

A high voter turnout is a sign that a country's political system enjoys a strong degree of participation. **Voter turnout rates vary hugely across the region** (Figure 8.13, Panel A). Over eight in every ten people turn out to vote in parliamentary elections in Viet Nam, Papua New Guinea, and Lao PDR, compared to less than one in every two people in Azerbaijan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Pakistan, the three lowest turnouts in the region. In all other countries for which there is data on voting turnout in parliamentary elections, more than half of the eligible population votes.

Voter turnout has generally declined in most countries over the last 20 years (Figure 8.13, Panel B). However, the pattern of voting decline has been uneven and far from universal. Mongolia and Azerbaijan have experienced the sharpest decline in voter turnout. One-third of countries experienced increases in voter turnout since the early 1990s, and the increase was largest in Papua New Guinea.

Confidence in the electoral process is an essential element for civic participation of citizens. **About 60% of the electorate across the Asia/Pacific region has confidence in election outcomes** (Figure 8.14). Confidence in fair elections is highest in Lao PDR, Cambodia, Singapore and Viet Nam while less than 20% of the electorate in Armenia, Pakistan, and Mongolia has confidence in the fairness of the election process.

Men and women often have similar levels of confidence in honesty of elections across the region (Figure 8.15). In most Asia/Pacific economies that do not belong to the OECD, women tend to trust the electoral process more than men, and the gender gap is around 5 percentage points in Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Malaysia. By contrast in Australia, Japan, Korea and New Zealand, women have less confidence in the fairness of electoral processes with the gender gap being around 8 to 10 percentage points.

Definition and measurement

Voting in national parliamentary elections is one indicator of people's participation in their community's national life. The indicator used here to measure the participation of individuals in the electoral process is the "Voting age population turnout", i.e. the percentage of the voting age population that actually voted – as available from administrative records of member countries. Different types of elections occur in different countries according to their institutional structure and different geographical jurisdictions. For some countries, it should be noted, turnout for presidential elections and regional elections may be higher than for national parliamentary elections, perhaps because those elected through these ballots are constitutionally more important for how those countries are run. Data about voter turnout are extracted from the international database managed by the Institute for Democratic and Electoral Assistance (IDEA).

Data on confidence in "honesty of elections" has been taken from the Gallup World Poll. The Gallup World Poll is conducted in more than 150 countries around the world based on a common questionnaire, translated into the predominant languages of each country. With few exceptions, all samples are probability based and nationally representative of the resident population aged 15 years and over in the entire country, including rural areas. While this ensures a high degree of comparability across countries, results may be affected by sampling and non-sampling error, and variation in response rates. Hence, results should be interpreted with care. These probability surveys are valid within a statistical margin of error, also called a 95% confidence interval. This means that if the survey is conducted 100 times using the exact same procedures, the margin of error would include the "true value" in 95 out of 100 surveys. Sample sizes vary across countries from 1 000 to 4 000, and as the surveys use a clustered sample design the margin of error varies by question. The margin of error declines with increasing sample size: with a sample size of 1 000, the margin of error at a 95% confidence interval is $0.98/\sqrt{\text{sample size}}$ or 3%, with a sample size of 4 000, this is 1.5%. To minimize the effect of annual fluctuations in responses related to small sample sizes, results are averaged over a three-year period, or two-year period in case of missing data. If only one observation in a three-year period is available this finding is not reported.

Data on confidence in the honesty of elections is based on the following question: "In this country, do you have confidence in each of the following, or not? How about honesty of elections?"

Figure 8.13. Voting

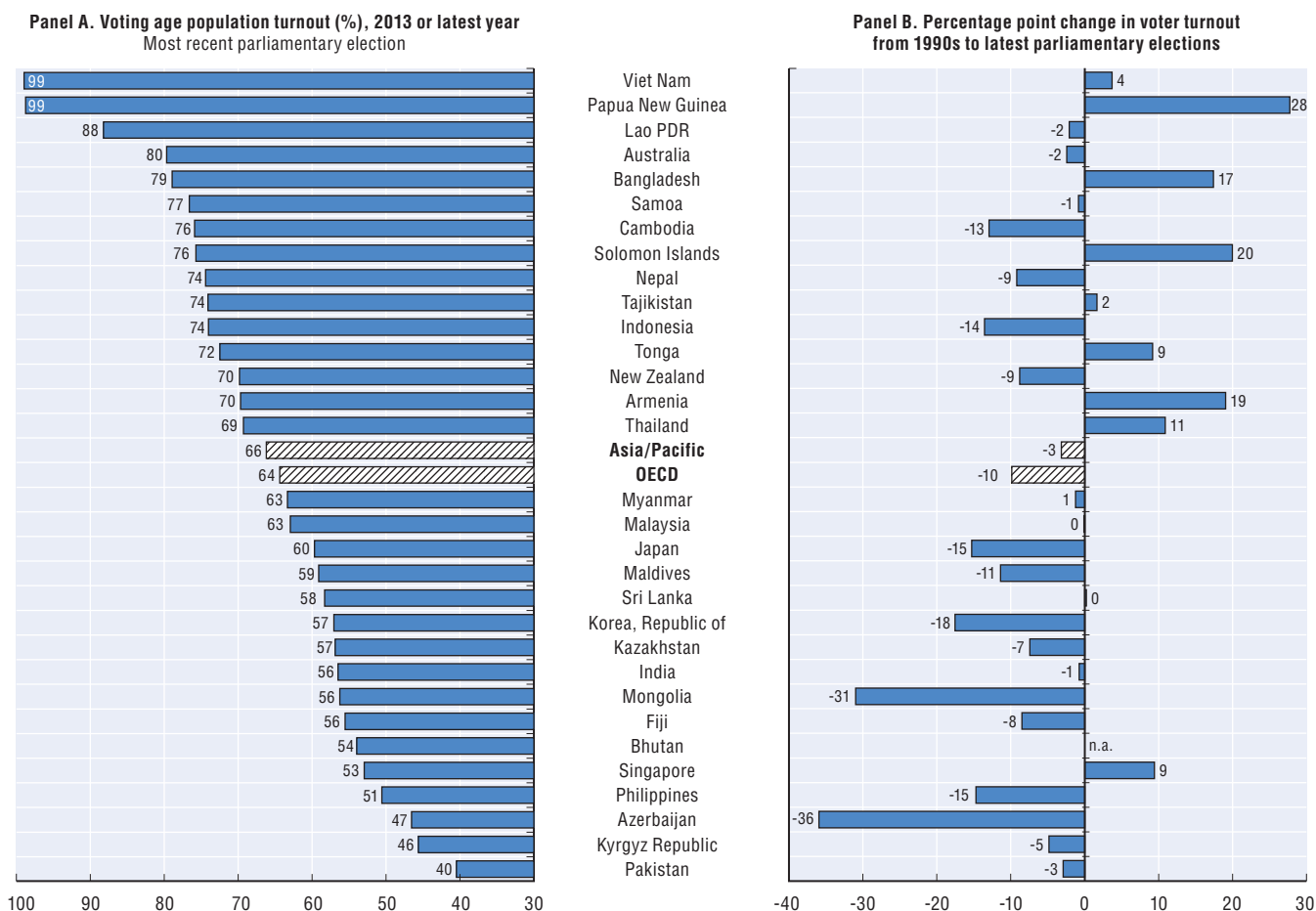


Figure 8.14. Confidence in fairness of elections varies across countries

Share of people reporting to have confidence in honesty of elections, %

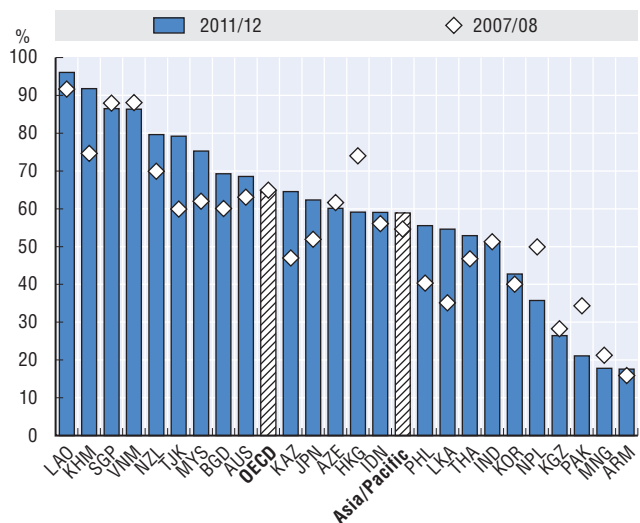
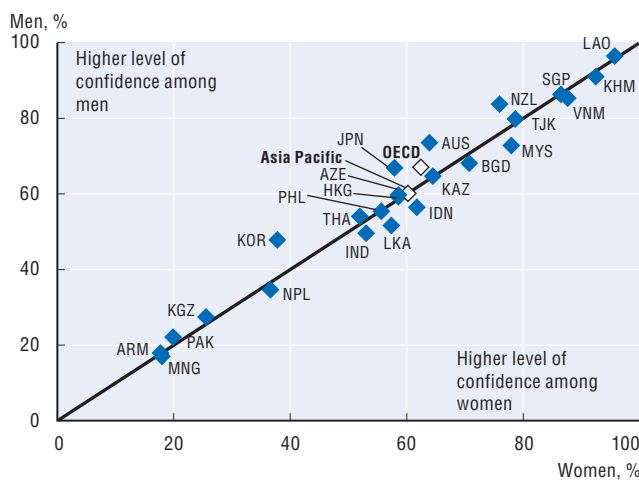


Figure 8.15. Confidence in fairness of elections is often similar for men and women in the region

Share of people reporting to have confidence in honesty of elections by gender, %



Source: International database organised by the Institute for Democratic and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), www.idea.int/. Data on confidence in honesty of elections are collected by Gallup World Poll (www.gallup.com).

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Society at a Glance: Asia/Pacific 2014

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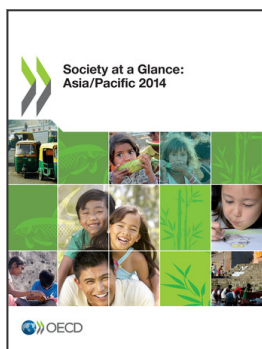
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