

# When is democratic voting desirable?

| Structure         | Favorable conditions   | Unfavorable conditions   |
|-------------------|--|--|
| Democratic voting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The knowledge, skills, and motivation needed to make a good decision are distributed widely.*               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <i>average</i> voter is more likely to make a good decision than a bad one.**</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Whoever controls the information needed to make good decisions is willing to share it with voters.*</li> <li>• Everyone in the group needs to abide by the same decision. (Otherwise individuals can just decide for themselves without a group vote.)**</li> <li>• It is important for the voters to be committed to the decision. (They are more likely to feel committed to the decision if they had a chance to vote on it.)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <i>average</i> voter is more likely to make a bad decision than a good one.***</li> <li>• The voters' motivations are too divergent. For instance, there is no satisfactory way to prevent:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gaming*</li> <li>• Sabotage*</li> </ul> </li> <li>• There isn't enough time (or enough of other resources) for everyone to become informed and then to vote.</li> <li>• If votes are visible to others, then               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• early voters may have too much influence on decisions ("information cascades")</li> <li>• social pressures may have too much influence on decisions</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

\* Conditions shared with other forms of action by a Crowd

\*\* Conditions shared with other forms of Group Decision

\*\*\* See Condorcet Jury Theorem (described, for example, in Sunstein, 2006)

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