

Democracy Around the World: A Case for Compulsory Voting

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UNITED STATES
ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMMISSION

RESOURCES FOR VOTERS | VOTING SYSTEM TESTING & CERTIFICATION | ELECTION MANAGEMENT RESOURCES | PAYMENTS AND GRANTS | RESEARCH AND DATA | NATIONAL VOTER REGISTRATION ACT

Outline

"A man without a vote is a man without protection" – Lyndon B. Johnson

Part One
The issue at hand and why it matters

Part Two
What does the literature say?

Part Three
Results:

- a Case Study on compulsory voting
- b Democracy Index Report 2012

Voting Systems Map



EAC's map of voting systems shows which jurisdictions are using EAC-certified systems. View the map

EAC Newsletters and Updates

Sign up to receive information about EAC activities including public meetings, webcasts, reports and grants.

Contact Your State



Access state election Web sites, which include voter guides, registration information and deadlines, absentee and early voting dates, provisional voting information and polling place hours and locations. Contact Your State.

Voting TIPS

To Enhance Your Vo

The following tips from the U.S. Election Assistance Commision may help enhance your voting experience. See Voting Tips.

Events Calendar

18 Mar 14

Washington DC: Election Center Accessibility Wkshp
Washington, DC: The Election Center is

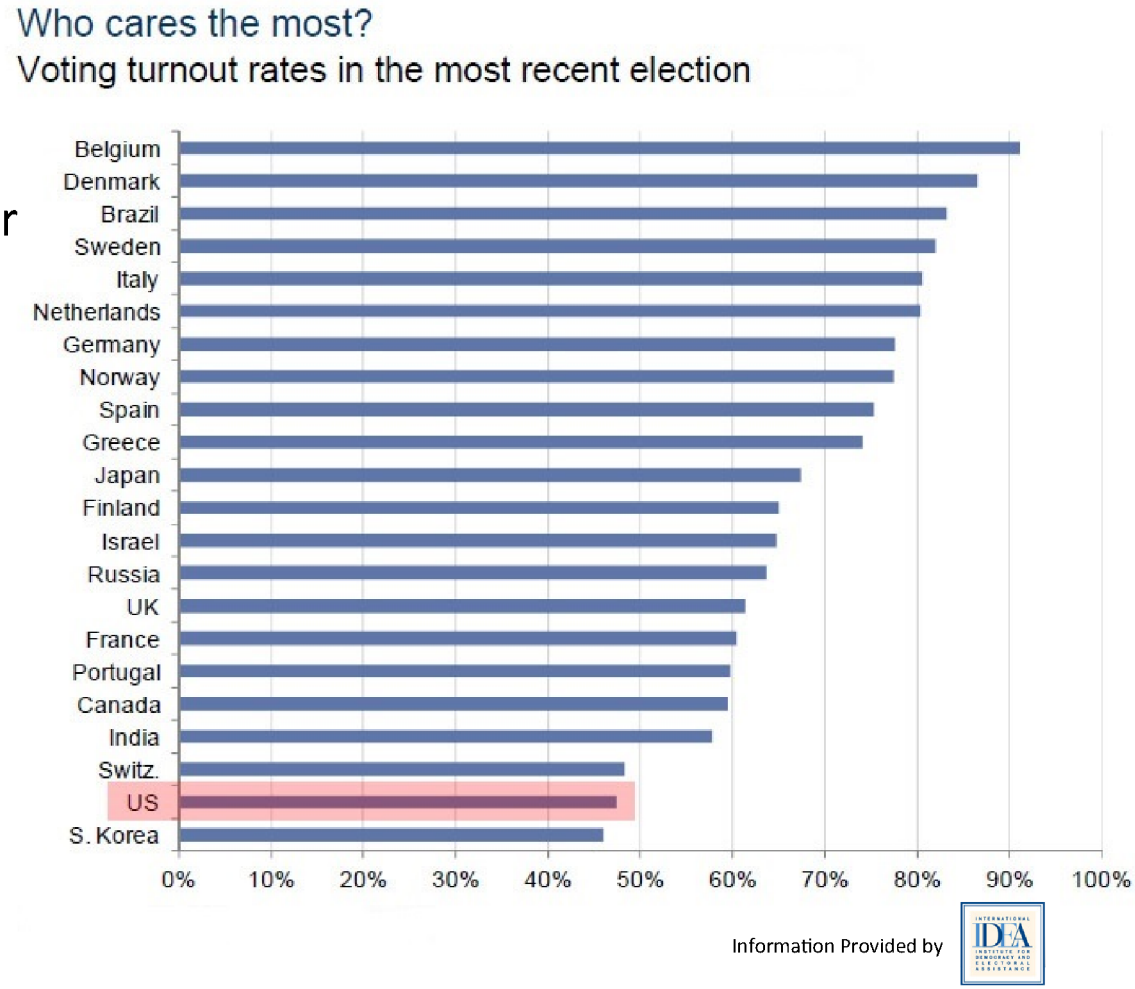
Latest Blog Posts

2/19/2014 10:55:00 AM
Voting System Testing Update 2.19.14
EAC's "Voting System Testing Update" blog allows stakeholders to track progress on EAC system certification that impacts their...

2/18/2014 9:26:00 AM
Weekly Election Update 2.18.14
EAC's Election update blog posts summarize the

Voter Turnout:

- When compared to other democracies around the world the United States has some of the lowest voter turnout.



How to Solve Low Voter Turnout?

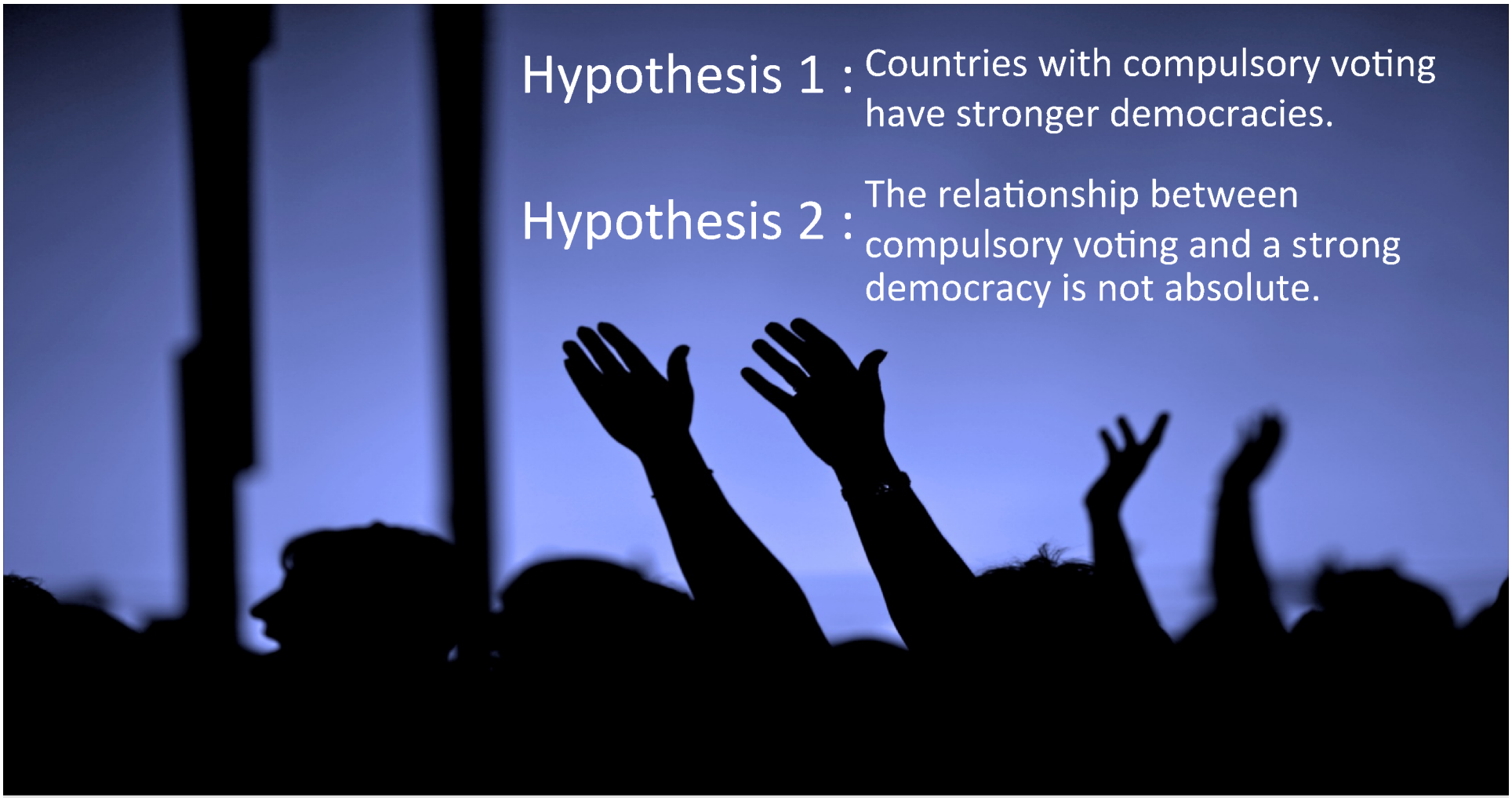



What is a Democracy?
"The equal participation of a countries citizens towards the proposal, development, and creation of laws."

Research Question:

Do countries that have compulsory vote (i.e. high turnout) have stronger democracies?




Hypothesis 1 : Countries with compulsory voting have stronger democracies.
Hypothesis 2 : The relationship between compulsory voting and a strong democracy is not absolute.

A Two-Sided Debate

Among scholars there is a debate as to whether or not low voter turnout is a problem and whether compulsory voting is a viable solution.



Argument 1: Low voter turnout is a problem and compulsory voting is a solution.

- Low voter turnout = unrepresented population.
- Voters can become disenfranchised.
- Compulsory voting ensures a more complete representation in government.





Argument 2: Low voter turnout is not a problem and compulsory voting violates the core principle of a democracy.

- The right to vote implies the right not to vote.
- Increase in uneducated voters.
- Voting just to avoid the penalty.



- *Commonwealth Electoral Act of 1918*, section 245(1): "It shall be the duty of every elector to vote at each election".
- Number of ways voters can cast their votes: postal voting, pre-voting, absent voting, mobile voting (overseas), and ordinary voting.
- Compulsory enrollment for federal elections was introduced in 1920.

"The Penalties"

- Penalty notice sent by Divisions Recruiting Officer (DRO).
- Pay first time penalty to (DRO) of $20
- Failure to pay can result in maximum $50 penalty and in extreme cases involve, community service, seizure of goods, or a short period in jail.



The Economist Intelligence Unit

Democracy index 2012
Democracy at a standstill
A report from The Economist Intelligence Unit



Methodology

- Democracy index, on a 0 to 10 scale, is based on the ratings for 60 indicators grouped into five categories: **Electoral Process and Pluralism**, **Civil Liberties**, **Functioning of Government**, **Political Participation**, and **Political Culture**.
- Index values for four regime types:

Full democracies – scores of 8-10
Flawed democracies – score of 6-7.9
Hybrid regimes – score of 4-5.9
Authoritarian regimes – score below 4

The Model

- Model uses a combination of dichotomous and three-point scoring system for the 60 indicators.
- The dichotomous 1-0 scoring system is (1 for yes and 0 for no answer). Also included is the possibility of a 0.5 score to capture "grey areas" where a yes (1) or no (0) answer is problematic.

III Political participation

27. Voter participation/turn-out for national elections.
(average turnout in parliamentary elections since 2000. Turnout as proportion of population of voting age).
1 if consistently above 70%
0.5 if between 50% and 70%
0 if below 50%
If voting is obligatory, score 0. Score 0 if scores for questions 1 or 2 is 0.
28. Do ethnic, religious and other minorities have a reasonable degree of autonomy and voice in the political process?
1: Yes
0.5: Yes, but serious flaws exist
0: No
29. Women in parliament
% of members of parliament who are women
1 if more than 20% of seats
0.5 if 10-20%
0 if less than 10%

Table 2

Democracy Index 2012

			Category scores				
	Rank	Overall score	I Electoral process and pluralism	II Functioning of government	III Political participation	IV Political culture	V Civil liberties
Norway	1	9.93	10.00	9.64	10.00	10.00	10.00
Sweden	2	9.73	9.58	9.64	9.44	10.00	10.00
Iceland	3	9.65	10.00	9.64	8.89	10.00	9.71
Denmark	4	9.52	10.00	9.64	8.89	9.38	9.71
New Zealand	5	9.26	10.00	9.29	8.89	8.13	10.00
Australia	6	9.22	10.00	8.93	7.78	9.38	10.00

- Australia's overall score and individual scores highlight a country that uphold many democratic values.

- Concerns over recent political corruption and decline in youth participation in politics have however been cause for recent concern.

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South Korea	20	8.13	9.17	8.21	7.22	7.50	8.53
United States of America	21	8.11	9.17	7.50	7.22	8.13	8.53
Costa Rica	22	8.10	9.58	8.21	6.11	6.88	9.71
Japan	23	8.08	9.17	8.21	6.11	7.50	9.41
Belgium	24	8.05	9.58	8.21	5.56	7.50	9.41
Spain	25	8.02	9.58	7.50	6.11	7.50	9.41

- The United States received largely a disappointing overall score as a result of low voter turnout and Congress' recent inability to work together on important issues.

Discussion

Does compulsory voting (i.e. high turnout) lead to more democratic countries?

