

Episode 57DHHX July 16 2025 What is the 3 point 5 percent protest rule? What does it mean for the U S?

What is the 3 point 5 percent protest rule and what does it mean for the US? As the anti Trump resistance has grown so has talk of 3 point 5 percent a figure which stems from research on previous movements **Excerpts edited for brevity and clarity by Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates a 501C3 nonprofit organization** The Guardian July 17 2025 The number is frequently cited in leftwing circles serving as a rallying cry for people who oppose Donald Trump if 3 point 5 percent of a population protests against a regime the regime will fail Left leaning content creators activists and media have boosted the 3 point 5 percent rule as the anti Trump resistance has grown A Pod Save America episode in June was headlined The 3 point 5 percent Protest Rule That Could Bring Down Trump Social media posts from protest groups broke down the rule and its limitations In the lead up to mass days of protest organizers have referred to the target as a goal After the No Kings protests in June for instance the progressive activist group Indivisible sent an email to its supporters noting how 3 point 5 percent is a historically important target but not a magic number Another day of protests is set for Thursday dubbed Good Trouble a reference to the late congressman John Lewis on the fifth anniversary of his death The figure stems from research of prior mass movements though it's often oversimplified Still the gist is accurate sustained mass participation in a resistance movement can topple authoritarianism Political scientists Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan created a database of civil resistance campaigns from 1900 to 2006 analyzing whether non violent or violent movements were more likely to succeed and whether there was a tipping point in terms of size for protests to actually expel the party or person in power The results showed non violent campaigns were often much larger and were twice as likely to succeed than violent movements They were more representative of the population and they found active and sustained participation by 3 point 5 percent of a population meant a movement would succeed with very few specific exceptions If 3 point 5 percent of people are actively participating in a mass movement there are many more supporters who aren't active participants underscoring broad dissent against the regime And among those participants are often defectors people who were once part of the regime or its support structure who have since joined the other side For the US it's nearly 12 million people The number refers to peak participation not cumulative participation Most nonviolent campaigns still succeeded with less participation Numbers in the streets matter But there's also the question of quality Have people been trained? Are they committed to nonviolent discipline? What is their message? What are their demands? What is their composition? Other limitations exist in the current moment The anti Trump resistance is not a maximalist campaign seeking to oust a dictator or achieve independence because the US is not under a clear authoritarian regime In consolidated authoritarian regimes the rules of the game are clear and people generally agree they are living under an authoritarian regime In a backsliding democracy like the US people are more disoriented institutions that recently worked begin to fail but people put a lot of faith in elections It's like organizing on quicksand The figure is a descriptive statistic derived from historical movements not necessarily a prescriptive one meaning it is not necessarily a guarantee to organize around as some are explicitly doing now The UK's Extinction Rebellion a climate movement has made the 3 point 5 percent figure a part of its organizing for instance In previous successful movements people weren't trying to reach a specific number they just in hindsight hit a tipping point and 3 point 5 percent was an identifiable threshold The anti Trump protest movement is large and growing Recent protests have drawn many millions to the streets and many of those protesting have sought other opportunities to stand against the Trump administration beyond street protests The scale of protests is larger now than it was during Trump's first term Since 2013 authoritarian governments have caught on to the idea too and figured out how to either ignore them or subdue them even when they've gotten pretty impressive numbers Researchers concluded

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