

Affirmative Answers to (A/T) Common Negative Arguments

A/T Compulsory voting violates individual rights.**1. TURN: Voluntary voting systematically violates the rights of many in society.**

Bart Engelen states (Research Assistant of the Fund for Scientific Research – Flanders (Belgium), Centre for Economics and Ethics – Institute of Philosophy (K.U.Leuven), Centre for Economics and Ethics), “Why Compulsory Voting Can Enhance Democracy,” Acta Politica, Palgrave Journals, 2007

A first way of countering this is to show that absolute freedom of choice is in fact illusory. The fact that less educated citizens abstain systematically more than others reveals that they encounter greater obstacles, preventing them from participating. As someone’s knowledge of and interest in politics is influenced by structural factors such as his received education, his decision whether or not to vote cannot be wholly ascribed to ‘freedom of choice’, which can therefore not be used to justify freedom of participation through voluntary voting.

In essence, voluntary voting allows only those who have been well educated and have free time to understand and utilize the ability to vote.

- 2. NOT TRUE: Compulsory voting does not violate individual rights because, even in a democracy, there is not an absolute freedom of choice. All rights have corresponding responsibilities and a democracy requiring everyone to show up to a polling place is the responsibility that corresponds to the right to vote. It is not any different than the state requiring citizens to show up for jury duty if they want a system of courts with jury trials. Voting exists as a right, but it is also meant to serve the public interest.**
- 3. DOESN’T MATTER: Compulsory voting, even if it does violate rights, has positive effects on democracy, such as increased turnout, increased political involvement, and a more legitimate result to democratic elections. The violation of rights is insignificant compared to the benefits.**

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A/T Low turnout is ok because then only the “good” voters will vote.

1. **TURN:** Labeling some voters as “good” or “bad” undermines the concept of democracy. All voters, regardless of their experience and qualifications, have a legitimate right to express their views through the vote. When we start claiming that some votes are less worthy than others, we harm that foundation of voter equality and democracy.
2. **TURN:** Having only “good” voters means that fewer people vote, so public policy is skewed towards the interest of a minority of the population rather than the interests of the entire population. Democracy exists to represent the will of the majority, not the minority.
3. **NOT TRUE:** Many voters who claim to be well informed are not, and many who claim to be uninformed are actually very well informed. Labeling voters presupposes that we can identify who is well informed simply by whether they show up at the polls.

A/T Not voting is a legitimate form of expression in itself.

1. **TURN:** Not voting allows citizens to get protection from the state without giving back to the state. If all people chose to exercise this type of free expression, the system that protects free expression can lose legitimacy over time and will likely collapse.
2. **TURN:** Not voting can mean that there is something wrong with the system, but it does not help determine WHAT is wrong. Compelled attendance at a polling place and a compelled blank ballot are more likely to indicate dissatisfaction with the government than not showing up at all.
3. **DOESN'T MATTER:** Even if it is legitimate expression, it is bad for democracy for everyone to use that form of expression, which justifies the need to compel voting.

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A/T Compulsory voting is undemocratic.

1. **NOT TRUE: Compulsory voting is not undemocratic. Forcing people to the polls does not prevent them from casting a blank ballot.**
2. **DOESN'T MATTER: Governments with compulsory voting systems have higher turnout and higher satisfaction.**

Guy Lodge (Associate Director for Politics and Power for the Institute for Public Policy Research) and Sarah Birch (Professor at the University of Essex), "The case for compulsory voting," *New Statesman*, April 28, 2012

IPPR research demonstrates that by far the most effective – albeit controversial – way of boosting participation is to make voting compulsory. It is more widespread than many realise, and is currently practiced in approximately a quarter of the world's democracies, including Belgium and Australia, though in no case is voting itself required by law; rather what is mandatory is attendance at the polls. Not all of these states actively enforce the legal requirement to turn out on election-day, but among those that do, enforcement is usually underpinned by means of small fines. Countries that use such sanctions have turnout levels that are on average 12 to 13 per cent higher than those where electoral attendance is voluntary. Moreover, states that make electoral participation a legal requirement also have higher levels of satisfaction with democracy, lower levels of wealth inequality and less corruption.

3. **TURN: Voluntary voting is less democratic because it is often only a small fraction that get to the polls. Low turnout decreases the legitimacy of the election and is less democratic than when lots of people vote.**

A/T It is too impractical and difficult to require compulsory voting.

1. **TURN: Compulsory voting will encourage making voting as easy as possible. Such laws will place the burden on government to open up new avenues such as early voting, mail in ballots, and other means that will make it easier for a person to vote. Current polling problems are a result of assuming fewer people will show up to vote.**
2. **NOT TRUE: Polling places can easily check whether or not a voter has shown up or not, and fines or punishments can be carried out quickly. If it is easy to track down speeders for traffic tickets, it will be easy to track down poll dodgers.**
3. **DOESN'T MATTER: Even if it is difficult, that is not a reason not to do it. It may be difficult, especially at first, but it will get easier over time.**

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A/T Compulsory voting does not make government better

1. **DOESN'T MATTER:** Voluntary voting does not create more responsive politicians, either. Politicians are more interested in mobilizing their base than in mobilizing the population to vote, especially if their base is in the minority of a voting district.
2. **DOESN'T MATTER:** Compulsory voting sends the message that every voter matters. Even if the results are the same, the fact that all votes and not just the votes of the privileged are counted helps legitimize the elections.
3. **TURN:** Compulsory voting significantly improves government because the end result is likely to represent the views of the majority of the population, not just the majority of voters. When populations vote, their total interest is taken into account. Voluntary voting can never do that.

A/T: Compulsory voting does not increase political awareness or understanding.

1. **TURN:** The long term effect of making citizens vote creates a norm that people feel more responsibility to exercise that vote, increasing the likelihood that they will take a more active part in learning about the issues.
2. **NOT TRUE:** Voting may not require increased awareness, but if one simply doesn't vote, it is far more likely that the issue or candidate at stake will never cross the mind of a non-voter. Even if the compelled voter reads the blurb in the newspaper about a candidate or talks to anyone about the issue, they are more politically aware than the non-voter.
3. **DOESN'T MATTER:** Even if all the voters are dumb as stumps, being politically aware is not required in a democracy, even if it is a good thing.

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A/T A right to vote, as with every right, implies that there is a right not to vote.

- 1. NOT TRUE: All rights have a corresponding duty. A right to a jury trial requires everyone to fulfill jury duty. A right to the protection of one's life requires the government to have a military and police, so citizens must pay taxes to fund those institutions.**
- 2. NOT TRUE: States grant rights that cannot be used conversely. In the US Supreme Court case *Singer v. United States*, the court held that citizens have the right to a jury trial, but cannot always waive that right if the state feels that doing so would not be fair to society's interest in an open and fair trial.**
- 3. DOESN'T MATTER: Compelled voting is most consistent with democracy because democracy is about getting a public consensus, not simply about an individual voter's wants and needs.**