



Inter-Parliamentary Union

For democracy. For everyone.

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## Parline database: Glossary of terms

### Political System & Sub-categories:

**Six political systems are recognized: Presidential, Parliamentary, Presidential-Parliamentary, Monarchy, Communist, and Transitional. Three sub-categories are recognized: Parliamentary, Parliamentary-Ceremonial President, and Constitutional Monarchy. Political systems were classified for the IPU by an external expert, Robert Nakamura, in October 2013.**

- 1. Presidential Systems:** (a) The chief executive (usually a president) and legislature are separately elected, and (b) they serve for fixed terms.
- 2. Parliamentary Systems:** (a) The outcome of elections for the legislature determines the chief executive (usually a prime minister) and (b) the legislature can be dissolved, requiring new elections.
  - 1. Parliamentary:** (a) The outcome of elections for the legislature determines the chief executive and (b) the legislature can be dissolved, requiring new elections.
  - 2. Parliamentary-Ceremonial President:** A parliamentary system with a president as head of state and a separate the head of government elected by the legislature. The head of state exercises limited powers.
  - 3. Constitutional Monarchies:** A parliamentary system of government in which a monarch plays a largely symbolic role and is guided by a constitution whereby his/her rights, duties, and responsibilities are substantially limited by written law or by custom.
- 3. Presidential - Parliamentary:** (a) President elected separately from parliament usually for a fixed term, (b) shares executive powers with a prime minister, (c) and the prime minister is responsible to parliament that may be dissolved before the end of its term.
- 4. Monarchy:** A form of government where the monarch exercises substantial powers and may rule through a chief executive and parliament by the use of his appointment powers and the ability to form and dissolve governments.
- 5. Communist system:** Selection of chief executives and legislature are made primarily by a Communist Party which sees its role as leading the country in the interests of the governed.
- 6. Transitional:** Governments where the established structure has been displaced and the subsequent formal system is yet to be determined.

See the political system of each national parliament [in Parline here](#).



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## Sub-Categories of Electoral Systems

### Proportional Representation

#### List Proportional Representation (List PR):

Under a List Proportional Representation (List PR) system each party or grouping presents a list of candidates for a multi-member electoral district, the voters vote for a party, and parties receive seats in proportion to their overall share of the vote. In some (closed list) systems the winning candidates are taken from the lists in order of their position on the lists. If the lists are 'open' or 'free' the voters can influence the order of the candidates by marking individual preferences.

#### Single Transferable Vote (STV):

The Single Transferable Vote is a preferential system in which the voter has one vote in a multi-member district and the candidates that surpass a specified quota of first preference votes are immediately elected. In successive counts, votes are redistributed from least successful candidates, who are eliminated, and votes surplus to the quota are redistributed from successful candidates, until sufficient candidates are declared elected. Voters normally vote for candidates rather than political parties, although a party-list option is possible.

### Plurality/Majority

#### First Past The Post (FPTP):

First Past The Post is the simplest form of plurality/majority electoral system. The winning candidate is the one who gains more votes than any other candidate, even if this is not an absolute majority of valid votes. The system uses single-member districts and the voters vote for candidates rather than political parties.

#### Block Vote (BV):

Block Vote is a plurality/majority system used in multi-member districts. Electors have as many votes as there are candidates to be elected. The candidates with the highest vote totals win the seats. Usually voters vote for candidates rather than parties and in most systems may use as many, or as few, of their votes as they wish.

#### Party Block Vote (PBV):

Party Block Vote (PBV) is a plurality/majority system using multi-member districts in which voters cast a single party-centred vote for a party of choice, and do not choose between candidates. The party with most votes will win every seat in the electoral district.

#### Alternative Vote (AV):

The Alternative Vote is a preferential plurality/majority system used in single-member districts. Voters use numbers to mark their preferences on the ballot paper. A candidate who receives an absolute majority (50 per cent plus 1) of valid first preference votes is declared elected. If no candidate achieves an absolute majority of first preferences, the least successful candidates are eliminated and their votes reallocated according to their second preferences until one candidate has an absolute majority. Voters vote for candidates rather than political parties.

#### Two-Round System (TRS):

The Two-Round System is a plurality/majority system in which a second election is held if no candidate or party achieves a given level of votes, most commonly an absolute majority (50 per cent plus one), in the first election round. A Two-Round System may take a majority-plurality form—more than two candidates contest the

second round and the one wins the highest number of votes in the second round is elected, regardless of whether they have won an absolute majority—or a majority run-off form—only the top two candidates in the first round contest the second round.

## **Mixed system**

### **Parallel Systems:**

A Parallel System is a mixed system in which the choices expressed by the voters are used to elect representatives through two different systems—one List PR system and (usually) one plurality/majority system—but where no account is taken of the seats allocated under the first system in calculating the results in the second system.

### **Mixed Member Proportional System (MMP):**

Mixed Member Proportional is a mixed system in which the choices expressed by the voters are used to elect representatives through two different systems—one List PR system and (usually) one plurality/majority system—where the List PR system compensates for the disproportionality in the results from the plurality/majority system.

## **Other systems**

### **Single Non-Transferable Vote (SNTV):**

Under the Single Non-Transferable Vote system voters cast a single vote in a multi-member district. The candidates with the highest vote totals are declared elected. Voters vote for candidates rather than political parties.

### **(Modified) Borda Count (BC):**

Borda Count (BC) – A candidate-centred preferential system used in either single- or multimember districts in which voters use numbers to mark their preferences on the ballot paper and each preference marked is then assigned a value using equal steps. These are summed and the candidate(s) with the highest total(s) is/are declared elected.

### **Combination of different Plurality/Majority systems**

- First Past The Post (FPTP) & Block Vote (BV)
- First Past The Post (FPTP) & Party Block Vote (PBV)

Please see above-mentioned explanation.

## **Click on the links below to see the:**

[Electoral system](#) of each parliamentary chamber

[Electoral system sub-categories](#) of each parliamentary chamber

**Source:** <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/electoral-system-design#>