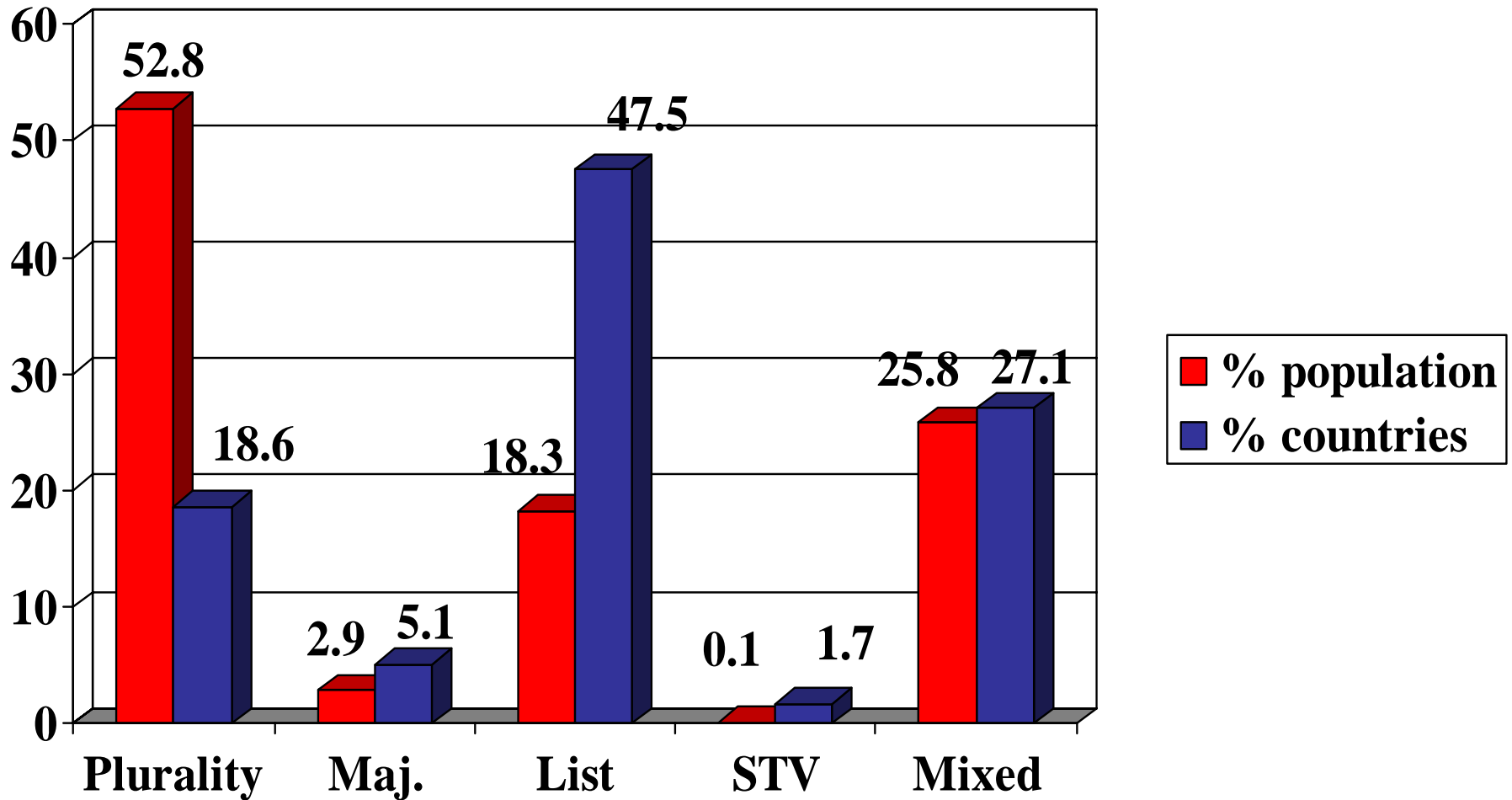


# **Electoral Reform in Established Democracies**

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# Which electoral system to opt for....?

## The world of electoral systems



But, electoral systems are actually of fundamental importance.

In a new democracy, key design questions include:

- Presidential v parliamentary
- Unitary v federal
- Electoral system design

Practicalities:

- Who gets elected?
- Who runs the government?
- How policies are set?

Fundamentals:

- Stable government
- Accountable government
- Representative democracy
- MP-voter links
- ... etc...

# An idealized view of electoral system design...

- Emergent political system establishes a series of values and principles and designs the electoral system to meet these
- Examples:
  - Desire for strong government (SMP?)
  - Consensual structures (PR?)
  - Strong links between MP and voters (SMP?)

This view places too much stress on 'deliberate design'. Also have to allow for:

- Accident
- Patterns/fashion

But, the idealized view does fit better in the case of electoral reform in established democracies...

- Here we do see evidence of deliberate design, usually by the political elites
- The slight (and only temporary) exception to the dominance of political elites was Italy
- ... until the rise of Citizens' Assemblies...

# What is 'electoral reform'?

- A change in some feature of electoral system design
  - A reduction in district magnitude (M)
  - Redesign of the ballot paper (BS)
  - A shift from one divisor to another (EF)
- A fundamental shift from one electoral family to another

Plur/maj	Mixed	List	Other
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Plur/maj	Bermuda Fiji Montserrat PNG Guinea Mongolia	Lesotho Monaco New Zealand Philippines Thailand Ukraine Russia	Iraq Rwanda Sierra Leone South Africa Moldova	Jordan Afghanistan
Mixed		Mexico	Macedonia Croatia	
List	Madagascar	Bolivia Italy Venezuela		
Other		Japan		

Japan SNTV → MMM

Political scandal in 1980s/90s  
1989, LDP committee proposes a mixed system  
1994, new coalition government adopts mixed system

New Zealand SMP → MMP

Unpopular governments; economic recession; anomalous election results  
1986 Royal Commission proposes MMP  
Referendums in 1992 & 1993

Italy List → MMP  
→ ... back to List!

Political scandal in 1980s/90s  
1993 (abrogative) referendum changes Senate system to mixed  
Government changes lower house system to mixed

Sub-national reforms in Anglo-Saxon democracies....

- Australia: ACT moves from List to STV
- New Zealand: shift from SMP to STV for local elections
- UK: regional parliaments by MMP; Scottish local elections shift from SMP to STV
- Canada's provinces adopt MMP or (potentially) STV systems

# Patterns?

- In most cases the process is ‘top-down’:
  - Either the government designs the system (Japan), or establishes a Commission and sets it restrictive criteria (NZ)
  - Sometimes the voters are involved (NZ and Italy<sup>1</sup>)
- In most cases the shift is to a ‘mixed’ system
  - Though STV is featuring in some sub-national cases

# Citizens' Assemblies – a new 'bottom-up' pattern?

- Canada (British Columbia and Ontario) and Netherlands
- No pre-set criteria
- The system is designed by the CA members
- In the Canadian cases the proposed system is then put to a referendum

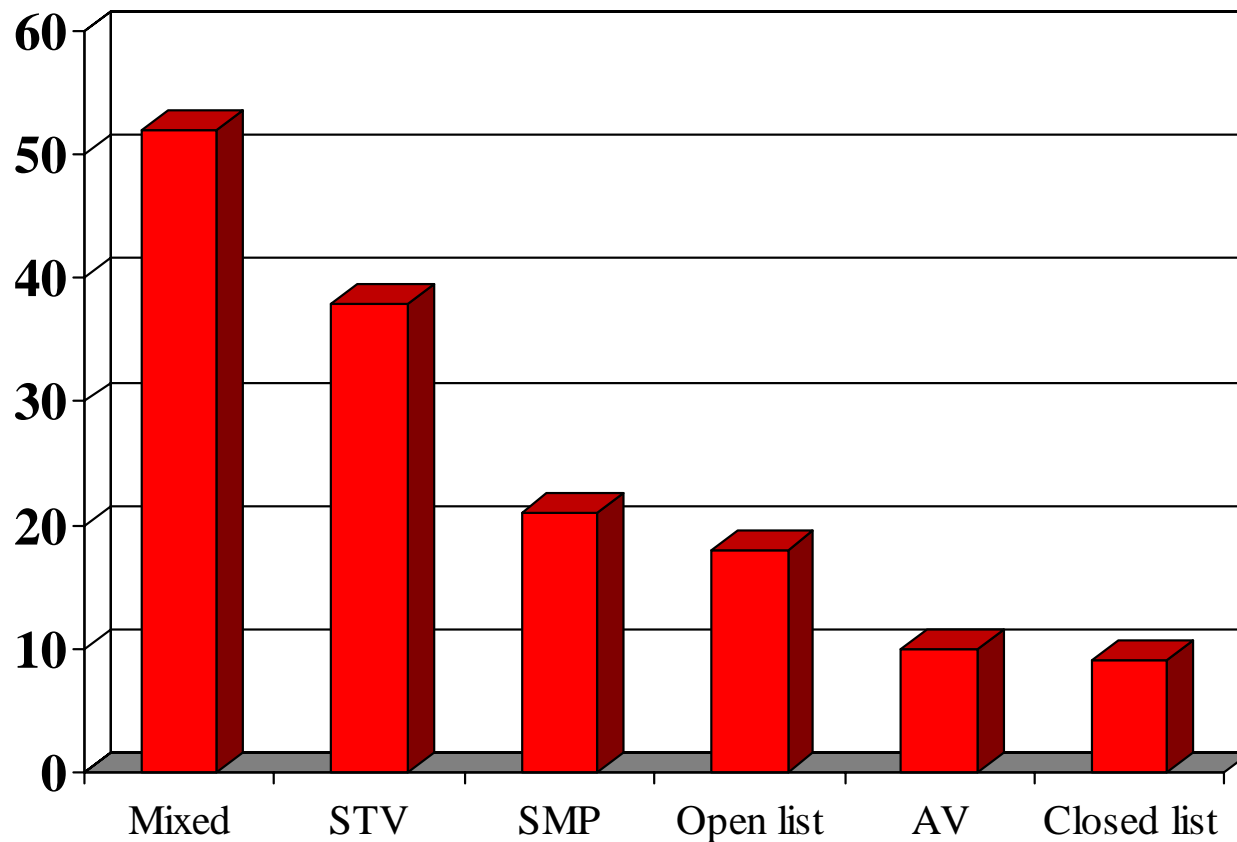
# Types of issue to consider in electoral system design

- Government stability
- Need to incorporate minorities
- Link between politicians and voters
- Keep it simple

	<b>Stability</b>	<b>Minorities</b>	<b>Voter link</b>	<b>Simplicity</b>
<b>District magnitude</b>	Small districts; or legal thresholds	Large districts	Small districts	Small districts
<b>Electoral formula</b>	Non or semi-PR	PR	STV	Non-PR (SMP)
<b>Ballot structure</b>	Closed lists	STV or open lists	STV or open lists	Closed lists

... and what do the electoral system specialists think....

### Expert rankings of electoral systems



Bowler et al., *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*. Vol.15, 2005

# Conclusion

- Electoral system reform is guided by principles and values
- It is generally run by the political elite (top-down)
- Citizens' Assemblies are a welcome bottom-up process in which the citizens call the shots