

Civic Engagement & Voting Key Terms

YWCA USA is focusing on civic engagement for Stand Against Racism 2020. Civic engagement, voting, and election work have many terms associated with them that may be confusing. Use this glossary* of key civic engagement terms to get more familiar with the language of civic engagement.

<p>Absentee Ballot</p>	<p>A ballot filed by a voter who cannot be present at their polling place on Election Day. Absentee ballots are often filed by people who are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living abroad • Serving in the military • Traveling • Attending school in a different state than their legal state of residence
<p>Ballot</p>	<p>A list of candidates and proposed laws that voters mark to make choices. A ballot may be made of paper and marked with a pen or hole punch. Or it may be electronic, and voters mark their choices with the push of a button or by touch screen.</p>
<p>Ballot Initiative</p>	<p>A proposed law drafted by citizens and placed on the ballot. Citizens will vote to approve or reject it.</p>
<p>Caucus</p>	<p>A meeting held by members of a party to decide an issue. Most often, caucuses are statewide meetings held in presidential election years. Members of a party choose a candidate to support or they elect members to a state nominating committee.</p>
<p>Census</p>	<p>A periodic governmental enumeration of population.</p>
<p>Census Day</p>	<p>The reference day used for the U.S. census. Census Day for the 2020 U.S. census is April 1st, 2020.</p>

*Glossary adapted for YWCA's usage from [usa.gov](https://www.usa.gov)

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Census Takes/Census Enumerators	Census takers conduct the “non-response follow-up” portion of the Census. They interview the residents of every household that has not responded via the online or paper forms to collect Census information. Census takers serve as the last line of defense for getting an accurate count
Constituent	A person who lives, works, or pays taxes in an area that a politician represents.
District (or Ward)	A geographical area that an elected official serves or represents.
Election Official (or Poll Worker, Election Clerk, Election Judge)	A person appointed to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor the voting process at a polling place • Make sure voters follow state requirements • Certify an election was conducted legally • Give the official vote count
Electoral College	The process Americans use to elect the president and vice president. The number of electors a state receives is equal to that state's number of U.S. senators and representatives. Those electors then gather to cast the state's votes in the Electoral College. They vote for the candidate who won in their state during a presidential election.
General Election	A final election for a political office with a limited list of candidates. The candidates in the general election are the people who won their party's primary election. General elections happen at a local, state, and national level.
Hard to Count Populations	A range of sociodemographic and other groups which are at risk of being undercounted in the U.S. census. These individuals are considered hard-to-locate; hard-to-contact; hard-to-persuade; and/or hard-to-interview.
Incumbent	The person currently in a particular job or political office.

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Midterm Election	The federal election for members of Congress held between presidential elections.
National Voter Registration Day	<u>National Voter Registration Day</u> is a national holiday celebrating our democracy. It was first observed in 2012 and has been growing in popularity every year since. Held on the fourth Tuesday of September, National Voter Registration Day will take place on September 22, 2020.
Nominee	The final candidate chosen by a party to represent them in an election.
Overcount (U.S. census)	A net trend of errors in certain sociodemographic or other groups in the U.S. census. Net overcounts occur if there are more errors of inclusion (double-counting people and dwellings) than balancing errors of erroneously omitted population and housing.
Platform	A collection of beliefs, legislative goals, morals, and ideals. A political party's platform outlines its principles and plans to govern.
Political Party	A group whose intent is to govern and legislate in a specific way based on a chosen set of principles or platform.
Polling Place (Polling Station)	The location in which you cast your vote. Your area may hold voting in schools, churches, community centers, or other central public places. Your polling place is assigned based on your legal address.
Popular Vote	The votes cast during an election for a candidate or about an issue. Whichever candidate or decision about an issue gets the most votes has won the popular vote. (U.S. president and vice president are determined by an Electoral College vote.)

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<p>Precinct (Election District, Voting District)</p>	<p>Each city, county, or geographic area is divided by address into precincts to assign polling places and gather votes. A precinct can sometimes be called an election district or voting district.</p>
<p>Primary</p>	<p>An election held to choose which of a party's candidates will be nominated for the general election. In an open primary, all voters can vote for any candidate they prefer, regardless of the voter's or candidate's party affiliation. In a closed primary, voters can only vote for a candidate from the party that the voter belongs to.</p>
<p>Provisional Ballot</p>	<p>Type of ballot used to collect a vote when there are questions about the voter's identity or ability to vote at that precinct. A provisional ballot is counted when the voter's information is confirmed.</p>
<p>Recount</p>	<p>Counting the votes again because of a suspected error in totaling them the first time.</p>
<p>Referendum</p>	<p>A proposed new law or a proposal to repeal an existing law, passed to the voters to approve or reject. Some states require the following to be approved by a referendum before they can be adopted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spending bills • Bond issues • Constitutional amendments
<p>Registered Voter</p>	<p>Someone who is qualified and has applied and been added to their area's voter registration system.</p>
<p>Sample Ballot</p>	<p>An example of what the official ballot will look like. These can be used to help people make decisions, and are often published by newspapers or websites.</p>
<p>Special Election</p>	<p>An election to fill a vacant position if an officeholder dies, resigns, or is impeached. It is not part of the regular election schedule.</p>

<p>Term</p>	<p>The set length of time for someone to serve in an elected office. The president and vice president of the United States serve a four-year term. U.S. representatives serve two years and U.S. senators serve six years.</p>
<p>Term Limit</p>	<p>The total amount of terms that an officeholder is allowed to serve in a particular position. Laws set term limits for elected offices. No one can serve more than two terms as president of the United States. There are no laws about term limits for U.S. representatives or senators. Term limits for governors and other elected officials are different in each state and locality.</p>
<p>Ticket</p>	<p>The group of candidates that a party is running in an election.</p>
<p>Town Hall Meeting or Debate</p>	<p>A setting in which candidates for office answer questions from voters. In a town hall-style debate, a moderator helps ensure candidates follow the rules they agreed to.</p>
<p>Undercount (U.S. census)</p>	<p>A net trend of errors in certain sociodemographic or other groups in the U.S. census. Net undercounts occur if there are more errors of omission (missing people and housing) than balancing errors of erroneously included population and housing or - of course--if there are a large number of omissions even though most people counted are correctly enumerated.</p>
<p>U.S. Census Bureau</p>	<p>The United States Census Bureau (USCB; officially the Bureau of the Census, as defined in Title 13 U.S.C. § 11) is a principal agency of the U.S. Federal Statistical System, responsible for producing data about the American people and economy.</p>
<p>Voter Fraud</p>	<p>Interfering with the results of an election by doing illegal things that affect the vote's outcome. Types of voter fraud include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bribery • Illegal voter registration • Tampering with voting machines or ballot boxes • Voter impersonation

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vote buying• False advertising about the election date or how to vote
Voter Intimidation	<p>An attempt to prevent eligible people from voting or forcing them to vote a certain way. The attempt may be made by an official, individual, or group. Some voter intimidation tactics include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Using verbal or physical threats• Threatening with weapons or jail time• Tests involving literacy, property ownership, or citizenship• Poll taxes• Other types of intimidation to prevent an eligible person from voting freely
Voting/Voter Guide	<p>Information about candidates and issues in an upcoming election. Guides can be published by political parties, organizations, or other groups. They may be non-partisan or may favor a particular party or viewpoint.</p>