

# Chapter 7: International experience

## A Introduction

7.1 In her 2003 book, *Electoral Engineering*,<sup>180</sup> Pippa Norris described how, in the 1990s, issues of electoral engineering (changing electoral rules and systems) have moved up the policy agenda in many countries. This included the western democracies, where following the establishment of the universal franchise, electoral systems had, for the most part, been stable. Arend Lijphart, in his study of the electoral systems used in 25 established democracies from 1945 to 1990,<sup>181</sup> found that only one – France – had experienced a fundamental change to its electoral system. The 1990s saw that change. Norris writes:

*“In the 1990s, some established democracies experienced the most radical reforms to electoral systems for over a century. Major change from majoritarian to PR, or vice versa has occurred in... Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Britain and Italy, and more modest amendments have also been adopted in Austria, Portugal and Switzerland. Moreover, the international community has become deeply invested in attempts to generate free and fair competition in dozens of nations around the globe [including] Bosnia and Herzegovina... East Timor and Cambodia. The constitutional settlements in post-communist Europe, dissatisfaction with political systems in Latin America and the rise of electoral democracies in Asia, as well as state-building and regime change in the Middle East and Africa, have all revived interest in what might have appeared the rather technical, dull and rather abstruse issue of electoral engineering.”*

7.2 She goes on to observe that there are conflicting schools of thought about the impact or origin of electoral engineering. On the one hand, rational choice theories suggest that changing electoral systems can significantly change the behaviour of politicians, parties and citizens, and attempts at electoral engineering are based implicitly or explicitly on such assumptions. On the other hand, sceptics about rational choice may argue that changes to systems are more likely to be a reflection of changes in society. The responses needed from electoral systems may change as society becomes more affluent and educated, with access to more information through a variety of sources and with less allegiance to traditional political and social organisations.

7.3 There is no simple cause and effect relationship and electoral systems both change and reflect political and social behaviour and circumstances. Our analysis of the changes to UK voting systems would certainly seem to support this.

- 7.4 In this chapter on international experience we look further at the impact of different voting systems on turn-out, representation in parliaments and stability of government. A case study of New Zealand's transition from FPTP to MMP offers some insights into whether electoral engineering does change voting patterns and electoral outcomes.
- 7.5 The following sections focus on a selection of different electoral systems in established western democracies that provide a degree of comparability with the new electoral systems in the UK. These are:
- the Netherlands, Italy and Sweden with the PR list system also used for European elections in the UK
  - Germany and New Zealand using AMS, as used for the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly
  - the Republic of Ireland using STV, as used for the Northern Ireland Assembly (and Scottish local government elections)
  - the AV system as used in Australia, also considered given that the Jenkins Commission proposed a variant of AV with a proportional top-up for Westminster.
- 7.6 We also briefly consider the issues raised by an interesting deliberation in British Columbia and Ontario in Canada, where a Citizens' Assembly made proposals about changes to the province's electoral system that were put to referendum.
- 7.7 Finally, we provide an international comparison of voting systems and turn-out.

## B New Zealand

### (i) Background

- 7.8 New Zealand provides a particularly interesting example because it has changed its electoral system from FPTP to the MMP system (similar to AMS in the UK) in recent times. The first election to be held under MMP was in 1996, following referendums in 1992 and 1993 which first rejected FPTP and then selected MMP from four proportional options. The 1993 referendum, which was binding, took place at the same time as the 1993 election where 84.5 percent of voters favoured replacing FPTP and 70.3 percent chose MMP (the next most popular was STV with 17.5 percent).
- 7.9 New Zealand has a unicameral parliament and central government is relatively strong compared to local government. In the past it was held up as the epitome of a two party system operating under FPTP. Since 1945, there had never been more than two members of Parliament from outside the two main

parties – the National and Labour parties. In 1978 and 1981, the National Party gained power although the Labour Party won more votes. In 1985, having won in 1984, Labour established a Royal Commission on the Electoral System, to consider the case for changing the electoral system. The Commission's report in 1986, *Towards a Better Democracy*,<sup>182</sup> recommended a move to MMP. Although the Labour Party made a commitment in 1987 to hold a referendum before or at the 1990 election, this did not materialise. However, the National Party also committed itself to a referendum in 1990, and the two stage process eventually took place in 1992 and 1993.

- 7.10 One interesting impact of the change in the electoral system took place between 1993 and the first MMP election in 1996. Three new parties were formed by MPs and others had their numbers boosted by defections from the two main parties, as the table below illustrates.

**Table 19**  
**Party allegiances – preparing for the changed voting system in New Zealand**<sup>183</sup>

Party	Seats at 1993 election	Seats prior to 1996	MP movements
National	50	41	9 defected
Labour	45	41	4 defected
United	0	7	4 Nat, 3 Lab joined
NZ First	2	5	2 Nat, 1 Lab joined
Alliance	2	2	
Conservative	0	1	1 Nat*
Christian Democrats	0	1	1 Nat
Ind	0	1	1 Nat*

\* Initially 2 National Party MPs founded Conservatives, but one then became Independent.

## (ii) Election outcomes

- 7.11 The results of the elections since 1996 are summarised in Table 20 below. Seven electorate seats are currently reserved for the Maori electorate. Before 1993, there were four seats reserved for Maori – the number now reflects the number of people who choose to go on the Maori electoral roll. Maori people can choose either to vote for candidates standing for the reserved seats (by registering on a Maori register) or in non-reserved constituencies (general register). Those seats have usually been won by either Labour or the National Party, but in 2005 a new Maori Party was formed by a defected Labour member and it won four seats.

**Table 20**  
**Summary of New Zealand election results 1987-2005 (seats won)<sup>184</sup>**

E = electorate seat (constituency); L = list seat

Party		2005	2002	1999	1996	1993	1990	1987
Labour	E	31	45	41	26	45	29	57
	L	19	7	8	11			
National	E	31	21	22	30	50	67	40
	L	17	6	17	14			
NZ First	E	0	1	1	6	2		
	L	7	12	4	11			
Green	E	0	0	1				
	L	6	9	6	0			
Maori	E	4						
	L	0						
United Future	E	1	1					
	L	2	7					
ACT	E	1	0	0	1			
	L	1	9	9	7			
Progressive	E	1	1					
	L	0	1					
Alliance	E	0	0	1	1	2		
	L	0	0	9	12			
United	E			1	1			
	L			0	0			

7.12 In 1996, the balance of power was held by the New Zealand First Party, who gained 17 seats, 11 list seats and six electorate seats, the strongest performance by a smaller party since 1919. New Zealand First had been expected to join forces with Labour, but after two months of negotiations, it formed a coalition with the National Party. This was unpopular with the public and with many of its own voters. New Zealand First eventually left the coalition in August 1998 leading to an early election. In 1999 the party won five seats.

7.13 In 1999 the Labour Party and the Alliance made clear their intention to work together in coalition if necessary before the elections. In the event their combined seats fell two short of an absolute majority and they formed a coalition, supported from outside the coalition by the Green Party. The Alliance Party splintered in 2002 and an early election was called in July of that year.

7.14 Following the 2002 elections the Labour Party formed a minority coalition with the Progressives, with support in 'confidence and supply' votes from the United Future Party. They were not expected to support the Government in all votes. In 2005, the same coalition formed the government, but with confidence and supply support from New Zealand First as well as United Future. The leaders of New Zealand First and United Future took ministerial posts but were not in the Cabinet. This includes the post of Foreign Minister being held by the leader of New Zealand First outside of Cabinet. The Labour party only obtained two more seats than the second largest party, the National party. A surprise development was that Labour did not give the Green Party any Cabinet positions despite a previous coalition as well as Green support of Labour in the lead up to the elections, although several concessions on energy and transport policies were made.

### (iii) Impact of MMP

7.15 Since 1996, New Zealand has been governed by coalitions, usually with a minority of the seats in Parliament. Obviously this makes it more difficult for the leading party to achieve all of its policy aims but, arguably, policy decisions reflect the views of a wider coalition of voters. Tina Day, a Director of the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust interviewed 21 MPs in the 2002-05 Parliament for her research. She argues in her 2005 paper *Increasing the representativeness of parliament in Aotearoa/New Zealand*,<sup>186</sup> that there has been a shift of power from the Executive to Parliament, with select committees (whose composition reflects the multi-party Parliament) assuming a very powerful role. There is also a greater representation of women (around 30 percent of members), Maori and the Asian population in Parliament. She argues that this has increased the legitimacy and standing of Parliament (notwithstanding the early unpopularity of coalition government). It also means that divisions in opinion within the country are played out in Parliament to a greater extent.

7.16 A number of parties have clearly benefited at times from the existence of the list top-up system, notably New Zealand First and the Green Party, and in the first two elections, the Alliance and ACT. We noted the presence of 'split-ticket' voting under AMS in Chapter 6. The 2005 election was also notable for both the major parties significantly increasing their list seats, while in the case of Labour, losing a large number of electorate seats.

7.17 Proportionality, not surprisingly, has increased under MMP. Using the Gallagher index,<sup>187</sup> disproportionality has fallen from an average of 11.1 percent between 1946-93 to 4.36 percent in 1996 and 1.11 percent in 2005. Under the Loosemore-Hanby index (as used in Figure 2 for elections in the UK in recent years), the deviation from proportionality scores of New Zealand elections has fallen from about 26 in 1993 to 7.6 in 1996 and 2.2 in 2005, when comparing

seats won with list votes cast. Again this shows that proportionality has increased under MMP.

7.18 Table 21 below shows the outcome of the 2005 election in terms of percentage of votes and seats. It shows how the list system makes up for the more disproportional effect of the FPTP system for the constituency seats.

**Table 21**  
New Zealand election results in 2005<sup>188</sup>

Party	Electorate (%)		List (%)		Total
	Votes	Seats	Votes	Seats	Seats (%)
Labour	40.3	31	41.1	19	50 (41.3)
National	40.4	31	39.1	17	48 (39.7)
NZ First	3.5	0	5.7	7	7 (5.8)
Green	4.1	0	5.3	6	6 (5.0)
Maori	3.4	4	2.1	0	4 (3.3)
Utd Future	2.8	1	2.7	2	3 (2.5)
Other	5.7	2	4.5	1	3 (2.5)

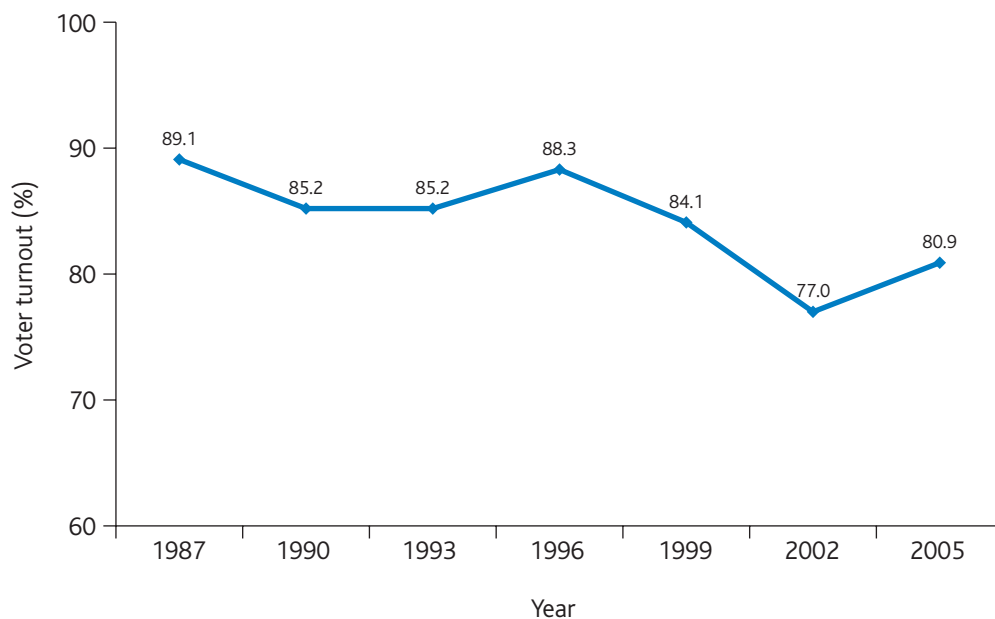
7.19 In the last FPTP election, in 1993, the National Party won 50 of 99 seats with 35.1 percent of the vote, while Labour won 45 with 34.7 percent of the vote. The Alliance Party won two seats with 18.2 percent of the vote and New Zealand First won two seats with 8.4 percent of the vote.

7.20 Turn-out has not increased with the introduction of MMP. Official turn-out figures show turn-out increasing to 88.3 percent in 1996 from 85.2 percent in 1993, but then falling to 84.1 percent in 1999 and 77.0 percent in 2002, before recovering to 80.9 percent in 2005. These are still healthy turn-out figures by international standards, but overall, turn-out is lower under MMP than it was under FPTP. As we noted in the discussion about turn-out in the UK, participation in elections is the result of many different factors – the voting system is but one. Some observers have attributed disappointing turn-out to public dissatisfaction with coalition government; others to the trends observed in most countries, especially among the young; and others to less party mobilisation under MMP.

7.21 The issue of party mobilisation has been studied by, among others, Jeffrey A Karp from Texas Tech University. In a paper from 2003 entitled *The Effects of Proportional Representation on Party Activity in New Zealand*,<sup>189</sup> he shows that there has been a decrease in the proportion of citizens who report being contacted by parties, particularly those who report being contacted in person. Parties are less likely to concentrate on marginal constituencies, and more likely

to treat electorate seats equally, but the rate of contact has been lower than in the safest seats under FPTP. Jack Vowles, in a study of turn-out decline between 1996 and 1999<sup>190</sup> observed that campaign expenditure on electorate seats declined by seven percent between the two elections.

**Figure 6**  
New Zealand election turn-out (%) 1987-2005<sup>185</sup>



7.22 Overall then, MMP has made significant changes to the way that New Zealand is governed, and has made its Parliament a good deal more representative of the population; but the positive effects on turn-out and parties' contact with the electorate that are often attributed to PR systems do not appear to have materialised. In both cases this may be due to factors other than the voting system, but it reinforces the observations made elsewhere in this paper that many things impact on turn-out and changing the voting system alone is not likely to boost participation.

## C Election outcomes under proportional voting systems and the alternative vote – international examples

7.23 The selection of countries below is chosen to give an example of all the main proportional systems in established western democracies, so a degree of comparability with the new electoral systems in the UK is possible. These are:

- the Netherlands, Italy and Sweden with the PR List system also used for European elections in the UK

- Germany (and New Zealand) using AMS, as used for the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly
- the Republic of Ireland using STV, as used for the Northern Ireland Assembly (and Scottish local government elections).

7.24 The AV system in Australia is also considered, given that the Jenkins Commission proposed a variant of AV with a proportional top-up.

### (i) Netherlands

7.25 The Dutch Parliament, the *Staten Generaal*, has two chambers, the *Eerste Kamer* and the *Tweede Kamer* (second chamber). The latter is the main chamber, initiating legislation. There are 150 seats in the second chamber and the maximum term of the Parliament is four years. The Netherlands has one of the most proportional of electoral systems, which has been in place since 1917. There is a list system where a seat is apportioned for every 1/150th of votes cast – this fraction is the electoral quota. There are 19 electoral districts and typically candidates appear on most if not all of them. Parties' overall percentages of the vote are rounded down, so that there are a few residual seats, which are allocated according to popular vote, using the d'Hondt method. The apportionment of seats to candidates is quite complex, a combination of automatic selection for candidates with more than 25 percent of the electoral quota, allocation according to order on party lists, and then allocation of the residual seats.

7.26 The proportionality of the electoral system leads naturally to coalition government. Since 1981, the coalitions have, with one exception, involved permutations of four parties – the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA), Labour, the VVD (right-liberal People's Party for Freedom and Democracy) and Liberal Democrats 66. The exception was following the 2002 election, when the List Pim Fortuyn (LPF) won 26 seats and a place in the Government with the Christian Democrats and VVD. The LPF quickly split and this precipitated another election in 2003, which restored the coalition, minus the LPF, but with Democrats 66 joining. An early election was also called in November 2006 when the Democrats 66 withdrew from the coalition over disagreements regarding immigration policy. Following the 2006 elections there were potentially four different coalition options. Two parties previously not represented were elected; the far right-wing Party for Freedom (PVV) including a former VVD member, and the animal-rights Party for the Animals. By February 2007 CDA, PvDA and CU formed a centre-left coalition and presented their coalition agreement and the six broad policy commitments of the new cabinet. The large number of parties involved has meant that coalition formation in the Netherlands is complicated and often takes several months for detailed agreements over policies. Cabinets can take up to half a year to form and not always in the ways anticipated by election results.<sup>191</sup>

7.27 The main parties in the second chamber for the past five elections are shown in Table 22 below, with governing parties in bold. 1994 was significant for being the first time in 90 years that a Christian Democratic party had not been part of the coalition and it took four months to agree this coalition.

**Table 22**

Election results (number of seats) in the Netherlands 1994-2006<sup>192</sup>

Party	Seats*				
	2006	2003	2002	1998	1994
CDA	<b>41</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>43</b>	29	34
Labour (PvdA)	<b>33</b>	42	23	<b>45</b>	<b>37</b>
VVD	22	<b>28</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>31</b>
Socialist (SP)	25	9	9	5	2
LPF	–	8	<b>26</b>	–	–
Green Left (GL)	7	8	10	11	5
Democrats 66	3	6	7	<b>14</b>	<b>24</b>
PVV	9	–	–	–	–
CU	<b>6</b>	3	2	–	–
SGP	2	2	4	3	2
Party for Animals (PvdD)	2	–	–	–	–
Other	–	–	2	5	15

\*bold indicates governing coalition

7.28 Governing coalitions have generally had more than 50 percent of seats in the chamber (the last minority coalition was in 1982), and most Prime Ministers have a reasonably long tenure – there have only been four since 1981, despite shifting coalitions. There are typically around 10 parties in the chamber, with a single party (CDA) leading recent coalition governments and small parties having opportunity to be part of governing coalitions over the years. Hence the Dutch electoral system appears to deliver representativeness and responsiveness to change (the LPF example being the most striking example of the receptiveness of the system to new forces). While there are examples of stable coalitions in the Netherlands, there are also examples of coalition breakdown in recent years. The year following the 2002 election saw the fall of the CDA-LPF-VVD coalition that only lasted five months due to internal strife in the LPF. It was the shortest ruling Dutch cabinet since the Second World War and elections were necessary the following year. In 2006 the CDA-VVD-D66 coalition broke down due to the Democrats 66 leaving the coalition, which brought about early elections. Coalition negotiations typically take several months but the detailed coalition agreements can be said to have

encouraged consensual government in the Netherlands and the voting system provides openness to a wide range of political interests. However there have been concerns about the often elusive and 'untransparent' manner by which coalition cabinets have been formed after elections.<sup>193</sup>

- 7.29 In March 2006 a 140 member Civic Forum was established at the Cabinet's request to review and advise on the most suitable electoral system for the Second Chamber. The Civic Forum was commissioned in response to concerns about declining public confidence in politicians in the Second Chamber. In its report in December 2006 the Civic Forum made modest recommendations for reform. The main proposal was to amend the current voting system to open party lists (allowing voters to either vote for a party or an individual). As part of this change, they also recommended a new method for allocating residual seats, adopting the 'largest-remainder method' instead of the currently used 'highest average method'. Supplementary recommendations related to concerns about the number of members separating from their party between elections, the use of 'list pushers' (personalities added to the bottom of the list to attract votes), improvements to education about how Dutch democracy works and greater use of civic forums in policy making.<sup>194</sup> At the time of writing, the Government was still discussing its position on the proposals but it seemed unlikely that the Parliament would pass the Civic Forum's recommendations.
- 7.30 Turn-out, ranging between 73-80 percent over the past four Dutch elections, is healthy.

## (ii) Republic of Ireland

- 7.31 The Irish Parliament, the *Oireachtas*, consists of two houses, the *Dáil Eireann* and the *Seanad Eireann* (the Senate). The main legislative house, the *Dáil*, is elected at least once every five years using STV. Ireland is one of two countries that use STV for elections to the main legislative house (Northern Ireland, while part of the UK, also uses STV for its Assembly and local elections). STV has been used in Ireland since 1922. There have been two referendums, in 1959 and 1968, asking the Irish electorate whether STV should be replaced, but in both cases the proposition was rejected.
- 7.32 There are currently 166 seats in the *Dáil*, elected from 42 constituencies. Seven parties are currently represented in the *Dáil*, as well as a significant number of independent Teachta Dála (TDs – members of the *Dáil*) – 13 resulting from the last election in 2002. STV, with its multi-member constituencies, where voters exercise the preferences for individual candidates, makes this number of independent representatives possible (though 13 is by far the highest number in recent times).

- 7.33 In recent elections one or other of the two largest parties in Ireland, *Fianna Fail* and *Fine Gael*, are always in the Government, but there has been no single party government between 1987-89. Between 1957 and 1981, Fianna Fail was in sole power, with the exception of a period of national coalition between 1973 and 1977. Ireland shows for long periods of the 20th century that it is possible to have non-coalition government under PR, if that is what the voters want. Equally, as Irish society has changed, the dominance of the two main parties is not as strong as before and coalition government has more recently become the norm.
- 7.34 During the period of coalition (or minority) governments since the early 1980s, Ireland's third largest party, Labour, has at times held a pivotal position. In 1987, the election was precipitated by the withdrawal of Labour from its coalitions with Fine Gael, after disagreements over budget proposals. In 1994, having formed a coalition with Fianna Fail after the 1992 election, Labour left that coalition and formed the "Rainbow Coalition" with Fine Gael and the Democratic Left Party, which then formed the Government until the next elections, in 1997.
- 7.35 In 1997, Fianna Fail and the Progressive Democrats formed the Government after the elections. The same coalition continued after the 2002 elections. This was the first time that the serving Government had been re-elected since Fianna Fail was returned to power in 1969. Following the May 2007 election a coalition government of Fianna Fail, the Green Party and the Progressive Democrats was formed, with support from four Independent TDs by June 2007.
- 7.36 The 1980s saw five elections as some coalitions proved not to be durable, but since 1989 there have been only four elections.
- 7.37 Table 23 below shows the composition of the Dáil since 1992, and for the most recent election in 2007, the percentages of seats and first preference votes won. A glance at the figures suggests broad proportionality, although allocation of seats obviously is also determined by other lower preferences. The Jenkins report suggested that the relatively small size of Ireland's constituencies with three to five members did not deliver as proportional a result as constituencies with seven to eight members. Nonetheless, it has been enough to allow seven parties to win representation in the Dáil, as well as a significant number of independents, although 2007 saw a significant decline in the number of independents from 13 in 2002 to five.

**Table 23**  
**Election results for the Dáil in Ireland 1992-2007<sup>195</sup>**

Party	2007			2002	1997	1992
	Seats	%	% 1st preference	Seats	Seats	Seats
Fianna Fail	77	46.4	41.6	81	77	68
Fine Gael	51	30.7	27.3	31	54	45
Labour	20	12.0	10.1	20	17	33
Prog Dems	2	1.2	2.7	8	4	10
Green	6	3.6	4.7	6	2	1
Sinn Fein	4	2.4	6.9	5	1	0
Socialist	0	0.0	0.6	1	1	0
Other parties	0	0.0	0.6	0	4	4
Independents	5	3.0	5.7	13	6	4
Speaker	1	0.6	-	1	1	1

### (iii) Germany

7.38 The political framework of Germany is laid out in the 1949 constitution, the *Grundgesetz* or Basic Law, which remained in place with some amendments following German re-unification in 1990. Power is divided between federal and state level as well as between the legislature, executive and judiciary. The Federal Republic consists of 16 federal states (*Länder*). The Länder provide the members of the *Bundesrat*, the second chamber in Germany's bicameral legislature. Representation is based on population and representatives take instruction from their state governments. The main chamber is the *Bundestag*, which is elected using the MMP system (referred to as AMS in the UK). Voters have two votes, one for a constituency representative and the other for a party – the list vote.

7.39 The Bundestag nominally has 598 members; 299 are elected in single-seat constituencies on a FPTP basis, the other 299 are allocated from national party lists in order to ensure that the distribution of seats mirrors parties' share of the national list vote (those parties which meet the threshold for representation). To be represented in the Bundestag, a party must have five percent of the national vote, or win at least three constituency seats. There can be more than 598 members of the Bundestag, as the result of 'overhang' seats caused by the larger parties winning more constituency seats than their share of the national vote would suggest.

- 7.40 Since its first post war election in 1949, the Bundestag has been dominated by two parties, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and its Bavarian equivalent the Christian Social Union (CSU) – which is in effect a single party from the point of view of forming a government – and the Social Democratic Party (SPD). Every post war government has had at least one of these parties in the ruling coalition, and on three occasions there have been “Grand Coalitions” involving both the SPD, and CDU/CSU – the first post-war Government under Chancellor Adenauer; a coalition from 1966 to 69 and the present coalition which has existed since the formation of a Government following the 2005 elections.
- 7.41 There have been long periods where either the SPD or the CDU/CSU, with a coalition partner, usually the Free Democrats (FDP), have been in power. From 1949-69, the CDU/CSU were the leading party in power, from 1969-82 the SPD were in power, from 1982-98 the CDU/CSU, and from 1998-2005, the SPD. So it cannot be said that Germany’s proportional electoral system has led to unstable government. Only once has an election led to a complete transfer of power. That was in 1998, when an SPD/Green coalition took over from the CDU/CSU/FDP.
- 7.42 On the other hand, one of the features of German political history since 1949 is that the FDP have often held the balance of power, with their seats deriving from list rather than constituency votes. The biggest percentage of the list vote won by the FDP was 12.8 percent in 1961; typically it ranges from six to 11 percent. From 1949 to the election of 1998, the FDP had always been part of the governing coalition at the start of a Parliament (in 1966 they left the coalition with the CDU/CSU, precipitating the Grand Coalition which lasted until the 1969 election. In 1982, they exerted probably their strongest influence by leaving the coalition with the SPD and joining forces with the CDU/CSU, which ushered in 16 years of Government led by Helmut Kohl.
- 7.43 Generally, largely because of the five percent threshold, the Bundestag has not been home to a large number of parties. In 1949, 80 seats were won by 10 small parties (one of which, the German Party with 17, formed part of the coalition), but by 1961 only four parties (SPD, FDP, CDU, CSU) won seats and this remained the case until the emergence of the Greens as a parliamentary force in 1983. In 1990, after Re-unification, the ex-Communist PDS won 17 seats, which rose to 36 in 1998, before falling away to two in the 2002 elections. In 2005, a new party of the Left, including well known politicians such as Oskar Lafontaine, previously of the SPD, won 54 seats in the Bundestag. It seems reasonable to suggest that the German system has supported a core of mainstream coalition parties, but has at the same time been flexible enough to allow voters to respond to newer parties where there are growing political forces (the environment from the 1980s, some post Re-unification dissatisfaction in eastern Germany in the 1990s, perhaps concerns about unemployment now). It is the list system which allows this. As Table 24 below

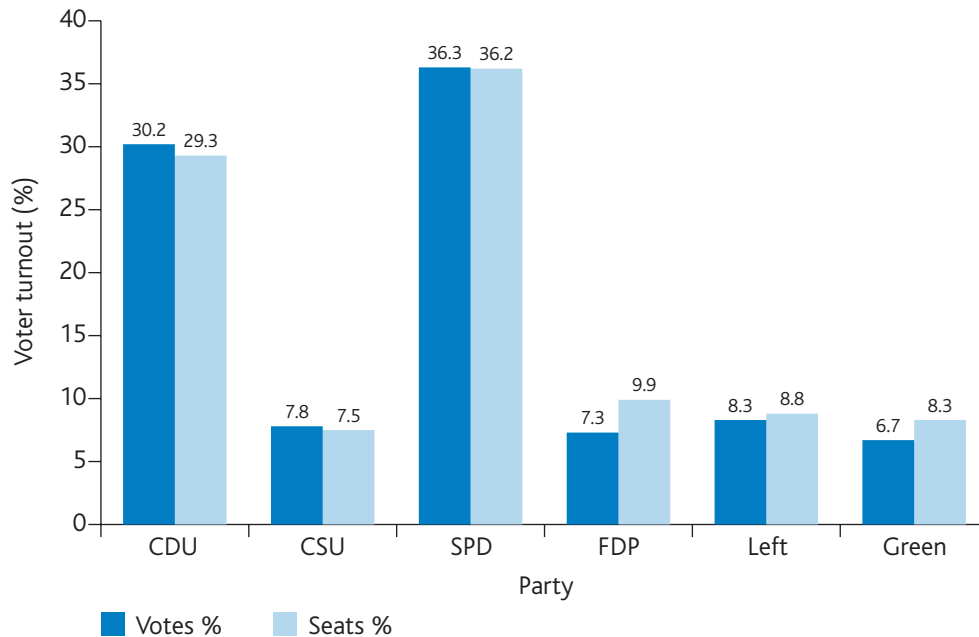
indicates, the FDP, Greens and Left Party are almost entirely reliant on list votes for their seats. The reverse is true of the one regionally-based party, the CSU which has almost all constituency seats. The only parties with a balance of constituency and list seats are the SPD and CDU.

- 7.44 The protracted coalition negotiations following the 2005 elections, which resulted in the formation of a CDU/CSU/SPD Grand Coalition led by Chancellor Angela Merkel of the CDU, have been used by UK critics of coalition government as evidence of the problems of delivering effective government under proportional electoral systems. However, the outcome of the elections was extremely tight, and arguably, in those circumstances, a coalition of the major parties reflects voting intentions more accurately than one party assuming control without a clear mandate from the electorate to do so. Much depends on the expectations of the society in question – as we have seen in Ireland and especially New Zealand since 1996, it has been possible for there to be effective minority government. In Germany, which is still adjusting to the huge economic impact of Re-unification, among other things, a coalition of a wide range of interests appears to be the preferred option.

**Table 24**  
**Outcome of 2005 elections to the German Bundestag<sup>196</sup>**

Party	Constituency		List		Total seats
	% Votes	Seats (%)	% Votes	Seats (%)	
CDU	32.6	106 (35.5)	27.8	74 (23.5)	180
CSU	8.2	44 (14.5)	7.4	2 (6.3)	46
SPD	38.4	145 (48.5)	34.2	77 (24.4)	222
FDP	4.7	0	9.8	61 (19.4)	61
Left	8.0	3 (10.0)	8.7	51 (16.2)	54
Green/Alliance 90	5.4	1 (3.3)	8.1	50 (15.9)	51
Other	2.7	0	4.0	0	0
Total	100.0	299	100.0	315	614

**Figure 7**  
**Comparison of total votes and total seats percentages in 2005 German elections<sup>197</sup>**



7.45 Figure 7 shows that broad proportionality is achieved by Germany's MMP system – almost exactly for the SPD in 2005. The system seems to favour slightly the parties who rely on their seats from the list system, despite the overhang seats won by the major parties.

#### (iv) Italy

7.46 Italy is often cited by opponents of PR as an example of unstable government, with the suggestion that there is a cause and effect from the electoral system to the changes in government. A look at the evidence reveals a much more complex picture.

7.47 Italy has a bicameral system composed of a Senate and a Chamber of Deputies. Both are directly elected and are of equal authority. The Speakers of the Senate and Chamber are respectively second and third to the President of the Republic in the Italian order of precedence. The analysis below focuses on the Chamber of Deputies.

7.48 In the post Second World War period, the dominant party in Italy was the Christian Democrats, from the first elections in 1948 until the early 1990s. The electoral system was a proportional list system based on multi-member electoral districts. In all this time the Christian Democrats were the main party of Government and governed in coalition with small parties which

included, from the beginning of the 1960s, the Socialist parties. In 1948, the Christian Democrats won 48.5 percent of the popular vote, with a coalition of Communists and Socialists the main challengers with 31 percent. Through their period in Government, the Christian Democrats typically won between 30-40 percent of the vote. Changes in government and Prime Minister were frequent (there were 23 Prime Ministers from 1945-83), but the ruling coalition remained largely the same. The main opposition was the Communist Party, which in the 1970s and 80s polled around 30 percent of the popular vote.

- 7.49 In the 1980s the Christian Democrats' hold on power weakened, and for a while the Socialists became the leading party in Government, principally under Bettino Craxi for three and a half years in the mid 1980s (the Christian Democrats remained the largest party during this time). However, in the late 1980s and early 1990s most of the major political parties were caught up in various crises, including corruption. In 1992 and 1993, the Christian Democrat, Socialist and Communist Parties were all dissolved. Following a referendum in 1993, the electoral system was changed to a version of the Mixed Member System (also known as AMS in the UK and MMP in New Zealand), with a heavy emphasis on FPTP in constituencies with uninominal seats. Seventy five percent of seats in the Chamber of Deputies were uninominal, 25 percent a proportional top-up, with a 4 percent threshold to limit the number of parties in the Chamber of Deputies.
- 7.50 Three elections were held under MMS – in 1994, 1996 and 2001. The 1994 elections saw a major change in representatives, with 452 out of 630 deputies being elected for the first time. There remained a large number of parties competing for votes, but coalescing around two groups: the "House of Freedoms" and the "Progressives". The former, led by the Forza Italia Party, under Silvio Berlusconi, won power, but only until December 1994, when the Northern League withdrew from the coalition. A 'technical' Government was in power until the next set of elections in 1996, following which a series of governments (including the "Olive Tree" coalition under Romano Prodi between 1996 and 1998) were in power until the 2001 elections. In 2001 Silvio Berlusconi was returned to power at the head of a five party coalition (the House of Freedoms again).
- 7.51 Table 25 shows the high level outcomes of the elections from 1994, 1996, and 2001. Essentially, a relatively large number of parties remained in the Chamber of Deputies under MMS, but there was a greater sense of there being alternative governments than under the pre-1994 PR system. There was no real increase in government stability, however, if measured by changes in government. Between 1994 and 2006, there were eight different governments and six Prime Ministers, although Silvio Berlusconi remained Prime Minister from 2001-2006.

- 7.52 Italy has also witnessed the use of 'decoy' party lists by the two coalitions in order to maximise their share of PR seats. Under this scheme, many constituency candidates were linked to decoy lists in the proportional part of the election – *Abolizione Scorporo* and *Paese Nuovo*. The former was linked to House of Freedoms candidates and the latter to Olive Tree candidates. Three hundred and sixty of the 475 constituency seats were won by such candidates, although the two decoy parties won only 0.2 percent of the proportional vote. This meant that when the proportional seats were allocated, fewer were deducted from the main coalitions' shares on account of their performance in the constituency elections. The House of Freedoms coalition won 52 percent of the proportional seats with 41 percent share of the vote, where under most versions of AMS, one would expect the larger party or coalition to win fewer seats in the top-up than its share of the vote.
- 7.53 Italy also had a relatively high proportion of invalid or blank votes under MMS. This may be connected to the fact that voting is a duty in Italy, as well as the complexities of MMS. In 2001, 9.2 percent of the proportional votes were invalid or blank, with 7.4 percent of the constituency votes suffering the same fate.

**Table 25**  
**High level election results in Italy 1994, 1996, 2001<sup>198</sup>**

Party	Constituency		Party	Proportional	
	% Votes	Seats (%)		% Votes	Seats (%)
<b>1994</b>					
Progressives	32.8	164 (34.5)	Forza Italia	21.0	30 (19.3)
House of Liberty	22.8	164 (34.5)	Party of Left	20.4	38 (24.5)
Hse of Good Govt	14.9	129 (27.2)	It Popular Pty	11.1	29 (18.7)
National Alliance	6.7	8 (1.7)	Nat Alliance	13.5	23 (14.8)
			Northern Lge	8.4	11 (7.1)
			Comm Refdn	6.0	11 (7.1)
<b>1996</b>					
Olive Tree	45.4	247 (52.0)	Dems of Left	21.1	26 (13.3)
House of Freedoms	43.2	169 (35.6)	List Dini	4.3	8 (5.1)
Northern League	10.8	39 (8.2)	Oth centre-left	6.8	4 (2.7)
Comm Refdn	2.7	15 (3.2)	Comm Refdn	8.6	20 (13.3)
			Forza Italia	20.6	37 (23.8)
			Nat Alliance	15.7	28 (18.1)
			CCD-CDU	5.8	12 (7.8)
<b>2001</b>					
House of Freedoms	45.4	282 (59.4)	Forza Italia	29.4	62 (40.0)
Olive Tree	43.2	184 (38.7)	Nat Alliance	12.0	24 (15.5)
			Dems of Left	16.6	31 (20.0)
			Daisy democracy (La Margherita)	14.5	27 (17.4)
			Comm Rfdn	5.0	11 (7.1)

Note: In all three elections there were 475 constituency and 155 proportional seats.

7.54 Controversially, before the 2006 elections, the House of Freedoms Government initiated a change in the electoral system back to a list-based regional PR system (these elections were also the first to create seats for overseas voters).

7.55 The system now operates as follows:

### Chamber of Deputies

- 100 percent of parliamentary seats are decided on the basis of PR with large voting districts replacing smaller constituencies (in total 27 districts).
- There are three separate cut-off thresholds for parties and coalitions:
  - a) single parties obtaining less than two percent of the national vote are not represented in parliament, and their votes count towards their coalition's overall tally. (However, should some seats remain unallocated these votes are then assigned to those parties that have received less than two percent of the national vote in descending order);
  - b) parties obtaining less than four percent of the national vote (but more than two percent) are not given seats, but their votes count towards their coalition's tally; and
  - c) coalitions failing to win at least 10 percent of the national vote do not obtain seats.
- In the event of a close result and, should the winning coalition not gain the necessary 340 seats (out of 618 plus 12 for constituencies representing Italians resident overseas) to guarantee a sufficient majority in the Chamber of Deputies, then the 'missing' extra seats (see (a) above) are given to this coalition.

### Senate

- 100 percent of senatorial seats are decided on the basis of PR according to regions (20 regional constituencies).
- There are two separate thresholds for parties and coalitions:
  - a) single parties obtaining less than eight percent of the vote in each single region are not represented in the Senate; and
  - b) coalitions failing to win 20 percent of the vote in each region do not obtain seats.
- The threshold to reach in order to obtain a senatorial seat corresponds to 55 percent of all regional votes within each region. In the event of a close result, the coalition with the majority of votes is given extra seats to reach that percentage. On a national basis the seats amount to 308 (six for constituencies overseas).

7.56 Naturally the assumption was made by some that the changes to the voting system were made to benefit the ruling coalition; but in a very tight election (which was disputed for some time afterwards, given the closeness of the result – less than one percent of the popular vote), the “Union” coalition, led by Romani Prodi, emerged the winner. The Olive Tree coalition of three parties – Democrats of the Left, Daisy-Democracy is Freedom and the European Republican Movement – dominates the Union coalition with 220 seats in the Chamber of Deputies. Another eight coalition parties (including two communist parties) have 121 seats, while six overseas seats are allocated to the Union, and one to the Italy of Values Party, giving the Union coalition a majority of 67 seats. The opposition House of Freedoms coalition currently has 277 seats in the Chamber of Deputies spread over five parties and four overseas seats in total. One overseas seat assigned to South America is independent. In the Senate, the Union coalition depends on the votes of the seven Senators for life.

**Table 26**  
**Outcome of the 2006 Chamber of Deputies election in Italy<sup>199</sup>**

Party	% Votes	Seats	% Seats
The Union	<b>49.8</b>	<b>348</b>	<b>55.2</b>
– Olive Tree	31.2	220	34.9
– Comm Refdn	5.8	41	6.5
– Others*	12.8	87	13.8
House of Freedoms	<b>49.7</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>44.6</b>
– Forza Italia	23.7	137	21.7
– National Alliance	12.3	71	11.3
– Union of Christian & Centre Democrats	6.8	39	6.2
– Northern League	4.6	26	4.1
– Overseas (FI)		3	

\* Others includes 7 parties plus 7 overseas seats

Note: Also one overseas seat representing Italians in South America.

7.57 The Union coalition was a beneficiary of the mechanism built in to the proportional system to produce majority government. If the coalition that receives a majority of the votes initially receives less than 55 percent of the seats (340 out of 618), it receives a 'majority prize' which takes its number of seats to 340. Given that the two coalitions were separated by less than 0.1 percent of the popular vote (49.8 percent to 49.7 percent), this was a highly significant benefit.

7.58 The 2006 elections are very recent and the first back under the PR list system, so it is hard to judge what the longer-term effects may be. But the number of

parties involved does suggest that the situation may be fluid and not destined for the long term. Given the widespread (cross-party) dissatisfaction with the effect of the current electoral law, work is ongoing to identify a new law, possibly based on other EU countries' systems (e.g. Germany, France or Spain). Possibly some parties may consolidate or fade from the picture over the time, as often happens under proportional systems. Indeed the two largest parties on the centre-left are in the process of forming a new single party, the Partito Democratico, of which Prodi will be Chairman. It is difficult to predict what will happen next in Italy.

- 7.59 The MMS between 1994 and 2006 did encourage parties to coalesce around two poles, but there remained more parties than in other countries with similar systems. This may simply reflect the fact that all political cultures are different and that in Italy, a relatively large number of parties is the norm, especially now that the umbrella of the Christian Democrat Party, which dominated for more than 40 years (with the Communists as the main opposition) after the Second World War, no longer exists.

## (v) [Australia \(not including the 2007 election\)](#)

- 7.60 Australia has a bicameral Parliament with both chambers – the House of Representatives and the Senate – having equal legislative powers under the Australian Constitution. The exception is that appropriation (money) bills must originate in the House of Representatives and, while they may be rejected by the Senate, they may not be amended in the Senate. In practice most legislation is initiated in the House of Representatives, but the Senate is in a powerful position to block or negotiate amendments to Government legislation when, as has often been the case in the past, the Government is in a minority in the Senate. The current Government, a coalition between the Liberal and National parties (who effectively operate as a single party) has had a majority in the Senate since July 2005, following the 2004 federal election. Before that it had relied on negotiations with small parties and independents to secure passage of its legislation.
- 7.61 The Australian electoral system was studied closely by the Jenkins Commission because, although the AV system used for the House of Representatives is not proportional (and can in fact lead to even less proportional outcomes than FPTP), it does allow people to express preferences; and the Senate voting system, using STV, allows for some smaller party representation and often provides a check on the House of Representative majorities.
- 7.62 Australia has also had compulsory voting since 1924. This ensures turn-out of around 95 percent at federal elections. About five percent of votes cast are usually invalid or “informal” as they are known in Australia. Some of those will be votes from people who do not wish to elect any of the candidates on offer.

- 7.63 Each House of Representatives may sit for a maximum term of three years and elections must be held within 68 days following the House's expiry. The Prime Minister can approach the Governor-General to seek elections for the House of Representatives at any time. Most Senators have six year terms, with half the Senate elected every third year. The exception to this is if there is a "double dissolution" called by the Government as a result of the Senate not passing legislation initiated in the House of Representatives. In the ensuing elections, all Senate seats must be competed for. The last time that this happened was in 1987. Senators for the two Territories (Australian Capital Territory and Northern Territory) have the same term as the members of the House of Representatives.
- 7.64 The AV system for the House of Representatives has helped to deliver majority government in Australia. There is effectively a two party system, with a majority held either by the Liberal/National Party coalition (which has been in power since 1996, led by John Howard) or the Australian Labor Party (which prior to 1996, had been in power since 1983, led by Bob Hawke from 1993-91 and Paul Keating from 1991-96). There have been three Prime Ministers in the past 23 years – indicative of stable government.
- 7.65 STV is used to elect members of the Senate, although this does not lead to proportionality according to the number of voters, as each of the six States elects 12 senators, and the two Territories elect two. This leads to the smaller and less populated states being over-represented in comparison with the more heavily populated states like New South Wales and Victoria. The proportionality of STV is reflected by the political make-up of the Senate in which small parties are represented, with the Australian Greens and Australian Democrats each holding four seats since 2005 and the Family First and Country Liberal parties holding one each, in the 76 seat chamber. It is argued that the more diverse political representation in the Senate enhances its reviewing role on legislation, particularly when the majority party (or coalition) in the House of Representatives does not have a majority in the Senate. Further, in both recent periods when the Government has had a majority in both Houses, some Senators from the party of Government have opposed elements of Government legislation and obtained amendments in negotiation with the Opposition and cross benches.
- 7.66 Preference voting systems can be complex, particularly when STV applies to constituencies with a large number of representatives, as is the case in Australian Senate elections. As voters can face the prospect of having to set out an order of preference for 60 or more candidates, a 'group voting ticket' is allowed, whereby, ballot papers allow voters to select a single party or group of parties, with the ensuing preferences following a party list.<sup>200</sup> More than 90 percent of voters exercise this 'above the line' option. For example, at the past four elections for Senators to represent the State of New South Wales there

have been more than 60 candidates on the ballot paper. This is an example whereby STV can be engineered to operate like a PR-List system.<sup>201</sup>

- 7.67 In the House of Representative elections, voters must indicate an order of preference for every candidate on the ballot paper in order for their vote to be valid. To mitigate the possibility of errors, or the 'donkey vote', where electors simply number their preferences from top to bottom of the ballot paper, volunteers from all the political parties stand outside polling places with "How-to-vote" cards, with instructions on where to place their preferences if they want to elect the candidate from a particular party. In addition, political party names appear on the ballot papers under the names of their endorsed candidates. As noted above, the incidence of invalid or informal votes, at around five percent, is not as high as it might be, given the complexity and the fact that there is compulsory voting.
- 7.68 As Table 27 below shows, the number of House of Representatives seats won by the major parties can vary considerably for a given share of the first preference vote. This is the partly the impact of preference voting and partly an effect of single-member constituencies. The table shows that the Labor Party, for example, won 49 seats with 38.7 percent of the vote in 1996 (the year it lost power), but 65 seats with 37.8 percent of the vote in 2001. In 2004, it lost five seats, with 0.2 percent less of the vote. According to the Australian Electoral Commission<sup>202</sup> 61 out of the 150 seats in the House of Representatives were decided by preference votes in the 2004 election. Of the largest parties that did not win seats the Greens (7.2 percent of first preference votes) strongly favoured Labor (80.8 percent of second preference), while Family First (2 percent of first preference votes) preferred the Liberal/National coalition in 66.6 percent of cases.

**Table 27**  
Australian House of Representatives election results 1993-2004<sup>203</sup>

Year	Liberal/National		Labor	
	1st preference votes	Seats (%)	1st preference votes	Seats (%)
2004	46.7	87 (58.0)	37.6	60 (40.0)
2001	42.7	82 (54.7)	37.8	65 (43.3)
1998	39.5	80 (53.3)	40.1	67 (44.7)
1996	47.2	94 (62.7)	38.7	49 (32.7)
1993	44.0	65 (43.3)	44.9	80 (53.3)

(2007 election not included)

- 7.69 The National Party, during this period, won between 12-18 seats (1996 the peak, 2004 the low). Its share of the first preference vote ranged from 8.2

percent in 1996 to 5.3 percent in 2001. In 2004 it won fewer first preference votes than the Greens. The Greens did not win any seats. Independents won between one to five seats. The most recent election was held in late 2007 but due to time constraints an analysis has not been included in this review.

- 7.70 The Australian electoral system, therefore, appears to allow for relatively stable two party government, with greater political diversity provided by the Senate. The preference systems for elections to both chambers are complex if fully exercised, but there is a simpler list based alternative for Senate elections and the political parties themselves play an active role in promoting voters' understanding of the processes.

## (vi) Sweden

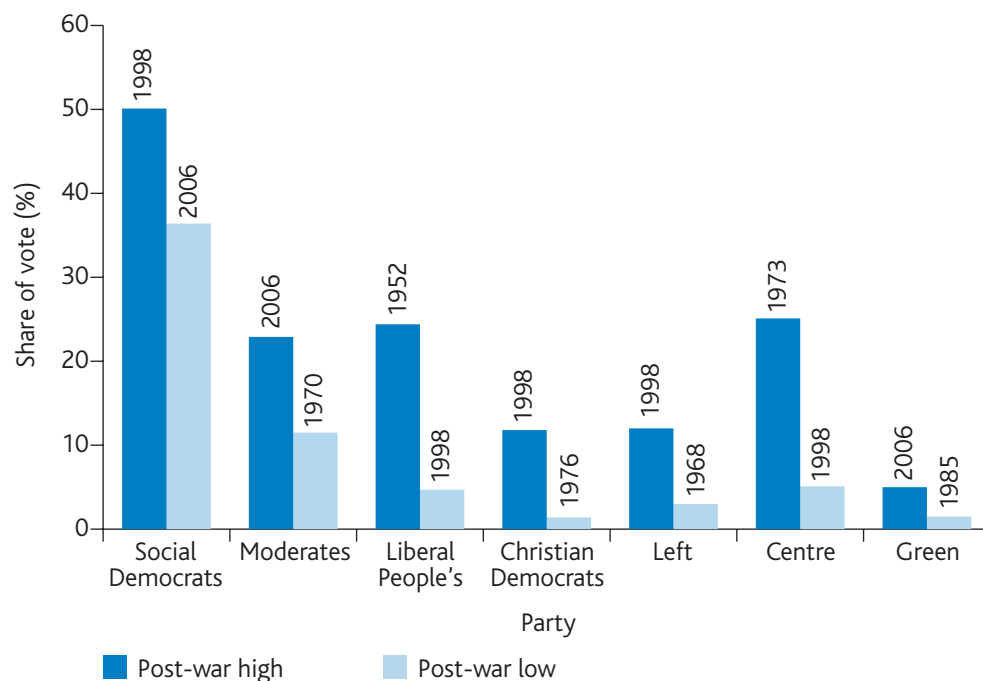
- 7.71 On a national level Sweden holds elections to its legislature, the *Riksdag*, every four years (it was every three years between 1970 and 1994). Local elections take place at the same time. A proportional list system, in 29 multi-member national electoral districts is used. Three hundred and ten members are elected to these districts, with the other 39 seats allocated in order to make the distribution of seats more proportional. There is a threshold for representation of either 4 percent of the national vote, or 12 percent of a single electoral district.
- 7.72 Ballot papers in Sweden are provided by the parties, though paid for by the Government if the party in question has won at least one percent of the vote in one of the previous two national elections. The voter has a choice of three ballot papers, any one of which can be used to vote. One ballot has the name of a party and its list of candidates. The voter makes a mark against a preferred candidate. Another has the name of a party only. The third is a blank paper, on which the voter can write in his or her preferred candidate.
- 7.73 Although a large number of parties stand for election, the seven parties in the 2002 Riksdag have dominated since 1982, which was the first time that the Green party was elected. The one exception was when the New Democracy Party won 6.7 percent of the vote and 24 seats in 1991. The Christian Democrats are a relatively recent phenomenon (the party was formed in 1964), winning its first seat in 1985. The other five parties have all been permanent fixtures since 1917.
- 7.74 The Swedish General election was held on 17 September 2006 and saw the minority Government of Göran Persson's Social Democratic Party and their left-wing allies narrowly defeated by the centre-right alliance. Göran Persson had been Prime Minister for 10 years and his party had been in power since the 1994 election.

**Table 28**  
**Swedish Riksdag election results 2006<sup>204</sup>**

Party	% Votes	Seats (%)
Social Democrats	35.0	130 (37.2)
Moderates	26.2	97 (27.8)
Centre	7.9	29 (8.3)
Liberal People's	7.5	28 (8.0)
Christian Democrats	6.6	24 (6.9)
Left	5.9	22 (6.3)
Green	5.2	19 (5.4)

- 7.75 Fredrik Reinfeldt, leader of the Moderates, was appointed Prime Minister by Parliament in the beginning of October 2006. The centre right parties (The Moderate Party, The Liberal People's Party, The Christian Democrats, and The Centre Party) now together form a majority Government.
- 7.76 The Social Democrats have been the leading party in the majority of Swedish Governments since the Second World War, with Social Democrat Prime Ministers for all but the six years between 1976-1982 and the three years from 1991-1994. The Social Democrats have consistently won the largest share of the national vote, with a post war high of 50.1 percent in 1968, and a low of 35.0 percent at the 2006 election that, despite being the largest share of votes, was low enough to remove them from government.

**Figure 8**  
Share of national vote in Sweden by main parties – highs and lows<sup>205</sup>



7.77 Overall, Sweden has combined a proportional electoral system that allows the strength of parties to ebb and flow over time, with stable coalition or minority government, generally dominated by the Social Democrats. Turn-out remains high at around 80 percent, although this is below the 1970s peak of 90 percent.

## D British Columbia & Ontario – Asking citizens to review the voting system

7.78 Prior to the provincial elections in British Columbia in 2001, the Liberal Party, who were then in opposition, made a commitment to appoint a Citizens' Assembly on electoral reform to assess all possible models for electing members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs), including preferential ballots, PR and the prevailing electoral system, FPTP. The Citizens' Assembly would have a mandate to hold public hearings throughout British Columbia. If it recommended change to the electoral system, the option would be put to a province-wide referendum.

7.79 All of this transpired following the Liberals' landslide victory in the 2001 provincial elections, where they won 77 of the legislature's 79 seats, therefore winning power from the New Democrats.

7.80 Under FPTP, British Columbia had frequently experienced significant swings in seats for the main parties from election to election. In the post war period until 1991, the dominant two parties were the New Democrats and the Social Credit Party. The Social Credit Party collapsed in 1991, winning only seven seats out of 75, with the Liberals emerging as the second party with 17 seats, having won no seats for the previous three elections. Results since 1991 have been as follows.

**Table 29**  
British Columbia election results since 1991<sup>206</sup>

Party	Votes (%)	Seats	%
<b>1991</b>			
NDP	40.7	51	68.0
Liberals	33.3	17	22.7
Social Credit	24.1	7	9.3
<b>1996</b>			
NDP	39.6	39	52.0
Liberals	41.8	33	44.0
3 other seats won by small parties			
<b>2001</b>			
NDP	21.6	2	2.5
Liberals	57.6	77	97.5
<b>2005</b>			
NDP	41.5	33	41.8
Liberals	45.8	46	58.2

7.81 In 2001 the Greens won 12.4 percent of the vote, and in 2005, 9.8 percent, but no seats.

7.82 These results show some highly disproportional results under FPTP, particularly in 2001, with the ruling NDP being reduced to two seats, so that it could not even qualify as an official opposition. In 1996, the Liberals won the largest proportion of the popular vote, but lost out to the NDP on seats. While it is reasonable to assume that the 1996 result may have been a reason for the Liberals' proposal for a Citizens' Assembly, it stuck to its plans having won the 2001 landslide.

7.83 The Citizens' Assembly was created in 2003. The British Columbia legislature unanimously appointed Jack Blaney, former president of Simon Fraser University, to the Chair of the Assembly. Members of the Assembly were

chosen at random from the province's 79 electoral districts (though names were grouped by age and gender, to ensure a good mix) and included two randomly selected First Nations (aboriginal) members. Elections BC, which runs BC elections, ensured impartiality. Eventually 161 Assembly members were selected. The members underwent a three-month learning programme and then embarked on a range of consultative exercises – public hearings, written submissions, and a deliberative phase, including a mandate to look at electoral systems in other jurisdictions around the world.

- 7.84 The Citizens' Assembly, following its deliberations, recommended that British Columbia should move to STV – "BC-STV". It did so on the following grounds, which are set out in its December 2004 report, *Making every vote count*.
- BC-STV is easy to use – voters rank candidates in order of preference
  - BC-STV gives fair results – each party's share of seats reflects its share of voter support
  - BC-STV gives more power to voters – they decide which candidates within a party, or across all parties are elected. Local representation is strengthened as all candidates must work hard to secure votes
  - BC-STV gives greater voter choice – choosing more than one member from a riding (BC electoral district) means that voters will select from a greater range of candidates.
- 7.85 The Assembly recommendations were put to a referendum at the same time as the 2005 provincial elections. Certain thresholds had to be passed for a new electoral system to be introduced: first, 60 percent of the valid votes province-wide had to be in favour of the change; and second, the change needed to receive the support of more than 50 percent of the valid votes in at least 48 (60 percent) of the 79 electoral districts.
- 7.86 The second of these criteria was met in the referendum, with 77 of the 79 districts having at least 50 percent approval. However, the province-wide threshold of 60 percent was narrowly missed, with 57.7 percent of voters supporting the change to the electoral system. Turn-out at the referendum was 61.5 percent.
- 7.87 Therefore, there has been no change to the electoral system at this point. However, the BC Premier Gordon Campbell promised a second referendum in 2008. That has now been put back to 2009, to coincide with the next provincial elections, which are now held according to a fixed term of four years.

## Ontario – Referendum of 2007 on electoral Reform

7.88 In this section we briefly note recent events in the province of Ontario but a detailed description of the electoral system and outcomes is not provided. Ontario also recently reviewed its voting system, which was subject to a referendum being held on 10 October 2007. Ontario's Citizens Assembly on Electoral Reform<sup>208</sup> reporting in May 2007 recommended the Mixed Member Proportional system (MMP or AMS). Under this model the Ontario legislature would expand from 107 to 129 seats. The number of local constituency seats would drop to 90 and 39 seats would be filled via a top-up list. A party would need to achieve a minimum of three percent of the overall vote to receive any seats in the legislature. The Referendum asked voters to choose which voting system Ontario should use to elect members to the provincial legislature, FPTP or MMP. To be adopted it had to receive 60 per cent of all votes cast across Ontario and 50 percent or more of the ballots cast in at least 64 of the 107 ridings.<sup>209</sup> However, only 37 percent of the participating electorate and 5 out of 107 ridings voted for the MMP.<sup>210</sup> These elections had the lowest turn-out levels for Ontario at 52.8 percent. The previous lowest election recorded was in 1923 with 54.7 percent turn-out. It was also the first referendum in 83 years.

## E Turn-out under different voting systems

- 7.89 Figure 3 showed that turn-out in elections under the new electoral systems in the UK had not matched that of the FPTP system for the General election. In this section we draw on the research conducted by Pippa Norris in *Electoral Engineering*. The figures were also used by ICPR in its 2003 report.<sup>211</sup>
- 7.90 Norris's findings are summarised in Table 30 below. The figure that is generally quoted from these findings is that PR systems generally have turn-out about 10 percentage points higher than majoritarian systems. However, this is a selective figure that does not tell the whole story, and gives the highest differential between majoritarian and proportional systems, as closer study of the table below indicates.

**Table 30**  
**Electoral systems and turn-out, worldwide 1990s<sup>212</sup>**

Type of electoral system	Mean vote vs VAP	Mean vote vs reg	Number of systems
Alternative vote	65.5	92.9	2
Second ballot	58.5	65.0	21
First past the post	61.2	67.7	43
Single non-transferable	52.6	59.8	2
Block vote	56.5	70.9	9
<b>All majoritarian</b>	<b>60.4</b>	<b>68.3</b>	<b>77</b>
Combined – dependent	66.6	71.9	7
Combined – independent	63.5	69.0	19
<b>All combined</b>	<b>64.0</b>	<b>70.4</b>	<b>26</b>
List PR	70.0	74.7	59
STV	83.4	81.7	2
<b>All PR systems</b>	<b>70.0</b>	<b>74.6</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>All systems</b>	<b>65.0</b>	<b>70.8</b>	<b>164</b>

Mean vote vs VAP: number of valid votes as proportion of voting age population.

Mean vote vs reg: number of valid votes as a proportion of the registered electorate.

Combined systems: equivalent to mixed or additional member systems. Note no control is made for countries where voting is compulsory (Belgium, Cyprus, Luxembourg & Australia).

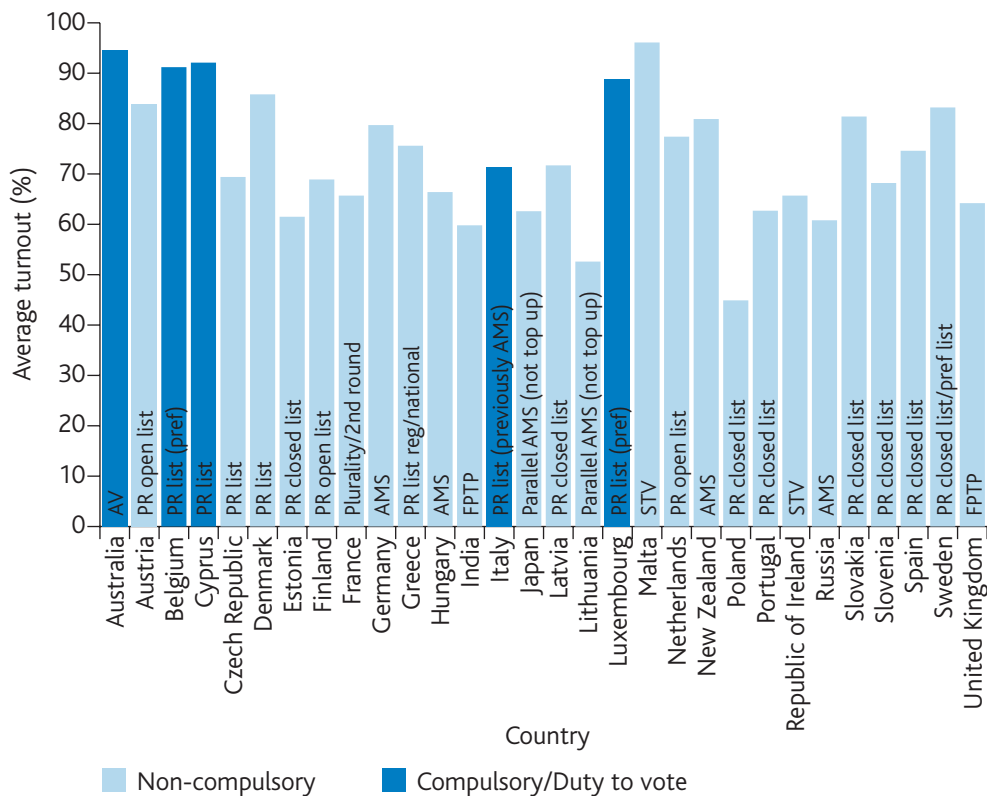
#### 7.91 Some key observations:

- the 10 percent differential is the difference between majoritarian and STV/list systems (and a few other PR variants). It does not include AMS, which can be as proportional as some list systems, but appear to have lower turn-out
- the 10 percent differential is for turn-out using voting age population as a denominator. Many people tend to measure turn-out as a percentage of the registered electorate
- using registration as the denominator, majoritarian systems have turn-out that is 2.1 percentage points below that of AMS and 6.3 percentage points below STV and list systems. If we combine the AMS and PR systems and simply find the mean figure for turn-out, it is 73.4 percent. So the differential reduces to 5.1 percent.

7.92 So, turn-out differences between majoritarian systems – calculating turn-out as a percentage of the registered electorate – varies according to the specific systems one is comparing, but five percent is probably a reasonable average differential worldwide in the 1990s.

7.93 Figure 9 below shows average turn-out in some of the larger democracies across the world and in the European Union countries. The figures are a simple mean average of the past three national elections in those countries.

**Figure 9**  
Average turn-out (%) over past three elections in selected countries<sup>213</sup>



7.94 Leaving aside those countries with compulsory voting, the highest levels of turnout are mostly in countries with some form of list system, many of them closed list, where voters do not get a choice of which candidates to vote for. Equally, some of the countries with the lowest turnout in the EU also had closed list systems. Overall, this suggests that in Europe at least, the type of electoral system is not a particularly good predictor of relative turnout.

7.95 Analysis undertaken by IDEA looking at average turnout in Western Democracies since 1945 for the nine major electoral systems used around the world states that there is a relatively small difference between the two most widely used systems, List PR turnout at 73 percent and FPTP turnout at 67 percent.<sup>214</sup> With a six percentage point difference, this is similar to our findings above.

7.96 Research shows that in countries with PR systems, turnout is slightly higher than for countries with FPTP, particularly those operation List PR systems.

Mixed systems perform somewhere in the middle. These findings should also be considered alongside the findings in Chapter 6 about the multiple and complex factors that impact on voter turn-out and that the voting system is not the only influencing factor.

## F Conclusions

- 7.97 Internationally, turn-out under proportional systems is on average about five percent higher than for majoritarian systems (principally, but not exclusively, FPTP). This differential cannot be attributed solely to the voting system, as set out in the section on participation in Chapter 6 with other multiple factors impacting on voter turn-out. Countries in Europe with relatively high turn-out are those that operate closed list systems, which make the least connection between individual candidates and constituents, a feature valued highly in the context of the UK.
- 7.98 The international examples studied in this review reinforce the view that the political culture rather than the voting system determines the number of parties in parliament, the longevity of governments and political behaviour. The voting systems are more likely to be enablers for change, rather than the causes of change. While PR enables a greater number of parties to be represented, with the likelihood of coalition governments, the longevity of represented parties differs by political contexts.
- 7.99 New Zealand provides a particularly interesting case study because it changed from FPTP to the MMP system as recently as 1996. There have been some important changes, with majority governments being replaced mainly by minority administrations supported by other parties in Parliament, with the role of the parliament in policy making and scrutiny being strengthened. There have also been other developments in New Zealand which proponents of PR might not have expected. After an initial small boost, turn-out has fallen below the rates under FPTP. Mobilisation of political parties has also fallen, according to academic studies – fewer people now report being contacted by parties, particularly in person. Innovative coalition agreements have been formed in ways sometimes unexpected.
- 7.100 Coalition formations in the Netherlands and Italy have resulted in greater volatility than in the case of Sweden and Germany (except for the close contest of the last election in Germany). Recent elections in the Republic of Ireland provide examples of stable coalition governments without any need for early elections.

7.101 In British Columbia a Citizens' Assembly was formed to investigate a change to the voting system and make proposals. It recommended a change from FPTP to STV, and this was put to a referendum in the province. A majority of voters elected for change, but the majority fell just short of the 60 percent threshold. Another referendum is scheduled for 2009. Voters in the Ontario referendum for the provincial government in October 2007 voted in favour of retaining the current FPTP over introducing a new MMP (AMS) system with a majority of 63 percent.

# Acronyms

**AEA** – Association of Electoral Administrators

**AMS** – Additional Member System

**APE** – Audit of Political Engagement

**AV** – Alternative Vote

**AV+** – Alternative Vote Plus top-up (voting system proposed by the Jenkins commission)

**BC** – British Columbia

**BME** – Black and minority ethnic

**BNP** – British National Party

**CDA** – Christian Democratic Appeal (Netherlands)

**CDU** – Christian Democratic Union (Germany)

**CSU** – Christian Social Union (Germany)

**DCA** – Department for Constitutional Affairs

**DUP** – Democratic Unionist Party (Northern Ireland)

**DV** – Deviation from proportionality

**ECJ** – European Court of Justice

**ERS** – Electoral Reform Society

**EU** – European Union

**FDP** – Free Democrats (Germany)

**FPTP** – First past the post

**GLA** – Greater London Authority

**IDP** – Index of democratic power

**LPF** – List Pim Fortuyn (Netherlands)

**MEP** – Member of the European Parliament

**MLA** – Member of the Legislative Assembly

**MMP** – Mixed Member Proportional System

**MP** – Member of Parliament

**MSP** – Member of the Scottish Parliament

**NEF** – New Economics Foundation

**PR** – Proportional representation

**SER** – Scottish Elections Review (Gould Review)

**SDLP** – Social Democrats and Labour Party (Northern Ireland)

**SDP** – Social Democratic Party (Germany)

**SMDS** – Single member district

**SNP** – Scottish National Party

**SOLACE** – Society of Local Authority Chief Executives

**STV** – Single Transferable Vote

**SV** – Supplementary Vote

**TD** – Teachta Dála

**UK** – United Kingdom

**UKIP** – UK Independence Party

**UUP** – Ulster Unionist Party (Northern Ireland)

## ANNEX A – Summary of selected voting systems<sup>215</sup>

### Additional Member System (AMS), Mixed Member System (MMS), and Mixed Member Proportional (MMP)

*Summary:*

These all refer to essentially the same system, where some proportion of the seats are directly elected and the remainder are drawn from larger areas to increase proportionality. Electors cast two votes – one for a constituency representative and one for a party list. The percentage of list votes obtained by each party determines their overall number of representatives and is used to top-up the number of constituencies won to the required degree of proportionality. The constituency or directly elected members are usually elected by first past the post; the list element is usually closed.

*Example (AMS):*

Five parties stand for election – Party A, Party B, Party C, Party D and Party E. At the polling booth, voters cast two votes – one for a constituency representative and one for a party list. Constituency members are elected by first past the post (see below) and the results are as follows:

	Party A	Party B	Party C	Party D	Party E
Constituency seats	4	3	2	0	0

Additional members (regional seats) are elected using a closed party list and are tallied as follows:

	Party A	Party B	Party C	Party D	Party E
Party list (No of votes)	800	500	900	500	80

The number of votes cast for each party list is divided by the number of constituency seats gained plus one (d'Hondt method). For example, Party A gained 4 constituency seats so the party list vote is divided by 5. Once that calculation is complete, the party with the highest regional figure gains the first regional seat. The results of the regional list election are below:

	Party A	Party B	Party C	Party D	Party E
Round 1	160	125	300	<b>500</b>	80
Round 2	160	125	<b>300</b>	250	80
Round 3	160	125	225	<b>250</b>	80
Round 4	160	125	<b>225</b>	166	80
Round 5	160	125	<b>180</b>	166	80

**Result:**

**Party A:** 4 constituency seats and 0 regional seats = 4 MPs

**Party B:** 3 constituency seats and 0 regional seats = 3 MPs

**Party C:** 2 constituency seats and 3 regional seats = 5 MPs

**Party D:** 0 constituency seats and 2 regional seats = 2 MPs

**Party E:** 0 constituency seats and 0 regional seats = 0 MPs

**Alternative Vote (AV)***Summary*

Voters fill in a ballot paper by marking their ballot paper 1,2,3 etc against their most preferred individual candidates in a single member seat. Winning candidates must get more than 50% of the votes as the second and later preferences of the least successful candidates are counted in turn.

*Example:*

Three parties stand for election – Party A, Party B and Party C. At the polling booth, voters list each party in order of preference. On election day, 120 people turn-out to cast their vote. The votes are counted and tallied as follows (third preferences have been omitted for the sake of simplicity):

	42 voters	17 voters	10 voters	51 voters
1st preference	Party B	Party A	Party A	Party C
2nd preference	Party A	Party B	Party C	Party A

The first preferences are counted and the results are:

**Party A = 27, Party B = 42, Party C = 51**

No candidate has the 61 votes needed to win an outright majority. Party A has the fewest votes, so is eliminated. The votes of those who put Party A as their first preference are then re-distributed to their second preference nominations. In this example, 17 votes are transferred to Party B and 10 votes are transferred to Party C. After this process, the new result is:

**Party B = 59, Party C = 61**

**Alternative Vote Plus or Top-up (AV+)***Summary:*

This is an AMS system, with two modifications (proposed by the Jenkins Commission). Firstly the constituency members are elected by alternative vote rather than first past the post. Secondly, the lists used to elect top-up members are semi-open.

**First past the post (FPTP)***Summary:*

Voters fill in a ballot paper by marking an X against a single candidate. Winning candidates must get more votes than any other candidate in the constituency (a plurality, but not necessarily a majority).

*Example:*

Three parties stand for election – Party A, Party B and Party C. At the polling booth, voters mark a cross next to their preferred party. On election day 120 people turn-out to cast their vote. The votes are counted and tallied as follows:

	Party A	Party B	Party C
Votes received	39	48	33

**Result:** Party B received the most votes and wins the election.

## List Systems

### *Summary:*

There are considerable variations in the different types of list systems but the basic principle behind them is that the proportion of votes that each party receives determines the number of seats it can fill.

Each party draws up a list of candidates in each constituency and the size of the lists is based on the number of seats to be filled. Since the basis of the list system is a vote for a party rather than a candidate, the type of list that is used is the means of determining the allocation of seats between the party candidates. There are three main types:

- Closed list systems: voters choose their preferred party list (voters vote for parties rather than candidates)
- Semi-open list systems: voters may vote either for the list as published or for a candidate on the list (the vote for a candidate counts as a vote for the party)
- Open list systems: voters may vote for a candidate (candidates are not ranked in order of preference by parties. Personal votes have an influence on candidate rank order).

Semi-open and open lists can also allow preferential voting (ranking candidates by order of preference).

Different electoral formulas are used in different list PR systems. See Annex B for a summary of a selection of electoral formulas.

### Single Transferable Vote (STV)

#### Summary:

Voters fill in a ballot paper by marking their ballot paper 1,2,3 etc against their most preferred individual candidates across any party or combination of parties. Winning candidates must obtain a 'quota' of support so as to qualify for one of the seats in a constituency.

#### Example:

Five parties stand for election – Party A, Party B, Party C, Party D and Party E. There are 3 seats to be allocated. At the polling booth, voters list each party in order of preference. On election day, 20 people turn-out to cast their vote. The votes are counted and tallied as follows (some lower preferences have been omitted for the sake of simplicity):

	7 voters	3 voters	1 voter	5 voters	2 voters	2 voters
1st preference	Party A	Party B	Party C	Party D	Party E	Party C
2nd preference	Party B	Party A	Party D	Party C	Party D	

In an STV election, a quota is the minimum number of votes a candidate must receive in order to be elected. Using the Droop quota, with 20 voters and 3 seats to be allocated, the quota is 6.

When ballots are counted the results are as follows:

	Party A	Party B	Party C	Party D	Party E
Round 1	7	3	3	5	2
Round 2	1	9	3	5	2
Round 3	1	9	3	5	2
Round 4	1	9	3	7	

**Round 1:** Party A meets the quota and is elected.

**Round 2:** Party A's surplus votes are all transferred to Party B. This causes Party B to reach the quota and be elected. There are no surplus votes from Party B.

**Round 3:** None of the remaining candidates has reached the quota, so Party E, which has the fewest votes, is eliminated.

**Round 4:** Party E's second preference votes are transferred to Party D. This causes Party D to reach the quota and be elected to the final seat. Party C is eliminated.

**Result:** Party A, Party B and Party D are elected.

**Supplementary Vote (SV)***Summary:*

Voters fill in a ballot paper by marking an X against their first preference candidate and, if they want to, against a second preference candidate. A winning candidate must either: 1) get majority (50.1%) support from voters' first preferences, or 2) obtain majority support following one or more redistributions of the second preferences of voters backing the bottom candidates, or 3) be the leading candidate after one or more such redistributions of second and subsequent preferences of voters backing the bottom candidates.

*Example*

Four parties stand for election – Party A, Party B, Party C and Party D. At the polling booth, voters rank at least one and no more than two candidates in order of preference. On election day, 120 people turn-out to cast their vote. The votes are counted and tallied as follows:

	45 voters	15 voters	20 voters	40 voters
1st preference	Party A	Party B	Party D	Party C
2nd preference	Party D	Party C	Party A	Party B

The first preferences are counted and the results are:

**Party A = 45, Party B = 15, Party C = 40, Party D = 20**

No candidate has the 61 votes needed to win on majority, so all Parties except the two with the most votes are eliminated. In this case, Party B and Party D are eliminated and their second preference votes are distributed. After this process, the new tallies are:

**Party A = 65, Party C = 55**

**Result:** Party A now has an overall majority and wins the election.

**Two Round System (second ballot or runoff voting)***Summary:*

Voters fill in a ballot paper by marking an X against their preferred candidate. If no candidate receives an absolute majority of votes, then all candidates, except the two with the most votes, are eliminated, and a second round of voting occurs. A winning candidate must either: 1) get majority (50.1%) support from the first round of voting, or 2) obtain majority support following the second round of voting.

*Example*

Four parties stand for election – Party A, Party B, Party C and Party D. On election day, 100 people turn-out and cast their vote for their preferred candidate. The votes are counted and tallied as follows:

	Party A	Party B	Party C	Party D
No. of votes	43	35	16	6

At the end of the first round of votes, no Party has an absolute majority, so the two Parties with the most votes, Party A and Party B, proceed to a second round, while Party C and Party D are eliminated. The people who voted for Party C and Party D must now vote for one of the remaining candidates. The results of the second round of votes are:

	Party A	Party B
No. of votes	47	53

**Result:** Party B now has an absolute majority and wins the election.

## Annex B – Summary of selected electoral formulas

Different electoral formulas are used in different list PR systems, producing different results in terms of proportionality, large-party bonus and so on. Electoral formulas separate into:

- *Highest average systems* – uses divisors, of which the main two are d'Hondt and modified Sainte-Lague. Pure Sainte Lague (known in the USA as the Webster method) is used in New Zealand; and
- *Largest remainder systems* – referred to in the USA as the Hamilton method. This approach uses an electoral quota, the most common of which are Hare and Droop. Italy used the Imperiali quota until 1993.

## Highest average systems

### d'Hondt Formula

#### Summary:

This system allocates seats in successive rounds. In each round, votes cast for each party are divided by the number of seats the party has already been allocated, plus one. For the party which won a seat in the previous round, the amount derived from that calculation is removed from its total. The party with the highest remaining total in the round wins the seat.

#### Example:

The formula for the quotient is  $\text{Votes} / (\text{Seats} + 1)$  where:

- Votes is the total number of votes that party received; and
- Seats is the total number of seats that the party has been allocated so far. At the start of the calculation, this will be zero for all parties in a list only ballot, but will include the number of seats that the party has already won where this process is combined with a separate ballot).

See below for a worked example:

Round	Party A	Party B	Party C
1	<b>700</b>	400	300
2	350	<b>400</b>	300
3	<b>350</b>	200	300
4	233	200	<b>300</b>
5	<b>233</b>	200	150

The winners of each round are in bold. Party A wins the first round and so wins a seat. Its vote for the second round is halved ( $1 \text{ seat} + 1 = 2$ ). The other parties' votes remain unchanged for the second round. Party B then wins the second round, so its vote is similarly halved for the third round. Party A wins the third round, winning a second seat, so for the fourth round its vote is divided by 3 ( $2 \text{ seats} + 1 = 3$ ), giving 233 votes ( $700 / 3 = 233$  to the nearest whole number).

**Result:** Party A wins 3 seats, Party B wins 2 seats and Party C wins 1 seat.

### Sainte-Laguë

*Summary:*

The Saint-Laguë method of the highest average is one way of allocating seats proportionally with party list voting systems. The Sainte-Laguë method is a divisor method, in the same manner as the d'Hondt method. However, the divisor is calculated using a different formula.

*Example:*

After all the votes have been tallied, successive quotients are calculated for each party. The formula for the quotient is  $\text{Votes} / (2 \times \text{Total Seats} + 1)$  where:

- Votes is the total number of votes that party received; and
- Total Seats is the number of seats that the party has been allocated so far. At the start of the calculation, this will be zero for all parties.

The party with the highest quotient is allocated the next seat. Their quotient is then recalculated because their seat total has increased. This process is repeated until all the seats are allocated.

## Largest remainder systems

### Droop quota

*Summary:*

A quota is the minimum number of votes required for a party or candidate to capture a seat. The Droop quota is most commonly applied in elections that take place using the STV system. Elections held under the largest remainder method of party-list PR may also use the Droop quota. It is named after its inventor, Henry Richmond Droop.

*Example:*

The formula for the Droop quote is  $\text{Votes} / (\text{Seats} + 1)$  where:

- **Votes** = Total number of votes cast in the election.
- **Seats** = Total number of seats to be filled in the election.

### Hare formula (simple quota)

*Summary:*

The Hare formula is used under some forms of STV as well as the largest remainder method of party-list PR. The English lawyer and mathematician Henry Richmond Droop devised his Droop quota (see above) as an improvement on the Hare quota. The Hare quota is today rarely used with STV. It is still often used in party list election systems.

*Example:*

The formula for the Hare quota is **Total Votes/Total Seats** where:

- Total votes = Total number of votes cast in the election.
- Total seats = Total number of seats to be filled in the election.

### Imperiali quota

*Summary:*

The Imperiali quota is a formula used to calculate the minimum quota of votes required to capture a seat in some forms of STV or largest remainder method PR voting systems. Typically its effect is kinder to larger parties than using the Droop quota or Hare quota. It produces smaller numerical quotas, which creates a risk that more candidates will be elected with full quotas than there are seats. Indeed, in a two-list election, or in an STV election, it is inevitable that the wrong number of candidates will be elected, requiring some further adjustment. This flaw means that it is rarely used.

*Example:*

The Imperiali quota is:

**Total Votes/Total Seats + 2**

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