



# Chapter Four

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## Interest Articulation

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Almond, Powell, Dalton & Strøm

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# Interest Articulation



- Process of expressing interests (needs and demands to the government) by people and social groups
  - Examples: contacting a city council member; groups working together on a common concern
- In large, established political systems, formal interest groups are a primary means of promoting political interests.
- As societies become more complex and scope of government grows, quantity and methods to articulate public interests have grown as well.

# Citizen Action

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- One dimension of interest articulation: What might you do as an individual citizen?
  - Voting in an election most common form of activity
  - Working with others in their community/typically very policy focused
  - Direct contact with government
  - Protests or other forms of contentious action
  - Political consumerism

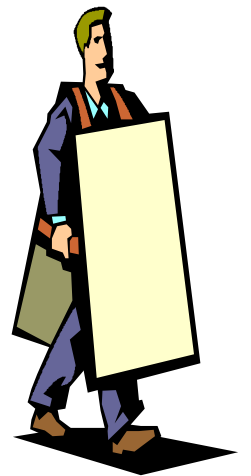


TABLE 4.1

## Forms of Citizen Interest Articulation

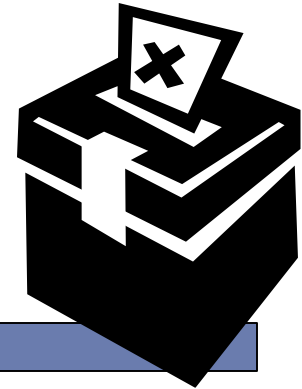
Form	Scope of Interests	Degree of Pressure on Elites
Voting, participation in elections	Broad, collective decision on government leaders and their programs	Modest pressure, but not policy focused
Informal group	Collective action focused on a common interest	High pressure
Direct contact on personal matter	Normally deals with specific, personal problem	Low pressure
Direct contact on policy issue	Action on a government policy	Modest pressure
Protest activity	Highly expressive support for specific interests	High pressure
Political consumerism	Focused on specific issues, activities	High pressure

# How Citizens Participate

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- The amount of citizen political participation varies greatly by type of activity and type of political system.
  - Most typical: activity relating to elections
    - U.S. stands out for its rather low levels of national voting participation
    - Not necessarily reflective of apathy

# How Citizens Participate



- Activity extends beyond elections.
  - Many of these activities are identified with middle-class participation in affluent societies.
  - Frequent activity found in advanced industrial democracies
  - Direct action most expressive and visible form of citizen action
    - A majority in most nations have signed a petition (not considered unconventional any more)
    - Many different sectors of society now use protests and direct action.
    - French more protest involvement
    - Russians 4% in 1990, but ten years later the number is up to 25%

# How Citizens Participate

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- Cross-national research shows that better-educated and higher social class individuals are more likely to use various opportunities for participation.
  - Skill and confidence
  - Participation patterns vary
    - Better-off versus less affluent variation
  - Those who are more active in articulating their interests are more likely to have their interests addressed by policymakers.

TABLE 4.2

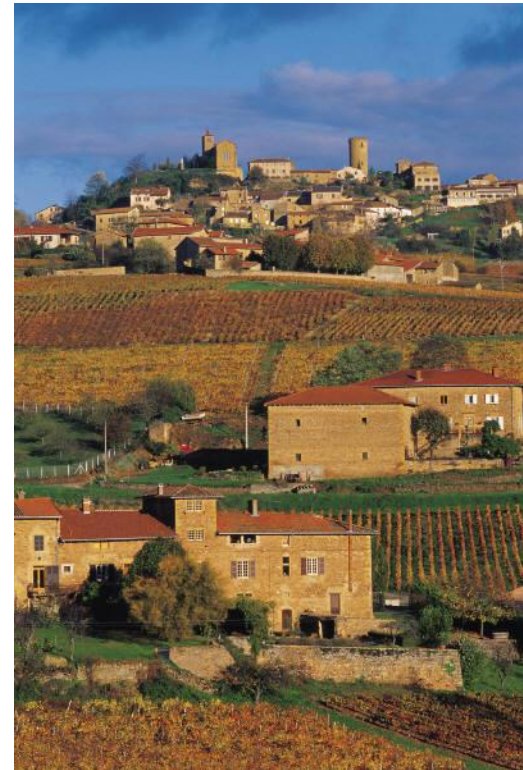
## Citizen Participation Across Nations (percentage)

Type of Participation	United States										
	Britain	France	Germany	Japan	Russia	Mexico	Brazil	China	Iran	Nigeria	
Voter turnout in most recent national elections	54%	61%	60%	78%	68%	56%	59%	78%	—	60%	49%
Discussed politics with others	74	46	65	84	64	75	58	58	70	69	74
Participated in political party activity	18	3	2	3	4	1	5	—	10	—	—
Participated in citizen interest group	36	7	6	7	9	2	11	—	3	—	—
Signed a petition	81	81	68	52	63	12	19	47	—	—	7
Participated in lawful protest demonstration	21	13	39	28	13	24	4	25	—	—	17

Sources: Election turnout data is percent of registered public for most recent national legislative election from the International Institute for Elections and Democracy, downloaded from [www.idea.org](http://www.idea.org); 2000–2002 *World Values Survey* and the 1999 *European Values Survey* for other statistics. Some of the participation questions were not asked in each survey, and these missing items are noted by a dash in the table.

# Interest Groups

- Interest articulation
  - Can occur through the action of social or political groups that represent groups of people
    - Anomic groups – spontaneous group
    - Nonassociational groups – working class as a collective
      - Large groups not formally organized
        - Collective action problem
      - Small villages
    - Institutional groups – the labor department within government
    - Associational groups – a labor union



# Civil Society

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- A society in which people are involved in social and political interactions free of state control or regulation
- Global civil society



# Interest Group Systems

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- The nature of the connection between interest groups and government policymaking institutions is another important feature of the political process.
  - Pluralist interest group systems
  - Democratic corporatist interest groups systems

# Pluralist Interest Group Systems

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- Multiple groups may represent a single society interest.
- Group membership is voluntary and limited.
- Groups often have a loose or decentralized organizational structure.
- There is a clear separation between interest groups and the government.

# Democratic Corporatist Interest Group Systems

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- A single peak association normally represents each societal interest.
- Membership in the peak association is often compulsory and nearly universal.
- Peak associations are centrally organized and direct the actions of their members.
- Groups are often systematically involved in making and implementing policy.

# Controlled Interest Group Systems

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- There is a single group for each social sector.
- Membership is often compulsory.
- Each group is normally hierarchically organized.
- Groups are controlled by the government or its agents in order to mobilize support for government policy.

# Access to the Influential

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- To be effective, interest groups must be able to reach key policymakers through channels of political access.
  - Legitimate and constitutional channels of access
  - Illegitimate, coercive access channels of access



# Legitimate Access Channels

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- Personal connections
  - Face-to-face contact is one of the most effective means of shaping attitudes and conveying messages.
- Mass media
- Political parties
- Legislatures
- Government bureaucracies

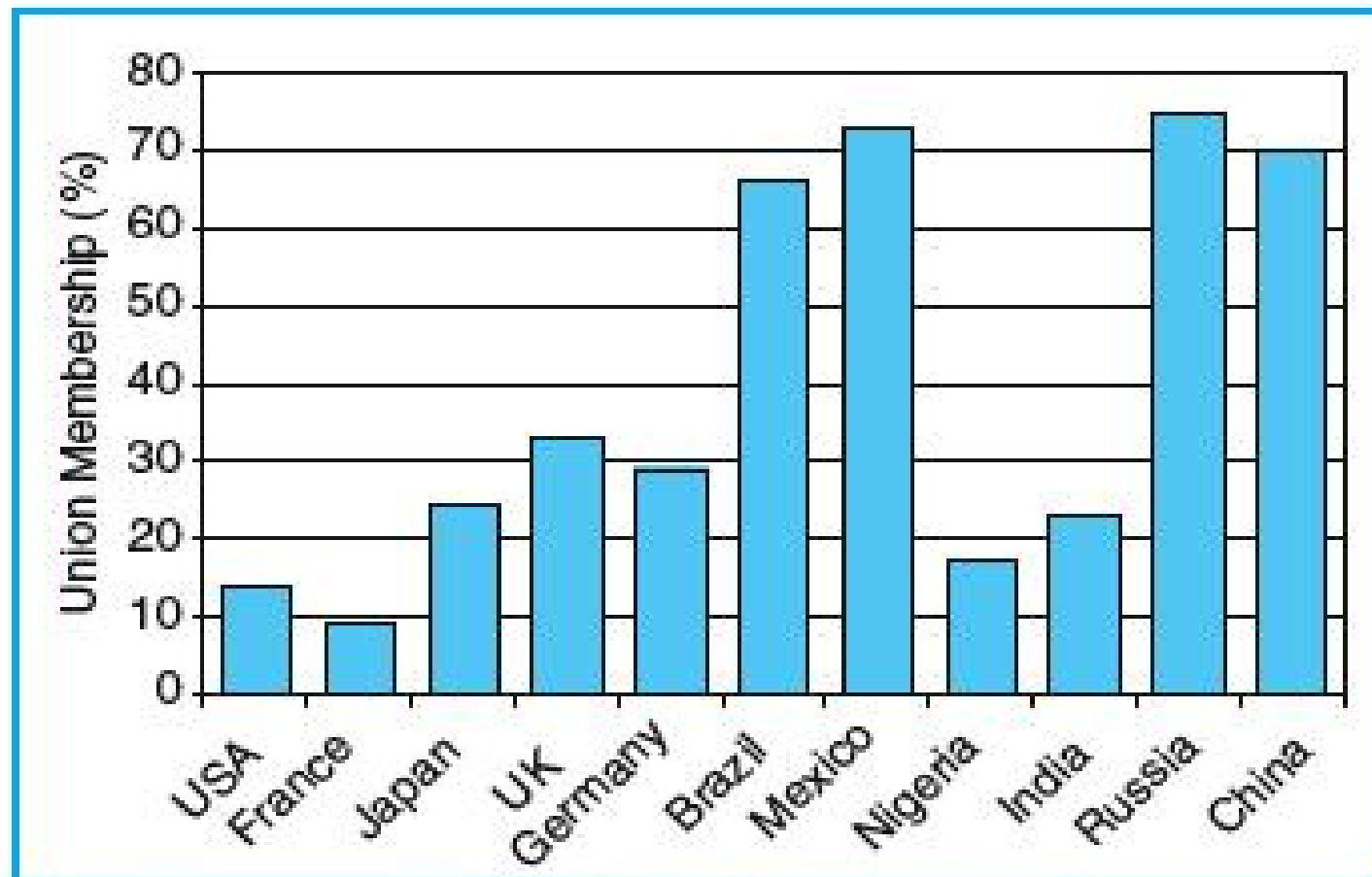


# Coercive Access Channels and Tactics

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- Feelings of relative deprivation motivate people to act aggressively.
  - Source of frustration, discontent, and anger
  - Greater discontent/anger yields greater probability of collective violence
    - Riots (often spontaneous)
    - Strikes/obstructions (coordinated)
    - Political terror tactics
      - Assassination, armed attacks, mass bloodshed
        - More likely to produce negative consequences





**A Comparison of Labor Union Density Across Nations**

**FIGURE 4.1**

Source: International Labor Organization, *World Labour Report 1997–1998*, The Statistical Annex, Table 1.2. ([www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org)). The figure plots union membership as a percentage of wage earners.

# **Policy Perspectives on Interest Articulation**

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- Varied possibilities for legitimate and coercive interest articulation exist in each nation.

# Interest Group Development

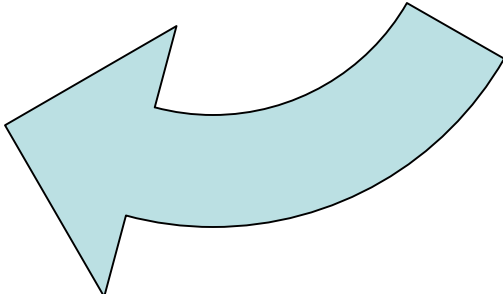
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- Diversity of interest groups is a byproduct of modernization.

**Modernization**



**Multiplication of  
Political interests**

- Diversity of life conditions and a specialization of labor
  - Interdependence
  - Exposure to mass communications
  - Larger policy role for government
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# Interest Group Development

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- Successful democratic development leads to the emergence of complex interest group systems.
  - Not an automatic process
  - Many problems involved
    - Level of trust shared among members of society
    - Authoritarian parties/bureaucracies may suppress autonomous interest groups
    - Bias within the interest group system
    - Levels of participation in associational groups declining?