

World Publics Strongly Favor International Observers for Elections, Including Their Own

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[PRI's The World interviews Steven Kull on this study](#)

[Questionnaire/Methodology \(PDF\)](#)



The charges of irregularities in the Afghan and Iranian elections have raised the broader issue of how frequently international observers should monitor elections, and whether publics would welcome this in their home countries.

Afghans cast ballots at a polling station during the 2004 presidential election.
(OSCE/Brian Steers)

A new WorldPublicOpinion.org poll of 17 nations finds that publics in 15 favor the general practice of having international observers monitor elections. In eleven of the nations, most people think that their own country would benefit from international observers monitoring their elections.

Asked whether "when there are concerns about fairness of elections," nations should be willing to have international observers monitor their elections, on average, across all nations polled, 64 percent say that they should. In no nation do most people oppose the idea, though views are divided in Turkey and India. Most of the nations favoring election monitors do so by solid majorities, often two-to-one. The highest levels of support are found in Azerbaijan (83%), Kenya (82%) and Britain (81%). In addition, majorities are supportive in Hong Kong (55%), Macau (63%), and Taiwan (61%).

Perhaps most striking, most publics also say that their nation would "benefit from having international observers monitor elections here." The most enthusiastic are Kenya (85%) and Nigeria (74%). In no country do more than 51 percent oppose the idea.

In established Western democracies, bare majorities or less say their nation would not benefit: Britain (51%), the US (51%), and France (50%). But still large numbers favor having international observers in the United States (46%), France (45%), and Britain (46%). In Germany, a plurality says they would benefit (49%; 36% disagreed).

A slight majority in India (51%) does not think international observers would benefit their nation's elections. Views are divided in Russia and Turkey.

WorldPublicOpinion.org conducted the poll of 16,863 respondents in 17 nations. This includes Azerbaijan, Chile, Egypt, France, Germany, Great Britain, India, Iraq, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Palestinian territories, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine, and the United States. Polling was also conducted in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau.

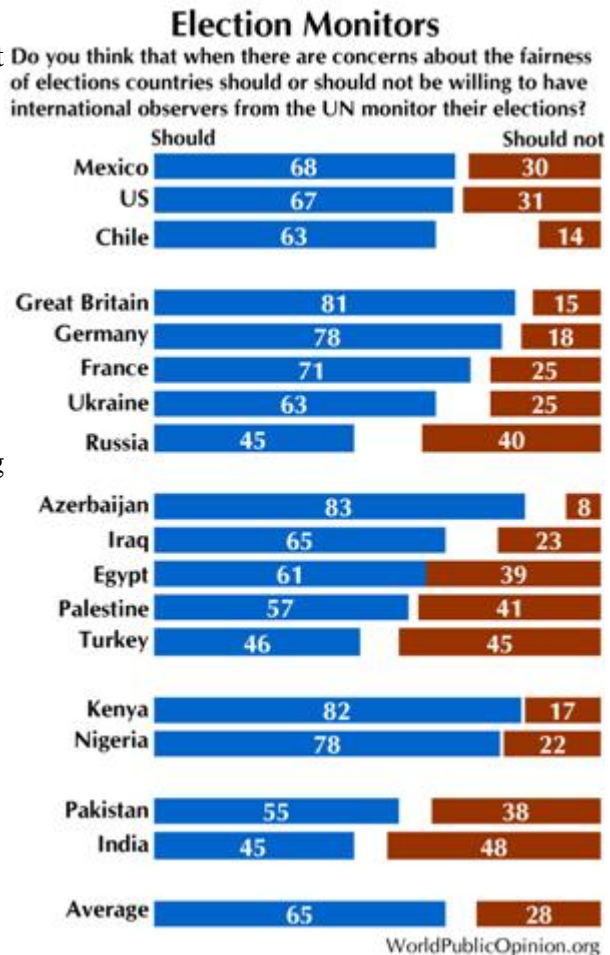
WorldPublicOpinion.org, a collaborative project involving research centers from around the world, is managed by the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) at the University of Maryland. The margins of error range from +/-3 to 4 percentage points. The surveys were conducted across the different nations between April 4 and July 9, 2009.

In addition to the eleven nations with a favorable view of having international observers monitor their own elections, majorities also have favorable views in Taiwan (59%), Hong Kong (55%) and Macau (66%).

"While the high-profile disputes about elections in Afghanistan and Iran have dominated the news recently, older democracies also have their problems, such as the case of hanging chads in Florida," noted Steven Kull, director of WorldPublicOpinion.org.

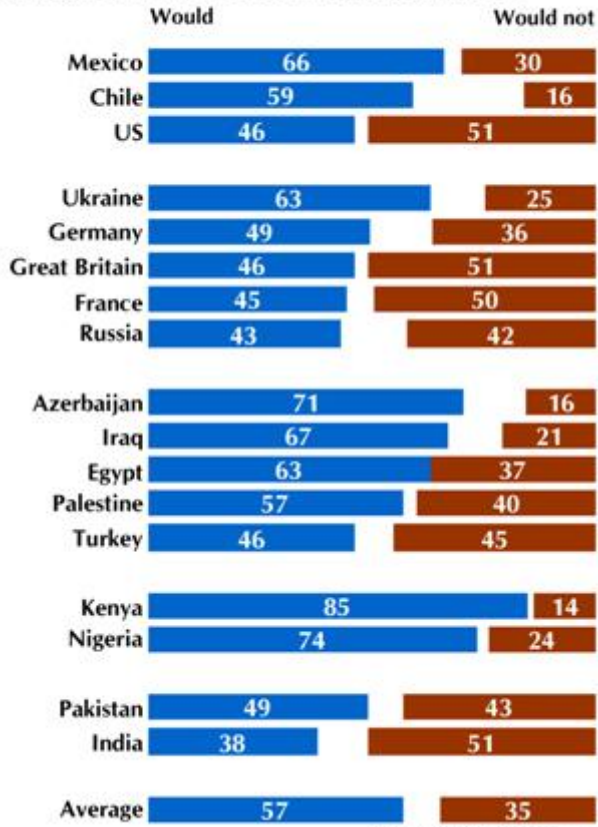
He adds, "It appears that people around the world are looking to international observers to help resolve ambiguities in elections. These numbers suggest that international observers could add considerably to the perceived legitimacy of election outcomes."

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Election Monitors in Country

Do you think that [Country] would or would not benefit from having international observers monitor elections here?



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