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Mandatory Active Suffrage and Political Participation in Ecuador

El Sufragio Activo Obligatorio Y La Participación Política En El Ecuador

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Abstract

Throughout the history of electoral processes, doctrinal positions regarding citizen political participation have maintained successive controversies regarding the compulsory or non-compulsory nature of active suffrage and its role in the outcomes of these processes. These debates have hinged on various factors, such as democratic character, individual rights, and responsibilities, as well as political legitimacy. The objective was to analyze, from a legal perspective, the impact of mandatory active suffrage on citizen participation in the last two electoral processes in Santo Domingo de los Tsáchilas. Using a mixed approach, with qualitative and quantitative tendencies, the application of scientific research methods, such as analytical-synthetic, historical-logical, and document analysis, allowed to achieve the predetermined goal. According to the results, the relevance of compulsory citizen participation in electoral processes was confirmed. It can be concluded that mandatory active suffrage continues to be a real necessity to ensure citizen participation, serving as an indispensable means to certify the democratic legitimacy of the government and its political institutions, governance, the real interaction of society with power, and the transition toward other forms of political participation.

Keywords: Mandatory Active Suffrage, Democracy, Citizen Political Participation, Electoral System.

Resumen

Las posiciones doctrinales referentes a la participación política ciudadana han mantenido a lo largo de la historia de los procesos electorales sucesivas controversias en cuanto a la obligatoriedad o no del sufragio activo y su papel en los resultados de dichos procesos. Esgrimiéndose entre otros factores, el carácter democrático, el derecho y la responsabilidad individual, así como la legitimación política. Se definió como objetivo, analizar desde el punto de vista del derecho como fenómeno socio-jurídico la incidencia del sufragio activo obligatorio en la participación ciudadana en los dos últimos procesos electorales en Santo Domingo de los Tsáchilas. Sustentada en la modalidad mixta, cualitativa con tendencia cuantitativa, la utilización de métodos de la investigación científica como, el analítico-sintético, el histórico-lógico, el de análisis documental permitió el cumplimiento del propósito preestablecido. Se comprobó de acuerdo con los resultados, la pertinencia de la obligatoriedad en la participación ciudadana en los procesos electorales. Concluyendo que el sufragio activo obligatorio continúa siendo una necesidad real a fin de garantizar la participación ciudadana, como vía indispensable para certificar la legitimación democrática del gobierno y sus instituciones políticas, la gobernabilidad, la interacción real de la sociedad con el poder, así como el tránsito hacia otras formas de participación política.

Palabras Clave: Sufragio Activo Obligatorio, Democracia, Participación Política Ciudadana, Sistema Electoral.

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Introduction

The electoral mechanism of each country is oriented, among other objectives, to ensure citizen participation in fundamental political processes, using different types of suffrage, which can be voluntary, compulsory, or mixed. These types differ in how they regard suffrage, either as a right or as an obligation. They are considered mixed in cases where there is an obligation for the majority of citizens while allowing some legally identified groups to participate voluntarily (Zuñiga Urbina, 2009).

Compulsory voting is understood as a system in which citizens are required to participate in elections under penalty of sanction (Compulsory Voting, 2020), is contemplated and stipulated in the constitutional and electoral regulations of numerous countries as a means to ensure higher citizen participation. This is done to achieve better representation, which in turn impacts the full exercise of democracy and governance in each state or region.

From a doctrinal standpoint, there is agreement in recognizing that political participation, in electoral terms, represents a factual test of the ideal of democracy as a form of government. Nevertheless, controversy exists regarding the desirability of each type of suffrage, based on the need for electoral processes to represent the majority of participating citizens (Barrientos, 2018). In this context, proponents of mandatory voting base their theories on various factors, including:

- The weakening of political parties in terms of credibility and trust among voters.
- The democratic legitimacy of the government and its political institutions.
- The necessary political empowerment of the electorate.
- Increasing citizen participation.
- Eliminating representational disparities within each social group.
- Raising levels of civic engagement and responsibility.

On the other hand, proponents of voluntary suffrage, defined as "the citizen's freedom to cast a vote or not" (Legal Encyclopedia, 2020), emphasize its historical origin as a right rather than an obligation. From this perspective, it stems from the fundamental right of every citizen to choose whether to participate, depending on their interest in the presented political proposals. They stress the infringement on political and individual freedom that compulsory suffrage represents. Nevertheless, in response to these arguments in favor of rights, some question the fundamental freedom affected by compulsory voting (Marshall, 2014).

An examination of the origins of compulsory active suffrage is necessarily linked to the principles of popular sovereignty, defined as "the political principle that sovereignty, as the exercise of the general will, can never be alienated, and the sovereign, as a collective being, can only be represented by itself" (Pan-Hispanic Dictionary of Legal Spanish [DPEJ], 2022). These principles place citizen participation as a fundamental element in the political configuration of states, their representative bodies, and institutions, and as a guarantee of institutional stability and the necessary systematic interaction between the state and society.

Representative experiences of the participation-compulsory voting link, as presented by Soto Barrientos, show that in the case of Switzerland, compulsory voting reinforces voters' determination to fulfill their political duties of participation and combating abstention. In the specific case of Italy, the importance granted to compulsory voting is evident from its inclusion as a constitutional and individual duty, linked with other constitutional duties under the principle of solidarity (Soto Barrientos, 2018). However, both Switzerland (1971) and Italy (1992) have since transitioned from compulsory voting to voluntary suffrage.

In the same context, the analysis conducted by Hernandez regarding voting in Europe shows that out of 36 countries studied, only 3 maintain compulsory voting, representing a mere 8.3%. This contrasts

with the situation in the Americas, where 52.2% of the countries analyzed (12 out of 23) uphold compulsory voting (Compulsory Voting in America and Europe, 2019). The predominant trend is towards the use of voluntary voting in most states and electoral processes. There is also the introduction and use of mixed voting systems by establishing exemptions from the established duty or responsibility.

Previous studies have demonstrated an increase or decrease in levels of political electoral participation corresponding to the presence or absence of mandatory suffrage. In most cases, higher electoral turnout and participation are observed in countries where suffrage is mandatory and subject to penalties (Mendieta Ramirez, 2016).

Similarly, it is estimated that compulsory voting not only ensures increased citizen participation but also guarantees the effective representativeness of the electorate, thereby increasing the potential for political offers to converge towards a more equitable distribution of power (Mata, 2009).

In the Latin American context, the analysis and discussion of citizen participation in politics have become a common topic, especially considering that in South America, a larger number of countries have incorporated compulsory active suffrage into their political systems (Neu, 2022).

In Ecuador, it can be argued that from the early days of the Republic, suffrage had a compulsory nature, although there were no mechanisms in place to enforce it (Macías Bowen, 2018). The establishment of the Superior Electoral Tribunal in 1944 resulted in the formation of a new electoral control system.

From a doctrinal standpoint, the debate surrounding mandatory or voluntary suffrage in Ecuador underscores the need to maintain mandatory voting. Advocates argue that it is essential to cultivate pluralism, respect for differing opinions, and transparency in democratic processes as essential elements due to the lack of political culture and maturity within Ecuadorian society. These factors make the transition to voluntary suffrage unfeasible (López Ludeña, 2014).

A chronological overview of changes in the suffrage process in Ecuador highlights several key developments. The birth of the Republic of Ecuador in 1830 recognized the right to vote, albeit with specific requirements and without universal suffrage. In 1861, property ownership as a requirement for suffrage was eliminated. In another step towards democratization, the requirement of wealth to run as a candidate in electoral processes was removed in 1884. Other significant transformations include setting the minimum voting age at 18 in 1997, granting women the right to vote in 1928, introducing compulsory voting in 1945, establishing electoral registers, and enacting party laws in 1947.

This process of transformation continued in the second half of the 19th century and the early 20th century with the enactment of regulations that significantly contributed to the genuine democratization of political participation in Ecuador. Notable among these was the effective recognition of universal suffrage in 1978, including illiterate individuals, who represented a significant portion of the population, including peasants, indigenous people, and other social strata. The recognition of voluntary voting was also established in Article 62, numeral 2 of the current Constitution of the Republic, which states:

Voting is optional for individuals between the ages of sixteen and eighteen, those over sixty-five years old, Ecuadorians living abroad, members of the Armed Forces and National Police, and persons with disabilities. (Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador, 2008).

In this context, the Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador addresses the rights enjoyed by all Ecuadorian citizens in Article 61, which discusses the right to choose and be chosen, constituting the evident and free participation that the constitution provides for actively engaging in political and democratic processes. The Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador also enshrines the right to vote in Article 62, numeral 1, thus establishing the foundation for political rights (Constitution of the Republic

of Ecuador, 2008).

On the other hand, the Organic Law of Electoral and Political Organizations of the Republic of Ecuador, in Article 11, numeral 1, specifies the exercise of the right to vote, mentioning that voting is mandatory and subject to the provisions outlined (Electoral Law, 2016). Suffrage is considered a duty, as outlined in Article 83, numeral 17 of the Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador, which states that individuals must participate in political life, whether in a civic or community manner, with honesty, transparency, and in accordance with principles that ensure full participation in territorial matters and decisions that contribute to the development of society, whether social, economic, or legal (Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador, 2008).

Furthermore, the Inter-American Convention on Human Rights (San Jose Pact) addresses political rights in Article 23, numeral 1, letter b. It empowers citizens to vote and be elected in various elections within a state, ensuring that the process is conducted secretly, thus guaranteeing the freedom of expression of the voters who participate in different electoral processes (American Convention on Human Rights, "San Jose Pact," 1969).

According to the electoral law intellectual Pedicone de Valls, regarding compulsory suffrage, states: "The technical-legal significance of this obligation lies in the thesis that exercising the political right to vote is synonymous with the civic duty to do so" (Pedicone de Valls, 2001). Thus, mandatory active suffrage is given a positive dimension because it encourages active participation by individuals, contrasting with what voluntary suffrage might entail, as it might compress the participatory aspect.

Therefore, it is necessary to analyze, from the perspective of law as a socio-legal phenomenon, the impact of compulsory active suffrage on citizen participation in the last two electoral processes in Santo Domingo de los Tsáchilas. This analysis will enable the formulation of a doctrinal position regarding the role of Ecuadorian legal regulations with respect to mandatory voting and its effects on representation, democracy, and the institutional functions of the Ecuadorian state.

Line Of Research

- Challenges, Perspectives, and Improvement of Legal Sciences in Ecuador.
- ✓ The Ecuadorian legal system, historical, theoretical, philosophical, and constitutional assumptions.

Materials And Methods

For this research, a mixed quantitative-qualitative research paradigm was employed to analyze the impact of mandatory suffrage on citizen participation in the last two electoral processes in Ecuador. This approach relied on a combination of different statistical and informational results related to compulsory voting and political participation in Ecuador.

Methodologically, it adopted an exploratory and descriptive character, primarily based on a bibliographical study of electoral law, involving data collection from various sources, including academic papers, normative documents, and other references related to compulsory voting. The Historical-Logical method allowed for an exploration of the development and evolution of suffrage and its regulatory forms. Additionally, the Document Analysis method facilitated the examination of different doctrinal positions on suffrage, whether it is mandatory, voluntary, or mixed, in various regions and countries worldwide, including Ecuador.

At the theoretical level, the Analytical-Synthetic method enabled the evaluation of the specifics of suffrage in relation to participation in the last two electoral processes and the exploration of the fundamental aspects of suffrage as a form of political participation by citizens and legitimization of state institutions. It also allowed for the synthesis of the results related to the impact of compulsory voting in achieving the research objectives.

The use of Mathematical methods, including descriptive statistics, enabled the processing of the required data obtained from participation in the 2021 presidential and 2023 local elections (Quevedo Arnaiz, et al., 2017).

The information collection was carried out through well-established survey and interview techniques, using appropriate tools (questionnaires and interview guides). These techniques were applied to legal professionals, specifically lawyers in private practice with more than five years of experience in Santo Domingo, faculty members from the Universidad Regional Autónoma de los Andes in Santo Domingo, and officials from the National Electoral Council in the performance of their duties, all of whom provided valuable insights for the research.

Results

The evaluation of the data presented below, related to electoral processes in countries with different stances on voting and the ability to carry it out:

Table 1: Political Participation in Latin America.

Presidential elections: Mandatory voting		
Countries	Registered Citizens	Percentage of citizen participation
Peru 2021	25 287 954	74.5
Brazil 2022	+ 150 million	79.41
Uruguay 2019	2,699,980	90.1
Argentina 2019	25.8 million	81

Sources: Electoral Court of Peru, Supreme Electoral Court of Brazil, Electoral Court of Uruguay, and the National Electoral Chamber of Argentina.

Table 2: Political Participation in Latin America.

Presidential elections: Voluntary Vote		
Countries	Registered Citizens	Percentage of citizen participation
Colombia 2022	39 002 239	58.17
Chile 2021	15 030 963	55.2

Sources: National Electoral Council of Colombia and Electoral Service of Chile.

On the other hand, an approach to citizen participation in the electoral processes (Presidential and legislative) of recent years in Ecuador, yields the following results:

Table 3: Presidential Elections Ecuador.

	Registered Citizens	Total votes cast	Percentage of citizen participation
2009	10 532 234	7 928 748	75.2%
2013	11 675 441	9 465 860	81.09%
2017 first round	12 816 898	10 470 174	81.69%
2017 second round	12 816 898	10 636 008	82.99%
2021 first round	13 106 357	10 616 263	80.99%
2021 second round	13 106 357	10 829 823	82.62%

Source: National Electoral Council Ecuador.

Table 4: Legislative Elections Ecuador.

	Registered Citizens	Total votes cast	Percentage of citizen participation
2009	10 532 234	7 928 748	75.2%
2017	12 816 898	10 476 231	81.68%
2021	13 107 364	10 616 457	81%

Source: National Electoral Council Ecuador.

Table 5: Ecuador Sectional Elections February 5, 2023. Santo Domingo Province.

	Registered Citizens	Total votes cast	Percentage of citizen participation
Santo Domingo Canton	342,473	275,143	80.3%
Canton La Concordia	46,148	39,254	85%
Santo Domingo de los Tsáchilas Province	388,621	314,397	80.9%

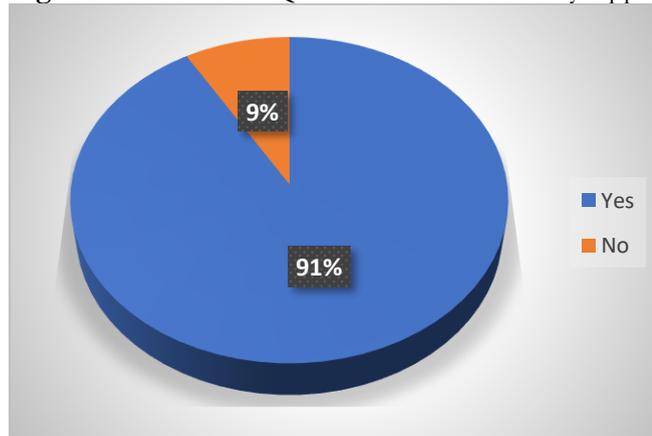
Source: National Electoral Council Santo Domingo Provincial Delegation.

Survey results

Regarding the survey conducted in the course of the research, it is worth noting that the majority of the 164 participants are active legal professionals with 5 to over 10 years of experience in their field. They have also been involved in various electoral processes in Ecuador. Additionally, some participants are directly engaged in the political and electoral life in Ecuador.

The conducted survey yielded the following results:

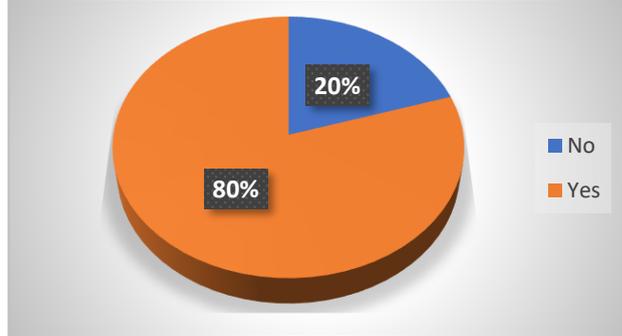
1. Are you familiar with the concept of mandatory active suffrage?

Figure 1: Answers To Question 1. Source: Survey Applied, Own Elaboration.

91% (150 respondents) stated that they are familiar with the concept of compulsory active suffrage, while 9% (14 respondents) mentioned that they are not familiar with the concept.

2. Do you believe that compulsory active suffrage is an effective way to increase political participation in Ecuador?

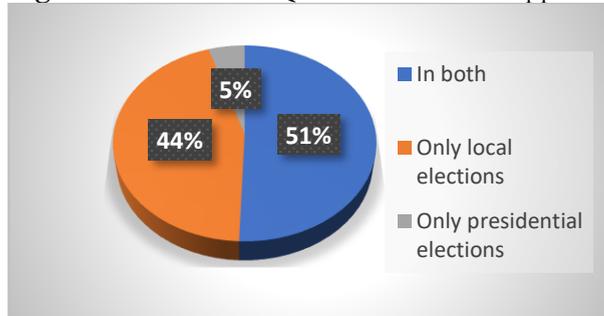
Figure 2: Answers To Question 2. Source: Survey Applied, Own Elaboration.



80% (131 respondents) believe that compulsory active suffrage is an effective way to increase political participation in Ecuador, while 20% (33 respondents) stated that compulsory active suffrage is not an effective way to increase political participation in Ecuador.

3. Did you vote in the last presidential elections in 2021 and local elections in 2023 in Ecuador?

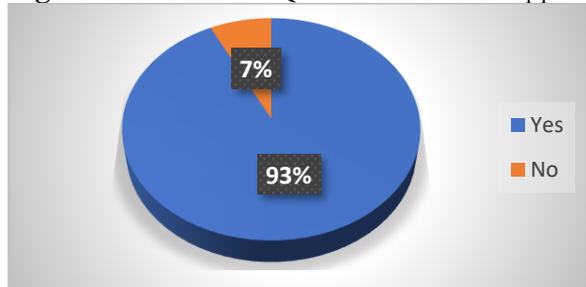
Figure 3: Answers To Question 3. Source: Applied Survey, Own Elaboration.



51% percent (83 respondents) stated that they voted in the last elections, both in the 2021 presidential and the 2023 local elections in Ecuador, while 44% (73 respondents) mentioned that they voted only in the 2023 local elections, and 5% (8 respondents) indicated that they voted only in the 2021 presidential elections.

4. Do you consider important your role as a citizen in the political participation of your country?

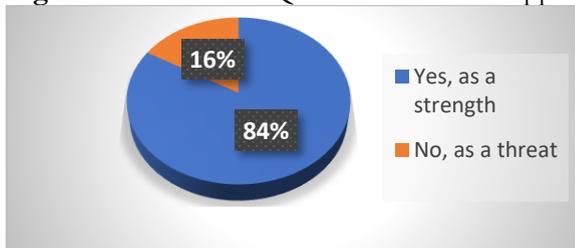
Figure 4: Answers To Question 4. Source: Applied Survey, Own Elaboration.



93% (154 respondents) consider their role as a citizen in the political participation of the country important, while 7% (12 respondents) do not consider it important for their role as citizens in political participation in the country.

5. Do you consider the compulsory nature of active suffrage a strength or a weakness of democracy in Ecuador?

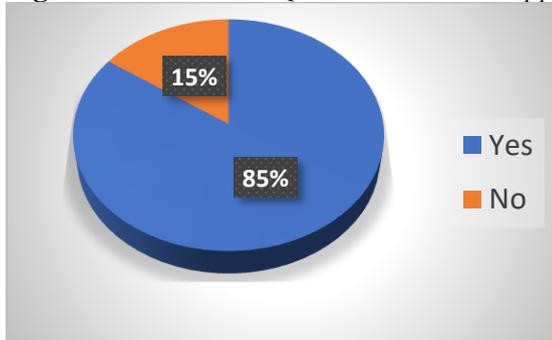
Figure 5: Answers To Question 5. Source: Applied Survey, Own Elaboration.



84% (137 respondents) consider that mandatory voting is a strength of democracy in Ecuador, while the other 16% (27 respondents) mentioned that mandatory voting is a weakness of democracy in Ecuador.

6. Have you participated in any political movement or party in Ecuador?

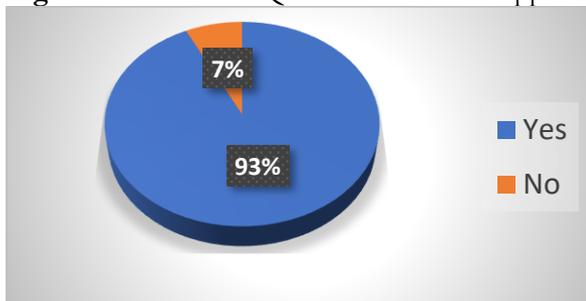
Figure 6: Answers To Question 6. Source: Applied Survey, Own Elaboration.



85% percent (139 respondents) indicated that they have not participated in any political movement or party in Ecuador, while 15% (25 respondents) mentioned that they have participated in a political movement or party in Ecuador.

7. Do you believe that the political participation of young people should be encouraged in Ecuador?

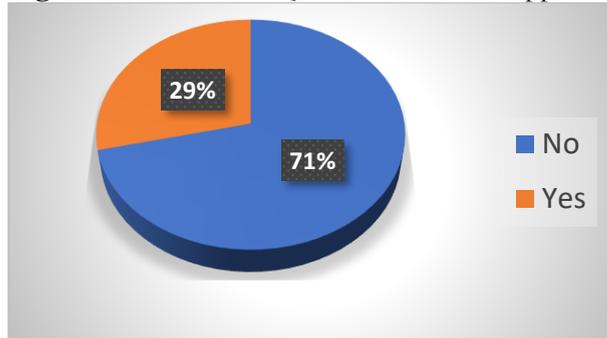
Figure 7: Answers to Question 7. Source: Applied Survey, Own Elaboration.



93% percent (153 respondents) believe that the political participation of young people should be more encouraged in Ecuador, while 7% (11 respondents) mentioned that it should not be more encouraged.

8. Do you think that political education is sufficient in Ecuador to promote citizen participation?

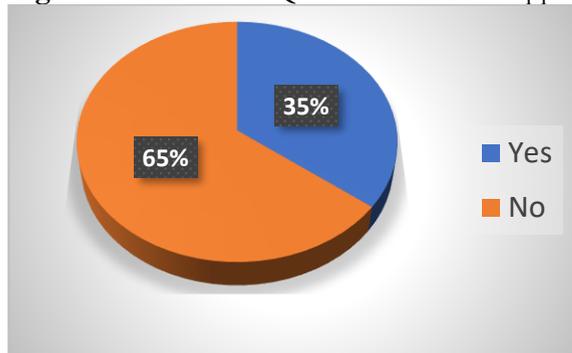
Figure 8: Answers To Question 8. Source: Applied Survey, Own Elaboration.



71% (117 respondents) believe that political education in Ecuador is not sufficient to promote citizen participation, while 29% (47 respondents) mentioned that it is sufficient.

9. Are you willing to participate more actively in your country's politics if you are given the opportunity and the necessary means?

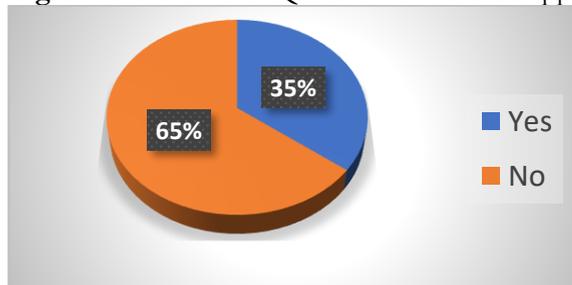
Figure 9: Answers To Question 9. Source: Applied Survey, Own Elaboration.



91% (149 respondents) stated that they are willing to participate more actively in the politics of the country if given the opportunity and necessary means, while 9% (15 respondents) mentioned that they are not willing to participate actively in the politics of the country.

10. Do you consider the political awareness of citizens sufficient to transition to voluntary suffrage in Ecuador?

Figure 10: Answers to Question 10. Source: Applied Survey, Own Elaboration.



65% (106 respondents) stated that there is not enough political awareness among citizens to transition to voluntary suffrage in Ecuador, while 35% (58 respondents) mentioned that there is enough political awareness among citizens to transition to voluntary suffrage in Ecuador.

Interview Results

The conducted interviews allowed for interactions with professionals and public officials with extensive knowledge of electoral matters and the political life of the region. Among them were the Provincial General Secretary of the National Electoral Council in Santo Domingo, the current and re-elected Mayor of Santo Domingo, a current and re-elected councilwoman from Santo Domingo, as well as a university professor at UNIANDES and a lecturer in electoral law.

No.	Questions	Interpretation of answers
1	Do you believe that compulsory active suffrage is necessary to promote citizen political participation?	In response to this question, the majority of the interviewees (3) concur on the necessity of this type of suffrage for the promotion of citizen political participation. However, one interviewee does not share this perspective and believes that it should be viewed as the fulfillment of a right, which translates into benefits for society.
2	Do you consider that suffrage should be mandatory in Ecuador?	All participants agree on the need to maintain this form of participation, recognizing that the political culture necessary to move towards voluntary participation does not exist.
3	What impact has mandatory active suffrage had on citizen political participation in Ecuador?	In this particular and, in the majority sense, the impact of mandatory active suffrage on citizen participation in the different electoral processes called is recognized as positive, translated into the high percentage indices of turnout to the detriment of non-participation and abstentionism.
4	In your opinion, does mandatory active suffrage affect or benefit political representation in Ecuador?	In relation to this point, the majority of those interviewed agree with valuing mandatory active suffrage as a benefit for the representativeness of the different political parties, since it will depend on the quality and correlation between the speech and its practical application.
5	What role does civic education play in mandatory active suffrage in Ecuador?	All participants recognize the importance of civic education to promote a political culture in citizens, in such a way that awareness is achieved, its importance in political participation, as a path to true democracy, where citizens recognize their role and come to consider voting, not as an obligation, but as a right.
6	How is political participation being encouraged among citizens within the Province of Santo Domingo de los Tsáchilas?	On the one hand, there is agreement in emphasizing the support in educational units and institutions for the formation of political and democratic criteria as an essential way to promote participation and involvement in future electoral processes that are called. On the other hand, there is an agreement in describing the promotion and development of actions conducive to the conscious participation of citizens in these processes as insignificant.
7	Do you consider citizen political awareness sufficient to move towards voluntary active suffrage in Ecuador?	Generally speaking, there is agreement on the insufficiency and non-existence of a true citizen political consciousness, as well as an active and committed voting culture, making evident the lack of real and sustained commitment of government institutions and Ecuadorian society in general.

Source: Applied interview, own elaboration.

Discussion

As can be seen, according to Table 1, levels of citizen participation in presidential elections in countries where compulsory voting is in place, such as Peru, Brazil, Uruguay, and Argentina, are higher from a

percentage perspective, as reflected in Table 2. In countries like Colombia and Chile where voting is voluntary, participation is lower. In general terms, this indicates that in Latin America, there is not a citizen political culture that aligns with the general principles of democracy, especially regarding the importance of personal voting for the representation that comes with the exercise of political power.

The data in Table 3, which pertains to presidential elections, shows stability in terms of citizen participation, with values exceeding 80% since 2013. It can be noted in the cases of the 2017 and 2021 elections that the results of the second round in both cases were higher than those of the first round. This suggests that greater citizen participation is driven by the direct interest generated by the fact that it is the determining process of the electoral contest, which will define the nation's political direction.

In the case of Table 4, which concerns the electoral processes for the formation of the legislative power, as with presidential elections, shows an increasing citizen participation from a percentage perspective, reflecting the guarantee of compulsory voting for the sake of representativeness and institutional legitimacy of this state function in Ecuador.

In full correspondence with the results reflected in Tables 3 and 4, Table 5 demonstrates, through its results and the high citizen participation, the relevance of compulsory active suffrage in the electoral processes in the province of Santo Domingo. This ensures the full effectiveness of democracy and the exercise of power.

The high percentage of surveyed individuals who claim to be familiar with the concept of compulsory active suffrage demonstrates that this term is well-known within the Ecuadorian electoral context, especially by those individuals who participate in various electoral contests. However, it is important to consider that not all citizens are familiar with this term, as evidenced by the percentage of individuals who are not acquainted with it. This indicates that a portion of the population participates in electoral processes due to their obligatory nature and the resulting consequences.

The fact demonstrated by the majority of the participating individuals, who consider compulsory active suffrage as a means of ensuring citizen political participation in Ecuador, highlights the need to maintain the obligation of electoral participation to guarantee the necessary legitimacy and political representation in various state bodies and institutions. However, efforts should be made to promote citizen participation based on contemporary concepts, emphasizing the right of each individual to participate in the political life of society through voting, not as an obligation but as the civic exercise of a political right. This aligns with Dr. Araujo Rocha's viewpoint (Advisor to the Supreme Electoral Tribunal), who argues that voting is a political right that citizens have to participate in public affairs, directly or through representatives, in full accordance with Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The reality demonstrated by the majority of individuals who consider compulsory active suffrage as a strength of democracy in Ecuador confirms the need to maintain this form of participation to ensure the democratic legitimacy of the government and its political institutions, governance, and the real interaction of society with power. It also paves the way for other forms of participation by elevating levels of citizen political culture.

Regarding political education, it has been shown that it is insufficient in terms of fostering genuine citizen political participation. Clear concepts should be promoted to visualize suffrage not as an obligation but as a civic right so that each individual identifies themselves as part of the power, actively exercising the government for the sake of the democratic nature of society as a whole. This is in line with Paolo Moncagatta and others, who argue that "democracy is more solid when the citizenry expresses support for its institutions and the democratic process."

As a result of the insufficient political education mentioned earlier, it is demonstrated that there is not

enough political awareness among the population, which would enable them to understand the real need for their participation in the country's political life. This aligns with the findings of the interviews, which emphasize political awareness as the determining factor for the transition to voluntary active suffrage.

Furthermore, it is demonstrated that there is a need for active and sustained commitment from government institutions and civil society to promote participation and ensure the integrity of the electoral process. This includes the promotion of civic education and electoral transparency and the removal of barriers to voting access. It is important to recognize that electoral participation is a fundamental citizen right but also a responsibility. Considering all of the above, it is believed that the required cultural conditions for transitioning to voluntary active suffrage are not in place.

Conclusions

Active suffrage, rather than an obligation, continues to be a real necessity to ensure citizen political participation. It is an indispensable means to guarantee the democratic legitimacy of the government and its political institutions, governance, the real interaction of society with power, and the transition to other forms of political participation.

The percentages achieved in the analyzed electoral processes, both in the Latin American context and in Ecuador, demonstrate higher citizen political participation in countries where active suffrage is mandatory, in contrast to those using voluntary suffrage. Therefore, this form of participation should be maintained.

It has been confirmed that civic education is insufficient in raising awareness and understanding of democratic values, institutionalism, representativeness, and the role of citizens in political decision-making.

In conclusion, within the Ecuadorian context, there is not enough political awareness and understanding to shift from mandatory active suffrage to voluntary participation. Therefore, it is essential to enhance citizen political culture at all educational and social levels to solidify the democratic values necessary for full political participation as a citizen's right rather than an obligation.

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