

Negative Answers to (A/T) Common Affirmative Arguments

A/T Compulsory voting does not violate individual rights.

1. **NOT TRUE: Compulsory voting does violate rights because the weak and timid have the right to express themselves through a non-vote in a democracy. To force them to vote puts them in a position where they feel exposed and unsafe.**
2. **DOESN'T MATTER: Compulsory voting is merely a band-aid that violates rights without actually helping those it intends to help. Even with greater turn-out, there are no measurable effects to say that the results of elections have changed.**
3. **TURN: Compulsory voting shows a lack of respect for the individual, which is the core value of democracy. When we people are compelled to vote, their right to free expression as an individual in a democracy is seen as unimportant and trivial when it is the foundation of all voting in a democracy.**

A/T Compulsory voting will make a significant difference on policy.

1. **NOT TRUE: Compulsory voting has little effect on government policies.**

Armin Schäfer (research fellow at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies, Cologne), "Republican Liberty and Compulsory Voting," Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies, Cologne, November 2011

The main empirical objection to compulsory voting is that the level of turnout does not seem to matter. While there is a broad consensus that people with more socio-economic resources are more likely to participate in politics, similar differences do not exist in terms of attitudes or political preferences. Many studies conclude that voters and nonvoters are not that far apart in their policy and party preferences. If this is the case, voters do represent the entire population and turnout is of minor importance. And if turnout does not matter for election outcomes, there is no need to boost participation through mandatory voting.

2. **DOESN'T MATTER: Even if there is a huge change in government policies, that does not justify forcing people to participate in a system against their will.**
3. **TURN: Government policy is likely to be even more unclear because many people, when forced to vote, will feel the need to cast non-ballots, meaning that it might not even be possible for a candidate or policy to get a majority of the total votes cast.**

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A/T Low turnout undermines the legitimacy of a democratic government.

1. **DOESN'T MATTER: Voter turnout is a secondary concern in democracies. Democracy is about selecting competent leaders, not necessarily hearing everyone's voice. People who want to have a say are always entitled to vote by choice.**
2. **TURN: Low participation might be a 'blessing in disguise.' If there are lots and lots of uninformed voters going to the polls who do not take their responsibility seriously, it is more likely that a fluke candidate will win over a one that is genuinely qualified. Sometimes the majority of people is not as wise**

A/T Compulsory voting is not too difficult for citizens.

1. **NOT TRUE: Affirming means people can and do go to prison for not voting. We cannot objectively say that penalties for not voting would be 'trivial.' Even if the Affirmative assumes this, it might not be true for all democracies with compulsory voting.**
2. **TURN: Significant penalties for not voting cause over-politicalization. To be effective, compulsory voting penalties must be harsh, too harsh to justify.**

Armin Schäfer states (research fellow at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies, Cologne), "Republican Liberty and Compulsory Voting," Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies, Cologne, November 2011

Finally, even if one accepts that voting is valuable to the political community, that most of the time a choice between different platforms is meaningful, and that individual abstention should not be allowed to become the general norm, it does not follow that coercion is justified against those who do not vote, especially, since it is not sufficient to make voting legally obligatory on paper, as recent empirical work has demonstrated. To be effective, punishment for non-voters cannot be trivial or merely symbolic.¹³ And, in fact, Lever (2009: 66) points out that an Australian woman was sent to jail (for one day) because she refused to pay the fine for not voting. Severe sanctions are rare but they do exist. Now, if democracy was about to break down due to low turnout, such measures might be justified. Yet countries with low electoral participation such as Switzerland or the United States are not on the verge of collapse. Democracy has never been a casualty of too little participation. To the contrary, opponents of mandatory voting argue, intense politicization with high rates of turnout contributed to the fall of the Weimar Republic (Mayo 1959: 321, fn. 4). [after the fall of Germany in World War I].

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A/T Compulsory voting is no different from mandatory jury duty.

1. **NOT TRUE: Jury duty is about fulfilling a responsibility to society so that you too may share in the right to a jury trial if you are ever arrested for a crime. There is a sense of reciprocity. With voting, it is not about reciprocating to other voters, it is about personal expression. As long as you don't prevent another from voting, you have fulfilled your responsibilities to that person. You are not obligated to vote simply because your neighbor did**

2. **NOT TRUE: Even if we do owe something back, we don't all owe the same. People have legitimate reasons for escaping jury duty and never serve while others are called all the time. Compulsory voting does not necessarily allow for**

A/T Abstention is an illegitimate/ineffective form of protest.

1. **NOT TRUE: Voluntary voting embraces two ideas central to democracy.**

Annabelle Lever states: Associate Professor of Normative Political Theory in the Department of the University of Geneva, Switzerland), "Is Compulsory Voting Justified?" Public Reason, 2009

Despite the claims of proponents of compulsory voting, I am not persuaded that the right not to vote is a trivial one, whether we consider "voting" to mean "turnout" or something more demanding.²⁶ The right to abstain, or to refrain from political self-identification and participation is an important one, symbolically and practically. It captures two ideas that are central to democracy. The first is that government is there for the benefit of the governed, not the other way round. The second is that the duties and rights of citizens are importantly different from those of their representatives, because the latter have powers and responsibilities that the former do not.

2. **DOESN'T MATTER: The fact that nonvoting is likely an ineffective form of protest does not mean it is an invalid form of protest. Protests do not have to work to be justified. Burning the American flag to protest the government often just upsets people, but you are still allowed to do it.**

3. **TURN: When the state decides what behavior is an is not legitimate as far as political speech is concerned, it unnecessarily limits the right to political expression, which is the foundation of democracy. Limits via compulsory voting can snowball into other coercive measures.**