1913, when the government first started tracking such data. And although incomes among all Americans grew from 2013 to 2016, gains at the highest levels of income grew the fastest and the wealthy were able to recover much more quickly from the recent recession than were the middle or lower classes.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, the challenges to climbing the economic ladder are steeper than many people imagine. In a study comparing nine economically developed countries in Europe and America, the United States scored lowest on intergenerational upward mobility, with the possible exception of the United Kingdom.<sup>29</sup> One researcher concludes: "the chances of ending up rich if you were born to a low-income family [in the United States] are on the order of just one percent."<sup>30</sup> These are the types of concerns that helped fuel the Occupy Wall Street movement that started in 2011 and gave rise to support for candidates like Bernie Sanders in the 2016 presidential campaign.

Throughout much of the twentieth century, many working-class Americans could count on a career in one of the nation's skilled industries like steel or auto manufacturing. Labor unions organized workers in these fields, enhancing their job security and income and propelling them into the middle classes. Over the past thirty years, however, employers have transferred many of these jobs overseas where they can employ cheaper labor. Between 2000 and 2010 alone, the United States lost more than five million manufacturing jobs, amounting to nearly one-third of its manufacturing employment.<sup>31</sup> Although there are signs that the pace of job loss in manufacturing may be slowing, it is increasingly clear that the well-paying jobs of the future for American citizens will emphasize high levels of financial acumen, technological proficiency, and creativity. This shift places great emphasis on access to education for career advancement and financial security. At the same time, however, the cost of a college education is skyrocketing while government resources to help students cover those costs are shrinking. So the economically disadvantaged must choose debt or low wages, and unfortunately they sometimes end up with both.

## The Graying of America



Projections show Americans living longer and longer lives with fewer workers paying into the social programs that support them. The nation has not yet tackled how to address this challenge.

Source: An Aging Nation: The Older Population in the United States Population: Estimates and Projections. Current Population Reports, May 2014.

**social class** The perceived combination of wealth, income, education, and occupation that contributes to one's status and power in society.



## THE CHANGING AMERICAN IDENTITY

What does it mean to be an American? The national identity, once defined by middle-class, white male standards has shifted dramatically over the past several decades. These changes have come about because of a variety of factors including immigration, changes in fertility rates for various demographic groups, cultural reinvention, and legislative and judicial changes. As a result, America today is more diverse than ever before, and these changes will continue into the foreseeable future.

The United States is often referred to as a nation of immigrants. But this designation has meant different things at various times. During most of the twentieth century, America's melting pot tradition emphasized the importance of cultural and social integration. While not completely ignoring some of the traditions of their native lands—especially in the enclaves in which they lived—immigrants were expected to speak English and to conform to the ways and traditions of the dominant culture. Today, it is not unusual to see public signposts in several different languages and, in some locales such as Los Angeles, voters can cast their ballots in any of seven different languages, including Khmer, Korean, and Tagalog.

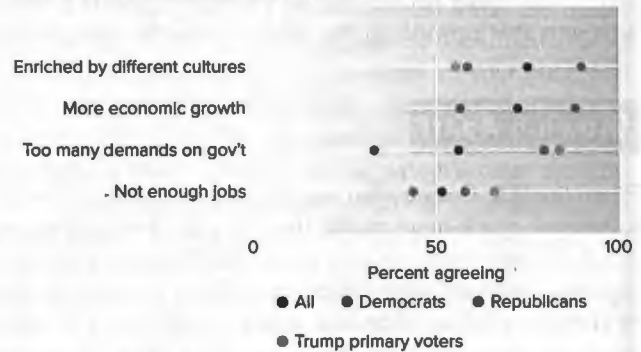
Women's roles have changed substantially as well. Once expected to dutifully perform the chores of the household and to raise children, women emerged as a major economic force in the late twentieth century and, although their numerical strength is not yet reflected in corporate boardrooms and state capitols, they have changed the ways Americans view the relationship between family and work life.

In 1965, there were no blacks in the U.S. Senate, no black governors, and only a handful of black representatives and state legislators. Although blacks are still underrepresented in government, their numbers have expanded and 2008 witnessed the election of the first African American president, changing forever the aspirational ceiling for black leaders.

Gender stereotypes have also been shattered. Rulings like *Obergefell v. Hodges* opened the door to same-sex marriages, and transgender individuals have gained legal protections in some states and cities.

A survey taken after the 2016 presidential election showed most Americans have embraced these changes, with a majority believing American identity is tied to factors such as respect for American political institutions and laws, having American citizenship, and accepting people of

What are the Consequences of a Diverse American Population?



Perceptions of the impact of our quickly diversifying nation vary considerably by political party allegiances.

Source: Sides, John. *Democracy Fund 2016 Voter Study Group*.

diverse backgrounds. However, there were signs of resistance to these changes that broke along partisan lines. For example, 23 percent of Republicans and nearly one in three (30 percent) of Trump primary supporters said that European heritage is important to American identity; by contrast, only 16 percent of Democrats felt this way. Whereas 30 percent of Democrats considered Christianity to be important to American identity, 56 percent of Republicans and nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of Trump supporters said Christianity was part of what it means to be an American.\*

Partisan differences also arise regarding what a more diverse citizenry means for the future of the American economy and government (see chart above). These differences may be related to the fact that Donald Trump attracted many lower-income, white males without a college degree, a demographic that has not fared very well economically in our increasingly global economy. (This is a topic to which we will return several times in this text.)

As America moves toward becoming a majority-minority nation, conflicts may continue to arise over the meaning of American identity. However, as in the past, American identity will continue to evolve.

\*John Sides, *Race, Religion, and Immigration in 2016: How the Debate over American Identity Shaped the Election and What It Means for a Trump Presidency*. Democracy Fund 2016 Voter Study Group, June 2017, <https://www.voterstudygroup.org/publications/2016-elections/race-religion-immigration-2016>.

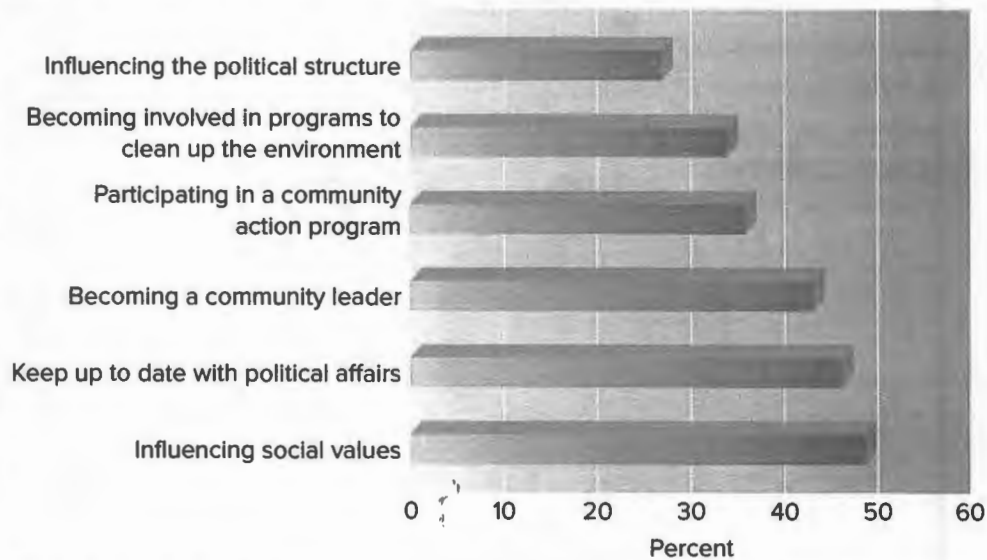
Social class adds another dimension to our consideration of civic engagement. We will see in forthcoming chapters that political activity is not spread evenly across all social classes. Those who vote, run for office, contribute to political campaigns, and engage in a wide array of political and civic activities are disproportionately individuals with more wealth. As a result, the wealthy are more likely to be heard by political actors in the corridors of power.



# THE FUTURE OF CITIZENSHIP

A number of ideas are surfacing about how we might alter and improve the civic engagement and political participation of American citizens today. Some states now require students to perform community service in order to graduate from high school. More colleges and universities are turning to student service learning programs as a legitimate educational experience. Will service learning eventually reconstruct the social capital that many believe will reinvigorate political participation? Or will it contribute to a growing sense that political solutions to social problems are futile? A recent poll found that Americans overwhelmingly support policies designed to support public or community service. But a majority—especially those younger than 30—felt the best way to make positive change was through community volunteerism

## Freshman Class Survey: Essential or Very Important Personal Objectives



Young people continue to express more interest in community-building activities than direct political participation.

Source: UCLA Higher Education Research Institute, *The American Freshman National Norms Fall 2016*. Accessed at <https://www.herl.ucla.edu/monographs/TheAmericanFreshman2016.pdf>

rather than through engagement with the political process.<sup>32</sup> One study found that although students exposed to service learning experiences demonstrated increased political awareness, they did not increase their political engagement. Students gained little knowledge about how to bring about political change and remained skeptical about their ability to affect the political system itself.<sup>33</sup> Unlike **civic engagement**, which seeks to build community relationships, **political engagement** involves direct participation with the institutions and processes of the political system. Consequently, the two types of engagement require explicitly different types of education.<sup>34</sup> Although public service is laudatory, the fact that it might displace political participation is troubling. As some have said, young people seem to be running away from politics rather than running for office.

**service learning programs** Agencies that help connect volunteers with organizations in need of help.

**civic engagement** Involvement in any activity aimed at influencing the collective well-being of the community.

**political engagement** Active interest and participation in political activities

## citizenship Quiz

Can you pass the U.S. Citizenship Test? See how well you know the content in this chapter covered on the citizenship test required of foreign-born candidates for naturalization.

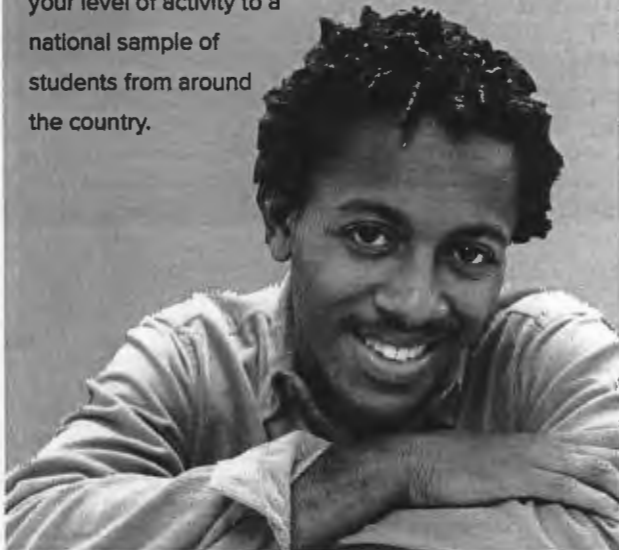
1. Name one *responsibility* that is only for U.S. citizens.
2. Name one *right* of only U.S. citizens.
3. Name *two rights* of everyone living in the United States.

(1) Serve on a jury, vote in federal elections. (2) Vote in a federal election, run for federal office. (3) Freedom of expression, speech, assembly, petition, and worship; right to bear arms.

Source: U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

## get involved!

Find out how your civic engagement level measures against that of students from around the country. Take the Civic Engagement Quiz from the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement. It is available on the center's website at [http://civicyouth.org/PopUps/Final\\_Civic\\_Inds\\_Quiz\\_2006.pdf](http://civicyouth.org/PopUps/Final_Civic_Inds_Quiz_2006.pdf). You can score yourself and compare your level of activity to a national sample of students from around the country.



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Perhaps the alienation many young people feel from politics can be eased by changes in our political system and in our electoral processes. Participation improves when government agencies become more open, when participation is made more accessible, and when a range of political and nonpolitical associations mobilize citizens to take action. For example, a majority of young people find they are simply too busy on Election Day to get to the polls. Perhaps, declaring Election Day a legal holiday might help solve this dilemma and increase voter participation—especially among the young. Or, like in Oregon, Washington, and Colorado, elections can be conducted entirely by mail. Making voter registration easier would also help. Citizens in at least seventeen states and the District of Columbia can register the same day they vote instead of meeting registration deadlines weeks or months ahead, and at least twelve states and the District of Columbia automatically register every citizen to vote when they engage in business with any government agency. Expanding this practice could boost turnout substantially. Schools must do a much better job of educating students about their civic responsibilities so that they will see political involvement not as a chore or a choice but as an opportunity to enhance their own lives and those of their families and communities. States have cut back on civics requirements in the schools, abandoning their responsibility to democratic education.<sup>35</sup> Political parties and candidates can help increase participation by speaking more directly to the issues that impact young voters and by extending their reach through the use of social media.

Technological change is altering the way we conduct politics in this country. For example, President Donald Trump has demonstrated how powerful Twitter can be in citizen engagement. The #MeToo movement has fostered real hope for change in the

ways women are treated in the workplace. Most political leaders and candidates maintain Facebook pages and Twitter feeds. YouTube videos instantaneously record and magnify the actions of the candidates—sometimes to their chagrin. And the Web now has a proven track record as a fundraising tool.

We will discuss many of these ideas and more for enhancing civic and political involvement throughout this text. The most important ideas for improving civic engagement may not yet have been discovered. That is where you come in. As you consider your place in the social fabric of America, we hope you will share your ideas with your class, your community, and your political leaders. In the process, you will be helping to shape the way our democracy functions and fulfilling your role as citizen.



## Thinking It Through >>>

**Learning Objective:** Evaluate the significance of demographic changes in the United States.

**Review:** The Changing Face of the American Citizenry

How will demographic changes, especially those related to the ethnic composition and age distribution of the American population, affect the millennial generation as it approaches middle age? Based on the current projections noted in this chapter, how will these changes influence the composition of future political leadership and what specific changes in public policy might these demographic changes bring about?

## Summary

### 1. What kinds of civic involvement fuel democracies?

- Citizens can contribute to the civic life of democracy by participating in voluntary associations that build social capital, or bonds of trust among citizens, and by participating in the political process that fuels our form of government.
- Ours is a representative democracy that allows us to choose and hold accountable leaders who make our laws and policies, thereby enabling us to share in the exercise of political power. In some states, individuals are given additional powers like initiative, referendum, and recall, which permit a more direct exercise of democratic control.
- There is debate about how power is dispersed in America. Some claim it is exercised almost exclusively by the wealthy; others believe it is widely dispersed among many competing groups with overlapping membership. What is clear is that since those who are well off are more knowledgeable about and more active in political life, their voices are more likely to be heard in the corridors of power than are those of average citizens.

### 2. What ideals fuel American democracy?

- American democracy gets its inspiration from the liberal democratic views of John Locke and rests on three

essential notions: natural rights, the formulation of a social contract by the consent of the governed, and majority rule.

- Natural rights include the right to life, liberty, and property. Because these rights are protected, they cannot be denied to any citizen by majority wishes.
- Our Constitution embodies the notion of popular consent and works best when citizens are informed and actively involved in various forms of political participation, like voting and running for office.

### 3. What are some changes and challenges facing America today?

- We are growing more diverse as racial and ethnic minorities constitute a larger proportion of our citizenry.
- We are growing older, a challenge that will make it increasingly difficult to fund programs for the elderly from a smaller population of younger workers.
- We continue to reflect the divisions of class as those with fewer resources and less education fall further behind economically.