

Voting systems in elections

- First past the post system
- Supplementary vote system
- Additional vote system
- Single transferable vote system



First-past-the-post system

- Used in elections for the House of Commons
- 1 seat per constituency
- Voters cast one vote for the candidate of their choice
- The candidate with the largest number of votes is elected



First past the post system

Advantages

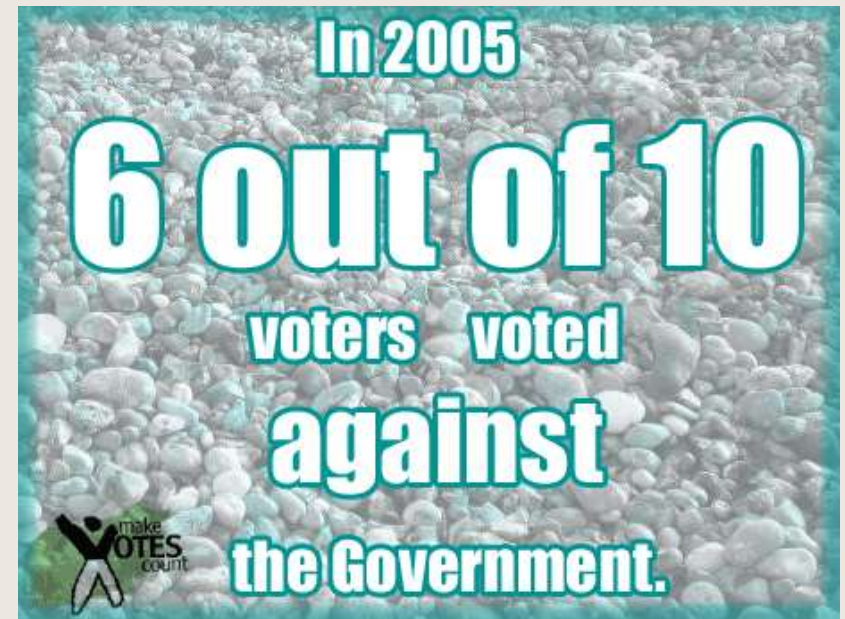
- Close tie between MP and constituency
- Tends to produce a majority for the party that gains most seats
- Produces more stable governments with little need for coalitions

Disadvantages

- Many seats are **safe seats** where many voters may feel their votes are 'wasted'.
- Proportion of candidates for a party elected is not in proportion to votes cast
- A government can gain a large majority of seats even though it only gained a minority of votes nationally
- **Smaller parties** tend to go unrepresented

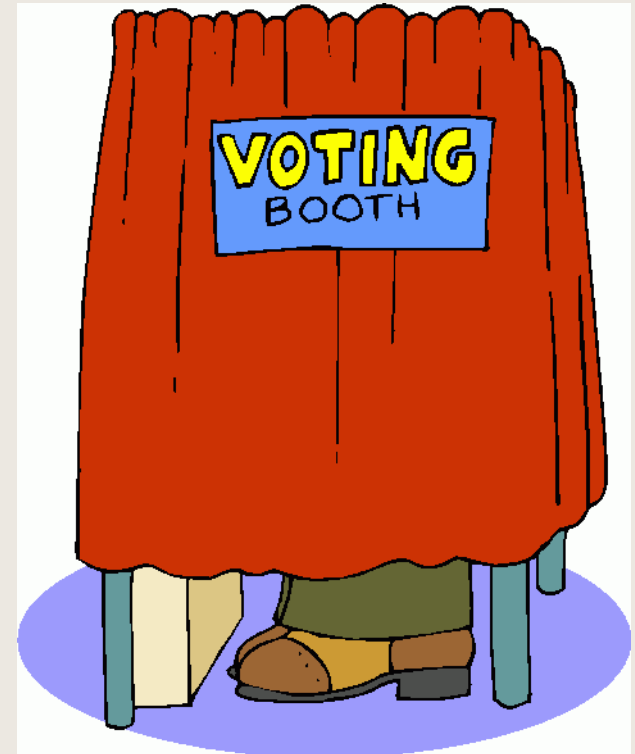
Proportional representation

- Opponents of first-past-the-post claim that some kind of system of **proportional representation (PR)** would be fairer
- PR systems aim to ensure that the number of candidates elected for a party is in proportion to the number of votes cast.
- This tends to give a better chance to smaller parties eg the **Green Party**.



Supplementary vote (SV) system

- Used for electing Mayor of London
- Used for elections where there is only one person to be elected
- Voters indicate first and second choice candidates
- If a candidate receives a majority of first choices then he/she is elected
- If not, then all candidates apart from top two are eliminated and second choice votes redistributed to remaining candidates



Supplementary vote (SV) system

Advantage

- A candidate cannot be elected who although achieving the largest number of votes is unpopular with the majority of voters

Disadvantage

- This system would not necessarily produce proportional representation if it were used for a whole parliament or assembly

Additional vote (AV+) system

- Used to elect members of the European Parliament, the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Assembly and the Greater London Assembly
- Voters **vote twice** - first for a list of candidates who they list in order of preference, they then also vote for a party.
- If a candidate gains a majority he/she is elected if not the second choices of the bottom candidate are **transferred** to other candidates. This is repeated until one candidate has a majority
- The second set of votes for the parties are then used to assess how a number of remaining **'top up' seats** are allocated to ensure that each party ends up with seats in proportion to the votes they have received.



Additional vote (AV+) system

Election of the Scottish Parliament
You have **two** votes

Any Region Scotland Regional Member		Vote once only (X)	Anytown Central Constituency Member		Vote once only (X)
Scottish Christian Party "Proclaiming Christ's Lordship"		☒	Arnold Andrew		☐
Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party		☐	Bertram Barry		☐
Scottish Green Party		☐	Clarke Christopher		☐
Scottish Labour Party		☐	Dixon David		☐
Scottish Liberal Democrats		☐	Edwards Edwin		☐
Scottish National Party (SNP)		☐	Ferguson Francis	☐	☐
Scottish Socialist Party		☐	Independent	☐	☐
Solidarity Party		☐			

Example of
ballot paper
for the
Scottish
Parliament

Additional vote (AV+) system

Advantages

- Tends to produce a legislature where seats held by parties are in proportion to votes cast
- Most of those elected are still linked to a constituency
- Smaller parties which fail to get elected in a constituency can still achieve representation via top up seats

Disadvantages

- Candidates elected in top up seats are not linked to a particular constituency
- More likelihood of coalition governments

Single transferable vote (STV) system

- Constituencies are usually multi-member – typically 3-5 seats
- Voters number candidates in order of preference
- Counting votes in this system is a complex process whereby the votes of candidates who have achieved a quota and been elected as well as those of candidates with too few votes are transferred to other candidates until all seats have been filled
- This system is not currently used in any UK elections

Single transferable vote (STV) system

Advantages

- Tends to produce **proportional representation** better than most other systems
- Allows voters to **vote for more than one candidate** eg may not want to cast all votes for one party

Disadvantages

- **Complex system** to administer
- **Constituencies are large** so link between representatives and voters less close

