

Cambridge International AS & A Level

THINKING SKILLS

Paper 4 Applied Reasoning

9694/41

May/June 2026

1 hour 45 minutes



You must answer on the enclosed answer booklet.

You will need: Answer booklet (enclosed)

INSTRUCTIONS

- Answer **all** questions.
- Follow the instructions on the front cover of the answer booklet. If you need additional answer paper, ask the invigilator for a continuation booklet.

INFORMATION

- The total mark for this paper is 50.
- The number of marks for each question or part question is shown in brackets [].

This document has **8** pages. Any blank pages are indicated.

Questions 1, 2 and 3 refer to specific documents. You should study those documents carefully to answer those questions. You do not need to study the other documents in as much detail, but you should read them to find material to use in your answer to Question 4.

Questions 1 and 2 refer to Document 1.

1 The main conclusion of the argument in Document 1 is:

‘We must introduce compulsory voting.’

(a) Identify **two** intermediate conclusions in paragraphs 4 to 5. [2]

(b) Analyse the structure of the reasoning in paragraph 2. [5]

(c) Identify **one** counter-assertion. [1]

2 (a) Identify and explain **three** flaws and/or weaknesses in the reasoning in paragraphs 3 to 5. [6]

(b) Assess the extent to which paragraph 6 supports the argument as a whole. [3]

3 Question 3 refers to Document 4.

(a) The data given in Document 4A is intended to support the claim that ‘Public opinion is in favour of compulsory voting.’

Identify **three** reasons why the support given by the data is weak. [3]

(b) The graph given in Document 4B is intended to support the claim that ‘Compulsory voting is associated with higher voter turnout.’

Identify **two** reasons why the support given by the graph is weak. [2]

(c) The graph given in Document 4C is intended to support the claim that ‘Compulsory voting removes differences in voter turnout between different age groups.’

Identify **one** reason why the support given by the graph is weak. [1]

4 You are advised to spend some time planning your answer before you begin to write it.

‘Voting in national elections should be compulsory.’

Construct a reasoned argument to support **or** challenge this claim.

Your argument should:

- have a clear structure and make use of various argument elements
- use and evaluate evidence from Documents 1 to 5
- respond to significant counter-positions.

[27]

DOCUMENT 1

- 1 We often hear about celebrities encouraging people to vote in elections. Such contributions highlight the fact that there is a need for more people to get out and vote. In most democracies, voter turnout in major elections is between 50% and 70%. This means that between one third and one half of potential voters do not contribute to the democratic process. We can either accept a low voter turnout or we can make voting in elections compulsory. We must introduce compulsory voting because low voter turnout is undesirable.
- 2 When voter turnout is low, certain groups in society are less likely to vote than others. A European study in 2014 found that people aged over 55 were twice as likely to vote as 18 to 35-year-olds. Therefore, most governments are not representative of the populations they purport to represent. Democracy is based on the belief that the governments we elect represent the views of the people. So voluntary voting is anti-democratic.
- 3 Politicians tend to prioritise the desires of the groups that are most likely to vote in high numbers. This means that the needs of younger people or the unemployed, for example, are ignored. This leads to worsening circumstances and makes people disengaged from politics. Isolated people are even less likely to vote and will become more disadvantaged as time goes on. Without action we will end up with a situation where the young or the unemployed never vote and society is run entirely for the benefit of rich old people.
- 4 In the nineteenth century, many so-called democracies allowed only a small proportion of citizens (usually wealthy males) to vote. The nineteenth century was also a time of poor working conditions and low life expectancy. So increased voter turnout would greatly improve life expectancy and working conditions.
- 5 High turnout will increase individual happiness because people will know they are fulfilling a civic duty. There are people who say that voting is a hard-earned right and not a duty; but it is a duty, and such people can be ignored on the basis that they are unscrupulous politicians who stand to gain personally from the current low turnout.
- 6 How can high voter turnout best be achieved? Fifteen of the world's democracies, including Australia and Belgium, have some form of compulsory voting. Fears about harsh enforcement are unfounded. There is routinely a small fine, of perhaps \$50, that most people can afford, and this penalty is enough to make a big difference. The 2019 Australian federal election saw a turnout of 92%. So, the introduction of compulsory voting worldwide is practical and would increase voter turnout.

DOCUMENT 2

Belgium introduced mandatory voting in elections over 130 years ago, but in all the time that has elapsed since, only a handful of others have followed their example. Yet every few years, somebody proposes introducing compulsory voting as a progressive reform that would, some say, invigorate our democracy. But the so-called benefits of mandatory voting are highly dubious.

Australia is often cited as the exemplar compulsory-voting country. The effect, in Australia, is that many voters randomly pick a candidate or party, often simply choosing the candidate listed first on the ballot paper while others return a blank ballot, so that they will not be punished.

Many people who vote voluntarily may be uninformed, but compulsory voting would mean even more uninformed voters. Studies show that uninformed voters are more easily swayed by advertising. Increasing the number of uninformed potential voters to be reached would mean a surge in misleading advertising that appeals to voters' prejudices. Today's elections are filled with nasty, negative campaign ads; mandatory voting would make this much worse.

In addition to its having no obvious benefits, mandatory voting sits uneasily with the principle of freedom. Participating in an election can be regarded as an act of free speech and so not participating can equally be regarded as exercising the right to remain silent. There is a long history of principled abstention. It is acceptable for certain pacifist religious groups not to take part in military action. In a similar way, anarchist groups, ranging from right-wing libertarians to communists, reject the moral legitimacy of governments on principle and do not wish their vote to imply endorsement of the state. Enforcement of compulsory voting laws against groups with a religious or philosophical exemption would involve governments in a moral dilemma that could become a 'public relations' (PR) nightmare and would increase the burden on the already overstretched police and courts.

The general public are either ambivalent about the issue or do not support it. A report from a leading US university, Harvard, included a poll showing that 64% were opposed to compulsory voting with only 26% in favour of it. Despite this, the report argued in favour of compulsory voting.

Showing up to vote may well be a praiseworthy, public-spirited act, an admirable exercise of civic duty that ought to be encouraged. However, it is an exercise in free speech, and it is not the government's role to enforce speech when an individual does not wish to voice their opinion. If you don't want to vote, it's your right not to vote.

DOCUMENT 3**Which countries have compulsory voting?**

As of January 2023, 21 countries had a compulsory voting system, with varying penalties for not voting. However, only about half of those countries enforce the requirement to vote, with penalties for non-participation ranging from very mild to quite severe. Belgium has the oldest continuous compulsory voting system, which began in 1893, but today it is rarely enforced.

Below is a list of some countries where voting in national elections is compulsory and some degree of enforcement exists.

Argentina

Penalty: a fine and being banned from public office for one year. Exemptions are permitted on the grounds of health complications and distance from polling stations.

Australia

Penalty: a \$20 fine, increasing to \$50 for repeat offenders.

Belgium

Penalty: a fine ranging from 80 euros to 200 euros, but if one fails to vote in four elections, one can lose the right to vote for 10 years. Since 2003, offenders have rarely been prosecuted.

Brazil

Penalty: a fine of between 3% and 10% of one's salary and potential prohibition from getting a passport or ID, obtaining a public sector job, or receiving a government loan.

Ecuador

Penalty: the removal of civil rights.

Liechtenstein

Penalty: a fine. Legitimate reasons for abstention are permitted.

Luxembourg

Penalty: a fine ranging from 100 euros to 250 euros, increasing to 1000 euros for repeat offenders. Legitimate reasons for abstention are permitted.

Nauru

Penalty: a fine.

Peru

Penalty: a fine and restriction of civil rights, including losing the right to vote.

Samoa

Penalty: a fine.

Singapore

Penalty: losing the right to vote and the right to stand for election.

DOCUMENT 4A

Public opinion is in favour of compulsory voting

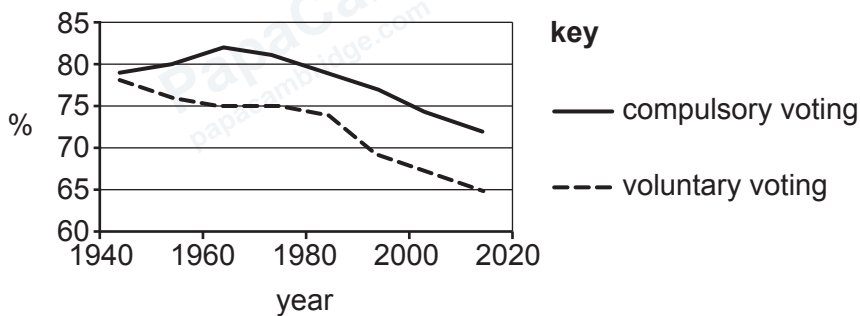
The table shows data collected from a large sample of voting-age citizens in four different countries in response to the question, 'Should the national government make voting compulsory for all eligible citizens?'

country	yes (%)	no (%)
France	65	35
Germany	67	33
US	51	49
UK	64	36

DOCUMENT 4B

Compulsory voting is associated with higher voter turnout

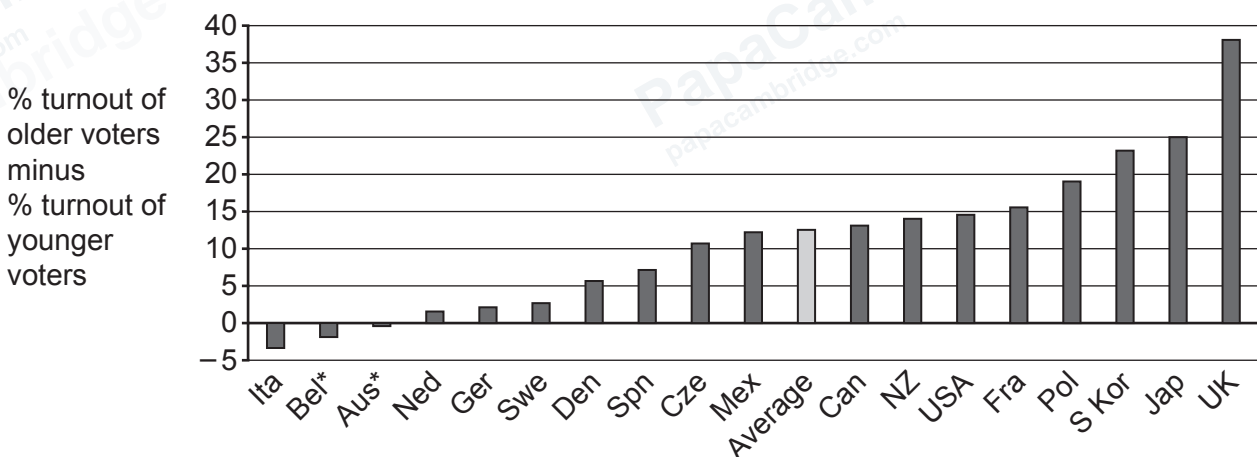
The graph shows voter turnout in national elections worldwide for which reliable data are available.



DOCUMENT 4C

Compulsory voting removes differences in voter turnout between different age groups

Older people are more likely to vote in elections than younger people. The graph shows the (recent) difference in voting rates between people aged over 55 and those aged under 35 in a range of countries.



* country with compulsory voting

DOCUMENT 5

Some comments from an internet discussion forum

Compulsory voting would not make any difference to the outcome. Non-voters tend to be about the same as voters in terms of partisan preferences.

GS, India

Elections are often won or lost on turnout. Turnout can be affected by trivial things like weather or sporting events. The direction of government should not be decided by the weather on a particular day. So anything we can do to encourage higher turnout is a good thing.

LN, Malaysia

It seems like, in Australia, you get fined about \$50 if you don't vote, but if your vote is for someone not on the ballot, it's considered a protest vote and thrown out. So what's the point in voting? Is it just a way for governments to raise money through a stealth tax?

AZ, Italy

Many of our ancestors were imprisoned, injured or killed in the struggle to get the right to vote. It is immoral not to exercise such a hard-earned right and disrespectful to those who suffered for our benefit, but it should not be illegal to exercise freedom of choice.

TE, UK

Most people I ask are in favour of making voting compulsory so why not do it, as long as the penalties aren't too high.

DV, Pakistan

There are plenty of other compulsory civic duties, like making a census return or doing jury duty, making voting compulsory would not be such a big leap.

FM, New Zealand

The idea of forcing me to vote when I have no interest or am just not knowledgeable enough is insane.

BY, USA

Voting doesn't change anything, and enough money can make any candidate win.

CW, Brazil

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