



University of
New Hampshire

Turnout and Voter Trust

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Why Vote?

- Rational to vote only if expected benefits of voting are greater than cost (Downs, Tullock, Riker & Ordeshook)

$$PB + D > C$$

P = Probability that individual vote will affect the outcome

B = Expected benefit of voting

D = Psychological benefit citizen receives from voting

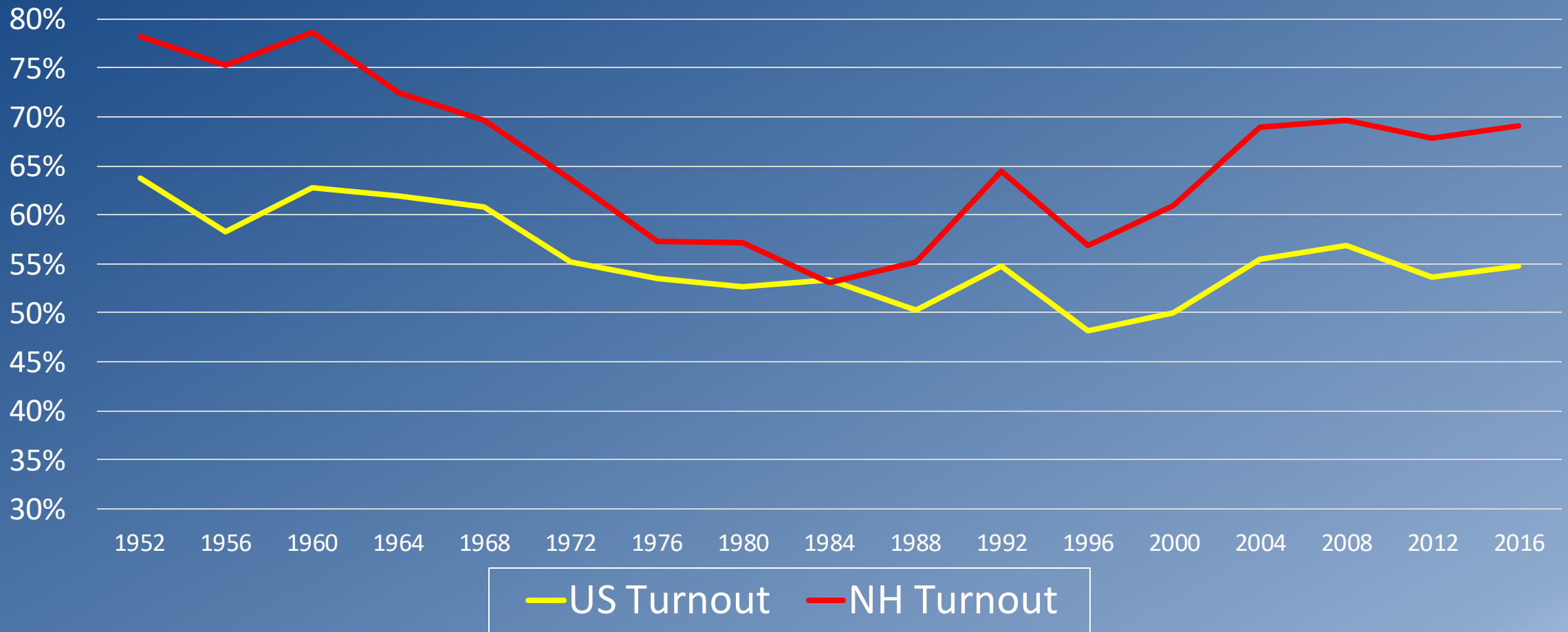
C = Cost of voting (time, expense, opportunity costs)

- Low turnout due to either high costs, low expected benefits, or both

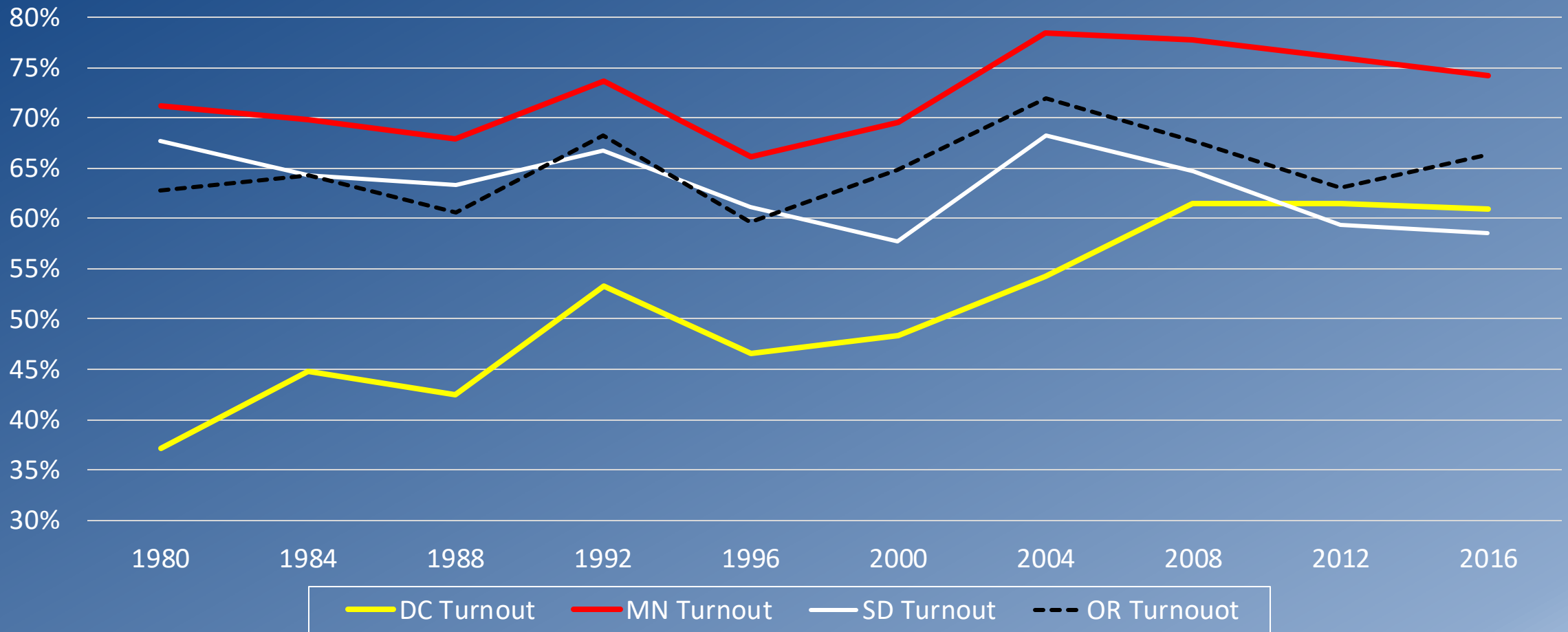
Multiple Factors Correlated with Turnout

- Demographics
 - Age
 - Education
 - Income
- Barriers
- Civic Education
 - Confidence in elections
- Campaign factors
 - Competition
 - Interest in race
 - Economy
 - War
- No Single cause of increase or decrease in turnout

Turnout: US Presidential Elections (VAP)



Turnout: US Presidential Elections (VEP)



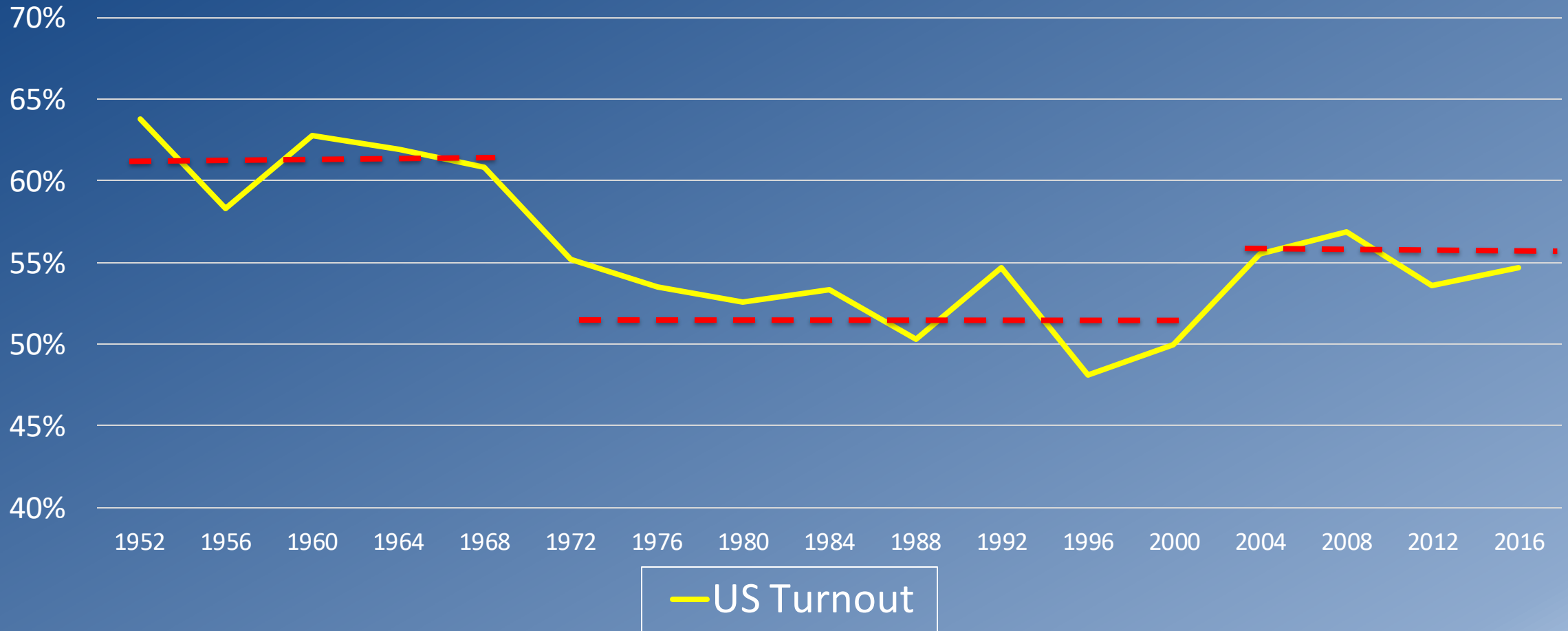
Why Differences?

- Varies by state
 - Some consistently high – Minnesota
 - Some consistently low - Hawaii
 - Some change over time
- Different reasons for changes in each state

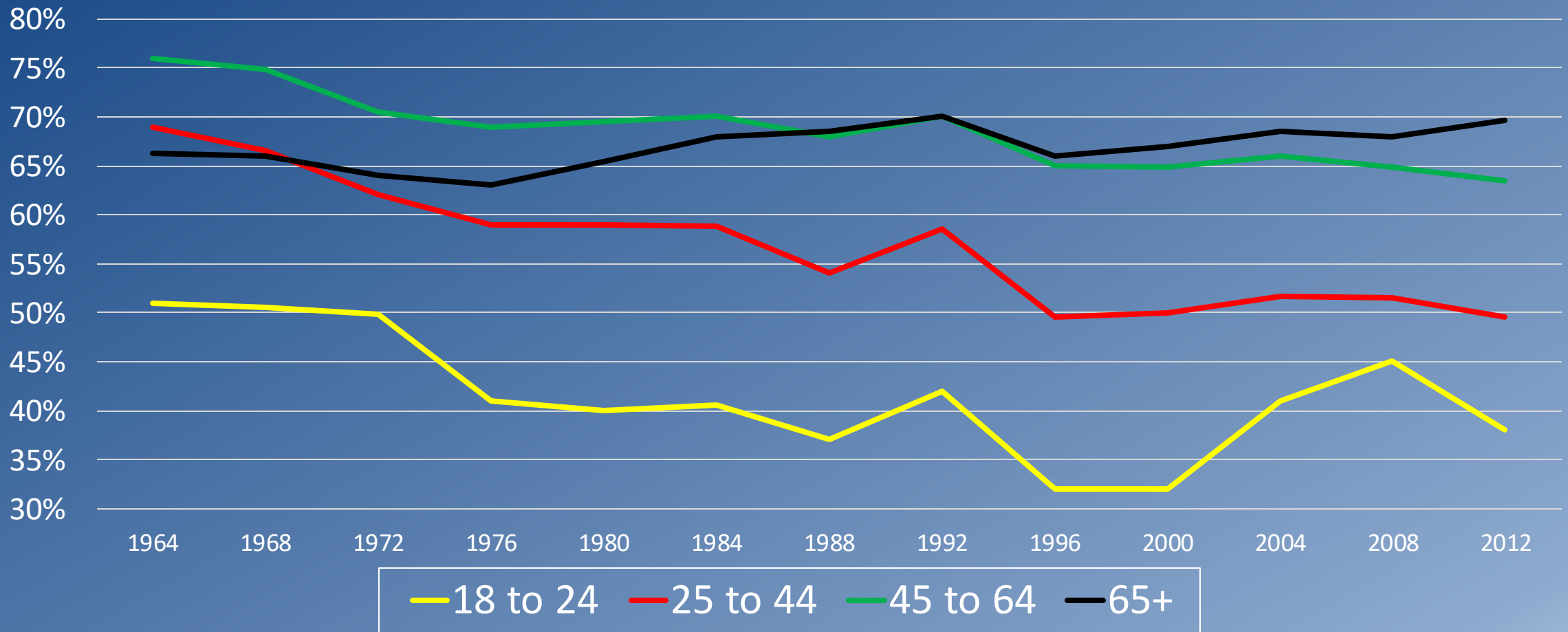
Why Turnout Decline after 1960s?

- 26th Amendment?
 - Turnout dropped for 20 years as Baby Boom was “digested”
- But is that what happened?

Turnout: US Presidential Elections (VAP)



US Turnout 1964-2012 by Age (VAP)



Trust in Elections Essential

- For accepting results
- Trust/support of winning candidate & policies

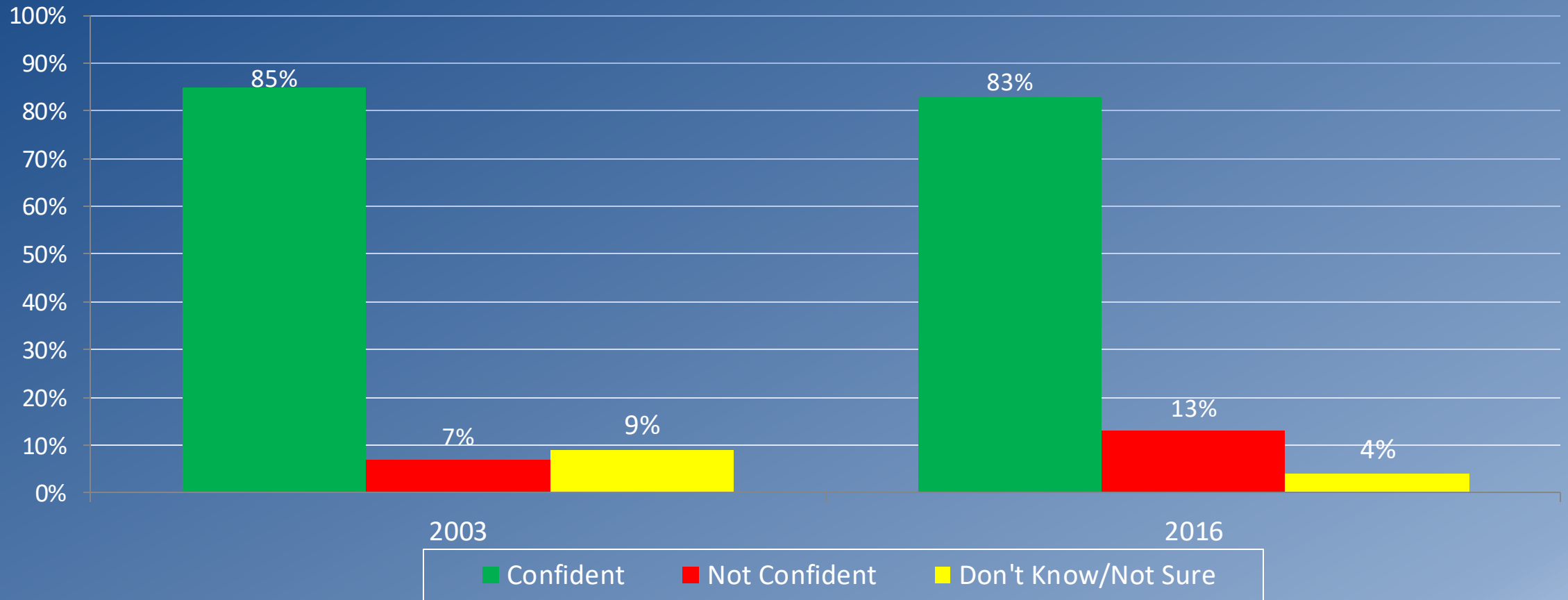
Public confidence “is closely related to the State’s interest in preventing voter fraud, public confidence in the integrity of the electoral process has independent significance, because it encourages citizen participation in the democratic process.”

Justice Stevens, *Crawford v. Marion County Election Board*

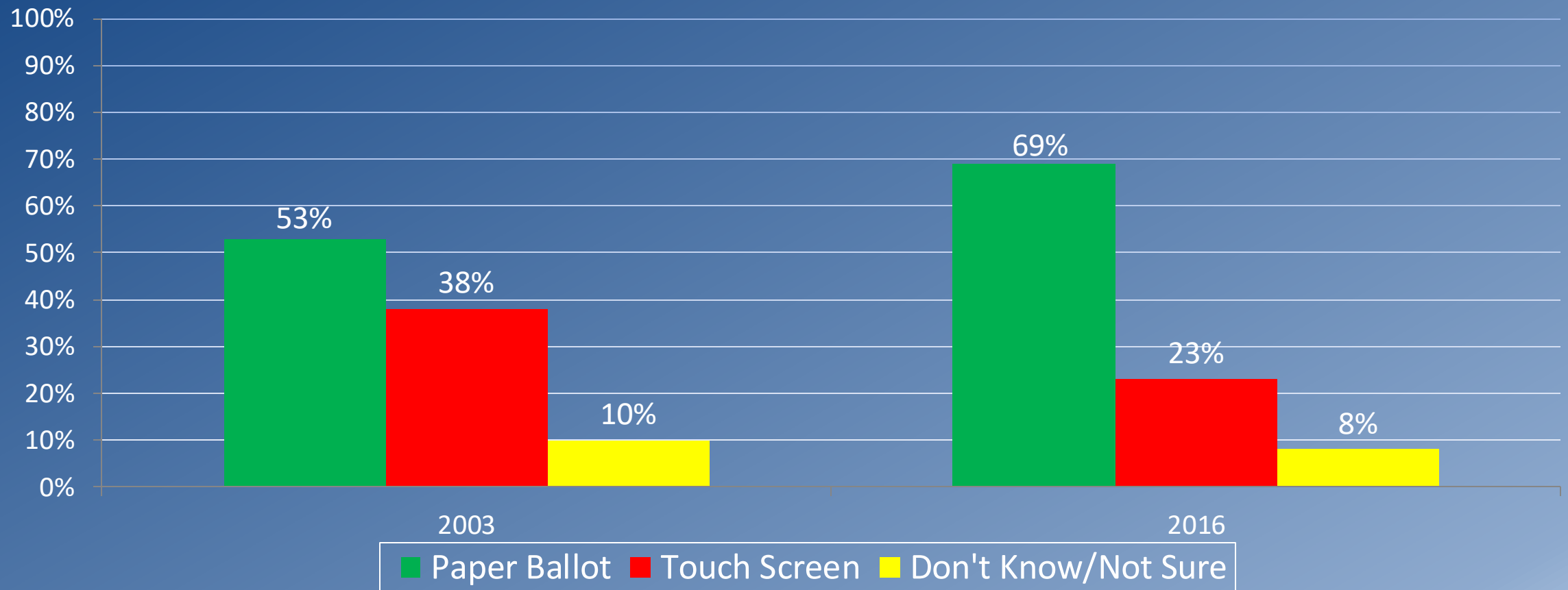
Perceived Threats to Electoral Trust

- Lack of Constitutional understanding
 - State variations in electoral procedures
 - Misunderstanding of Electoral College
- Inaccurate counting
 - Computer hacking
 - Paper trail
- Illegal voting
 - Non-residents
 - Non citizens
 - Multiple votes

Trust in NH elections: Confidence vote in previous election was accurately counted



Less confidence in Electronic Voting than Paper Ballots: Increasing over recent years



Summary

- Many factors influence turnout. Very difficult to determine a specific cause for changes in turnout
- Citizens need to have confidence in elections:
 - Tradeoffs between stricter voting laws to increase trust and barriers that may discourage voting

Thank You!
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