

Sources and Definitions

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Definitions

Voting Age Population

International IDEA has chosen to use not only the reported registration rate to calculate turnout percentages, but also the voting age population (VAP) which includes all citizens above the legal

voting age. We show both indicators for two reasons. First, registration figures can be inaccurate or unavailable, and sometimes voter registers are not used (as in South Africa in 1994). Second, the voting age population figures can provide a clearer picture of participation as they signal a problem with the voters' register or registration system. In some countries, the registration rate for a country may exceed the estimated VAP. The explanation for this apparent anomaly usually lies in the inaccuracy of the electoral register. In some countries the register is difficult to keep up to date, and deaths or movements of electors from one district to another are not reflected. Of course, the opposite can also occur: the register can under-represent the true size of the eligible voter pool if, as is often the case, it fails to record the names of new voters who have come of age or migrated to an area. Both of these scenarios represent relatively common problems facing electoral administrators around the world. It is important to emphasize, however, that registration figures are, in most cases, more often updated than population figures. The estimated voting age population is based on a country's population over the age of 18. It is not intended to be an exact measure of the VAP as it does not take into account legal or systemic barriers to the exercise of the franchise or account for non-eligible members of the population, such as resident non-citizens. It is intended as indicative only. The VAPs shown here have been calculated from statistics produced by the Population Division of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Most estimates are based on the latest census data report in the Demographic Yearbook 1998. Estimates for Barbados, the Central African Republic and Niger are based on census data reported in the Demographic Yearbook 1996. Estimates for Albania, Djibouti, Ghana, Guinea, Guyana, Côte d'Ivoire, Samoa, Tanzania, and Togo are based on the medium variant population estimate in World Population Prospects: the 1998 Revision Volume II. The following countries were not included in the statistics produced by the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs: Anguilla, Fiji, Grenada, Nauru and Palau. For these countries the CIA World Factbook has been used. In all cases the population data selected is either that for the election year or the latest reported before the election year. In the latter case the growth rates presented in table A11 of World Population Prospects: the 1998 Revision Volume 1 were applied to form an estimated population for the election year. The data was then adjusted to remove population under the age of 18; the result forms our estimated voting age population.

GDP

Gross Domestic Product per capita measured in \$US as listed in the Human Development Report 1999.

HDI

The Human Development Index tracks a nation's level of human development based on a combination of indicators and is more sophisticated than GDP per capita. For more details see the UNDP Human Development Report 1999.

Literacy

Literacy rates as a percentage of the adult population. These are estimates and projections from UNESCO's assessment as listed in the Human Development Report 1999

The adult literacy rate (1997), human development index (1997), and gross domestic product (GDP) per capita \$US 1987 (1997) were taken from the statistical annex of the Human Development Report 1999 (HDR), published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). These were matched with the most recent parliamentary election available in the International IDEA database. There were 153 common countries between the two data sources. The figures were computed as per their subtitle. The 153 countries common to both the International IDEA and the 1999 HDR databases are: Albania, Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Comoros Islands, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russia, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Electoral System

For each country in the table we have listed the electoral system currently used, i.e. PR, Majority or Mixed. This information is taken from The International IDEA Handbook of Electoral System Design (1997) published by International IDEA. Please refer to the chapter on Voter Turnout Rates in a Comparative Perspective for a brief explanation of each electoral system.

FH

Freedom House from which we use the ratings calculated as an indicator of the levels of freedom in a country's political system. We have added together the "political rights" and "civil liberties" ratings to yield a number from 2 to 14, where 2 indicates the highest possible level of rights and freedoms and 14 the lowest. Data was collected from the Freedom House website at www.freedomhouse.org, where more information about the survey methodology is available.

Invalid

The number of invalid votes, as reported by each country.

Population

The total population as described under Voting Age Population.

Registration

The number of registered voters. The figure represents the number of names on the voters' register at the time that the registration process closes, as reported by the electoral management body.

Total vote

The total number of votes cast in the relevant election. Total vote includes valid and invalid votes, as well as blank votes in cases where these are separated from invalid votes. More information on valid, invalid and blank votes can be found at www.aceproject.org.

Vote/Registration

The number of votes divided by the number of names on the voters' register, expressed as a percentage.

Vote/VAP

The number of votes divided by the Voting Age Population figure, expressed as a percentage.

Voting Age

The lowest age at which the right to vote is obtained in the relevant country.

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Algeria

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Barbados

Electoral and Boundaries Commission, Barbados www.bgis.gov.bb

Belarus

Central Election Commission, Belarus www.bgis.gov.bb

Belgium

Ministry of Interior, Belgium www.belgium.fgov.be

Belize

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www.belize-elections.org

Benin

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Bolivia

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