

High School Lesson

Did giving women the right to vote significantly change the outcome of the presidential elections?

Core Idea: Making a Claim and supporting the argument with evidence.

Did the Vote Make a Difference?

Observers expected a flood of women voters in the 1920 presidential election. In fact, women's turnout matched that of men, about 50 percent--one of the lowest turnouts in years.

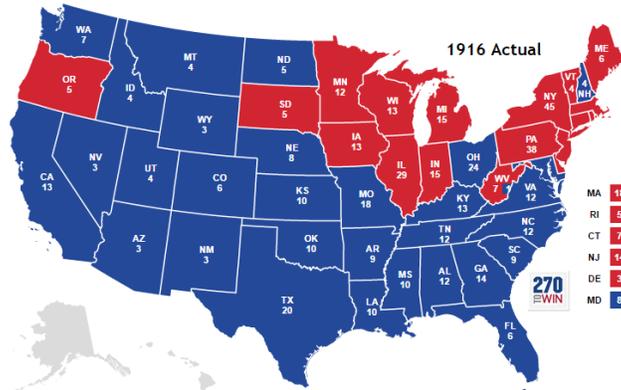
Nevertheless, women's suffrage did make a difference. Even during the 1920s, women voters showed a special concern for social issues. Women voters were more likely than men to attach priority to issues involving children, education, and health care. They also tended to be strong advocates of peace. The issues that dominated American politics during the 1920s--education, the establishment of maternal and infant health care clinics, pacifism, and prohibition--reflected women's mounting political influence.

http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook_print.cfm?smtid=2&psid=3207

According to the [1920 United States Presidential Election Wikipedia](#), "The total vote for 1920 was roughly 26,750,000, an increase of eight million from 1916. The Democratic vote was almost exactly the vote from 1916, but the Republican vote nearly doubled, as did the "other" vote..."

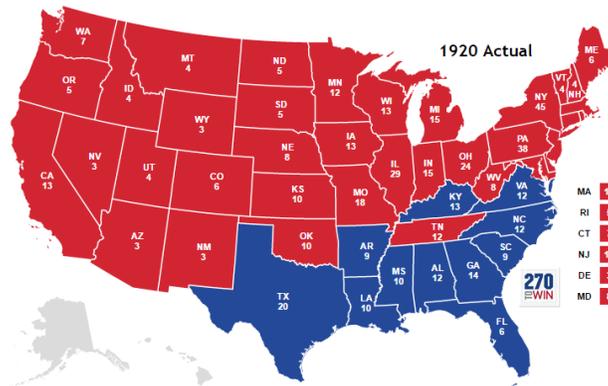
Document 1: 1916 Election Results

Candidate	Party	Electoral Votes	Popular Votes
✓ Woodrow Wilson (I)	Democratic	277	9,129,606
Charles E. Hughes	Republican	254	8,538,221
Allan Benson	Socialist	0	585,113



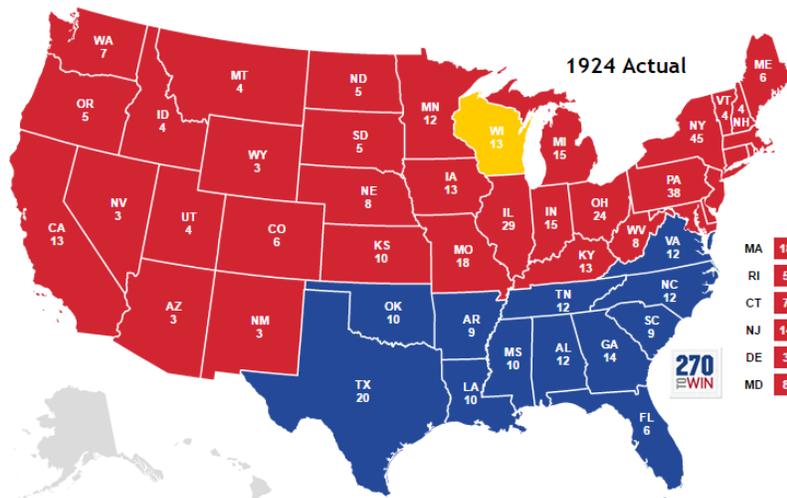
Document 2: 1920 Election Results

Candidate	Party	Electoral Votes	Popular Votes
✓ Warren G. Harding	Republican	404	16,152,200
James M. Cox	Democratic	127	9,147,353
Eugene Debs	Socialist	0	919,799



Document 3: 1924 Election Results

Candidate	Party	Electoral Votes	Popular Votes
✓ Calvin Coolidge (I)	Republican	382	15,725,016
John W. Davis	Democratic	136	8,386,503
Robert M. LaFollette	Progressive	13	4,822,856



In those circles which decide the affairs of national politics, women have no voice or power whatever. On the national committee of each party there is a woman representative from every State, and a woman appears as vice-chairman. Before national elections they will be told to organize the women throughout the United States, and asked to help in minor ways in raising funds. But when it comes to those grave councils at which possible candidates are discussed, as well as party policies, they are rarely invited in. At the national conventions no woman has ever been asked to serve on the platform committee.

Politically, as a sex, women are generally "frozen out" from any intrinsic share of influence in their parties.

The machinery of party politics has always been in the hands of men, and still is. Our statesmen and legislators are still keeping in form as the successors of the early warriors gathering around the campfire plotting the next day's attack. Yes, they have made feints indicating they are willing to take women into the high councils of the parties. But, in fact, the women who have gone into the political game will tell you they are excluded from any actual kind of important participation. They are called upon to produce votes, but they are kept in ignorance of noteworthy plans and affairs. Their requests are seldom refused outright, but they are put off with a technique that is an art in itself. The fact is that generally women are not taken seriously. With certain exceptions, men still as a class dismiss their consequence and value in politics, cherishing the old-fashioned concept that their place is in the home. While women's votes are a factor to be counted upon, and figure largely in any impending campaign, the individual women who figure in party councils are regarded by their male conferees as having no real power back of them. And they haven't.

Men who work hard in party politics are always recognized, or taken care of in one way or another. Women, most of whom are voluntary workers and not at all self-seeking, are generally expected to find in their labor its own reward. When it comes to giving the offices or dealing out favors, men are always given precedence.

They will ask women to run for office now and then, sometimes because they think it politic and wise to show women how generous they are, but more often because they realize in advance their ticket cannot win in the district selected. Therefore they will put up a woman, knowing it will injure the party less to have a woman defeated, and then they can always say it was her sex that defeated her. Where victory is certain, very rarely can you get a woman nominated on the party ticket.

Of course there are women all over the United States who have been elected to high and important offices. There are three women in Congress; there have been two woman governors; and women sit in various State legislatures and hold State offices. In New York City one could cite several who have not only been elected but who have conducted themselves in office with ability and distinction. But does that indicate any equal recognition of share in political power? Infinitely more examples come to mind of women who were either denied a nomination or who were offered it only when inevitable defeat stared the party leaders in the face.

When, some years ago, it came to putting women on the Democratic State Committee in New York, only two outstanding men openly approved of the move. A number were willing, but a great many more were indifferent. Governor Smith wanted women on the committee, believing they had something to contribute, and that they should have recognition for what they could do. Quite unlike Governor Smith, many other men come to mind who hold important positions of power in New York State. They deal with the women in a spirit of most deferential courtesy; but as many of us know, they heartily dislike the idea

of women mixing in politics, are antagonistic to those who are active, and can be depended upon to do all in their power to render the women's influence negative.

Beneath the veneer of courtesy and outward show of consideration universally accorded women, there is a widespread male hostility--age-old, perhaps--against sharing with them any actual control.

How many excuses haven't I heard for not giving nominations to women! "Oh, she wouldn't like the kind of work she'd have to do!" Or, "You know she wouldn't like the people she'd have to associate with--that's not a job for a nice, refined woman." Or more usually: "You see, there is so little patronage nowadays. We must give every appointment the most careful consideration. We've got to consider the good of the party." "The good of the party" eliminates women!

When no women are present at the meetings, the leaders are more outspoken. "No, we're not going to have any woman on the ticket," declared one leader according to a report once made to me. "Those fool women are always making trouble, anyway. We won't have any we don't have to have, and if we have none, let's get one we understand."

It is a strong and liberal man, indeed, who speaks on behalf of the women at those secret conclaves, and endeavors to have them fairly treated.

To many women who fought so long and so valiantly for suffrage, what has happened has been most discouraging. For one reason or another, most of the leaders who carried the early fight to success have dropped out of politics. This has been in many ways unfortunate. Among them were women with gifts of real leadership. They were exceptional and high types of women, idealists concerned in carrying a cause to victory, with no idea of personal advancement or gain. In fact, attaining the vote was only part of a program for equal rights--an external gesture toward economic independence, and social and spiritual equality with men.

When the franchise was finally achieved, their interest was not held by any ambition for political preferment or honors. To learn the intricate machinery of politics and play the men's game left them cold. The routine of political office held no appeal. One of the most prominent of those early crusaders today gives her energies to campaigning for world peace. By nature a propagandist, it would be impossible to interest her in either of the major parties. Another woman, who donated hundreds of thousands of dollars to the cause, frankly admits she has never even cast a vote. She considers the situation, with women coping with men in the leading parties, utterly hopeless. Like many others, she regards suffrage as an empty victory, equal rights a travesty, and the vote a gesture without power.

An extreme point of view, in my opinion. There is a method--and not the one advocated by certain militants who hold aloof from party politics--by which, I believe, the end of a fair representation and share in control may be attained.

Personally, I do not believe in a Woman's Party. A woman's ticket could never possibly succeed. And to crystallize the issues on the basis of sex-opposition would only further antagonize men, congeal their age-old prejudices, and widen the chasm of existing differences.

How, then, can we bring the men leaders to concede participation in party affairs, adequate representation and real political equality?

Our means is to elect, accept and back women political bosses.

To organize as women, but within the parties, in districts, counties and States just as men organize, and to pick efficient leaders--say two or three in each State--whom we will support and by whose

decisions we will abide. With the power of unified women voters behind them, such women bosses would be in a position to talk in terms of "business" with the men leaders; their voices would be heard, because their authority and the elective power they could command would have to be recognized.

Women are today ignored largely because they have no banded unity under representative leaders and spokesmen capable of dealing with the bosses controlling groups of men whose votes they can "deliver." These men bosses have the power of coordinated voters behind them. Our helplessness is that of an incoherent anarchy.

Perhaps the word "boss" may shock sensitive ears. To many it will conjure all that is unhealthy and corrupt in our political machinery. Yet when I speak of women bosses, I mean bosses actually in the sense that men are bosses. The term boss does not necessarily infer what it once did. Politics have been purged of many of the corruptions prevalent a quarter of a century ago. In neither of the political parties are there many, if any, such bosses, great or small, as were such common types in the heyday of Quay and Tweed. As things are today, the boss is a leader, often an enlightened, high-minded leader, who retains little of the qualities imputed by the old use of this obnoxious word, but who still exercises authority over his district. I therefore use the word, as it is the word men understand.

If women believe they have a right and duty in political life today, they must learn to talk the language of men. They must not only master the phraseology, but also understand the machinery which men have built up through years of practical experience. Against the men bosses there must be women bosses who can talk as equals, with the backing of a coherent organization of women voters behind them.

Voters who are only voters, whether men or women, are only the followers of leaders. The important thing is the choosing of leaders.

We must be fair, and admit the blame for our present ineffectuality in politics does not lie wholly with the men. If we are still a negligible factor, ignored and neglected, we must be prepared to admit in what we have ourselves failed.

The trouble with many women is that they won't work. They won't take up their jobs as men do and put in seven or eight real working hours a day. They lack knowledge, and at that many won't take the pains to study history, economics, political methods or get out among human beings. If they take a volunteer political job, it is a thing of constant interruptions, with no sense of application, concentration, business efficiency or order. One of the reasons why men leaders so often do not consider as important what a woman says is that they do not feel sure she has been active among the mass of women voters and has learned what they want. In fact, many women do make the mistake of "talking out of a blue sky" instead of going about, mixing with women, and getting their point of view from close personal contact and practical experience. When a man leader says his following want certain things, the men higher up realize that he knows what he is talking about, and that he has gone through his district.

There are two classes of men in politics--those for whom it is a game or relaxation, and those for whom it is bread and butter. These latter are usually small office-holding politicians, bosses of small groups of men. At their head are men who are deeply interested for the good of their country as they see it, and who often for patriotic reasons hold government offices for a time. But you will find as a rule that their first interest is in some other career in which they have made a name, worked their best and hardest, and gained the wherewithal to live and support their families. Politics--public service--is something apart.

Women are different. Many of them have no professional careers. If they go into politics it is usually because of some interest which they realize is dependent on government action. I know women who are

interested in education, in health conditions, in the improvement of rural life, in social problems, in housing, and all active in politics because they have come to realize by that way they may further their particular cause. Politics is less of a game to them because they haven't had the same training for games as men, and their first contact with great groups of people is an exciting and disturbing experience, not to be taken lightly but almost prayerfully.

In this I am not speaking of the small army of women who are trained in some profession, some of whom hold minor political offices, and a few of whom hold minor positions of importance in the parties. Some of these have attained the attitude of men, and meet them on the same ground. Then there are women, as there are men, who frankly are in politics for what they can get out of it. I remember well one woman who had worked hard in an organization and was denied recognition in the tangible way she desired--namely, a paid job. Whereupon she announced she was going over to the opposing political party, where, when they wished to reward a worker, they created a job if one was not available at the time!

This attitude is comparatively rare, however, because most women working in all political organizations are volunteers. Their motives for being volunteers may be mixed. I am far from claiming that as a sex we have a monopoly of disinterested desire to serve our country. Human nature is much the same in men and women. But the fact remains that the great mass of women working in political organizations all over this country are unpaid, and they are so far allowed to do the detail work which bores the men.

In the average home a woman's job is full of interruptions; and so, unless she sets out to methodize her life, she is apt to go through many wasted motions. Now many volunteer political workers come out of such unorganized homes. When the children are small, if they have little help in their homes, the mothers cannot do outside work. But as the children grow up--or in rare cases before they are married--they may turn to politics as an outside interest. If they are women of means and have more help at home, they may still have led disorganized lives, for of necessity a home and children make unexpected demands.

I should not want the average woman, or the exceptional woman for that matter, who for one reason or another could not do a public job well, to take one at present. For just now a woman must do better than a man, for whatever she does in the public eye reflects on the whole cause of women. There are women in the United States I would gladly see run for any office. But if we cannot have the best I should prefer to wait and prepare a little longer until women are more ready to make a fine contribution to public life in any office they might hold.

An old politician once objected, "Don't you think these women lose their allure, that the bloom is just a little gone? Men are no longer interested?"

Frankly, I don't know. I imagine the answer is individual. It was once said that men did not marry women who showed too much intelligence. In my youth I knew women who hid their college degrees as if they were one of the seven deadly sins. But all that is passing, and so will pass many other prejudices that have their origin in the ancient tradition that women are a by-product of creation.

Remember, women have voted just ten years. They have held responsible positions in big business enterprises only since the war, to any great extent. The men at the head of big business or controlling politics are for the most part middle-aged men. Their wives grew up in an era when no public question was discussed in a popular manner, when men talked politics over their wine or cigars, and pulled their waistcoats down, on joining the ladies, to talk music, or the play or the latest scandal. Can you blame them if the adjustment to modern conditions is somewhat difficult?

Certain women profess to be horrified at the thought of women bosses bartering and dickering in the hard game of politics with men. But many more women realize that we are living in a material world, and that politics cannot be played from the clouds. To sum up, women must learn to play the game as men do. If they go into politics, they must stick to their jobs, respect the time and work of others, master a knowledge of history and human nature, learn diplomacy, subordinate their likes and dislikes of the moment and choose leaders to act for them and to whom they will be loyal. They can keep their ideals; but they must face facts and deal with them practically.

The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers Project, Department of History, Columbian College of Arts & Sciences
Academic Building, Post Hall, 2100 Foxhall Road NW, Room 312, Washington, DC 20007, Phone: 202-994-3000

Document 6: Women's Rights Advanced During Prohibition

Women's public, private and political lives forever changed during the Prohibition era. Their involvement in passing the Prohibition amendment in 1919, gaining the right to vote a year later, and their growing autonomy at home, in the workplace and in relationships launched American women into uncharted territory.

The Prohibition amendment prohibiting the sale, manufacture and transportation of alcohol would not have passed without the persistence of the women involved in the temperance movement starting in the 19th century. The best known women's organization favoring Prohibition was the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). Throughout American history women have been involved in social clubs and charities, but the temperance movement not only allowed women to become participants in national politics, they were the driving force on this issue. These women were regulators of morality and advocates for other women and children who had been abused by drunken husbands and fathers.

By aligning the prohibition movement with the suffrage movement, women were able to drum up strong support for women's right to vote. While the push for suffrage began in the middle of the 19th century, efforts surged forward during the 1910s with the National Woman's Party. Several women's suffrage associations produced pamphlets and magazines promoting their cause. Many women tried to vote illegally, picketed the White House, and went to jail for protesting.

In 1918 President Woodrow Wilson switched his stance on women's suffrage and equated suffrage with the escalated involvement of women in World War I efforts. Just seven months after enacting the 18th Amendment, the 19th Amendment granting women the right to vote passed. Throughout the 1920s women made more political progress. Maria C. Brehm was the first female candidate for vice president when she ran on the Prohibition Party ticket in 1924.

Not only did public and political life undergo drastic changes for women during the Prohibition era, but women's private lives changed as well. Women stepped into jobs while the men were away fighting in World War I, allowing them to make their own money. Riding the wave from Prohibition and women's voting rights, the Roaring Twenties saw the rise of consumerism and technology. Widespread consumption of material goods filtered into homes through catalogues and magazines that grew thanks to advances in printing technology. During the Prohibition Era advertising companies began targeting women, empowering them with the ability to make buying choices and spend their own money.

These innovations afforded women from different socioeconomic backgrounds the chance to advance their status and to make more decisions for their households. Mass production techniques decreased the cost of products and allowed for women to become major players in the increasingly consumer-driven popular culture. Cosmetics as a consumer good soared in popularity.

The broad change in women's rights and American culture during the Prohibition era reshaped the lives of women. Their newfound rights and liberties changed the way women were viewed by themselves and others and expanded their roles within society. These changes allowed women to transform from the traditional, essentially subservient roles of the Victorian era to the "New Woman" of the Prohibition era.

<http://prohibition.themobmuseum.org/the-history/how-prohibition-changed-american-culture/womens-rights/>

Optional Activity for Discussion and/or Research

Who is denied the right to vote today? (youth under age 18, people in prisons, legal immigrants who are not citizens, people who are eligible but who did not register.)

<https://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2015/08/04/voting-rights-still-a-political-issue-50-years-later>

<https://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/elections/voting-rights-native-americans.html>

Should the right to vote be extended to age 16? (Make a list of pro/con arguments, discuss if youth at age 16 and 17 have the educational background to make an informed vote, discuss the independence that an 18-year old has as a legal adult.)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/07/learning/should-the-voting-age-be-lowered-to-16.html>

<https://firstamendmentvoice.org/2018/06/the-pros-and-cons-of-lowering-the-legal-voting-age-in-the-united-states/>

<https://www.debate.org/opinions/should-the-voting-age-be-reduced-to-16>

Resource: <https://www.nps.gov/articles/the-internationalist-history-of-the-us-suffrage-movement.htm>

Challenging Question: *Which women were still denied the right to vote after the ratification of the 19th Amendment? How long did it take for these women to have the privilege of voting?*