

Electoral turnout at national parliamentary elections

Dimension - Institutional Arrangements

Associated Key Factor:

Legitimacy

Data Source:

Electronic Directory of the European Institutions

Voter Turnout since 1945: A Global Report, IDEA, 2002

<http://www.idea.int/vt/index.cfm>

<http://europa.eu.int/idea/index.htm>

General Availability:

Reporting unit: Voter

Reporting level: Country

Reporting period: regularly

Data available from 1980 to 2000

Availability by country:

1980 - 1999: Austria

1980 - 2002: Germany

1980 - 1999: Finland

1980 - 2001: Italy

1980 - 1999: Luxembourg

1980 - 2002: Portugal

1980 - 2002: Sweden

1980 - 2000: Slovenia

1980 - 2001: United Kingdom

1981 - 1999: Belgium

1981 - 2001: Cyprus

1981 - 2001: Denmark

1981 - 2002: France

1981 - 2000: Greece

1981 - 2002: Ireland

1981 - 1998: Malta

1981 - 2002: Netherlands

1989 - 2000: Spain

1989 - 2001: Poland

1990 - 2002: Czech Republic

1990 - 1999: Estonia

1990 - 2002: Hungary

1990 - 1998: Latvia

1990 - 2002: Slovak Republic

1991 - 2001: Bulgaria

1992 - 2000: Lithuania

1992 - 2000: Romania

The indicator:

Electoral turnout is the number of voters that voted divided by the total number of eligible voters, defined in turn as either registered or of voting age

Description

Electoral turnout is a good indicator for level of political interest, trust and political participation. Low electoral turnouts are often interpreted as evidence for the alienation of voters from the political system and, hence, a legitimacy or democratic deficit.

How is it measured?

IDEA calculates electoral turnout by dividing the total number of votes by the voting age population. The data is collected mostly from the electoral offices of the various countries.

What are the advantages of the indicator?

Easy to establish and by now a standard indicator on the legitimacy of democratic political systems.

What are the disadvantages of the Indicator?

Contextual information on political system is necessary to correctly interpret the results. Analyses should take into account variation depending on:

A. Type of electoral system used.

B. Whether voting is compulsory or not - In Belgium, Greece, Italy and Luxembourg a compulsory voting system is used.

C. Socio-economic factors such as literacy rate, wealth of nations, population size, human development level.

D. Competitiveness and plurality of the political system, i.e. the extent to which different political ideologies / programmes are represented by political parties

What is the policy relevance of the indicator?

In democratic systems, the policy process must be evaluated with reference to both policy output and democratic input. Electoral turnout says something about democratic input at the general level.

The Indicator is relevant for the following pathways of the FORESIGHT FOR TRANSPORT exercise:

	Transport Impact	External Determining Variable	Intermediate Variable	Contextual Information
Greater power for European level of decision making	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>