

Legislatures: How are we represented?

GLOSSARY

government - The set of institutions that make and enforce collective public decisions for a society.

opposition - A term used in parliament systems to describe those members of the legislature who do not belong to the party of parties that form the government and cabinet.

majority government - A government in which the party that controls **cabinet** commands a majority of the seats (50% +1) in the legislature.

minority government - A government in which the party that controls **cabinet** commands less than a majority in the legislature. This may be a single-party minority or a minority coalition.

coalition government - A government in which two or more parties control the **cabinet**, usually on the basis of a formal agreement about who will lead, how portfolios will be assigned, and what policies will be implemented.

cabinet - Those members (usually elected) in a **parliamentary** system who lead the legislature by serving as “ministers” with specific areas of administrative and policy-making responsibility (i.e., portfolios). The cabinet must maintain the support of a majority of the legislature on key matters (see **confidence**). The party or parties that control the cabinet form the government.

party discipline - Particularly in parliamentary systems, members of political parties are expected to vote the same as the other members of their party, regardless of personal beliefs or the preferences of their constituents.