 Thomas Kunsch

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Ballots Mailed, Turnout Boosted!

Low and socially divided voter turnout harms Germany’s democracy. To vote by mail – the only flexible way to cast one’s ballot – citizens still have to apply before each election. If this hurdle were removed, voter turnout could go back up.



Christina Tillmann



Emilie Reichmann

In recent decades, and with few exceptions, voter turnout has sunk at all levels of government and become less and less socially representative. This harms the legitimacy of our democracy. The reasons for not voting are diverse, and the responses must be diverse, too – ranging from addressing non-voters in person to making changes in how we vote. Postal voting, in particular, still holds some potential. If “application-free” postal voting were introduced, it would open up two options:

1. For state and federal parliamentary elections, postal voting documents could be automatically sent to all eligible voters. In Switzerland, this led voter turnout to climb by more than four percentage points.
2. On the municipal level, it might even make sense to conduct elections (almost) exclusively via postal voting. Doing this led voter turnout to climb by almost 10 percentage points in the United States.

These measures also hold much promise for Germany. If we exploit the potentials of postal voting and adapt them to the requirements of an increasingly mobile and flexible society, it can help get voter turnout back up.

You can learn more about the potentials of postal voting and the two proposals in the EINWURF policy brief linked below. There, you will also find a supplementing factsheet that summarizes all the most important facts and figures about postal voting (in German only).

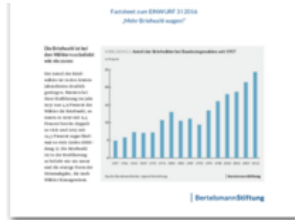


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Factsheet Postal Voting

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