
VOTER REGISTRATION



Voter Registration and Inclusive Democracy: Analysing Registration Practices Worldwide

Rafael López Pintor and Maria Gratschew

This chapter discusses why voter registration is important for democracy, and in particular for the exercise of voting rights in producing genuine democratic elections. It outlines why the need to have all eligible voters registered poses a significant challenge to electoral authorities, particularly with regard to the use of different registration methods and citizen mobilization campaigns. It discusses why issues such as continuous versus periodic registers, compulsory versus voluntary registration, and citizen versus state-initiated registration are key questions for electoral administration and why the cost implications of such decisions are vital. The chapter concludes with a summary of findings on the types of voter registration systems used around the world.

WHY REGISTER PEOPLE TO VOTE?

Voter registration is crucial for political participation in a democratic context. There must be a guarantee that the right to vote

in elections is universal, equal, direct and secret. The franchise is the means through which the governed agree to delegate their authority to those who govern. It is the link between the legitimacy of political governance and the liberty of human beings. In a democracy - "government (*cratos*) by the people (*demos*)" - voter registers constitute a concrete description of the "*demos*" (i.e., the citizens who constitute the sovereign). Citizenship is usually defined by nationality or by residence, or both. The sovereign politically active is the electorate, which may be required to register in order to exercise the franchise.

Voter registers, which work to safeguard the franchise, should be:

Universal. They should include every adult person belonging to the citizenry. The crucial question of who is a citizen (i.e., nationals or residents? nationality by *ius soli* or by *ius sanguinis* and issues of nationality and territoriality (i.e., non-resident, displaced and refugee populations) should be addressed before elections are held; indeed these issues should be decided when democracy is first being established. Voter registration is directly related to political participation in terms of both citizen mobilization and voter turnout. The operation of registering voters is in itself a mobilizing exercise in transitional democracies, as well as in established democracies where significant segments of the population may fail to register and vote.

Equal. The vote of every citizen should have the same value without discrimination. This does not mean that every vote has the same weight in producing institutionalized representation of the people. This is why issues of electoral formulae (i.e., majority/propor-

tional/mixed), of voting districts (i.e., district boundaries and size) and of representation of minorities often are so highly debatable. The definition is relevant in connection to voter registration as a mechanism to ensure equality for the exercise of the right to vote. As a safeguard, voter registers that are clean and comprehensive contribute significantly to district delimitation as well as to the proper functioning of electoral formulae. They are also instrumental in organizing voting operations (e.g., allocating voters to polling stations or preparing polling places and voting materials). Another major benefit of undertaking voter registration before or at the beginning of the election period is that it allows disputes about the right of a person to vote to be dealt with in a measured way well before the polling takes place, and thereby minimizes disputes on Election Day (Maley, 2000, 9). Last but not least, properly compiled registers can also make difficult, and may discourage, attempts at double voting.

Direct. The right to vote should be personally exercised by every individual citizen at the polling station. This standard should be seen against the historical practice of double-step elections of assemblies, the "curia and estate systems" in nineteenth-century Central Europe. (Some in the United States may argue that the "electoral college" type of presidential election fails to meet the direct vote standard.) This standard also implies that the vote should not be delegated. This sometimes leads to controversy regarding issues of family vote, proxy vote, assisted vote, mail vote and external vote, including related problems with voter registers.

Secret. Secrecy of the vote must be guaranteed both legally and in practice. Factors that may impact negatively on secrecy of the ballot include intimidation and fraud practices, or inadequate design of polling station interiors. There may be other concerns in societies where secrecy of the ballot has not been culturally valued. Also, people with sustained experience of freedom and political pluralism may not take care to protect the content of their ballot papers; the opposite may occur among those with-

out democratic experience for whom the idea of individual secret ballot is not so important.

In conclusion, the structuring of voter registers constitutes a main instrument for the political expression of the sovereign, i.e., the electorate. All-inclusive, clean voter registers should be considered a safeguard to the integrity of the suffrage, and therefore an essential condition for the legitimacy of democracy as well as for the political stability of the country (Rial, 1999, 15).

HOW TO STRUCTURE VOTER REGISTERS

In structuring a voter register the principal guiding principles are simplicity of procedures and convenience for the citizen. As we are dealing with the exercise of a right (i.e., the suffrage), political authorities and public officials must not hinder the exercise of that right by imposing obstacles. Simple administrative procedures must be put in place, and the process for citizens to register must be made as convenient as possible (e.g., avoiding long distances, payment of heavy fees on stamps and photos, or having to show up several times at registration centres). The main issues to consider in structuring voter registers are outlined below.

Which registration system?

Voter registration systems may be classified based on four main criteria: a) compulsory

versus voluntary registration; b) continuously updated registers (e.g., much of Western, Central and Eastern Europe, Australia, Peru, Guatemala) versus ad hoc voter registers or a new register put together for each election (e.g., many emerging democracies, Canada before 1997); c) registration through state initiative versus responsibility placed upon the individual citizen; and d) voter-specific registers (standard practice) versus not a separate register of voters (e.g., Sweden, Denmark).

Which authority is responsible for voter registration?

The responsibility for voter registration may rest with different state apparatuses depending on political and administrative traditions and experiences. In emerging democracies voters are often registered by an administrative unit within Electoral Management Bodies. In older democracies,

voter registers may be produced by civil registers with or without the involvement of Electoral Management Bodies. Voter registers may also be produced by the national office of statistics. Finally, there are cases where voter registers are directly compiled by international community organizations such as the United Nations or the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (e.g., the Balkans, East Timor). In any case, the formation of voter registers often receives some input from civil registers and local governments.

How long does it take to produce an acceptable new voter register?

This may take from weeks to months depending on political and material conditions (i.e., political will, war and peace, logistics, administrative and financial conditions). Some examples of voter registration in emergency situations include: Nicaragua 1990, Albania 1992, Cambodia 1993, Kosovo 2000. On the other hand, most Western democracies' experience is with continuous registration, in which information is updated at the same time each year and within a given deadline.

Is enfranchisement genuinely universal, both legally and in practice?

The most often excluded or non-included populations, by law or *de facto*, are peasants, ethnic minorities, women, the illiterate and the poor. With the exception of a few countries, disenfranchisement around the world today tends to be more a matter of degree and of practice than of a legal phenomenon. Hence the relevance of presenting the problem as one of frontiers or of a

territory which can be progressively settled by new waves of voters. It remains an empirical question in a given country to determine how much of the eligible population is actually being disenfranchised, and under whose responsibility.

Making registration procedures simple or complicated?

Making registration procedures simple involves: automatic registration based on civil registers where these exist, or requiring eligible voters to appear only once at registration posts; free-of-charge registration, and minimal costs for transport, certificates, and photos. A very sensitive question is why registration is sometimes difficult for eligible voters. International experience indicates that complicated and costly registration procedures are usually put in place for two main reasons: a) an intent by governments to prevent or discourage certain groups from voting (e.g., peasants, urban slum dwellers, ethnic groups, women); and b) the complexities of identifying eligible populations after civil conflicts (e.g., displaced persons, refugees, exiles), including situations where the mere spelling of names may be a problem (e.g., Cambodia, Western Sahara, Kosovo).

How to identify and quantify eligible voters

In principle, this may be expected to be a problem of varying dimensions in most new democracies. Determining the size of the electorate very much depends on the availability of reliable population census information, population estimates, and civil registers. When these are not available, making a

reasonably comprehensive voter register may turn out to be the best possible basis for estimating the population of the country, including the size of internally displaced populations, refugees, and migrants. It may also allow for an estimate of regional and age distribution of the population and the scope of the urban rural divide.

Documents for identifying individual eligible voters

A variety of documents may be used for personal identification wherever a civil register is not automatically producing a voter register (i.e., national ID cards, driver's licenses, passports, civil register certificates). In cases where none of these are available, a voter's eligibility can be certified by witnesses. This may be arranged for culturally marginalized populations or for people in post-conflict situations where identification records have been destroyed or have disappeared. It is also typical in post-conflict scenarios to conduct registration by interviewing people (e.g., Western Sahara, Kosovo).

In registering eligible voters, is it necessary to produce a specially designed voter card?

This is not necessary as a matter of principle, as a properly registered voter may be identified by any other personal identification document; in some case identification may not even be required. Identification requirements depend on the specific environment and circumstances (i.e., whether such documents exist and cover all eligible voters, and whether an atmosphere of political mistrust may necessitate the issuance of a special voting card).

What should be the content of voter registers?

It is customary to include the personal details of voters such as name, gender, age and residence; photos may also be included, as is the case in Mexico, Peru and Kosovo. Voters in a national register are typically listed by family name in alphabetical order with breakdowns by polling centre; less frequently, they are listed by family clusters in each town/district (e.g., Albania 1992); the least frequently used method is to list voters chronologically by date of inscription (e.g., Pakistan). Necessary administrative information is also included in the voter registers, such as name and/or number of constituency, polling station and polling booth.

Breaking down of voter registers

National voter registers often, though not always, exist and can usually be extracted from a central aggregate register down to constituency and polling station levels. There are important benefits to having a centralized voter register: it allows for the clearing of duplications and double voting, facilitates redistricting when necessary, and processes external voting. In today's computer age, it can be particularly cost-effective to use a centralized register of voters.

Scrutiny of Voter Registers

Making provisional voter registers publicly available for corrections, deletions or additions is standard democratic practice. By not complying or not doing this in a timely manner, the transparency and fairness of the elections can be compromised. The main issues in this regard have to do with places and methods for publication, deadlines for changes and timely adjudication of complaints.

Publishing Final Voter Registers

How long before an election should final voter registers be known and made available to political parties and candidates as well as to other relevant groups, such as electoral observers and civil society organizations? A straightforward approach would recommend timely availability to allow political contenders a chance to make use of the registers for the organization of campaign activities and their Election Day operation. Moreover, election monitors and other civil society organizations can make use of the voter registers for civic education purposes and for distributing information to voters on where and how to vote.

Updating the Voter Registers

At least on technical and financial grounds, working to have permanently updated voter registers is the ideal situation. This would imply systematic inclusion of newly eligible voters; moving those who have changed residence; and removing the deceased, the convicted and the expatriates. As for the question of who shall be held responsible for initiating the update, a variety of legal alternatives have been offered in different countries. Quite often responsibility is placed upon individual voters, but it could also involve municipal authorities (i.e., matters of residence), judiciaries (i.e., criminal offences) and civil registers (i.e., births and deaths). The more regularly a voter register is updated the more likely it is that an update takes place under the exclusive responsibility of public authorities rather than the citizen.

Last Minute Voters

Are citizens who attain voting age shortly before or on Election Day eligible to vote? Will they appear on the standard voter register or on a separate register? Will they cast a regular or a tendered ballot? These are some of the questions that electoral authorities may face under certain circumstances, especially when emergency situations would recommend that a flexible approach be followed to allow as many people as possible to vote even if they were not previously registered. Tendered or conditional ballots can be collected and a separate register of voters compiled at the polling station in order to facilitate last minute voters showing up under critical circumstances (i.e., refugees, exiles, or ethnic minorities joining the electoral process at a very late stage). The question can be asked of how many tendered ballots are acceptable in an election. Political sensitivity and a problem solving approach would recommend that tendered ballots might be collected to the extent to which a new problem is not created, which would be larger or more serious than the problem which was intended to be solved.

How costly is it to produce adequate voter registers, and how can this be made cost-effective?

The most current research on this topic concludes that permanent registers promote both transparency and cost-effectiveness, particularly when they are periodically updated with corrections, additions, and deletions without obliging voters to re-register. Recent reforms in this direction are being imple-

mented in a number of new as well as older democracies such as Botswana, Canada, Colombia, Chile, Namibia, Nicaragua and Venezuela. Among other recent developments, the computerization of voter registers has proved to be a reliable and effective mechanism for updating and cross-checking the registers at the national level. In addition, the single most important cost-cutting measure is probably continuous registration. Although there may be few countries in the world where continuous voter registration has been completely and successfully instituted, many countries are moving in that direction, among them Canada since 1997. Given the huge costs involved in undertaking voter registration operations for the first time, permanent registers that can be updated regularly will prove cost-effective in the long run.

Should voter registers be audited and how?

Registration practices (register formation and maintenance) can be assessed using different methods including visual inspection

of voter registers and statistical samples that are verified through personal interviews of registered voters. In both transitional and established democracies observing and auditing voter registration can be part of an election observation programme. As Horatio Boneo points out, the traditional approach has been for observer teams to visit registration sites, as is done on Election Day. However, a preferred approach would be to conduct expert analysis of registration procedures and regional allocation of resources; to evaluate political party participation in identification of registration stations; to perform statistical analysis, including sample analysis of consistency of electoral registers; to follow up specific complaints concerning registration; and to visit registration stations randomly (Boneo, 2000, 187). In Peru, for example, the civil society organization Transparencia conducted a systematic audit of voter registers before the general elections in 2000 and 2001 with the support of electoral authorities. By so doing contributed significantly to the improvement of the quality of voter registers.

VOTER REGISTRATION SYSTEMS AROUND THE WORLD

Data has been compiled from 124 countries from all eight regions in the world. The two questions posed to electoral management bodies were:

- Is it compulsory or voluntary for the citizen to be registered for elections?
- Is a continuous or a periodic voter register used?

As can be seen from Figure 1, compulsory registration is quite common in Western Europe and Central and Eastern Europe but not widely practised in Africa or North America. Data collected for South America

shows an even distribution between the two practices.

Some countries impose sanctions on those who fail to register, while in others it is considered a civic duty and high registration rates can be expected.

As discussed above, voter registers can be updated either on a continuous basis or at specified time periods (including at election time). Continuous registers are used more than periodic registers, despite the complex machinery required and high cost incurred in maintaining continuous registers. (See Figure 2)

Compulsory Registration

Based on the principle that voting is a right and duty of citizenship and that voters are obliged to register for an election.

Voluntary Registration

Predicated on the principle that voting is a right of citizenship and that voters may choose to register or not to register for an election.

Periodic Register

The result of election administration authorities developing a new register of eligible voters prior to each election. This process often occurs (although not always) in the period immediately preceding an election. Voter registration through a periodic voters' register is a more expensive operation than maintaining a continuous register or a civil register. Although more money is spent as a one-time cost for that electoral event, the ongoing maintenance costs of

a continuous register tend to be higher while the cost of the periodic register is prorated over the period between elections.

Continuous Register

One in which the electoral register is maintained and continually updated, either by the election administration or as a civil register. This system requires an appropriate infrastructure to maintain the register, adding the names and other relevant information for those who satisfy eligibility requirements (attaining citizenship, satisfying residency requirements, attaining voting age) and deleting the names of those who no longer meet the eligibility requirements (through deaths, changes of residency etc.)

The full data set on registration systems can be found at www.idea.int/turnout

Figure 1: Is it compulsory to register?

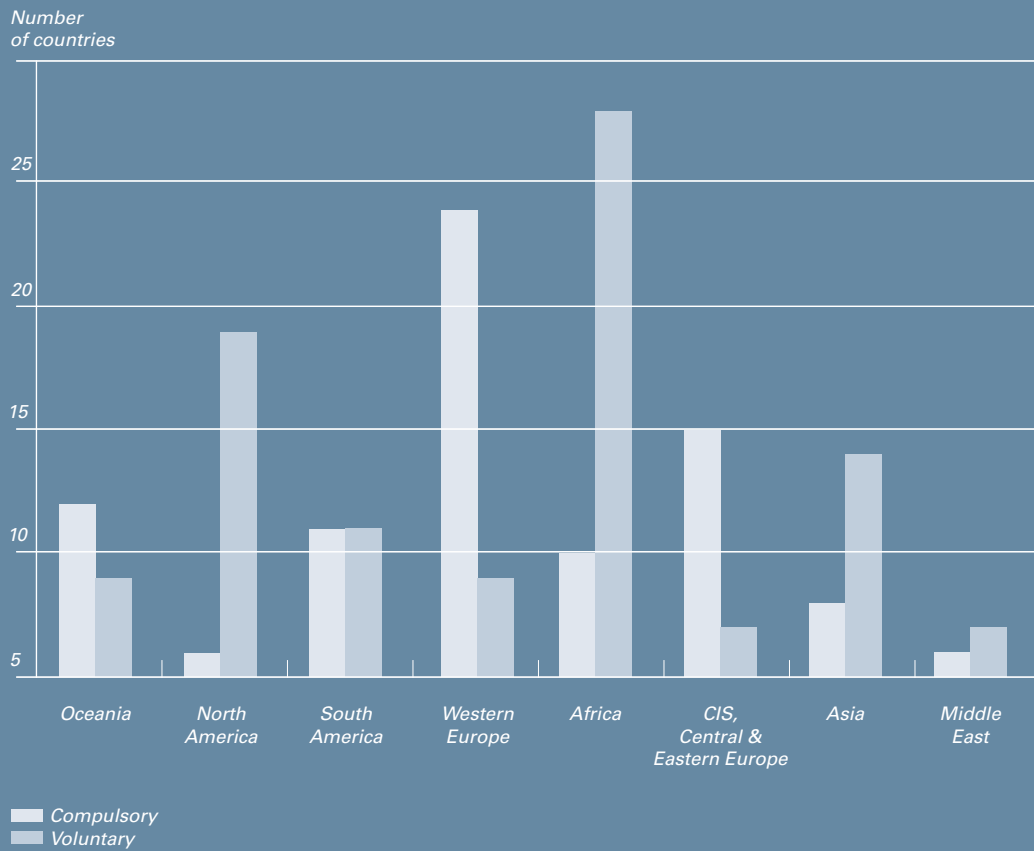
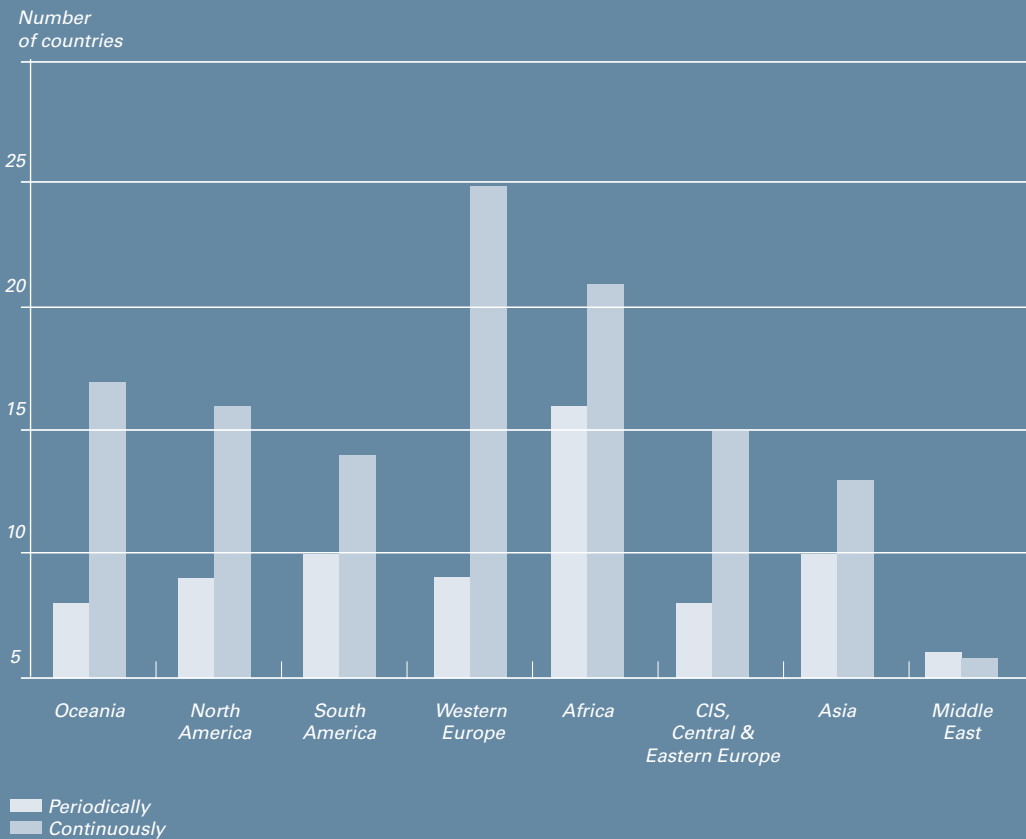


Figure 2: How often is the register updated?



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Voter Registration Today: A Gateway to Enfranchisement

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Electoral registers are not just one additional element of the electoral process; they are in fact a crucial factor in the establishment and consolidation of a democratic system of government (Rial, 1999, 37). Having comprehensive, accurate voter registers should be considered a prerequisite for free and fair elections, although there have been exceptions to the rule such as the independence elections in Zimbabwe in 1980 and the election in South Africa in 1994 (Maley, 2000, 9). The main function of a good voter register is not only to promote high voter turnout, but also to enable any turnout at all. In general, it can be expected that comprehensive, continuously updated voter registers will produce higher voter turnout rates, although as an indirect effect. In fact, voter turnout rates are over 70 percent in most well-established democracies where comprehensive and continuously updated voter registers exist; the main exceptions are the United States and Switzerland. In both countries, fairly comprehensive voter registers have failed to

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produce turnout rates significantly over 50 percent of registered voters and both countries continue to rank among the lowest amongst established democracies in this respect. On the other hand, the experience of emerging democracies shows that whenever comprehensive voter registers are created, or existing registers of a limited scope are substantially improved, voter turnout rates tend to be, on average, as high as in most established democracies.

The delicate balance implicit in preparing election registers was succinctly characterized by the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission of Queensland, Australia: "Electoral rolls are a fundamental component of any voting system. Rolls constitute the official list of electors and are prima facie evidence of electors' right to vote. Enrolment procedures therefore need to strike the right balance between the need to be rigorous to ensure integrity of the rolls, and the need for flexibility to ensure that peoples' rights to enrol and vote are protected" (ACE, 1999).

More than a century after universal franchise was introduced in the western world, voter enfranchisement is becoming more and more universal in practice. If nation states are taken as a frontier reference for enfranchisement, there are only a few countries in the world where direct parliamentary elections are not held today, or where voter enfranchisement and registration are not required (e.g., some Arab countries and China). From a historical perspective, though, other more relevant frontiers for enfranchisement can be identified among and within states where the citizen's right to

register and vote has been limited or impeded on grounds of gender, age, property, education or ethnicity. As it has been pointed out elsewhere "The history of the franchise is also the history of the abuses and harassment that prevented citizens legally entitled to vote from doing so. These included tricky rules and tests for voter registration, manipulation of residential requirements, choice of voting days, violations of the secrecy of the vote, district malapportionment and gerrymandering... *De facto*, however, these measures disenfranchised certain social groups" (Bartolini, 2000, 118). Registers which are all-inclusive constitute a guarantee that no significant segment of the population is impeded from registering and voting because of geographic, economic, ethnic-cultural, gender, or education reasons.

Several stages in the struggle towards universal suffrage have been identified; these phases were different in the United States and in Europe. In the United States, the franchise expanded slowly and by compromising steps and, despite the earlier start of franchise expansion, it took much longer to complete than in Europe. Administrative and legal obstacles were fully removed only in the 1960s (Bartolini, 2000, 118). The conquest of suffrage by women took longer and came later. Just as an example of how slow the road to suffrage has historically been for women, in Canada it was forty years after the first suffragette organizations emerged that one group of women - those employed by the army or who had a close male relative in the Canadian Forces - obtained the right to vote in 1917. The following year the right was extended to most Canadian women in

recognition of their contribution to the war effort (Tremblay, 2001, 5). The situation was not the same in all Western countries, including the older Latin American democracies where women's right to vote was also established in the first half of the twentieth century (e.g., Uruguay in 1924). The United States and a number of European countries enfranchised women in the 1920s; but Italy, France and Belgium did so after World War II. The last country to grant women the right to vote was Switzerland in 1971, 123 years after the same right was granted to men (Bartolini, 2000, 125). Fortunately, after the Cold War the achievement of universal suffrage has progressed faster than ever before in history. As far as women's enfranchisement is concerned, at the beginning of the twentieth century, only 10 percent of the world's countries had enfranchised women; by the end of the century the figure was 95 percent (Rule, 2000, 384).

Limitations by law to the right to register and vote based on gender, age, property or education can hardly be found anywhere in the world today. What is more likely are situations where legislation is not enforced by competent authorities as a matter of ill will, negligence, lack of resources, or lack of

capacity to face opposing reactionary elements in the society and culture. De facto if not legal disenfranchisement is frequently the case among certain sectors of society, most likely peasants, the illiterate, women and ethnic minorities. Any significant research on enfranchisement and voting should look at these particular segments in order to assess the actual state of affairs, no matter what the legal provisions may be.

The next section offers a mosaic of country case studies and interviews that are illustrative of progress and setbacks in voter registration around the world. Six countries were chosen to illustrate different challenges regarding voter registration that are being faced in established democracies like the United States, in countries with a long but uneven experience with democratization, like South Africa, Guatemala and Russia, and in some emerging democracies like Yemen and Indonesia. The case studies show a variety of situations where full enfranchisement of voters is facilitated or hindered by gender, socio-economic conditions or ethnicity. The studies provide examples of how voter enfranchisement is still an evolving process today.

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Guatemala

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Voter registration in Guatemala has been historically deficient because it has not included, de facto if not by law, large segments of the population. This applies in particular to women and peasants from different ethnic communities, who comprise almost half of the country's total population. Voter turnout has been limited to those sectors of the population who registered more actively. But even among these groups, the boundaries of the politically mobilized segments have shifted dramatically with the vicissitudes of various political crises. Voter turnout in Guatemala is one of the lowest in the world, ranking 155 in International IDEA's list of 170 countries.

After decades of protracted civil conflict in Guatemala, peace accords were signed in 1996 by the national government and the guerrilla organization Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG), today a political party by the same name. Peace negotiations included legal and institutional reforms to increase voter participation. Since the 1995 general elections, slow but steady increases in voter registration and turnout can be measured.

THE PATH TO ENFRANCHISEMENT

Widespread suffrage for adult males was introduced in Guatemala in 1865, but it would not become truly universal, even from a legal point of view, until much later. In 1945, women were allowed to vote for the first time, but illiterate women were excluded. Voting was optional and secret for literate women but optional and public for illiterate men. It was not until 1965 that universal and secret suffrage was introduced with compulsory voting for all citizens 18 years and older; voting was still optional for all illiterates, and the illiterate vote was public.

Low voter turnout, as a percentage both of registered voters and of the eligible voting age population, ranks Guatemala low on International IDEA's list of 170 countries. The highest post-compulsory turnout at an election to the Constituent Assembly took place in 1985, when 69 percent of registered voters voted. It has been declining ever since, although the database indicates that there was an increase from 21 percent to 40 percent between 1994 and 1999.

A number of factors have been identified to explain the low turnout in Guatemala:

- lack of registration by significant sectors of eligible voters;
- location of polling stations only at the administrative centre of the municipalities, which creates transport problems for the poor and more distant citizens (this legal provision was introduced in response to complaints that electoral fraud was practised mostly at polling stations located in villages and country estates before 1985); and
- lack of confidence in government and the

political elite (López Pintor, 1997; MINUGUA, 1999a and b; Boneo, 2000).

In Guatemala, both registration and voting were compulsory until 1985; since then they have been voluntary. Nevertheless, according to the law a citizen must initiate, but not necessarily complete, the voter registration process in order to obtain a passport or a driver's licence although many who initiate the process to get a passport no longer live in the country. Registration is not automatic, but once a citizen is registered he or she will remain on the register for a given municipality until a modification is made at the initiative of the citizen or municipality. Citizens must take the initiative to register by submitting application forms to registration offices of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (one office is located in each administrative centre of 330 municipalities, under the supervision of 21 regional or departmental offices). Personal identification, an ID card (a valid *cédula de vecindad*), is required. An inscription is made, but the applicant must return at a later date to pick up the voter card. As the United Nations Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) has pointed out in several reports, the requirement that citizens visit registration offices several times partly explains why large sectors of the population do not register. Costs, such as those of transport and photographs, are also incurred as part of the registration process. Economic, geographic and cultural factors as well as lack of an ID card make the process even harder. Under-registration was estimated at over 30 percent of voting age population by 1999 (MINUGUA, 1999b), although the magnitude of the problem is probably much higher.

In 1982 the current voter register was introduced to prepare for elections to the Constituent Assembly in 1985 and the transition toward a more democratic system (Boneo and Torres-Rivas 2000, 8). Increases in the number of registered voters can be attributed to massive registration campaigns by the Supreme Electoral Tribunal, such as those undertaken after the discouraging results of the constitutional reforms referendum in May 1999. The electoral authorities established registration sites in several centres in the capital and in 180 sites in the provinces, and carried out a massive publicity campaign. The Rigoberta Menchú Tum Foundation has also carried out registration campaigns in 1995 and 1998 with significant media advertising and workshops in villages and municipalities throughout the country.

This development notwithstanding, increasing the number of registered voters has not improved the quality of the voter rolls. As time passed, voter rolls deteriorated by becoming inflated with non-existent or not fully eligible electors. At least 10 percent of already registered voters (an estimate of over 600,000 people) were never able to vote since they had not completed the registration procedures to receive their voter cards. Furthermore, significant numbers of deceased and permanent migrants abroad have not been removed from the rolls, and many who have changed residence within the country have not updated their voter information. Current estimates show that about 25 percent of all inscriptions are incomplete or out of date, or relate to deceased persons and migrants (Boneo and Torres-Rivas, 2000, 55).

REGISTRATION AS A BARRIER TO ENFRANCHISEMENT

Before 1999 it was considered that electoral registers in Guatemala were generally in line with international standards, with about 80 percent of the eligible population enrolled. As mentioned earlier, non-registration was more frequent among women and peasants in the indigenous parts of the country. It was thought that problems of political participation had more to do with low turnout among registered voters than with mobilization of non-registered voters. Contrary to conventional wisdom, however, recent in-depth research indicates that the main barrier to voter participation arises from sheer lack of registration. The eligible voting age population in 1999 was estimated at 5,785,000 persons (i.e., those aged 18 and over who were not legally impeded from voting; military and police personnel as well as condemned prisoners were excluded). The rolls included 4,459,000 people, about 77 percent of eligible voters - a reasonable figure according to international standards (Boneo and Torres-Rivas, 57).

At the November 1999 general election, 1,800,676 people turned out to vote, about 40.4 percent of those registered. Nevertheless, a more sophisticated analysis shows that once the registers are "cleaned", they actually include only 63.7 percent of the eligible population rather than 77 percent. Consequently, voter turnout as a percentage of registered voters is a much higher 71.7 percent rather than 40.4 percent. Turnout as a percentage of the total eligible population is 31.1 percent, which is much lower than the previous estimates. The fact is that 56

Figure 3: Voter Turnout in Guatemala, 1950-1999

Year	% of registered voters	% of voting age population
1950	71.5	30.4
1961	44.5	19.0
1970	53.3	25.9
1982	45.6	30.6
1985	69.2	49.8
1990	56.4	41.0
1995	46.8	33.4
1999	40.4	31.1

percent of the eligible population does not actually vote, and as many as 36 percent are not even registered (Boneo and Torres-Rivas 2000, 58). These findings reveal that the problem of non-voting in Guatemala is not one of motivating registered voters, but rather one of barriers to registration, either motivational and administrative or socio-economic and ethnic cultural.

NON-INCLUSION OF WOMEN AND INDIGENOUS PEASANTS

It was recently pointed out that the majority of those excluded from the registers in Guatemala are indigenous people of Mayan origin living outside the structures of the modern state (Rial, 1999, 31). Available evidence illustrates that under-registration is more frequent among women and indigenous peasants. While the gap between male and female registration has decreased, there are still significant gender imbalances, particularly in regions with large indigenous populations and high illiteracy rates. One reason is that these sectors have not been

politically active historically, and often they do not possess personal identification papers: 15 percent of the adult population falls into this category according to estimates by the Supreme Electoral Tribunal. Another reason is that the recent civil war has uprooted and politically intimidated many people. Thus, low registration seems to be attributable more to historical and structural reasons than to the current situation and government. The main political powers and the international community recognize the need for important legal reforms and programmes to strengthen institutions and make the representational system more inclusive and the right to vote easier to exercise (López Pintor, 1999, 96).

Significant disparities in registration rates between men and women were found in both 1995 and 1999 among the 22 departments of the country, showing that the registration of women was much lower in departments with larger indigenous populations. Again, analysis indicates that this seems to be based more on historical and structural grounds than on episodic and administrative difficulties (López Pintor, 1997; MINUGUA, 1999a). Recent analyses of the 1999 elections has shown that, although women as a whole turn out to vote less often than men, such gender imbalance tends to disappear if only registered women are taken into consideration. Once registered, women tend to turn out to vote in similar proportions to men (Boneo and Torres-Rivas, 2000, 77). Thus problems in the registration process appear to be the main barrier to suffrage.

Opinion poll data also supports the above conclusion that under-registration is more likely among women and indigenous people than among men and Ladino populations (In Guatemala, the term Ladino refers to the Spanish-speaking people not belonging to any indigenous community; they comprise about half of the total population). Three recent national surveys (conducted by the University of San Carlos, the University Rafael Landívar, and the ASIES Institute) reveal that non-registered people are more likely to be women (around 60 percent) than men (around 40 percent). Similarly, Ladinos tend to register more often (54 percent) than indigenous people (44 percent) (Boneo and Torres-Rivas, 2000, 83, 206). Among indigenous populations, the likelihood of getting registered is significantly higher among literate males (62 percent) than among illiterate females (27 percent). Correspondingly, literate indigenous males would more likely turn out to vote (81 percent) than illiterate females (51 percent) (UNDP, 1999).

Notwithstanding the above, under-registration of indigenous people has been diminishing, especially since the 1995 elections. Lower registration rates of the indigenous vis-à-vis the Ladino still persist, but relative improvement has taken place. While the national average for registration increased by 20 percent between 1995 and 1999, the proportion of increase was higher in those departments with larger indigenous populations. It is interesting to note that mobilization of indigenous people also increased at the time of the referendum for constitutional reforms in May 1999, even when the

national average voter turnout was particularly low. Prior to the referendum, between October 1998 and February 1999, registration was higher in departments with larger indigenous populations. The rate of increase was 1.5 percent at the national level, but it was between 2.5 percent and 3 percent in Sololá, Totonicapán, Quiché, Alta Verapaz and Quiché. In fact, these were among the few departments where the constitutional reforms referendum was won, although it was defeated at the national level (MINUGUA, 1999b).

FUTURE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The main barrier to the exercise of the right to vote has historically been and continues to be, in certain countries, non-inclusion of significant segments of the population in electoral registers. In Guatemala, historical deficiencies in voter registration were at least partly removed at the time of the 1999 general elections, with increasing rates of both voter registration and turnout, in particular among women and indigenous people. In fact, political mobilization started becoming more intense during the time of the 1995 general elections. A significant increase in voter registration took place after 1995 during two main polling events: the referendum for constitutional reform of May 1999, and the general elections the following November. On both occasions the number of new inscriptions mounted to over 300,000, and this was largely an effect of mobilization and campaigning efforts by the electoral authorities, political parties, civil

society organizations and the international community (MINUGUA, 1999a and b).

A number of challenges and opportunities have been identified. First, the current state of affairs can be improved by disseminating current and reliable research and information concerning the problems of registration. This should facilitate public discussion of these issues as well as the search for viable solutions. Comprehensive in-depth research on voter participation was undertaken under the auspices of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal, International IDEA and the UNDP. Second, the cost of registration could be lowered by facilitating citizen access and alleviating the administrative procedures to register. The reasons and the logic for these administrative complexities are difficult to explain. On the other hand, the costs for non-registration could be raised, for example, by making it mandatory to obtain a personal ID card (the forthcoming *cedula de*

identidad personal as a substitute for the current *cedula de vencidad*), and then to automatically register properly identified citizens. The Supreme Electoral Tribunal could take this responsibility. Third, civic education could be recommended on a long-term basis rather than only before a given election (Boneo and Torres-Rivas 2000, 143-171).

The Electoral Reform Commission, created under the peace accord, formally proposed the above-mentioned reforms in its 1998 report Guatemala, Peace and Democracy. The aim of the proposals was to attain a fully inclusive and participatory electoral system with special attention to the integration of indigenous Maya populations as citizens and voters. The Supreme Electoral Tribunal created by the Constitution of 1985 has been recognized to this day as a prestigious institution, which should be instrumental in implementing the above-mentioned reforms (International IDEA, 1998, 60, 61).

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INTERVIEW

with Mrs Nineth Montenegro Cottón, member of the Congress for Alianza Nueva Nación (ANN) and member of the Commission for Electoral Issues.

7 November 2000, Congress

What is the current state of voter registration and enfranchisement in Guatemala?

It still needs to be expanded. Several sectors, among them women, the indigenous population and the rural population are not registered due to the lack of opportunities, financial resources and infrastructure. Illiteracy as well as little information about the importance of registration and voting further limit the participation and development of true citizenship.

Have there been any major developments on voter registration recently?

There are registration campaigns but only when elections are approaching. In 1999 the electoral roll was expanded by 100,000 names, but this is very low considering the voting age population [VAP is 5,784,820; number of registered voters is 4,458,744]. Mapping of the electorate has been initiated, even if the previous mappings have been insufficient. There is hope that the reforms of the Electoral Law of Political Parties (that are based on the peace agreements) and the implementation of the Agreements on Constitutional Reform and Reform of the Electoral Regime that are being carried out will bring about new ways of improving enrolment opportunities.

What could be done to ensure enfranchisement of all eligible people and improve voter turnout?

More permanent information campaigns are necessary, preferably bilingual or multilingual in order to include the various languages of the Mayan culture. It is also imperative that we address the high illiteracy rate that exists amongst a large segment of the population. The enrolment and polling stations need to be closer and made more accessible to the rural population, since they now only exist in the administrative centres of each region.

Do you see registration as a barrier to voter turnout or as an incentive? Please explain why.

There is still a barrier that makes people abstain from voting due mainly to the malfunction of the electoral system. This is why it is indispensable to introduce, for example, a uniform system of identification. This would give each and every person a unique identification number in the citizen register, which would mean that he or she could be automatically included in the electoral roll once they reached voting age. The requirements to get an ID today are so complicated that it does not appear important enough for most inhabitants.

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Indonesia

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HISTORY OF ENFRANCHISEMENT

Political circumstances have largely shaped the history of enfranchisement in Indonesia, as electoral laws have been affected by the ebb and flow of Indonesian politics.

The first law on elections was passed in 1953 in preparation for the long-anticipated 1955 general election, the first general election after the nation gained independence in 1945 (Feith, 1957).

In 1966, General Soeharto seized power from President Soekarno and created the authoritarian New Order regime, which lasted 32 years. Soeharto justified the *coup d'état* to prevent a communist takeover of the government indicated by the assassination of six army generals in 1965 by army officers in the communist September 30 Movement. One of the first actions taken by the New Order was to ban the Communist Party of Indonesia (Partai Komunis Indonesia, PKI) (Schwarz, 1994).

In 1969, a new electoral law was passed as a basis for the 1971 general elections. This law underwent several amendments in 1975, 1980 and 1985, in anticipation of the elections of 1977, 1982 and 1987, respective-

ly. The general elections of 1992 and 1997 were held based on the last amendment made to the electoral law in 1985. The 1969 law and its amendments were more conservative than the 1953 law, as they restricted enfranchisement by prohibiting ex-members of the Communist Party of Indonesia from participating in the general elections during the New Order period (Umum, 1997, 36-37).

The 1999 general election, the first election held after the fall of General Soeharto, was based on a new electoral law (Law No.3/1999). Some of the important aspects and changes in this electoral law concerning enfranchisement are discussed below.

VOTING AGE

The 1953 law stipulated that the voting age was 18 years and older, or that the prospective voter had to be legally married at the time of registration. (Marital status was and is still seen as a sign of political maturity in Indonesia.) The voting age was reduced to 17 in the 1969 electoral law passed by the newly established New Order government, presumably to expand the participation of first-time voters. The government and the ruling GOLKAR Party may have assumed that politically naïve first-time voters would tend to vote for GOLKAR. In 1982, the law was amended to allow divorcees or widows, even those under 17, to register to vote in the general elections. This law allowed under-age voters an opportunity to vote in areas where child marriage was common.

NON-ELIGIBLE VOTERS

Individuals who were serving jail time as sanctioned by a court were not eligible to vote according to the 1953 law. This article

was made more strict in the 1969 law, which stipulated that crimes must be punishable for a minimum of five years jail term. This stricter version was sustained until the 1999 election.

Individuals whose voting rights were removed by a court of law were also ineligible to vote according to the 1953 law. This law implies that a court can pass a decision that can remove an individual's voting right, but it does not explicitly state what cases would involve the removal of such rights. This article remained until the 1999 election. The electoral laws also prohibited individuals suffering from serious mental illness from participating in elections.

The most controversial part of the law regarding non-eligible voters was the exclusion or prohibition imposed on ex-members of the banned PKI or those who participated directly in the September 30 Movement 1965. This clause was later extended to ex-members of other banned organizations. In 1975, the government sought to soften this law by adding the possibility that the voting rights of ex-PKI members or other banned organizations could be re-evaluated, which implied that their voting rights could be restored. This could have been the result of international pressure on the Soeharto government to release ex-PKI members or those who were alleged to be ex-PKI members and had been imprisoned since 1965. After the fall of the Soeharto government in 1998, the law prohibiting the participation of ex-PKI members in the general elections was abolished, reflecting a more liberal and progressive view towards the Communist Party.

THE MILITARY

Members of the military or the armed forces were eligible to vote according to the 1953 elections law. But beginning in 1969 the election law stipulated that active members of the Indonesian armed forces would not be able to exercise the right to vote. The rationale given by the government was that, in order to perform their role as defender of the nation, the armed forces have to remain neutral and cannot be involved in partisan politics. It was thought that the 1955 general election caused political chaos because members of the military were involved in partisan politics. In reality, this law was used to justify the appointment of active military officers as voting members of the DPR (parliament) and the MPR (People's Consultative Assembly). The law did not prevent the military from becoming neutral political actors because the institution adhered to the "dual function" concept that justifies the military's role in politics. In practice, the military also tended to support the position of the government and the ruling GOLKAR Party.

VOTER REGISTRATION

Indonesia uses a periodic list voter registration system based on the most recent national census data. An automatically composed list is used in combination with a list demanding citizen initiative, allowing citizens to petition for changes in the list after the first automatic list is published prior to Election Day. Until the 1997 elections, voter registration was compulsory. Voter registration officials were largely responsible for registering voters through door-to-door canvassing. The first obvious problem with this

method was the exclusion of those would-be voters with no residence. This problem was compounded by the practice of some election officials imposing stricter residential requirements, such as local residential registration forms that were not always available to those with no residential base. In this case, the registration process tended to exclude the poor who usually lacked documentation to show residence.

Compulsory registration also presented the possibility of fraud during voter registration. One of the most frequently reported types of fraud was the deliberate exclusion of would-be voters who were assumed to be supporters of the opposition parties. Voters in the island of Bali, for example, often had to suffer this particular abuse because Bali is known for its strong support of the Democratic Party of Indonesia (PDIP). There were also reports that local town or village officials often intimidated would-be voters by running "sweeping operations" to identify non-GOLKAR voters (Harjanto, 1997; Cahyono, 1998).

Another common practice was for government institutions or agencies to register their employees en masse using their place of employment or office as their residence address. Group registration was a common practice exercised by governmental institutions mainly to control how their employees voted in the elections. The civil service was GOLKAR's most important stronghold and therefore each civil servant was considered to be a GOLKAR member. During the New Order period, Election Day was not declared a holiday; thus, civil servants were often ordered to vote in their place of work instead of at the closest polling centre near their

homes. This convinced many civil servants that their votes were monitored by their superiors.

Critics have frequently argued that the compulsory aspect of voter registration in Indonesia has actually turned voters into mere political objects of the government's mobilization programme rather than into active and autonomous citizens. The New Order regime thus treated the general elections as an exercise of mass political mobilization to legitimize the New Order's policies (Legowo, 1996).

In the 1999 electoral law, the compulsory registration process was abolished and a voluntary voter registration method was adopted. The requirement for registration has also been modified to allow only one form of legal identification as a requirement to register. Registration centres were established independently of local town or village bureaucracies. In practice, however, there were enormous problems surrounding the implementation of the new method of registration because of the lack of training and logistical preparation. The 1999 general election was hastily organized to serve the immediate need for new political leadership after the end of the New Order regime. Some of the problems reported were delays in the opening of registration centres, lack of information on registration procedures, and often inexperienced registration officials. In some remote areas, registration forms were delivered only a few days before the registration deadline. In the end, in order to accommodate the voters the government extended the voters' registration period. There was no serious fraud reported during the 1999 voters' registration process except

some scattered and unsubstantiated reports of abuses by local party officials (KIPP, 1999).

VOTER TURNOUT

The key characteristic of elections in Indonesia has been high voter turnout. This can be attributed to high voter expectation of elections as a solution to existing or past political turmoil, as was the case with the general elections of 1955 and 1999. However, this conclusion can hardly be applied to the elections during the New Order period. High voter turnout during the New Order period can be attributed to "political mobilization" combined with intimidation by the government to move voters to the polling stations. In some cases, government officials or party officials often transported voters to polling centres to ensure that they cast their votes. This method is suspect because there was a tendency to only provide transportation to voters for the GOLKAR Party.

Unfortunately the government does not publish data on voter turnout, let alone turnout based on gender, residence, or other social and political groupings. The only data available on voter turnout is the data on voter registration and on valid votes cast during the elections.

In the 1997 election, out of almost 125 million registered voters, 113 million (90.5 percent) of registered voters cast their votes. In the 1999 election, out of 118 million registered voters, 105.5 million (89 percent) cast their votes. Indonesia experienced a slight decline in the total number of registered voters by 5 percent. The biggest slump occurred in the province of Aceh, which suffered a downturn in the number of regis-

tered voters from 2.2 to 1.4 million, a decline of 35 percent. However, the Aceh region experienced a bigger decline in the number of valid votes, from 2.1 million voters (95.2 percent) to only one million (69.3 percent). East Timor, which at the time of the 1999 general election was preparing to hold its own referendum to determine its independence from Indonesia, only experienced a slight downturn in the total number of registered voters (7 percent).

PROSPECTS

Voter turnout at the next election will depend partly on the successful conclusion of an amendment to the existing election law which could radically change the electoral system from the standard proportional representation system to a "first past the post" system, as proposed by the government. This plan can affect voter turnout in different ways. On the one hand, a new electoral system could have the potential of

detering would-be voters who do not understand the new system. On the other hand, the adoption of a new system could instill enthusiasm among voters to participate in greater numbers than at the last election.

Regardless of what the political development will be, the Indonesian government should strive to attain the principle of universal suffrage by gradually eliminating discriminatory barriers to voter registration and voter eligibility. One of the issues that needs to be reconsidered is the exercise of the right to vote for members of the armed forces. Also, the banning of prisoners from participating in elections should be re-evaluated to prevent court decisions from being manipulated or used to incriminate or bar individuals from exercising their voting right. Lastly, the government should allow ample time for the training of registration officials to allow for a successful voluntary registration process.

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Russia

Sergei Lounev

HISTORY OF ENFRANCHISEMENT

The first parliamentary elections in Russia were held as recently as 1906, but even then the franchise did not include women, persons under 25 years old, students, servicemen, foreigners, convicts and some other groups. The system of separate electorates provided advantages to socially and economically privileged groups, particularly landlords. After the February 1917 Revolution, Russian suffrage became the most democratic (universal) in history: the franchise was given to women (only some states in the United States allowed this at the time) and servicemen (for the first time in the world), and the age limit was the lowest anywhere (20 years). The October 1917 Revolution led to changes: the “exploiter” classes were disenfranchised. By 1937, the majority of restrictions were lifted and direct elections with secret voting were introduced. However, the very term “elections” was clearly a misnomer in the Soviet Union. There was no electoral competition whatsoever. A constituency could have only one candidate nominated by the powers that be.

By the early 1990s, Russia witnessed fundamental shifts. Competitive elections (with a multiplicity of parties and candidates) were one of the most significant achievements in the process of democratization. Elections are free, although doubts remain about whether they are fair. There are expert reports on numerous cases of intervention by authorities at various levels of the electoral process and other malpractice, especially in the so-called "national republics".

The changes did not affect the electoral procedure (the suffrage remains universal, equal and direct, and the voting is secret). The only significant amendment was a ban on voting by proxy. The 1993 constitution has no special section concerning the suffrage (there are only very general provisions), which remains regulated by different federal laws and federal constitutional laws. Active suffrage is granted to all citizens aged 18 and over (the age limit is not a constitutional norm and some politicians and experts, especially those from the southern regions, suggest bringing the age limit down to 16). There are only two restrictions on suffrage: serving convicts and citizens admitted incapable by a court have no right to vote (persons under criminal investigation have this right).

Voter registration in Russia is conducted periodically by the public authorities in an automatic manner. All Russian citizens are on the lists of voters compiled by constituency election commissions on the basis of information from the heads of local municipalities. Registration occurs twice a year (by 1 January and 1 July). The information is passed to a constituency election commission immediately after the announcement of an election date. The basis for registration is permanent or preferential residence in the constituency. The list of voters is supposed to be made public no later than 20 days before the election. Any citizen has the right to verify it and point out errors, if any, and a constituency election commission is supposed to either correct errors or provide a written reply within 24 hours.

Citizens who were omitted from the list or became residents in the constituency after the list had been compiled are included in an additional list on the basis of documents that identify the person and his or her residence.

There were no attempts to deprive particular groups of the franchise, with one exception: in the 1990s the people of Chechnya were not able to vote in the elections for federal bodies. However, such elections were held in 2000. There were also unsuccessful

Figure 4: Turnout in Russia, 1989 - 2000 (%)

1989	1990	1991	1993	1995	1996	1996	1999	2000
87.0%	76.4%	74.7%	54.8%	64.7%	69.6%	67.8%	61.8%	68.7%

Notes: 1989. the first free election to the USSR Congress of People's Deputies (the data is only for the Russian Federation)

1990. the first free election to the Congress of People's Deputies of the Russian Federation

1991. the first election of the President of the Russian Federation

1993, 1995, 1999. parliamentary elections

1996, 2000. presidential elections (two rounds in 1996)

Figure 5: Parliamentary statistics for Bashkortostan

The difference in turnout compared with all-Russian indices (%)

<i>Election district</i>	<i>1993</i>	<i>1995</i>	<i>1999</i>
<i>Oktiabr'skii (part of the Republic's capital city)</i>	- 5	0	0
<i>Kirovskii (part of the republic's capital city)</i>	0	+3	+4
<i>Sterlitamak (an industrial region)</i>	+ 7	+ 9	+ 10
<i>Sibaiskii (rural)</i>	+ 18	+ 13	+ 15
<i>Birskii (rural)</i>	+ 15	+ 15	+ 18
<i>Tuimazy (rural, on the boundary with Tatarstan)</i>	+ 14	+ 16	+ 20

attempts in the Arkhangelsk and Tyumen' regions to disenfranchise individuals with dual citizenship.

TURNOUT TRENDS

Voting is voluntary in Russia. The problem of absenteeism has made it necessary, in order to ensure legitimacy, to make a legal provision regarding the turnout rate (a presidential election requires over 50 percent of voters; the turnout figure required for a parliamentary election is 25 percent). After a number of cases when the election for a particular district failed due to poor turnout, some experts discussed alternative measures including the idea of compulsory voting and punishing non-voting or rewarding voting.

It is well known that the Soviet authorities considered it a major task to ensure a full turnout and vote for the official slate. Abstention was treated as an open challenge to the authorities, and very few persons abstained. From World War II until the Gorbachev period, turnout varied from 99.74 percent to 99.99 percent, and the vote for candidates from 99.18 percent to 99.95 percent. The beginning of the democratization process has inevitably brought a marked decrease in turnout.

It is necessary to take into account that there are many "active" non-voters. The number of persons voting against all candidates or spoiling ballots can be very high; in 1993 they constituted 7.5 percent of voters.

There are not many general studies regarding turnout trends in Russia. It is common for researchers to state that many non-voters live in cities of over one million. Yet, both in 1993 and in 1999, the figures for the turnout in Moscow and St. Petersburg were higher than the average figure for Russia (by contrast, in 1995 they were lower). In general, in rural areas the turnout rate is higher than in urban areas (in the 1995 election 70 percent and 61 percent respectively). But, as a rule, turnout in cities like St. Petersburg and Ekaterinburg is higher than in the surrounding rural areas. The local authorities' control over the population is much stronger in rural areas and in the called national republics (see the parliamentary statistics for Bashkortostan as one example, in Figure 5). But, for reasons that depend on local situations, relations with the centre, and so on, the authorities may prefer either high or low results.

From the late 1980s to the early 1990s, the growth of popular political activity and the emergence of a feeling that an average per-

son might affect the political process were the main reasons for the relatively high turnout. In the late 1990s, a sharp aggravation of the social and economic situation, government failures, and the growth of corruption and crime brought turnout rates down.

Public opinion surveys reveal that, in comparison with the Soviet period, Russians today perceive government to be less able to control ordinary life. They also believe that they can influence the government less. During the 1990s, trust in such institutions of civil society as parties and political movements, trade unions, the presidency, government and parliament was shockingly low. The primary reason for not voting in Russia is alienation or political apathy. Some surveys point to physical or legal impediments as the main obstacle to voting, but the majority of studies conclude that these factors are secondary (as a rule, only 25 to 30 percent of non-voters give this reason). On the other hand, presidential elections attract more voters than parliamentary ones: the 1993 Russian Constitution is "presidentialist," and Russians consider the presidency to be crucial for the general development of the country.

Different surveys detect certain, often hardly traceable, tendencies: a lower turnout of women and unemployed; a slightly higher percentage of votes from state employees than from those working for private companies; and retired people frequent election commissions more than the employed.

The most visible trend is the impact of age: the percentage of voters under 30 is significantly less than among older persons. The turnout is also lower among the supporters

of democratization and reforms, young people and women (there are more women than men voting for democracy-oriented parties and candidates). In some cases the authorities tried to stimulate turnout among young people (this was one of Yeltsin's main strategies during the 1996 campaign).

In the future, the role of young people is likely to become a major challenge. In the mid-1980s, Russia had the highest birth rate that by 2000 led to an increasing percentage of 12- to 17-year-olds in the population. The number of jobs available for this age-group in areas such as industry, small and medium business, science, education, consumer services, and public service, however, is very small. This is spurring the growth of radicalism among young people, on the one hand, and is feeding apathy, on the other. As a result, teenagers and young people are often politically indifferent: only 8 percent of students show any interest in politics. They also display absenteeism: about 70 percent of young people said they would not interfere if democracy in Russia appeared to be in jeopardy. The level of social engagement is minimal. It is probable that, together with the decrease in the population of the older generation, this factor will lessen the turnout in the near future.

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South Africa

Julie Ballington

HISTORY OF ENFRANCHISEMENT

Universal suffrage and electoral registration are relatively new to South Africa's political history. South Africa's exclusionary apartheid regime formally came to an end with the country's first democratic national and provincial elections in 1994. These elections heralded a new political order in which the vast majority of previously disenfranchised people, most notably Africans, were finally able to cast their ballots and participate in electing a new democratic government. No voters' register was compiled for this election. The first common national voters' register was completed in 1999 in time for the second elections, with more than 19 million names. Since then, continuous registration has been available for South African citizens.

For most of the twentieth century, the franchise was racially restricted in South Africa. From the time of the Union in 1910, white males were enfranchised, but with certain property and education requirements in certain territories. In 1930 white women were enfranchised without qualification, and in 1931 the vote was extended to all white men. Few

Black, Asian and Indian voters were enfranchised before the Union, and until 1994 they were subject to severely restricted and inconsistent voting rights. For Black voters, the only elected bodies were those that functioned within the boundaries of the homeland system, which was a system of 10 homeland governments representing the African population (Lodge, 1999).

Indian and Coloured voters were removed from the common municipal registers in Natal and the Cape in 1964 and 1968, but were re-enfranchised in 1984 with the establishment of the Tricameral Parliament which established a House of Representatives for Coloured affairs and a House of Delegates for Indian affairs (Lodge, 1999). The House of Assembly represented the white population. The Tricameral Parliament ceased to exist in April 1994, being replaced by the Parliament and Senate (now the National Council of Provinces). All elections prior to 1994 were contested on a constituency basis. Racially segregated elections for African, Indian and Coloured voters generally did not attract high voter participation. However, white electors generally displayed higher levels of voter commitment during this time (Lodge, 1999).

South Africa's first democratic elections were conducted using a list proportional representation system. This system was considered the best option for a number of reasons, including the fact that it would not require the mammoth task of registering voters in time for the election in April 1994. Therefore, voter registration was not required and all citizens and permanent residents were able to vote with a wide range of

prescribed identity documents, or with a temporary voting card. Voter turnout in this election was high, with over 19.7 million of the 22.7 million voters (86.9 percent) turning out to vote.

In 1995 and 1996, local government elections were held to elect councillors to transitional local authorities to include African, Indian, Coloured and white communities. Citizens 18 years of age or older were required to register for these elections in order to vote. Voters' registers were compiled on a provincial basis. Overall, registration was relatively high as over 17.7 million of the estimated 22.3 million voters registered (79.8 percent). However, voter turnout was low with 48.8 percent of registered voters turning out on polling day (Elections Task Group, 1996). Explanations for the low turnout included the fact that a drop in turnout rates between a national and a local election is not unusual. There was also speculation that insufficient voter education had been provided about the complicated electoral system and balloting procedures. The registers compiled for the 1995/1996 local election were discarded after the election, and a new voters' register compiled for the 1999 national elections.

South Africa's first all-inclusive voters' register was compiled over the course of 1998 and 1999, to be used for South Africa's second democratic election on 2 June 1999. The Electoral Act No. 73 of 1998 requires the Chief Electoral Officer to compile and maintain a common national voters' register. The franchise is confined to South African citizens in possession of an identity document or temporary certificate, who must

apply for registration in the prescribed manner and in the voting district in which the person is ordinarily resident in order to vote. The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) certified South Africa's first democratically compiled national voters' register on 30 April 1999.

REGISTRATION OF VOTERS

The registration of voters, in particular the stipulation that only those with the requisite identity document could register, proved to be a point of contention in the run-up to the election. The requirement for bar-coded identity documents arose from a concern to prevent people in possession of fraudulently obtained identity documents from taking part in the election, and to provide the framework for an orderly, free and fair election. However, this statute appeared to disenfranchise at least part of the eligible voting population, as not all citizens were in possession of the requisite bar-coded identity document.

The task of informing citizens of the requirements for registration, as well as places of registration, proved to be a critical task in the administration of the 1999 elections. The IEC embarked upon a number of public awareness campaigns and voter educators worked to inform the electorate about the requirement for the bar-coded identity document in order to register, and to encourage those without bar-coded documents to obtain them. However, the fact that a notable proportion of the voting population was unable to register was indeed a cause for concern. Opposition parties vehemently opposed the requirement for registration,

arguing that it was discriminatory and affected certain sections of the population, such as young people, as well as many rural voters. Some parties called for an amendment to the Electoral Act to recognize all forms of identification so that citizens were not disenfranchised as a result.

The IEC used sophisticated technology including 25,000 "zip-zip" machines that were used to scan bar codes, linking their central communication system to over 14,000 voting stations. The majority of citizens registered during three "registration weekends" when voters registered at the polling station at which they would vote during the election. Disabled and elderly people and weekend workers were also encouraged to register at municipal offices daily in the run-up to the election. Based on research from other Southern African countries, the IEC considered a registration figure of about 70 percent to be acceptable (EISA, February 1999, 2).

Voter registration levels exceeded this expectation. Of the 22.8 million estimated voters, over 18.3 million (80.4 percent) registered. Registration was highest among those living in urban areas, where 85 percent of urban voters registered compared with 75 percent of rural citizens (EISA, April 1999, 1). National trends point to a higher registration of women than men. A significant 1.5 million more women than men registered meaning that the voters' register comprised of 53 of percent women. This perplexed observers anticipating a gender gap in terms of turnout, as historically men have often displayed higher levels of interest in politics than women. In the June 1999

election nearly 16 million voters turned out on polling day, representing a turnout of 86 percent of registered voters, or roughly 60 percent of the voting age population.

TURNOUT RATES AND TRENDS

Registration and voting across the different age cohorts increased with age. Those in the 50-to-60-year old age group had a registration rate of over 97 percent. Registration was lowest among first-time voters, where only 42 percent of the potential voters registered. Therefore, one group in particular that displayed lower levels of registration, and consequently voting, was first time voters. Nearly 3.3 million of the eight million people (41 percent) who did not vote (which includes the six million who did not register) would have been first time voters. Reasons cited for the low youth turnout included the fact that the election date was not declared early in the registration process, meaning that many students did not know where they would be at the time of the election and consequently did not know where to register. Opinion polls also suggested that a number of first-time voters did not possess the requisite identity document, or fully understand the voting process and identity requirement.

Other problems raised included lack of information disseminated about voter registration by the IEC: as a consequence some voters did not know where to register or did not possess the relevant documentation. Some people had registered but their names did not appear on the register, and they were unable to vote on polling day. Rural areas proved to present their own problems

in terms of registration. People in rural areas were less likely than urban dwellers to possess the requisite identification and often had long distances to walk to registration posts. Rural areas often had high illiteracy rates and limited access to adequate information, which often caused confusion about the processes and identity documents required to register in order to vote.

Subsequent to the 1999 elections, continuous registration was made available by the IEC in order to maintain the voters' register. This allowed citizens to register or to amend their details on the voters' register (such as a change in residential address) at municipal electoral offices. Ahead of the local government elections in November 2000, targeted registration was undertaken to increase registration in areas that had recorded less than 60 percent turnout. It also allowed electors to correct details on the voters' register in instances where the boundary demarcation process undertaken for the local elections had affected voter details by splitting voting districts. Electors were also able to check their registration details using the Internet by entering their identity number into the database. The campaign also included door-to-door registration and information campaigns, as well as a registration weekend where all voting stations were opened to ensure accessibility for voters ahead of the local elections.

The IEC certified the voters' register for the local government elections in October 2000. The register contained the names of 18,476,519 verified voters. Of these, there were 1.6 million more women than men. Younger and first-time voters again displayed disappointing levels of interest in the regis-

tration process by registering in low numbers. The issue of statutorily defined identity documents did not surface as such a contentious issue ahead of the 2000 local government elections. However, there was confusion among some voters as to whether re-registration was required to participate in the local elections, and whether or not they could still vote in the voting district in which they registered for the national election. The splitting of some voting districts during the demarcation process also caused confusion and frustration for some voters as they were moved to other districts. Only 48 percent of those registered turned out to vote on polling day. Less than 50 percent turnout in local elections appears to be an emerging trend as voter turnout in South Africa's first local elections in 1995/1996 was 48.8 percent.

While a complex array of factors can explain turnout or non-participation in elections, clearly voter registration procedures have an important role to play. Compared with the 1994 national and provincial elections, the 1999 elections required far more stringent qualifications in order to register. Most notably, South African citizens required a green bar-coded identity document issued after 1986 to be eligible to register, which appeared to disenfranchise a small proportion of the eligible population. Other technical and procedural difficulties also confused voters. The other area of concern is the low level of participation displayed by young and first-time voters. As voter registration is a requirement for voting, it appears that voter education requires further attention in South Africa.

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United States of America

Craig Brians

In the United States, voter turnout has historically been closely linked to voter registration levels. This relationship has weakened in recent years as voter registration has become increasingly universal, while voter turnout continues to decline. National legislation making voter registration easier in most states was enacted in the 1990s. Easier registration has resulted in large increases in voter registration levels, but has had little effect on turnout. Research following the enactment of this new law finds that lower-income classes are now more likely to be registered, but are still under-represented among the voting electorate.

HISTORY OF ENFRANCHISEMENT

Historically, voter turnout for those with less education and lower income has been disproportionately low in the United States. From the earliest days of the country, few people who were not land-holding, white males were permitted to vote. By 1896, politics had permeated through much of the population to include many poorer white

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men and the country experienced high levels of turnout among those eligible to vote. In the face of rampant voter fraud in many jurisdictions, voter registration methods were developed. As voter registration became commonplace, turnout at national elections declined, particularly among the poor and less educated.

Women, minorities and younger citizens have slowly gained recognition of their right to vote following national government action in this traditionally state-dominant area of the law. Although permitted to vote in some localities earlier, women were constitutionally guaranteed the right to vote in 1920. But it took several generations before womens' turnout approached their proportion of the

population. A growing population of Latinos and Asian-Americans are becoming increasingly politically active; these groups are largely concentrated in certain states and often face citizenship barriers in addition to registration hurdles. Although the 26th Amendment to the Constitution lowered the voting age to 18 years throughout the US, younger citizens still register and vote at disproportionately lower rates than do their elders.

In response to the egregious disenfranchisement of African-Americans in the South, the national government undertook several remedial steps. In the 1960s, federal registrars were sent to many of the states of the former Confederacy to register citi-

Figure 6: Voter registration statistics in the USA over time

Type	Year	VAP	% of VAP	% Women	% Men	% White	% Black	% Hisp.
Pres.	1974	146336000	65.7% ¹	61.7%	62.8%	63.5%	54.9%	34.9%
Pres.	1978	158373000	65.2%	62.5%	62.6%	63.8%	57.1%	32.9%
Pres.	1982	169938000	65.1%	64.4%	63.7%	65.6%	39.1%	33.3%
Pres.	1984	174466000	71.2%	69.3%	67.3%	69.6%	66.3%	40.1%
Pres.	1988	182778000	69.1%	67.8%	65.2%	67.9%	64.5%	35.5%
Pres.	1992	189529000	70.6%	69.3%	66.9%	70.1%	63.9%	35.0%
Pres.	1996	196511000	74.4%	67.3%	64.4%	67.7%	63.5%	35.7%
Parl.	1976	152309190	69.0%	66.4%	67.1%	68.3%	58.5%	37.8%
Parl.	1980	164597000	68.7%	67.1%	66.6%	68.4%	60.0%	36.3%
Parl.	1986	178566000	66.3%	65.0%	63.4%	65.3%	64.0%	35.9%
Parl.	1990	185812000	65.2%	63.1%	61.2%	63.8%	58.8%	32.3%
Parl.	1994	193650000	67.3%	63.7%	61.2%	64.6%	58.5%	31.3%
Parl.	1998	183450000	67.1%	68.4%	65.7%	69.3%	63.7%	55.2%

¹Ex.Iowa

See www.fec.gov/pages/Raceto.htm for VAP clarification and linked pages for methodology

Hispanic may be of any race.

Source: All data in the table above taken from the website of the Federal Election Commission, United States of America under the section "Voter Registration and Turnout Statistics"; www.fec.gov and www.fec.gov/elections.html.

zens to vote. Less onerous registration and voting requirements were mandated and federal authorities must now approve changes in state election procedures. These changes have yielded large gains in registration and voting rates for both African-Americans and lower-income whites living in the South.

REGISTRATION LEGAL REFORMS

In the 1990s, the federal government enacted legislation to standardize voter registration procedures for all citizens. Previously, voter registration was offered idiosyncratically, with procedures and pre-election deadlines varying by state and even county. In 1993, the National Voter Registration Act became law. It requires states to register voters at motor vehicle offices and many other state and local government agencies. Implementation of the Act produced a marked increase in voter registration, particularly among under-represented groups. Younger Americans, minority citizens and lower socio-economic groups recorded large gains in registration.

Nonetheless, contrary to the expectations of those sponsoring this legislation, a turnout increase did not result from the registration increases associated with the new laws. In fact, national voter turnout has continued its downward trend that began in the 1960s. One scholarly explanation for the inability of the new procedure to stem the turnout slide hinges on the nature of the new voter registration procedures. Unlike

when voter registration was primarily performed at the offices that ran the elections or by political party representatives, now registration is frequently accomplished by checking a box on a driver's license form, incidental to one's renewal. This transforms voter registration from a political act linked to voting into an administrative action.

Another factor underlying low turnout among new registrants is their lower level of partisan attachment. As has long been the case in American politics, those lacking allegiance to a political party are less likely to vote. In many states a large proportion of the new "motor voter" registrants identify themselves as independents.

The future of registration and voting administration in the US is likely to have a large federal component. Late in the twentieth century, federal legislation had already determined minimum voting age and registration availability, as well as mandated procedures to make the franchise fully available to minority group members. Additionally, the aftermath of the 2000 presidential election has been accompanied by calls for the national government to play a greater role in election administration.

It is doubtful, though, that procedural changes in election rules will profoundly affect turnout levels without mobilization efforts by political parties or candidates. Eased registration rules have increased the number eligible to vote in any given election, but a continued lack of political contact has kept these potential voters from the polls.

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INTERVIEW

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At the beginning of the new millennium, many people are still disenfranchised either legally or de facto. How would you assess the current state of voter registration and enfranchisement in the United States?

In the United States, you must register in order to vote. It is easy to register to vote and the US Congress and state legislatures are making registration easier all the time. Every state has its own laws regarding registration; some even allow voters to register at the polling place on Election Day (e.g., Wisconsin). Some states are experimenting with online registration and voting (e.g., Arizona) and voting exclusively by mail (e.g., Oregon).

Having said that, of the over 196 million Americans eligible to vote in 1996, only 75 percent (about 146 million) actually registered to vote; 61 percent of those registered went to the polls (96 million people). Unfortunately, that means that only 49 percent of those Americans eligible to vote actually voted.

As these figures indicate, we have challenges. As Americans, we need to work harder to make registration easier and to make voting easier, but we also need to work harder to give people a reason to register and vote. Voters need to understand that voting matters; that it matters who wins an election and that the democratic process is important. These are challenges that candidates, activists, and political parties face every day.

Have there been any major developments on voter registration recently?

The most recent major development is the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (the “motor voter” law), which is designed to increase voter registration and participation by making it easier to register to vote.

Specifically, this law requires states to provide people with the opportunity to register to vote, or to update their registration for change of address, when they get or renew drivers’ licenses, or when they apply for services at public assistance, disability and other designated offices within a state. The “motor voter” law also requires that states offer voter registration through the use of a simple mail-in form.

The motor voter law went into effect for most states on 1 January 1995. The most recent result shows a marked increase in voter registration, with over 12 million new registrants at the time of the 1996 elections.

What could be done to ensure enfranchisement of all eligible people and to improve voter turnout?

On the technical side, voter registration and the actual voting process needs to be made even easier. Whether it is through Internet registration and voting or by expanding hours at polling places, we need to address the fact that many Americans cannot always get to an office to register to vote or to a polling place to vote during normal working hours.

On the political side, we need to make politics relevant to people. We need to give people a reason to vote. We need to make sure that candidates clarify how they are different from their opponents, what their priorities will be if elected to office, and how

their election will make a difference. We need to seriously work for campaign finance reform, so that Americans don't believe that elective office in the United States can be bought.

Do you see registration as a barrier to voter turnout or as an incentive? Please explain why.

It is both. The voter registration system in the United States is an incentive to vote in that people believe that the system is transparent and relatively free of manipulation. Therefore, they believe that their vote counts and will be counted appropriately. It is a barrier in that almost all states require registration 30 days before Election Day.

Yemen

Jamal Adimi

RULES ON THE RIGHT TO VOTE

The Parliament

After Yemen's unification in 1990, the first parliament was constituted in 1993 and the second in 1997. New parliamentary elections were due in April 2001. However, a constitutional amendment presented to parliament by the president of the republic providing for the term of parliament to be extended from four years to six years was approved and submitted to a national referendum at the time of local elections in February 2001.

The constitution stipulates that the republic be divided into equal electoral districts on the basis of population, give or take 5 percent (Article 62). The parliament comprises 301 members of parliament (MPs) representing 301 electoral districts, each district electing one MP. The parliament is elected every four years and the president of the republic calls the election 60 days before the election is to take place.

The President

The president of the republic is elected by direct popular vote. The candidate who receives an absolute majority of votes in the

elections is considered the winner. If none of the candidates obtains such a majority the elections are held once again between the two candidates who received the greatest number of votes. The president's term of office is five years and the post may not be held for more than two terms. In 1999 the first president of the republic was elected by direct popular vote. Prior to this, the president was elected by parliamentary vote. A constitutional amendment extending the term of office of the president to seven years was submitted and approved in 2001.

Voting Rights

The right to vote is guaranteed by the constitution to every Yemeni citizen 18 years of age or older. The 1996 Electoral Law does not permit naturalized persons to exercise the right to vote or to be nominated in elections until 15 years after they have acquired Yemeni nationality. This is inconsistent with the text and provisions of the constitution, which state that all citizens are equal in rights and duties and that each citizen has the right to contribute to the political life of the country. These provisions also provide that every citizen has the right to vote, be nominated and express an opinion in a referendum. Furthermore, the Penal and Criminal Law of 1994 grants the courts the right to prevent persons convicted of a crime from being nominated to political office or from exercising the right to vote as a complementary penalty alongside the original penalty. This is a perpetual deprivation that does not end except through rehabilitation. It may be a temporary deprivation for a period of no less than one year and no more

than three years starting from the date of completion of the original penalty.

As a general matter, each citizen may cast one vote in an election, which must be done in person at the electoral district that is the electoral domicile and in the election centre where his or her name is registered. Shortly before the 1999 presidential elections the Electoral Law was amended. The amendment granted voters in presidential elections the freedom to cast their vote in any election centre, regardless of where the voter's name is registered. It is thought that this severely limits the benefit of having electors' rolls and significantly increases the possibility of election fraud. Each voter receives a permanent election card which has his or her photograph and includes the date of birth, election domicile, number and date of registration in the electors' rolls of the election district and centre and the election centre where he or she is entitled to vote, as well as the signature of the district primary committee representative.

REGISTRATION OF ELIGIBLE VOTERS

Legal Framework

The law provides that each electoral district have a permanent electors' roll that contains the name of every citizen in the district who meets the constitutional and legal conditions required for exercising electoral rights, as well as the title, occupation, date of birth and election domicile of each citizen. Registration in more than one electoral district is prohibited.

The age of a person who wants to register

Figure 7: Registration divides, Yemen

Registered voters and the voters who cast their votes in 1993, 1997 and 1999

	Parliamentary election 1993	Parliamentary election 1997	Presidential election 1999
Total eligible ¹	6,282,939	5,921,542	6,500,000
Eligible male	3,075,056	3,464,570	3,250,000
Eligible female	3,206,833	2,456,992	3,250,000
Total registered	2,688,323	4,737,701	5,621,829
Registered male	2,209,944	3,364,627	3,897,346
Registered female	478,379	1,273,073	1,702,773
Cast their vote	2,271,185	2,843,216	3,772,941
Void ballots	38,612	100,609	47,713

¹Figures for 1999 are estimates from the population census breakdown of the number of persons 15 years or older.

Source: Produced by the author from official statistics.

his or her name in the electors' rolls is verified either through that person's personal identity card or any other official document, or, if these documents are not available, the evidence of two witnesses.

The roll is published in five copies signed by the chairman of the committee and its members (at the premises of the committee in the electoral district). The committee retains the first copy, the second is kept by the Supreme Elections Committee, the third by the parliament secretariat, the fourth by the Supreme Court, and the fifth at the premises of the Governorate Supervisory Committee.

The rolls are periodically revised and amended. No amendment to the rolls may be made after elections have been announced. The rolls are considered conclusive proof at the time of elections and no one may participate in the elections unless his or her name appears on the rolls.

Official copies of the electors' rolls are posted in public spaces and places for a peri-

od of 15 days following the end of the registration process. Every citizen resident in the electoral district has the right to have his or her name included in the rolls if it has been excluded or deleted without justification. Any person included in the rolls may request the inclusion of the name of any eligible person whose name has been excluded from the rolls. Applications are submitted during a period of 20 days starting from the first day the rolls are posted. Every citizen who has been registered in the electors' rolls is given a temporary certificate to that effect. An election card replaces this temporary certificate after the entry of his or her name in the electors' rolls becomes final.

GETTING REGISTERED TO VOTE

Since 1993 voter registration has been increasing, with an especially dramatic rise among women and the rural population. This is a very important trend in a country where there are 7 million illiterate people and 6 mil-

Case Studies - Yemen

lion of the 17 million population are poor. Despite these dramatic developments in voter registration, it is still women, the illiterate, and the poor that are the least likely to register. Figure 8 below reveals, the registration divide is first between men and women, second between the educated and the illiterate and third between urban and rural populations.

The overall registration rate more than doubled as a percentage of eligible voters between 1993 and 1999 (42.8 percent in

1993, 80.0 percent in 1997, and 86.5 percent in 1999). Changes in women's registration were still more dramatic as the registration rate more than tripled during the same period of time, moving from a meagre 15 percent of all eligible women in 1993 to over 55 percent in 1997. This latest figure implies that around one-third of all registered voters are currently women. Registration in 1993 was higher in the southern provinces, though the north made great efforts to increase women's registration in time for the

Figure 8: Some Relevant socio-demographics and voter registration figures by province, Yemen, 1999

PROVINCE	Total population (thousand)	% Rural population	% Illiterate 10 years and over	Registered voters as % of population 15-64 ¹	Women registered as % of all registered
Sana'a city	1373	0.0	23.9	76.5	22.7
Sana'a	1242	98.0	57.3	61.7	26.4
Aden	471	1.9	19.8	83.4	30.9
Taiz	2157	77.6	44.8	74.7	35.6
Lahj	616	95.6	39.9	66.2	32.8
Ibb	1893	85.5	50.0	69.9	32.3
Abyan	404	79.2	38.1	67.3	35.3
Al-Baida'a	558	82.8	49.9	58.4	31.3
Shabwa	520	88.4	48.7	49.2	35.1
Hadramout	862	63.9	38.6	61.2	34.1
Al-Maharah	64	65.6	50.8	96.8	32.2
Hodeidah	1994	61.7	60.9	56.5	27.4
Dhamar	1106	88.1	58.7	74.8	35.7
Al-Mahwit	428	92.5	62.2	65.9	31.2
Hajjah	1409	90.0	64.7	51.5	28.3
Saadah	574	87.4	63.9	52.6	15.2
Al-Jawf	499	87.3	64.5	28.0	25.7
Mareb	240	87.9	56.5	55.8	23.8
TOTAL	17676	73.9	49.5	66.0	30.3

¹This age bracket has been taken from the 1999 Census, as no better source is available.

Source: Table produced by author with data from the Statistical Yearbook 1999.

1997 parliamentary election. The increase in women's registration after 1993 was particularly high in the more rural provinces. The higher increase rates between 1993 and 1997 took place in those provinces with the largest rural population (i.e., Al-Mahwit with a 24 percent increase, Dhamar with 22 percent, Ibb with 18 percent, Hajjah and Al-Jawf with 16 percent each, Al-Baida'a with 15 percent, Sana'a rural with 14 percent, and Shabwah and Saadah with 10 percent each). Nevertheless, despite this dramatic trend of women's enfranchisement, almost half of the eligible women in Yemen are not included in the electoral rolls as yet.

Examining registration rates in general as well as among women does not entirely answer the question of who is more likely to register in Yemen, and whether there are other social segments still excluded from the voter lists, as a matter of fact if not legally. Comparative international experience shows that the history of enfranchisement is a history of enhancing the participation of larger and larger segments of the society in political life. Women, peasants and the illiterate are usually the last to be fully enfranchised. The case of Yemen is not unique.

It is also worth noting that voter registration has been lower in those areas of the country with the highest illiteracy rates. In seven out of eight provinces with illiteracy rates above the national average of 50 percent, voter registration ranks below the national average: Sana'a rural, Hodaida, Mahwit, Hajjah, Saadah, Al-Jawf and Mareb. On the other hand, a correlation exists between living in rural areas and not getting registered as a voter, although this is weaker than in the case of illiteracy. This can per-

haps be explained by the registration efforts made in rural areas in the last few years. In fact, seven out of thirteen provinces with a rural population above the national average of 73 percent show voter registration rates below the national average, five of them also included as highly illiterate provinces: Sana'a, Al-Baida'a, Shabwa, Hajjah, Saadah, Al-Jawf and Mareb.

In conclusion, the least likely Yemeni national to be registered to vote is an illiterate female peasant; the most likely to get registered is an educated urban male.

CHALLENGES FOR GRANTING THE YEMENIS THE RIGHT TO VOTE

The most important and prominent difficulties that confront the exercise of voting rights in Yemen are the following: illiteracy, the fabrication of ballots, deprivation of naturalized persons of the right to vote, pressure of living conditions of most categories of the population, and most important the competence of those managing the electoral process and the continual amendment of the electoral law and the constitution.

If there is to be democratic voting in the country, a number of basic preconditions must be fulfilled. Among these are the following: the eradication of illiteracy; nullification of all provisions related to deprivation of naturalized persons from exercising their electoral rights; a candidate should not be declared the winner except if the counting of votes is true and correct; the judiciary should decide on the validity of membership of parliament (parliament should not by itself decide this matter); amendment of the elections system; the judiciary should supervise

the election process; and a precise mechanism should be put in place for registration of voters to ensure clarity and correctness of the electors' rolls.

Through our consideration of the election process, we have found that there exist some prospective challenges that have to be met by the operation itself and those responsible for it. These must be resolved in a sound and clear manner. Among the most significant challenges are the following:

Registration

The level of awareness of the importance of parliamentary and other forms of elections among unregistered citizens is very low. However, this does not mean that those that are registered are aware of the importance of participating in elections. There are many citizens who do not go to polling centres to cast their votes. Despite the awareness of a huge proportion of unregistered citizens and those eligible to register of the immense significance of registration, and of the elections themselves, participation in the electoral process is low. This may be attributed largely to indifference and lack of planned and considered awareness of the significance of elections, particularly among illiterates, the rural population and recently eligible young people. These citizens usually lose the opportunity to cast their votes due to not having been made properly aware of the significance of registration and elections.

Family bonds still assume a vital role in social participation, both among men and women.

There is still an immense need for awareness in some basic information pertaining to elections, such as informing citizens of registration, its purposes and timing, which entails undertaking the following steps:

- an urgent awareness campaign for those categories in the rural areas, such as the Bedouins;
- an election awareness campaign for women, provided that an initiative is undertaken to inform men of the importance of participation of women in the elections;
- illiteracy may not form an obstacle with regard to registration for elections, but may form a tremendous barrier with regard to exercising the election process. Therefore, a campaign to raise awareness among the illiterate, especially women; and
- activating the role of non-partisan local leaderships in order to enable those responsible for elections to benefit from them when undertaking awareness campaigns.

Women's Participation

Customs and traditions play an influential and strong role in the electoral choices of both Yemeni men and women. Some studies indicate that these customs and traditions are the major reasons for opposition to women's participation in elections. In fact, some of them reject the idea due to their belief that women have no knowledge of politics.

Although religious beliefs are for the choice of the voter in a conservative country

like Yemen, religious reasons that hamper women from participating in elections cannot be rationalized.

Modifying inherited customs and traditions is, no doubt, very difficult and requires intensive and continuous efforts, particularly if quick results are desired. But long-term awareness campaigns will have an effective and vital impact, particularly in rural areas.

There is a common factor between non-registration of a large number of women and their failing to attend polling centres to cast their votes, represented by the feeling that nothing would benefit from the elections in the future as men also do not go themselves cast their votes or otherwise they lack political tendencies.

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