**Positive Group: Should Voting Be Mandatory? (4min)**

**Round 1**

***Background***

*Compulsory (Mandatory) voting is an effect of laws which require eligible citizens to register and vote in elections, and may impose penalties on those who fail to do so.*

*A healthy representative democracy depends on citizens exercising their right to vote.*

*31 countries have some form of mandatory voting, according to the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. The list includes 9 members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and two-thirds of the Latin American nations. More than half back up the legal requirement with an enforcement mechanism, while the rest are content to rely on the moral force of the law.*

In the United States, nearly half the people who don’t vote have family incomes below $30,000, and just 19 percent of likely voters come from low-income families. So it’s hardly surprising that the Economist Intelligence Unit’s Democracy Index downgraded the United States from a “full democracy” to a “flawed democracy” in 2017, based on diminished voter engagement and confidence in the democratic process.

***Reason 1***

Compulsory voting is a generalised view that democratic election of governing representatives is the responsibility of citizens, rather than a right afforded citizens constitutionally to nominate representatives. Equating in kind to similar civil responsibilities such as taxation, jury duty, compulsory education or military service, voting in these democracies is regarded as one of the "duties to community" mentioned in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This view asserts that, by introducing an obligation to vote, all citizens governed by a democracy partake in the responsibility for the government appointed by democratic election. In practice, this appears to produce governments with more stability, legitimacy and a genuine mandate to govern, which in turn benefits all individuals even if an individual voter's preferred candidate or party is not elected to power.

**Round 2**

***Reason 2***

The idea that compulsory voting results in a higher degree of [political legitimacy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legitimacy_%28political%29) is based on higher [voter turnout](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voter_turnout). Referring back to the Australian experience, voluntary voting prior to 1924 accounted for between 47% and 78% turnout of eligible voters. Following the introduction of compulsory federal voting in 1924, this figure jumped to between 91% and 96%. with only 5% of eligible voters accounted as not enrolled.

Venezuela and the Netherlands are countries that have moved from compulsory voting to voluntary participation. The last compulsory Dutch and Venezuela elections were in 1967 and 1993, respectively. Turnout in the subsequent national poll in the Netherlands decreased by around 20%. Venezuela saw a drop in attendance of 30% in 1993 once compulsion was removed.

***Reason 3***

Compulsory voting are the stimulation of broader interest politics, as a sort of civil education and political stimulation, which creates a better informed population, although no studies have been undertaken to demonstrate that the populations of Belgium or Australia for instance, where compulsory voting has long existed, are better informed and more politically aware than the populations of New Zealand, France, Canada or the Scandinavian countries, where voting has never been compulsory.

***Reason 4***

Supporters of compulsory voting also argue that the [secret ballot](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secret_ballot) is designed to prevent interference with the votes actually cast, compelling voters to the polls for an election removes interference with accessing a polling place, reducing the impact that external factors such as the weather, transport, or restrictive employers might have. If everybody must vote, restrictions on voting are identified and steps are taken to remove them.

[Monash University](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monash_University) political scientist [Waleed Aly](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waleed_Aly) argues that whether compulsory voting favors the right or the left is beside the point, because the most beneficial aspect of compulsory voting is that it will improve the caliber of individuals who run for office and the quality of the decisions that they make: "In a compulsory election, it does not pay to energize your base to the exclusion of all other voters.

***References***

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***Rebut***

**#1**

China is a communist country, but it also has its voting system.

*Chinese leaders qualify the kind of democracy they’re after as “socialist democracy.” They describe it as a system in which power is centralized in one authority – the Chinese Communist Party – which in turn acts in the interest of the people.*

*To join the China Democracy Party, applicants must swear an oath to pledge their loyalty to the party and declare their will to build a constitutional and democratic China. That is, you email the text of the oath to the party’s chairman, Xie Wanjun, at his Hotmail address.*

*But unlike political parties in western democracies, no party in China is allowed to challenge the Communist Party’s hold on power. The relationship between the eight legal parties and the ruling Communist Party is officially one of cooperation, not competition.*

<https://www.inkstonenews.com/china-translated/china-democracy/article/2163522>

**#2**

*Supporters of mandatory voting say a true democracy needs to hear from all citizens. Democracy doesn’t work if a large portion of the population doesn’t participate. Mandatory voting is the best way to encourage politicians to focus their attention on all Americans, not just the middle and upper classes.*

***A study by Pew Research Center*** *found that the eligible voters most likely to avoid the polls are younger, poorer, less educated, and more racially diverse. This means those groups are less likely to have their voices heard. Voting is more than a right—it’s a responsibility. If Americans want their government to truly be of the people, by the people, and for the people, everyone has to go to the polls on Election Day.*

***Dr. Peter John Chen*** of the International Relations at the University of Sydney, in Australia, believes mandatory voting would help the current U.S. system. “Democracy provides both rights, as well as responsibilities. Requiring people to vote communicates our responsibilities as citizens, like jury service or paying taxes,” he told TFK. “It says to us: 'You are part of this society and have a stake and say in its government'

A mandatory vote might inspire citizens, especially young voters, to learn about the issues facing our country. If voting were the law, politicians would hear from all those eligible, not just the 60% who cast ballots. The country would have a president that more people personally supported. In addition, it would strengthen our democracy to hear from more citizens. Every vote counts!

<https://www.ecasd.us/getattachment/Northstar-Middle-School/Staff/DeAnna-Slaggie/Social-Studies/Should-Voting-Be-Mandatory-article.pdf>

### **Pro compulsory voting**

* The voter turnout increases. In all countries where compulsory voting is in place, turnout increased. In Australia, where not voting is punished, voter turnout is at 90%.
* It works against political apathy because everybody has to form their own opinion.
* Compulsory voting prevents the influence of the few who participate on the election results of becoming too strong.
* It contributes to the stability of the government since political apathy and a low voter turnout are threats for democracy – for more info click [here](https://www.polyas.de/blog/en/increasing-voter-turnout/non-voters-threaten-democracy)
* **A high turnout reduces the financial expenditure for election campaigns. This is how the influence of donors on parties and politicians is decreased.**
* **Voting is a democratic and moral duty, so why shouldn’t it be directly written in law?**
* First, party system characteristics may be affected by compulsory voting. By motivating participation among typically disadvantaged groups, compulsory voting can benefit parties of the left.
* **Further, compulsory voting has been linked to reduced political corruption, potentially because it incentivises disillusioned voters, many of whom would otherwise stay home, to go to the polls and vote against improbity. Anecdotal evidence for this is found in Australia, which is considered by Transparency International to be one of the least corrupt countries in the world – and less corrupt than the United Kingdom and the United States**

<https://www.psa.ac.uk/insight-plus/beyond-turnout-consequences-compulsory-voting>

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### **List of Pros of Compulsory Voting**

**1. Increase Voter Turnout**

It is not democracy if there is only 50 percent of voter turnout. If only half of the population turns out at voting precincts at election, it can’t be called a democracy. With the number of voters declining year after year, political analysts and a few citizens fear that there might come a time when it would just be the candidates’ kin, friends and colleagues who will bother to show up.

**2. It Broadens Representation And Legitimacy**

If voting is made mandatory, it will ensure that the government will be represented by a majority of the population, not just a few individuals. It will also guarantee that members of the society who are not as politically active will not be neglected. It will also prevent political leaders to claim greater legitimacy.

**3. Lessen The Need For Large Sums Of Money In Campaigns**

Whether people admit it or not, money plays a significant role in politics. But if compulsory voting becomes a law, there will be no need for politicians to be backed by billionaires to fund their political campaigns.

**4. Make Campaigns Broader**

Compulsory voting will assist in not targeting specific subgroups. If it is guaranteed that everyone will vote, then politicians would stop creating campaigns that are only targeted to certain people. This should also mean more pressure on politicians to represent the beliefs of all citizens. As a result, determining the best candidate would be easier.

**5. Promote Political Stability**

Where there is division there is instability. So when a nation has an alarmingly low voter turnout, it could increase the risk of political instability brought about by crises or leaders with hidden agendas.

**6. Encourage Voters to Better Educate Themselves**

If people are obliged to vote every election, they will most likely want to make the most of their votes. So, they would want to research more on each candidate to ensure they’ll be able to make the right choice. As a result, candidates would be forced to be more transparent about their stance on controversial issues. Furthermore, better informed voters will be able to determine unrealistic plans, ensuring fairer decisions in the future.

**7. More Serious Elections**

It will make people take elections as well as candidates more seriously. Compulsory voting would compel the people to be more proactive in building a government that will serve the majority, not only a few groups. This will lead to a better and more united nation.

<https://connectusfund.org/13-strongest-pros-and-cons-of-compulsory-voting>

Conclusion:

1. **It Broadens Representation And Legitimacy**
2. **Increase Voter Turnout**
3. **Encourage Voters to Better Educate Themselves**
4. **Reduced political corruption**
5. **Reduces the financial expenditure for election campaigns.**

**Therefore, our group support the topic stating that Voting should be Mandatory.**