

Electoral Systems

GLOSSARY

Ballot type – The means by which electoral choices are presented to voters, as well as any about how those choices may be expressed. Ballots are normally categorical (also called exclusive) or ordinal (also called preferential).

Categorical ballot – A ballot that requires voters to choose only one candidate and/or party. Also called exclusive ballot.

District magnitude – The number of members elected in an electoral district. In First-Past-the-Post and Majority systems, the district magnitude is always one. In proportional representation and mixed systems, the district magnitude is always greater than one.

Electoral formula – The mathematical rules by which votes are turned into seats. Three basic rules are in use: the majority formula, the plurality formula, and proportional formulas.

Ordinal ballot – A ballot that allows or requires voters to rank candidates as their first preference, second preference, and so on. This type of ballot is used, among others, in the Alternative Vote system in Australia and the Single Transferable Vote system in Ireland. Also called preferential ballot.

Majority formula – An electoral formula that requires the winning candidate to receive more votes than all the other candidates combined – at least 50% plus one vote. It is a component of majority systems.

Plurality formula – An electoral formula requiring the winning candidate to receive more votes than any other candidate. It is a component of plurality systems.

Proportional formula – Electoral formulas and systems in which seats are allocated to parties in proportion to the shares of votes that the parties receive.