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Voter turnout in electoral democracies declined by nearly ten percentage points between the 1960s and 2010s. The reasons for this global decline are yet unclear. This article draws on the findings from on micro-level studies and theorises two explanations: generational change and rise in the number of elected institutions. In the process, the article critically assesses the other main explanations that have been advanced in the political science literature: shifts in party/candidate competition, voting age reforms, weakening group mobilisation, or economic globalisation. Subsequently, all the explanations are tested via an original dataset covering all post-1945 democratic national elections. The results support the generational change, elective institutions, and party/candidate competition hypotheses but do not corroborate any of the other explanations. The three identified culprits, of which in particular generational replacement, account for most of the decline. These findings have important implications for a better understanding of the current transformations of representative democracy and the challenges it faces.