

National Democratic Institute
International Comparative Candidate Debate Participation Criteria
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The following are examples of criteria used by debate sponsors from a range of countries to determine which candidates are invited to debate:

Evidence of Public Support

- The candidate meets a pre-established level of popular support in an impartial, credible public opinion survey (or average of a number of surveys) a pre-determined number of days before the debate; the level of support candidates must attain to be invited to debate typically varies by country: e.g. Jamaica 10%; South Korea 5%; U.S. 15%.
- The candidate's party has a mathematical chance of forming a government if it were to win the election; (e.g. the party is running candidates for a sufficient number of seats to obtain a majority in a parliamentary system).
- The candidate has met requirements to be registered and is on the ballot in the required number of provinces or states necessary to win the election (e.g. some presidential systems).
- The candidate has achieved national newsworthiness and competitiveness as determined by a council of experts weighing such factors as: column inches on newspaper front pages, coverage on news programs, public attendance at political rallies, recognition by leading political analysts and editorial boards.
- The candidate's party received a threshold percentage of support in the most recent election that allows it to maintain legal status. (e.g. South Korea, 3% for presidential, national legislature, and mayoral races).
- The candidate represents a party that is historically relevant in the political life of the country.

Organized and Active Political Force

- The candidate's party has conducted democratic internal elections.
- The candidate's party has an established national organizational structure.
- The candidate is actively campaigning for office.
- The candidate has organized a threshold number of campaign rallies.
- The candidate and party have developed and publicly presented a policy platform or manifesto.
- The candidate's party has seats in the national legislature.
- The candidate's party fields a pre-established minimum of candidates for other posts at stake in the same election; (e.g. national legislature, governor, municipalities).
- A candidate has raised and spent a threshold amount of campaign funds.

Legal Eligibility to Run for Office

- The candidate meets constitutional requirements to assume office if elected (e.g. minimum age, natural born citizen, residency, no criminal record).
- The candidate has been officially registered by electoral authorities.
- The candidate legally qualifies to receive public funding for campaigning.

Non-Violence or Governance Pledge

- The candidate has agreed to abide by an election or post-election governance agreement such as a commitment to non-violence or an anti-corruption effort.