

# Example of electoral systems in the uk and one other country with a pr system ess...

[Countries](#), [England](#)



## **Program: - Political Science: Researching Political Analysis**

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Compare and contrast the merits of First Past the Post and Proportional Representation

Electoral Systems in the UK and one other country with a PR system

Introduction-Definitions

The provocative argument informing this discourse on first past the post and proportional representation emerged from a recently held British referendum to decide whether first past the post should be replaced by proportional representation as an electoral systemic procedure. A “ no” vote for a change from FPTP to PR resulted from the referendum.

### **First past the post**

This voting system is also known as “ winner take all” whereby candidates receiving the most votes are declared winners. It is recommended for both single and multiple elections. In a single election one candidate is declared the winner whereas in multiple election patterns a group of candidates take the lead in the highest vote count (Sachs, 2011). However, an Electoral Reform Committee based in the United Kingdom is advocating that first past the post be replaced by proportional representation (Drogus, 2008).

## **Proportional representation**

Proportional representation is a voting concept, which allows a political party to have seats in the assembly based on a proportion of votes cast at election. For example, if 50% of voters support a particular party, then that party would earn 50% of seats in parliament (Denis, 2008).

Precisely, there are several forms of proportional representation adopted in various countries across the world. In some systems voters have the opportunity of selecting candidates to represent them in the assembly while others aim merely to have a proportionate representation in the house of assembly/parliament (Colomer, 2004).

## **Comparative analysis**

This comparative analysis would be an assessment of perspectives advanced by various researchers pertaining mainly to the May 5, 2011 British referendum.

## **Similarities**

Dr. Allan Renwick's (2011) briefing pertaining to the alternative vote quite clearly outlines that whether it be PR or first past the post they are voting systems which allow voters to choose a candidate; group of candidates or party utilizing a democratic process. From debate studies quite a significant portion of voters did not really know the differences and similarities between PR and first past the post in terms of the alternative vote typology. Then, there was equal difficulty in deciding which one was more appropriate for the political management at the time (Renwick, 2011).

A major similarity between the systems is that an election reflects the

decision of people be it majority; minority or whether contesting parties or candidates accept the results to be authentic. The foregoing referendum informing a first past the post preference in British parliamentary election shows that an equal portion of voters were satisfied with the system of voting and did not care whether it was PR or first past the post. The opportunity to cast a vote was more important than a system that was used (ICM Research, 2011).

Importantly, political analysts have summarized the benefits of PR and FPTP to hypothesize that strategic voting levels in both electoral systems are similar based on comparative studies conducted in United States of America, Mexico, Great Britain and Israel. They concluded that in every election smaller parties tend to lose votes to larger ones and voters focus on policy consequences of their personal behavior and the parties or candidates' ability to manage with transparency (Abramson, 2010)

## **Differences**

Differences within the context of this discussion relate to whether British voters recognize the strategic implications of PR and FPTP. Isobel White's (2011) inferences to PR indicated that there were no distinct causal relationships between PR and the wide range of expectations of voters to determine whether it was more applicable than FPTP at this time in the political history of Great Britain. Hence, the major difference lies in that voters could identify more readily with the outcomes of FPTP than those linked to PR (White, 2011).

However, another major observation was that the new voting system when

tested allowed for a better allocation of seats to give opportunities for cultural diversity within the parliamentary administration since more parties could be represented. More importantly, when compared to FPTP studies have proved where voter participation in the UK did not increase in PR electoral system adaptations as in other countries such as Israel even though analysts have discovered that PR shows greater voter participation than FPTP (White, 2011).

Consequently, recommendations were that changing from FPTP would necessitate education concerning how the alternative vote is applied for increase voter participation in the process and this can explain exactly why voters in the recent referendum voted against a system with which they were not conversant.

More pronounced arguments pertaining to insidious differences between the electoral systems citing Great Britain contend that under FPTP, candidates desirous of contesting must register to do so. At the election be it by-election such as selecting a constituency MP for Westminster; whoever gets the highest votes within the consistency is the winner. There is rarely a recount. Precisely, some political analysts question the democratic process of the elections in terms of a balanced representation within parliament (Mannin, 2010).

Significantly, political analysts continue to argue that an electoral system that is not PR is biased and disproportionate being in favor of larger political groups suffocating the emergence of minority parties. Hence, there is no true democracy in such a structure as practiced in Great Britain, United States of America and Canada. An example of a true democracy derived from a

proportionate electoral system is Israel because a number of parties can contest with an equal chance of winning (Jenkins Report, 1998).

## **Conclusions**

These conclusive perspectives would advance advantages and disadvantage of both systems and how counties have utilized them to offer a more transparent electoral mechanism and establish true democracy within their ranks.

## **Advantages of FPTP**

In societies where the voting population is uneducated regarding benefits of one electoral system above the other first past the post is a simple way of voting and identifying who voters would like to represent them within a constituency. Also, from the stand point of candidates it would appear to be an easy uncomplicated win. The vote count says it all.

Duverger's law posits that when the political administration wishes to limit the number of parties participating in an election FPTP is the best intervention. Consequently the prediction under this law has that that these countries develop into a two party states namely the ruling and the opposition as in Great Britain (Mannin, 2010).

## **Advantages of PR**

The system utilizes preferential voting believed to be a more transparent counting model. Precisely, it offers opportunities for each constituency to select two or more representatives for the each electorate. As such, the constituency is representative of the total number of candidates that voters

can select at the election. A party can tender as many candidates as possible (Norris, 2010)

More importantly, there are added advantages of the single transferable vote in multimember constituencies; looser delegation in a single member constituency; party lists system in multimember constituency; additional member and mixed member mechanism all absent in the FPTP.

## **Disadvantages of FPTP**

Arguments against FPTP are that it encourages tactical voting; there are wasted votes; gerrymandering is persistent and accusations of manipulating votes. Tactical voting is considered when voters can predict the most likely outcome through the most votes cast for a candidate to the extent of predicting that all votes cast for any candidate beside the first and second winners will eventually go to them by default or discarded as wasted votes. This gives them the incentive to vote (White, 2011).

Gerrymandering is the concept influencing a design whereby there is a disparity among seats awarded by the winning party as against the losing one. A classic example is if the governing British party wants to reduce seat won by the opposition it can create many constituents within the opposition party strongholds. While the opposition will win these seats the votes will be wasted and not awarded to the opposition. This in turn allows suspicions to enter the minds of losing candidates to think that there is some degree of manipulation of votes awarded (Colomer, 2004)

## **Disadvantages of PR**

Israel while practicing PR for centuries shows evidence of its disadvantages regarding the gross fragmentation that occurs when using this system to award seats in a parliament. Research has revealed that there are 18 parties represented in the Israeli assembly. When balancing power it was discovered that these party leader seldom agree on issue making it very difficulty for amicable decision making process. As such, it poses the difficulty of cohesiveness in governance (Abramson, 2010).

Another consideration as a disadvantage is that a voter gets a chance to cast one vote which is counted several times since the second preference is not casting a second vote, but the way in which the voter would like the vote to be used. Each vote is counted within the round for the candidate identified. Some political analysts see this as a limitation in the voting criteria (Mortimer, 2011).

Therefore, in summarizing the May 5th, 2011 British referendum results utilizing a comparative analysis of the two electoral systems, it was quite evident that British voters are comfortable with the way FPTP election procedures are conducted and may continue this way despite efforts to of an Electoral Reform.

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