

Political Parties: The Role and Function of Parties and their Relationship to Electoral Systems

GLOSSARY

niche parties – small parties, sometimes called ideological parties, that contest elections but may not win seats (therefore are electoral parties but may not be parliamentary parties)

umbrella parties – larger 'catch-all' parties, sometimes called brokerage parties because they broker regional and partisan interests.

electoral parties - This term describes parties that contest elections and attract votes but do not obtain enough support to win a seat. This is in contrast with **parliamentary parties** (i.e. those that occupy seats in the legislature). The number of electoral parties is almost always larger than the number of parliamentary parties, and one way of comparing electoral systems is by how much larger this difference is.

parliamentary parties - A term used to describe parties that occupy seats in the legislature, in distinction from electoral parties which win votes but not seats. The Green party in Canada, for example, is an electoral party but has not been a parliamentary party. The Liberal party meanwhile has always been a parliamentary party.

party system – The party system refers to the number and type of established parties and it is shaped by the electoral system. Two dominant types are the two-party system and the multi-party system.

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.