Constraints and Choices: Electoral Participation in Historical Perspective

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Abstract

Participation in electoral politics is not a fully voluntary act. Suffrage rules regulate who can participate, while institutional arrangements shape the consequences of the voting act. The secular increase of electoral participation in the world during the past two centuries was largely due to extensions of suffrage rather than to increased turnout of those eligible. The relation between voting and electing, as manifested in institutional arrangements, had a strong effect on individual decisions to vote. In the end, the voice of the people is inescapably structured by the institutional frameworks that relate voting to electing.

"In the state of New York, legislators choose voters, rather than voters choosing legislators." (Overheard on National Public Radio.)

1 Introduction

Whether or not one votes is not just a matter of one's choice. Some political regimes do not give people a chance to vote at all. Other regimes force individuals to participate in what they call "elections" although no one is selected as their result. But even systems of representative government always restrict the right to vote to some segments of the population, using as criteria national citizenship, property, income, literacy, gender, ethnicity, religion, or age.

Clearly, the choice whether or not to vote can be exercised only by those who are given this choice. Moreover, an entire panoply of institutional rules shapes the meaning and the consequences of one's vote, thus affecting incentives and disincentives to participate. Even if those who vote are "participating," they are not doing the same under different political and institutional conditions. To "participate" is to take part in something that is prior to individual decisions. Voting is not the same as electing: the consequences of one's vote for the selection of one's rulers depend on the institutional, as well as ideational, framework within which one votes.

The realm of individual choice is thus delimited by barriers independent of one's will. These barriers are constructed by the politically powerful, whether these had usurped political power or were selected under the extant rules. The masses of potential voters can exercise the choice whether or not to participate only within these barriers.

If we think in quantitative terms of electoral participation as the ratio of actual voters to the population,[1] with an important caveat spelled out in the Appendix, we can decompose it by the following tautology:

$$participation \equiv \frac{voters}{population} = \frac{eligible}{population} * \frac{voters}{eligible}, \qquad (1)$$

where the entire tautology is conditional on an election occurring at all. "Participation" is then the ratio of voters to the population, "eligibility" is the ratio of the number of people legally qualified to vote to the population, while "turnout" is the ratio of actual to the eligible voters. In this language,

$$participation = eligibility * turnout. \qquad (2)$$

This tautology underlies the organization of what follows. The data cover most, but by no means all, national legislative elections that oc-

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[1]Using the total population as the base introduces a bias due to the ageing of the population. Data on age composition, however, are scarce.

curred in the world between 1788 and 2000.[2] Section 2 presents a brief history of suffrage qualifications and of long-term patterns of eligibility. Section 3 uses information about eligibility to decompose the growth of participation into its components, showing that throughout most of modern history increases in participation were due to extensions of suffrage, rather than to higher turnout among those qualified to vote. Section 4 asks what it is that individuals "participated" in at different times in different countries. Section 5 shows that even when individuals had a choice of voting or not voting, their participation reflected the function of this act as manifested in the institutional arrangements. Finally, Section 6 summarizes findings by other researchers concerning recent patterns of participation, highlighting the deviant case of the United States. A conclusion follows.

Before proceeding, a brief historical background is useful. Few people voted in the middle of the eighteenth century. Even where they were formally supposed to be elected, public offices were routinely inherited or filled by appointments. Nobles participated in estate bodies as a matter of inheritance; the clergy was represented by bishops; towns deputized

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[2]One can never be certain that all elections are counted. While we consulted various collections of electoral data and read through histories of particular countries, we cannot be certain that some elections did not escape historians' attention. Moreover, data on participation are available for only 2,093 elections, on eligibility for 1,832 elections, and on turnout for 1,627 elections of the total of 3,405 years in which at least one legislative election is known to have occurred. The numbers of observations in particular analyses vary according to the availability of other information.

their officials. Peasants and burgers were elected to their respective chambers in Sweden; deputies to the national parliament were elected by the Hungarian and Polish gentry at local meetings; some of the *Cabildo* seats were elective in Latin America. Yet only Great Britain and some British American colonies enjoyed fully elective lower houses of legislatures before 1788, when the first national Congress was elected in the newly formed United States of America. Revolutionary France and the short-lived Republic of Batavia (Netherlands) were the only countries to join this list before 1800. Spain experienced the first legislative election in 1813,[3] Norway in 1814, Portugal in 1820, and the newly independent Greece in 1823. At least eight new Latin American countries joined this list between 1821 and 1830,[4] while Belgium and Luxembourg followed in 1831. The revolutionary years of 1848-9 expanded this list by seven new entrants. With four Latin American countries holding first legislative elections in the meantime, by 1850 at least thirty-one independent

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[3] I do not count the election to the Cádiz Constituent Assembly, since most provinces of occupied Spain were represented by people who happenned to be present in Cádiz as "*supplentes*." Moreover, it was not clear whether this Cortes was a pure constituent assembly or had ordinary legislative powers.

[4] The actual number is almost certainly larger. While we do not have a record for legislative elections in several Latin American countries, we know that they held presidential elections and that presidents were indirectly elected by legislatures. Ecuador held a presidential election in 1830 and Nicaragua 1825, but we have no record of legislative elections. In turn, legislative elections may have occurred before 1830 in El Salvador which held first presidential election in 1824 (we can date the first legislative election only to 1842), and Peru which had a presidential election in 1814 (but we have a record for legislative elections only as of 1845).

Note that elections to constituent assemblies that were not intended to have ordinary legislative powers are not counted here (See Codebook).

countries or dependent territories had an experience of voting in at least one legislative election. By 1900, this number was at least forty-three. Most countries that emerged from World War I had elected legislatures at least during a part of the inter-war period, when several dependent territories also held their first elections.

Hence, as time went on, the number of people who in any year voted in legislative elections increased vertiginously. From about 1 million in 1820, their numbers increased to at least 2.5 million in 1850, to at least 21 million in 1900, to 125 million in 1950, and to 730 million in 1996. From a handful in 1750, the multitude of voters erupted to hundreds of millions. Even without information about some elections, the total number of people who had ever voted in legislative elections by 2000 adds up to 16.4 billion.

Figure 1 shows the proportion of countries and dependent territories which subsequently became independent that held legislative elections in each year between 1800 and 2000. The upper line is based on the available information. This information is upward biased for the early period. The reason is that this series takes as the base the number of countries for which information is available and, while we often have information that an election took place, we cannot be certain that one did not occur when the sources are simply silent. The lower bound

series, in turn, is downward biased since it is based on the assumption that no election took place whenever no information is available. The true series would probably track the lower bound with somewhat higher values before 1900.

Proportion of countries that held legislative elections, 1800-2000
Available information and lower bound

Lower bound, lowess smooth, assumes that no elections occurred in some cases with no information. See Codebook.
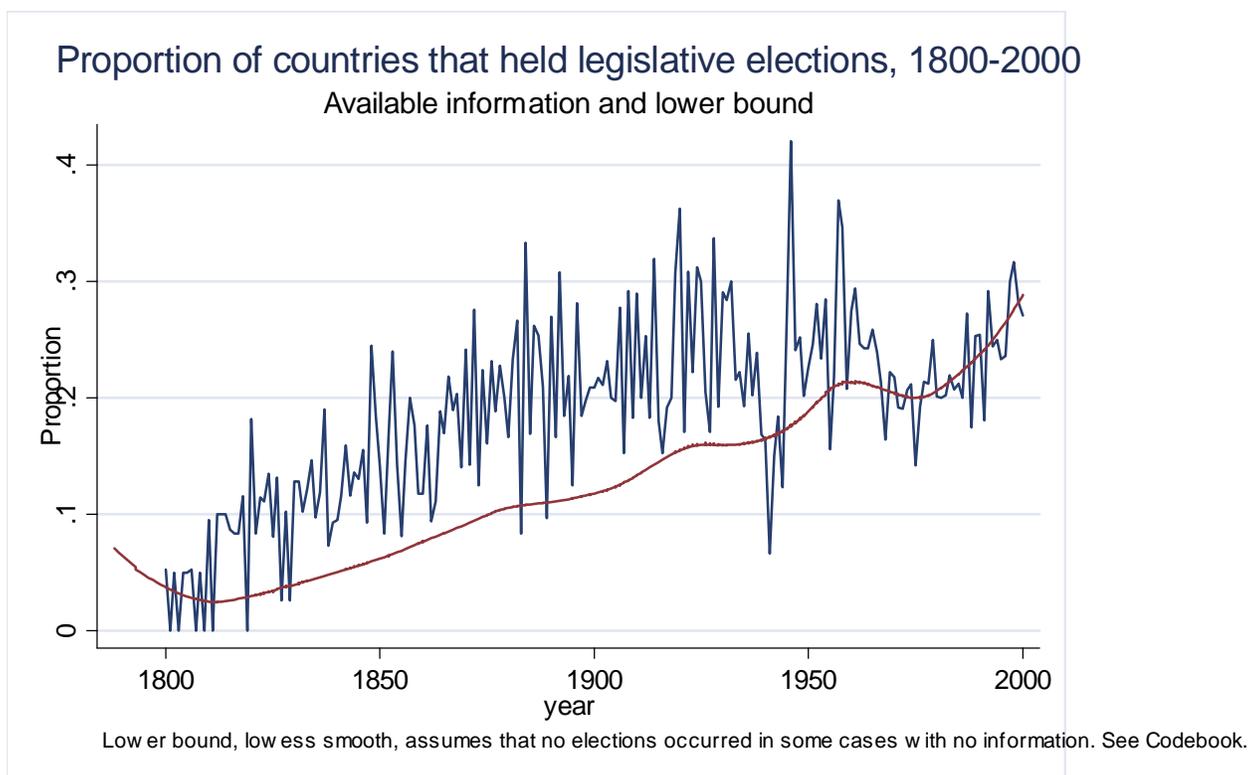
Figure 1

Figure 2, in turn, shows the trends of the proportion of the population that did vote ("participation"), the proportion that had the right to vote (was "eligible"), and the proportion among those allowed who actually cast votes ("turnout") during national legislative elections. Since the

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remainder of the paper is devoted to the analysis of these series, they are left without a comment at this moment.
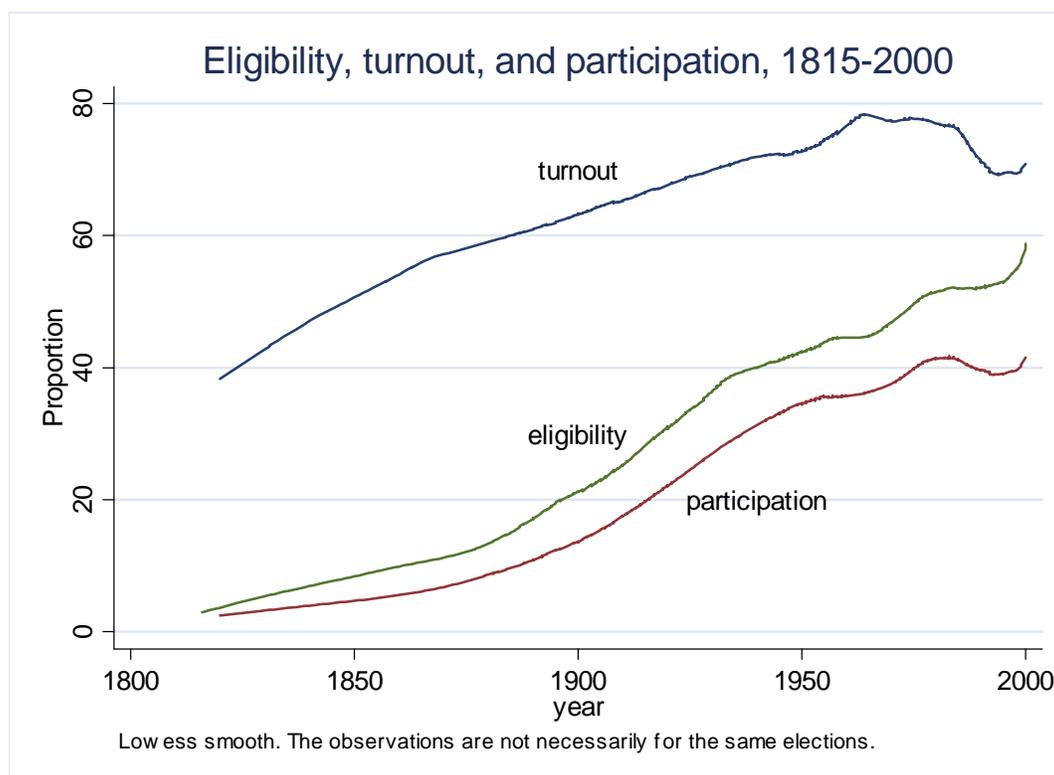
Eligibility, turnout, and participation, 1815-2000

Figure 2

2   Suffrage qualifications and eligibility

While some early constitutions made male suffrage nearly universal, during most of the nineteenth century the right to vote was confined to adult men who owned property, earned some amount of income, or paid some amount of taxes.

Two countries – Liberia in 1839[5] and Greece in 1844 – extended the right to vote to all adult males when they established first uniform suffrage requirements.[6] Beginning with Spain in 1810,[7] the first suffrage qualifications were also relatively extensive in sixteen countries that gave the right to vote to all "independent" males before 1850, but twelve among them soon restricted suffrage by income or literacy criteria. Since Liberia also restricted franchise in 1847 and since all other countries that introduced suffrage before 1848 conditioned the right to vote on property, income, or literacy, Greece, Mexico (which extended suffrage to all males in 1847), and El Salvador (which maintained "independent" suffrage) were the only countries with broad male suffrage as of 1847. Except for a few landowners in the Austrian Empire, no women could vote in national elections before 1893.

These original restrictions were either gradually or abruptly relaxed as time went on, but not without further reversals. In several countries, "Conservatives," to use the Spanish terminology, repeatedly fought with

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[5] Liberia was a private settlement of American slaves, a Commonwealth, in 1839.

[6] The 1821 electoral law of Buenos Aires introduced universal suffrage but only for free males. About 12 percent of the population was not free. (Ternavasio 1995: 66-67)

[7] France introduced universal male suffrage in the Constitution of 1793 (article 4) but this Constitution never went into effect and no elections were held under it. The Constitution of 1795, which replaced it, required in turn payment of a direct tax contribution (article 8) or having participated in at least one military campaign (article 9). Moreover, it excluded domestic servants and persons convicted of bankruptcy (article 13). See the documents in Aberdam et al. (2006) and a discussion in Crook (1996).

"Liberals" over suffrage, with the result that franchise qualifications alternated according to their political power. France is the best known example of a country that went from income qualifications to extensive male suffrage, back to income qualifications, to income and literacy restrictions, back to income, to universal male suffrage, back to income, and back to universal male, only to make suffrage universal for both sexes in 1945. The history of Spanish suffrage was not any less convoluted (Bahamonde and Martinez 1998), as was the history of several Latin American countries, notably Guatemala, which had ten different suffrage rules, plus periods without elections.

With all the twists and turns, however, the proportion of total population that could vote in an average country increased secularly over time. Figure 2, which we have already seen, shows that from a few percent around 1815, the proportion eligible reached more than one half by the end of the past century. Since this is the proportion of total population, these numbers imply that, at least in those countries that hold elections, almost all adults now have the right to vote.

Suffrage qualifications obviously shaped the actual proportions of the population that was eligible to vote. Figure 3 shows the ranges of eligibility associated with each suffrage rule.[8] Property, income, and

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[8]In all graphs of this type (graph box command in Stata), the horizontal line represents the median, the thick box the observations between the 25th and 75th

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literacy restrictions were very restrictive, but became less so over time as incomes grew and people became literate.[9] Since by the time literate women gained the right to vote most males were already literate, one should not read the difference between eligibility under the literacy criterion between males only and both sexes as due exclusively to the incorporation of female voters. Finally, universal suffrage categories, both for males only and for both sexes, exhibit an enormous range. The low numbers are due either to registration procedures (see Appendix) or to politically based exclusion or to exacting citizenship requirements.[10] Very large numbers reflect, in turn, the ageing of the population: indeed, according to the available data, in some countries as much as 80 percent of the total population was of the voting age of 18 by the end of the past century.

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percentile, the whiskers indicate the upper and lowe adjacent values, and the isolated points are the outliers.

[9]Note that these data do not distinguish numerical thresholds even within the same country. In several countries franchise was extended by lowering the income threshold. Yet the growth of real incomes, as well as inflation, enfranchised people without a change of legal criteria.

[10]While suffrage was in principle universal in Laos, Bahrain, and Oman, only persons "nominated" by the government had the right to vote. In turn, in Kuwait male suffrage was universal but only for men whose ancestors lived in the country by 1920. These restrictions are coded separately; see below.
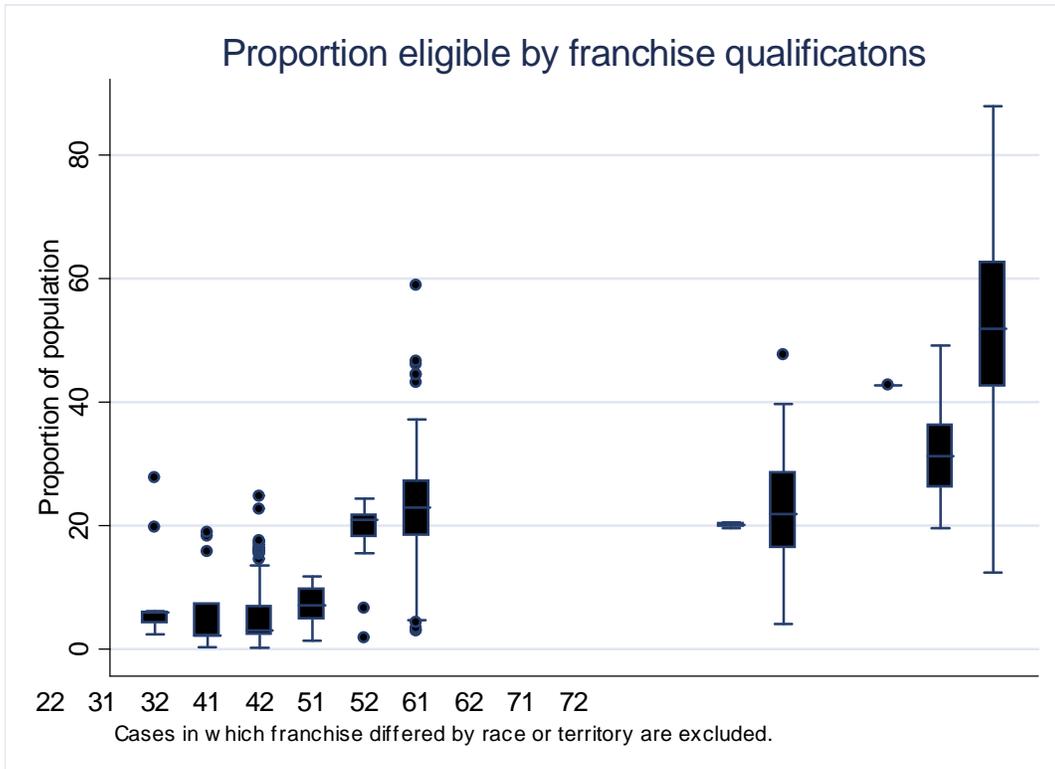
Figure 3

Coding of suffrage qualifications. For males: 2 property; 3 income and literacy; 4 income; 5 literacy or (income or literacy); 6 "independent"; 7 universal. For females: first digit gives qualifications for males; second digit = 1 indicates that women had to satisfy stricter requirements; second digit = 2 indicates that they qualified on the same basis as males.

3   Decomposing electoral participation

We can now decompose the rise of political participation into a part due to eligibility and a part due to turnout. The purpose of this accounting

exercise is to weigh those changes in participation that were voluntary, at least insofar as that individuals had the legal right to vote, against those changes that resulted from extensions of political rights.

During the entire period, participation increased on the average by 1.46 percentage points between any two successive elections for which data are available.[11] Eligibility increased by 1.98, while the turnout of the eligible by only 0.24. Decomposing the change in participation shows that the average increase in participation was due almost exclusively to increases in eligibility: of the average increase in participation, exactly 1.4629, 1.4169 is due to eligibility and 0.0460 to turnout.[12] Yet these averages are not very informative, since eligibility and turnout evolved differently during different periods. Figure 4 shows the decomposition of participation by year:

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[11]Note that the periods covered may span episodes during which the government was not elected.

[12]Mathematically, let P stand for participation, E for eligibility, T for turnout, and $\triangle$ for forward difference between two successive elections. Since,

$P_t = E_t * T_t,$

$\triangle P_t = T_t * \triangle E_t + E_t * \triangle T_t. + \triangle E_t \triangle T_t,$

or

$\triangle P_t = T_t * \triangle E_t + \triangle T_t * E_{t+1}.$

The first product on the right hand side is the part due to increases in eligibility, the second to increases of turnout.
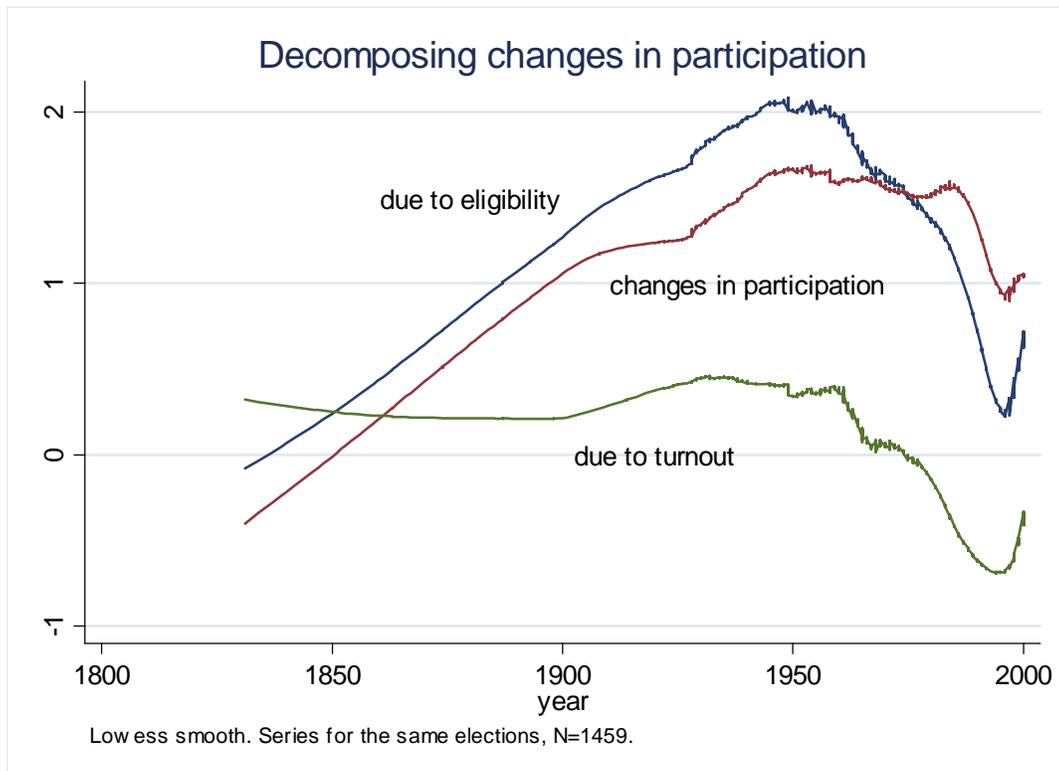
Figure 4

Changes due to eligibility increased nearly linearly until the massive

wave of decolonialization around 1960, when suffrage became almost

universal in most countries, while the changes due to turnout declined

slightly until about the eve of World War I, increased during the inter-

war period, and declined sharply around 1978. Although the average

turnout of elections held in a particular year peaked in 1976, analysis

of splines shows that the difference between periods is maximized by

taking 1978 as the dividing year. The difference, either of intercepts or

slopes, is not significant for any plausible breaking point before 1978, but

both the intercept and the slope are different for the pre- and post-1978 periods.

Table 1: Decomposing participation by period.

	pre-1915	1915-1977	1978-2000	Total
change in participation	0.67	2.38	0.63	1.46
due to eligibility	0.46	1.75	1.32	1.42
due to turnout	0.20	0.63	-0.69	0.05
N	179	692	588	1459
pr(slopes same before 1915 or after1978)		0.116	0.000	
pr(slopes same after 1978			0.000	

Note: Based on spline regressions of turnout. Probability is of the t-statistic.

In turn, the post 1978 decline of turnout seems to have been world-wide. The average decline of turnout was 0.76 percentage points between 107 successive elections in Western Europe, 0.68 between 150 elections in the OECD countries (Western Europe plus Australia, Canada, Japan,New Zealand, and the United States), and 0.69 between 438 elections in the non-OECD countries, including a decline of 0.44 between 102 elections in Latin America.

The evolution of eligibility has not been smooth. When the elec-

torate was expanding, it was typically in spurts resulting from extensions of suffrage.[13] Eligibility jumped on the average by 15.8 percentage points when suffrage restrictions were relaxed, while it drifted upwards by only 1.34 points when suffrage rules remained the same.[14] Turnout of those eligible increased on the average by 4.1 points in the first elections under expanded suffrage, while it increased by 0.23 when suffrage rules did not change. Decomposing the increase of participation following immediately extensions of suffrage, on the average 12.5 points, shows again that most of this increase were due to increased eligibility. Hence, legal provisions regulating the right to vote were much more important in determining whether participation increased than individual choices.

To isolate the effects of suffrage extensions on turnout, we can regress changes of turnout[15] on its lagged value, a dummy for the first election

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[13] An extensions occurs whenever the first or the second digit of suffrage categories increases while the other digit does not decrease. It may be true that shifting from property to income qualifications in fact restricted the electorate – it depends on the respective thresholds – but qualitative evidence suggests that such reforms were intended to enlarge the electorate by incorporating some groups other than landowners.

[14] The drift was due to increasing real incomes, inflation, or increasing literacy. For example, the annual income requirement in Imperial Brazil was 100 *milreis* in 1824, raised to 200 in 1846, and Graham (2003: 360) reports that because of inflation everyone except for beggars and vagabonds, even servants, earned enough to satisfy this criterion. As Seymour (1915) pointed out, the crucial consequences of the British reform of 1832 was not that it enfranchised many new voters but that it opened a possibility of gaining political rights by acquiring wealth and Plumb (1973) claims that the English 40-shilling requirement lost its restrictive effect by the early eighteenth century because of inflation.

[15] Given that we are interested in the effect of changing eligibility, taking as the dependent variable the difference in turnout is more natural than using its current level. Obviously, the coefficients on variables other than lagged turnout are the same under both specifications.

after an extension, changes in eligibility and separately the changes of eligibility associated with an extension, as well as the splines for the pre- and post-1978 periods. The results are presented in Table 2.

*** Table 2 here ***

Even if one might have thought that since extensions constitute major and conflictive events, the elections that immediately follow would be particularly intense and bring people to the polls, the mere fact that an election follows an extension of suffrage has no effect on turnout. Drift of eligibility, whether because of increasing incomes, inflation, expanding literacy, or the ageing of the population, had a negative effect on turnout. Yet the jumps in eligibility resulting from extensions increased turnout. We cannot tell, however, whether these increases were due to the higher turnout of those newly admitted or to the reaction of the previously eligible to the potential threat presented by the entrance of new groups into electoral politics.

All we know, therefore, is that increases in participation were due largely, almost exclusively, to extensions of suffrage. Yet participation depends not only on eligibility: it matters what one is called to participate in. This is the topic to which we now turn.

4 Voting and electing

What were people doing when they did vote? To understand why individuals decide whether or not to participate, we need to know what they are called to participate in. Voting is a physical act: shouting someone's name, raising a hand, placing a particular piece of paper in a box, pulling a lever, touching a screen. But both the political consequences and the cultural interpretations of this act differed profoundly across countries and epochs. Voting is not the same as electing; indeed, it may have no relation to electing.

What follows is not a chronology – different views of elections coincided at the same time and overlapped over time in particular countries – but only some conceptual distinctions.

(1) Elections were frequently seen as a way of consensually recognizing those best fit to govern in the best interest of all (Manin 1997).[16] The role of voters was to acknowledge natural leaders. "The purpose of elections," said the Spanish Moderates around 1870, "is to identify social power and turn it into political power" (Garrido 1998: 214). In the indirect elections in monarchical Brazil, the role of the elector was to 'nominate the good men, worthy of governing ....'" (Neves 1995: 395).

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[16]Manin argues that, as contrasted with selection by lot, elections are inherently an "artistocratic" method of selecting rulers. While I do not disagree, this view was more overt in some countries at some times than in other places at other times.

Early elections in Latin America, Sabato (2003) summarizes, were understood "as a mechanism for selecting the betters.... It was supposed that in this transaction the notables of each place will impose themselves naturally." The quality of leadership, of being "fit to govern,"[17] was manifest and thus spontaneously recognizable as such. Candidatures were unnecessary since, according to Montesquieu (1995 [1748]: 99), "The people is admirable it its ability to choose those to whom it must entrust some part of authority. It has only to decide on the basis of things it cannot ignore and of facts that are self-evident." Condorcet (1986 [1788]: 293) thought that recognizing the natural ability to govern is so simple that even women (albeit only propertied among them) can do it. Madison believed that a large republic would permit such "a process of elections as will most certainly extract from the mass of the society the purest and noblest characters which it contains" (cited in Rakove 2002: 56).

This understanding meant that pretending to have this quality and being rebuked would be shaming; indeed, that the very public demonstration of this pretension would be demeaning. According to Kishlansky (1986), elections were not contested in England until the second part of the seventeenth century.[18] They needed not be contested because the

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[17]Winston Churchill used this phrase still in 1924 to disqualify Labour government.
[18]According to Caramani (2003: 420), 155 candidates were unopposed in the

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quality of being electable was natural and recognizable. Competing and losing would be a public denial of this quality, with the consequence of dishonor not just for the candidate but for his entire family, for it would have meant that the defeated candidate comes from a family that does not generate a public recognition of its social standing. Except for the election of 1797, in revolutionary France competing for election was prohibited by law (Crook 1996). Candidatures were to emerge spontaneously, "*par éléctricité moral*" in the language of the time, from the meetings of primary assemblies. To present oneself as a candidate would be to bless equality in taking oneself as better than others. "In our customs," Rosanvallon (2004: 73) cites a contemporaneous voice, "a man who advances the impropriety to the point of soliciting himself the votes of people renders himself unworthy by this very act." (See also Guerra 2003: 55 with regard to Spain). In Norway, the electoral law of 1826 forbade electioneering and, even when this law was abolished, "such activity was still thought to be hardly respectable" (Popperwell 1972: 130). It was seen as such in Sweden still in the 1860s (Andresson 1998: 359). In Denmark, landowners did not take an active role in political life between 1849 and 1866, "because few of them were willing to take part in elections alongside humble peasants, let alone risk being defeated

United Kingdom in 1832 and 147 were unopposed still in 1900.

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by them" (Jespersen 2004: 65). George Washington simply refused to campaign, confessing that he "would have experienced chagrin," had he not won by "a pretty respectable vote" (Dunn 2004: 15). "It was scarcely possible that, with such a transcendent reputation he should have rivals," Massachusetts congressman Fisher Ames would say. And Washington was elected and reelected unanimously.

(2) Romanelli (1998: 24) emphasizes the persistence of the idea of corporate representation: "At every level in this endless game of social mapping of the nation, the principle of the rational constructions of constituencies on the basis of mere population distribution – which defines the constituency as a fragment of society, and hence not as a community – is opposed to more historical-traditional ones, which refer to the existing communities, to their social structures and hierarchies." In the corporatist conception, elections were seen as a process through which pre-existing communities of interest delegate their representatives to national assemblies where such interests were to be reconciled; in the competing view, elections were to serve as a method for selecting representatives of the entire nation. This conflict dominated constitutional debates in the German states after 1814: "according to the more traditionalist view, these representative bodies had the right to participate in the legislative process only because their members were representatives

of autonomous corporations (*Körperschaften*).... By contrast, according to the liberal view, parliaments were assumed to represent the people (*Volk*) as a unitary whole...." (Paolucci 1998: 258). The conflict in Spain around 1840 concerned "the main object to be represented: 'social interests' for the Moderates and 'the true national opinion' for the Progressives." (Dardé and Estrada 1998: 145). A Spanish parliamentary report rejected in 1870 "personal representation, an atomistic and individual system that, based on an abstract idea of citizen ... abandons every essential and permanent relation that binds him to the social order." ((Dardé and Estrada 1998: 149).

The communities to be represented were often territorial, but sometimes functional, ethnic, or religious. In the eighteenth century England, "the electoral franchise was thought of in terms of territories. Enfranchisement meant not the enfranchisement of individuals but the enfranchisement of places." (Hanham 1990: 120; also Romanelli 1998: 10) Annino (1998: 174) highlights the conflict between local autonomies and the national constituency in Latin America: "the nationalization of citizenship – and with it the vote – meant in these countries nationalization of local communities. These communities were born before the republic, they acquired territory, in agony they depossessed the colonial state of its powers, until proclaiming themselves 'sovereign.' In consequence, why

would they renounce this liberty and accepted a new sovereignty only because national elections were organized?" He emphasizes that "The Gatidian or American representation never had individualistic foundations" (1998: 161).[19]

Several writers refer to the corporatist view as "traditional," identifying its roots in the systems of estate representation. But the medieval image of society as a body endowed with functional parts was revived in several countries in the guise of "organic democracy." As Romanelli (1998: 28) observed, with the rise of class conflict "a new demand arose for organic and 'physiological' forms of representation which did not insist of the cohesion of traditional communities or estates (Stände) within the nation, but pointed to new social cleavages that cut across contemporary national societies, and therefore to new ways of giving them representation." The corporatist ideology flourished in Europe between the wars independently of fascism, authoritarianism, or democracy (Linz 2004: 556). The Spanish electoral law of 1878 introduced representation of Special Associations (*Colegios Especiales*) (Garrido 1998: 215). Bismarck wanted to set up a corporatist assembly, *Volkswirtschaftsrat*, to dilute the power of the territorially based Diet (Ritter 1990: 55). Can-

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[19]"Gatidian" refers to the 1812 Constitution of Cadiz , which was influential during the nineteenth century in the Iberian penninsula as well as throughout Latin America. On the Cadiz Constitution, see Fernández Garcia (2002) and Moreno Alonso (2000).

didates to the Italian parliaments of 1929 and 1934 were designated by unions, corporations, cultural organizations, etc. and then approved in a plebiscitary fashion, until elections were abolished in 1939. (Ungari 1990: 132). Indeed, in sixty-one elections for which we have this information, electorates were divided along the lines of income, property, or profession. Separation of electorates along racial, ethnic, or religious lines has been even more frequent, having been observed in 108 elections. Finally, in twelve elections voters were divided both along class and ethnic lines.

(3) In elections under communist and some other dictatorships (for example, Mussolini's Italy, Malagassy Republic between 1976 and 1990) voters were offered a single list of official candidates, so that they had no choice to exercise. It is puzzling why such regimes held "elections," in which no one was selected. While a standard interpretations of these rituals is that they simulated democracy in order to render these regimes legitimate in the eyes of the population and perhaps the international community, this interpretation was not credible either to those who organized such elections nor to those who were forced to participate in them. My view is that such elections were in fact an instrument of intimidation: their role was to show to each individual that the regime can make everyone do what it wants – force everyone to appear in a

particular place on a particular days and perform the act of throwing a piece of paper into a designated box - thus making it manifest that no collective resistance was feasible. Indeed, the decline of the communist regimes became visible for the first time when electoral turnout failed to reach 60 percent in the Polish local elections of 1984.

One should not think, however, that the communist practices were an historical aberration. The idea of an official government list submitted to voters for a plebiscitary approval was present already in France under the Directorate, used under Restoration, and perfected under Napoleon III (Zeldin 1958). The Spanish monarchy gained in this way such a complete control over voters that between 1876 and 1917 it was able to orchestrate a system in which governments alternated in every elections according to a pre-arranged agreement between parties: Garrido (1998: 218) reports that "The electorate did not elect Parliament, and it did not elect the government. The system worked 'from top to bottom': the king named his head of government, who convoked elections, which had, of necessity, to bestow a large majority on his party." Similarly in Portugal between 1851 and 1869, "Elections usually occurred after a change of government, not before, and were then won by the incoming administration which manipulated the patronage of the party bosses among the provincial electors" (Brimingham 1993: 132). In this view of elections,

promoting government candidates was not a transgression but a duty of public officials: the French Prime Minister, de Vilèlle, issued in 1822 a circular according to which "All those who are members of my ministry must, to keep their jobs, contribute within the limits of their right to the election of M.P.s sincerely attached to the government" (cited in Zeldin 1958: 79). While his sincerity was not generally shared, lists of "government candidates" were a frequent device in Europe as well as Latin America. Following Chile after 1831 (about which see Valenzuela 1995),[20] several Latin American countries established stable systems of succession in which incumbent presidents completed their terms, faithfully obeying term limits, chose their successors and used governmental power to assure their victory at the polls.[21] The stability of such systems of oligarchical pluralism – Chile between 1831 and 1891 and again until 1924, Nicaragua between 1856 and 1890, Brazil between 1894 and 1930, Argentina between 1897 and 1916, Uruguay between 1898 and 1932, Mexico between 1934 and 2000 – was remarkable. Indeed, in the entire history of Latin America only three incumbent presidents who pre-

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[20] Collier and Sater (1996: 58) report that "Delivering the vote was a vital aspect of the Intendant's [equivalent of French *prefet*] work.... Yet Intendants could at times go too far .... When the young Intendant of Colchagua, Domingo Santa Maria [future president], interpreted the president's instructions to win the elections 'at all costs' a trifle too enthusiastically, this was seized by his enemies as the pretext for his dismissal."

[21] For a summary of devices by which these governments controlled results of elections, see Posada-Carbó (2000).

sented themselves for reelection ever lost.[22] As Halperin-Donghi (1973: 116) observed, "Among the many ways of overthrowing the government practiced in postrevolutionary Spanish America, defeat at the polls was conspicuously absent."

In sum, the triumph of individualism was slow in coming. Choosing a candidate or a party that offers programs closest to one's preferences may have always guided individual decisions; there is no way to know. But the idea of elections as a process in which each voter is free to choose his or her representative is, I insist, anachronistic when applied to different epochs. As Romanelli (1998: 4) observes, "Historians are fully aware that in nineteenth-century societies uniformity within the nation rarely existed; that social identities were constructed around a multiplicity of 'corporate' social subjects, ranging from the family, to the community, to the class; while the concept of the voter – an individual ... who deals directly with the great national issues of his time – is nothing more than an abstraction." The very idea that the role of voting is to recognize the eminent quality of being able to govern in the common interest of all did not leave room either for individual interests or for choosing. This quality was given objectively and, while some voters could err allowing

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[22]There is also the case of the Costa Rican Braulio Carrillo, first elected in 1835 to complete the term of an incumbent who was forced to resign. Braulio Carrillo lost reelection in 1837 but one year later he overthrew the electoral winner and enacted a constitution that declared him president for life. He was deposed in turn in 1843.

their passions to cloud their judgments, many seats were either not contested or the acclamation was overwhelming. Neither did the idea that voting consists of selecting delegates that would represent pre-existing communities of interest allow for an individual definition of these interests. These interests were "organic," given to individuals according to their function in the society. Finally, when incumbent governments presented official lists and enforced their approval with their political muscle, voters had little choice even when these lists were not unique.

5   Electoral institutions and turnout

These different conceptions of elections were reflected in their institutional design. Recognizing the manifest quality to govern was a public and to a large extent an informal process, in which elections took place by acclamation, often without candidatures, ballots, or counting of the votes. Palacios and Moraga (2003: 141) observe that early elections in Latin America "*confirmed* the notability of the elected, who were elected precisely because they were notable. These were not elections destined to elect but to confirm a selection already realized by the prestige and the good origins." As a Pennsylvania state legislator, Rep. Mark B. Cohen once commented. "Open ballots are not truly free for those who preferences defy the structures of power or friendship." (www: answers.com).

The idea of elections as a process of delegation by communities of interest was associated with indirect elections, in which voters recognized their immediate superiors, who then chose those who would represent the community in the national institutions. The role of indirect elections, says Guerra (2003: 57) with regard to the Cádiz Constitution, was to "make numbers compatible with reason; that is to say, the participation of a large number of citizens, demanded by the new legitimacy, with the necessity to elect men endowed with qualities necessary to exercise office." "Indirect voting systems," Romanelli (1998: 16) comments, "suggest that the lower ranks are more concerned with local matters and capable of nominating their direct superiors, who are better equipped for wider, political issues at the national level...." Paolucci (1998: 289) comments that "Indirect elections and the census criterion were used interchangeably: both were instruments to keep the majority of the population from exerting a direct influence on the composition of parliaments." Bader-Zaar (1998: 297) reports that in Austria it was thought that "the diets would be more interested than voters in nominating 'worthy members'." Direct elections were opposed in 1868 with the argument that the *Reichsrat* "would not represent the kingdoms and their provinces as it should, it would merely represent individual classes of the population." One example of the effect of indirect elections comes

from the 1847 elections in the Mexican state of Querétaro: While artisans and laborers constituted 51.4 percent of the primary electorate and large landowners were very few, the latter made up 58.3 percent of secondary electors and the former were completely absent among them (Carmagnani and Chávez 2003: 380).

Early elections tended to be public and indirect. Over time they became legally secret, even though various ballot devices were continually invented to make voters choice transparent: as Bader-Zaar (1998: 325) observes, "The use of ballots, of course, did not necessarily mean that elections were secret." Most elections also became direct, but the idea of collective representation of territorial communities, functional groups (corporations), or electorates distinguished along the lines of income, ethnicity, or religions recurred until today.

Finally, the idea of voting as a plebiscite was expressed in lists of official candidates. "Elections" in which a unique list is presented to voters are a more recent invention. During the nineteenth century most governments that held elections allowed some opposition. While some presidential candidates run unopposed in the nineteenth-century Latin America, the idea of a single party was a technological innovation of V.I. Lenin and became widespread only during the second half of the past century when almost one half of elections did not give voters any choice.

Obviously, one cannot tell how voters interpreted their actions at different periods in different countries. All we can do is to use these institutional manifestations to see if they affected the rate at which those who were eligible turned out at the polls. In what follows, current turnout is studied as a function of its first lag, the proportion eligible, the age at which individuals were eligible, secret or open ballot,[23] direct or indirect elections,[24] compulsory or voluntary voting,[25] the presence or absence of opposition,[26] the existence of some non-elected seats in the legislature,[27] the length of legislative terms,[28] a dummy for concurrent elections, a

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[23]Among the elections for which we have the information, in 2,213 voting was legally secret for everyone. In 429 elections, there was no secret ballot, while in eleven elections (mainly communist Poland) secrecy was optional and in thirty-eight elections (Austria 1870-1906, inter-war Hungary, New Zealand 1870-1936) voting was secret for some voters and open for others. In the statistical analysis, these two latter categories are coded as "open." Data on secret voting are missing for 720 elections.

[24]In addition to 2,640 elections that were direct for everyone, there were 270 indirect elections, fifty-two elections (some African countries, pre-1906 Austria, pre-1917 Romania, British India) in which some individuals voted directly and some indirectly and thirty elections (Morocco, post-1866 Sweden) in which some collectivities voted directly and some indirectly. Again, the last two categories are coded as indirect. Data are missing for 419 elections.

[25]Voting was optional in 1,956 elections and compulsory for everyone in 519 elections. In addition, in 103 elections (some Central American countries, Brazil, Ecuador, Austria, Switzerland) it was compulsory for some voters and optional for others. These latter cases were coded as compulsory. No information is available for 832 elections.

[26]Opposition was present in 2,416 elections and absent in 685. Opposition is considered to have been present if at least in some districts voters were presented with a partisan choice in elections. Situations in which there was only one party but some individuals ran as independents are considered as not presenting opposition. No information is available for 304 elections.

[27]2,719 legislatures were fully elective, while 419 were not. Data are not available for 267 elections.

[28]Lower (or only) houses of legislatures were elected for one year in forty nine elections (all in Barbados and El Salvador), for two years in 227 cases (of which 107 in the United States), for three years in 490 cases, for in four in 1087, for five in 702, for six in 156, and for seven in two (France in 1824 and 1827).

dummy for whether a territory was independent[29], and the splines introduced above. Since different estimators correct for different biases, shown in Table 3 are results obtained by fixed country-effects regression, generalized least squares with a correction for heteroeskedastic country variances, and panel corrected standard errors.

*** Table 3 here ***

More extensive suffrage, as measured by eligibility, has a robustly positive effect on turnout, indicating that the inclusion of the lower classes and of women was not a cause of the decline in turnout. The introduction of secret ballot reduced turnout, perhaps because when voting was public people were subject to political or social pressure to deliver their votes. The introduction of direct elections raised turnout, perhaps because people felt more free to exercise their preferences, but note that the magnitude of this effect ranges broadly among the estimates.[30]Legal obligation to vote raised turnout, but the estimates are surprisingly small and somewhat unstable.[31] Non-pluralistic elections

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[29]Information is available for 127 elections under colonial rule and 1,968 for independent countries.

[30]Note that in the Austrian part of the Austro-Hungarian empire, where elections were direct in some and indirect in other provinces at the end of the nineteenth century, turnout was higher under direct elections (Bader-Zaar 1998: 321-322).

[31]Jackman (no date) reports that estimates of the effect of compulsory voting on turnout range between seven and sixteen percent.

appear to be accompanied by a political pressure to vote, since turnout is lower by about 2 percentage points when elections are pluralistic.[32] Turnout is higher by 3 percentage points when the lower house of the legislature is fully elected, rather that partially appointed. Finally, turnout is higher during concurrent elections, when presumably more is at stake. In turn, neither the length of the legally specified legislative term nor the time elapsed since the last election affect turnout.[33] And surprisingly, turnout was not lower in territories that were not independent. Conditional on all the other factors, the slope coefficient for the post-1977 period is close to zero while the intercept for this period is sharply negative, indicating a discontinuous drop in turnout around 1978.

In addition to these institutional features, in 212 out of 889 elections for which we have this information, some particular categories of potential voters were excluded by additional criteria. In some elections excluded were adherents of particular religions, members of particular ethnic groups, inhabitants of particular regions, military personnel, priests or nuns, or property owners (Mongolia, early USSR). In some cases, electoral laws excluded individuals sympathizing with some political parties or ideologies or not having the requisite "moral charac-

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[32]For example, turnout fell sharply in Mali in 1992 and in Niger in 1993, when these countries shiften from one- to multi-party systems.

[33]Since legislatures do not necessarily complete their legally specified terms, I experimented with the length of the period between successive elections. It never mattered.

ter." We could not analyze the effect of these exclusions conditional on other variables contained in the regression because they are collinear with some other factors. It appears, however, that these exclusions had an impact on reducing turnout: the average difference in turnout between the 677 elections without these additional exclusions and the 212 elections with at least one exclusion is 4.08, which is statistically significant $(t = 2.74, p = 0.0065)$.

Hence, individual decisions to participate depend on the institutional relation between voting and electing. Suffrage rules determine who can vote, but other institutional, and perhaps ideational, features of elections also influence individual behavior. Voting plays a different role when elections are secret than when they are public, different when they are indirect than direct. When voting is a duty, eligible voters have a legal obligation to cast a vote; when incumbent governments offer official lists of candidates, potential voters are subject to intense political pressure to do so. When the legislature is not fully elected, people have less of an incentive to vote. Not only is the right to participate regulated by law, but the individual incentives to avail oneself of this right are shaped by the relation between voting and electing.

6 De la plutocracie en Amérique

As long as franchise was restricted, the poor simply could not vote. Combining information about suffrage with data on turnout, we can read Figure 5 as saying that when suffrage was conditioned on property, voters were about 70 percent of male property owners and no one else. In turn, when suffrage was restricted to literate males, voters were about 70 percent of literates. Etc.[34]
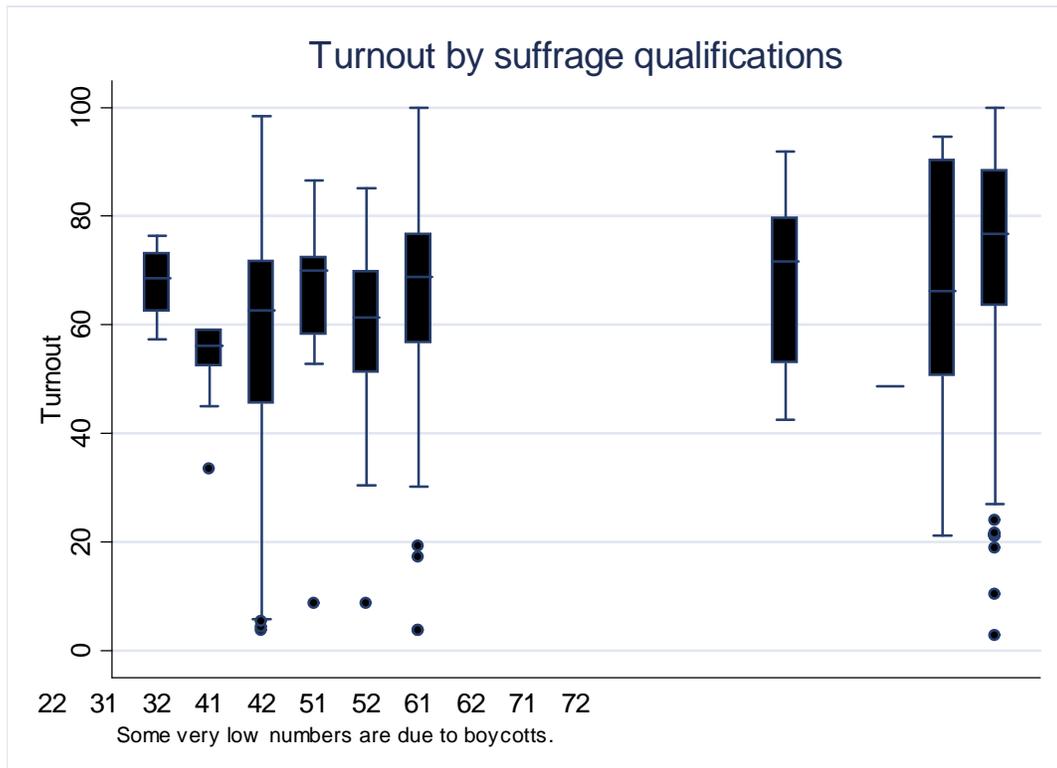

Figure 5

[34]This reasoning assumes that suffrage laws were enforced according to their letter rather than with politically motivated discretion. See Bassi, Morton, and Trounstine (2006) for a warning against this assumption.

Coding of suffrage qualifications. For males: 2 property; 3 income and literacy; 4 income; 5 literacy or (income or literacy); 6 "independent"; 7 universal. For females: first digit gives qualifications for males; second digit = 1 indicates that women had to satisfy stricter requirements; second digit = 2 indicates that they qualified on the same basis as males.

Once suffrage became broad, however, it is not possible to tell who voted and who did not without information from micro-level data. While not exactly the same, however, micro-level data are now available for a wide range of countries. This information adds up to the conclusion that people who are relatively poorer, whether in terms of income or some other understanding of poverty, are not less likely to vote than those who are better off. Recalculating the data reported by Anduiza (1999: 102) for fourteen Western European countries shows that the average difference between the turnout of the top and bottom income quartiles was only 6 percent. The largest difference, in France, was 16.4 percent. According to Norris's (2002: 93-94) analysis of pooled data from twenty-two countries, the difference in turnout between the highest and the lowest quintile was 9.6, but this sample includes the United States. Norris's (2004: 174) data for thirty-one countries in 1996, including again the United States, shows this difference to be 8 percent. Moving outside Europe and its wealthy offshoots to poorer countries

shows again that income has no impact on turnout. Yadav (2002) found that members of the scheduled casts and registered tribes voted at higher rates than people who were better off in India during the 1990s; a finding confirmed by Krishna (2006) within North Indian villages. Using data from Afrobarometer for fifteen African countries, Bratton (2006) found that the poor were somewhat more likely to vote than the non-poor.[35] Booth and Seligson (2006) report that in a pooled analysis of six Central American countries plus Mexico and Colombia turnout was not related to income.[36] But there is a clear outlier to these results: according to Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995: 190), while in the United States 86 percent of those with incomes of $75,000 or over turned out at the polls, only one half of those with incomes under $15,000 did.

The impact of education seems to vary more across countries. Bratton (2006) as well as Booth and Seligson (2006) find that educated people are somewhat more likely to vote in their respective regions. Norris (2002: 93-94) estimates the difference of turnout between college graduates and high school dropout to be 9.5 percent, while her sample of thirty-one countries in 1996 shows a difference of 14 percent (2004: 175).

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[35]Bratton (2006) suggests that high rates of turnout among the poor may be due to the fact that they value highly the clientilistic favors they receive in exchange for voting.

[36]Gaviria, Panizza, and Seddon (2002: 5) report that in seventeen Latin American countries, "participation (in a broader sense) is surprisingly homogeneous across socio-economic strata." They do not have data on turnout but concoct a scale of participation from attitudes toward politics.

Yet Norris emphasizes that education has no effect on turnout in Western Europe. Anduiza's (1999: 99) data show the difference between the turnout of "high" and "low" education to be only 2.3 percent in fifteen European countries, with six countries in which people with low education turn out at higher rates than the most educated ones. The highest difference in favor of highly educated is in Switzerland, which is an outlier at 19.2 percent. Goodrich and Nagler (2006) data show the average difference between the top and bottom quartiles of education to be 8.3 percent in fifteen countries not including the United States, with Switzerland again the outlier at 22.7 percent. But they also show the difference for the United States: it is 39.6 percent.

To summarize these findings differently, about 85 percent of people in the bottom income quartile vote in Western Europe (Anduiza 1999: 102), about 75 percent of people in the bottom quintile voted in twenty-two countries in Norris's (2002) sample, which is almost the same as in Norris's (2004) sample of thirty-one countries, both including the United States. About 88 percent of people with low education vote in Western Europe (Anduiza 1999: 99), about 77 percent in Norris sample of twenty-two countries, and about 68 percent in her sample of thirty-one countries, again including the United States. In the United States, about one half of people with low income or low education do not vote.

I will not venture into explanations. Placing the United States in a cross-national context immediately points to the fact that it is one of the few countries, along France, where registration is not automatic and before 1993 was quite difficult in most states. Delving into history shows that the introduction of various registration impediments at the end of the nineteenth century sharply reduced turnout, with a ballpark estimate of about one-third (Testi 1998). Yet registration requirements were relaxed and made uniform in 1993 with some effect on registration but almost no effect on turnout (for a summary literature on this topic, see Hill 2006). Moreover, different estimates converge to the effect that even if registration were automatic, turnout in the United States would increase by no more than 10 percent, which would still leave it well below the rate of other countries. Hence, something other than registration is at play.

All I can conclude is that somehow in the United States the poor are successfully barred from electoral politics, in spite of universal suffrage, egalitarian ideology, and all the ostensible devotion to democracy.

7   Conclusions

Systems of representative government were born under a mortal fear of participation by the broad masses of the population, a large part of

whom were poor and illiterate. One would not err much thinking that strategic the problem of "founders," pretty much everywhere, was how to construct representative government for the rich while protecting it from the poor. Even if *suffrage censitaire* contradicted the principle of political equality, the right to elect one's representatives was limited almost everywhere to wealthy males. And whenever the poor were allowed to vote, institutional devices counteracted their participation. As one speaker observed in the Spanish parliamentary debate about universal suffrage in 1889, "We are going to establish universal suffrage, and then what is going to happen in our national political history? Nothing ... the Congress of Deputies will continue working as it is doing now; the legislative power will be wielded by the Crown with the Cortes; the Crown will have ... all the guarantees and privileges given by the Constitution of 1876" (cited in Garrido 1998: 213). Or, as Graham (2003: 364) put it with regard to free Afro-Brasilians, "Their vote was allowed because the results could be manipulated." Since particular institutional devices affect the rich and the poor differentially,[37] they were used to make the voice of the poor inaudible.

Marx's famous phrase – that men make history but they make it under conditions not of their choosing – has always divided social scien-

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[37]Anduiza (1999) offers the best discussion I read of the impact of interactions between institutions and individual characteristics on voting.

tists into those who emphasize its first or its second part. The evidence
presented here clearly weighs in favor of the latter. All elections take
place under some rules and in specific ideational contexts. And the rules
as well as the ideas affect who participates and with what consequences.
Elections are always "manipulated":[38] since it is impossible to hold elec-
tions without some rules and since these rules affect behaviors, outcomes
of elections are inevitably shaped by their rules. Elections are thus in-
escapably Madisonian: they "filter" the people's voice. Whether they
also "refine" it or only deform it in the interest of the current rulers is
a different question. In either case, the voice of the people is modulated
and orchestrated under the direction of a baton. Sometimes this baton
is a vulgar truncheon, visible and painful. At other times it is wielded
so adroitly that it becomes invisible: we then have "fair," "democratic"
elections. But a "filtered" voice is always an orchestrated one. During
most of the history of representative institutions, most individuals did
not have a choice whether or not to participate. Moreover, even when
they could exercise this choice, its consequences were structured by the
rules under which they participated.

This observation does not imply that "rational choice" is not a valid

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[38] One should distinguish "manipulation" from "fraud." Since all elections are struc-
tured by some rules and procedures, they are inextricably "manipulated." "Fraud,"
in turn, means that the rules and procedures are not observed, whatever they are.
On the difficulty of defining electoral fraud in the nineteenth century Latin America,
see Annino (1995: 15-18).

method of theorizing. One can easily suppose that rulers, however they become rulers, use their control over the rules under which people vote to their own advantage, to prevent losing. Sometimes rulers just do not hold elections. When they have to hold elections, for the fear they would be overthrown in some other way, incumbents invent innumerable devices to prevent the people from deciding. They regulate who can vote. And when they cannot prevent undersirables from voting, they use other institutional devices. We have seen that it matters whether elections are direct, whether voting is compulsory legally or enforced politically, whether all legislators are elected or some appointed. And the list of institutional devices extends far beyond those we could consider systematically: the inventiveness of rulers in modulating the peoples' voice seems to have no limits. Different forms of ballots makes voting visible even when it is legally secret. Malapportionment is but a less visible manner of weighted or plural voting. Electoral formulae not only aggregate individual votes but also affect the incentives to participate. Dividing voters into separate constituencies along the lines of income, ethnicity, or religion is yet another instrument for manipulating representation. A single list is thus but an extreme of a whole spectrum of devices by which participation and its results are controlled. While I presented no evidence that the rules are manipulated intentionally and

while I do not believe that deliberate manipulation always achieves desired results,[39] it is easy to believe that those who the generate ideas and those who set the rules do it in their own favor. One strategy in politics must be to restrict the choice of those who would exercise this choice against you.

One can also easily believe that individual voters behave rationally at the polls, that people use their vote to advance their objectives, whatever these may be, given the constraints. While the discussion of individual decisions to vote has been hopelessly derailed by the assumption that individuals experience the act of voting as a cost, there are plausible arguments to the effect that people value choosing (Sen 1991, Przeworski 2003) as well as ample evidence that masses of people are willing to struggle and to bear sacrifices for the right to elect their rulers. Yet the right to vote is not the same as the right to elect. Institutional devices regulate the relation between voting and electing. They not only determine who can participate but what one participates in.

Hence, it is quite plausible that both the rulers and the masses of individuals rationally pursue their interests in elections: it was certainly not my intention to dispute it. What I hope to have shown is that masses

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[39]For example, Prime Minister Berlusconi may have shot himself in the foot by his last-minute tinkering with electoral rules on the eve of the 2006 elections (D'Alimonte 2006).

of individuals participate under constraints set by their incumbent rulers and that during most of the history of representative government these constraints have been so tight that little room was left for individual choice, however rational it might have been.

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9 Appendix 1: Registration and eligibility.

Whenever registration to vote in a particular election is not automatic for those who qualify under the formal criteria, it introduces additional barriers. If we distinguish those who can actually cast a vote in a particular election from those who are qualified to do so by the legal criteria, tautology (1) becomes

$$\frac{voters}{population} = \frac{eligible}{population} * \frac{registered}{eligible} * \frac{voters}{registered}. \qquad (3)$$

Unfortunately, with the exception of the US after 1960, we do not have separate data for the eligible and the registered series. All we can do is to distinguish (1) the series which Nohlan gives as the numbers of registered (which equal eligibles if registration is automatic), (2) data from Caramani for eligibles in Western Europe, from (3) the series that merges registered and eligible, used in the text. As Figure A1 shows, at least during the later period, when most data come from, the Western European eligible series exhibits higher proportions than Nohlan's number for registered voters in other parts of the world. We cannot tell to what extent this difference is due to the fact that the two series cover different regions, but one can suspect that some part of it is due to registration requirements.
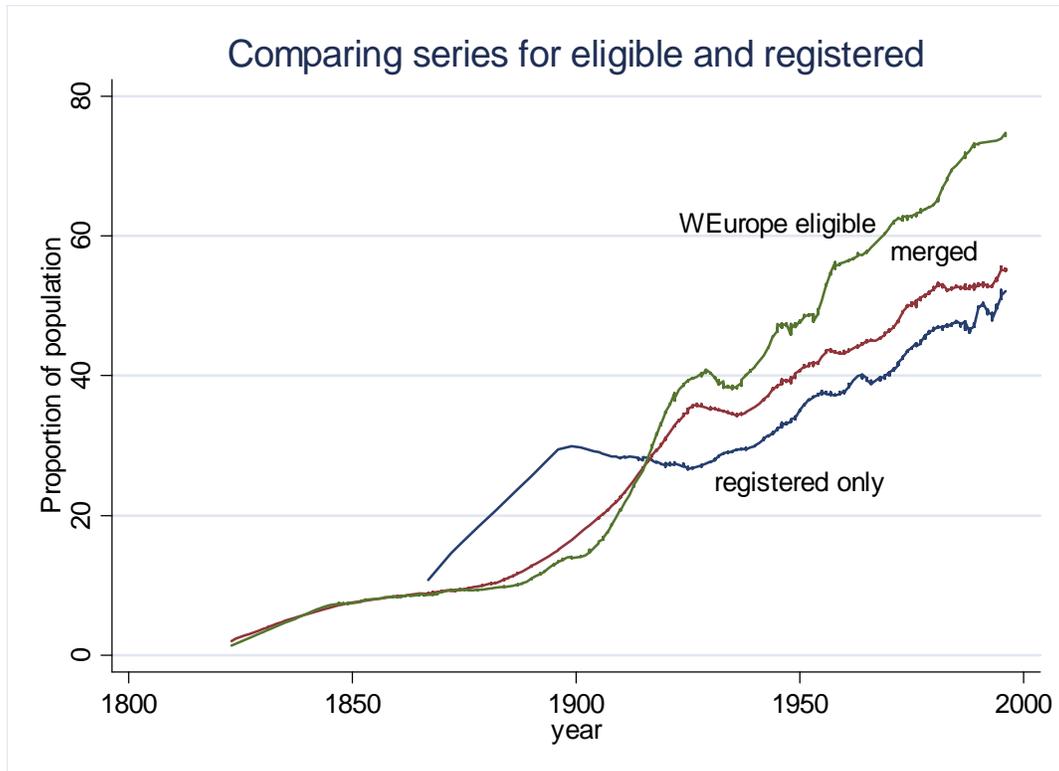
Figure A1

The difference between eligible and registered voters is pronounced

in the United States,[40] but we already know that it is a deviant case.

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[40]In the United States, particularly after 1870, when suffrage became restricted to citizens, strict residency requirements were applied at four levels (state, county, city, and precinct). By 1880 twenty-eight out of thirty-eight states had some form of registration in effect, while poll taxes, literacy tests, and grandfather clauses made registration difficult for a large segment of the population. Testi (1998: 400) estimates that about one-third of formally eligible persons could not register to vote in the United States after 1900. Rusk's (2001) post-1960 data confirm this estimate, insofar as the registered are about 2/3 of the eligible.
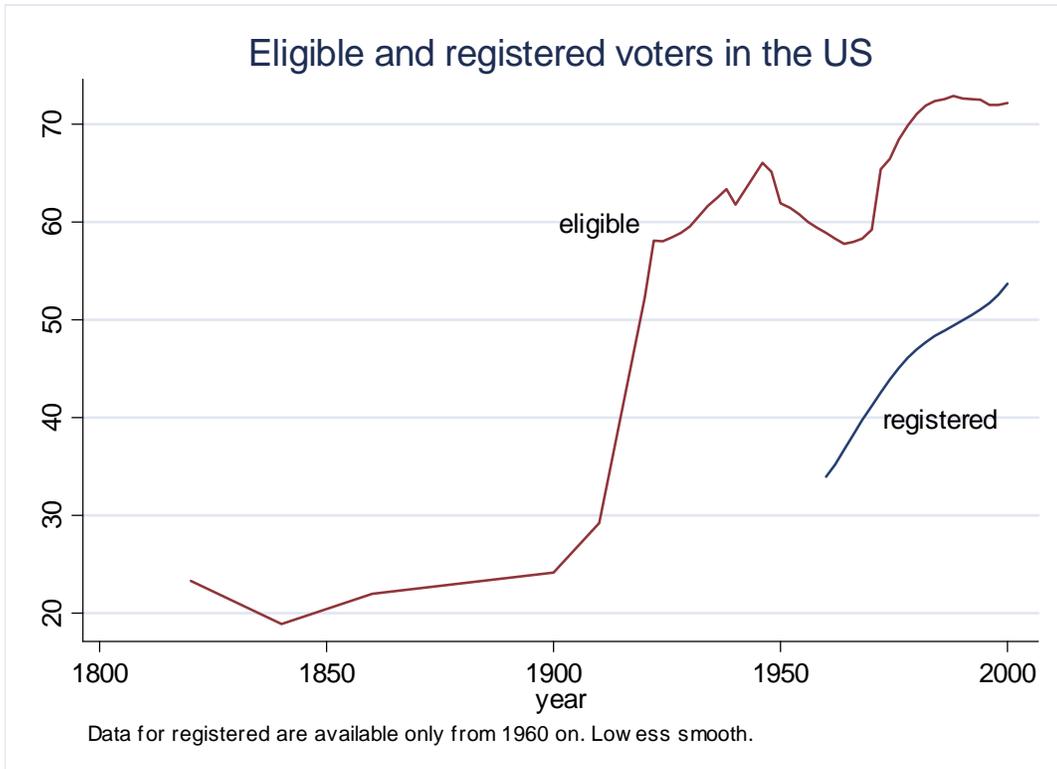
Figure A2

10 Appendix 2: Codebook

The data were collected by Adam Przeworski, Tamar Asadurian, Carolina Curvale, Sunny Kuniyathu, and Anjali Thomas. The data file is referred to as PACKT, v.1.

Included are national units that were independent at any time after 1917, during the period 1788-2000, including years before independence. The units are thus either independent countries or dependencies. However, territories that were geographically adjacent parts of larger

units (empires, confederations, colonial administrative entities) are not included if no electoral data are available at the level of these parts. The total number of observations is 28,371 country-years. At least two observations of electoral data are available for 204 units.

What follows are definitions of variables used in the text, accompanied by some comments. Full documentation, including a list of monographic sources, is available on request.

INDEPENDENT COUNTRY

Current political status of the country. Coded as:

0   Dependency

1   Independent

Cases of annexation of adjacent territories, such as parts of the Russian Empire, are not considered as dependencies and are coded as 1. Only occupations of territories lasting longer than ten years are considered as constituting colonial rule. For example, the Italian occupation of Ethiopia is not considered as colonial.

LEGELEC

Number of legislative elections that took place during the year. It includes general elections, elections in which only a part of the legislature is renewed, and annulled elections, but not by-elections to replace

representatives who for some reason did not continue in office. Elections to the upper house only and elections to constitutional assemblies that do not have ordinary legislative powers are excluded. Elections to constituent assemblies, however, are counted if these assemblies usurped ordinary legislative powers. Second rounds are not counted.

LOWER BOUND (used in Figure 2) is a result of recoding the data missing under LEGELEC as 0 if the data on the constitutional provisions for a legislature and for suffrage were missing and years are before independence.

PRESELEC

Number of presidential elections that took place during the year. Annulled elections are counted. Second rounds are not counted.

ELIGIBLE

Ratio of the number of people eligible to vote to the total population. Coded only for years of elections.

Note: In some cases, registration is automatic, so that the number of registered voters is equal to the number of eligible voters. Whenever they differ and a series for registered is available, this is the series used. If it is not available, numbers of eligible voters are used. In several instances, however, we do not know whether the numbers refer to registered or eligible voters.

PARTICIPATION

Ratio of voters in legislative elections to the total population. Coded only for years of legislative elections. If elections are indirect, only the number of primary voters is used.

TURNOUT

The ratio of actual voters (sometimes valid votes) to the eligible:

TURNOUT = PARTICIPATION/ELIGIBLE.

Note: This seems to be a more consistent way of getting turnout that the numbers offered in the sources.

FRANCHISE

Qualifications for the right to vote in national elections.

Preliminary notes:

To account for exclusions not captured under FRANCHISE, we use the variable OTHER_EXCLUSIONS (see below).

Cases of coexisting qualifications are treated as follows:

(1) If the qualifications differ by ethnicity or religion (common in colonies), we code the least restrictive qualification for non-colonizers.

(2) If the qualifications are set at a sub-national level, we code the variable as missing. (Unified countries in which franchise is regulated by sub-units include the United States, Mexico, or South Africa before

1968, while cases of countries that were not yet politically unified include Argentina before 1853, South Africa before 1910, and Australia before 1901). A separate document lists these qualifications.

Regulations concerning immigrants and foreign residents are not considered.

Coding of FRANCHISE:

The codes 0 to 7 are for males only:

0   No legal provisions for suffrage. This code is applied

(a) before first elected representative institutions were established,

(b) whenever constitutions or other legal acts providing for suffrage were either abrogated without being replaced or formally suspended,

(c) if (b) is unclear, whenever the legislature was closed and neither legislative nor presidential elections were held.

1   Estate representation (see below). Example: Sweden until 1866.

2   Property only.

3   (Property OR income OR taxes OR exercise of profession OR educational titles) AND literacy.

4   Property OR income OR taxes OR exercise of profession OR educational titles.

This code applies whenever the law specifies a minimum threshold,

even if this threshold is very low (for example, tax contribution of three days of local wages in France in 1789, as long as this requirement is observed. If it is not observed, as in post-1917 Mexico, the code is 6.

5   Literacy only OR (Literacy OR .Property OR income OR taxes OR exercise of profession OR educational titles).

6   All the "economically independent" (not personal servants, not debtors, only residence requirement).

7   All. The only exclusions admitted in this category are: (1) having been convicted of a crime (2) being legally incompetent (3) short, less than two-year local residence requirement. There are some cases, however, where the law contains restrictive phrases, such as the requirement of appearing on the tax rolls or having fulfilled military obligation, these restrictions were not enforced. In such cases franchise was coded as 7. An example is the Ottoman Constitution of 1876 (in force after 1908) or the Swedish law until 1975.

For females, we use the second digit, distinguishing only situations in which

0   if no women can vote

1   women are qualified on narrower basis than males

Examples: (a) in England between 1918 and 1927 males were qualified at the age of 20, females at 25. (b) in Canada between 1917 and

1920 the vote was given only to relatives of military. (c) in some countries women voted only in some regions. Note that if females vote in municipal elections, we do not include it since the codes refer only to national elections.

2   women are qualified on the same basis as males.

Auxiliary codes:

-1   More than one constitution, any other kind of political chaos that makes the electoral rules inoperative. For years of foreign occupation we either set as missing or extend the restriction in effect before the occupation.

-2   Family representation (Bhutan).

OTHER_EXCLUSIONS: Captures exclusions not accounted for under FRANCHISE. Coded as follows:

0   None other (all restrictions are accounted for under FRANCHISE).

1   By ethnicity (some ethnic groups are excluded).

2   By territory (people living in some regions cannot vote).

3   By religion (only adherents of a particular religion(s) can vote).

4   By politics (Individuals sympathizing with some political parties or ideologies are excluded. This code refers only to persons, hence it does not cover cases when political parties are banned.). Includes the

language in which suffrage is determined by "moral character."

5   Slaves are excluded.

6   Military personnel or police is excluded.

7   Priests or nuns are excluded.

8   Propertied are excluded (as in Mongolia, USSR 1918).

Note: When more than one exclusion applies, all are listed as consecutive digits. For example, if 5, 6, and 7 applies, we code exclusions as 567.

FRANCHISE_AGE

Age at which those otherwise qualified to vote can exercise this right. Whenever age thresholds are different for different groups, lowest age is coded, unless the group which can vote at an earlier age is very small, say holders of *Legion d'Honneur* in post-1946 France.

SECRET_VOTE

0   Public at least for some or if secret is optional.

1   Secret

COMPULSORY_VOTE

0   Compulsory

1   Optional or compulsory for some, facultative for others.

DIRECT_VOTE

Refers only to the lower house.

0   Indirect for all or indirect for some depending on individual (e.g. literacy) or collective characteristics (i.e. territory)

1   Direct

LEGTERM

Constitutionally prescribed duration of the legislative term in the lower house (in years).

-1   if no term is specified

0   if life term

Note: If the term of the legislature is extended while incumbents are in office, it changes the year it was extended.

FULLY ELECTED

Captures legal provisions regulating the mode of selection of the lower house of the legislature. Whenever there are no such provisions but a legislature exists, the actual mode of selection is coded. These provisions are coded whether or not the legislature in fact exists, as long as they have not been formally abrogated or suspended.

0   if the legislature is at least in part appointed

1   if it is fully elected

Note: Estate bodies are coded as 0.

Table 2: Changes of turnout from the previous to the current election as a function of eligibility.

$\triangle$turnout$_t$	Coefficient	s.e.	t	p(t)
turnout$_{t-1}$	-1.2955	0.0257	-50.32	0.000
$\triangle$eligibility$_t$	-0.1391	0.0480	-2.89	0.004
extension$_t$	-1.7695	0.1523	-0.51	0.046
$\triangle$eligibility$_t$*extension$_t$	0.3044	0.1523	2.00	0.000
concurrent election$_t$	4.5948	0.8189	5.61	0.000
year if year$\square$1978	0.0725	0.0128	5.69	0.000
year if year$\square$1977	-0.7386	0.1982	-3.73	0.000
dummy post-1977	-1.6156	1.5578	-1.04	0.300
constant	-48.16	0.6916	-69.64	0.000

Note:

t indexes elections, while $\triangle$ stands for backward difference between two consecutive elections (regardless of the period between them).

extension is a dummy variable for first elections under expanded suffrage.

concurrent election is a dummy which assumes the value of 1 when the legislative and presidential elections are concurrent; it equals 0 in off years and in countries which hold no presidential elections.

year if year$\square$1978 and *year if year$\square$1977* are splines for the respective periods.

dummy post 1977 =1 if year$\square$1977, 0 otherwise.

N=1375; there are 130 groups, with $1\square T_\square \square 59$.

Langrange multiplier test indicates that the series are autocorrelated. Hausman test indicates that random effects estimates are not consistent. Autocorrelation was estimated by the Durbin-Watson method.

When the same specification is estimated by GLS(common ar1), the variable *concurrent* is not significant at 0.10. When it is estimated by PCSE(common ar1), neither *concurrent* nor $\triangle$*eligibility* have significant coefficients. Their signs, however, are always the same.

Table 3: Institutional determinants of turnout.

turnout$_t$	Fixed effects	GLS	PCSE
turnout$_{t-1}$	0.4722***	0.7758***	0.6730***
	(0.0242)	(0.0156)	(0.0309)
eligibility$_t$	0.1576***	0.0961***	0.1510***
	(0.0335)	(0.0142)	(0.2528)
secret vote$_t$	-3.0813*	-2.7877***	-3.5069***
	(1.7416)	(0.9492)	(1.2802)
direct vote$_t$	5.8722**	2.2497*	1.0592
	(2.3202)	(1.2865)	(1.7587)
compulsory vote$_t$	0.6881	1.1768***	1.4328*
	(1.5498)	(0.6715)	(0.7403)
opposition present$_t$	-2.1437*	-1.5792**	-2.6511**
	(1.2916)	(0.6715)	(1.0924)
legislature fully elected$_t$	4.1593	2.3828***	3.0496**
	(2.5712)	(0.8150)	(1.2926)
age of eligibility$_t$	0.1310	0.0304	0.1176
	(0.2691)	(0.0784)	(0.0911)
length of legislative term$_t$	-0.5505	0.0270	0.3779
	(0.7578)	(0.2710)	(0.3816)
concurrent election$_t$	3.4562***	1.8952***	2.0107**
	(0.9731)	(0.5216)	(0.8743)
country independent$_t$	-0.9887	0.2727	-0.0579
	(2.7190)	(1.4394)	(1.5627)
year if year□1978	0.1067***	0.0146	0.0259
	(0.0275)	(0.0129)	(0.0185)
year if year□1977	-0.1387*	-0.0675	-0.0296
	(0.0786)	(0.0453)	(0.0833)
dummy post-1977	-4.0534***	-2.1976***	-4.0900***
	(1.1960)	(0.7368)	(1.2356)
constant	-180.31***	-17.28	-35.01
	(53.16)	(24.51)	(34.74)

Note:

Standard errors in parentheses. t indexes elections regardless of the period between them. N=1334; there are 122 groups, with 1□T$_□$□68.

concurrent election is a dummy which assumes the value of 1 when the legislative and presidential elections are concurrent; it equals 0 in off years and in countries which hold no presidential elections.

year if year□1978 and *year if year□1977* are splines for the respective periods.

dummy post 1977 =1 if year□1977, 0 otherwise.

For definitions of other variables, see the Codebook.

Langrange multiplier test does not reject the hypothesis of no autocorrelation. Hausman test indicates that random effects estimates are not consistent. The GLS estimates correct for heteroeskedasticity among groups but not for cross-sectional correlation. The PCSE correct for both to the extent to which elections occurred in the same year in different countries (pairwise option in Stata).

There is little colinearity among the regressors, except for the age of eligibility, which is correlated with the splines and is positive and significant in specifications without them.