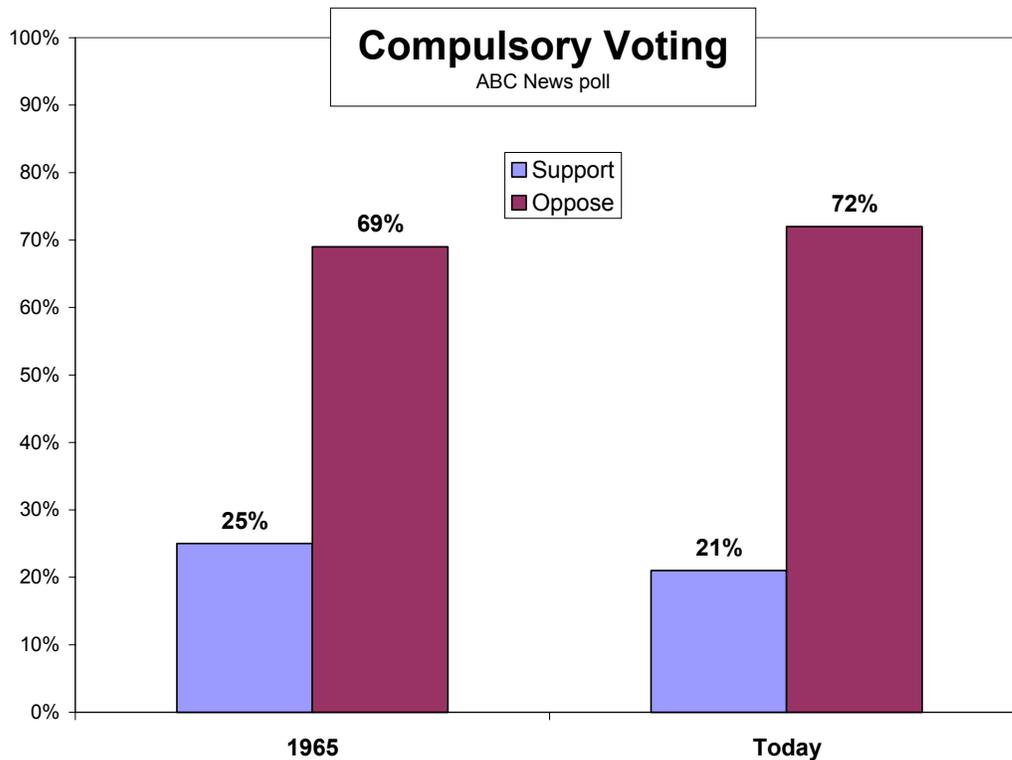


More than Seven in 10 Oppose Compulsory Voting

Regardless of the closeness of the last presidential go-round, the freedom to stay home on Election Day is one right most Americans don't want to surrender: Just like they did 40 years ago, most by far reject the idea of requiring all citizens to vote.

Seventy-two percent in this ABC News poll oppose a law that would require all eligible citizens to vote in national elections and levy a small fine on those who don't have a good excuse. Just 21 percent say it would be a good law to have here.

That's almost identical to its level in Gallup polls in 1965, when 69 percent opposed such a law. Opinions haven't changed even though turnout has slipped from about 63 percent of eligible voters in 1964 to 55 percent in 2000.



A new book by political scientists Louis Massicotte, André Blais and Antoine Yoshinaka reports that, of 63 democratic countries studied, 18 required citizens to vote, including 11 in which nonvoters face sanctions such as fines. It's been estimated that such laws increase turnout by eight to 15 percent. Mandatory-voting nations include Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil and Chile, Italy, Portugal, Panama, and Venezuela.

In this poll, majorities across all demographic groups oppose mandatory voting, with some differences in degree. A third of people in the lowest-income households call it a good law to have here (despite the fine); that compares with fewer than two in 10 in the highest-income households. And a third of non-whites support the law, compared with just 16 percent of whites.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News poll was conducted by telephone June 2-6, 2004, among a random national sample of 1,001 adults. The results have a three-point error margin. Sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS of Horsham, Pa.

Analysis by Dalia Sussman.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com at <http://abcnews.com/pollvault.html>.

Media contact: Cathie Levine, (212) 456-4934, or Lisa Finkel, (212) 456-6190.

Full results follow:

115. In a few countries every eligible citizen is required by law to vote in national elections. Those who don't have a good excuse for not voting are subject to a small fine. Do you think this would be a good law or a poor law to have in this country?

	Good law	Poor law	No opinion
6/6/04	21	72	7
9/1/65*	25	68	7
8/10/65	25	69	5
7/21/65	26	68	6
5/18/65	25	69	6

9/1/65 and previous, Gallup. Wording: "If he doesn't have a good excuse for not voting, he is subject to a small fine."

END