

Preface

This is our third report on voter turnout, based on information collected for the International IDEA Voter Turnout Database - the world's most comprehensive and authoritative collection of statistics tracking participation in electoral processes. It also builds on the work of previous editions, *Voter Turnout from 1945 to 1997: a Global Report on Political Participation*. The Institute plans to publish such a report every two years, each time focusing on a particular theme. This focuses on exercising the franchise through voter registration.

Voter registration is the process by which a person can exercise his or her right to vote. As such, it is a key determinant of electoral participation. History tells us that the removal of barriers to registration is essential to the full exercise of a citizen's political rights. In the first half of the twentieth century the right to vote was extended to many sectors of society; in the second half, as this

report reveals, the effective use of that right was extended through an unprecedented expansion in the number of registered voters.

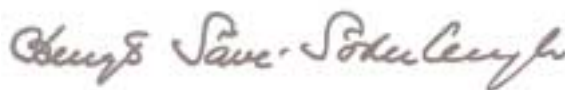
Since its inception International IDEA has focused on electoral administration. The collection and analysis of data on methods of voter registration and its effect on voter turnout is thus a natural complement to our other efforts in the electoral field.

The database, which will be updated continuously on International IDEA's website (www.idea.int/turnout), contains an incomparable collection of statistics, gathered from a diverse range of sources around the world. A great number of organizations and individuals made such an unprecedented collection of data possible. First, I would like to extend my appreciation to the electoral management bodies that answered our requests with speed and good humour. Under the supervision of Professor Reg Austin, International IDEA's Elections Team has transformed this project from an occasional publication into a research effort and methodology that form an integral part of our work programme.

Professor Rafael López Pintor of the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid serves as the Senior Research Advisor for the project as well as a lead writer for this publication. His enthusiasm, knowledge and experience have inspired those around him. Special thanks go to Maria Gratschew, whose tenacious research forms the core of this publication, and to Kate Sullivan, whose tireless

energy provided us with organizational and substantive support during the final phase of the publication. The project has been realized under the able direction of Patrick Molutsi and Vijay Patidar. Nina Seppälä and Therese Laanela laid the groundwork for the revival of this project. Thank you also to Peter Stephens and Ana Spross for their work in the production of this publication.

In addition, International IDEA wishes to thank the following individuals and organizations for their help in making this study possible: Mathew Batsiua, Inna Baranova, Virginia Beramendi-Heini, Annica Dahlgqvist, Staffan Darnolf, Richard Desjardins, Anna Fogelmarck, Mario Henriquez, the Institute for International Education (Stockholm), Denis Kadima, Anna Katz, Wilfried Kindli, Lotta Lann, Charlotta Larsson, Alistair Legge, George Tarkhan-Mouravi, Simon-Pierre Nanitelamio, Mark Payne, Svante Persson, Mate Radics, Ben Reilly, Andrew Reynolds, Richard Rose, Marta Ruedas, Maja Tjernström, Felix Ulloa and Hans-Urs Wili. As this publication and website build on the earlier two editions, we would also like to renew our thanks to those who helped us with the earlier reports.



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