



Alternative electoral systems



System	Operation	Main effects
Single transferable vote (STV) Republic of Ireland Northern Ireland	Multi-member constituencies. Each candidate seeks to achieve a quota. Voters may place all candidates in order of preference. Second, third and subsequent preferences of voters are taken into account. Parties may put forward candidates up to the number of seats available in each constituency. Voters may discriminate between candidates of the same party.	Small parties can win a fair number of seats. Independent candidates have a chance of being elected. Larger parties cannot realistically gain an overall majority. Calculating results is slow and complex. Governments are invariably coalitions, with small parties sharing power.
Additional member system (AMS) Germany Scotland	A hybrid system, partly first-past-the-post and partly a list system. Part of the legislature is elected on the constituency system. The other part is by list. Voters have two votes. One is for a constituency MP; the other is for a party. Top-up seats are awarded to parties in proportion to the second votes cast for them.	More proportional than the first-past-the-post system. Small parties gain, but do not win large numbers of seats. Constituency representation is maintained. Governments are often coalitions, but normally stable ones as small parties do less well than under STV.
National list Israel	There are no constituencies. Voters choose a party, not a candidate. Seats are awarded to each party in exact proportion to votes cast.	Many small parties gain representation. Governments are always coalitions and tend to be unstable as small extreme parties gain seats.
Regional lists Spain	As national lists, but the seats are awarded on a regional, not a national, basis.	As national lists, but small parties do a little less well.
Alternative vote (AV) Australia	Not a PR system. Voters elect constituency MPs. Voters place candidates in order of preference. Only candidates with 50% of first preference votes are elected. Otherwise second preferences are added until one candidate does have 50%.	Preserves constituencies. Representatives receive an overall majority of the votes. Small parties do better than under first-past-the-post. Generally large parties form the government, but they might have to share power with a smaller party.



Effects of alternative electoral systems in the UK

System	Where used	Effects
Single transferable vote (STV)	Northern Ireland Assembly and local elections, Scottish local government after 2007.	Eleven different groups won seats in the 2003 Northern Ireland Assembly election. The four main parties won a significant number of seats in 2003 in the same election.
Additional member system (AMS)	Scottish Parliament, Welsh Assembly, Greater London Assembly.	In Scotland in 2003 the Greens and Scottish Socialists won seats. Labour–Liberal Democrat coalition had to be formed in Scotland. In Wales Labour failed to win a majority of seats in 2003.
Regional lists	Elections to the European Parliament.	Seven different parties won seats in 2004. The Conservatives won most seats against the national trend.

