POL.USC16-test US Voting Behaviour and the Participation Crisis: Test Pack

EDEXCEL 9PL0 · about 15 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Short answer questions may be concise. For levels-marked questions write full sentences and structured paragraphs. Time guidance: 75 minutes total; allow approximately 35 minutes for the two extended levels questions together and the remainder for short items and reading the source.

1 In the context of US voting behaviour, define the term 'gender gap' as used by political analysts in presidential elections.

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

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2 Identify one common argument made by opponents of strict voter ID laws in the US context.

(Total for Question 2 is 3 marks)

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3 State two features of automatic voter registration (AVR) as proposed or implemented in some US states to increase turnout.

(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)

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4 Identify two documented effects of strict voter registration deadlines and procedures on turnout, citing the mechanism by which turnout is reduced.

(Total for Question 4 is 3 marks)

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5 State one empirical finding from turnout studies comparing US midterm and presidential elections, with a brief explanation.

(Total for Question 5 is 5 marks)

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Mark scheme · POL.USC16-test US Voting Behaviour and the Participation Crisis: Test Pack

Question 1

a concise definition identifying systematic differences in voting patterns or party support between men and women **B1**

Answer: Systematic differences in voting patterns or party support between men and women, for example women on average supporting Democratic presidential candidates more than men in recent cycles.

Question 2

states a clear argument, e.g. that strict ID requirements disproportionately disenfranchise minority, low-income and elderly voters **B1**

brief development, e.g. many affected voters lack the required documents or face costs to obtain them **B1**

qualifier, e.g. framed as reducing turnout among groups that lean Democratic **B1**

Answer: Opponents argue strict voter ID laws disproportionately disenfranchise minority, low-income and elderly voters because many lack required documents or face costs to obtain them, which can reduce turnout among groups that tend to lean Democratic.

Question 3

one accurate feature, e.g. eligible citizens are automatically registered when interacting with government agencies unless they opt out **B1**

a second accurate feature, e.g. the system updates voter records using reliable government data such as DMV records, reducing paperwork for voters **B1**

Answer: Eligible citizens are automatically registered when interacting with government agencies unless they opt out, and voter records are updated using reliable government datasets such as Department of Motor Vehicles records, reducing paperwork and administrative barriers.

Question 4

identifies one effect, e.g. lower turnout among young and mobile voters **B1**

identifies the mechanism for the first effect, e.g. advance deadlines mean recently moved or newly eligible voters miss registration cutoffs **B1**

identifies a second effect and mechanism, e.g. reduced minority turnout where administrative complexity and lack of information discourage registration **B1**

Answer: Advance registration deadlines and complex procedures lower turnout among young and mobile voters because those who recently moved or became eligible miss cutoffs, and they reduce minority turnout where administrative complexity and information gaps discourage registration.

Question 5

states the finding, e.g. turnout is generally higher in presidential elections than in midterms **B1**

gives an approximate quantitative statement, e.g. turnout rates are commonly 10 to 20 percentage points higher in presidential years **B1**

explains one reason for the difference, e.g. greater media attention and mobilisation in presidential years **B1**

explains a second reason or qualification, e.g. some midterms have higher turnout when high-salience issues or close races occur **B1**

a short example or date, e.g. turnout in the 2020 presidential election was substantially higher than in the 2018 or 2014 midterms **B1**

Answer: Turnout is generally higher in presidential elections than in midterms, typically by around 10 to 20 percentage points, because presidential contests attract more media attention and national mobilisation; midterms can see higher turnout when high-salience issues or particularly competitive races occur. For example, turnout in the 2020 presidential election exceeded turnout in the 2018 midterms and was far larger than in 2014.

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