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Long Reads

Who Should Vote in America?

Jul 6, 2018 | **DAMBISA MOYO**

NEW YORK – The US midterm elections this November will tell us where American voters want their country to go. Will they endorse US President Donald Trump’s “America First” vision, or will they reject his brand of anti-globalist illiberalism by handing one or both houses of Congress to the Democrats?

This question admits of no easy answer, because if the history of past midterm elections is any guide, two-thirds of eligible voters won’t even bother to show up. In the last US midterm election, in 2014, turnout plumbed a 72-year low. Two years before Trump was elected with three million fewer votes than his opponent, a mere 92.3 million Americans cast ballots. Such low turnout, Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders lamented at the time, “was an international disgrace.”

In general, US voter turnout consistently falls below that of most other developed countries. For the past two decades, the average US voter-participation rate in both midterm and presidential elections has hovered just above 50%, down from more than 60% throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Crucially, only some 30% of households with an annual income below \$30,000 have bothered to vote in recent years.

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