



BRIEFING PAPER

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Voting systems in the UK

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Summary

Before 1997 all elections in the UK, with the exception of Northern Ireland, used the same voting system. However, since 1997 a number of different voting systems have come to be used.

This Briefing Paper provides brief details of the different voting systems currently used in the United Kingdom. It also notes recent developments relating to voting systems in the UK and provides information about previous government reviews into voting systems. The final section gives details of the voting systems used in selected overseas countries.

1. Current voting systems

Before 1997 all elections in the UK, with the exception of Northern Ireland, used the same voting system. However, since 1997 a number of different systems have come to be used.¹ This section gives details of the voting systems currently in use in the UK.

1.1 First Past the Post (FPTP)

First past the post is the current system for electing MPs to the House of Commons. The UK is divided into 650 separate constituencies, each of which elects a single Member of Parliament. Winning candidates must receive more votes than any other candidate; they do not need a majority of all votes cast in order to be elected.

First past the post is also used for local elections in England and Wales. Local authorities are divided into wards, each of which elects a set number of councillors. Each councillor is elected for four years. In the majority of authorities in England, and all of the 22 authorities in Wales, elections are held for all councillors every four years.

Some English authorities, however, elect a proportion of councillors each year over a four year cycle. This can either be election by thirds, whereby a third of councillors are elected every year (with no elections in the fourth year), or election by halves, whereby half of councillors are elected every two years.²

1.2 Alternative Vote (AV)

Under the AV system, voters are entitled to rank candidates in their order of preference, marking 1, 2, 3 etc against the candidates' names on the ballot paper. If a candidate receives more than 50 per cent of the first preference votes then they are elected.

If no candidate reaches the 50 per cent threshold then the candidate with the fewest first preference votes is eliminated and their second preference votes are reallocated to the remaining candidates. This reallocation of the bottom candidate's votes – based on second, third and fourth preferences etc – continues until one candidate has a majority of votes.

The AV system is used to fill vacancies of an excepted hereditary peer in the House of Lords and to select the six elected members of the Crofting Commission in Scotland.³

1.3 Supplementary Vote

The supplementary vote system is similar to AV. Under the supplementary vote, there are two columns on the ballot paper. Voters

¹ M Gallagher and P Mitchell, *The Politics of Electoral Systems*, 2005, p157

² "Local Councils", website of the Electoral Commission (accessed 22 September 2014).

³ Part IV, Rule 42 of [The Crofting Commission \(Elections\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2011](#), SI 2011/456

mark an X in the first column against the name of their first choice candidate and an X in the second column indicating their second preference (although they are not required to do so). Unlike under AV, voters are limited to making only a first and second choice.

If a candidate receives more than 50 per cent of the first preference votes then they are elected. If no candidate reaches a majority at the first stage then all but the two candidates with the most votes are eliminated simultaneously. The second preference votes on the ballot papers of the eliminated candidates are then transferred to the remaining candidates. The candidate with the most votes at the end of the process is elected.

The supplementary vote system is used to elect Police and Crime Commissioners and directly elected mayors, including the Mayor of London, where there are more than two candidates. When there are only two candidates first past the post is used.⁴

1.4 Single Transferable Vote (STV)

STV operates in multi-member constituencies. Voters rank candidates in order of preference by marking 1, 2, 3 etc against the candidates' names on the ballot paper. Voters can rank candidates within parties or across different parties.

Candidates must obtain a certain quota of votes in order to be elected.⁵ Any candidate passing the specified quota of first-preference votes is elected. The surplus votes of elected candidates (i.e. those votes received in excess of the specified quota) are then transferred to the remaining candidates based on the second preference listed on the ballot paper.⁶

If the surplus is too small to make any difference to the remaining candidates (or if no candidate reaches the quota on the first count) then the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated and their votes are transferred on the basis of second preferences. This transfer of winning candidates' surplus votes or the votes of eliminated candidates – based on second, third and fourth preferences etc – continues until sufficient candidates reach the quota to fill all the seats.⁷

STV is used for local government elections in Northern Ireland and Scotland, European Parliament elections in Northern Ireland, and for Northern Ireland Assembly elections.

1.5 Additional Member System

Under additional member systems, voters cast two votes. The first vote is cast for a constituency member using the system. The second vote,

⁴ [The Local Government Act 2000, s42](#)
[The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, s57](#)

⁵ The quota is determined using the Droop formula: $\text{total valid votes}/(\text{number of seats} + 1)$

⁶ For more detail on how surplus votes are distributed see D Farrell, *Electoral Systems: A Comparative Introduction*, 2011, p131-5.

⁷ D Farrell, *Electoral Systems: A Comparative Introduction*, 2011, p131-2

on a separate ballot paper, is for a party. The percentage of votes obtained by each party determines their overall number of representatives. After taking into account the results of the constituency elections, additional seats are allocated to parties to the required degree of proportionality using the modified d'Hondt formula. This takes into account the total votes cast in the area-wide ballot together with the number of constituency member seats that each political party has already won.

The additional member system is used for elections to the Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales and the London Assembly.

1.6 Closed Party List System

The Closed Party List system has been used for European Parliament elections in Great Britain since 1999. In Northern Ireland STV is used. England is divided into nine regions, each of which is allocated a number of seats in relation to their electorate. Scotland and Wales each comprise a single region. Voters mark a cross on the ballot paper next to the party they wish to vote for.

Seats are then allocated according to the d'Hondt formula so that each party receives the number of seats proportionate to the votes it receives in the region (see box below). Under the closed list system the party lists determine the allocation of seats between candidates; the elector simply votes for a party and has no say as to which candidates are elected.

d'Hondt System

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. The party with the highest remaining total wins the seat. Thus, the formula is:

$$\text{Total votes for party}/(\text{seats allocated to the party so far}+1)$$

The table below shows how five seats would be allocated between three parties receiving 700 (Party A), 400 (Party B) and 300 (Party C) votes respectively.

Round	Party A	Party B	Party C
1	700	400	300
1	350	400	300
3	350	200	300
4	233	200	300
5	233	200	150

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

Source: *Review of Voting Systems: the experience of new voting systems in the United Kingdom since 1997*, 2008 Cm 7304

1.7 Table showing where the voting systems are used in the UK

Voting System	Where used
	House of Commons
First Past the Post	Local elections in England and Wales
	Scottish National Park authorities
The Supplementary Vote	Mayor of London and all other elected Mayors in England and Wales where there are more than two candidates.
	Police and Crime Commissioners.
Single Transferable Vote (STV)	Northern Ireland Assembly
	European Parliament elections in Northern Ireland
	Local elections in Scotland
	Local elections in Northern Ireland
Additional Member System	Scottish Parliament
	National Assembly for Wales
	London Assembly
Closed Party List System	European Parliament elections in Great Britain.
Alternative Vote (AV)	Excepted hereditary peers in the House of Lords.
	Elected members of the Scottish Crofting Commission

2. Electoral systems in the UK – recent developments

2.1 The AV Referendum

A referendum was held on 5 May 2011 on whether the electoral system used for UK general elections should be changed from the first past the post system to the AV system.⁸ The referendum rejected the adoption of the AV. Library Research Paper 11/44, [Alternative Vote Referendum 2011](#), provides a full analysis of the result. In brief:

- There were 6.2 million ‘Yes’ votes (32.1%) in favour of the change.
- There were 13.0 million ‘No’ votes (67.9%) opposing the change.
- The No vote was in the majority in every UK region. The No vote was above 70% in 5 of the 9 English regions – the North East, the West Midlands, the East Midlands, the East of England and the South East.
- Out of 440 vote counting areas, the No vote was in the majority in 430. Of the 10 areas that had a majority of Yes votes, 6 were in London
- Turnout was 42.0%.

All three major political parties had included sections on the electoral system in their manifestos for the 2010 general election. The Conservative manifesto stated that the party supported the first past the post system; the Liberal Democrat manifesto supported STV; and the Labour manifesto included a commitment to hold a referendum on moving to AV.

Following the election, on 5 July 2010 the Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg, made a statement on the Government’s proposals for Parliamentary reform.⁹ Mr Clegg announced that a bill would be introduced to provide for a referendum on the AV system for elections to the House of Commons and for a review of constituency boundaries in order to create fewer and more equally sized constituencies.

The resulting [Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011](#) made provision for the next general election to be fought under the AV system, provided that the change was endorsed in a referendum.¹⁰ The referendum was therefore held after the legislation was enacted, but

⁸ The referendum question, which was modified on the advice of the Electoral Commission, was “At present, the UK uses the “first past the post” system to elect MPs to the House of Commons. Should the “alternative vote” system be used instead?”

⁹ HC Deb 5 July 2010 c23

¹⁰ The Act also introduced new Rules for the Redistribution of Seats, beginning with a target of 600 seats in the House of Commons for the whole of the UK. As well as reducing the number of MPs, the Act aimed to reduce inequalities of electors per seat and introduced a uniform electoral quota. The boundary reviews, which were set to be completed by September 2013, have now been cancelled and the next review of constituency boundaries will not start until after the 2015 general election. 650 constituencies will therefore be contested at the 2015 election. For more information see I White and N Johnston, [Constituency boundaries: the Sixth General Review](#), House of Commons Library Standard Note SN/PC/05929, 1 February 2013.

the provisions changing the voting system would only have come into force had a simple majority voted for a change in the referendum. The Act also provided for the introduction of AV to be linked with the proposed reduction of the size of the House of Commons to 600. Unless the necessary boundary changes were made, AV could not be introduced. The form of AV proposed would have allowed voters to express a preference for as many or as few candidates as they wished.

2.2 Directly electing members of the National Park authorities in England

There are ten National Parks in England, three in Wales and two in Scotland. Each national park is administered by its own independent authority which is funded by central Government.¹¹

In March 2012, the Government published a [Consultation on changes to National Park governance](#). Among the proposed changes was “making it possible for National Park authorities to include some directly elected members”.¹²

The consultation stated that “the detail of the electoral process will be specified later, in secondary legislation”.¹³ However, it did set out a general approach for proposed elections to the New Forest and Peak District National Park authorities, which the consultation envisaged happening in May 2013 (but which did not take place)¹⁴:

We envisage the New Forest and Peak District elections would be held in May 2013, using the existing procedures for the conduct of local elections with the use of polling stations and proxy/postal ballots. We think this gives voters flexibility and avoids having to collect signatures and date of birth forms from those not already registered for postal votes, which are required to carry out the postal voting checks under the Electoral Administration Act 2006. Members would be elected for a four-year term (consistent with the terms of other members).¹⁵

In the Queen’s Speech on 4 June 2014 the Government announced that it would publish a *Draft Governance of National Parks (England) and the Broads Bill*.¹⁶ The Government’s background briefing notes to the Queen’s Speech stated that the draft Bill would “enable direct elections to be held in English National Parks and the Broads, by an order of the Secretary of State”.¹⁷

However, no Bill was laid during and in June 2015, the Conservative Government announced that it did not intend to bring forward this legislation.¹⁸

¹¹ [National Parks UK](#)

¹² DEFRA, [Consultation on changes to National Park governance](#), p3

¹³ [Consultation on changes to National Park governance](#), p6

¹⁴ [HC Deb 21 January 2013, c86-7W](#)

¹⁵ [Consultation on changes to National Park governance](#), p6-7

¹⁶ [HC Deb 4 June 2014, c6](#)

¹⁷ [Queen’s Speech 2014: background briefing notes](#), p82

¹⁸ [Written question – HL670: 29 June 2015](#)

In Scotland direct elections are already held for a proportion of National Park Authority members. The first past the post electoral system is used.¹⁹

2.3 Devolution of elections to Wales

The *Wales Act 2017* received Royal Assent on 31 January 2017 and gives the NAW and the Welsh government legislative competence for the administration of Assembly and local government elections in Wales, including the franchise for those elections. These powers are expected to be transferred in 2018.

The Welsh Government recently consulted on electoral reform for local elections in Wales. [The consultation](#) ran from 18 July to the 10 October 2017. It included proposals to allow individual local authorities in Wales to choose whether they retained FPTP or introduce STV for council elections.

Each election of a principal council is a separate election. It is appropriate that the council should decide on its electoral method...We propose that each authority should be allowed to decide for itself on the electoral system they prefer. We do not propose to introduce the option of STV for elections to community councils, because a root and branch review of the sector is underway.²⁰

The National Assembly for Wales has established an expert panel to consider elections to the National Assembly. Powers to introduce legislation to change the number of Members and the electoral system were conferred on the Assembly by the *Wales Act 2017*. The Expert Panel has been established to consider three key issues:

- How many Members the Assembly needs to carry out its functions;
- The most suitable electoral system to be used to elect them; and
- The minimum voting age for Assembly elections.

2.4 2017 manifesto commitments

The **Conservative Party** manifesto included a commitment to retain first past the post elections (FPTP) for the House Commons. It also contained a new commitment to extend FPTP to police and crime commissioner and mayoral elections.²¹

The **Labour Party** manifesto included a commitment to “establish a Constitutional Convention to examine and advise on reforming of the way Britain works at a fundamental level.”²² It did not explicitly mention voting system reform but stated:

¹⁹ [The Scottish Government Website](#) (accessed on 19 September 2014)

²⁰ Welsh Government, *Consultation Document: Electoral Reform in Local Government in Wales*, 18 July 2017, chapter 4

²¹ *Forward, Together: Our Plan for a Stronger Britain and a Prosperous Future Conservative Party Manifesto 2017*, p 43

²² *Labour Party, For the Many not the Few, The Labour party Manifesto 2017*, p102

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The Convention would look at extending democracy locally, regionally and nationally, considering the option of a more federalised country.

The manifesto committed the Party to an elected House of Lords but without and detail of how this would be achieved.

The **Liberal Democrats** have long supported electoral reform. Their 2017 General Election manifesto pledged to introduce STV for local government elections in England and for elections to the House of Commons.²³ It also included a commitment to a reformed and democratic House of Lords but without explicitly mentioning a preferred electoral system.

The **Scottish National Party** also supports introducing STV for elections to the House of Commons.²⁴

UKIP included a manifesto commitment to PR:

UKIP wants a fairer, more proportional voting system that makes seats match votes, and ends the inbuilt advantage the establishment parties have over smaller parties. A proportional electoral system that delivers a parliament representative of the number of votes cast, while retaining a constituency link, is one we strongly advocate.²⁵

The **Green Party** supports proportional representation for Parliamentary and local elections.²⁶

Plaid Cymru's manifesto also supported a more proportional system of voting.²⁷

Of the main political parties in Northern Ireland, only the **Alliance Party** manifesto contained a specific pledge to support proposals for a more proportional system for House of Commons elections. The party's preferred system is STV. The party also supported direct elections to the House of Lords.²⁸

²³ *Change Britain's Future: Liberal Democrat Manifesto*, p90

²⁴ *Stronger for Scotland: 2017 Manifesto*, p41

²⁵ *Britain Together: UKIP 2017 Manifesto*, p58

²⁶ *The Green Party for a Confident and Caring Britain*, p24

²⁷ *Plaid Cymru, Defending Wales: Action Plan 2017*, p15

²⁸ *Alliance Party, Change Direction: Westminster Manifesto 2017*, p11

3. Previous government reviews of electoral systems

3.1 Report of the Independent Commission on the Voting System [October 1998]

In December 1997, following a manifesto commitment to hold a referendum on the voting system for the House of Commons, the Labour Government established the Independent Commission on the Voting System, chaired by Lord Jenkins of Hillhead. The Commission's remit was to recommend an alternative to the existing system for Parliamentary elections to be put before the people in a referendum.

In its report, published in October 1998, the Commission recommended:

...a two-vote mixed system which could be described as either limited AMS [additional member system] or AV top-up. The majority of MPs (80-85%) would continue to be elected on an individual constituency basis, with the remainder elected on a corrective Top-up basis which would significantly reduce the disproportionality and the geographical divisiveness which are inherent in FPTP [first past the post].

The Commission further recommended that, within this mixed system, the constituency members should be elected by the AV and the Top-up members should be elected using open lists.²⁹

The Government did not respond formally to the report but it was the subject of a [debate in the House of Commons on 5 November 1998](#).³⁰

3.2 Review of Voting Systems: the experience of new voting systems in the United Kingdom since 1997 [January 2008]

The 2001 Labour Party general election manifesto promised a review of the new voting systems introduced for the devolved administrations, the European Parliament and the London Assembly during the Labour government's first term of office. The Independent Commission to review Britain's experience of PR voting systems was established to assist that review and the Commission published its report, *Changed Voting Changed Politics: lessons of Britain's experience of PR since 1997*, in 2003. The Commission pointed out that every new representative body set up since 1997 had been elected using an electoral system other than first past the post, which was no longer the predominant system outside Westminster.

The Labour Party's 2005 general election manifesto stated that the party remained 'committed to reviewing the experience of the new electoral

²⁹ *The Report of the Independent Commission on the Voting System*, October 1998 Cm 4090-I, p50

³⁰ HC Deb 5 November 1998 c1032-1113

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systems'.³¹ The Government's review of voting systems in the UK was subsequently published on 24 January 2008.³² It did not make any recommendations for reform.

A Ministry of Justice press notice summarised the findings of the review:

- there is no clear causal relationship between proportional representation and a range of desirable outcomes;
- the new voting systems have led to more proportional allocation of seats in devolved administrations, which has resulted in more parties being represented in the elected bodies and given rise to a tendency towards coalition government;
- it has not been the experience of the UK that voter participation has risen with the introduction of proportional systems, although there is some evidence that proportional systems have a marginally higher turnout internationally;
- positive action policies have a greater impact on increasing women's representation than more proportional voting systems;
- there has been little change to party campaigning, with continued emphasis on winning constituency seats;
- changes to voting systems require significant research, planning and testing to ensure voters understand the system and can use their vote.³³

The review stated that its aim was to "contribute to the knowledge base and debate on whether or not changes should be made to the voting system for the House of Commons". On the implications for Westminster of changing the voting system to some form of PR it stated:

45. A move to any form of PR for Westminster would imply a range of significant changes including:

- more small parties represented in Parliament (due to proportionality)
- greater tendency for coalition governments
- multi-member constituencies.

46. On these three points and, in the case of greater proportionality, research and evidence is clear about the outcome of a shift to PR. The benefits of PR are that it is likely to increase people's choices in elections and provide a more proportional allocation of seats in Parliament. This in turn increases the likelihood of coalition governments. There would need to be a shift to more government by consensus and compromise,

³¹ *Labour Party Manifesto*, 2005.

³² [Review of Voting Systems: the experience of new voting systems in the United Kingdom since 1997](#). Cm 7304, January 2008.

³³ Ministry of Justice Press Release, [Governance of Britain - UK Voting Systems Review](#), 24 January 2008

particularly in the period following elections when coalition or other agreements were being negotiated. This consequential change to the nature of government formation is a key consideration in the debate about whether PR should be introduced for Westminster, including the subsequent changes to the nature of policy development. Any party could become part of the coalition government, regardless of its size or share of the votes.³⁴

The Government did not make any recommendations based on the review and stated that any proposed changes to the electoral system for the House of Commons would need to be endorsed by a referendum.³⁵

³⁴ *Review of Voting Systems: the experience of new voting systems in the United Kingdom since 1997*. Cm 7304, January 2008, para 45 - 46

³⁵ Ministry of Justice Press Release, [Governance of Britain - UK Voting Systems Review](#), 24 January 2008

4. International comparisons

The sections below provide brief details of the electoral systems used in selected overseas countries. The countries cited are selected examples and should not be taken as an exhaustive list of all the countries using a particular electoral system.

4.1 First Past the Post

First past the post is used for elections in the USA, Canada, India and a number of smaller countries. David Farrell, in his study of electoral systems, notes that, although the trend has been away from first past the post, it remains the most commonly used system in population terms.³⁶ 26% of countries listed on the website of the Electoral Knowledge Network use first past the post to elect the first chamber of their national legislature.³⁷

4.2 Additional Member Systems – Germany and New Zealand

Germany uses the Additional Member System for elections to the Bundestag, with 50 per cent of MPs elected by first past the post in single-seat constituencies and 50 per cent elected using closed party lists. Voters cast two votes: a 'primary vote' for a district MP and a 'secondary vote' for a party.

The allocation of the list seats is determined so that the distribution of seats mirrors the parties' share of the national list vote (i.e. the number of district seats a party has won is subtracted from the total number of list seats allocated to it on the basis of its share of the national list vote). It is possible for a party to win more district seats than its share of the national list vote would entitle it to. When this occurs, the size of the Bundestag is enlarged temporarily until the next election. To be awarded list seats a party must win at least five per cent of the national list vote or at least three district seats.

In 1993 New Zealand changed its electoral system from first past the post to the additional member system.³⁸ The system is similar to Germany's but on the ballot paper the two votes are ordered the opposite way around – the party list vote is first and the district vote is second. This is in order to better reflect the significance of the list vote in determining the overall election result.³⁹

4.3 Two Round Systems – France

In France, elections to the legislature are conducted using a two-round voting system. The first stage is similar to first past the post in the UK in that the voter casts one vote for their favoured candidate. If a

³⁶ D Farrell, *Electoral Systems: A Comparative Introduction*, p13

³⁷ [What is the electoral system for Chamber 1 of the national legislature?](#), Website of ACE: The Electoral Knowledge Network. Accessed on 19 September 2014.

³⁸ P Norris, *Electoral Engineering: Voting Rules and Political Behaviour*, 2004, p5

³⁹ *Electoral Systems: A Comparative Introduction*, p94-102

candidate receives an overall majority of the votes then they are elected. If no candidate reaches this threshold then a second round of voting takes place a week later. Only those candidates that received a number of votes in the first round equivalent to at least 12.5 per cent of registered voters can stand in the second round. In the second round, a simple plurality is sufficient for a candidate to be elected.

A two-round voting system is also used to elect the President of France. The system differs from that used for French legislative elections in that only the top two candidates are allowed to run in the second round.⁴⁰

4.4 AV – Australia and Ireland

Australia uses the AV system to elect its House of Representatives. Voters are required to rank all the candidates or their vote is declared invalid. AV is also used in Ireland for presidential elections and for Parliamentary by-elections.⁴¹

4.5 STV – Ireland

Ireland's main legislative house, the Dail, is elected using STV.⁴² The constituency size ranges between three and five MPs and voters need to mark only one preference if they wish.⁴³

4.6 List Systems

A large number of countries use a list system of proportional representation, including the majority of West European countries. For example, 35.4 per cent of countries listed on the website of the Electoral Knowledge Network use a list system of proportional representation to elect the first chamber of their national legislature.⁴⁴ There is, however, a lot of variation among the systems used.

Austria and Greece are among the countries that determine seat allocation by subtraction – largest remainder systems. Under such systems, an electoral quota is used and the counting process usually takes place in two rounds. In the first round, parties with votes exceeding the quota are allocated seats and the quota is subtracted from their total vote. In the second round, those parties left with the greatest number of votes are awarded the remaining seats in order of vote size.

It is more common for countries using list systems to determine seat allocation by division – highest average systems. Under highest average systems each party's vote is divided by a series of divisors to produce an average vote. The party with the highest average vote after each stage of the process is awarded a seat and its vote is then divided by the next divisor. The process continues until all the seats have been filled.

⁴⁰ *Electoral Systems: A Comparative Introduction*, p46-7

⁴¹ *Electoral Systems: A Comparative Introduction*, p51 &

⁴² *Review of Voting Systems: the experience of new voting systems in the United Kingdom since 1997*, p144

⁴³ D Farrell, *Electoral Systems: A Comparative Introduction*, p125-136

⁴⁴ [What is the electoral system for Chamber 1 of the national legislature?](#), Website of ACE: The Electoral Knowledge Network. Accessed on 19 September 2014.

Countries that use the d'Hondt system (see box above), which uses the divisors 1, 2, 3 and so on, include Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Finland, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland and Turkey. Countries that use a modified version of the Sainte-Laguë system, which uses the divisors 1.4, 3, 5, 7 and so on, include Norway and Sweden.

Saint-Laguë System

Like the d'Hondt formula, the Saint-Laguë system allocates seats in successive rounds by dividing the votes cast for each party according to a formula. The formula is:

$$\text{Total votes for party} / (2 \times \text{seats allocated to the party so far} + 1)$$

The table below shows how five seats would be allocated between three parties receiving 700 (Party A), 400 (Party B) and 300 (Party C) votes respectively.

Round	Party A	Party B	Party C
1	700	400	300
1	233	400	300
3	233	133	300
4	233	133	100
5	140	133	100
Result: Party A wins 3 seats, Party B wins 1 seat and Party C wins 1 seat			

In the modified version of the Saint-Laguë formula used in Norway and Sweden, the formula for parties that have not been allocated any seats is changed to $(\text{total votes for party} / 1.4) / (2 \times \text{seats allocated to the party so far} + 1)$. The divisor for parties with no seats is 1.4 rather than 1. The same formula is used subsequently (i.e. the divisors 3, 5, 7 and so on).

Source: adapted from *Review of Voting Systems: the experience of new voting systems in the United Kingdom since 1997*, 2008 Cm 7304

Countries also vary in the size of the constituencies they use and the threshold of votes that a party must achieve in order to be awarded seats. For example, in the Netherlands all members of the Tweede Kamer (the second chamber) are elected on the basis of the national distribution of party votes, whilst in Greece the average region size is around five seats. The threshold that parties must reach in order to be allocated seats is 0.67 per cent of the vote in the Netherlands, 2 per cent in Denmark and 4 per cent in Sweden.

There is also variation in the type of list used (closed, open or ordered). For example, closed lists are used in Spain, whereas open lists are used in Finland and Chile. In Belgium, an ordered lists system is used whereby voters can either vote for one party or cast a preference vote for one or more candidates. In theory, expressing a preference vote has the effect of moving that candidate higher up the rank ordering. In practice, however, a candidate low down on the party list requires a large preference vote to move above other candidates. This is because

list votes are used to top up the preference votes for candidates placed high up on the party lists.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ D Farrell, *Electoral Systems: A Comparative Introduction*, p64-92

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