

Disclaimer: Criteria for Inclusion

Inclusion of a country in the International IDEA Voter Turnout database does not signify that the electoral process is free and fair nor does it imply IDEA's support for the democratic process in the country. It is not the aim of International IDEA to judge on this matter, only to present statistics and findings on voter turnout worldwide, given some basic criteria for inclusion.

The countries in the Voter Turnout Database are included on the basis of the following objective criteria:

- that the elections were held after 1945 but before 30 September 2001;
- that elections were for national political office in independent nation-states. The only exceptions to this rule are those nations which held elections on the eve of their independence from colonial rule, or those small island nations whose sovereignty is limited by "free association" with a larger power (for example, Nigeria in 1959 falls into the first category, and Aruba into the second);
- that there was a degree of competitiveness (that is, more than one party contested the elections, or one party and independents contested the elections, or the election was only contested by independent candidates). This criterion excludes the one-party states of North Korea, China and the Soviet Union, but led to the inclusion of elections such as those in Uganda 1995 (where parties were banned) and Egypt in 1976 (where a number of independent candidates ran against the ruling party). Within this "gray area" of competitiveness we have erred on the side of inclusion and, at least where data is available, have included the turnout figures and explanatory variables in the tables for each country; and
- that the franchise was universal. However, for the purposes of comparison we have included the following elections that excluded women from voting: Liechtenstein (pre-1986), Switzerland (pre-1971), Greece (pre-1956), Belgium (1948), Kuwait (1992-1996), Bahrain (1973) and Argentina (1947). In these cases, the voting age population figure only includes men. We have not included elections where the franchise was limited to a very small (and ethnically defined) segment of the population, e.g., South Africa before 1994 and Western Samoa before 1991.

As can be seen, these are quite broad parameters and it cannot be judged whether a country is democratic or whether a specific election is free and fair.
