



# The Impact of Education Funding on Voter Turnout

By: Ellie Anderson

**N** COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES  
Department of Political Science

**N** BUREAU OF BUSINESS RESEARCH  
College of Business

## Objective

To discover whether education funding one receives in their youth has an impact on whether they vote later in life. This study aims to see if per pupil education funding, which varies dramatically state by state, could predict future voting patterns.

## Method

Data was collected from each of the 50 states on per pupil education funding in 2001 to ensure that everyone affected would be of voting age by the 2016 election. Voter turnout rates were then collected for each state in the 2016 election and regressed on funding levels. Two continuous control variables, median household income and percentage nonwhite, were added.

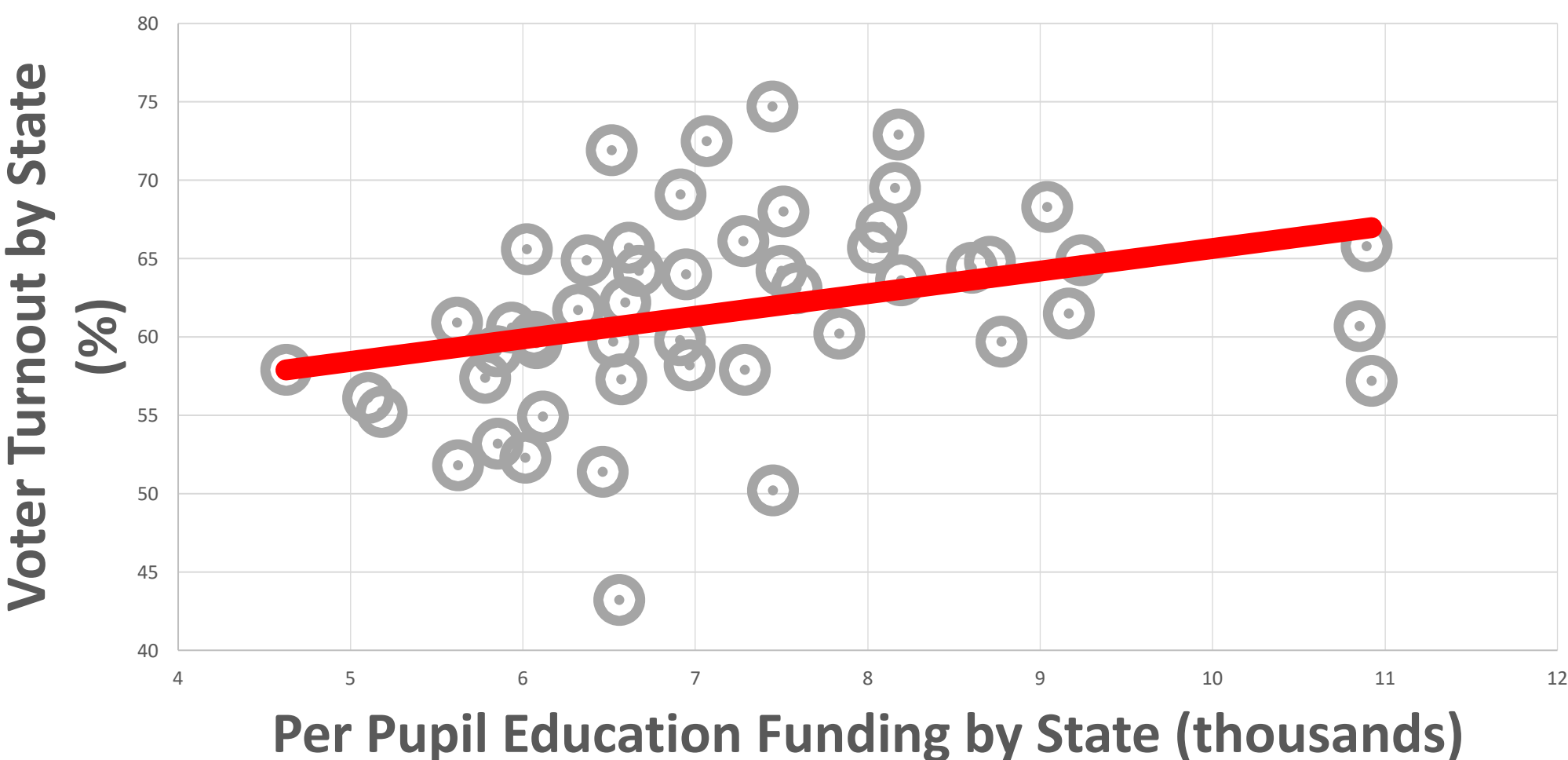
## Data

Guzman, Gloria. "Household Income: 2016." U.S. Census Bureau, September 2017. [Link](#)  
McDonald, Michael. "2016 November General Election Turnout Rates." United States Election Project, September 5, 2018. [Link](#)  
"Median Value (Dollars)," United States Census Bureau. [Link](#)  
"Population Distribution by Race/Ethnicity." Kaiser Family Foundation, data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2016. [Link](#)  
"Public Education Finances: 2001." U.S. Census Bureau. U.S. Department of Commerce, May 1997. [Link](#)  
"Why Americans Move," North American Moving Services. [Link](#)

## Contact Info

Email: [eanderson38@huskers.unl.edu](mailto:eanderson38@huskers.unl.edu)  
Phone: 913-305-9147

## Education Funding and Voter Turnout in 2016



## Turnout Regressed on Funding

Table: Education Funding's Impact on Voter Turnout for the 2016 Election  
Dependent variable:

|   | Voter Turnout by State |                      |
|---|------------------------|----------------------|
|   | No Controls            | Controlled           |
| Average Per Pupil Education Funding by State            | 1.441**<br>(.590)      | 1.227**<br>(.557)    |
| Median Household Income<br>Divided by Median Home Value |                        | -21.820<br>(13.78)   |
| Percentage Non-White                                    |                        | -.210***<br>(.052)   |
| Constant  | 51.223***<br>(4.325)   | 65.643***<br>(7.422) |
| Observations  | 51                     | 51                   |
| R <sup>2</sup>  | .109                   | .338                 |
| Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>                                 | .090                   | .295                 |
| F Statistic   | 5.965                  | 7.983                |

Note: \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

## Results

Both with and without control variables, it appears the relationship between education funding and voter turnout is positive and statistically significant. For every extra **\$1,000** a state spends on per pupil education, we can expect an increase in voter turnout of **1.227%**.

## Discussion and Future Research

There is room for more control variables to be added to the research, which would likely increase the R<sup>2</sup> value significantly. If this were to occur and the relationship between education and voter turnout remains relatively the same, it would increase confidence in the results significantly. Some potential variables to add are:

- Democrat or republican vote share by state
- Percent of population living in a major city
- Average teacher salary by state

## Limitations

- The data accounts for all voters in the Voting Eligible Population, not only those in school at the time measured. Results would only be accurate if voting patterns for all other populations remained steady across other age groups. If we can assume that education funding holds relatively constant in a state (which is mostly true), this becomes less of an issue.
- This study assumed that people remain in the state they attended K-12 schooling in. While this is often the case, it is not always true.

## Conclusion

Based on this data, there appears to be a positive and statistically significant relationship between education funding and voter turnout.