

# Low voter turnout in local elections as compared to national elections

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There are many reasons why local elections have lower voter turnout as compared to national elections. Many scholars and political scientists have been researching the reasons for this phenomenon. Interestingly, participation in national elections is not that high. Less than half of all eligible voters participate in federal elections. However, the voter turnout in local elections is even more terrifying. Out of many explanations for lower voter turnout in local elections, two of them, such as election timing and service delivery arrangements, stand out for me.

Hajnal and Lewis (2003) believe that scheduling local elections at the same time as statewide primaries or general elections would immediately increase the number of votes cast in the local elections because national elections historically have higher voter turnout (Hajnal and Lewis, 2003). The reason for this increase, as Hajnal and Lewis (2003) explain, is that it would be very convenient for a voter to have just one day of elections, where they would have to check a few more names on their local election lists in addition to national election lists. Naturally, it makes sense. The voters would have to take less time out of their busy schedules to commute to the election sites. Besides, a single election day requires less planning and organization on the part of the voters, and thus it becomes more convenient.

Another reason for the lower turnout in local elections is the limitation of the local government in terms of its service delivery arrangements as identified by Hajnal and Lewis (2003). A lot of local governments contract out city services. For example, city councils will contract with county governments to provide the services for the city. This practice has a lot of advantages, such as more efficient and more cost-effective service delivery. However, at the

same time, this practice has its negative effects, especially when it comes to local elections. It reduces the power of local officials, such as their ability to provide and control local jobs. As a result, reduced power leads to reduced interests in local officials and local governance overall during the local elections.