Changed Voting Changed Politics

Lessons of Britain's Experience of PR since 1997

Final Report of the Independent Commission to Review Britain's Experience of PR Voting Systems

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Independent
Commission
on PR

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Background to the Commission and terms of reference

In 1997 the Labour manifesto contained a commitment to hold a referendum on the voting system for the House of Commons. That commitment was not directly repeated. Instead, in 2001, the Labour manifesto promised a review of Britain's experience of the new PR voting systems, introduced during Labour's first term, before considering any changes to the electoral system for the House of Commons. This Independent Commission has been established to assist that review.

The 2001 Labour Party General Election Manifesto stated that:

The government has introduced major innovations in the electoral systems used in the UK—for the devolved administrations, the European Parliament and the London Assembly. The [Jenkins] Commission on the Voting System made proposals for electoral reform at Westminster. We will review the experience of the new systems and the Jenkins Report to assess whether changes might be made to the electoral system for the House of Commons. A referendum remains the right way to agree any change for Westminster.

The Independent Commission, set up by the Constitution Unit initiated a programme of research in advance of the 2003 elections, seeking to ensure that the Government's review is based upon the best available evidence. This Commission has been generously financed by the Nuffield Foundation and the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust.

The Commission includes members from all parties, some of whom have expressed views in favour of proportional representation and some of whom have been defenders of first-past-the-post (FPTP) voting; most, however, are uncommitted in the debate over electoral systems. It is not the intention of the Commission to arrive at a comprehensive verdict for or against a change for Westminster. The goal is to collect and analyse the evidence needed to inform any decision about changing the voting system for the House of Commons or for regional or other bodies.

Terms of Reference

- To review the experience of the new PR voting systems used in the elections for the Scottish Parliament, National Assembly for Wales, Greater London Assembly and for the European Parliament.
- To consult as widely as possible, and in particular to seek the views of citizens and voters as well as politicians and the political parties about the new voting systems;
- To consider the advantages and disadvantages of the new voting systems, and report on any implications for Westminster;
- To consider elections to the second chamber as well as the House of Commons;
- To produce an interim report in spring 2003, and a final report by early 2004.

The Commission has focused on the lessons from Scotland and Wales, from the 1999 European Parliament elections, and the 2000 elections for the London Assembly. It also looked at the evidence from Northern Ireland of voters' attitudes to the single transferable vote (STV), and their capacity to cope with different electoral systems. Finally, the Commission has examined the Alternative Vote. Although this system is not currently used in the UK, it was recommended by the Independent Commission on the Voting System, chaired by the late Lord Jenkins.

Acknowledgements

The Commission are extremely grateful to those who assisted in answering questions, providing venues for seminars and helping to write the report. In particular they would like to thank: Jocelyn Davies, Dafydd Trystan, Leigh Jeffes, Jessica Morden, Huw Roberts, Hugh Rawlings and Paul Silk in Cardiff. In Edinburgh we would like to thank Derek Barrie, Brian Taylor, George Reid, Katie Grant, Mark Lazarowicz, Lord Douglas-Hamilton, Paul Tyler and Barry Winetrobe. In London we are grateful to Tony Travers, Hugh Muir, Dermot Scott and Darren Johnson.

Many put a lot of work into preparing the report. In particular Ben Seyd, Meg Russell, David Farrell, Chris Ballinger, John Curtice, Caroline White and Peter Kellner. In addition several academics were particularly helpful, namely Ron Johnston, Anthony King, Patrick Dunleavy, Helen Margetts, Michael Gallagher, Vernon Bogdanor, Bill Hartas, Philip Kestelman, Clive Payne and Adrian Blau. We would also like to thank Ben Marshall of the Electoral Commission for making survey data available.

Finally the chairmen would like to thank Simon King for his tireless work in supporting the Commission and in researching and drafting the report. The thoroughness of the report and the extensive bibliography are testament to his scholarship and his industry: he has been unstinting in his support.

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Executive Summary

Scope and Nature of the Inquiry

1. The Commission was set up to review the experience of the new proportional voting systems used in the elections for the Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales, the Greater London Assembly and for the European Parliament; to consult as widely as possibly and to seek the views of voters as well as politicians; to consider the advantages and disadvantages of the new voting systems and report on any implications for Westminster. The aim throughout has been to look at the evidence in order to inform the debate, rather than to take a view on the merits of changing the voting system for the House of Commons.

2. The dominant theme of the report is the extent of change in the British electoral system in recent years. First-past-the-post is no longer the sole, or even the predominant, system. Each of the new bodies set up since 1997 has used a different means of electing its members. Voters in London, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are as likely to use PR systems in elections as first-past-the-post. So there is a large, and growing, volume of evidence.

3. There is no single, ideal electoral system. The choice depends on a range of different and often conflicting objectives and circumstances, depending upon what we want from our governments, our parliaments and our politicians. The report explains the main types of electoral system and discusses their strengths and weaknesses as well as those of the first-past-the-the post system currently used for electing members of the House of Commons and local councillors.

How should we judge Electoral Systems?

4. A variety of often conflicting criteria exist for judging electoral systems: fairness to parties; stable and effective government; fairness to social groups to prevent under-representation; fairness to localities; voter choice; voter participation; and impact on political parties. Most featured in the terms of reference of the New Zealand Royal Commission on the Electoral System in 1985.

5. The Jenkins Commission on the Voting System, which reported in 1998, was asked to recommend a system which would achieve broad proportionality; fulfil the need for stable government; extend voter choice and maintain a link between MPs and geographical constituencies.

6. Unlike these two commissions, we were not asked to recommend an alternative to the existing system, but to review the lessons of new systems. Consequently, we are focussing on analytical criteria: fairness and proportionality; voter choice and understanding; voter attitudes; campaigning and party competition; party candidate selection; mobilisation and turnout; representation; performance in government; implications for regional and local government; and relevance for Westminster.

Fairness

7. Proportionality between the shares of votes cast and seats won is not straightforward and can vary considerably, depending on the size of constituencies; the number of parties in the system and the rules of the electoral system, including minimum thresholds. In particular, the mixed constituency and list systems used in Scotland, Wales and London still produce disproportional results between votes cast and seats won.

Electoral System Design and Voter Choice

8. The closed list systems adopted for the European Parliament elections and for the list candidates in Scotland, Wales and London limit the choice available to voters since the political parties control the selection and ranking of candidates on the list. Open lists would allow voters to choose candidates from within their preferred party. Other systems offer voters a greater chance of expressing a preference, such as the Supplementary Vote used in London and local mayoral elections. The Single Transferable Vote also allows voters such a choice.

Public Attitudes to Different Electoral Systems

9. The public has contradictory attitudes to electoral systems. Public views of first-past-the-post and the alternatives vary depending on how the questions are asked. Surveys have shown that, while more people believe it is more important to have a clear winner than a fair result, at the same time more prefer to have two or more parties in government than just one. There has been no consistent change in views over the last twenty years.

10. The Commission did, however, find evidence that, after the experience of living under an Additional Member System, voters in Scotland and Wales were much more supportive than English voters of such a system. However, this is not an important issue for most voters, and few people have strong pro or anti-reform attitudes.

Party Competition and Campaigning

11. The experience of alternative electoral systems in the UK since 1997 confirms the evidence from overseas that the use of a more proportional method of voting results in a larger number of parties securing seats and playing a significant role in the political system. However, even under first-past-the-post, there are more than two major players at Westminster. The British experience shows, however, that rather than producing a profusion of parties, a proportional system may just encourage a modest increase in the number of minor parties (plus a few independent candidates).

12. The British experience has not so far produced a dramatic change in the nature of election campaigns. Perhaps

the most obvious change has been the attempt by smaller parties under the Additional Member System to target the second list, or non-constituency, vote.

Party Candidate Selection

13. The introduction of proportional representation in multi-member seats has offered the potential for centralised party control of candidate selection. This has been true of some parties in both Scotland and Wales, though others have adopted a decentralised approach.

14. The adoption of a proportional system has made only a limited impact on increasing the broader representativeness of those elected, as compared with other, broader political influences also affecting selection for first-past-the-post seats at Westminster. Multi-member seats make it easier to introduce various formal gender balancing arrangements, but this is only one, and not necessarily the most important reason for the large rise in the number of women politicians elected over the past decade.

Mobilisation

15. The low turnout at the post-1997 elections using proportional methods probably has less to do with electoral systems and more to do with other factors, such as voter apathy, lack of identification with parties, confusion and lack of interest in the outcome of the elections.

16. Research into low turnout shows how formidable is the task of mobilising the electorate to participate in 'second order' elections that do not choose a national government. Changes in voting methods may help since pilot schemes using all-postal voting procedures have

significantly increased turnout, though this would apply to first-past-the-post, as well as proportional, elections.

Representation

17. Representatives elected under Additional Member or Single Transferable Vote systems are just as likely to provide a constituency service as those elected under first-past-the-post. However, members of the European Parliament elected in larger regions have found it more difficult to undertake constituency casework.

Effect of Electoral System Change on Government.

18. The experience of government in Scotland and Wales since 1999 has generally proved to be stable in its impact on policymaking and broadly acceptable to the public. Compromises over policy have been relatively easy to reach. This is despite changes of First Minister in both countries and moves in and out of coalition in Wales.

19. PR in Scotland and Wales has also resulted in a shift in the balance of power between the executive and the assembly. The government cannot take the assembly for granted. There is more negotiation and consultation over policy. The committees in the Scottish Parliament are more powerful than their counterparts at Westminster. Key policies such as the abolition of up-front student tuition fees and free long term care for the elderly have resulted from negotiation within the coalition, and from the parliament asserting its wishes against the executive.

Implications for Regional and Local Government

20. The Additional Member System has been proposed for English regional assemblies. Referendums are to be held in the three northern regions in October 2004 on whether to go ahead. The coalition administration in Edinburgh has brought forward legislation to introduce the Single Transferable Vote system for local government in Scotland. This would be the first time a body elected by first-past-the-post has switched to a proportional system.

Relevance for Westminster and Conclusions

21. The changes in the electoral system, and related political behaviour, have been both more extensive and dynamic than is generally recognised. Every new representative body set up since 1997 has used an electoral system different from first-past-the-post. And the process of change is continuing with proportional systems continuing to be adopted, as noted in the preceding paragraph.

22. Changing the electoral system for the House of Commons from first-past-the-post to one of the variants of proportional representation would have far-reaching effects:-

    First, there would probably be some increase in the number of smaller parties represented in the Commons, the exact number depending on the precise system used.

    Second, coalition or minority governments would be probable, involving a more co-operative and consultative style of politics.

    Third, changing the electoral system might, possibly, inspire more confidence in politicians, given the evidence that voters might welcome the opportunity to express more choice over whom should represent them.

    Fourth, a preferential system such as the Single Transferable Vote or open party lists would put a greater focus on individual candidates and encourage greater diversity.

23. The Commission's analysis suggested that the impact of using new electoral systems has not been as dramatic, in either direction, as supporters and opponents of proportional representation have suggested. Other, broader, political factors have often been as important in, for example, increasing the number of women candidates elected to both the new representative bodies and the House of Commons.

24. The question of relevance to Westminster comes down to the issue of the distribution of power. Do we want it concentrated under the winner-take-all system of first-past-the-post, or do we want it spread between parties as is probable under any proportional system?

25. This report is a snapshot of work-in-progress. The conclusions are tentative. The debate is still developing. That does not make electoral reform inevitable for the House of Commons. What has happened in the devolved bodies is not precisely relevant for the Commons. But the broad experience outside Westminster cannot, and should not, be ignored. There are clear lessons which may, and should, dispel many of the claims and charges heard on both sides of the argument. The debate about electoral systems is still open.

Chapter 1:
Our task: Reviewing Britain's experience of new voting systems

Introduction: The Scope and Nature of our Enquiry

1.1   Electoral systems in Britain have changed substantially in recent years. First-past-the-post is no longer the sole, or even the predominant, system outside Westminster. Each of the new representative bodies set up since 1997 has used a different means of electing its members. The Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales, the Northern Ireland Assembly, the Greater London Assembly and the European Parliament have all used variants of Proportional Representation (PR), while the London Mayor and other mayors around England have been elected by a preferential system, the Supplementary Vote. Consequently, everyone in the United Kingdom has had the opportunity to use a different electoral system, and voters in London, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are as likely to use PR systems as first-past-the-post. These changes have far-reaching implications for the political system: the way we are governed and the behaviour of politicians.

1.2   This Independent Commission was established to examine the experience of these new electoral systems and to consider their relevance and possible implications for the way that the House of Commons is elected. This is not a new debate. The arguments for and against PR are familiar. What is new is the experience outside Westminster of these systems.

1.3   In its 1997 election manifesto, Labour promised to hold a referendum on the voting system for the House of Commons. The only action so far taken has been to set up a Commission under the chairmanship of the late Lord Jenkins of Hillhead which, in October 1998, recommended a hybrid system, combining single member constituencies using the Alternative Vote, with a limited top-up of 15 to 20 per cent of MPs. The Jenkins proposals were strongly opposed by many members of the Blair Cabinet and Labour MPs and were not taken up by the Government. Labour's 2001 manifesto promised that:

'We will review the experience of the new systems and the Jenkins Report to assess whether changes might be made to the electoral system for the House of Commons. A referendum remains the right way to agree any change for Westminster'.

1.4   Subsequently, Robin Cook, then Leader of the Commons, said in autumn 2001 that 'it was right to see how the

Scottish, Welsh and London systems worked in practice and then conclude what may be appropriate for Westminster. Logically, that's likely to be after the next round of elections for Scotland and Wales in 2003'. Nothing happened after these elections, and the timing of the review has slipped. However, in recent debates about PR in both the Commons and the Lords, ministers have specifically referred to the work of this Commission. On December 3, 2003, Christopher Leslie, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Constitutional Affairs, said that: 'Any review we might initiate will wish to draw not only on the Jenkins Report, the Electoral Commission's reports on particular elections and our own views on the experiences of the devolved legislatures, but the findings of the Independent Commission's report'. Lord Falconer of Thoroton, the Secretary of State for Constitutional Affairs, said in an interview with The Times on February 12 that he wanted any review to take account of this report and not just to be internal to Government, but to involve people outside Government.

1.5 Just before our report went to press the Scottish Affairs Committee published its report on Parliamentary constituency boundaries in Scotland (HC 77, 3 February 2004), in which the committee proposed 118 constituency members for the Scottish Parliament (in two-member constituencies) in order to retain the link with Westminster constituencies, and just 11 additional members. On 9 February the Scottish Secretary announced an independent commission to examine the consequences of having four different voting systems in

Scotland, and different constituency boundaries between Westminster and the Scottish Parliament. On the same day the Welsh Secretary announced that he might establish a similar commission to review the electoral arrangements for the Welsh Assembly.

1.6 We have not been able to do justice to these latest developments in our report. But they do underline some of our key conclusions. First, that these issues are not just of concern to the political world and electoral specialists. Elections and electoral systems are fundamental to our democracy, and we ignore them at our peril. Second, there has been a proliferation in new voting systems, which has not yet been adequately grasped by our politicians, let alone the voting public. Third, that it is the needs and the interests of the public which should come first, not the convenience or political advantage of the elected politicians.

1.7 The MPs who took part in the 9 February debate on the Scottish Parliament (Constituencies) Bill, during which Alistair Darling announced the new commission, were keen to stress the paramount interests of the public and their constituents. But very little hard evidence was cited during the debate about the views of the public on these matters. Are the public confused by the new voting systems? Has this been responsible for a decline in voter turnout? Do the public prefer a clear winner or a more proportional outcome? These are some of the issues on which we have sought systematically to collect the views of the public, and which we present as fully and fairly as we can in this report. We hope it will provide a solid base of

evidence for the commissions in Scotland and (if applicable) in Wales, and for the government's promised review of the voting system for the House of Commons.

1.8 This Independent Commission includes members from a wide range of political parties, as well as political scientists and commentators. Some publicly support PR, others defend first-past-the-post, while most are uncommitted in the debate over electoral systems. The remit of this Commission specifically ruled out taking a stand on the merits of changing the voting system for the House of Commons, or for regional or other bodies. We are solely concerned with examining the experience of PR in the new representative bodies and looking at any possible lessons. To this end, we have held seminars about the experience in Scotland, Wales, the European Parliament and London; visited the new bodies; sought the opinions of elected representatives; commissioned polling and survey research; and conducted on-line consultations.

1.9 There are plenty of theories and claims about PR and this report seeks to assess their validity against the very varied experience of the new bodies. Despite extensive academic research into these issues, and lively debates within the political elites in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, there has been little wider, public discussion about what has happened, particularly among Westminster politicians. We seek to provide an informed basis for such a debate.

1.10 Electoral systems cannot be viewed in isolation. They are not of interest to electoral specialists alone. A change of system from First-Past-The-Post to some form of PR affects the behaviour of voters and politicians as they adjust to a new framework, often in unpredictable ways. The law of unintended consequence tends to operate.

1.11 There is no single ideal electoral system. Different systems are associated with providing a strong and stable executive; representation of minority interests; proportionality in the relationship between the share of votes cast and the balance of party representatives elected; a clear link between the voter and their representatives. Different people will emphasise different factors: in the subsequent chapters, we try to separate them out. The choice has varied between different types of representative body because they perform different functions. Many people would support some form of PR for the Scottish Parliament or Welsh Assembly but not for the House of Commons. Moreover, attitudes have changed over time, depending on the political circumstances of the moment.

1.12 From 1931 until the mid-1970s, the electoral system generally produced clear-cut results in elections for the House of Commons. Power was split between two main parties which received the vast majority of votes. But from the two 1974 general elections onwards, the dominance of the two main parties has declined. The Liberal Democrats and various smaller parties

have won around a quarter of the vote, while, in the two most recent general elections, the number of MPs outside the Labour and Conservative parties has increased. Labour has achieved landslide majorities in the Commons on a smaller percentage of the national vote than when it lost elections in the 1950s.

1.13 Some variant of PR has been used in each of the new devolved bodies created since 1997-in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and London- as well as for the elections to the European Parliament in 1999. So voters in the whole of the United Kingdom have had at least one opportunity to vote under a form of PR, while voters in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have had two opportunities to do so. Each of the new electoral systems has had far-reaching, and still evolving, consequences for the practice of politics.

1.14 In this report we show how these new systems were created, how they have developed, and what they have meant for voters, parties, representatives and government. The report concludes with a discussion of the relevance and possible implications for the debate about any change in the system for elections to the House of Commons.

Chapter 2:
The voting systems in the UK: a quick guide

2.1   There is a vast literature on electoral systems. Key texts are listed in the bibliography at the end of this report. What follows is a brief description of the systems now in use or under discussion in the UK.

System name	Voters fill in ballot paper by	Seats contested in:	Winning candidates must
Plurality rule (first-past the post)	Marking an X against a single candidate	Current 659 single member Westminster constituencies, local council elections	Get more votes than any other candidate in the constituency. A plurality (but not necessarily a majority)
Multi member plurality rule	Marking as many Xs as there are seats	Many local authorities especially after redistricting	Be among the top candidates in terms of votes
Supplementary vote (SV)	Marking an X against their first preference candidate and, if they want to, against a second preference candidate	London Mayoral elections, 12 local Mayoral elections	Either: get majority (50.1%) support from voters' first preferences. Or: obtain majority support following one or more redistributions of the second preferences of voters backing the bottom candidates Or: be the leading candidate in a two horse race after one or more such redistributions of second and subsequent preferences of voters backing the bottom candidates
Alternative vote (AV)	Marking their ballot paper 1,2,3 etc against their most preferred individual candidates in a single member seat	Not currently used, though in-part proposed by the Jenkins Commission	Get more than 50% of the votes as the second and later preferences of the least successful candidates are counted in turn.
Additional Member System (AMS)	Marking an X against their first preference candidate or party at the local constituency level; and marking an X against their first preference party at regional level	Elections to the Scottish Parliament, National Assembly for Wales, Greater London Assembly, proposed for English Regional Assemblies	Be the leading candidate in one of the local constituencies. OR elected from the party list at regional level. Regional lists enable parties which are underrepresented in the constituency seats to be more fully represented overall.
List Proportional Representation	Marking an X against one party (or party candidate) only	UK European elections	Be elected from the party list in that constituency. Each party's votes are divided by a series of divisors to produce an average vote. The party with the 'highest average' vote after each stage in the process wins a seat, and its vote is then divided by the next divisor until all the seats have been filled.
Single Transferable Vote (STV)	Marking their ballot paper 1,2,3 etc against their most preferred individual candidates across any party or combination of parties	Northern Ireland Assembly elections, Northern Ireland local elections, proposed for Scottish local elections	Obtain a 'quota' of support so as to qualify for one of the seats in a constituency.

Chapter 3:
The current system

Issues in this chapter

- The historical and political context of first-past-the-post
- The virtues of first-past-the-post
- The defects of first-past-the-post
- Public attitudes to first-past-the-post

Historical and Political Context

3.1 The first-past-the-post system is used to elect the House of Commons although its history in the UK goes back to the middle-ages. It was not until 1885 that single member seats became predominant and not until 1950 that they became universal. From 1922 to 1950 there were also 12 university seats, three of which were two member and one three member, all elected on a system of Single Transferable Vote (STV).

3.2 There has been a long history of attempts to change the system. In 1867 and 1884 motions to establish proportional representation came before Parliament and in 1910 a Royal Commission recommended the Alternative Vote (AV). The 1917 all party Speaker's Conference unanimously recommended a change to STV in the cities and the large towns, accompanied by the use of the Alternative Vote in the counties. These propositions foundered in a wartime Parliament. In 1931, the second Labour government promoted a bill for the introduction of the Alternative Vote which was rejected by the House of Lords and was lost with the breakup of that government.

3.3 In the 1970s criticism of first-past-the-post became widespread, especially in the wake of the February 1974 general election, when the Conservatives won 226,000 votes more than Labour but won fewer seats; and the Liberals, with 19% of the vote, secured only 2% of the seats. In 1976 a Hansard Society Commission chaired by Lord Blake recommended an Additional Member System (AMS). About 100 Conservative MPs declared themselves in favour of electoral reform, but the party leadership was opposed. Three defeats between 1979 and 1987 led the Labour party to commission the Plant Report, which ended up recommending the majoritarian Supplementary Vote. John Smith, the leader of the Labour party at the time, responded to the Plant report by committing the party to a referendum on the electoral system.

3.4 In the 1990s, following John Smith's pledge and talks between leading Labour and Liberal Democrat politicians, Labour's 1997 manifesto included a promise to hold a referendum on the voting system. A Commission was convened under Lord Jenkins to produce an alternative to

Table 3.1. Party composition of governments after elections 1945–1998 (figures in % ages)		
	PR	**First-past-the-post**
Completely changed	12%	41%
Completely unchanged	25%	58%
Partly changed	62%	0%
Probability cabinet change	31%	40%
Average government vote share	54%	45%
Average change government vote share	2.6%	3.1%

Source: Vowles 2000, 23 countries examined

first-past-the-post to be voted on in a referendum. The Commission reported in 1998 and recommended an additional member system known as AV Plus. Nothing was done and Labour's 2001 manifesto only included a pledge to conduct a review after the 2003 Scottish and Welsh elections.

Debating the virtues and vices of first-past-the-post

3.5 Supporters of plurality systems (first-past-the-post) often take the view that the primary purpose of general elections is to choose a government, usually one of two rival political parties. This has been termed the 'majoritarian' view of representation. Accountability is achieved by voters' ability to dismiss a government. Opponents of first-past-the-post often prefer the 'representative' view. They argue that the main purpose of general elections is to produce a parliament that represents the range of public attitudes as fairly as possible, with the consequence that the government reflects a broader range of interests and opinions than is likely under first-past-the-post.

Virtues of first-past-the-post

3.6 First-past-the-post is easy to understand and straightforward to operate. All a voter has to do is to mark a single X on a ballot paper against a candidate. Whichever candidate has the most votes wins. The result is simple and avoids the apparent complexities of alternative proportional systems.

3.7 First-past-the-post parliaments tend to be dominated by two large parties or blocs, one of which generally enjoys a majority of seats. The system usually releases political parties from having to form coalition governments. It reduces the chances of small extremist parties winning seats and exerting influence. Advocates of first-past-the-post argue that its likelihood of producing single party government also means that the system promotes stable government.

3.8 First-past-the-post makes it easier than PR for voters to dismiss unpopular governments - 'throwing the rascals out'[1] - and to replace them with one from the rival political bloc. Under PR, governments are occasionally dismissed as a result of an election but more often as a result of post election bargaining between political party leaders. Table 3.1 (above), complied by

Jack Vowles, a political scientist from New Zealand illustrates this:

3.9 Table 3.1 shows that fewer governments were completely dismissed by the electorate in the PR countries than in the first-past-the-post countries. However, the higher incidence of partial change under PR systems would be taken by advocates to show that the composition of government under PR is more responsive to public opinion than under first-past-the-post. However, the counter argument might be that by enabling voters in effect to choose their government – rather than elect a variety of parties from which a government is subsequently assembled – the governing party can be held to the programme, or manifesto, on which it won power. Coalition governments often require negotiations and compromises. Furthermore, single-party governments usually deny excessive influence to small parties, which, under more proportional systems, are sometimes able to exert a power out of proportion to their public support in order to sustain the coalitions that they join.

3.10 As Michael Pinto-Duschinsky, one of the leading academic defenders of first-past-the-post, points out, sometimes a party which does unexpectedly well in a PR election presents a threat to other parties and, for this reason, is ousted from a coalition. On the other hand a party winning only a handful of seats may, for that reason, become an attractive, malleable coalition partner. For example, in 1989, the Norwegian Conservatives lost over a quarter of their electoral support, yet moved from opposition into government. If Westminster were to adopt a PR system, the Liberal Democrats might hold the balance of power and be

assured of an almost constant place in government. Alternatively the party system might change and a different party could assume this role.

3.11 Another defence of first-past-the-post that the major parties can offer is that over time they get a roughly proportionate share of power. Between 1945 and 2004 the Conservatives have been in office for 57% of the period and Labour for 43%, not too far from their cumulative share of the two-party vote over sixteen general elections which gives the Conservatives 51% and Labour 49%.

3.12 As the Jenkins Commission pointed out, by being a 'winner takes all' system, first-past-the-post can encourage parties to broaden their appeal and potentially discourage extremism. At the same time, it offers to unorthodox MPs a degree of independence from excessive party control, provided they can retain the support of their local organisation.[2]

Defects of first–past–the–post

3.13 Under first-past-the-post governments have usually failed to secure a majority of the votes cast. In other words, the party that wins a *plurality* (largest number) of the vote, very seldom wins a *majority* of the vote. In the UK, no governing party has won a majority of the vote since 1935.

3.14 Related to this is the tendency for first-past-the-post to develop potentially long periods of bias against one of the two main parties, when translating votes into seats. At certain times it runs in favour of the Conservatives, at other times for Labour. For example, the Conservatives had a majority of 21 seats on a 7.5% lead in 1992 while Labour won a majority of 146 on an

8.4% lead in 1945. Thus, the degree to which first-past-the-post exaggerates the lead of the largest party is variable and certainly a safe overall majority cannot be guaranteed. Moreover, there were no less than 5 elections in the 20th century when no party secured an overall majority in the Commons.

3.15 First-past-the-post does not always produce a government formed by the plurality winner. In most countries that use first-past-the-post there has been at least one case where the party forming the government came second in the popular vote (Canada in 1979, New Zealand in 1978 and 1981, India in 1991 and Britain in 1951 and in February 1974).

3.16 First-past-the-post makes life difficult for third parties with geographically dispersed support. In 1983 the SDP/Liberal Alliance won 25.4% of the vote but just 3.5% of the seats. In 2001, the Liberal Democrats secured 18% of the vote and 8% of seats. (This bias does not occur when support for a party is concentrated in a particular area, as it is for Plaid Cymru and the Ulster parties; their representation more clearly approximates their strength.)

3.17 One consequence of first-past-the-post is that a major party may have no representatives from significant areas of the country, or types of seat, despite winning significant numbers of votes. This is liable to inhibit a party that

Bias in the relation of seats and votes under first–past–the–post

First-past-the-post has the virtue of usually producing clear majorities by exaggerating the winner's share of votes into a larger (sometimes a much larger) share of seats. It used to treat the main parties fairly equally. In the 1950s there was a slight bias in favour of the Conservatives. But the last three elections have shown a strong and growing bias in favour of the Labour party. It can be demonstrated that in 2001 the Conservatives would have needed almost 43 per cent of the vote to gain a clear majority in the House of Commons while Labour needed less than 36 per cent.

There are three main sources for this bias.
1. *Malapportionment.* Scotland and Wales are heavily over-represented in comparison to England and Northern Ireland. With a uniform quota of electors per constituency Scotland would have 13 seats fewer than its current 72 and Wales 7 less than its current 40. In addition, because of urban depopulation and other factors, in England Conservative-held seats contained 3,800 more electors than Labour seats.[3]

2. *Tactical voting and targeting.* Increasingly there has been a tendency for voters, encouraged by sophisticated campaign strategies, to cast their ballots not for their preferred party but for the party most likely to defeat their most disliked party. This enabled the Liberal Democrats in 1997 to more than double their representation even though their share of the national vote actually fell.[4]

3. *Turnout.* The recent fall in turnout has been greatest in safe Labour areas. This has cost the party votes without costing it seats.

aspires to national status from being able to speak for all sections of the electorate. In 1983, Labour held only two seats in southern England outside London; in 1997 the Conservatives won no inner city seats outside London, and had no MPs in Scotland or Wales.

3.18 A single-party government may have the clear-cut mandate of the manifesto on which it was elected; but there is little evidence that more than a tiny minority of voters know of, let alone approve, all its manifesto commitments. It is possible for a coalition's negotiated post-election programme for government to command more public support than any one party's single programme.

Conflicting views of representative government

3.19 As is made clear in the 1991 Plant Report, commissioned by the Labour party to consider alternative electoral systems for the UK. There is no neutral position. As the report says 'we cannot adjudicate this argument by appealing to an idea of function that is in some sense beyond dispute; rather it is arguable that the different forms of electoral system are grounded in different views of function.'[5]

3.20 Given these complexities, it is clear that there can be no single system that meets all desirable criteria and standards.[6]

Public Understanding and attitudes to first–past–the–post

3.21 Focus groups convened to test people's reaction to different systems suggested that many citizens were unaware of any defects in first-past-the-post until they were pointed out. The attitude of

surveyed respondents tended to change dramatically when they found out more about the operation of first-past-the-post. Most were converted to some form of PR.

3.22 For example, in 1998, a series of focus groups were convened by the Jenkins Commission to discuss electoral systems.[7] Their object was to assess underlying attitudes towards electoral reform and the issues involved. From the start it was evident that the participants knew little about electoral systems. Nobody was able to identify the precise workings of first-past-the-post. It was not surprising therefore that no one was able to offer a credible alternative to it and that most respondents favoured retaining first-past-the-post. During the course of the discussion when alternative electoral systems were explained to the participants the mood shifted towards favouring a change from first-past-the-post, although without any clear support for any alternative system. In addition, most participants favoured a system that retained a constituency link and which was not too complex.

3.23 Our Commission, together with the polling company, YouGov, attempted to explore further the attitude of the public towards first-past-the-post through surveys conducted in the summer of 2003. In general, respondents were split over whether they favoured PR systems or first-past-the-post, though in the end there was a small majority in favour of first-past-the-post. However, on the whole most people were indifferent, reflecting the low salience of the subject in the public imagination.

3.24 When asked about first-past-the-post, 85% of people found the system easy to understand though they were split

over whether they thought the system offered a great deal of choice (see Chapter 7 on public support for different electoral systems for more details).

3.25 In addition, the survey asked whether people thought that first-past-the-post resulted in good quality people being elected to Parliament. Figure 3.1 below displays the results. It shows that more people were dissatisfied than satisfied with the role of first-past-the-post in producing good quality MPs but that a significant number (45%) had no opinion at all on the matter.

3.26 In summary, our survey work is in line with the previous research, which shows that people think very little about electoral systems. Hence there is a significant degree of support for first-past-the-post, which reduces only when the deficiencies of the system are pointed out. A strong public attachment to single member constituencies tends to boost support for first-past-the-post.

Online Consultation

3.27 In an attempt to go beyond survey methods, the Commission sought the views of members of the public on first-past-the-post through an on-line consultation, run by the Hansard Society. This exercise threw up some interesting comments, especially from MPs:

'Conservatives believe the traditional British system of voting has served this country well for many years. It produces a fair result, promotes strong, stable government, and allows voters to kick out a government when they want. There is no popular demand for change.'

'Advocates of PR claim that electoral reform ensures there is a fairer link between votes cast and seats in a legislature. Yet PR frequently leads to a disproportionate relationship between votes cast and the share of executive

Figure 3.1 Public views on first–past–the–post

Disagree 30%

Agree 25%

Neither agree nor disagree 45%
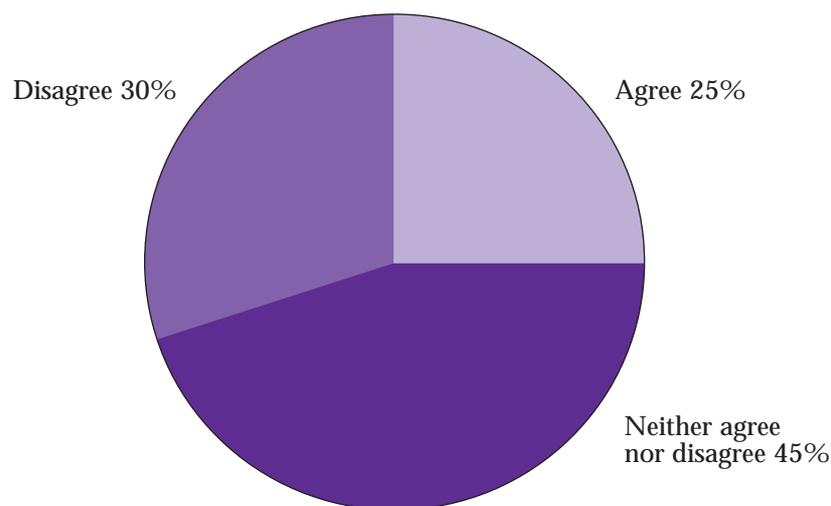
Source: YouGov/ICPR Survey May 2003 N=2,236

power -making unpopular, minority parties the power brokers in government. PR also undermines the one-to-one link between representatives and their constituencies, so reducing accountability. PR would thus be extremely unhealthy for our Parliamentary democracy.'
- Theresa May MP, former Chairman of the Conservative Party

'I have had direct experience of PR only twice in my life: once when I lived in Belgium, and the system encouraged an endless series of identical coalition governments, in which the same old corrupt and fraudulent characters flourished from one decade to the next.'

'Then we introduced PR for the Euro-elections, with the result that candidates spend all their time carving up colleagues in the same party, in order to ensure that they are placed high on the list. I say: to hell with PR, long live first-past-the-post, and safeguard, for the people, the right to kick into outer space a government they dislike.'
- Boris Johnson, Conservative MP

'The decline in collective government may also have come about because we have grown accustomed to the first-past-the-post system, which throws up mega-majorities that leave prime ministers in the comfortable knowledge that no political rival could conjure up an effective parliamentary rebellion. Yet few of those who complain about presidential government make the logical connection that the best way to put Parliament back at the centre of action would be to adopt an electoral system of proportional representation

that obliged prime ministers to assemble a majority rather than take one for granted.'
- Robin Cook, Labour MP

'Any voting system for the House of Commons needs to take into account two key objectives. It needs to reflect the general will of the people whilst also delivering strong government. It is doubtful whether proportional systems deliver the first and they have not delivered the latter. PR frequently delivers weak coalitions where minority and sometimes extremist parties wield disproportionate influence. Following elections under PR, deals are done behind the scenes which often result in coalitions which are not supported by the electorate. The current system offers the electorate a real choice by enabling them to remove a government they dislike whilst maintaining a strong link between the MP and their constituents.'
- William Hague, MP, former leader of the Conservative Party

3.28 The public though were more critical of first-past-the-post. In fact, not a single contributor to the online forum came out in favour of first-past-the-post. In response to the comments from Boris Johnson, Theresa May and William Hague: One man commented:

'I find the tendency for political leaders to prefer first-past-the-post another pointer to the biggest fault line in the system - it OFTEN gives overwhelming parliamentary power to a party and its leader, that bears very little resemblance to their actual electoral support.'

3.29 Another noted:

'Much is made by Theresa May and William Hague, and has been made by others, of the strong, one to one link between MPs and their constituents. And yet the vast majority of electors have no say in the selection of their representatives. first-past-the-post, in which only one person can stand for each party in a constituency, gives the power of selection to the party rather than to the electorate. It is particularly important that any new system should allow the electorate to choose their representatives as individuals and not just according to party affiliation. Systems based on party lists do not allow this, but rather allow parties to use the system to ensure conformity.'

3.30 Other contributors used the MP's comments to attack the cynicism of politicians over first-past-the-post:

'It is quite transparent why Conservatives want to keep a system which has in the recent past given them untrammelled power when they had only minority support. Much the same could be said of the current Labour Government.'

And:

'Magaret Thatcher of course recognised (and indeed rejoiced in) the undemocratic nature of first-past-the-post which had ensured a majority of Tory governments (mostly with minority votes) throughout the twentieth century. As she explained to David Frost in an interview in 1995: if the Tories did not get back into power (in the next general election) they might not get back for many years - 'they might change the voting system.'

3.31 Several contributors dismissed the argument first-past-the-post was preferable due to being simple:

'No way is PR too complicated - what is complicated is how to make your vote count under First-past-the-post. Do you vote for the policies you actually believe in? or do you vote for the person most likely to remove the current MP?'

3.32 Despite being critical of first-past-the-post, some contributors echoed the respondents in the survey by defending the single member constituency:

'It is important to retain the strengths of FPP - ie the constituency link and working majorities (this being necessary in a system where the executive sits in Parliament).'

3.33 However, others were quick to point out the advantages of multimember constituencies:

'Democracy in Britain nowadays is not primarily about local representation but about national (i.e. English/English-regional, Scottish, Welsh NI) PARTY-political representation.'

And:

'Many people do not know the name of their MP under our current system, and even amongst those who do, few have direct personal contact with him or her. The constituency link is a refuge for the die-hard parliamentary opponents of PR, who like to paint themselves as their constituents' counsellor and friend; but in fact a multi-member system actually

*encourages more constituents to
consult their MP.'*

3.34 Finally, some contributors were
worried that first-past-the-post helped
extremist parties:

*'English local government elections
under the Simple Majority system have
returned British National Party
councillors, so first-past-the-post is no
antidote to that kind of party. Worse
still, members of ethnic minorities in
wards with B.N.P. councillors are
expected to look to those councillors
for 'representation'. At least under a
proportional system they would have a
choice of a different councillor.'*

Conclusion

3.35 This chapter has presented and
reviewed the current system of first-
past-the-post. It has shown how first-
past-the-post came about and has
charted some of the milestones in
attempting to reform the system. The
chapter has also presented a short
summary of the arguments for and
against first-past-the-post.

3.36 First-past-the-post contains both
advantages and disadvantages. It is
simple. It promotes single party and
often stable government. It generally
punishes extremists. It tends to produce
two competing political blocs, one in
government and the other aspiring to
replace it at the next election. This
means that voters are easily able to
'throw the rascals out' in that when a
government is perceived to fail they
can turn to the rival bloc. In short,
first-past-the post provides, what might
be called 'removal-van democracy'.

3.37 On the other hand, first-past-the-post
tends to cause smaller parties, and

sometimes large opposition parties, to
be severely underrepresented. First-
past-the-post parliaments may be good
at supplying and sustaining single-party
government; but they are often poor at
reflecting fairly the full range of public
attitudes.

3.38 There is no neutral position on first-
past-the-post versus PR. Judgements on
what is the best voting system depend
crucially on judgements about the main
purpose of the election and assembly
or parliament in question. For this very
reason, it is perfectly rational for an
individual, party or nation to opt for
different systems for different types of
election.

3.39 When surveyed, members of the public
tend not to have definite views about
the problems of first-past-the-post.
Most are not aware of them until
prompted. This is one of the reasons
that explain the longevity of first-past-
the-post in Britain. Members of the
public are comfortable with the status
quo and do not view a change in the
electoral system as making much of an
impact on their lives.

Chapter 4:
Criteria for judging Britain's experience

Issues in this chapter

- General criteria
- Criteria used by others
- Our criteria

4.1 As we have already seen over the debate about the current system for electing MPs to the House of Commons, judgements about electoral systems raise a variety of connected issues.

- Some issues concern the **purposes** of different elections: systems that are appropriate for one type of election may be less appropriate for others.
- Some issues concern the **values** to be applied to make judgements: for example, how should we weigh the competing claims of fairness and a decisive outcome?
- Some issues concern the nature, quality and relevance of **empirical** information: what can we learn from the experiences of different systems, used at different times and at different places – and how far can we apply these lessons to Britain in years to come?

4.2 To seek a perfect system that will achieve all legitimate objectives at all times and in all circumstances is to chase a rainbow. In reality, balances have to be struck among a variety of criteria. In this chapter we identify the issues that emerge from Chapter 3, look at the criteria applied by other recent inquiries into electoral reform, and outline the way we have approached our task in this Commission.

4.3 Issues:

1   **Fairness to parties.** How important is it to ensure that parties are represented broadly in proportion to their size? Is it as important to be 'fair' to a party with 5% support as to one with 15% or 25% support? Does it matter if the party that attracts the most votes sometimes fails to win the most seats? How important is it to achieve 'fairness' – however that is defined – not only overall but within regions (bearing in mind the fate of Labour in southern England in the 1980s, and of the Conservatives in Wales and Scotland since 1997).

2   **Stable and effective government.** With the exception of some mayoral elections, British executives are not elected directly but emerge from the council, assembly or parliament. Elections thus serve a dual role. Their direct function is to choose representatives, but their indirect – and, in the eyes of many voters, equally

or more important – function is to choose an executive to run the locality, region or nation. How important is it to bear this indirect function in mind when choosing an electoral system – and what empirical evidence is available to help us judge the impact of different systems on this task? Is it more important to have a clear-cut result of each election, in terms of choice of government, or to have an executive comprising a party or parties that command the support of a majority of those who vote? How vital is it to have an election system that makes it easy for voters to 'throw the rascals out' – or is it better to have a system that produces more stability and fewer changes of administration?

3 **Fairness to social groups.** Does it matter if some groups – defined, for example, by gender or ethnicity – are significantly under-represented among the elected representatives? If it does matter, to what extent can – and should – redress be sought through the electoral system, rather than by other means (such as the ways parties choose their candidates)?

4 **Fairness to localities.** In majoritarian systems such as FPTP and AV, voters choose representatives for single-member constituencies (House of Commons) or small multi-member wards (most local councils). In more proportional systems, such as AMS, STV, or list PR, some or all representatives are chosen to represent larger geographical units. How should we weigh the case for representation to be based on the smallest practicable localities, against the case for giving voters a range of representatives from different parties for their area?

5 **Voter choice.** Different systems provide different opportunities for voters to express preferences among individual candidates. Multi-member systems, in which a party may have more than one representative for an area, provide a particular opportunity for voters to choose not only among parties but among different candidates within parties. This facility raises issues to do with a) its merits – what is the appropriate balance between party-decision and voter-choice?, and b) its saliency – how important is it for voters to have this choice?

6 **Voter participation.** How important is it to have an electoral system that (a) is easy for voters to understand and (b) maximises the chance of a high turnout? In practice, what is the evidence that voters find different systems more difficult to understand than others, and/or of any correlation between choice of system and turnout?

7 **Impact on political parties.** Different electoral systems are apt to affect political parties in different ways, including a) the way they campaign, b) the relationship between local party groups and regional/national party organisation, c) the incentives on parties to maintain or modify their ideological outlook, d) the incentives on parties to co-operate with other parties, e) entry barriers to new political parties, f) the ability of 'extreme' parties to gain representation. How far should the choice of election systems be influenced by such factors – and, if so, in what direction(s)?

Criteria used by others

4.4 Two recent major inquiries into electoral reform have been instigated by Governments elected by FPTP – in Britain, the Independent (Jenkins)

Commission on the Voting System established by the incoming Labour government in 1997, and in New Zealand, the Royal Commission on the Electoral System set up in 1985.

4.5 The Jenkins Commission was asked to take account of four requirements in the terms of reference decided by the Government. These were to recommend a system, or combination of systems that would a) achieve broad proportionality, b) fulfil the need for stable government, c) extend voter choice and d) maintain a link between MPs and geographical constituencies.

4.6 The Jenkins Commission commented that these requirements were not entirely compatible; they were drawn in such a way as to allow for some compromise. For example, the requirement referred to 'broad' rather than strict proportionality, and to maintaining 'a' link, rather than 'the' link between MPs and constituencies.

4.7 In its report, the Commission also referred to the desirability of having a system that would a) reduce the under-representation of women and minority groups, b) lead to more effective scrutiny of the executive by the legislature and c) reduce the power of the party machines and encourage MPs to act more independently.

4.8 The criteria employed by the New Zealand Royal Commission are set out in the box opposite.

Our criteria

4.9 Unlike the Jenkins Commission and New Zealand's Royal Commission, our Commission was not set up to propose an alternative to the existing system of first-past-the-post. Instead, we have set out to learn the lessons of a series of specific reforms that have been undertaken in different parts of Britain since 1997. Consequently, we had two paths to choose between. We could decide on **prescriptive** criteria, starting with a list of specific objectives and judging the lesson of Britain's recent experiences of different electoral systems against these objectives; or we could choose what might be termed **analytical** criteria – that is, draw together the evidence of those experiences under various headings without imposing prior judgements about what is 'good' and what is 'bad'.

4.10 We have adopted the second course. This is not because members of the Commission lack strong views. Rather it is because we believe it is more important to lay out the evidence as fully and objectively as possible than to align ourselves with a particular camp or campaign. We have chosen ten analytical criteria. These form the body of our report, and the headings for the next ten chapters. They are as follows:

1 **Fairness and Proportionality (Chapter 5)**
We review the question of what it means for an electoral system to be thought fair. We ask how much the concept of proportionality actually matters and discuss the components that affect proportionality such as thresholds and electoral formula. We also look at how different electoral systems affect representation, and whether different systems have a greater or lesser effect in excluding voters from the political process.

New Zealand's Royal Commission on the Electoral System

In 1985, the New Zealand Labour government established an independent Royal Commission into the electoral system. The Commission had 5 non- partisan members, and was chaired by a High Court Judge.

The Royal Commission tested FPTP and other voting systems against a number of criteria. The main ones were

1 Fairness between political parties.

When they vote at elections, voters are primarily choosing between alternative party Governments. In the interests of fairness and equality, the number of seats gained by a political party should be proportional to the number of voters who support that party.

2 Effective representation of minority and special interest groups.

Membership of the House should not only be proportional to the level of party support, but should also reflect other significant characteristics of the electorate, such as gender, ethnicity, socio-economic class, locality and age. This would help to ensure that parties, candidates and MPs are responsive to significant groups and interests.

3 Effective representation of constituents.

The voting system should encourage close links and accountability between individual MPs and their constituents.

4 Effective voter participation.

If individual citizens are to play a full and active part in the electoral process, the voting system should provide them with mechanisms and procedures which they can readily understand. At the same time, the power to make and unmake governments should be in the hands of the people at an election and the votes of all electors should be of equal weight in influencing election results.

5 Effective government.

Governments should have the ability to act decisively when that is appropriate and there should be reasonable continuity and stability both within and between Governments.

6 Effective parties

The voting system should recognise and facilitate the essential role political parties play in modern representative democracies, in formulating and articulating policies and providing representatives for the people.

7 Legitimacy.

Members of the community should be able to endorse the voting system and its procedures as fair and reasonable and to accept its decisions, even when they themselves prefer other alternatives.

2 **Voter Choice and Understanding (Chapter 6)**

In this chapter we look at the impact that new electoral systems in the UK have had on voter choice. We look at the extent to which the public find the new systems intelligible. We examine the effect of ballot paper design on voting behaviour as well the impact of public information campaigns in helping to increase understanding of the system. Some systems such as STV and SV have improved choice by allowing voters to express preferences. Other systems such as AMS and List-PR using closed lists leave the choice of elected candidates firmly in the hands of political parties. We examine whether this should be changed by moving to a system of more open lists.

3 **Voter Attitudes (Chapter 7)**

We also look at public support and understanding for different types of system as gleamed from specially commissioned surveys.

4 **Campaigning and Party Competition (Chapter 8)**

We look at the effect the new electoral systems have had on party competition and whether they have resulted in more or fewer parties taking part in the political process. We also determine whether the new systems have affected campaign styles and whether the additional member system (AMS) in Scotland and Wales has resulted in different campaign styles for constituency and list MSPs and AMs respectively.

5 **Party Candidate Selection (Chapter 9)**

We look at the effect new electoral systems have had on party candidate selection. We investigate whether there has been a new balance of candidates in terms of gender, race, ability and

experience. We also look at whether the new systems have created an advantage for incumbents.

6 **Mobilisation (Chapter 10)**

We examine whether the new electoral systems have had any impact on citizen participation in elections. We question whether voters feel more inclined to turn out under PR than FPTP, and if not why not?

7 **Representation (Chapter 11)**

We examine how elected representatives behave under the new systems. It looks at the attitudes of the public to single member versus multi member representation. We also look at the difference between constituency and list representatives in Scotland and Wales, the ratio between the two and the work undertaken by the two. We examine the extent to which AMs, MSPs and MEPs perform constituency work, their relationship with MPs and whether the public differentiates between them.

8 **Performance in Government (Chapter 12)**

We look at the effect of the new systems on government. We discuss the accountability of the ruling administrations in Scotland and Wales and the formation and stability of their coalitions. We ask whether coalition government in Scotland is weak government; and whether the new electoral systems have resulted in different styles of governing, legislating and different public policies than would have occurred under FPTP. Finally, we examine the attitudes of politicians and the public towards coalition government.

In the final part of the report we then apply this analysis of how the new voting systems have worked in practice to levels of government, which have

not yet experienced one of the new voting systems. We start with local government, and regional government in England, before looking at the implications of the new voting systems for elections at Westminster.

9   **Implications for Regional Government and Local Government (Chapter 13)**
     We look at the implications of the new electoral systems for Regional Assemblies in England, local government in Scotland and Wales and local government in England.

10   **Relevance for Westminster and Conclusions (Chapter 14)**
     The final chapter reviews the evidence presented in the report and provides conclusions. It also looks at the relevance that electoral system change has had for Westminster.

Chapter 5:
Fairness

Issues in this chapter

- How to judge if an electoral system is 'fair'
- The principle of proportionality
- How different systems affect proportionality
- Public attitudes to proportionality

Introduction

5.1 The notion of 'fairness' means different things to different people. The most familiar electoral definition is the difference between the shares of votes won and shares of seats by each party. Any electoral system must ensure that the reward each party is allocated (share of seats) matches broadly the preferences (share of votes) it attracts.

5.2 We explore how far this is the case under different electoral rules. But whether proportionality matters is entirely dependent on one's view of the function of elections, parliament and government. If one takes the view that elections should produce a parliament that is a mirror of society then the proportionality of the system matters a great deal. On the other hand if one takes the view that an electoral system should do its best to produce a stable, single party government then proportionality is not as important.

Votes and seats

5.3 We begin with the simplest, and most intuitive, measure of fairness. Comparing the share of seats won by each party with their share of the vote. Clearly, it may seem unfair for one party to win, say, 60% of seats having received the endorsement of just 40% of voters. So how far do different electoral systems go to matching electoral support with electoral rewards? The figure we use to capture this is 'Deviation from Proportionality' (DV), a simple measure that takes the variations in vote and seat share for each party and then aggregates it to give a single figure for the election as a whole. The DV scores for the 1997 and 2001 Westminster elections, along with those for the elections held under the new voting systems in the UK, are shown in Table 5.1.

5.4 The DV scores for the Westminster contest in 2001 and the European Parliament contest in 1999 – both held under first-past-the-post arrangements – are the highest, at 21% and 30% respectively. That is to say, these contests show the most marked distortion of voters' choices in the allocation of seats. When it comes to the proportional contests, the DV

Table 5.1   Disproportionality under different electoral systems

	Year of contest	Deviation from proportionality
House of Commons (FPTP)	1997	21%
	2001	22%
European Parliament (GB) (FPTP)	1994	30%
(List PR)	1999	14%
Scottish Parliament (AMS)	1999	11%
	2003	12%
National Assembly for Wales (AMS)	1999	11%
	2003	14%
Greater London Assembly (AMS)	2000	15%
Northern Ireland Assembly (STV)	1999	6%
	2003	6%
Dáil (Irish Republic) (STV)	1997	13%
	2003	13%

DV involves calculating the difference between each party's percentage vote-share and seat-share; summing all deviations (ignoring minus signs); and halving the total

scores are much lower, ranging from 6% in Northern Ireland to 14% in the case of the European Parliament contest in 1999. Under PR arrangements, fewer distortions are made to voters' preferences when determining outcomes though the DV scores still show a variation. In the case of AMS, this variation is due to the number of seats that were available as top-ups to compensate for the disproportionalities introduced by the single member constituency ballots.[8]

5.5   Proportionality is determined by a number of factors. One of the most important is the *number of seats in a constituency* (known technically as 'district magnitude'). The relationship does not follow a linear pattern but roughly in PR systems where the numbers of parties are held constant, proportionality increases as the number of seats in a constituency goes up.

5.6   In systems such as AMS with both first-past-the-post seats and proportional 'top-up' seats, the higher the number of top up seats, the lower the disproportionality. With a high number of such seats, even parties that attract minor public support (less than 5%, say) may still gain representation. Scotland has a higher proportion of top-up seats than Wales and is therefore more proportional.

5.7   On this measure of fairness - the relationship between votes cast and seats won - the new electoral systems have performed considerably better than the first-past-the-post system used for Westminster contests.

Thresholds

5.8   One of the drawbacks of PR systems for established political parties is that they make it easier for small parties and independents to win seats. If there

are too many of these small parties or if some of them have extreme policies, thus it can destabilise the efficient working of parliament.

5.9 In order to minimise the number of small parties in a system and to discourage extremism, many countries impose thresholds. Thresholds are a minimum vote percentage, or minimum number of seats won, to qualify for representation in parliament.

5.10 The most well known example of a country using a threshold is Germany. There, a party must win either 5% of the vote or three constituency seats in order to be represented in parliament. In the UK, the Greater London Authority is the only body to impose a compulsory threshold of 5% on parties. This was imposed specifically to keep out extremist parties.

5.11 Even if a system does not impose a formal threshold, the number of seats in a region poses a de facto threshold of representation for all parties. This is because the lower the number of seats per region, the more votes a party needs to secure representation in parliament. AMS uses the multimember regions to compensate for the lack of proportionality in the FPTP single-member contests. Since Scotland has a more balanced ratio of regional to constituency seats (43:57) than Wales (33:67), its system is more proportional. The smallest percentages of the vote required for getting a top-up seat in the 2003 Wales/Scottish elections were 6.5% in Mid and West Wales and 4.6% in Mid Scotland and Fife. This is shown in table 5.2

(below), which compares Scotland and Wales with the rest of the UK. In short, AMS imposes a de-facto threshold.

Table 5.2 Smallest % for getting a (top-up) seat	
	%
Scotland 2003	4.6%
Scotland 1999	5.6%
Wales 2003	6.5%
Wales 1999	7.1%
EP 1999	7.1%
London 2000	5.0%

5.12 The specifics of the electoral system also have an impact on defining thresholds. The d'Hondt threshold (as used for list seats in Scotland, Wales, London and European Parliament elections) is always greater than the Modified Sainte Lague threshold (as used to assign list seats in New Zealand). The Droop quota (used to assign seats using STV in Northern Ireland) usually has a lower threshold than both d'Hondt and Modified Sainte Lague but this is dependent on the number of parties contesting the election. The larger the number of parties, the smaller the threshold. What this means is that larger parties have a somewhat easier time in Scotland, Wales, London and European elections due to the use of d'Hondt.

5.13 Israel and the Netherlands have the most proportional systems in any country because they have no threshold. With the whole nation as a single constituency it is possible for a party to secure representation with less than one percent of the total vote.

Table 5.3 Attitudes to fairness
'The new voting system is much fairer than the one usually used at elections'

	Scotland		Wales	
	1999	**2003**	**1999**	**2003**
Agree / strongly agree	54%	36%	39%	30%
Neither agree nor disagree	23%	32%	31%	31%
Disagree / disagree strongly	9%	9%	12%	12%
Don't know	11%	21%	15%	24%

Source: Scottish Parliamentary Election Study 1999; Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2003; Welsh Assembly Election Study 1999; Welsh Life and Times Survey 2003.

Public attitudes to fairness

5.14 Respondents to surveys in Scotland and Wales appear to believe the new voting systems there are fairer than the system used for Westminster elections. As shown in Table 5.3, more people believe the devolved electoral systems are fairer than believe they are more unfair. However, the initial experience of the new system, in Scotland in particular, has been to reduce support for the idea that the system is fairer.[9]

5.15 One question that arises from this is whether the public wants its electoral system to maximise fairness (which is, after all, only one factor among many). When posed with a forced choice between whether elections should produce a fair outcome or yield a clear winner, opinion is divided virtually equally among Scots, and favoured the clear winner option in Wales. Moreover, the relative popularity of the two options has not changed between the two devolved elections. Thus, while large sections of the population want to see an electoral system yielding a fair result, this quality is not prioritised by other sections of the population.

Table 5.4 Attitudes to fairness as one quality among others
'Which of these statements comes closest to your views?'

	Scotland		Wales	
	1999	**2003**	**1999**	**2003**
It is more important that elections should produce a clear winner so that it is voters who decide who forms the government	41%	40%	51%	49%
It is more important that elections should produce a fair result even if this means it is not clear who should form the government	43%	41%	36%	35%
Majority for fairness	+2%	+1%	-15%	-14%

Source: Scottish Parliamentary Election Study 1999; Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2003; Welsh Assembly Election Study 1999; Welsh Life and Times Survey 2003

Conclusion

5.16 This chapter has reviewed some of the most common ways of classifying whether an electoral system is 'fair.' One way in which fairness is determined is by looking at the proportionality of the system. Proportionality is dependent on many factors such as constituency size, number of parties in the system and the electoral formula. Due to this, some systems award political parties a closer approximation of seats to votes than others.

5.17 Another lesson from this chapter is that the mixed system of PR and first-past-the-post as used in Scotland, Wales and London does not provide a panacea to the problems of disproportionality resulting from first-past-the-post. This is because it is the list vote not the constituency vote which determines the overall allocation of seat and if there is only a relatively small number of list seats, as there are in Wales, proportionality will be significantly less.

5.18 For those that advocate parliament being a mirror of the nation, the choice is between AMS with a large number of top-up seats (50:50, as in Germany), or large district PR. This would increase the chances of minority parties being elected (although locally concentrated minorities can often do better under a single-member-plurality system). Large district PR is generally the most proportional system when distributing seats among parties.

Chapter 6:
Electoral system design and voter choice

Issues in this chapter

- The degree of choice offered to voters
- The potential for voter confusion
- The scope for party control

Introduction

6.1   In this chapter we consider the implications of the new electoral systems for the range of choice offered to the voter. In particular, we examine how the new electoral systems in use across the UK vary on this dimension; what this means for the role of voters in the electoral process; and how voters have reacted to these new systems.

6.2   In the previous chapter, we discussed the way in which the electoral system design affects the proportionality of the election result – in which the 'district magnitude' and 'electoral formula' features of electoral system predominate. In this chapter our principal focus is on 'ballot structure', on how the shape and design of a ballot paper can affect the choice given to voters in elections.

6.3   The hallmark of representative democracy is that voters choose their representatives. Electoral systems vary in terms of both the nature and the *degree* of choice they give to voters,

and the new UK electoral systems can be ranged along both dimensions.

6.4   In the first instance, the *nature* of voter choice relates to whom or what the vote is about. Voters may be asked to decide between individual candidates, as happens under the STV system for electing the members of the Northern Ireland Assembly. Alternatively they may be required to choose between separate party lists, the system used since 1999 for electing British members of the European Parliament (MEPs).

6.5   The *degree* of voter choice refers to the amount of choice voters are given. Clearly, the degree of choice is always going to be a function of how many parties and candidates actually put up for election: therefore under more proportional electoral systems (see chapter 5) we might expect voter choice to rise. But separate from this – and the focus of this chapter – is the extent to which the degree of choice is influenced by the design of the ballot paper. On one extreme are ballot papers which are 'single-choice', allowing voters a simple 'categorical' choice (either/or) between candidates (as in first-past-the-post) or parties (closed list). The STV system used for electing the Northern Ireland Assembly

Figure 6.1: Locating the new UK electoral systems in terms of voter choice

I. NATURE OF CHOICE

Party-based

II. DEGREE OF CHOICE

Single-choice

Multi-choice

Closed list

AMS

SV

FPTP

STV

Candidate-based
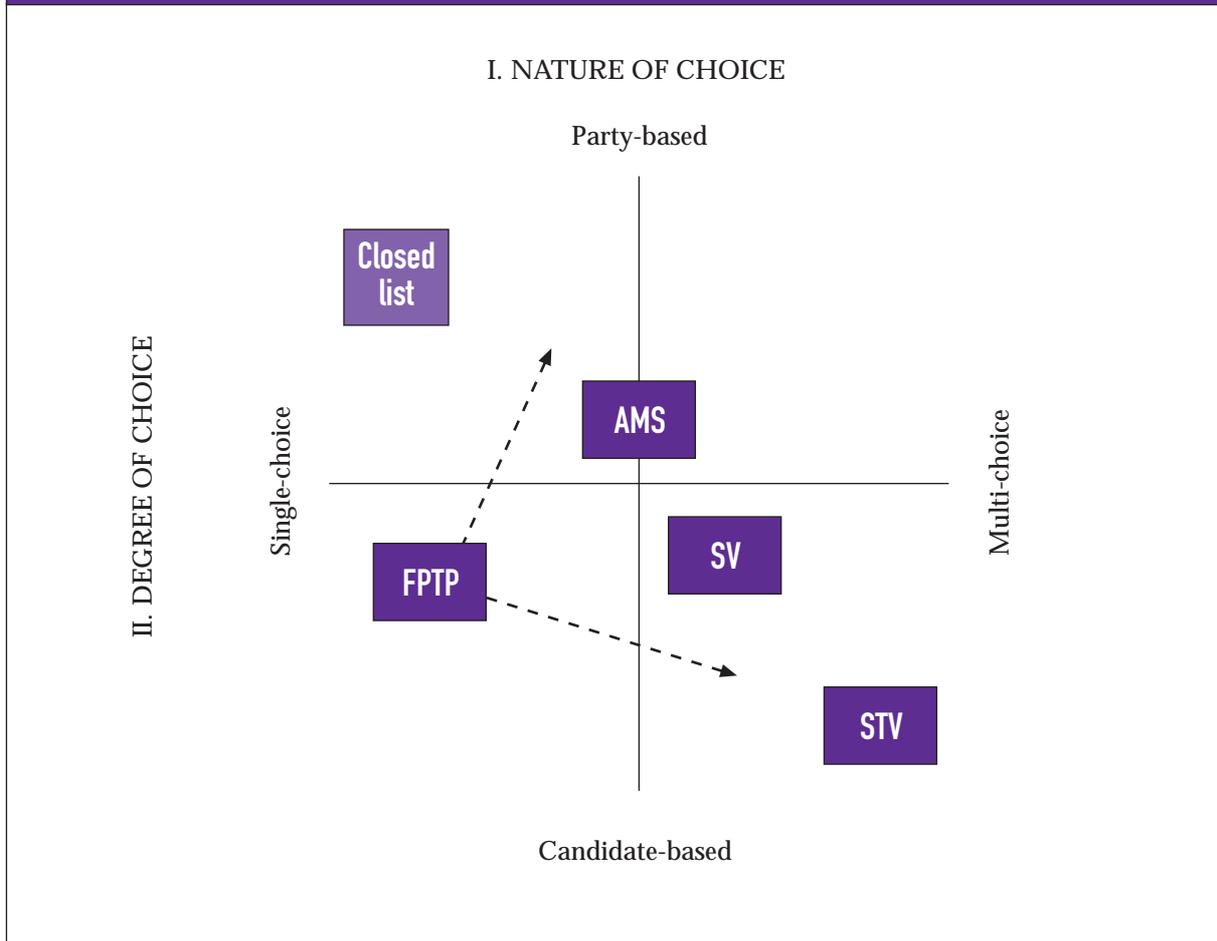
is on the other extreme, in which voters have multiple choices; here voters are able to rank-order as many candidates as they like from as many parties as they like.

6.6 Figure 6.1 locates the new electoral systems on these two dimensions of 'degree of choice' and 'nature of choice'.[10] We have already explained where we expect the closed list (European Parliament) and STV (Northern Ireland Assembly) systems to lie on the two dimensions. The supplementary vote (SV) system used for electing the London mayor provides voters with a slightly greater degree of choice, in the sense that they are able

to rank-order two candidates. The additional member system (AMS) used for elections to the Scottish Parliament and Welsh and London assemblies represent a shift in the direction of a more party-based electoral system, in the sense that the list element (like for European Parliament elections) is 'single-choice', so that the voters can not affect the rank-order of the lists of candidates selected by the parties. These AMS systems also reflect a movement in a multi-choice direction, due to the fact that voters are given two separate votes: one for a constituency candidate and one for a party list.

6.7　The dotted arrows in Figure 6.1 provide a summary of the two main movements in ballot structure design in the UK. The principal movement has been along the 'degree of choice' dimension (II): i.e. most of the new systems have amounted to giving voters greater choice in elections. A secondary movement – for the most part associated with the new system for electing MEPs – has occurred along the 'nature of choice' dimension (I), in which the political party selectorates have been granted greater say over the electoral fate of candidates. These two main trends suggest a range of implications, three of which we explore in this chapter:

1.　Voter choice: How do voters make use of the greater degree of choice?
2.　Voter confusion: Have the new systems – especially those allowing voters greater choice – led to increased voter confusion?
3.　Party control: How do voters feel about the shift towards more party-based systems?

Voter choice

6.8　As electoral systems move along dimension II from single to multi-choice systems, the scope for voter choice increases (as, indeed, does the scope for voter confusion). In the case of AMS systems, voters are able to 'split the ticket', for instance giving a constituency vote to a candidate from one of the larger parties, while at the same time voting for the list of one of the smaller parties.[11] In the SV system voters are able to, say, give a fillip to the Green candidate for mayor before expressing their second preference for one of the larger party candidates,

thereby not wasting their vote. In the STV system, the voters are able to deploy their preferences, for instance, to favour a particular coalition constellation, or perhaps to return candidates promoting a particular vision of politics (such as, in the Northern Ireland context, those parties supporting the Good Friday Agreement).

6.9　We can analyse the extent to which voters make use of the greater choices available to them under some of these new systems by reference to trends in three systems, namely the extent of split ticket voting under AMS and the use of preference votes under SV and STV. We deal with each in turn.

6.10　The proportions of voters splitting their tickets under AMS can be measured by post election survey work. Table 6.1 shows the extent to which it occurs under AMS in Scotland and Wales and compares the rate with that in Germany and New Zealand. In 1999 it was estimated that 20% of Scottish voters split their ticket while 23% of Welsh voters did so. In 2003, the number of people splitting their ticket rose to 23% in Scotland but fell to 17% in Wales.

Table 6.1. Split–Ticket Voting in Scotland, Wales, Germany and New Zealand

	% Ticket Splitters
Scotland 99	20%
Scotland 03	28%
Wales 99	23%
Wales 03	17%
London 00	21%
Germany 98	23%
Germany 02	20%
New Zealand 99	35%
New Zealand 02	37%

Source: Scottish Parliamentary Election Study 1999; Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2003; Welsh Assembly Election Study 1999; Welsh Life and Times Survey 2003, London Mayoral Election Study 2000.; Gschwend et al. 2003.

6.11   Table 6.2 indicates that voters in Scotland and Wales are indeed somewhat less likely to vote for the party they said was their first choice party on the 'second' (list) vote than they did on the 'first' (constituency) vote. But the difference is not large, and is insufficient to suggest widespread confusion. The one possible exception to this statement might be thought to be in Scotland in 2003 when as many as 25% failed to vote for their first preference party on the second vote. However, this figure was very much the product of the behaviour of those who voted for the Greens and the Scottish Socialist Party, 22% and 44% of whose list vote supporters respectively were not voting for their first preference party. Such a concentration of this sort of behaviour suggests that it was a deliberate choice on the part of voters rather than confusion.

6.12 Indeed if vote splitting were the product of confusion we might anticipate that its incidence would be higher amongst those who said that the relationship between votes and seats under AMS was difficult to understand than it was amongst those who did not think it was difficult. But of this there is no consistent evidence. While those in the former group in Scotland were three points more likely to split their votes in 1999, in 2003 they were one point less likely to do so. Meanwhile, in Wales in 2003 they were three points less likely to do so.

Table 6.2 Percentage voting for first-choice party

	Constituency Vote	List Vote
Scotland 99	88%	83%
Scotland 03	84%	75%
Wales 99	88%	81%
Wales 03	89%	84%

Source: Scottish Parliamentary Election Study 1999; Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2003; Welsh Assembly Election Study 1999; Welsh Life and Times Survey 2003

6.13   At the same there is little evidence that the rise in ticket splitting in Scotland in 2003 was the result of a greater appreciation by voters of the strategic constraints that the system can impose. If this were the case we would expect the rise in ticket splitting to have been most marked amongst those who cast their constituency vote for a Labour candidate as in most regions of Scotland Labour had little or no prospect of winning any list seats. This proves not to be the case. While there was a four point increase between 1999 and 2003 in the proportion of those who voted Labour on the constituency vote failing to do so on

the list vote, the equivalent figure for Liberal Democrat and SNP supporters was no less than 14 and 10 points respectively.

6.14 We tried to explore this further by examining the party affiliation of ticket splitters. Logically, Labour voters in Scotland and Wales should be most likely to split their ticket since their party seemed assured of winning most of a region's constituency seats and therefore would not be placed in a position to win many list seats. Just 10% of respondents agreed that there was little point in giving Labour both votes; while 63% of Labour supporters said that they thought it better to vote for the party on both ballots. Party loyalty was clearly stronger, even when a second vote for Labour was a superfluous vote.

The Supplementary Vote

6.15 The decision to use the Supplementary Vote (SV) to elect the London Mayor was partly based on the (mistaken) assumption that people would express their primary choice on their first preference and with their second preference focus on which of the likely top two candidates they prefer to win. The system was intended to work in a situation dominated by large Labour and Conservative vote blocs, with the Liberal Democrats running a long way behind in third place. Its virtue is its simplicity in that voters just have to place an 'X' beside their two favourite candidates.

6.16 However, in the event, both Labour and the Conservatives mishandled their selection process. Labour rejected the most popular candidate, the left-wing

dissident Ken Livingstone and selected Frank Dobson, a government loyalist. The Conservatives first endorsed the millionaire Jeffrey Archer only to sack him later over corruption allegations. The party instead selected the ex-MP Steve Norris. In the end, Ken Livingstone stood and won as an independent candidate with Norris in second place. Dobson came third and the Liberal Democrat candidate fourth. With 11 candidates standing, there was a considerable dispersion in the vote. Just 6.6% of all first round votes went to candidates from small parties though they won 24% of the second round votes.

6.17 The greatest proportion of Livingstone supporters (29%) gave their second preference vote to Susan Kramer, the Liberal Democrat candidate, while the Conservative candidate, Steve Norris received a second vote from only one in ten voters. Seventeen percent of first-round voters expressed no second choice, though this ratio was slightly higher for voters backing the top two candidates and less for voters backing eliminated candidates. Of the nearly 1.6 million total eligible preferences, 1.3 million were cast for the top two candidates.

6.18 There were important variations amongst different candidates' supporters in the extent to which they recorded second preferences. There was also 'repeat voting' in that some voters opted for the same candidate in the second round as they backed with their first choice.[13] Under the rules, repeat voting did not invalidate the ballot; the choice is simply not counted again at the second stage. Frank Dobson, who refused to give any guidance to his

supporters on how to vote, suffered from a third of his supporters failing to make use of their second preference at all and 12% repeating their vote. This was far more than the supporters of other candidates who all took steps to campaign for second preferences from different parties.

6.19 In an eleven candidate race, Livingstone had a clear lead across first preferences and combined first and second preferences. He won a plurality, (49.3%) of the eligible votes whereas under FPTP he would have attained just 39%. He also won majority backing from all groupings in the electorate except Conservative loyalists and was considered the best candidate on all the main policy issues.

6.20 A study of the election argues that, if the major parties are persuaded to signal how their supporters should cast their second preferences, and if voters are more clearly informed that repeat second preferences are wasted votes, then SV should be able to reflect voters' preferences even more successfully.[14]

The Alternative Vote

6.21 The Alternative Vote is included here because it was recommended by the Jenkins Commission (for constituency seats), and it has been proposed for the House of Commons by senior figures in the Labour Party (Peter Mandelson and Peter Hain). It is more complicated than the supplementary vote in that voters have to assign their preferences 1,2, 3 etc. as opposed to putting X's beside two candidates. Each constituency is still represented by a single MP, but it increases voter choice

in the sense that voters are able to express preferences. These preferences would ensure that each MP commanded the acquiescence of a majority within his constituency. There would be no more cases, as there are under first-past-the-post of MPs getting elected on as little as 30% of the vote.

6.22 However, it must not be forgotten that the alternative vote is a majoritarian system and is therefore associated with the same sort of disproportionalities and paradoxes as first-past-the-post. Depending on one's point of view, this can be seen as being a good thing. As the Jenkins Report notes, 'there is not the slightest reason to think that AV would reduce the stability of government; it might indeed lead to larger parliamentary majorities.'[15]

6.23 Yet AV is, in many cases, even less proportional, as measured by first preference votes, than first-past-the-post. Simulations presented in Appendix A show that AV would have significantly increased the size of Labour's majority in 1997 and 2001. Even in more 'normal' elections, AV would significantly distort the result. For instance, the Jenkins Report notes that in 1992 the Liberal Democrats would have got only 31 (4.8%) of the seats for 19% of the vote. In Australia, smaller parties such as the Democratic Labour Party and the Democrats have never managed to win a seat under AV though in some cases they have more votes than the UK Liberal Democrats.[15] Furthermore, AV would perpetuate the geographical imbalances of first-past-the-post. Large sections of the country would remain electoral deserts for parties and most existing safe seats would remain that way.

The Single Transferable Vote

6.24 One of the reasons that STV was introduced for elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly is that voters can, in principle, cast a preference for members of different parties. In contrast to list-PR systems or FPTP whose ballots help reinforce party divides, candidates under STV can try to make cross-cleavage appeals and thereby bridge religious or racial boundaries. By encouraging parties to form coalitions before as well as after the elections, STV rewards cooperative electoral strategies. In order for parties to attract a greater number of lower preferences, they need to appeal to voters identified with other parties. Hence STV can exert a moderating influence.[17]

6.25 For instance, a survey of voters after the 1998 Northern Ireland Assembly election showed that STV prevented the narrow 'No' first preference majority within the Unionist bloc of voters from being converted into a narrow 'No' majority among the Unionist legislative bloc.[18] On the Nationalist side, the SDLP informally recommended that voters should transfer their lower order preferences to pro-Agreement parties, despite there being no formal pre-election agreement between party elites.

6.26 Yet STV elections held in Northern Ireland reveal sophisticated vote management by parties as well as a high level of communal voting.[19] Sydney Elliot of Queen's University, Belfast, has examined transfers in Northern Irish elections since 1982. He found that the majority of transfers go either to candidates from the same

party or to those from either a unionist or nationalist party block. In the district council elections in 1997, a year before the first Assembly elections, the main parties achieved around 80% of transfers to their continuing candidates. For instance, 89% of Sinn Féin transfers went to continuing candidates followed by the SDLP with 85%, the Alliance with 78%, the UUP with 77% and the DUP with 76%.

6.27 The District Council elections of 2001 were used by the main parties as a trial run for the 2003 Assembly elections. Party retention of votes was again high and the level of communal voting was evident in the battle between UUP and DUP candidates and SDLP and Sinn Fein candidates. The 2003 Assembly election showed little change in the pattern of transfers. The SDLP transferred more to Sinn Fein than the UUP. Furthermore, 38% of DUP terminal transfers went to the UUP.

6.28 In summary, the general pattern in Northern Ireland is that the level of cross community transfers is low, though there were some signs of more transfers between the UUP and the SDLP in 2003. Although STV has the potential to maximise communal choice, Northern Irish parties have been able to use the system to by pass dependence on their rival communities.

6.29 Finally, to what extent do voters in the Republic of Ireland (which has used STV since 1922) use their preferences? The answer is quite a bit. The 2002 Irish election study revealed that just 6% cast a minimal ballot, casting just a single preference.[20] Most voters cast three to four preferences, depending on the amount of candidates standing in

their constituency. Just under 8% of voters expressed a preference for all available candidates, a practice more common when there were fewer candidates standing. Furthermore, most Irish voters did not confine themselves to voting for a single party. The study shows that 81% voted for at least two parties and 49% for at least three. In all, we can conclude that most Irish voters take care to make full use of the system.

Voter confusion

6.30 As electoral systems become more open they inevitably also become more complex, and critics often round on such systems for causing greater confusion. Survey work on samples of British voters suggest, however, that voters are capable of adapting quite successfully to new electoral systems. During the debate over the design of the new electoral system for electing British MEPs in 1998, Patrick Dunleavy and his colleagues carried out a survey in which people were shown mock ballot papers distinguishing between closed and open list systems.[21] They found that the bulk of the respondents were able to complete the various ballot papers without needing additional explanation. When asked, after having completed the ballot papers, which system they preferred, a narrow majority (51%) preferred the more complex open list system.

6.31 The Commission, in association with the National Centre for Social Research, surveyed Scottish and Welsh voters after the 2003 elections. One objective was to investigate whether voters found the ballot papers difficult

to complete and whether they understood how votes were translated into seats. The results can be compared with identical questions asked after the 1999 elections.

6.32 Respondents were asked whether or not they found the ballot difficult to fill in. Most people had no problem with this, just 11% of both Scottish and Welsh voters found it very or fairly difficult. Nor was there a difference between answers given in 1999 and those given in 2003. As the report on the 1999 elections concluded: 'Most voters appeared to be reasonably confident and knowledgeable about filling in the ballot papers. But the [voter education] campaigns do not appear to have been successful in ensuring that voters were fully aware of the possible consequences of their vote.'[22]

6.33 However, 21% of Londoners found their ballot difficult to understand, at least in the first elections, held in May 2000.[23] This may reflect one or both of two things: the reduced interest among Londoners in the establishment of the capital's new system of governance (reflected in the low turnouts both in the referendum establishing the system and in the May 2000 elections); and the fact that London voters were asked to perform three functions: elect a Mayor, elect a local assembly member, and choose a party list.

6.34 Focus group research also indicates that the design of ballot papers can affect people's understanding of electoral systems. In March 1999, the Constitution Unit organised a series of focus groups at which types of ballot paper were discussed.[24] Participants

said that they often found ballot papers confusing and would prefer them to be as simple as possible. Most agreed that a brief statement printed at the top of the ballot about the essential features of the electoral system would be useful.

6.35 The survey evidence of voter confusion is supported by the fact that the number of invalid votes is marginally higher at PR elections than Westminster elections. In Scotland in 1999, the total invalid vote was 0.39% as opposed to 0.29% in the 2001 Scottish Westminster elections. In 2003 the number of invalid votes in Scotland increased to 0.82%. In Wales in 2003, the total invalid vote was higher at 1.37% compared with 0.56% in the Westminster contest. However, there is no difference between the number of invalid list and constituency ballots in either Scotland or Wales. Furthermore, the change in the electoral system for the European elections also resulted in a higher incidence of invalid ballots. The 1994 elections held under first-past-the-post had 0.26% of ballots invalid while the 1999 elections held under PR-List had 0.31% invalid. In Northern Ireland, 1.5% of the votes were invalid in the 2003 Assembly election compared with 1.2% in the 2002 Republic of Ireland election.

Figure 6.2. Difficulty in Understanding Electoral Systems

Difficulty in understanding how seats are worked out (Scotland and Wales)
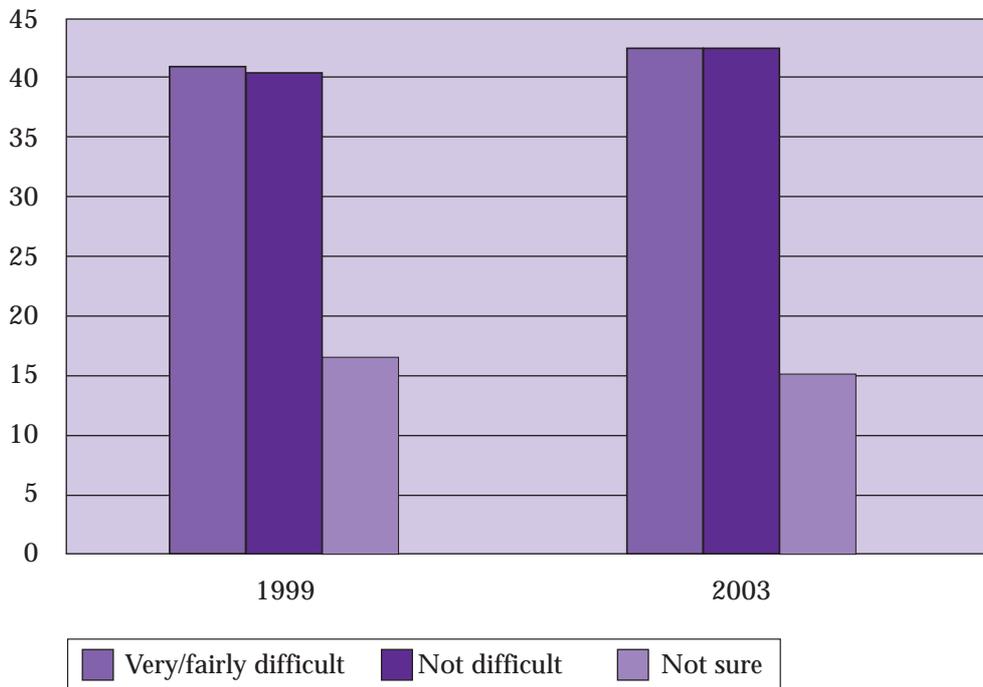
Legend: Very/fairly difficult ■ Not difficult ■ Not sure

Source: Scottish Parliamentary Election Study 1999; Welsh Assembly Election Study 1999; Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2003; Welsh Life and Times Survey 2003.

6.36 These figures are very small and we cannot be sure whether it was the ballot papers themselves that caused the increase in invalid votes or whether it was due to other random factors. Indeed it is possible that much of the increase in Scotland and Wales was the result of voters deliberately spoiling their ballots.

6.37 Our surveys also measured whether people found it difficult to understand how number of seats a party wins is worked out under AMS. Figure 6.2 above shows that under half of all respondents felt they understood the system, but that the same proportion did not understand it. There was no difference between Scottish and Welsh respondents, nor was there much of a difference between 1999 and 2003. There is also no evidence in 1999 that those who do not understand the votes/seats relationship were less likely to vote.

6.38 The survey gave people a 'knowledge quiz' about aspects of the electoral system. The results show, perhaps surprisingly, that knowledge actually declined slightly between 1999 and 2003, though only by 4 percentage points. In particular, respondents were far less sure of the fact that list seats were allocated to make the system more proportional. Why was this the case? One factor may be that the public information campaign was far less intense in 2003 as opposed to 1999. In fact it was barely perceptible and consisted simply of billboards erected by the Electoral Commission to encourage people to turn out.

6.39 Later in the survey, respondents were asked about the voting system in Scotland and Wales with a set of true or false statements. The results show a general lack knowledge about the system. Most respondents were aware that one was allowed to vote for the same party on the 1st and 2nd vote, yet just under half knew that list seats were allocated to produce a fair share overall. Only a third knew that if a party won fewer than 5% of the list vote, it was unlikely to win any regional seats.

6.40 In association with the Hansard Society, the Commission also organised an online consultation exercise in July 2003. It was moderated and participants were encouraged to give their views on various aspects of electoral system change. The subject of whether the new electoral systems could be easily understood provoked a great deal of comment (though it should be borne in mind that the participants in this exercise were self-selecting, and not a representative sample of the wider public). One person noted:

'The Additional Member system is still not well understood, and has not been properly explained by the media or election officials.'

6.41 Another commented:

'What people fail to understand is that it is the SECOND vote (for the regional party list) which makes the system proportional and hence determines the make-up or balance of power in the parliament. The first vote is much less important except in terms of personalities. I doubt whether this will ever be properly understood. I think this is a serious flaw, as there is

no guarantee that the election result is what the voters intended.'

6.42 A further individual expressed concern that politicians would try and take advantage of the complexity of electoral systems to manipulate voters:

'One thing that can be used to put people off PR is the suggestion by its opponents that, in the end, few people actually get what they vote for, and that the outcome of the election is stitched up in those infamous smoke-filled rooms. That's why it's essential that the system we finally adopt - and we will, ultimately - cannot have its legitimacy challenged as some sort of sophisticated attempt to cheat or trick the electorate.'

6.43 Yet another thought it ludicrous that the UK electorate would find it difficult to adapt to a new system:

'PR of any kind is of course more 'complicated' than first-past-the-post, but how relevant is this? The Republic of Ireland has long had STV without any difficulty at all, and indeed so has Northern Ireland for the election to the Assembly - and so has Australia for election to the Senate. Are we so much less intelligent than our Irish and Australian cousins that we are unable to write 1,2,3 on a ballot paper? Similar considerations go for AMS and pure list systems which are widely used throughout Europe.'

Party control

6.44 Movement along the 'nature of choice' dimension (I) in Figure 6.1, from candidate-based to party-based systems, suggests a greater degree of

control by political parties over the fate of candidates. We might expect a reaction by voters to this growing degree of party control over the electoral process.

6.45 UK PR elections use 'closed lists' whereby the party decides on the order of candidates to be elected. Political parties tend to like the idea of closed lists since it makes their internal management easier. Parties can use closed lists to maximise the chances of certain candidates being elected. For example, they can improve their proportion of female or ethnic minority representatives (see chapter 9 on candidate selection for more details).

6.46 The alternative is the 'open' list where voters can chose individual candidates anywhere on the ballot. Although open lists offer a greater choice to the voter, they often make very little difference to the ordering of candidates elected. Another variant is the 'ordered' list where voters have a choice of candidates but only within a single party and with an option to let the party decide which candidates are elected. In these cases most people tend to let the party decide and only a small proportion declare their preferences.[25] But ordered lists do provide a safety valve in giving voters the opportunity to re-order the party list. This can help strengthen the legitimacy of the system, even if the choice is illusory because most of the time too few voters avail themselves of it to affect the outcome.

6.47 We can compare the attitudes of Scottish and Welsh citizens to open and closed lists using survey work carried out by the National Centre for Social Research. Figure 6.3 (below) shows the

Figure 6.3. Public views of Open versus Closed Lists (Scotland and Wales)
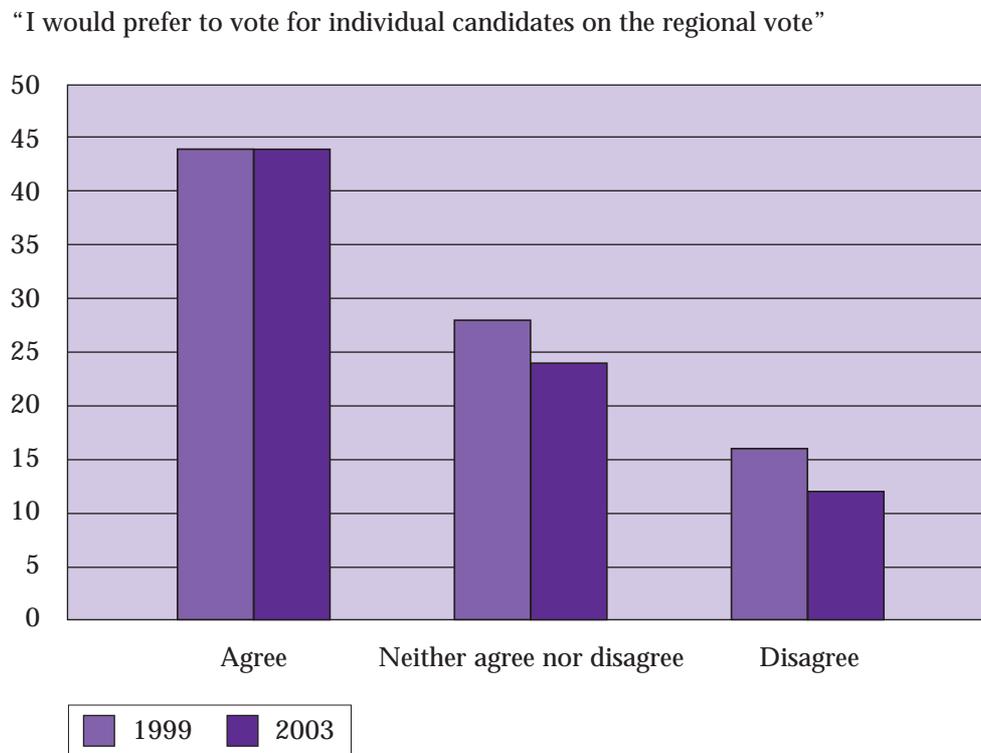
"I would prefer to vote for individual candidates on the regional vote"

Source: Scottish Parliamentary Election Study 1999; Welsh Assembly Election Study 1999; Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2003; Welsh Life and Times Survey 2003.

extent to which Scottish and Welsh voters would like to have been able to vote for an individual candidate on the regional AMS vote rather than for a party list. It indicates that more voters would prefer to have a choice on the regional ballot. Furthermore, there is no difference between answers given in 1999 and answers given in 2003.

6.48 We should not be surprised that the public opts for open rather than closed lists. In all surveys of this nature, people tend to accept an extra dimension of choice if offered. Yet when the same question is asked in a different way we find that the opinion of voters is entirely consistent. Figure

6.4 shows their views on whether parties, not voters should decide which of the candidates on their regional list get the seats their party has won. This indicates that most voters in Scotland and Wales think that parties should not be able to decide which candidates on the list are awarded seats.

6.49 Furthermore, as Figure 6.5 (below) reveals, the plurality of respondents felt that MSPs and AMs elected under the regional party list would be too much under the control of their party. This chart shows only small differences between the two periods: more people think that list MSPs/AMs are under too much party control in 2003 than in

Figure 6.4. Public Attitudes to Party Control of Lists (Scotland and Wales)

"Parties, not voters should decide which of the candidates on their regional list get the seats their party has won"
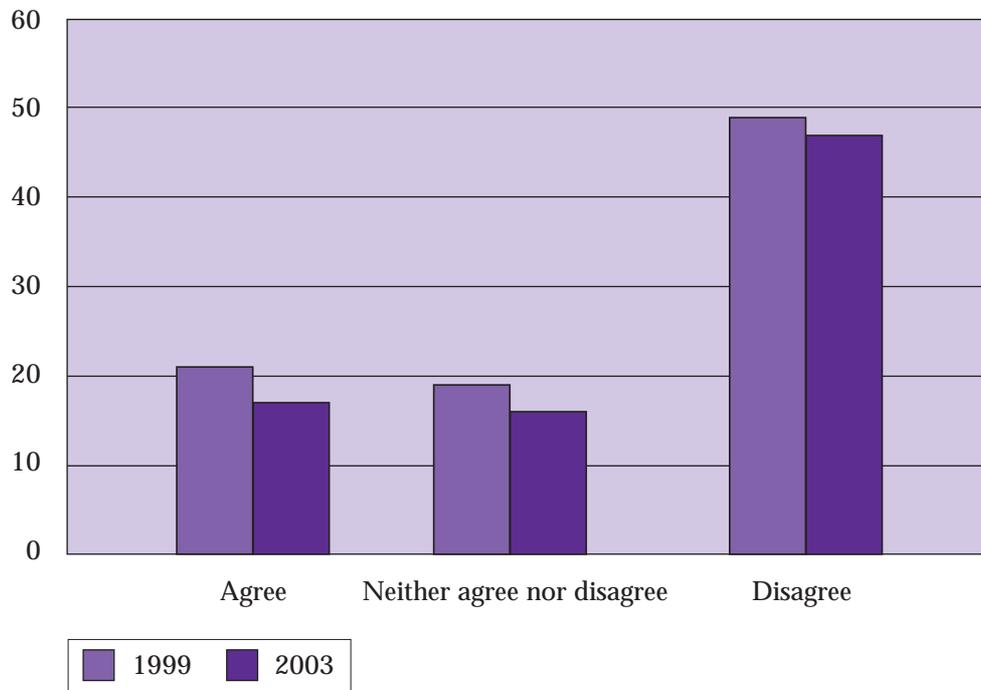
Source: Scottish Parliamentary Election Study 1999; Welsh Assembly Election Study 1999; Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2003; Welsh Life and Times Survey 2003.

1999. This is possibly a result of having witnessed the behaviour of list representatives in the first term of the Parliament/Assembly.

6.50 In all, list systems are popular with political parties, They give the greatest amount of control to party headquarters, particularly where closed lists are used. List systems are also popular with electoral reformers because of their greater proportionality. However, our surveys show that citizens would prefer list systems to give them more choice over the actual candidates elected.

International Evidence

6.51 International comparisons suggest that low public knowledge of the workings of the electoral system is not unusual. Similar patterns to those of Scotland and Wales are observed in Germany, which has used AMS for over 50 years. Many German voters do not understand the purpose or significance of their second vote, but despite this, the German system is popular with its electorate.[26]

6.52 New Zealand provides an example of voter understanding of both 'old' and 'new' voting systems. Less than half of those interviewed in a 1993 survey

Figure 6.5. Public perceptions of party control of list MSPs/AMs (Scotland and Wales)
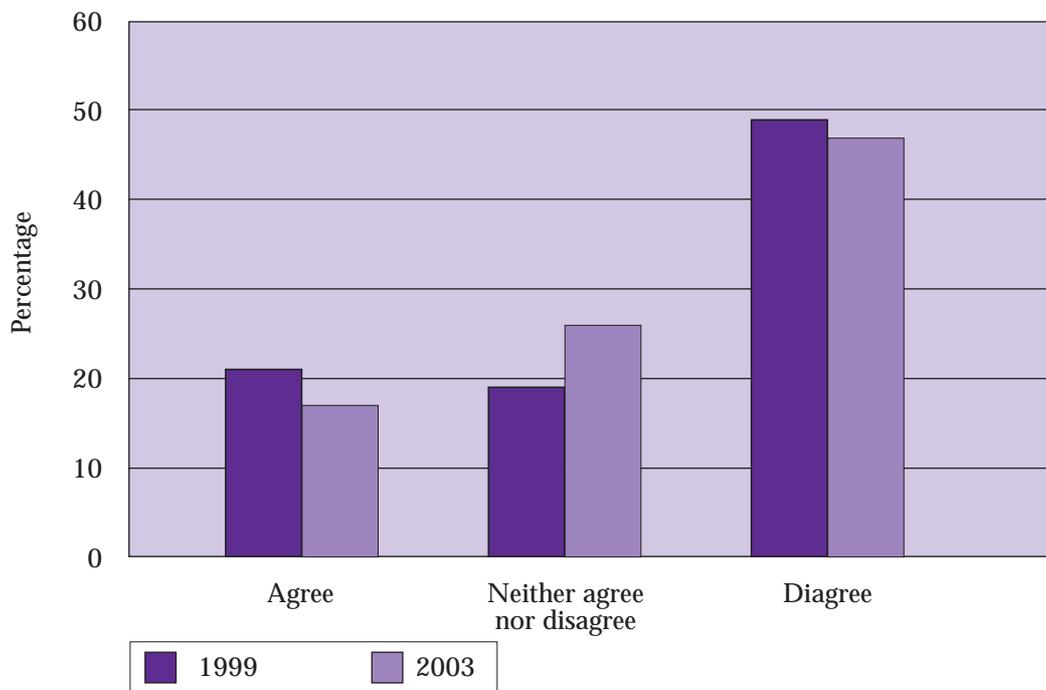
Source: Scottish Parliamentary Election Study 1999; Welsh Assembly Election Study 1999; Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2003; Welsh Life and Times Survey 2003.

knew that under first-past-the-post 'the winning party may win a greater share of seats in Parliament than its share of votes.'

6.53 In 1992 and 1993, prior to New Zealand's referendums on changing the electoral system, the government made a substantial effort to inform and educate the public about AMS. Yet this information was not retained by most people, and their knowledge and approval of AMS faded between elections. New Zealand research suggests that people are not solely reliant on government information, but also make judgements based on cues from political parties.[27] Their attitude to the electoral system is also coloured by their general attitude to the political system, which in turn is influenced by the overall performance of the government and of individual politicians.

Conclusion

6.54 The list systems used in the UK, for European Parliament elections as well as for the regional component of the Scottish, Welsh and London systems do not offer as much choice to voters as they could. If these 'closed lists' were replaced by 'open lists', voters would be able to choose candidates from within their preferred parties. Our

survey evidence shows that open lists would be popular with voters. However, open lists are likely to be less popular with political parties which would lose control over the placement of their candidates.

6.55 Other electoral systems offer the chance for voters to express preferences between candidates. The Supplementary Vote, as used in the London and local Mayoral elections offers the voter some choice, produces clear winners and is easily understood by the electorate. However it is a majoritarian system and victorious candidates rarely win more than 50% of the vote. The Single Transferable Vote allows voters a complete choice over which candidates are elected by ranking their preferences. By this, they can choose candidates on personal as well as party grounds. STV also permits the possibility that voters for the main parties will have one or more constituency representatives they can approach. The operation of STV in Northern Ireland shows that its impact depends on the political circumstances in which it is used. Both Assembly elections have been dominated by the issue of the Good Friday Agreement. Voters tend to transfer their votes on the basis of tribal loyalties with few Nationalists transferring to Unionists and vice versa.

6.56 It is sometimes forgotten that there is a price attached to both parties and voters in allowing more choice on the ballot paper. For parties, the ability to choose between candidates opens up the prospect of factionalism and intra-party warfare. For voters, the price of choice is complexity and need for greater information about candidates.

The fact that only a minority of voters chose to exercise their choice in countries using open lists shows that most are not prepared to pay its price.

Chapter 7:
Public attitudes to different electoral systems

Issues in this chapter:

- Public attitudes to the new electoral systems
- Public support for different systems

Introduction

7.1 Any new voting system faces two tests if it is to command active public approval. Do voters understand how it works? And are voters content with the nature of the parliament, assembly or council it is likely to produce? We have seen in the last chapter that voters do not find new electoral systems overly confusing, although the mechanisms are less easily understood than first-past-the-post. We now move on to examine voters' attitudes towards the political consequences of the new electoral systems.

Public Attitudes to Different Systems

7.2 What do members of the public think about different electoral systems? In order to answer this question, we commissioned three different research exercises during 2003. The first was an on-line consultation facilitated by the Hansard Society. The second was a series of three on-line polls conducted by YouGov. The third was a survey conducted by the National Centre for Social Research as part of the Scottish Social Attitudes and Welsh Life and Times surveys where people were given self-completion booklets.

7.3 YouGov created a panel of more than 3,000 adults in England, Scotland and Wales, weighted in order to be representative of the general population. They were questioned in April, May and July 2003. The survey conducted in May presented respondents with different systems. For three systems, AMS, Party List-PR and STV, respondents were given an explanation of the system and issued with sample ballot papers to fill out (see Appendix C). A set of detailed questions were asked about AMS and Party List, with respondents required to compare those systems with first-past-the-post. A more limited set of questions was asked about STV and respondents were not asked to compare it with other systems.

7.4 No electoral system emerged as a clear favourite. On first-past-the-post, 85% of respondents found the system easy to understand though they were split over whether it offered a great deal of choice. Respondents were then confronted with a series of statements on first-past-the-post and asked how these statements affected their attitude to the system. When told that first-

Figure 7.1 Public Attitudes to List PR and first–past–the–post

Do you think that List-PR is better than First Past the

Worse 33%

Better 37%

No option 30%

Source: YouGov/ICPR survey, May 2003. N=2698
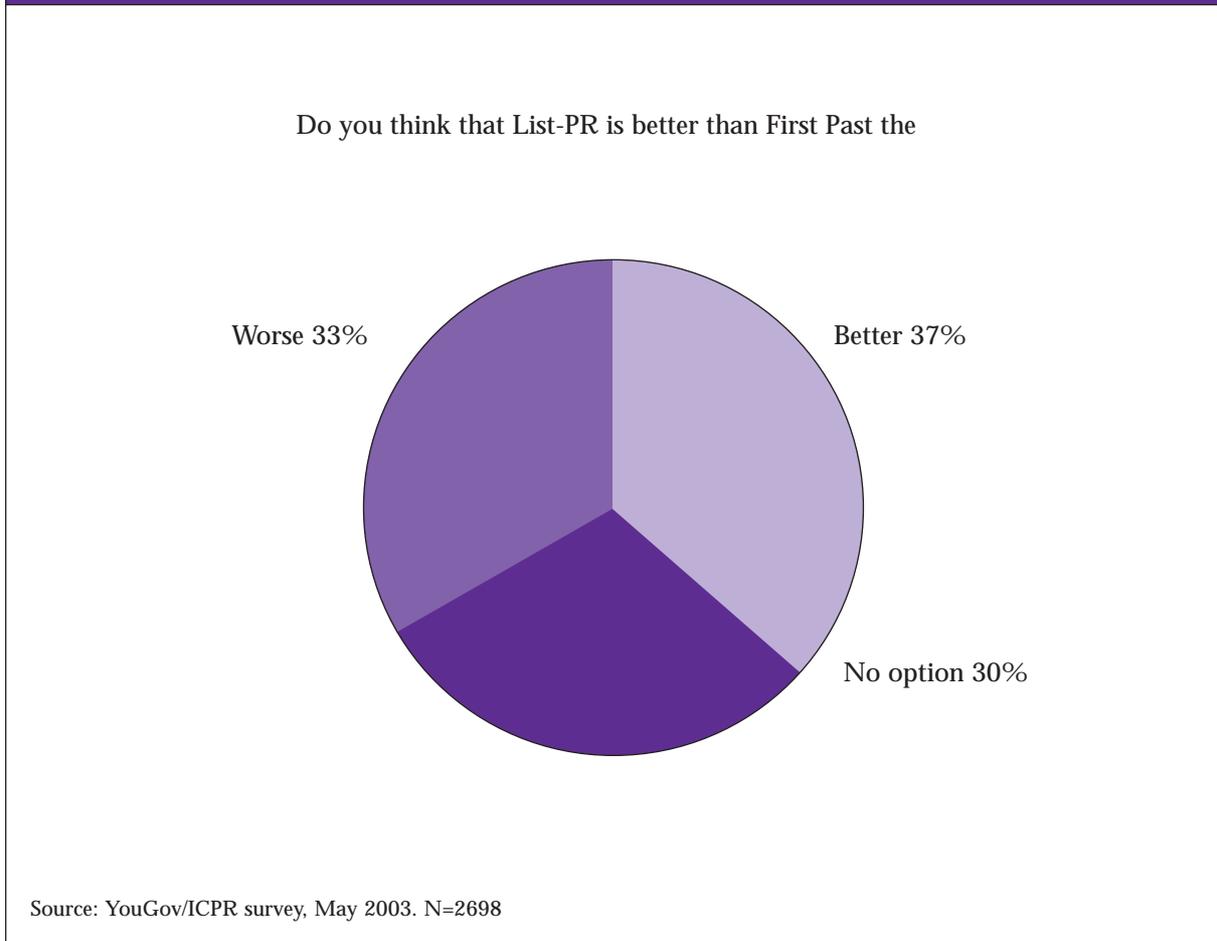
past-the-post could result in a candidate winning with less than 50% of the vote, 35% said it made them less in favour of the system, though 51% were not moved at all by this information. When told that a party could win a majority of the vote under first-past-the-post but not a majority of seats in Parliament, 45% said it made them less in favour while 42% were unmoved.

7.5   The next system considered was Party List PR. Here, 58% thought the system easy to understand and 44% thought it offered a great deal of choice – 6 percentage points higher than first-past-the-post. A significant proportion

(57%) said that they would prefer to be able to select individual candidates rather than a party list. In response to the proposition that this system could bring about an increase in the number of parties contesting elections, including small and extremist parties, just 23% said they were more in favour, while 31% were more against; but a plurality, 42%, were unmoved either way. However, once the idea of thresholds was explained, 50% declared themselves more in favour of the system.

7.6   When asked to compare the list system with first-past-the-post, respondents were split three ways. 37% agreed that

Figure 7.2 Public Attitudes to AMS and first–past–the–post

Do you think that AMS is better than First Past the

Worse 22%

Better 45%

No opinion 33%

Source: YouGov /ICPR survey, May 2003. N=2698
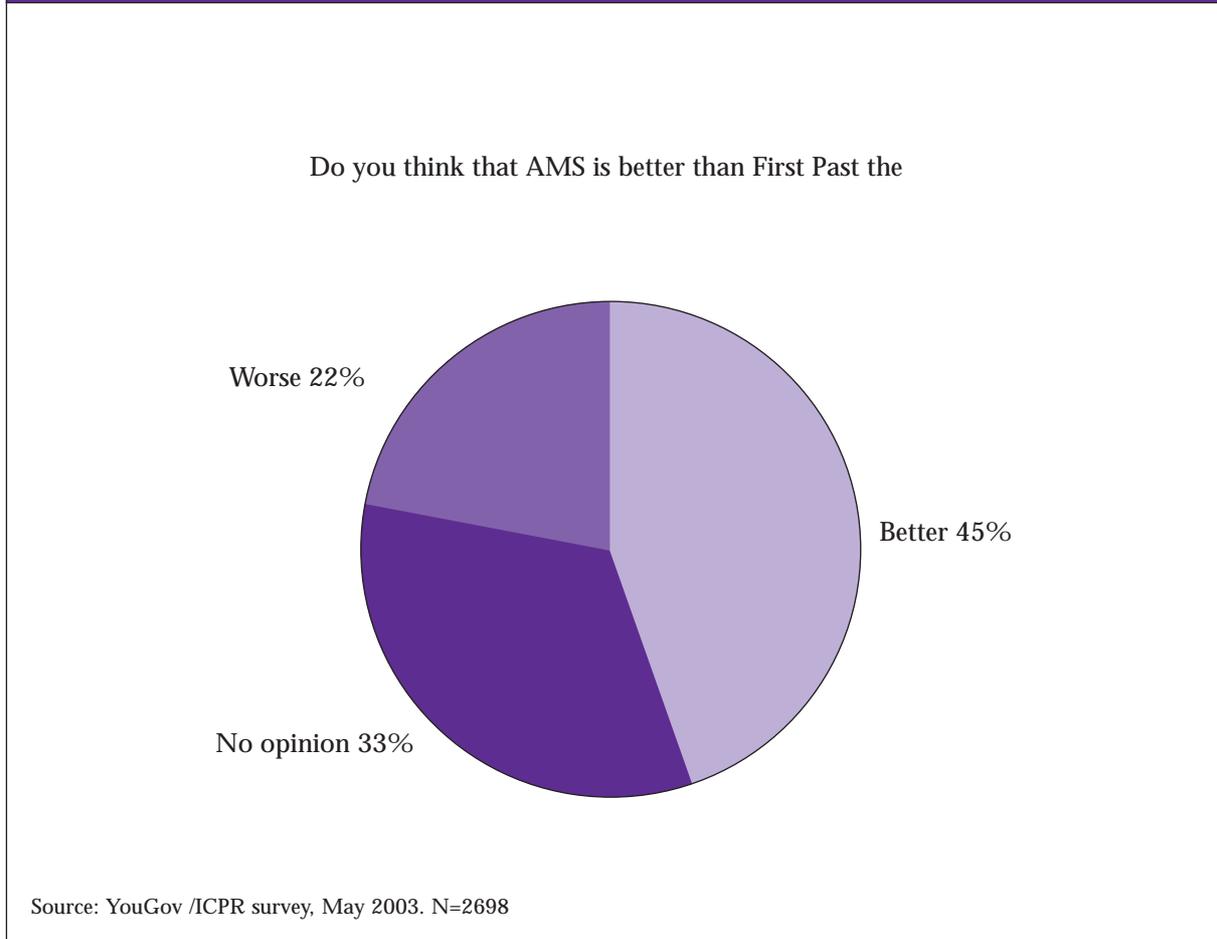
it was a better system, 30% thought it was worse and 33% either did not know or had no opinion. This is shown in figure 7.1.

7.7 When it came to AMS, fewer people (43%) found the system as easy to understand as List-PR (58%), though more thought that AMS offered a great deal of choice. As with the list system, respondents were unmoved by arguments for and against, though a bare majority (51%) said that they would prefer to be able to vote for individual candidates on the party list. When asked whether AMS was an improvement on first-past-the-post, 44% responded positively, 7 percentage

points higher than the score for party-list voting. 24% thought AMS worse than first-past-the-post and 32% either did not know or had no opinion. These results are shown in figure 7.2.

7.8 At the end of the questions on each system, respondents were asked to say how much they would 'like to vote this way in the future'. A question on STV was included here and the results are shown in figure 7.3.

Figure 7.3 Public views on future use of different electoral systems
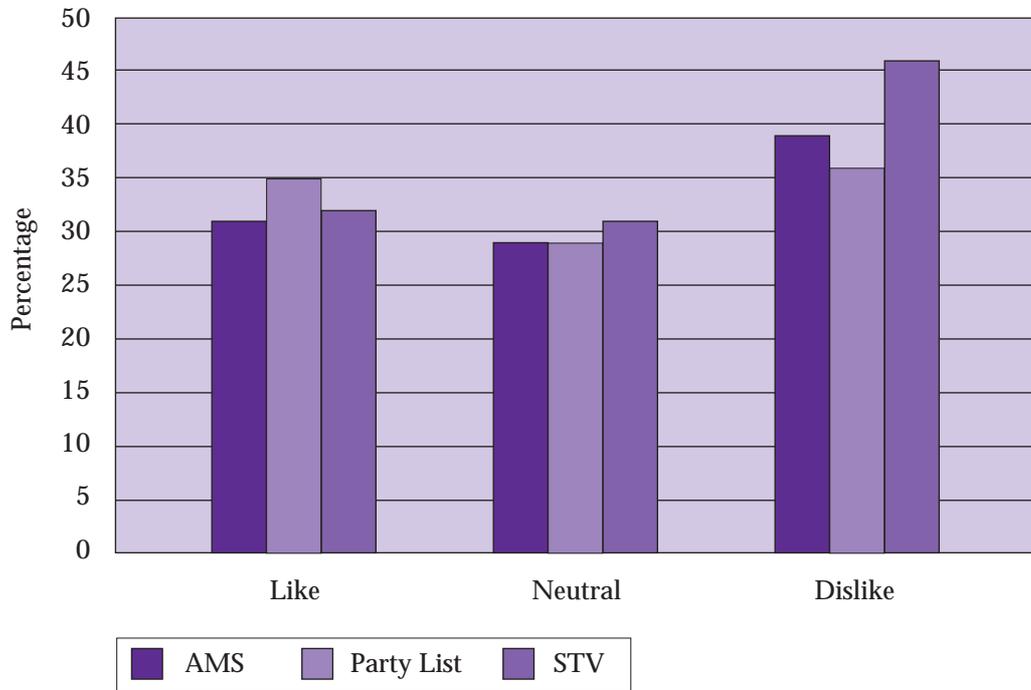
Source: YouGov/ICPR survey, May 2003, July 2003. N=2698

7.9 The chart shows that about a third of people were neutral on whether they would like to vote in elections using an alternative to first-past-the-post. This indicates the low salience of the subject matter – electoral systems are not at the forefront of people's minds. Otherwise, more people disliked each system than liked it, with STV being the most disliked.

Variations In Attitudes To Electoral Systems

7.10 Opinion surveys have repeatedly found that people's attitudes towards first-past-the-post and its alternatives depend on how they are asked. On six occasions the British Social Attitudes survey has asked the same sample of people two differently worded questions about proportional representation. On each occasion respondents were given two very different sets of answers. When asked simply to say whether Britain should introduce proportional representation so that the number of seats each party gets matches more closely the number of votes it wins, between twice and three times as many supported the idea as opposed it. But when asked to choose between a system that is fairer to smaller parties and one that produces effective government, around 60% opted for the latter and only around 35% the former.

Table 7.1 Trends in Attitudes towards Electoral Reform (1)

Some people say we should change the voting system for general elections to the UK House of Commons to allow smaller political parties to get a fairer share of MPs. Others say that we should keep the voting system for the House of Commons as it is to produce effective government. Which view comes closer to your own ...

Year	83	86	87	90	91	92	95	96	97	98	99	00	01	02	03
						(Percentages)									
Change voting system	39	32	30	34	37	33	37	33	35	32	35	35	39	34	36
Keep it as it is	54	60	64	59	58	60	58	59	60	63	63	59	57	61	60

Source; British Social Attitudes except 1983, 1992: British Election Study

Table 7.2 Trends in Attitudes towards Electoral Reform (2)

Britain should introduce proportional representation so that the number of MPs in the House of Commons each party gets matches more closely the number of votes each party gets. Which view comes closer to your own ...

Year	92	94	96	97	00	03
Agree	48%	49%	45%	48%	48%	44%
Disagree	27%	18%	16%	16%	16%	15%

Source; British Social Attitudes except 1983, 1992: British Election Study

7.11 Not least of the reasons for this is that voters value potentially contradictory characteristics from an electoral system. On the one hand, as the next table shows, the polling conducted for this commission by YouGov found that more people believe that it is more important to have a clear winner than a fair result, but that at the same time more people prefer to have two or more parties in government than just one. Evidently there is no electoral system that can fully satisfy the wishes of the public.

7.12 Nevertheless an important and consistent conclusion emerges from the research that has been undertaken by the British Social Attitudes survey over the last twenty years: there has been no consistent change in attitudes over time. While the answers to the two questions posed by the survey have differed sharply each year, there has been little change from year to year in the answers given to the same question. This suggests that the experience that people have had of different electoral systems in recent years has neither increased public approval for alternative systems nor produced a public backlash.

7.13 A slightly more nuanced picture emerges if we compare recent trends in Scotland and Wales with those in England. If the public had adopted particularly positive or negative attitudes towards the experience of proportional representation we might have anticipated that attitudes in Scotland and Wales (where AMS has been used for devolved elections) would have diverged from those in

Table 7.3 Attitudes towards Electoral Reform (3)	
Which of these statements comes closest to your views?	
It is more important that elections should produce a clear winner so that it is voters who decide who forms the government OR	47%
It is more important that elections produce a fair result even in this means it is not clear who should form the government	31%
Source; YouGov/ICPR survey April 2003	

Table 7.4 Attitudes towards Electoral Reform (3)	
And which of these statements comes closest to your views?	
It is better to have just one party in government so that it is very clear who should be blamed if things go wrong OR	37%
It is better to have two or more parties in the government so that more people's views are represented	48%
Source; YouGov/ICPR survey April 2003	

Table 7.5 UK Comparisons of Attitudes to Electoral Reform

Some people say we should change the voting system for general elections to the UK House of Commons to allow smaller political parties to get a fairer share of MPs. Others say that we should keep the voting system for the House of Commons as it is to produce effective government. Which view comes closer to your own …

1997	Scotland	Wales	England
Change voting system	33%	-	36%
Keep as is	60%	-	60%
1999			
Change voting system	39%	37%	35%
Keep as is	53%	57%	63%
2003			
Change voting system	39%	32%	36%
Keep as is	52%	60%	60%

Britain should introduce proportional representation so that the number of MPs in the House of Commons each party gets matches more closely the number of votes each party gets. Which view comes closer to your own …

	Scotland	Wales	England
1997			
Agree	48%	-	50%
Disagree	14%	-	16%
1999			
Agree	59%	55%	47%
Disagree	11%	18%	16%
2003			
Agree	55%	53%	45%
Disagree	12%	15%	16%

Sources: British Election Study 1997; Scottish Election Study 1997; British Social Attitudes Surveys 1999, 2000 and 2003; Scottish Parliamentary Election Study 1999; Welsh Assembly Election Study 1999; Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2003; Welsh Life and Times Survey 2003.

England (where apart from London experience of an alternative system has been confined to the low profile European elections). But, as the next table shows, opinion in Scotland and Wales seems to have changed little between 1999 and 2003 – in contrast to the evidence from England. To that extent we again find that the experience of proportional representation seems to have made little difference.

7.14 However in Scotland at least there is a somewhat more favourable attitude towards the use of an alternative system in elections to the House of Commons, an attitude that was already

evident in 1999. This gap was not however present at the time of the 1997 general election before Scotland had had any experience of proportional representation at all. Previous research has suggested that in fact there was a marked switch in favour of the use of an alternative system at the time of the 1997 referendum, and it appears that the referendum campaign has left a small but permanent mark on public opinion north of the border.[29] Evidently, despite its apparent stability, public opinion on electoral systems is potentially subject to change in the heat of a referendum campaign.

7.15 Tables 7.5 and 7.6 imply that attitudes to different electoral systems vary, with fewer people liking party list-PR than AMS. This suggests that the exposure Scottish and Welsh respondents have had to AMS makes them more likely to favour the system. The assumption is

Table 7.6. Responses to the question 'How much would you like to vote this way in the future?' Scotland, Wales and England Respondents

	Party list PR	AMS
Scotland/Wales		
Like	36%	46%
Neutral/Don't know	33%	31%
Dislike	31%	24%
Majority	+5%	+22%
England		
Like	36%	35%
Neutral/Don't know	22%	22%
Dislike	35%	35%
Majority	+1%	0%

Source: YouGov/ICPR survey, May 2003.

strengthened given than more Scottish and Welsh people were in favour of AMS than English people. There is no difference in attitudes to list-PR between Scotland, Wales and England. This is to be expected given that all three nations would have had similar exposure to the system in the European elections.

7.16 Another question in the final YouGov survey conducted in July 2003 asked respondents which system they would favour in a referendum on the electoral system for the House of Commons. The results show that 55% of Scottish and Welsh respondents said that they would prefer AMS as opposed to 17% of English respondents. These answers clearly suggest that AMS has made a favourable impression on the Scottish and Welsh public.

7.17 Finally, respondents were asked to rate the three electoral systems on which detailed questions had been asked: First-past-the-post, Party List PR and AMS. First-past-the-post came out as the most preferred system with 41% putting it down as their first choice. 29% put AMS as their first choice and 25% party list. STV was not included in the rating.

7.18 Yet other parts of the survey show that if the question is phrased in a different way, people are likely to dismiss first-past-the-post in favour of PR. There is a contradiction between the rating of the different systems as outlined above and those of figures 7.1 and 7.2 where more people said both AMS and PR-List were better than first-past-the-post than the opposite. Furthermore, at the end of the 2nd YouGov survey, after being given a lot of information about

electoral systems, 62% said that PR should be introduced for House of Commons elections. At the end of the 3rd survey, 33% said that they would vote for first-past-the-post in a referendum and 43% an alternative system. All this emphasises the difficulty of determining views on electoral systems from surveys. YouGov's results serve as a warning against extrapolating from a single question on this issue to general statements of public opinion.

7.19 The larger truth is that this is an issue of low importance for most electors. Furthermore, public opinion is not fixed. YouGov questions that tested the strength, and not just the direction, of opinion found that few people hold strong pro or anti-reform attitudes. In the two questions cited in the previous paragraph, just 27% either agreed or disagreed *strongly* about the introduction of PR, while only 28% regarded it as *very* important for the government to have an overall majority. These figures suggest that it is impossible to predict in advance what views the public would hold were a referendum to be held on changing the voting system for the House of Commons. The outcome would depend on the system offered, the political context of the decision and the calibre of the rival campaigns and campaigners.

International evidence

7.20 In New Zealand, majority support for AMS remained fairly stable between the 1993 referendum and the first AMS election in 1996. However, support for the system dropped in 1996 and 1997 largely as a result of dissatisfaction with the performance of the first coalition government.[30] The coalition negotiations had lasted over two months, and the resultant National/New Zealand First coalition was a result that neither party's voters wanted or expected.[31]

7.21 By January 1997 a majority of New Zealanders favoured returning to first-past-the-post. In January 1999 support for AMS recovered and continued to do so after the 1999 general election. The new Labour-Alliance coalition remained popular and by 2001, the balance in overall public opinion shifted once more in favour of AMS over first-past-the-post. By late 2003 the evidence shows that New Zealanders were supporting the principle of PR over first-past-the-post by margins of 10% to 15%.

Factors influencing Public Attitudes to Electoral Systems

7.22 We have seen that those with more experience of PR systems are more in favour than those who never experienced it. To what extent are attitudes to electoral systems influenced by such factors as age, education, social class and party affiliation?

7.23 The YouGov surveys indicate that supporters of particular political parties may feel that if their party is not winning under one system, then the rules should be changed to improve their chance of attaining power. Thus, being a Conservative supporter makes one almost twice as likely to be against changing the electoral system compared with supporters of other parties. Being a Liberal Democrat or small party supporter makes one about

three times as likely to favour changing the system. Labour supporters are evenly divided on the issue.

7.24 We also found that one of the strongest predictors of attitudes towards electoral system change is the respondent's opinion of coalition government. Those in favour of the concept of coalition government are also in favour of scrapping first-past-the-post.

7.25 Demographic factors such as sex, class and education appear to have no effect on attitudes to electoral system change. Age is statistically significant but shows only a tiny association between being young and supporting electoral system change. These factors are all surpassed by attitudes to coalition government and party affiliation.

Evidence From The Online-Consultation

7.26 The online consultation run by the Hansard Society for the Commission produced hundreds of comments on choice of electoral system in which respondents were self-selected.

7.27 Most contributors to the online forum were in favour of STV and took time to justify their choice. Many recognised that it is difficult to generalise about the effects of different PR systems since they perform different functions

'A closed list system like we now have for European elections scores very well on proportionality of votes to seats, but gives the voter no meaningful choice of who (in terms of one or more particular individuals) they would rather have as their representative. By contrast, Alternative Vote may be the

best option for a single office (e.g. an elected mayor), as it allows the electorate to express their view in a more refined manner using preferences and should therefore result in the winner having got at least some measure of support from over half of the voters, but if it were to be used to elect a multi-member body it would almost certainly be even less proportionate in terms of party representation than First-past-the-post!'

7.28 Many favoured STV precisely because they saw it as a way of retaining an MP-constituency link:

'My own view is that you should have a broadly proportional system, that retains a link between every elected member and a particular constituency, leaves as few votes as possible wasted (so most voters end up with at least one of their representatives that they can relate to), and where the process of voting is easy for the voter to understand. Which, as far as I can see, brings you to STV.'

7.29 Quite a few saw the campaign to adopt STV gaining momentum:

'The people of the Republic of Ireland have voted in consecutive referendums to keep their STV system, against the wishes of the main parties (now what does that tell you?), and in Scotland and Wales STV has been specifically recommended in the last couple of years by commissions on local elections that were genuinely independent.'

7.30 However, others thought that introduction of STV for Westminster elections would be hampered by political realities.

'Supporters of PR should stop wasting their time advocating STV which will never be accepted by the Labour Party. The best hope is some variant on the systems that already exist in Scotland and Wales which retain single-member constituencies, although it would probably have a less proportional element, like the Jenkins proposals.'

7.31 Those that did not support STV did so on grounds of proportionality:

'The closer a PR electoral system can be to delivering a proportional result at UK-region level, the fairer and more representative it is. Hence my preference for an open list system where the lists are at UK-region level (ie Scotland, Wales, NI, and each England region). The remaining systems all overly favour the constituency-level and therefore I only marginally prefer them to first-past-the-post. They deny representation to parties who have strong but evenly-spread support.'

7.32 Only a couple of participants supported AMS, mainly on the grounds that it was familiar:

'AMS has the very great advantage that one can now call it 'tried and tested in a UK context' because of the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly experiences.'

Conclusion

7.33 A variety of surveys on public attitudes to different electoral systems have been conducted over the years. In our own questionnaires, people were taken through different systems, given sample ballot papers and asked how much they would like to vote using these different systems in the future. The surveys found that attitudes were highly dependent on the way in which the question was asked and that on the whole, electoral systems are not something people on which most have definite views.

7.34 Forty-four percent thought AMS was better than first-past-the-post, against 32% who thought it worse; but 39% said they would dislike voting by AMS in the future compared with 32% who said they would like to. The main difference was in Scotland and Wales where voters have experience of using AMS. Here, a large proportion thought AMS was fairer than FPTP (by 4:1 in 1999 and 3:1 in 2003). People in Scotland and Wales preferred (by 2:1) to vote this way in the future, compared with no such preference in England. So experience of using AMS in Scotland and Wales inclines voters to regard it more favourably.

Chapter 8:
Party competition and campaigning

Issues in this chapter

- The effect of electoral systems on the number of political parties
- How far the new UK electoral systems changed the way parties and candidates campaign

Introduction

8.1   In this chapter we discuss the impact that alternative electoral systems have had on the number of parties and on the way that parties and candidates campaign.

The effect of different electoral systems on the number of political parties

8.2   One of claims commonly made about PR is that, over time, it leads to fragmented party systems. In other words, it is held to increase the number of parties that have a role in the governing of the country. This argument was most famously put forward by the French political scientist, Maurice Duverger, who stated that

- Proportional representation tends to lead to the formation of many independent parties
- The plurality rule (first-past-the-post) tends to produce a two-party system

8.3   Duverger's argument rested on two causal mechanisms. The first is a 'mechanical effect'; because it is more difficult for smaller parties to win seats under first-past-the-post, there are fewer parties in parliament. The second mechanism is a 'psychological effect'; voters will be aware that small parties have little chance in non-PR systems and so will be less likely to vote for them.

8.4   However, Duverger only suggested that his propositions were tendencies, not iron laws. It is certainly possible to think of exceptions. Canada and India, for example, have multiparty systems despite using first-past-the-post. But to assess the validity of the law more systematically, we need a method for counting the number of political parties that are 'effective' players in a country's system of government. Calculating this requires doing more than simply counting the raw number of parties that present candidates at election. Doing this equates a very small party, such as the Natural Law party, with a big party, such as the Conservative party. A more useful method of counting the number of 'effective' parties is to weight each party by its size, where size is determined either by its share of the popular vote or by its share of seats won.

8.5 Two important academic studies by Arend Lijphart and Richard Katz confirm that there is a tendency for there to be an increased number of parliamentary parties (that is where the parties are weighted by the proportion of seats they have won) where a proportional system is in place than where a plurality system is used. But equally those studies also suggest that Duverger's proposition is far from being an iron rule. Thus in a study of elections in 27 advanced democracies held between 1945 and 1990, Lijphart found that on average there were indeed only 2.0 effective parties where a plurality system is used, 2.8 under a majority system (such as the alternative vote) and 3.6 where a proportional system is in place.[32] But a study by Katz of a rather larger set of 800 elections held in 30 countries between 1945 and 1985 found that there were on average as many as 2.6 effective parties where first-past-the-post is used, 2.8 under the alternative vote, and 3.9 with a proportional system.[33] If the figures for the single member countries are examined further it appears that there are two effective parties only in the United States, Jamaica and Botswana. In Canada, New Zealand (before 1996) and the UK the average figure is three.

8.6 These findings are confirmed by an analysis of the outcome of the most recent election held in every democracy prior to June 2000, compiled by Pippa Norris and summarised in table 8.1.[34] On average no fewer than 4.7 parties actually secured at least one seat where first-past-the-post is used, while this rises to 9.6 where a party list system is in place. And even if we confine our attention to those parties that win at least 3% of all of the seats, the figure comes to 3.0 where first-past-the-post is used compared with 4.8 under a party list system.

Table 8.1: Electoral systems and party systems

	Mean number of parliamentary parties (with at least one seat)	Mean number of relevant parliamentary parties (with over 3% of seats)	Number of countries
Majoritarian	5.2	3.3	83
Alternative Vote	9.0	3.0	1
2nd Ballot	6.0	3.2	23
First-past-the-post	4.7	3.0	49
Proportional	9.5	4.7	61
STV	5.0	2.5	2
Party List	9.6	4.8	59

Note: The data includes the results for 1,263 parties contesting the latest elections to the lower house of parliament from 1995 to June 2000. Parliamentary parties are defined as those winning at least one seat in the lower house. The results of the elections were calculated by Pippa Norris of Harvard University from Elections Around the World. www.agora.stm.it/elections/alllinks.htm.

Table 8.2: Parties in UK Elections

	Mean number of parliamentary parties (with at least one seat)	Mean number of relevant parliamentary parties (with over 3% of seats)	Number of elections
Majoritarian			
First-past-the-post	10.5	3	2 (97 & 01)
Proportional			
AMS (Scotland)	6.5	5	2 (99 & 03)
AMS (Wales)	4	4	2 (99 & 03)
AMS (London)	4	4	1 (00)
Party List (Europe)	10	4	1 (99)
STV (NI)	8	5.5	2 (98 & 03)

Source: Norris 2003

8.9   In short, on average there are more 'effective' parties where a proportional system is in place rather than where first-past-the-post is employed. But use of the latter is no guarantee that there are no more than two such parties. Equally rather than producing a lot more parties, use of proportional representation is typically associated with between one and two more parties. Of course, a country may choose a proportional system because it has a larger number of parties in the first place, rather than the larger number of parties being caused by the electoral system.

8.10   Recent experience in the United Kingdom is line with these expectations. There are more than two parties in elections to the House of Commons, but between one and two more where alternative electoral systems have been used. This difference is not simply the result of alternative systems being kinder to smaller parties in the allocation of seats, but also because people vote for a wider array of parties where a proportional system is in place.

8.11   On average no less than 10.5 parties have managed to secure at least one seat in elections to the House of Commons at the last two general elections. This figure is in fact only matched by the outcome of the 1999 European Parliament elections, and is heavily inflated by the fact that four or five separate parties win seats in Northern Ireland. In practice just three parties have won at least 3% of the seats, while, as table 8.2 shows, that figure has typically been four or five in recent elections held under alternative systems.

8.12   There have been a little over two effective *parliamentary parties* at recent elections to the House of Commons, but, as table 8.3 shows, between three and four in elections held under alternative systems. Only in the case of STV in Northern Ireland has the figure been higher than four.

Table 8.3: Effective number of Parliamentary Parties at recent UK elections

	Effective number of political parties	Number of elections
Majoritarian		
First-past-the-post	2.2	2 (97 & 01)
Proportional		
AMS (Scotland)	3.8	2
AMS (Wales)	3.0	2
AMS (London)	3.3	1
Party List (Europe)	3.1	1 (00)
STV (NI)	4.9	2 (98 & 03)

Note: The index of effective number of parliamentary parties is calculated as follows: 1 divided by the sum of the squared percentage seats for each party.

8.13 As indicated, the increase in the number of effective political parties has not simply arisen because alternative electoral systems have rewarded smaller parties with a larger number of seats. People have also voted for a larger number of parties, albeit that there have also been more than two effective electoral parties in House of Commons elections too. As table 8.4 shows, there have on average been 3.2 effective *electoral* parties in recent elections to the House of Commons, compared with between four and five in elections held under alternative systems. Again the use of STV in Northern Ireland is an exception, but again too there is a relatively large number of effective electoral parties (4.7) in first-past-the-post elections in the province as well. (In contrast note that the equivalent figures for Commons elections in Scotland, Wales and London are at, 3.6, 3.1, and 2.9 respectively, not substantially different from the UK wide figure).

8.14 We should of course bear in mind that the propensity of voters to spread their votes across a wider range of parties in European and devolved elections may not simply be the result of alternative electoral systems. Voters may also be inclined to vote differently because they are voting for different institutions. It has commonly been argued that voters are more inclined to vote for smaller parties in European elections because they are regarded as less important second order contests.[35] There were for example already 3.6 effective electoral parties in the 1994 European elections held under first-past-the-post. The same may also be true for some voters in devolved elections for which there is certainly evidence that voters are more inclined to vote for nationalist parties because they are thought more likely to uphold the interests of Scotland and Wales.

Table 8.4: Effective number of Electoral Parties at recent UK elections

	ENEP	Number of elections
Majoritarian		
First-past-the-post	3.2	2
Proportional		
AMS (Scotland)	5.0	2
AMS (Wales)	4.0	2
AMS (London)	4.7	1
Party List	4.3	1 (EU)
STV	5.5	2 (NI 98 & 03)

Note: The index of effective number of electoral parties is calculated as follows: 1 divided by the sum of the squared percentage votes for each party.

Have new voting systems led to different styles of campaigning?

8.15 We now turn to the second question in this chapter: the extent to which alternative electoral systems change the way that parties and candidates campaign. We look first of all at the experience of AMS in devolved elections followed by that of a closed party list system in European elections.

8.16 We might expect AMS and party list systems to have similar effects. For example, as compared with first-past-the-post, parties might be thought to have a greater incentive to campaign everywhere rather than concentrate on 'marginal' constituencies. This is what happened in New Zealand when it changed its electoral system from first-past-the-post to AMS in 1996. [36]

8.17 Equally under both systems it might be thought parties would have a greater incentive to adopt a distinctive ideological position in order to try to capture a niche electoral market. Katz has certainly found that parties

between them cover a wider spread of ideological positions under PR systems than they do under first-past-the-post. As a result, campaigns under PR might be expected to be more defensive and ideological.[37] On the other hand, since PR brings about a multiparty system and hence coalition government, parties may refrain from attacking each other in case they might need to work with other parties once the election is over.[38]

8.18 AMS is of course distinctive in that it combines single member constituencies elected under first-past-the-post with multi-member constituencies elected by PR. This could mean that constituency candidates campaign differently from list candidates. The constituency candidates might be expected to focus more on local issues at the expense of broader national policy issues, and vice versa. However, if candidates stand in both constituency and list contests, this may not be the case.

8.19 AMS also creates a distinctive set of tactical incentives. Large parties may

do so well in the constituency contests that they have little chance of winning list seats, rendering a list vote for such a party of little value. In contrast smaller parties may hope to persuade voters to vote for them on the second vote where they have a better chance of winning a seat.

8.20 Under a closed party list system with a limited number of electoral districts, such as that used in European elections, we might expect that there is less focus on candidates and more on parties, and at the same time more centralisation of campaigns.[39]

Campaigns under AMS

8.21 It should be noted that none of the election campaigns that have been held under AMS have been as intense as an election to the House of Commons. In part this was the result of circumstance. The 1999 Scottish and Welsh elections coincided with the outbreak of hostilities in Kosovo; the 2003 campaigns began in the midst of war in Iraq. But it also reflects the perceived status and importance of the institutions. In particular, the 2000 election to the Greater London Assembly was overshadowed by the coincident election for the London Mayor. We should thus not overestimate the importance of these campaigns.

8.22 It is far from clear that the introduction of AMS has reduced the tendency for parties to concentrate on marginal seats. In part this may be because, thanks to the relative paucity of list seats, parties can win a disproportionate share of seats by doing well in marginal constituencies. Indeed

the SNP in particular paid especial attention to marginal constituencies in their 2003 campaign, in the hope of reducing the advantage that Labour gained from doing disproportionately well in marginal seats.

'We set up a call-centre in May 2000 to target voters in key marginal constituencies such as Dundee. We were also conscious of using the Scottish Parliament campaign in conjunction with the local election campaign. Leaflets featured candidates for both elections.' – An SNP official

8.23 The Scottish elections have offered a significantly wider range of ideological alternatives with the emergence of the Scottish Socialist Party and the Greens, who both significantly strengthened their position in 2003. The established parties offered a more limited range of policy positions, and the ideological divide narrowed in 2003 compared with 1999. Thus in 1999 the SNP promised to add a penny to income tax, thereby putting the party at sharp odds with Labour, but they withdrew that policy in 2003. The Liberal Democrats were also less insistent on the need to use the Scottish Parliament's 'tartan tax' powers in 2003 than they had been in 1999. In 1999 the SNP said that it would regard a majority of seats as a mandate for independence; in 2003 it was only considered a mandate to hold a referendum on independence. The 2003 election was marked by all four main parties offering rather similar packages of more police, more nurses and more teachers. Although the Conservatives did attempt to profit from disillusion with what the parliament had achieved in its first four

years, only the newer parties, the SSP and the Greens, offered a radically different menu.

8.24 In similar vein Plaid Cymru tried to widen its appeal in the 1999 campaign by appearing to drop its demand for independence in the next four years, a proposal that was eventually modified to mean that no such demand would be made for the next four years.[40] Otherwise in both elections the proposals of the main parties in Wales were notable for their commitments to more spending on health and education, including proposals to introduce free prescriptions.

8.25 One possible explanation is that the bodies that were being elected have limited powers. For example, the amount that the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly have to spend is largely or wholly determined by the UK government, though in Scotland there is a limited (though so far unused) power to vary the basic rate of income tax. In these circumstances we should perhaps not be surprised that the parties put similar emphasis on their spending plans.

8.26 With the exception of Labour in Scotland, and the Greens who did not contest any constituencies, most candidates standing on a party list also stood in a constituency (and vice-versa). There was thus little reason to believe that constituency candidates and list candidates would campaign differently, and we have uncovered no evidence that they did so. Indeed the interchangeability of the two types of candidates for most parties is demonstrated by this comment from the SNP.

'We see no problem with allowing candidates to stand in both constituency and list contests since it provides a second chance for really good candidates.' - An SNP official

8.27 Smaller parties did attempt to exploit the tactical opportunities afforded to them by the second vote. In Scotland the Greens used the campaign slogan, 'Vote Green 2nd', with its double-entendre, on its campaign posters in both 1999 and 2003. In Wales the party distributed leaflets encouraging voters to split their tickets. Meanwhile in 2003 the Scottish Socialist Party distributed leaflets showing a peach cut in half with the message 'give your peach vote to the SSP', a reference to the colour of the list-ballot paper. Equally in both Scotland and Wales, the Liberal Democrats attempted to persuade Labour voters to give them their second vote on the grounds that in most regions a list vote for Labour would not help get anyone elected.

'We attempted to convince voters, through leaflets, that a Labour vote was a wasted vote. This targeting was focused particularly in the Valleys.' – A Liberal Democrat official

8.28 The larger parties in contrast tried to discourage voters from splitting their tickets. In particular Labour tried to persuade people to give all their votes to the party and to ignore the tactical incentives to do otherwise. But Plaid Cymru also eschewed a strategy of targeting second votes because to do so would seem to admit that the party had no chance of winning.

'We [Plaid Cymru] didn't attempt to exploit AMS in this manner. Our

pattern was to present Plaid as an alternative government and not a party to simply pass one's second vote. Many in Plaid thought that voters perceived the 2nd vote as an 'inferior' vote and that it was demeaning for the party to campaign for it' – A Plaid Cymru official

8.29 As we might expect, the personality and attributes of individual candidates did matter in these elections. In 1999 those candidates who had already made a name for themselves performed better than their less well known counterparts,[41] while Labour MP Dennis Canavan secured election as an Independent constituency MSP. In 2003 not only was Mr Canavan re-elected but two further independents won constituency contests, one in Scotland and one in Wales. Moreover, the ability of independents to secure election has not been confined to the constituency contests. In 1999 Mr Canavan in fact won on the list as well as in his constituency as did John Marek in Wales in 2003, while in Scotland, Margo Macdonald, a former SNP MSP, won election as an Independent on the Lothians regional list.

The 1999 European Parliament Campaign

8.30 Like its predecessors the 1999 European Parliament election campaign seemed almost a non-event and like the 1999 Scottish and Welsh elections was also overshadowed by the Kosovo war. Neither the media nor the national political parties appeared to have been much interested. So once again the importance of the campaign and the lessons that might apply to elections to the House of Commons should not be exaggerated.

8.31 In most cases the amount of money that each party spent in each region was proportionate to its share of the electorate. The only notable exceptions were in Wales where Labour spent a relatively high amount and the Greens exceptionally little. It thus seems that party campaigning was spread relatively evenly across the country as we would expect.

8.32 There was considerable differentiation between the parties on their attitudes towards Europe though there is no reason to believe that this differentiation was any greater than in the subsequent 2001 general election held under first-past-the-post. The Liberal Democrat manifesto demanded a rapid referendum on joining the Euro, a written European constitution and a strengthened European Parliament. The Conservatives in contrast advocated opposing the Euro, opposing fiscal harmonisation and reducing the EU's budget and the UK's budgetary contributions. Labour's manifesto meanwhile advocated EU enlargement, a new structure for the EU Commission and joining the Euro when the time was right.

8.33 The smaller parties helped widen the range of choice somewhat further. Most notably, the UK Independence Party ran on a ticket of opposition to the Euro and leaving the EU. Meanwhile, the Greens also opposed the Euro but advocated an enhanced role for the European Parliament and a reduced role for the European Commission. The SNP advocated entry into the Euro and a withdrawal from NATO in favour of a European defence force. Plaid Cymru pressed for entry

into the Euro, a strengthened European Parliament, and EU enlargement.

8.34 Contrary to what might have been expected there was evidence to show that voters used the list vote to express a preference for an individual candidate. Three deselected Labour candidates who decided to stand as independents each managed to win a significant proportion of the vote. It is not however clear that political parties appreciated the extent to which they could attempt to win votes by stressing the names of the persons at the top of their party lists.

Conclusion

8.35 The new voting systems have led to a small increase in the effective number of political parties, in term of seats won and votes cast. This is exemplified in the 'rainbow' Scottish Parliament, which effectively has six political parties since the 2003 elections. But typically the effective number of political parties has increased by just one or two by comparison with Westminster. There has not so far been a proliferation of minor parties in the devolved assemblies, or amongst the UK MEPs elected to the European Parliament. And Westminster itself is no longer a two party system: the effective number of political parties in the House of Commons is three. Extrapolating from the experience of the devolved assemblies, the introduction of PR for Westminster might increase this to four or five.

8.36 The new voting systems have not seen much development in the way election campaigns are fought. The use of the

regional party list system in the European elections encouraged the parties to spread their campaigning more evenly across the country, rather than focusing their energies on marginal seats. But in the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly elections key marginal constituencies were targeted in 2003, because a party which does well in single member constituencies can win a disproportionate overall number of seats. Smaller parties with little hope of winning constituencies focused their campaigns on winning list votes. The profile of individual candidates can still make a difference, in winning both constituency and list seats.

Chapter 9:
Party candidate selection

Issues in this chapter

- The impact of electoral systems on candidate selection
- Methods of candidate selection
- Positive discrimination in candidate selection

Introduction

9.1   Proportional electoral systems are often believed to have both negative and positive consequences for the way candidates are selected by political parties. The detrimental one is giving the central arms of the parties too much control over which candidates are chosen. The more benign is to promote the selection of candidates that are more representative in the sense that they reflect the social, age and class balance of the wider electorate. This chapter examines what evidence can be brought to bear from Britain's proportional electoral systems on these two issues.

Party centralisation

9.2   It is easy to see why proportional electoral systems might create suspicion that they promote the power of the central parties. Under a first-past-the-post system based on individual constituencies, local party branches and their members select a candidate to represent them at election time. The move to the larger districts usually required by proportional arrangements makes this process more difficult. The districts cover numerous constituencies and several candidates have to be picked. In this situation, the concern is that party officials may increase their role in selecting candidates at the expense of local members. This concern is particularly acute in the case of 'closed' party lists (where voters may not select any particular candidate, but only a party slate of candidates and discussed in chapter 6). In such situations - and 'closed' lists are used in the Scottish, Welsh and European Parliament elections – it is easier for party officials to try to insert their preferred candidates onto the list, safe in the knowledge that local voters cannot undo that decision.

9.3   Looking first at the procedures used by the parties to select their candidates in three of the contests that use proportional voting arrangements: Scotland, Wales and the European Parliament: Is there any evidence that these contests have seen greater party centralisation of candidate selection?

9.4   Table 9.1 shows that there are similarities and differences in the way the parties select their candidates. All

the parties use a central body as the first step in drawing up a list of prospective candidates. Most parties involve local members in the selection of constituency candidates, by a vote at candidate hustings. When it comes to list candidates, however, the selection and ordering of candidates is often conducted by party committees, usually comprising figures drawn from the central and local parties. Labour uses such an arrangement for its list candidates for Scottish, Welsh and European Parliament elections. The Conservatives do likewise in Scotland (but not for Welsh and European elections). The Liberal Democrats select list candidates for all contests via a membership ballot. In the case of Labour, then, there is evidence that candidate selection in larger districts was accompanied by a centralising process. However, neither the SNP, Plaid Cymru nor the Greens centralised the selection of their list candidates, instead making arrangements for members to select and order the candidates via regional conferences or regional postal ballots.

9.5 A common experience is that the central party usually has at least an initial role in helping to vet aspiring candidates for placement on a panel. However, this arrangement is used for Westminster elections as well as for contests involving proportional representation. The initial role of the central parties is partly about 'weeding out' potentially weak candidates – thus reflecting a 'professionalisation' of candidates – and not simply the exploitation of new electoral rules to ensure that favoured candidates get selected (or non-favoured candidates blackballed). One aspect of this

professionalisation is the move to a more representative candidate base, in particular the presence of more female candidates. A particular reason why parties have adopted a more centralised approach to vetting is to ensure that shortlists contain a higher proportion of female candidates. It is widely believed that the more autonomy local parties have over candidate selection, the lower will be the proportion of female candidates.

9.6 A widespread belief is that proportional voting rules tend to increase the proportion of women elected. The reason is that, in electoral districts for which parties offer 'slates' of candidates, there is an incentive for the parties to present themselves as representative of the electorate and to offer a more 'balanced ticket'.

9.7 The evidence from the various elections held in Britain under proportional electoral arrangements appears to bear out this theory. While fewer than one in five members elected to Westminster is female, this proportion doubles for the devolved elections in Scotland (37% of total MSPs in 1999), Wales (40% in 1999) and London (40% in 2000). When it comes to the European Parliament election, the increase in female representation is less pronounced, but still noticeable, from 18% of total MEPs in 1994 (under first-past-the-post) to 25% in 1999 (under PR).

9.8 Yet a closer look at the data suggests a rather more mixed picture. In Scotland and Wales in 1999 and 2003, a larger proportion of female members was elected from the constituency section of the ballot than the list section. The

Table 9.1 The role of the party centre and membership in candidate selection

	Scotland	Wales	European Parliament
Labour	Constituency: Centrally vetted list of applicants. (Twinned) constituencies select candidates (one male/one female) via ballot of members at constituency husting. List: Centrally determined electoral board decides candidates and ordering	Constituency: Centrally vetted list of applicants from which local members select candidates via a ballot at the hustings. List: Centrally determined electoral board decides candidates and ordering	1999: Candidate nominations made through constituency parties. Final list and its ordering decided by board of national and regional officials/members. 2004: Regional membership ballot
Conservative	Con: Centrally vetted list of applicants. Constituency committees draw up candidate shortlist. Members vote on the shortlist at special constituency meetings. List: All constituency candidates formed the shortlist for the lists. Ordering by regional committees of the Scottish executive and constituency chairmen.	Con: As for Scotland List: As for Scotland, except members responsible for ordering at special regional meetings	1999, 2004: Meetings of party members at regional level choose from approved list of candidates. Candidates selected and their ordering depend on members' vote.
Liberal Democrats	Con: Centrally vetted list of applicants. Constituencies shortlist equal number of male/female candidates; final selection via members' ballot at constituency meeting. List: Centrally vetted list of candidates. Regional committees select candidates. Postal ballot of members decides list and its ordering.	Con: As for Scotland List: As for Scotland	1999, 2004: Candidate shortlist drawn up by regional selection boards. Selection and ordering by membership ballot.
Scottish National	Con: Centrally vetted list of applicants from which local members select constituency candidates by OMOV. List: Candidates selected at regional conference of members.		1999, 2004: Candidate shortlist drawn up by regional selection boards. Selection and ordering by membership ballot.
Plaid Cymru		Con: 1999: Centrally vetted list of applicants. Selection made by constituency committees; no ballot of members. 2003: All members invited to vote at selection meetings List: Selection made by regional conference of local parties.	1999, 2004: Candidate shortlist drawn up by regional selection boards. Selection and ordering by membership ballot.

OMOV = One member one vote

London: (Lab) As for Scotland/Wales, except membership ballot of constituency candidates is postal. The list candidates ordering is determined by a London selection board. (Lib Dems) A shortlist of constituency and list candidates is by a London selection committee. Final selection and ordering is by a postal ballot of all members.

Green Party candidates for regional list elections are by one member one vote STV ballot of all members in that region. Members for individual constituency selections are selected by one member one vote STV ballot of all members for that constituency. Hustings are held which members can attend if they wish. Different regions set different rules on internal campaigning. In London internal campaigning is allowed with an expenses limit of £200 per candidate.

Table 9.2 Gender representativeness in recent British elections

	% women
House of Commons	
(1997) (FPTP)	18%
(2001) (FPTP)	18%
Scottish Parliament (1999)	
- constituency	40%
- list	32%
Scottish Parliament (2003)	
- constituency	42%
- list	36%
Welsh Assembly (1999)	
- constituency	47%
- list	25%
Welsh Assembly (2003)	
- constituency	50%
- list	40%
Greater London Assembly (2000)	
- constituency	36%
- list	45%
European Parliament	
(1994) (FPTP)	18%
(1999) (PR List)	25%

Curtice and Steed, 2000; Russell et al, 2002

reason for this was that Labour, which won a plurality of seats in both elections, adopted a positive discrimination strategy for constituency seats, whereby neighbouring constituencies were 'twinned', with one selecting a male candidate and the other a female one (see Table 9.3). Labour had adopted a similar approach with all-women shortlists for selections for House of Commons constituencies elected under first-past-the-post. Given Labour's dominance in the constituency part of the ballot, this strategy ensured that a high proportion of women were elected to the new assemblies. However, in the London elections in 2000, a greater proportion of women members derived from the list, and not the constituency, section of the ballot (in spite of the fact that Labour used twinning arrangements for constituency contests).

9.9 Overall, the parties have responded fitfully to the new electoral rules by ensuring more women get elected. The gains that were made are due mainly to new arrangements at the constituency level and a more general desire to ensure the selection of more women for Westminster seats also. As we can see from Table 9.3, only the Liberal Democrats and Plaid Cymru used the opportunity of multi-member districts to introduce rules for gender balance.

9.10 There is some evidence of public support for the parties offering representative candidate slates. In 1999, surveys conducted immediately after the Scottish and Welsh elections asked voters whether they believed the parties should offer equal numbers of men and women candidates. In Scotland, 41% agreed or strongly agreed with this proposition, while only 18% disagreed; in Wales, the equivalent figures were 45% and 17%. By 2003, the attraction of gender equality appears to have waned somewhat. In Scotland, 36% wanted to see a gender balance among candidates, while 22% disagreed. In Wales, the figures were 37% and 18%.

Table 9.3   Arrangements for gender balance in candidate selection procedures 1999–2004

	Scotland	Wales	London	European Parliament
Labour	Twinning of constituency candidates. No gender requirement for list.	Twinning of constituency candidates. No gender requirement for list.	Twinning of constituency candidates. No gender requirement for list.	Requirement for one woman on each regional list.
Conservatives	No formal mechanisms.	No formal mechanisms.	No formal mechanisms.	No formal mechanisms, although gender balance must be 'borne in mind' by selectors.
Liberal Democrats	Candidate shortlists for constituency and list elections to include equal numbers of men and women.	Candidate shortlists for constituency and list elections to include equal numbers of men and women.	Shortlist of constituency candidates must include at least one women. For the list, at least one (two) of the top three (five) candidates selected must be female.	'Zipping' of candidates, with a male candidate being followed on the list by a female candidate. 2004: One of the top three on each list must be of a different sex.
Scottish National	No formal mechanisms. Encouragement to local party to include women on constituency shortlists and regional lists.			No formal mechanisms.
Plaid Cymru		Women guaranteed top places on regional lists.		Candidates selected from gender balanced shortlist

Greens: Gender balance for national and European elections is determined by the regional party.

For the GLA list selection there is a requirement that at least one of the top three places should go to a woman and at least one of the top three places should go to a man. There is a second rule that at least two of the top five places should be women and at least two men. There is a third rule that at least one third of the whole list should be women and at least one third should be men. After the results have been counted the list is re-ordered, if necessary, to reflect the gender balance rules.

Conclusion

9.11   The devolved assemblies have two to three times the proportion of women elected to Westminster, and the Welsh Assembly elected in 2003 is 50 per cent female. But this is not necessarily the result of PR. These were new political institutions with no incumbents blocking winnable seats, and the Labour party in particular made systematic efforts to select more women candidates.

9.12   The results showed what can be achieved even in first-past-the-post elections by different candidate selection strategies. In Scotland and in Wales a higher proportion of women were elected in single member constituencies under first-past-the-post than through the multi-member regional lists. The poorer showing of women on the lists is because only the Liberal Democrats and Plaid Cymru have introduced requirements for gender balance on the list.

9.13   List PR in particular offers the potential for more centralised party control of candidate selection. But the only parties which developed more centralised control were the Labour party, the Conservatives for Scottish elections and Plaid Cymru for Welsh elections.   Each of the other parties adopted decentralised strategies to select list candidates.

Chapter 10:
Mobilisation

Issues in this chapter

- The effect of electoral systems on turnout
- Low turnout in UK PR elections
- Factors influencing turnout

The Decline in Voter Turnout

10.1 This chapter looks at the impact of PR on voter participation in elections. A new electoral system is often judged by the extent to which it increases turnout relative to the previous system. One of the reasons that first-past-the-post is taken to decrease turnout is due to people's conception of the 'wasted vote.' Under majoritarian systems of which first-past-the-post is one, supporters of small parties (such as the Greens) with geographic support dispersed widely but thinly across the country may feel that casting their votes will make no difference to who wins in their constituency, still less to the overall composition of government and the policy agenda. The 'wasted votes' argument is strongest in safe seats where the incumbent party is very unlikely to be defeated. In contrast, PR elections, with low vote thresholds and a large number of seats per

Table 10.1 Electoral systems and turnout, worldwide 1990s

Type of Electoral System		Mean Vote 1990s	N
MAJORITARIAN	(Alternative Vote)	(65.5)	(2)
	(First-past-the-post)	(61.2)	(43)
	All majoritarian	**60.4**	**77**
MIXED (e.g. AMS)	**All mixed**	**64.0**	**26**
PROPORTIONAL	(List PR)	(70.0)	(59)
	(STV)	(83.4)	(2)
	All PR Systems	**70.0**	**68**
All		**65.0**	**164**

Source: Norris, 2003

Note: Mean Vote is measured as the number of valid votes as a proportion of the Voting Age Population in all nations worldwide that held parliamentary elections during the 1990s.

N = Number of countries

Table 10.2 Electoral systems and turnout in the UK 1990–2003			
Type of Electoral System		**Ave. Turnout**	**N**
First-past-the-post	UK	69%	3
	Scotland	65%	2
	Wales	67%	2
	Northern Ireland	65%	2
	Euro Parliament	35%	1
	Local authorities	33%	2
	All first-past-the-post	**56%**	**12**
AMS	Scotland, Wales, London (GLA)	45%	5
PROPORTIONAL	Euro Parliament	24%	1
	Northern Ireland	67%	2
	All PR Systems	**45%**	**8**

Source: Election returns

Note: Mean Vote is measured as the number of valid votes as a proportion of the voting age population.

N = Number of elections

constituency, are said to increase the opportunities for minor parties with dispersed support to secure representation with only a modest share of the vote, this increases the incentives for their supporters to participate.

10.2 One way to judge the influence of PR on turnout is to compare majoritarian (first-past-the-post) elections with PR elections. Table 10.1 compares 164 countries using different electoral systems around the world in the 1990's. It also gives details for specific systems such as first-past-the-post, the alternative vote, party list PR and the single transferable vote.[43] The results indicate that average turnout was highest among nations using proportional representation, namely party list and the single transferable vote electoral systems.[44] In contrast voting participation was lower among the different types of majoritarian and combined systems, with turnout across

all these systems about 7.5 to 11 points less than under PR. In other words, turnout in legislative elections held during the 1990s in countries with PR systems was 10% higher than in those elections contested in majoritarian systems. So, it appears from this evidence that the basic type of electoral system is a significant influence on turnout.

10.4 Although the results indicate that PR systems generate higher levels of turnout worldwide, this has not been the case in the UK. Table 10.2 shows turnout figures for the PR elections held in the UK and compares them to those held under first-past-the-post. The table amalgamates the different PR elections in the UK to create an average figure for each type of system.

10.5 In the UK, the electoral system plays less of a part in determining turnout than other factors. Although turnout in

all UK elections is falling, the highest turnout is in elections to Westminster under first-past-the-post (and in elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly). The next highest turnout is for the Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales, then local authorities and lastly the European Parliament. As this rank ordering suggests, one of the main determinants of turnout may be the public's perception of the importance of the body being elected as well as specific features such as closeness of contest and party position on important issues.[45] Turnout could therefore be higher for an election to the House of Commons under PR than now. It is impossible to predict.

10.6　The importance of an election varies with the type of legislature being elected. European elections and now devolved Scottish, Welsh and London elections are often said to be 'second-order' in character. This means that most electors consider the European, devolved Scottish, Welsh and London political arenas to be less important than the national one. Participation in such elections will, on average, be lower than national elections, as voters are less motivated to turn out.

10.7　Public perceptions of the importance of particular elections are a powerful factor in explaining low levels of UK turnout. The 1997 British Elections Survey (BES) saw a dramatic decline in the number of respondents who believed that they could influence the political system. The survey showed that the smaller the difference perceived between the two major parties, the more likely voters were to abstain.[46] The same trend can be seen

in 2001. Turnout was 10% higher in marginal than in safe seats.[47]

10.8　Turnout can also reflect voters' view of how close the election will be. In 2001, for example, Labour maintained a clear lead in the opinion polls throughout the entire campaign and Labour voters may have abstained on the grounds that their party was going to win anyway. Conservative voters, on the other hand, may have felt a need to participate in order to prevent a further erosion of the party vote. In addition, those who are committed to political parties are more likely to vote. In addition, party membership as well as the strength of party attachment in the UK is declining. This too helps reduce turnout at elections.[48]

10.9　Alienation and apathy can also play their part. If people think that politics matters and that governments deliver on their promises and there are clear alternatives on offer, people might be more inclined to participate. In general the character of elections determines turnout more than the character of society.

Turnout in Scotland, Wales, London and the European Parliament

10.10 Reports compiled by The Electoral Commission indicate that several factors can help explain the low turnout in UK elections using PR systems.[49]

10.11 There is some evidence that voters in Scotland and Wales declined to participate because they felt that elections to the Scottish Parliament and National Assembly of Wales were less important than those for the House of

Commons. In Wales especially, focus groups convened by The Electoral Commission showed that many people cited the belief that the Assembly was a waste of time as a reason for not voting. In Scotland, those who thought that the outcome of the Scottish Parliament election had declined in importance were less likely to vote than those who thought the outcome important.

10.12 In the case of European elections, there is more evidence that people don't vote because they see the European Parliament as being 'second-order' (or even 'third order') in character. Indeed, in all EU countries save those such as Belgium and Luxembourg that have compulsory voting, turnout is lower in European elections than in national elections, as table 10.3 (below) shows.

10.13 It is difficult to identify a precise relationship between the electoral system and turnout at the European Parliament elections. The most likely explanation is that poor turnout was related to the low importance of the election for many people. A report from The Electoral Commission compares turnout at European Parliament elections across the UK.[50] It shows that in Northern Ireland, where STV is employed, turnout has been some 20-30 points higher than on the mainland. The same is true for the Republic of Ireland, which also uses STV. In 1999, turnout there was 25 points higher than the UK mainland average. It is therefore possible that the range of choice offered by STV encourages more people to vote.

Table 10.3 Turnout in National and European elections

	Average Parl (1990's)	Average EU (1979-99)
Austria	83.8	49.0
Belgium	91.5	91.0
Denmark	84.3	49.8
Finland	67.4	30.1
France	68.5	53.2
Germany	79.9	58.0
Greece	79.7	74.6
Ireland	67.3	54.8
Italy	85.5	79.3
Luxembourg	87.8	87.5
Netherlands	76.0	44.3
Portugal	65.2	42.3
Sweden	85.4	38.3
Spain	77.6	59.4
UK	74.7	32.2
EU	78.3	57.7

Source: International IDEA
http://www.idea.int/voter_turnout/voter_turnout_pop9.html

10.14 The 34% turnout at the 2000 London elections was notably low. Neither PR nor the return of London-wide local government succeeded in raising turnout. In general elections, London has seen the biggest decline: twenty percentage points since 1992. Turnout at local elections in London peaked in 1990 but is now 15 percentage points lower. Of the four devolution referendums, the turnout in London was the lowest.

10.15 The reasons for the poor turnout in London were the same as in Scotland, Wales and Europe: scepticism about the impact of voting per se, a lack of interest in the outcome and a poor public profile of London political

parties. This was a reflection of the trend also seen in London Borough elections where the turnout in 1998 was just 35%, almost the same number who voted in the 2000 Mayoral and Assembly election.

10.16 There is another possible explanation for the low turnout in London in 2000. That is simple confusion. Londoners were being asked to vote using two new systems, SV for the mayor and AMS for the London Assembly. They did not have the benefit of the educational campaigns that had been conducted prior to the Scottish and Welsh elections of 1999. A relatively high number of spoilt votes were cast in the mayoral ballot because of apparent confusion over how to register a first and a second choice. Surveys conducted after the election found that those who did not know whether the ballot papers were easy or difficult to complete were more likely to abstain than were those who actually thought they were difficult. It appeared to be a simple failure of the electoral process to make any impression on Londoners that lay at the heart of the low turnout in the first London Mayoral and Assembly election.[51]

10.17 When the public do feel 'connected' with the political process, the effect on turnout is apparent. At a general level, the Electoral Commission found that focus group participants were quick to praise MPs who were seen to champion their local community. Its study found that the public profile of London Assembly members was particularly low – awareness of them in the focus groups was almost zero. The exception in London was the Mayor,

Ken Livingstone, who was well known by all focus group participants. He was associated with high profile policies such as the congestion charge and the reform of the underground.

10.18 In the case of European Parliament elections, two additional factors were also important: attitudes towards the EU in general and interest in politics. People that have a high opinion of the EU are more likely to vote in European Elections. Yet only a minority of people in Britain hold such an opinion. Similarly, those who feel the country benefits from EU membership are also more likely to vote. Interest in politics was also tested. Compared with non-voters, voters were twice as likely to discuss politics frequently. A large proportion of non voters never discussed politics at all. People's only points of reference for the Parliament were the figures of Neil and Glenys Kinnock and an amorphous army of 'Eurocrats' in Brussels.

10.19 In all, The Electoral Commission research concluded that two factors were most important when explaining the low turnout. Firstly, the Scottish Parliament and the outcomes of elections to it have declined in importance in the public's mind over the last four years. Secondly, any differences between the major parties are perceived to have narrowed yet further. Those who did vote appear to have been motivated by a sense of civic duty.

Conclusion

10.20 The results of Pippa Norris's study at the beginning of the chapter suggest that institutional rules do matter:

voting participation is maximized in elections using PR. Yet she also finds that PR needs to be combined with small electoral districts, regular but relatively infrequent national contests and competitive party systems. Furthermore, people's social background, and cultural attitudes also remain important predictors of turnout. Therefore, rule-based incentives and cultural habits need to be combined when trying to understand patterns of political participation.

10.21 Research into low turnout also shows that the task of mobilising the electorate to participate in 'second order' elections is formidable. Neither high-minded appeals to civic duty nor changes to the electoral system have much effect. There is some evidence that many people under the age of 60 now see voting as a transaction and expect something tangible in return. It is possible that changing voting methods might help. The UK government has conducted pilot schemes using internet, mobile phone and all-postal voting procedures which were evaluated for The Electoral Commission. So far, none bar postal voting has had any significant effect in increasing turnout. However, the only way of guaranteeing an increase in turnout is for the electorate to be convinced of the benefits of using their vote and the dangers of not doing so. The low turnout in UK PR elections probably has less to do with the electoral systems and more to do with other factors, such as voter apathy, lack of identification with political parties, confusion and lack of interest in the outcome of the election.

Chapter 11:
Representation

Issues in this chapter

- Do constituency and list members elected under AMS perform similar or different roles?
- How much competition is there between constituency and list members in providing a service to constituents?
- What impact has the use of a regional party list system had upon the work of MEPs?
- Constituency work under STV.

Introduction

11.1 Advocates of first-past-the-post argue that single member districts have two key merits. First, all MPs are individually accountable to a clearly defined body of voters and not just to their own party's supporters. Secondly, MPs have a strong incentive to take up the problems of individual constituents and to represent the interests of their constituents as a whole, because some MPs depend for re-election in part on their popularity in their constituency. The electoral system therefore fosters a strong tradition of 'constituency service' through which public representatives act as intermediaries between citizens and the state bureaucracy.

11.2 It is impossible to introduce proportional representation without having multi-member constituencies. The Additional Member System (AMS) is often seen as a means of reconciling this apparent conflict. Because AMS combines single member districts with a system of multi-member top-up seats, it is said to provide the 'best of both worlds.' A significant proportion of elected representatives are elected to represent single member constituencies while the additional list members help ensure a greater degree of proportionality.

11.3 A closed regional party list form of representation, such as that used in the 1999 European elections, offers no such compromise. A number of MEPs are elected collectively to represent a large region. We might anticipate therefore that MEPs have been less likely to engage in constituency service activities since the new system was introduced, although it should be borne in mind that even under first-past-the-post the typical MEP had to represent no fewer than half a million electors.

11.4 Under the Single Transferable Vote (STV) all representatives are elected in multi-member constituencies. But because voters vote for individual candidates rather than party lists, individual candidates' chances of being

elected depend on their personal popularity as well as that of their party. One of the ways in which candidates might seek to acquire that popularity is by acquiring a reputation for providing good 'constituency service'. Hence, advocates of this system argue that it is at least as effective as a system of single member districts in encouraging representatives to provide such a service.

11.5 But looking after the interests of constituents is only one of the roles that an elected representative is expected to perform. It might for example be argued that scrutinising legislation or helping to develop new policies are at least as important as constituency service and that representatives might pay too little attention to these roles if they are heavily involved in constituency service.

11.6 In this chapter we examine the impact that these various electoral systems have on the role played by elected representatives, looking at both the evidence from abroad and that from the use of alternative systems in the UK, and focusing in particular on the degree to which representatives provide some form of constituency service. We begin by looking at AMS, then turn to closed party lists, before examining the experience of STV.

The Different Roles of List and Constituency Representatives under AMS

11.7 Under AMS there are two kinds of representatives, constituency and list. Given the foregoing arguments, we might anticipate that they perform different roles. We would expect

constituency representatives to spend more time advocating the interests of individual voters than list representatives who in contrast could be expected to spend more time on such tasks as working on parliamentary committees, listening to the views of interest groups, or developing policy.

11.8 However, list representatives need to secure a high place on their party's regional list to ensure they are re-elected. This may give them an incentive to maintain a high profile within their region. Moreover they may also have hopes of being elected as a local constituency representative in future and thus might deliberately attempt to compete with the incumbent by providing a constituency service in that area. In short rather than playing complementary roles, constituency and list representatives may be in competition with each other.

11.9 Both these tendencies are evident to some degree in New Zealand where a similar tradition of constituency service pre-existed the change from first-past-the-post to AMS/MMP.[52] On the one hand list candidates in New Zealand are more likely than constituency candidates to rate regional interests as important. Furthermore, a larger proportion of list candidates believe that developing party policy is more important than tending to local constituency matters.[53] On the other hand, list members of all parties are given geographical constituency responsibilities by their leaders and most parties have assigned list MPs 'duty electorates.' Almost all such MPs have offices and staff in a constituency and are expected to deal with

casework. In addition, list MPs are frequently asked to carry out geographically orientated constituency work especially by people who, for whatever reason, are reluctant to approach their constituency MP.[54] Moreover, list MPs are not necessarily averse to this sort of constituency work. Many list MPs in New Zealand who were previously constituency MPs are keen to regain a constituency-level seat and regard engaging in high levels of constituency work as a way of achieving that goal.

11.10 One consequence of the introduction of AMS in New Zealand is that although single member districts have been retained, they are much larger than were constituencies under first-past-the-post. This has resulted in a higher caseload for constituency MPs even though voters might have a choice of MPs offering a constituency service if they are willing to approach a list member.

11.11 In Germany there is less of a tradition of constituency service. However, all parliamentary parties see to it that deputies are assigned to constituency service regardless of the tier from which they are elected. Candidates who have lost a constituency contest tend to keep an office there. At the same time, there is some slight evidence that constituency MPs have more contact with citizens than list MPs and that more constituency MPs want to represent all citizens of the constituency than list MPs. Nonetheless, the difference is slight.[55]

11.12 There is some evidence in the UK that the two types of representative do perform somewhat different roles.

Thomas Lundberg surveyed MSPs and AMs in 2001.[56] He found that list members spent more time than constituency members in contact with interest groups (through meetings, letters, and phone calls), whereas constituency members spent more time helping citizens who had problems with government agencies. Furthermore, list members spent more time than did constituency members in serving on parliamentary committees.

11.13 A useful comment indicating how list members might approach their job rather differently has been provided by Delyth Evans, a former Labour list AM:

'I was able to take a regional view and look at things in a slightly more strategic way than a constituency Member who was focusing entirely on things that were going on in their constituency. So when I was talking about rural issues or transport issues, I was able to take a strategic view across my region.'– Delyth Evans (Labour's only List AM 2000-2003) to the Richard Commisson.

11.14 In 2002, the Constitution Unit, thanks to funding from the ESRC and the Leverhulme Trust, carried out a similar survey of MSPs and AMs. It asked them to estimate how much time they spent on various activities ranging from attending debates to promoting business within the constituency. The results are shown in table 11.1 below.

11.15 We can see that constituency MSPs/AMs report spending more time than do list MSPs/AMs on individual casework and dealing with both local interest groups and delegations. In

Table 11.1. Time Spent on Various Activities, List and Constituency MSPs/AMs (average hours)

Scotland/Wales Average Hours Spent:	Constituency	List
Attending debates	2.7	2.6
Committee work	2.5	2.4
Lobbying/developing policy	1.9	2.2
Dealing with representatives of national UK organisations	1.3	1.2
Casework for individual constituents	3.7	3.1
Dealing with local interest groups	2.4	2.0
Attending non party meetings	2.2	2.7
Promoting business in the constituency	1.7	1.3
N	39	41

Source: Constitution Unit/ESRC/Leverhulme Survey. N=80

contrast, list representatives say they spend more time than do constituency representatives on working on party committees, policy development, and in attending other non-party meetings. Even so, dealing with casework for individual constituents was the single most time -consuming activity for both kinds of representative, and in many respects the results seem more remarkable for the similarity of the role apparently performed by the two kinds of representative.

11.16 This similarity indicates that constituency and list representatives can easily be in competition with each other. Many list members carry out constituency service functions not welcomed by constituency members. This seems to more the case in Scotland than in Wales, but taking both countries together Lundberg found that 49% of constituency members thought that they were being shadowed by a list member, while 33% of list members admitted to the practice.

11.17 The Constitution Unit survey also asked a variety of questions about the constituency casework undertaken by elected representatives. For instance, each member was asked to estimate the number of communications (letters/emails/phone calls) received from individual constituents per week as well as the number of constituency surgeries they held per month. The following table displays the results.

Table 11.2 Average no. of Communications and Surgeries held per month

	Constituency members	List members
Communications	91	73
Surgeries	6	5

Source: Constitution Unit/ESRC/Leverhulme Survey. N=80

11.18 List members do indeed receive fewer communications from individual constituents per month than do constituency members despite representing a far larger area. On the other hand their mail boxes are far from empty. Meanwhile, list members hold only marginally fewer surgeries per month than constituency members.

11.19 Evidence gathered from the public themselves suggests that constituency members maintain a rather greater pre-eminence over list members in their level of contact with the public. According to the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey and the Welsh Life and Times Survey, both carried out by

the National Centre for Social Research after the 2003 elections, 8% of people reported having had contact with a member of the Scottish Parliament or the Welsh Assembly during the previous four years. Of these nearly three quarters said they had had contact with a local constituency member but only a quarter had contact with a list member.

11.20 The same survey evidence indicates that 10% of people in Scotland and Wales had had contact with an MP over the last four years. From this it does not appear to be possible to conclude that the overall level of constituency service provided by

Figure 11.1 Citizen Contact with MSPs and AMs

Citizen contact with MSPs/AMs

Both 7%

Constituency AM/MSF 72%

List AM/MSP 21%

Source: Constitution Unit/ESRC/Leverhulme survey, 2003
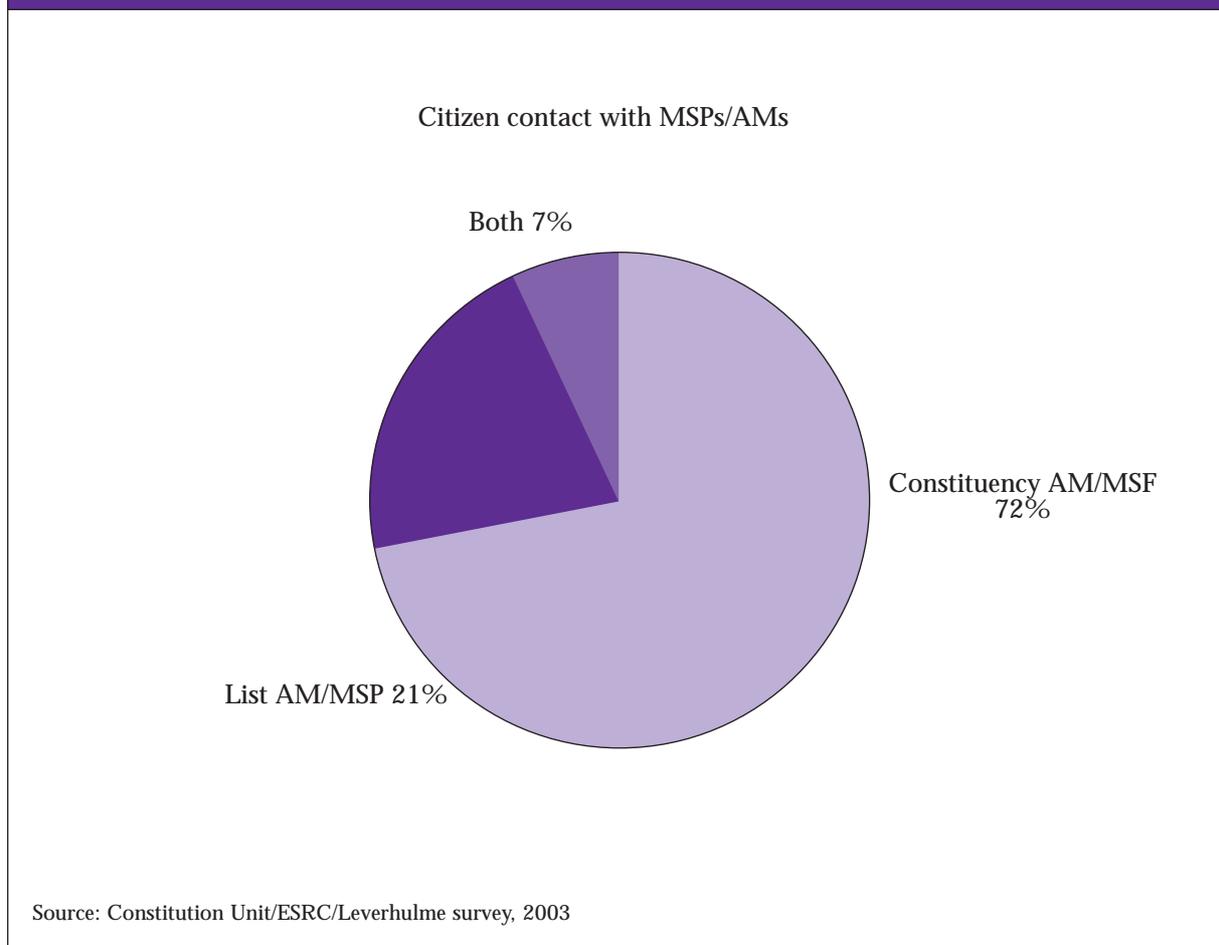
MSPs/AMs under AMS is significantly less than that provided by MPs elected by first-past-the-post.

11.21 So it appears that there are some differences between the roles performed by constituency and list members. The former are more likely to be in contact with individual constituents, the latter spend more time in party and policy work. But these are no more than differences of degree. Rather than performing clearly divergent and different roles, it appears that there is plenty of room for competition and tension between constituency and list members. It is the degree to which there is tension between the two kinds of member that we now investigate in more detail.

Competition and Tension between Constituency and List Representatives

11.22 The potential for tension between constituency and list members was revealed in Scotland soon after the parliament was up and running. It was suggested by the Labour-led Scottish Executive, nearly all of whose MSPs were elected in constituency contests, that list MSPs should receive a lower allowance for the maintenance of a constituency office than constituency MSPs.[57] This was vigorously opposed by Conservative and SNP members, most of whom had been elected as list MSPs.

11.23 In July 1999 an all-party group formulated a code of conduct for both types of member. This asserted that constituency and list MSPs were of equal status but insisted that members should deal only with matters relating to the area in which they had been elected. Moreover, regional members were forbidden to duplicate the work of constituency members and were required to notify the constituency MSP when individual cases were taken up. MSPs were also instructed not to misrepresent the basis on which they were elected or the area they served and were required to indicate on all stationery the name of the constituency or region in which they had been elected. MSPs were also encouraged to contact one another where they were involved or planning to be involved in a major local issue.

11.24 However, a recent Constitution Unit survey has shown that many MSPs do not view these guidelines as adequate.[58] Constituency members, who reported having to deal with large caseloads, alleged that regional members target particular constituencies rather than serving the whole region. They believed that regional MSPs did hardly any public-service work and focused their activity on campaigning while cherry picking selected issues. Some constituency MSPs alleged that regional members paid only lip service to the guidelines and attempted to shadow constituency MSPs in the hope of taking their seats. Moreover, constituency members felt that the guidelines were not enforced properly, despite frequently making complaints to the presiding officer, and noted that no regional members had been called to account for misbehaviour.

11.25 Lundberg also found similar views amongst constituency members. One said:

'The party list members divide up the individual constituencies amongst

themselves and shadow two or three each. This has the effect of 'politicising' constituency work. Instead of representing all constituents equally, you are portrayed as representing only those who support you. This is unnecessary and divisive.' - A constituency MSP.

11.26 But this is not a universal view. One constituency member said of the activity of list MSPs

'I am quite relaxed about it. They have to cover much wider areas in terms of their representation, so I am confident that they will not be able to give the attention to detail which I can, with an office in the constituency. In time, I believe voters will gravitate to a representative of the partyfor which they voted, when seeking to have a complaint dealt with.' - A constituency MSP

11.27 List members denied many of the allegations made against them. They insisted that most of their casework came from the area in which they lived and that they did not target their favoured constituency. Most list members reported meeting constituency members to discuss issues raised with them by constituents rather than vice versa.

11.28 In contrast to Scotland, however, there has been little debate in the National Assembly for Wales about the relative roles of constituency and list members. After the 1999 elections, the Presiding Officer simply declared that all members were equal and that both constituency and list members would receive the same allowances. No written guidance was issued to AMs on the conduct of constituency and list members.

11.29 Equally, the survey found that in both Scotland and Wales relations between constituency and list members of the same party were better than they were between representatives of different parties. However, in the 1999-2003 parliament there were only five instances of a party having both a constituency and a list MSP in the same region (a figure that only rose to eight after the 2003 election), while the equivalent figure in Wales was only six (now fallen to three).

11.30 There are also potential tensions about and between constituency and list representatives in respect of the electoral process. During the summer of 2003, Sir David Steel, the former Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament, and Peter Hain, the current Secretary of State for Wales, criticised AMS for the advantage that the system seemingly gives list MSPs and AMs. Their main objection was that list candidates get a second chance at winning a seat. If a candidate is defeated in the constituency contest he or she can win in the list contest. For this, reason, they state, AMS is 'fundamentally undemocratic'.[59]

11.31 As Table 11.3 shows, it is indeed common (if not universal) practice for parties to put on their lists candidates who are also standing in a constituency. This is usually a requirement for Conservative candidates, on the grounds that no one should be allowed to be elected unless they have at least fought a constituency contest.

Table 11.3 Percentage of List Candidates Contesting Constituency Seats 2003

Party	Scotland	Wales
Conservative	97%	100%
Labour	15%	85%
Liberal Democrat	51%	63%
Scottish Nationalist	86%	-
Plaid Cymru	-	50%
Scottish Socialist	58%	-
Green	0%	0%
UK Independence	0%	40%

Source: Calculated from data supplied by The Electoral Commission

11.32 As a result, most people elected as list members have fought and lost a constituency contest. No less than 88% of list members elected in Scotland in 2003, and 85% of those elected in Wales had also fought a constituency seat. This reflected the likelihood of winning in a constituency or list.

11.33 However, the practice of barring individuals from standing as both constituency and list candidates can itself introduce its own tensions. Such a ban would provide a disincentive for list candidates to work on behalf of their party's constituency candidates because the greater the success of the latter, the less their own chances of being elected. In Scotland, many Labour list candidates who were not contesting simultaneous constituency contests told our Commission that they privately hoped their party colleague would lose the election. Equally, a Welsh Conservative list candidate in 2003 privately encouraged people to vote against his party in the constituency contests in order to maximise his own chances on the list

11.34 AMS provides scope for tension between constituency and list representatives, and especially so in respect of their right to serve the interests of individual constituents. This tension can also spill over into public perceptions of the electoral process. The different experience of Scotland and Wales, however, suggests that this tension is not an inevitable consequence of the system. Much depends on the degree to which constituency and list representatives come from different parties, and the degree to which constituency

Table 11.4. Parties with both Constituency and List AMs in Wales

Wales	Parties with Constituency and List AMs	
	1999	**2003**
South Wales Central	PC (2 list, 1 constituency)	No party
South Wales East	PC (2 list, 1 constituency)	
	Conserv (1 constituency, 1 List)	Conserv (2 list, 1 constituency)
South Wales West	No party	No party
Mid and West Wales	PC (1 list, 3 constituency)	
	Lab (1 list, 1 constituency)	PC (1 list, 3 constituency)
Wales North	PC (1 list, 3 constituency)	PC (1 list, 2 constituency)

Source: Calculated from election returns

Table 11.5 Parties with both Constituency and List MSPs in Scotland

Scotland	Parties with Constituency and List MSPs	
	1999	**2003**
Glasgow	No Party	No party
Highlands and Islands	SNP (2 list, 2 constituency)	
	LAB (1 list, 1 constituency)	SNP (2 list, 2 constituency)
	LAB (2 list, 1 constituency)	
Lothians	LIB DEM (1 con, 1 list)	Conserv (1 list, 1 constituency)
Central	No party	No party
Mid and Fife	SNP (3 list, 1 constituency)	SNP (2 list, 3 constituency)
	LIB (1 list, 1 constituency)	
North East	SNP (4 list, 2 constituency)	LAB (2 list, 2 constituency)
	SNP (1 list, 4 constituency)	
South	No party	Conserv (2 list, 2 constituency)
West	No party	No party

Source: Calculated from election returns

representatives find the resulting competition unacceptable.

11.35 It should be noted that not every party in Scotland and Wales has both types of member, as tables 11.4 and 11.5 indicate.

11.36 The tables show that in Wales it is predominately Plaid Cymru that has both constituency and list members in the same region. In Scotland it is predominantly the SNP, although Labour and the Conservatives had both types in two regions in 2003. With such a small number of case studies of dual representation, it is impossible to conduct a meaningful statistical analysis of the attitudes of constituency to list members from the same party.

11.37 However, we might note that one tension about the position of list members that has arisen in New Zealand has not so far at least arisen in Scotland or Wales. This is the problem of 'party hopping'. In 1998, nine list MPs defected from the New Zealand First party. This raised questions about the continued right of these MPS to sit in parliament, given they had been elected as part of that party's national list. In order to put a stop to this practice, the New Zealand government introduced the *Electoral (Integrity) Amendment Bill* in December 1999. The Bill proposed that any list MP who resigned from the party for which he/she was elected, must also quit parliament. Despite opposition from non-government parties, the Bill eventually became law in December 2001. Since the passing of the Act, no MP has attempted to defect to a different party.

11.38 Two SNP list MSPs resigned the party whip and became Independents during the course of the 1999-2003 parliament. This did not, however, lead to widespread calls for their resignation. Indeed, one of those MSPs,

Margo MacDonald, subsequently secured election as an independent in 2003. It is debatable whether a decision by someone elected in a single member constituency to change parties raises as much difficulty as does such a decision by a list representative and indeed we might note that the New Zealand legislation referred to above applies to both constituency and list MPs.

11.39 In Scotland and in Wales tension is greatest between Labour members, overwhelmingly elected to represent constituents, and the opposition members, mainly elected on a list. It is exemplified in Wales where, since 2003, all 30 Labour AMs are constituency members. In 1999-2000 Labour had to suppress their dislike of list members, especially when their Leader and First Minister, Alun Michael, was himself elected on the list. Since 2003 they have had no such inhibitions, and widespread denigration of list members. Labour members would pointedly refer to themselves as directly elected members, in contrast to the list members who failed to get elected in constituencies. These constant reminders of the different status of Labour and opposition members reinforce the sense of two classes of member, even though the Presiding Officer sternly maintains there are not.

MEPs, Constituency Work and the Electoral System

11.40 We now look at the impact on the constituency service work undertaken by MEPs of the closed regional party list system used in the 1999 European elections. In particular we make use of

an extensive survey of 61 British MEPs carried out from late 2001 to early 2003 by David Farrell and Roger Scully.[60] We look in particular at the level of constituency service provided by MEPs and the degree to which multi-member regions encourage co-operation or conflict.

11.41 No less than 84% of British MEPs feel that they do more constituency work than do MEPs from other countries, confirming previous evidence that this is a relatively important part of the British political process.

11.42 Few MEPs felt that their constituency workload had increased, despite the move to larger multi-member regions. The vast bulk of MEPs admitted that their constituency workload had not increased (a mere 8% claimed that it had); if anything the amount of constituency work has declined. This was most likely to be true of those MEPs who were one of two or more representatives from the same party in a region and who could thus share the constituency casework between them. Most MEPs in this position reported carving up the region between them, though only 24% of Conservative MEPs reported having done this. In contrast MEPs from smaller parties face greater demands for constituency activity, not least because they are often one of very few elected representatives for their party at any level of government.

11.43 At the same time most MEPs felt that the size of their regions made it more difficult to undertake constituency casework. MEPs commented that it was impossible to be identified with any one community. At a seminar

organised by the PR Commission to discuss this problem, one MEP commented that he had more than 50 Westminster constituencies in his region. He complained that because he was not paid travel expenses within his region he could not give the same amount of time to constituency problems as he could have done had he been at Westminster. Even so, he noted that the type of issues raised by those who do contact him had not changed. Others at the seminar suggested that very few people knew who their MEP was while those who did know persisted in contacting MEPs on local issues which were beyond the MEP's remit. How far this had changed since 1999 was unclear, though it was suggested that the move from first-past-the-post to PR list had meant there had been a diminution of the link between constituents and their representatives in Scotland and Wales.

11.44 As a result of these difficulties most MEPs now view their role as being 'regional ambassadors' whose work focuses on the legislative process in Brussels rather than the provider of advice and services to constituents.

11.45 The majority of MEPs (62%) in the Farrell and Scully survey reported having good relations with other MEPs on the party team. This figure rose to 81% amongst Labour MEPs compared with 64% of Conservatives and 33% from other parties. However, previous research has shown that cooperation has not always been achieved.[61] In one region, for instance, relations between representatives of a major party were so bad that a professional intermediary was required to help resolve differences. Conservative MEPs were

particularly likely to feel party colleagues were 'shadowing' their territory. More generally, intra-party relations become more strained with the onset of the re-selection process when incumbents compete against each other for a high place on their party list.

11.46 Cooperation across party lines is far less common. Though most MEPs recognise that the electoral system creates the potential for such cooperation, few seem particularly eager to grasp those opportunities. Scotland is an exception. Here, MEPs from different parties co-operate because of what is seen as a 'shared national dimension.'

11.47 Overall, both the PR Commission seminar and the survey work carried out by Farrell and Scully revealed that a majority of British MEPs (59%) do not like the new electoral system. However, Farrell and Scully found that newer MEPs were more tolerant of the system than older MEPs, perhaps reflecting the 'withdrawal symptoms' faced by older MEPs from the old first-past-the-post system. While 56% of incumbent MEPs stated that they did not like list-PR only 14% of new MEPs held that view. Equally, those MEPs representing larger regions and those belonging to larger parties were more likely to be opposed than those representing smaller regions and those belonging to smaller parties. MEPs belonging to smaller parties owe their election of course to the introduction of the new system.

11.48 We have seen that from the perspective of MEPs themselves there has been little change in the constituency

casework undertaken since the change of electoral system in 1999; for many the amount may have declined. The large size of the regions used in European elections appears to have caused particular difficulty, a difficulty that is only partly alleviated by MEPs from the same party collaborating with each other. Instead MEPs appear to have taken on the role of ambassador for their region. As to what the public thinks about how well they are represented in the European Parliament we alas know relatively little.

Constituency Service under STV

11.49 Under STV candidates often take great pains to emphasise their personal qualities since they cannot use a party label to distinguish themselves from rival same-party candidates. STV in the Republic of Ireland has resulted increasingly in the election of a number of single issue or independent candidates. These candidates tend campaign on local matters and achieve a high personal profile. The 'bailiwicking' of constituencies by parties tends to be more common in rural than in urban areas. This is due to local communities and social networking in rural areas giving particular candidates a high personal profile. Parties in urban areas are less able to 'manage' the vote in such a manner due to the smaller geographical areas and less voter awareness of where different candidates come from.

11.50 Because of this, STV encourages candidates, particularly in rural areas, to campaign on the basis of personal characteristics often in discreet opposition to party colleagues. They regard constituency work as very

important. Irish MPs perform more constituency work than their counterparts from other countries, regarding it as vital for electoral purposes.[62]

11.51 The proposition that STV is an inherent cause of increased constituency work in Ireland should be treated with caution. The proposition does not seem to hold in an examination of countries that likewise have electoral systems in which voters rank candidates of the same party. The assumption is that the candidate-orientated nature of STV encourages MPs to compete through providing services for their constituents. However, Denmark, which has a preferential party list system provides a counter example. Studies of Danish MP's show that there is a fairly low degree of constituency casework and that Danish parliamentarians do not see constituency work as taking up excessive amounts of time.[63] Similarly in Switzerland which has an electoral system allowing a write-in ballot which allows voters to strike out candidate names on ballots and insert alternatives, MPs are not burdened by constituency work.[64] In fact, in a study of Swiss Federal MPs, respondents found it difficult to even understand why the author was asking about the extent of constituency solicitations. One MP reported it at 'about 40 cases a year'. Finally, in Tasmania - a province that uses a similar form of STV to Ireland there is no direct evidence of the electoral system being a causal mechanism for increased constituency service.[65]

Conclusion

11.52 Representatives elected under AMS or STV are likely to provide as much constituency service as are those elected under first-past-the-post. In the case of MEPs, the large size of the electoral regions appears to make it difficult for MEPs to undertake constituency casework.

11.53 The amount of time elected representatives spend on constituency casework and the degree to which the public come into contact with elected politicians under any political system, should not be exaggerated. Moreover, elected politicians certainly perform other important roles.

11.54 Any system of multi-member representation offers both opportunities for co-operation and the potential for tension between politicians elected for the same area. While perceptions of party and personal interest undoubtedly play a role, the degree to which either occurs appears to vary substantially from one party to another and from one country to another and thus neither outcome can be considered inevitable.

Chapter 12:
The effect of electoral system change on government

Issues in this chapter

- The effect of electoral systems on the conduct of government
- Coalition government in Scotland and Wales
- Achievements of the coalition governments
- Public attitudes to coalition government

Introduction

12.1 In this chapter, we consider the implications of the new electoral systems in Scotland and Wales for government. We examine the way the new systems have produced executives consisting of more than one party in a power sharing arrangement, and what those coalition governments have achieved. Coalition governments are rare in the UK; not since World War II has Britain been governed by a formal power sharing executive. But one consequence of any proportional electoral system is that no single party is likely to gain an overall majority of seats. In such a situation, the largest party can consider operating on its own as a minority administration. The alternative is to share power with one or more other parties in a majority coalition. The public in Britain is not used to such arrangements (neither are politicians) the only similar situation at the national level being the Lib-Lab Pact in 1977-78.[66] Yet Scotland and Wales already have experience of different forms of government arising from the use of proportional electoral systems.

12.2 Since the establishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1999, Scotland has been governed by a two-party coalition enjoying majority support in the legislature. At the 1999 election, Labour gained 43% of the legislative seats, leaving it well short of a majority. Since the party had forged good relations with the Liberal Democrats - who controlled an additional 13% of seats - it was relatively easy for Labour to form a coalition, with a clear majority in the legislature. Despite changes in the First Minister (there have been three First Ministers since 1999), the coalition has been stable, and was renewed in 2003.

12.3 The arrangements in Wales have been less stable. Here, Labour anticipated winning an overall majority in 1999. When it fell just short – with 28 voting members out of 59 (the Presiding Officer does not vote) - it decided to form a single party minority administration. However, the lack of a majority made it difficult for the government to prepare a clear legislative programme, and involved

Figure 12.1 Different public policies in Scotland 1999–2003[68]

- Free long term personal care for the elderly
- Abolition of up-front tuition fees for students in higher education, replaced by graduate contributions
- Three year settlement for teachers pay and conditions
- Less restrictive Freedom of Information Act
- Abolition of fox hunting, by Protection of Wild Mammals (Scotland) Act 2002
- 'One stop shop' for Public Sector Ombudsman
- Protection of the property and welfare of adults with mental incapacity through law reform
- Abolition of the ban on 'promoting homosexuality' in schools by repeal of Section 2A of Local Government Act (equivalent of 'Section 28' in England and Wales)

continuous compromises with opposition parties to secure passage of its measures. The precarious nature of the arrangements was made obvious in February 2000, when the legislature passed a motion of no confidence in the First Secretary, Alun Michael. Michael's successor, Rhodri Morgan, aware of the weakness of the minority administration, made overtures to the Liberal Democrats, with a formal majority-status coalition being formed in October 2000. Following the 2003 elections, however, Wales saw its third type of government, with Labour again reverting to a single party administration, albeit this time on a wafer thin majority (30 out of 59 seats).

12.4 We consider these experiences, and in particular the coalitions in Scotland (1999-present) and Wales (2000-2003). The government in Scotland has been stable, and the transition to a majority administration in Wales in 2000 made it easier for a clear legislative programme to be introduced. While civil servants in both areas were initially concerned at the prospect of power sharing executives, their

misgivings soon disappeared, and there is little impression that the coalitions hindered the policy process.[67]

Achievements of the coalition governments in Scotland and Wales

12.5 Most of the chapter presents the data on public attitudes to the coalitions in Scotland and Wales. The public will judge coalitions by the way in which they govern and by their results. This opening section briefly presents information on these aspects, the information on which the Scots and Welsh will have formed a favourable or unfavourable impression of what coalition governments can deliver. First we summarise what they have delivered, and then say a little about their different style of governing, and different relationship with the assembly.

12.7 Figure 12.1 summarises the main policy outputs of the coalition government in Scotland in its first term. It is a statement of achievements, not failings: these are things highlighted by the coalition partners. But taken on those terms,

two things are worth noting about the list. One is the influence of the Liberal Democrats in sustaining or promoting new policies, putting pressure on their Labour coalition partners. This is a different set of outputs than would have resulted from a Labour majority government. The Liberal Democrats were the driving force behind the new Scottish policy on tuition fees, which they insisted upon as their price of entry into the coalition. On free long term care the Liberal Democrats were part of the broader coalition of support in the Scottish Parliament (with the SNP and the Conservatives) for full implementation of the Sutherland report. The less restrictive Freedom of Information Act was thanks to Jim Wallace, Liberal Democrat leader and Justice Minister in the first term.

12.8 The second thing worth noting about the list is how many of these measures have been introduced in advance of the UK government, rather than Scotland lagging behind. It is true that in other respects Scotland has lagged behind the UK, by declining to follow some of the New Labour public service reforms (such as more choice and competition in schools, foundation hospitals) introduced south of the border. But on certain policy items Scotland has moved faster than the UK. This is of interest to those who fear that coalition must inevitably result in policy blockage and stagnation, because the Scottish experience appears to suggest the contrary. It was of course part of the purpose of devolution that Scotland should be free of the Westminster legislative logjam.

12.9 The last four items in Figure 12.1 all show how the coalition government in

Scotland has introduced legislation ahead of Westminster. Scotland has banned fox hunting (though with flawed legislation) and abolished the ban on promoting homosexuality in schools ('section 28') three years ahead of Westminster. On these first two items, Westminster moved more slowly because of opposition in the House of Lords; but the same does not apply to the next two. Scotland implemented the Law Commission proposals on adults with mental incapacity in 2000, at least four years ahead of Westminster which considered the Draft Mental Incapacity Bill in 2003. And Scotland has introduced a 'one stop shop' for the Public Services Ombudsman, while similar proposals in Whitehall still lie on the shelf. On the biggest decision of all, free long term care for the elderly, the Scottish coalition has taken a bold (some would say reckless) decision where Westminster still fears to tread.

12.10 Wales has fewer big policy items. In part this reflects the Assembly's lack of legislative power and its smaller per capita budget, which allows less room for manoeuvre, and in part the lesser policy making capacity in Wales. After little distinctive in the first year, different policies really began to emerge with the formation of the coalition government led by Rhodri Morgan in October 2000. Not all the items in figure 12.2 are a result of coalition, but, as in Scotland, the partnership agreement with the Liberal Democrats was a spur to policy innovation. And as in Scotland, the coalition does not appear to have been a brake on bold new policies: although the Liberal Democrats objected at the time, they did not succeed in stopping

Figure 12.2　Different public policies in Wales in the Assembly's first term[69]

- UK's first Children's Commissioner
- Creation of 22 local health boards, to work alongside Wales' 22 local authorities
- Free medical prescriptions for those under 25 and over 60, and freezing of all other prescription charges
- Education and Learning Wales (ELWa), new body to oversee post 16 education and training; and Careers Wales, to provide careers advice and guidance to all ages
- Means tested learning grants for people in further and higher education
- Abolition of school league tables; piloting a new Welsh Baccalaureate in 19 schools and colleges
- Six weeks free home care for the elderly after discharge from hospital
- Finance Wales established as a 'user-friendly' bank for small business.

Figure 12.3　Power sharing in the Scottish Parliament[70]

The 'new politics' in Scotland is illustrated by the way the Parliament plans its weekly business, scrutinises legislation, and engages with the public. The weekly business is brokered in the Parliamentary Bureau, chaired by the Presiding Officer, and attended by representatives of six parties (Labour, Lib Dems, SNP, Conservatives, Greens and Socialists) who can vote in accordance with their representation in the Parliament. This contrasts with the way the business is planned at Westminster bilaterally between the two main parties, to the exclusion of the minor parties (and the Speaker).

Legislation is scrutinised by expert subject committees, for whom legislative scrutiny is a heavy part of their workload. At Westminster the public have no opportunity to make any direct input into the legislative process, except on the small minority of bills which are published in draft and then subject to pre-legislative scrutiny. In the Scottish Parliament extensive efforts are made to ensure the public are engaged. As part of the Stage 1 procedure on a bill the lead committee enquires into the adequacy of the consultations so far, and may invite further representations from interested parties. A systematic study of legislative amendments in the first term concluded that although the Executive still dominates the legislative process, the domination is less than at Westminster, and expectations of power sharing between the Executive and Parliament are being realised.[71]

Finally, in terms of public engagement, the committees of the Scottish Parliament are more active in stimulating and facilitating public involvement in their work than their counterparts at Westminster. This can be seen, for example, in their websites and use of on-line consultation; in their use of reporters, to extend the committees' reach; and in their willingness to travel outside Edinburgh.

the decision by the Labour Health Minister to replace five health authorities with 22 new health boards, a decision which has since attracted considerable controversy.

The 'new politics' in Scotland and Wales

12.11 The common characteristic of all three devolved assemblies is that, thanks to being elected by proportional representation, no single party had an overall majority in their first term. This creates a very different atmosphere from the domination of single party government at Westminster, whether it is the dominance of Mrs Thatcher in the 1980s or the supremacy of New Labour after 1997. Coalition governments have to accommodate the views of the coalition partners, including their backbenches, and have to listen more carefully to other strands of opinion within the assembly.

12.12 This is most clearly evident in the Scottish Parliament, which from the start was determined to be different from Westminster. The Consultative Steering Group which advised on the Standing Orders in 1998 adopted four key principles of sharing the power; accountability; access and participation; and equal opportunities. At the end of the first four-year term, the Procedures Committee reviewed the Parliament's performance against these founding principles, and confirmed their adoption as the Parliament's principles.

12.13 Of course not all the innovations of the Scottish Parliament can be attributed to PR. Its founders were determined to break from the

Westminster mould, and had the advantage of starting with a relatively clean sheet. Furthermore, there was along history of Labour co-operation with the Liberal Democrats, especially on constitutional issues. This meant that both parties were bound together in supporting devolution as well as being used to working together. A better test case to illustrate the effects of PR is the New Zealand parliament, because this switched to PR in 1996 after over a century of being elected by first-past-the-post. New Zealand had been a classic, majoritarian Westminster parliament, and the changes since 1996 can mostly be ascribed to the introduction of PR. The main changes are summarised in Figure 12.4.

Public attitudes to coalition in Scotland and Wales

12.14 Enough has been said to give a flavour of the different style, and different policy outcomes of coalition governments. What has been the reaction of the public in Scotland and Wales to coalitions, and did their attitudes change in the light of their experience of coalition governments in the first term of the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly? In both 1999 and 2003 a public attitude survey was conducted immediately after the devolution elections. One question asked about the preferred form of government, contrasting single party and coalition executives (Table 12.1). Not only did more people in Scotland (1999 and 2003) and Wales (2003, although not 1999) prefer coalition over single party government, but this group has also increased in size since 1999. In other words, the experience

Figure 12.4   Impact of PR on the New Zealand Parliament[72]

New Zealand was a classic, winner-takes-all majoritarian system, with an executive dominated parliament. Following two referendums in the early 1990s, New Zealand switched to AMS (the same voting system adopted for the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly). The results were dramatic:

■ The two party system fragmented into a multi-party system
■ No single party commanded a majority after the elections of 1996, 1999, 2002
■ There have been coalition governments since, some commanding a majority, some a minority within the parliament.

This has altered the relation between government and parliament. Government can no longer take the parliament for granted.

■ There is more negotiation, between the coalition parties in government, and between minority parties and their supporting parties
■ Negotiation is over the parliamentary agenda (through the Business Committee), and over the content of legislation
■ The legislative process has become slower, although governments in the end get their way by negotiating over the detail
■ Parliamentary committees have become more assertive, in their scrutiny of legislation and in conducting more inquiries
■ The policy environment in parliament is livelier: with more political parties there are more policy agendas to choose from.

In short, PR in New Zealand has strengthened parliament against the executive.

TABLE 12.1: Public views on the form of government

'Which do you think would be generally better for Scotland/Wales nowadays?'

	SCOTLAND		WALES	
	1999	2003	1999	2003
To have a government in Edinburgh/Cardiff formed by one political party on its own?	41%	39%	48%	42%
To have a government in Edinburgh/Cardiff formed by two political parties together, in coalition?	51%	51%	47%	45%
Balance in favour of coalition	+10%	+12%	-1%	+3%

Source: Scottish Parliament Election Survey 1999, Scottish Social Attitudes 2003, Welsh Assembly Election Study 1999, Welsh Life and Times Survey 2003.

of coalition appears to have convinced some supporters of single party rule of the benefits of power-sharing.

12.15 Overall, then, there is little in the early experience of coalition government in Scotland and Wales to suggest that power sharing is a less effective form of administration than a single party ruling alone. But what of other, more specific, claims about the merits and drawbacks of coalition government? In particular, what about the numerous criticisms of power sharing executives? Disraeli once said that 'England does not love coalitions'. Is there any evidence that the coalitions in Scotland and Wales possess glaring deficiencies? To answer this, we consider a number of specific objections to coalition government:

The role of elections

1. At election time, voters do not know what their votes will mean for government formation, since parties tend to engage in post-election 'horse trading' before an outcome is reached.
2. If voters wish to apportion blame to a government at election time, it is more difficult for them to do so if the government comprises two or more parties (since which party is to be blamed for any particular outcome?).

The nature of the government outcome

3. Coalitions give disproportionate power to small parties, who can 'hold to ransom' the larger partner(s) to get what they want.
4. Coalitions are unstable, and more likely to collapse than single party governments. They are also less dynamic, since policy making takes longer and involves more compromises

than with a single party government.

5. If coalitions are not unstable, it makes it very difficult to electors to evict them and the same parties stay in government for a long time.

The role of elections

12.16 At Westminster elections, people who support the Conservative Party know what their vote will mean for the outcome; if the Conservatives gain a plurality of votes, they will probably form a government. Moreover, because of the way the electoral system allocates seats, the vote winner gains a substantial 'bonus', giving it a majority of legislative seats. Parties in this position are thus able to govern by themselves; except in rare circumstances, they do not require the support of any other party to get their measures through the Commons.[73] The consequences for the relationship between voters and governments are twofold. First, people know that if they vote for a particular party because of its policies, and if that party wins the election, then those policies are likely to be introduced by the government. There is thus a direct link between the choices voters make and the decisions taken in their name by governments. This is called the 'mandate' form of accountability. Second, since parties are able to govern alone, with no need to share power with another party, voters know which party to blame or reward for whatever the government does. Thus, at election time, if a voter is dissatisfied with the policies of a particular administration, he or she can identify the party responsible for these policies, and try to vote them out of office. This is called the 'sanction' form of

accountability. Together, the mandate and sanction forms of accountability provide strong levers for voters in controlling their governments.[74]

12.17 But what happens under proportional electoral arrangements, when governments are formed by more than one party? In this situation, the voters will usually know that, should their preferred party be in a position to form a government, it will likely not be able to introduce all of its manifesto commitments. What the voter will not know in casting his or her vote is which part(s) of the manifesto will have to be negotiated. In these conditions, the direct link between votes and government (the 'mandate') seems to be weakened.

12.18 In Scotland in 1999, the opinion polls might have pointed to a 'hung' parliament, but none of the parties made clear prior to the election which parties they would negotiate with. The Conservatives suggested that they would not negotiate with the Scottish National Party. The Liberal Democrats' formal position was that they would deal with whichever party gained the most seats. In practice, they clarified this by indicating that they did not envisage the SNP being in this position, and that Labour was their preferred partner. Similarly, in 2003, the Labour-Liberal Democrat coalition campaigned as separate parties, with no clear indication that they would re-enter government together. The Liberal Democrats again indicated only that they would negotiate with the largest party. In Wales in both 1999 and 2003, all the parties campaigned on their own terms, with no indication of their preferred coalition partner.[75]

12.19 So, in the context of a potential 'hung' parliament, the parties have not made it easier for people in Scotland and Wales to know what their vote will mean for government outcomes. Do people mind? The post-election surveys in 1999 and 2003 carried a question on the desirability of 'pre-election coalitions' (Table 12.2). The results show that far more people would have liked the parties to have made clear their preferences than not. However, in Scotland at least, fewer people took this view in 2003 than in 1999, although the reverse was the

TABLE 12.2: Public views on pre-election coalitions

'All parties should have told us before polling day who they would prefer to work with in a coalition government'

	SCOTLAND		WALES	
	1999	2003	1999	2003
Strongly agree/Agree	53%	45%	41%	44%
Neither agree nor disagree	20%	19%	27%	19%
Strongly disagree/Disagree	14%	15%	16%	14%
Balance Agree - Disagree	39%	30%	25%	30%

Source: Scottish Parliament Election Survey 1999, Scottish Social Attitudes 2003, Welsh Assembly Election Study 1999, Welsh Life and Times Survey 2003.

TABLE 12.3: Does support for coalitions incline people to favour representative elections?

	Favour single party government	Favour coalition
Believe elections should produce a clear winner	56%	41%
Believe elections should produce a fair result	25%	37%
Total (excluding 'Don't knows')	81%	78%

Source: British Social Attitudes 2003

case in Wales. Perhaps this reflects the likelihood of the coalition being renewed in Scotland in 2003, whereas in Wales, voters were more uncertain about the likely outcome. If voters feel they can predict the outcome of a 'hung' parliament, they appear less likely to seek the parties' assistance than if the outcome is less clear.

12.20 But if the new electoral system in Scotland and Wales deprived voters of some control over which government gets chosen, might it have restored some control in other ways? The new system allows people two votes which, some commentators claim, enable voters to signal their coalition preferences by supporting party X on one section of the ballot, and party Y on the other. Do we find that, in 1999, Scottish voters used their two votes to signal their coalition preferences, and did the parties take heed of these signals? There is some evidence that voters behaved in this way. Thus, survey data shows that, among supporters of Labour or the Liberal Democrats who favoured a coalition, 10% voted for one party on their first ballot and the other on their second, while among those who did not favour a coalition, only 3% did likewise. However, rather more supporters of a coalition (14%) voted for either

Labour or the Liberal Democrats on the first ballot, but then for another party on the second.[76] So just as the parties did not provide the voters with much of a steer in 1999, neither did voters give clear directions to the parties.

12.21 It looks as though the more the public is reconciled to coalition arrangements (as in Scotland), the less likely people are to believe that elections should function as vehicles for the mandate form of accountability. In fact, if we test for this more explicitly, there is some limited evidence for this supposition. In Table 12.3, we examine the attitudes towards whether elections should yield a 'clear winner' or 'fair result' (Table 12.3) by their support for either single party or coalition government (Table 12.1). We can see that more people who favour single party government believe elections should produce a clear winner than do those favouring coalition. The latter are more inclined to believe elections should yield a representative result than the former.

12.22 But what if people are less concerned to use their vote to confer a mandate on a government, as a reward or to sanction a government already in office? This requires 'clarity of

responsibility', with voters being clear which party is responsible for which policy output.[77] Surely this becomes more difficult if more than one party is in office, as is the case with coalitions? This is undoubtedly true, since coalition involves concessions between the partners, which muddies, rather than clarifies, responsibility. Yet coalitions can provide voters with at least some clarity, provided two conditions are met. The first is that a particular party habitually controls a particular portfolio, so that voters can identify a policy output in that portfolio with the party. The second is that the coalition partners control the ministries they hold by themselves, so that any decisions in a particular field can be labelled as one partner's or the other's. However, even if these conditions are met, this only helps voters to indicate approval of one of the coalition partners, not necessarily to eject the other party from office (in other west European countries, it is not common for a party in coalition to see its vote share decline between elections and yet to remain in government).[78]

12.23 How far has the coalition in Scotland helped voters to clarify responsibility in these ways? When it comes to the longevity of portfolios, voters have been helped somewhat by the fact that the junior partner - the Liberal Democrats - have consistently held the Rural Affairs ministry since 1999, while they also held the Justice ministry throughout the first term (although this portfolio was re-allocated to Labour after the 2003 election). Also muddying the waters is the fact that the partners do not tend to control discrete ministries, but rather share responsibility. Thus, junior ministers from one party are often located in ministries headed by the coalition partner (this was true also of the coalition in Wales between 2000-2003). Such an arrangement may aid the coordination of the coalition, but does little to help voters identify which party is responsible for which policy decisions.

12.24 Perhaps clarity of responsibility is of little concern to voters. As with the mandate role of elections, we tested attitudes towards the capacity of elections to confer sanctions on governments. The results (Table 12.5) suggest that, while three or four voters in ten believe elections should allow for sanctions to be imposed on governments, a greater number believe the representation of viewpoints is a more important goal. In Wales at least, there has been a shift to the latter goal since 1999; perhaps the experience of coalition there has encouraged voters to downplay the risk or relative importance of a lack of clarity. Our surveys suggest that more people are concerned about the weakness of mandates in a coalition situation than with the difficulty of imposing sanctions.

12.25 Overall, it may be that under the coalition conditions usual in proportional systems, elections are less likely to perform (or to easily perform) the functions of conferring mandates or imposing sanctions that commentators claim are possible under first-past-the-post. But we have uncovered little evidence that this is a source of great discontent to voters. It is true that significant proportions in both Scotland and Wales continue to believe that the primary function of elections should be to allow voters to exert

TABLE 12.5: Public views on elections as 'sanctions'

'All parties should have told us before polling day who they would prefer to work with in a coalition government'

	SCOTLAND		WALES	
	1999	2003	1999	2003
It is better to have just one party in government so that it is very clear who should be blamed if things go wrong	33%	31%	41%	37%
It is better to have two or more parties in government so that more people's views are represented	55%	54%	47%	48%
Balance in favour of sanctions	-22%	-23%	-6%	-11%

Source: Scottish Parliament Election Survey 1999, Scottish Social Attitudes 2003, Welsh Assembly Election Study 1999, Welsh Life and Times Survey 2003.

direct control over the formation and termination of governments. But significant proportions prefer to see that elections secure a more representative outcome. Moreover, there is some evidence that, the more voters observe of coalitions, the less likely those voters are to be concerned that elections provide for conditions of mandates and sanctions.

Coalitions in office

12.26 Having dealt with elections, we now turn to the actual operation of coalitions. In particular, we explore two key issues: the (disproportional) power of small parties, and the instability and ineffectiveness of coalitions. What evidence can we glean from Scotland and Wales that sheds light on these matters?

12.27 Have the coalitions in Scotland and Wales provided small parties with disproportionate power when it comes to the formation and operation of the government? Put colloquially, is the government 'dog' being wagged by the small party 'tail'? When it comes to the allocation of ministries, it is a pattern across countries that the junior partner tends to win a slightly higher proportion of posts than its share of government seats.[79] Thus, in Wales in 2000, while the Liberal Democrats contributed 18% of total government seats, they gained 22% of the portfolios (two cabinet posts). In Scotland in 1999, the Liberal Democrats gained 20% of the portfolios (two posts), although their seat share was 23%. In 2003, although the Liberal Democrats gained the same number of seats as in 1999 (17 seats), their share of total government seats increased (to 25%), since the seats won by Labour fell. The party was thus in a strong position to seek - and receive - an extra

TABLE 12.6: Public views on the power of small parties

'The new voting system used in elections to the Scottish Parliament/Welsh Assembly gives too much power to smaller parties'

	SCOTLAND		WALES	
	1999	2003	1999	2003
Strongly agree/Agree	16%	17%	16%	16%
Neither agree nor disagree	28%	26%	33%	30%
Strongly disagree/Disagree	44%	37%	35%	29%
Balance of concern about small parties	+28%	+20%	+19%	+13%

Source: Scottish Parliament Election Survey 1999, Scottish Social Attitudes 2003, Welsh Assembly Election Study 1999, Welsh Life and Times Survey 2003.

portfolio, boosting its share of ministers to 27%. The Liberal Democrats also gained three of the eight junior ministries in 2003, so that their total share of government seats was almost one third (32%). Even this can be justified on the basis that the party had retained its popularity while the senior partner - Labour - had slipped since 1999. In other words, the allocation of posts was responsive, not only to the absolute share of government seats held by the junior partner, but also to its relative position since the previous election.

12.28 So there is little evidence here of the tail wagging the dog. What about the decisions taken by the government? Most substantial decisions by a coalition government are prefigured in the agreement that is usually signed at the outset by the contracting partners, rather than being decided ad hoc. Given that the junior partners in the Scottish and Welsh coalitions involved themselves in all business of the executive, not simply those areas on which they had a particular interest, there is little the senior partner can do without the junior's agreement.

However, given that there is substantial policy commonality between Labour and the Liberal Democrats in Scotland and Wales, it has not been that difficult for the partners in both areas to reach compromises. Certainly, the public in both areas do not perceive coalition government to have overly benefitted the smaller parties, although maybe the experience of coalition has swung some voters towards this view (Table 12.6).

12.29 Finally, what does the experience in Scotland and Wales suggest about the stability and overall effectiveness of coalitions as forms of government? In spite of the novelty of the arrangements, the coalitions appear to have been stable, with no evidence that the executives in Edinburgh and Cardiff were ever close to being brought down by internal feuds (their stability was helped by the fact that no alternative majority coalitions were feasible). Indeed, the move to a coalition in Wales in 2000 brought with it greater stability, along with an increased policy dynamism, although this is largely attributable to the majority status that the coalition enjoyed, rather than to its multi-party

TABLE 12.7: Public views on the stability of coalitions

'The new voting system used in elections to the Scottish Parliament/Welsh Assembly will lead to unstable government'

	SCOTLAND		WALES	
	1999	2003	1999	2003
Strongly agree/Agree	14%	10%	16%	13%
Neither agree nor disagree	28%	29%	29%	27%
Strongly disagree/Disagree	43%	37%	36%	31%
Balance of concern about instability	-29%	-27%	-20%	-18%

Source: Scottish Parliament Election Survey 1999, Scottish Social Attitudes 2003 , Welsh Assembly Election Study 1999, Welsh Life and Times Survey 2003.

nature. Civil servants in both areas, many of whom served a single party administration prior to devolution, admitted to some early nervousness about the demands and constraints of a power sharing executive. But their experience of the coalitions in action have dispelled these doubts. Not only have officials adapted to serving two political masters rather than one, but there is also little residual belief that coalitions are less proactive than are single party governments in bringing forward policy measures.[80]

12.30 In terms of processes and outcomes, then, the experience of those close to the administrations in Scotland and Wales is broadly favourable. This confidence is also shared by the public, most of whom do not believe that governments under proportional representation will be unstable (Table 12.7). In spite of the turnover in First Ministers during the first term of the Scottish Parliament, and the changes in First Secretary and form of government during the Welsh Assembly's first term, the proportion of those believing in the likelihood of unstable government has not increased between 1999 and 2003.

12.31 In contrast to attitudes towards electoral systems themselves, attitudes towards one of the possible consequences of changing the electoral system, coalition government, have changed from year to year across Britain as a whole. It appears that attitudes are influenced by the perceived success or otherwise of the incumbent government. Up to and including the 1992 general election there was increasing support for single party government. But, as the time in office of the unpopular Major administration increased, the country's mood changed to being marginally in favour of coalition government. And while opinion switched back towards single-party government immediately after the election of Tony Blair's government, opinion appears to have moved once more marginally in favour of coalitions. This is illustrated in table 12.8 below.

Table 12.8 Trends in Attitudes towards Coalition Government

Is it generally better for Britain ...

Year	83	86	87	91	92	94	95	96	97	03
					Percentages					
To have a government formed by one party	47	52	58	56	59	45	46	47	53	44
To have two or more parties get together to form a government	49	43	37	37	34	49	50	48	40	50

Source; British Social Attitudes except 1992 and 1997: British Election Study

Table 12.9 Variation in Attitudes to Coalition Government

Preference for single party or coalition government…

	Scotland	Wales	England
1997			
Single	56%	-	52%
Coalition	35%	-	41%
1999			
Single	43%	57%	-
Coalition	48%	40%	-
2003			
Single	42%	46%	44%
Coalition	47%	44%	50%

Sources: British Election Study 1997; Scottish Election Study 1997; British Social Attitudes Surveys 1999, 2000 and 2003; Scottish Parliamentary Election Study 1999; Welsh Assembly Election Study 1999; Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2003; Welsh Life and Times Survey 2003.

12.32 In contrast to England, people in Scotland and Wales have of course had experience of coalition government. It appears that this experience has certainly not put people off coalition government. In 1997 opinion in Scotland appears to have been slightly more opposed to coalitions than that in England; now if anything it appears to be slightly more in favour. And while opinion in Wales appears to be slightly less favourable to coalitions than it is in England, opinion is more favourable now than it was immediately after the 1999 election.

Conclusion

12.33 This review of the effect of electoral system change on government has focused mainly on Scotland and Wales. It began by summarising what the coalition governments delivered in terms of their main policy outputs. The presence of the Liberal Democrats led to rather more policy innovation than would have happened under

Labour governing alone. And the evidence suggests that coalition can produce just as effective and efficient policy making and implementation as single party government.

12.34 PR has also led to a different relationship between government and parliament. Coalition governments have to negotiate more to win consent for their policies: with narrow majorities, they cannot take the support of the assembly for granted. The Scottish Parliament has developed subject committees which expose the Executive to more powerful scrutiny than their counterparts at Westminster. The weekly business is planned with all the parties, not just between the major parties. Similar effects are evident in New Zealand following the switch to PR in 1996. There is more negotiation over the parliamentary agenda, and over legislation; parliamentary committees have become more assertive; the policy environment in the parliament has become livelier.

12.35 These details of the political process may go unnoticed by the general public. But public attitude surveys in Scotland and Wales in 1999 and 2003 show little evidence of adverse reaction, and if anything the reverse: in Scotland and in Wales, people have warmed slightly to coalition government in the light of experience. They would prefer the parties to indicate their preferred coalition partners in advance; but they do not believe that the new voting system gives too much power to smaller parties, and they do not believe it leads to unstable government.

Chapter 13:
Implications for regional government and local government

Introduction

13.1 Regional and local government do not lie directly within our terms of reference. Our main focus is on the implications of electoral reform for Westminster, which we consider in the next chapter. But it is worth briefly reporting on the implications for regional and local government of the evidence we have collected about recent experience in the UK and overseas. New voting systems have been promised for regional government in England and for local government in Scotland, so both these tiers seem likely to join the growing list of bodies elected by PR. This chapter summarises the main lessons set out in this report which will apply to these bodies too.

Regional government in England

13.2 Referendums are due to be held in the three northern regions of England in October 2004 on the Government's plans for directly elected Regional Assemblies. The Government's White Paper, *Your Region, Your Choice* (Cm 5511, May 2002) indicated that the new assemblies will be slim-line, strategic bodies with 25 to 35 members, elected by AMS. This is the system used in Scotland, Wales, and Greater London. The model the Government has most closely in mind is the Greater London Assembly, which has 25 members elected by AMS and which possesses a limited range of mainly strategic functions. The GLA offers some useful pointers to how the electoral system is likely to operate in English Regional Assemblies in terms of proportionality, turnout, the respective roles of constituency and additional members, and their effectiveness.

13.3 Although almost half of its members are additional members (11 out of 25, or 44%), the GLA does not score high in terms of proportionality. Figure 5.1 showed that it is less proportional than the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly. Regional Assemblies may be even less proportional, because the Government is proposing only 33% to 35% as additional members, elected from a single region-wide constituency. The proportionality of the regional assemblies will also be limited by the size of their membership. The difference between using 44% top-up seats in the GLA and the 33% proposed for the regional assemblies is significant. For instance, it could mean the difference between a Labour majority and a hung assembly in the

North East. As in the GLA, there will be a 5% threshold to try to exclude extremist parties (see chapter 5).

13.4 Turnout may be low, reflecting the public's views about the importance of regional assemblies rather than a dislike of the electoral system. Turnout in the first GLA elections in 2000 was 36%. But the referendums taking place in October 2004 to decide on regional assemblies will be conducted using all-postal ballots. The experience of using postal ballots in local government elections suggests that postal ballots push turnout very substantially.

13.5 The limited functions and low 'visibility' of regional assemblies should help to minimise conflict between constituency and additional members. In Scotland and Wales competition has occured mainly over constituency casework, with claims of additional members carpet-bagging on the territory of the constituency member. Members of regional assemblies will not have a lot of constituency casework. Casework is as likely to come from firms and NGOs, who may have a regional rather than a constituency base, and so be appropriate for representation by list members representing the whole region.

13.6 The Government proposes that regional assemblies house an executive of six members, with the remainder being backbenchers scrutinising the executive. The Greater London Assembly has found it very difficult to develop an effective scrutiny role, and Regional Assemblies may experience similar difficulties. With fewer than 30 members it will be very difficult to run enough scrutiny committees to monitor

the work of the executive, and to carry out 'general scrutiny' on matters such as finance, audit, and standards: especially if the backbenchers work three days a week, as the White Paper proposed.[81] But this is not a function of the electoral system. It is a weakness imposed by the small size of the Assembly.

13.7 Finally, will Regional Assemblies attract more women, ethnic minorities, and people new to politics, or will they simply provide 'jobs for the boys'? In the first GLA elections 90% of those elected had prior political experience, 75% as local government councillors.[82] 44% were women, and 12% from the ethnic minorities. This is not a function of the electoral system, but of the candidate selection procedures run by the political parties.

STV for Local Government in Scotland

13.8 The Scottish Executive has considered the use of PR for local government stemming from the first Labour/Liberal Democrat coalition agreement in 1999. In the first term of the Scottish Parliament this was referred to an expert committee, the Kerley committee, which investigated what a change in the electoral system for local government should comprise. The Kerley committee recommended STV, and the second Labour/Liberal Democrat coalition formed in 2003 introduced a bill to change the law in time for the next local government elections, in 2007.

13.9 The Scottish Bill was introduced largely because of the demands of the Liberal Democrats as a condition for serving in coalition. STV should reduce the

number of councils where a single party is in control, such as Glasgow, but would probably still leave between a fifth and a quarter of Scottish local authorities under single party control.[83] STV is used in local government elections in both Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic. If it has the same effects in Scotland, different candidates from the same parties will compete against each other, and councillors should become more responsive to constituency concerns. The Scottish plan is for three or four member wards, which will produce only limited proportionality. Multi-member wards may be harder to accept in rural areas, where some single member wards are already geographically extensive.

Implications for local government in England and Wales

13.10 Wales had a similar commitment to introduce PR for local government

under its Labour/Liberal Democrat coalition formed in 2000. The issue was also referred to an expert committee, chaired by Professor Eric Sunderland. As in Scotland, the committee recommended STV as best suited to the needs of local government in Wales, using three to five member wards.[84] But when Labour found they could govern without the Liberal Democrats after the 2003 Welsh Assembly elections, they announced that they would not pursue the recommendations of the Sunderland Commission. Most Labour councillors in Wales are opposed, and the issue will only reappear on the agenda if Labour once again need the support of the Liberal Democrats in Wales.

13.11 In England the UK Government has set its face against electoral reform for local government. Although PR featured in early drafts of the 1998 Green Paper, *Modernising Local*

Implications of PR in local government

In 1998 the Constitution Unit conducted a literature survey to assess the likely impact of PR in local government.[85] The main conclusions were as follows.

Compared to first-past-the-post, PR will increase party competition and opposition representation in local government and will reduce the incidence of one-party councils.

- PR is likely to make councillors more responsive to the needs of their electorate.
- The presence of opposition members in significant numbers, and the increased possibility that the ruling party could lose office, may incentivise councillors to take their electorate more seriously.
- Although a higher proportion of those elected at local level are women, they are still significantly under-represented. PR will not necessarily increase the representation of women: the impact will vary between different forms of PR.
- Most forms of PR reduce the constituency/member link; but the impact of this reduction would be less marked than introducing PR at a national level, because most local government wards in England and Wales already have more than one councillor.
- PR is unlikely to increase turnout in local government elections.

Government, the final version explicitly declined to endorse it: 'The Government believes that changes to the voting system are not a panacea for the current weaknesses in local government'. Instead the Government introduced, in the Local Government Act 2000, clearer separation of the executive, with a choice of three possible models. Most councils have opted for a cabinet model, but following local referendums 11 councils now have directly-elected mayors.

Conclusion

13.12 It is becoming more likely that any new political institution created in the UK will be elected by some form of PR. Regional Assemblies in England are no exception. If in time they are introduced in all the English regions, they will extend to England the same experience of voting by AMS already used by the people of Scotland and Wales. Greater familiarity with AMS may also lead to greater support for it, as is evident in Scotland and Wales (see Tables 7.1 and 7.2)

13.13 Although smaller in scale, the introduction of STV for local government in Scotland may yet prove more significant. Local authorities in Wales and in England could be next. But (as evidenced by the volte-face in Wales) that is only likely to happen if the Liberal Democrats hold the balance of power. If the Liberal Democrats hold the balance of power to introduce PR for local government in England, they will also hold the balance of power to introduce PR in the final bastion of first-past-the-post, Westminster itself.

Chapter 14:
Relevance for Westminster and conclusions

Introduction

14.1 The previous chapters in this report have examined the experience of the new electoral systems created since 1997. This chapter will discuss what relevance this evidence has for Westminster, and particularly the House of Commons. The changes in the electoral system, and related political behaviour, have been more extensive than is generally recognised. Every new representative body set up since 1997 has been elected using an electoral system other than first-past-the-post. This does not just apply to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, but also to those parts of England with elected mayors. Moreover, every adult in the UK now has the opportunity to vote under a form of PR at the European Parliament elections, albeit that this opportunity was only exercised by one in four in 1999. Many voters, particularly in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and London, now have the chance to vote as often using a variant of PR as by first-past-the-post. This is not a static process, just the product of the heavy programme of constitutional reform in the 1997-99 period. Proposals have been put forward to introduce PR for local government in Scotland (now going through the Parliament in Edinburgh),

for regional assemblies in England (the subject of referendums in the northern regions of England in October 2004) and, more remotely, for any elected element in the House of Lords. So first-past-the-post is no longer predominant outside Westminster. More and more voters and elected representatives operate within a PR framework.

14.2 There is no 'one size fits all' electoral system. Under the general label of PR, a wide range of different methods of election have been adopted since 1997. The choice depends on political values and culture, on the remit and responsibilities of the elected body, and, above all, on the political circumstances of the time. There is no objective test. The choice depends on different views of the nature of representation and the role of parties. Advocates of PR tend to argue that parliament should be a 'mirror' of society, and that the members of the legislature should be representative of the diversity of the electorate as a whole. By contrast, supporters of first-past-the-post focus more on the decisions of the executive and the legislatures. As Iain McLean has said: 'The PR school looks at the composition of parliament; majoritarians look at its decisions'.[86] Advocates of electoral change also see

a direct link with the increased scrutiny of Parliaments over executives made possible by PR. In other words, PR is also viewed as a means by which overweening executive power can be properly checked.

14.3 It is neither possible nor sensible to reach firm conclusions on which particular electoral system is best: whether Additional Member System, PR-list, Single Transferable vote, Alternative Vote, Supplementary Vote or First-Past-the Post. Some systems are thought to be associated more with stable governments, while others are thought to be better at promoting the representation of smaller parties - though there is no simple choice to produce a better quality of democracy or better decisions. The pluses and minuses of various systems have to be balanced against the merits of securing consent for government. Well-established, even if imperfect, systems may do this better.

14.4 A system which suits devolved legislatures in Scotland or Wales, or the European Parliament, is not necessarily relevant for Westminster. The Greater London Assembly was designed as a deliberative assembly to hold the Mayor to account and to approve budgets, while the results of the elections for the European Parliament have only an indirect impact on the actions of the Brussels Commission, let alone on the decisions by the various councils of ministers representing member governments. By contrast, the balance of criteria is different for a national Parliament which is elected to choose, form and support an administration, than for sub-national bodies with limited responsibilities and

taxation powers. In reviewing the British experience, only the Scottish Parliament is directly relevant since, at present, it is the only one of the devolved bodies that comes close to Westminster in its powers to approve primary legislation and its theoretical, though so far unused, ability to vary rates of income tax.

14.5 The electoral systems used throughout Britain and the world are mostly the products of historical circumstance and the attitudes of political actors at the time. As Pippa Norris puts it: 'Electoral systems are rarely designed, they are born kicking and screaming into the world out of a messy, incremental compromise between contending factions battling for survival, determined by power politics.' The history of electoral change in Britain shows how the choice of particular systems, or, indeed, the rejection of possible reforms, such as the Alternative Vote, has usually depended on short-term political circumstances, and often on close parliamentary votes.

14.6 There is, therefore, no simple blueprint to be copied or rejected for the House of Commons. At best, there are pointers as to what has worked and what has not worked which are relevant to the continuing debate about Westminster. In broad terms, earlier chapters have undermined some widely-held myths on both sides of the debate. The experience with the devolved bodies does not suggest that PR is too complicated for voters or that the resulting coalition governments are necessarily weak or ineffective. The coalition executive in Scotland has held together through two elections, despite two changes of

Labour leader and First Minister, and has approved very controversial legislation such as the abolition of up-front tuition fees for higher education, the introduction of land rights for crofters and the abolition of fox hunting. On the other hand, the experience with PR in the UK since 1997 has contradicted the claims of its advocates that its introduction will necessarily increase turnout. Other factors not absolutely connected with PR have so far been more important in Britain. Moreover, there is little evidence that the use of AMS has persuaded the parties to appeal to all voters in every constituency rather than just marginal ones since campaign styles in Scotland and Wales have not changed substantially.

14.7 At the beginning of the report, we set out a number of ways of looking at alternative electoral systems: fairness and proportionality; fairness and voter choice; voter understanding and behaviour; party competition and campaigning; candidate selection; voter mobilisation and turnout; representation; and impact on government.

Fairness and proportionality

14.8 There are several ways in which rules for allocating seats can be judged 'fair'. The most common is how they translate votes into seats, with varying degrees of proportionality between the share of votes and the share of seats in the legislature. This in turn reflects many factors such as constituency size, the number of parties and the electoral system. Because varying systems are used in the UK, the levels of proportionality vary. Of all the systems

illustrated, STV in Northern Ireland is the most proportional, followed by the Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales, the European Parliament, the Greater London Assembly, and, finally, the House of Commons.

14.9 The implications for Westminster obviously depend on the system used. As noted in the simulations in appendix A, the results differ widely depending on which electoral system is used. AV is supposed to ensure that each MP is elected on at least 50 per cent of the overall vote in his or her constituency, but does not automatically do so if there are insufficient transferable votes (that is if not enough voters have marked other preferences after their first choice). Moreover, across the country, AV can produce a hugely disproportionate result: for instance, giving Labour even more MPs in 1997. The impact of STV and AMS is not clear-cut. In the case of STV, the degree of proportionality is related to the number of members in a constituency, while the impact depends on particular circumstances of the time and the second and third preferences of voters. For AMS, the key is the balance between constituency and top-up list members.

14.10 The calculations in Appendix B show that although STV as implemented in Northern Ireland was more proportional than any of the AMS systems that have been used in Great Britain, this does not necessarily mean that STV would produce the most proportional outcome in a House of Commons election. Rather, AMS could well be the more proportional so long as it contained a sufficiently large

number of top-up seats. Indeed in 1997 Labour might well still have secured an overall majority under STV as well as those versions of AMS that include a small proportion of top-up seats. It should be noted that any party list system with the same allocative rule and regional boundaries will always be at least as proportional as 50:50 AMS.

14.11 This analysis underlines the complexities of the debate over electoral systems, showing that there are no simple choices. AV and SV would not involve changes to constituency boundaries but would be even less proportional than first-past-the-post. Most variants of AMS and STV would be more proportional, but would change the relationship between members and voters, who would be in much larger constituencies than now. That is why the Jenkins Commission opted for a hybrid structure to preserve the constituency link in slightly larger single member constituencies than now. AV is not necessarily more disproportional than first-past-the-post. It all depends on the particular circumstances of each contest.

Fairness and voter choice

14.12 Another way of judging fairness turns on the amount of choice which the system offers the voter. Choice is related to the range of parties and candidates (in part depending on whether there are closed or open lists) and to the ways in which the elector can vote. For example, first-past-the-post and PR-list systems give voters an 'either/or' choice of party or candidate. STV, SV and AV allow voters to express preferences for different parties or candidates. Consequently, the

systems in Scotland, Wales, the European Parliament or the Greater London Assembly offer less choice than the system in Northern Ireland (where the design of the system reflected specific local religious and community factors). If desired, this gap could be corrected by replacing closed lists (where the party decides on the ordering of candidates) with open lists (where voters make the decisions), or by changing the Scottish, Welsh, London and European Parliament systems to STV. Surveys carried out for the Commission suggest that the introduction of open lists for the European Parliament elections and for the regional lists in the elections for the Scottish Parliament and National Assembly for Wales would be popular with the public.

Voter understanding and voting behaviour

14.13 A key test of the impact of any new voting system is how far it is understood by the public. This does not require a detailed knowledge of alternative voting systems, although this would be desirable. Consent for government could be weakened by complicated or opaque electoral systems, though this may not necessarily inhibit voting. A voter can have little understanding of the exact way that votes are translated into seats, but can be perfectly comfortable with filling out a ballot paper. The experience in Scotland and Wales shows that voters have had few problems with completing ballot papers on a PR basis, though they are unsure about the precise workings of the system. However, this lack of understanding was somewhat worse in 2003 compared with the first series of

elections in 1999. This indicates both a failure of public information and a decline in interest.

14.14 The Commission's surveys asked several questions about which system voters might favour. Most people are neutral. This is not surprising since most voters, understandably and probably fortunately, tend not to think about electoral systems regularly, if at all. Their level of interest is low. Most respondents were not aware of the debate about the first-past-the-post and other electoral systems until prompted. Members of the public are comfortable with the status quo and do not view a change in the electoral system as making much impact on their lives. However, after prompting and discussion, most people expressed a preference for a PR system, though this does not provide firm pointers for Westminster.

14.15 Survey work for the Commission showed that 43 per cent of those questioned would vote for an alternative electoral system for the House of Commons. A third said they would vote to retain FPTP and just under a quarter said they did not know or would not vote. In addition, well over half said they thought parties being awarded the same share of seats as of votes was much more important than a clear winner in the House of Commons. But these answers have to be treated with considerable caution since the questions are largely hypothetical without little relation to people's immediate experience. Much depends on how the question is asked: in particular, which of the many criteria in the debate are highlighted in the question.

14.16 When asked about their preferred choice of alternative system, more people opted for AMS, though they were not offered the alternative of STV. Public attitudes to electoral system are governed by peoples' direct experiences, their attitude to coalition government and their party affiliation. These survey replies, particularly from England, should not be over-interpreted since most people do not have firm or well-developed views unless prompted. There is broad sympathy for some form of PR and for the idea of coalition government. But these opinions are broad rather than deep. They are not strongly held and could easily shift away from PR if electoral reform moved to the front of the political stage and was fully debated in the media and by politicians.

14.17 Any change in the voting system for Westminster would unquestionably be debated at length- probably requiring a referendum. So voters would be inundated with information about how the systems would work as well as claim and counter-claim about the impact of any change.

14.18 There is a potential problem about the number of systems being faced by electors at various levels. Londoners will use three different electoral systems in the election of the mayor, the Greater London Assembly and the European Parliament in June 2004. The multiplicity of systems explains the decision of the Scotland Office in February 2004 to establish a commission to examine 'the consequences of having four different systems in Scotland'. The Secretary of State for Wales has said he is awaiting

the report of the Richard Commission before deciding to set up an additional review like the Scottish one. The multiplicity of electoral systems at local, regional and sub-national level has no direct relevance to the different factors affecting the election of a national Parliament and choice of central Government.

Party competition and campaigning

14.19 More parties have been represented in the new devolved bodies elected under PR than in councils and legislatures elected under first-past-the-post. The number of parties is related to the proportionality of the system, but this is not a static process since the number of parties, and the number of seats won by smaller groups, rose in the 2003 election in Scotland, compared with 1999. In the Scottish Parliament, there are now four large, and three small parties or groups. But this growth in the number of parties represented, as opposed to putting forward candidates, has not happened in Wales. So particular local circumstances have mattered as much as the existence of PR in determining the extent of a multi-party system among those elected, as opposed to those standing as candidates

14.20 However, support for the third and smaller parties has been rising at Westminster under FPTP, as well as in the devolved bodies elected under PR. The Liberal Democrats, in particular, have succeeded in the 1997 and 2001 elections in substantially increasing their number of MPs at Westminster despite taking a lower share of the national vote then when the old SDP/Liberal Alliance only won half as

many Commons seats in the 1980s. The two party dominance of Westminster politics began to recede in the 1970s. At present, one in eight MPs come from outside the Conservative and Labour ranks, and a total of nine parties are represented, ignoring an Independent, though six of these are Scottish and Welsh Nationalist or from Northern Ireland. Two or three more parties would probably be represented under most forms of PR- Green, UK Independence and Scottish Socialist. But the key change would be the increased representation of the Liberal Democrats and an increased likelihood, depending on exactly what system is used, that no single party would have an overall majority.

Party candidate selection

14.21 The arrival of the new devolved bodies has been accompanied by an increase in the number of women candidates. The Labour Party, in particular, has introduced several measures of positive discrimination for the selection of candidates. However, this policy was taken before the introduction of PR and reflected a general, national build-up in pressures towards the use of all-women short-lists, adopted by Labour for parliamentary selections for the Commons in the mid-1990s. As important was the fact that the new bodies were initially elected as a whole on one date, with no incumbents by definition, so the increased prominence and activism of women made its full impact. The change in the electoral system has been a subsidiary factor, compared with changes in rules in Labour.

14.22 Several parties have increased the involvement of ordinary members in the selection process, allowing them to vote for the final lists. Yet this is also the product of a change in internal party rules-applying across the country, and not just where PR elections have been used.

14.23 The introduction of PR for the Commons would not necessarily have much impact on the range of candidates selected. The evidence of the devolved bodies is that changes in attitudes and rules within parties are far more important than the method of election. The big increase in the number of women MPs has occurred under FPTP, though some forms of PR make it easier to offer a wider gender and ethnic balance of candidates.

Mobilisation and turnout

14.24 The impact of new electoral systems upon turnout is unproven. International experience has suggested that the wider choice offered by PR has encouraged higher turnout. However, turnout in the elections to the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Assembly, the European Parliament and the Greater London Assembly has been poor. The Scottish and Welsh elections in 2003 produced an even lower turnout than in those of 1999. In these cases, the system mattered less than public attitudes toward the performance of the devolved bodies and the ruling parties, and the credibility of the alternatives. Turnout is affected by many different factors, such as the type of legislature being elected, party campaigns, general attitudes to politics and the closeness of the contest.

14.25 There is no reason to believe that a change in the electoral system would, by itself, increase turnout in elections to the House of Commons. It might or might not depending on a range of other factors, such as general attitudes towards the parliamentary process and towards the government of the day, and the closeness of the contest.

Representation

14.26 The introduction of the split constituency/list AMS system to Scotland, Wales and London was supposed to create the 'best of both worlds'. The political parties would be represented more proportionately in relation to votes cast, while the traditional links between representatives and their single member districts would remain.

14.27 A survey for the Constitution Unit showed that constituency members in Scotland and Wales report spending more time than list members on individual casework and dealing with both local and national interest groups and delegations. However, dealing with casework was the single most time consuming activity for both kinds of representative. Underlying tensions exist because of the difference of role and electoral competition.

14.28 The survey data suggests that the public prefers to contact constituency, rather than list, members. Voters are also highly attached to the idea of single member constituencies, one of the strengths of the first-past-the-post system.

14.29 Most MEPs have seen a decline in their constituency work since the transition to PR in 1999 and many feel uncomfortable with the size of their regions. The main difference is between older and new MEPs. Older MEPs, elected under the previous FPTP method, tend to dislike the new system, feeling that it has changed their representational role for the worse. New MEPs are more positive about the PR-list system and have adapted to its consequences.

14.30 For many members of the House of Commons, the potential dilution of the link with their voters (and the relationship is often expressed in possessive terms) is a central objection to most forms of PR. As noted earlier, this was a crucial factor in the Jenkins recommendations, which would have retained a high number of single member constituencies. STV would require constituencies up to five or more times the current size, while AMS would, depending on the formula used, mean increases of anything from a third up to a doubling. While existing members of the Commons fear a weakening in the constituency link, our surveys of Scotland and Wales suggest that this need not be the case. Only about 10 per cent of people ever contact an elected representative directly. Among those who do so, the overwhelming majority contact their constituency MSP/AM rather than their list MSP/AM. This implies that voters can differentiate between constituency and list members because they think the former will be best placed to help them on local matters.

14.31 A further worry is that AMS would create two classes of member, a widely held view in the Scottish and Welsh Labour Parties. Despite underlying tensions, this issue is not a serious problem in either Germany or New Zealand, two countries that have been using AMS longer than Britain.

Government

14.32 The new electoral systems are much more likely to produce coalition governments involving more than one party than those elected under FPTP. This has been true in Scotland after both the 1999 and 2003 elections, though only intermittently in Wales where a minority Labour administration was followed by a Labour/Liberal Democrat coalition, and, then, after the 2003 elections, by a solely Labour administration. No single party has a majority either on the Greater London or, very different, Northern Ireland Assemblies.

14.33 The Commission did not examine the pros and cons of coalition governments as such, though the evidence suggests that the experience since 1999 has been broadly acceptable. However, if coalitions are seen to damage the conduct of government, the public may quickly change its view. This happened in New Zealand in 1996 when the new electoral system resulted in an unpopular coalition that took months to form. So far, this has not happened in Scotland, mainly because of rules specifically designed to ensure formation and ratification of the First Minister and executive within 28 days, while the executive in London, in the person of the Mayor, is directly elected and is separate from the Assembly.

14.34 The coalition governments in Scotland and Wales have shown themselves as effective and efficient in policy making and implementation as single party governments. They have had to negotiate more to win consent for their policies, because with narrow majorities, they cannot take the assembly for granted. But the evidence shows that coalition need not necessarily result in policy blockage and stagnation. The coalition governments in both countries have introduced significantly different public policies, and on certain subjects the Scottish coalition has managed to legislate faster than Westminster. Public attitude surveys in 2003 show a reasonably positive response: if anything, people in Scotland and Wales have warmed slightly to coalition government in the light of their experience.

14.35 One of the most striking features of the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly has been the greater role of committees, both in scrutiny and policy formation. This has not meant that politics is any less partisan than at Westminster: far from it. But the structures have altered the behaviour, and opportunities, of representatives. Consultation is built into the system.

14.36 Similarly, at Westminster, most changes to the electoral system would be more likely to produce coalitions than would first-past-the-post: the exceptions are AV, SV and, in some cases, the Jenkins hybrid scheme. Coalition governments at Westminster would be welcomed, at least in theory, by the public. The ICPR/You Gov surveys asked people whether they thought it was better to have just one party in government or to have more than one. A majority of people thought it would be better to have two or more parties in the government, so that more people's views could be represented. A third, 34 per cent, favoured one party in government, against more than a half, 56 per cent, wanting two or more parties, with 10 per cent don't knows. This tallies with surveys carried out in Scotland and Wales since 1999, where nearly a half have supported the concept of coalition government, as against a fifth that did not. Again, a caveat has to be entered since the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly are completely different institutions to the House of Commons and, for English voters, these are largely hypothetical questions about which most people have thought little. Broad sympathy for the general idea of coalition government in theory is not the same as firm support in practice, particularly in view of the public's long-standing familiarity with a system which allows voters a clearcut decision on which party they want to govern them.

14.37 More proportional methods of election would be likely to make the Liberal Democrats the key factor in the formation of coalitions as the Free Democrats were in Germany until 1998. Opponents of PR argue that the Free Democrats have therefore wielded power vastly disproportionate to their share of the vote for most of this period. Such coalitions need not necessarily be unstable, even though the pressures on a national government are very different from those facing a devolved administration. There are clearly advantages in having a strong executive with a clear-cut majority in

dealing with challenging foreign policy problems, and in tackling tricky public spending and tax decisions. But, contrary to the claims of opponents of PR, neither the devolved administration in Scotland nor many European governments elected under PR are automatically weak. Much depends on other political factors, such as internal party cohesion, and political leadership.

14.38 The introduction of PR would also change the way that the House of Commons operates on a day to day basis. The organisation of business would have to be negotiated between the coalition partners, and probably also with other parties represented in the Commons. At minimum, the current arrangement of parliamentary business by the party whips, the 'usual channels', would become more open and transparent, as in the Scottish Parliament. But, at maximum, control over the legislature and the organisation of business might shift from the sole control of the executive. Parliamentary committees might automatically consider more legislation in draft form, and occasionally introduce legislation on their own initiative.

Conclusions– the relevance for Westminster

14.39 Changing the electoral system for the House of Commons from first-past-the-post to any one of the variants of PR discussed in this report would have far-reaching effects:-

14.40 First, there would probably be some increase in the number of small parties represented in the Commons, the exact number depending in part on the form of PR used.

14.41 Second, coalition or minority governments would be probable, forcing parties to negotiate with each other. Supporters of PR believe this would produce a more co-operative and consultative style of politics, and a greater role for cross-party committees in influencing and drafting policy.

14.42 Third, changing the voting system might inspire more confidence in the political process. But it could have the opposite effect, depending on the balance between increased voter choice and the ability of voters directly to influence the choice of governments. Voters' views about the performance in practice of the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly have been mixed at best, in contrast to the continuing support in principle for devolution.

14.43 Fourth, a preferential system such as the Single Transferable Vote or open party lists would put a greater focus on individual candidates and encourage a more diverse range of candidates and parties- though would be only one among several factors going in that direction.

14.44 The weight given to these various factors will inevitably depend on one's view of coalition governments, multi-party politics and the constituency/member link. This is the dilemma with which the Jenkins Commission wrestled to produce its controversial compromise intended both to preserve the constituency/member link and to produce single party governments where one party had a big electoral margin over its main rival. The subsequent burying of the Jenkins recommendations owed more to a lack

of political support at the top of the Blair Government- indeed widespread opposition to the whole idea of PR- and to the lack of interest among the electorate than to any serious discussion of the report's strengths or weaknesses outside the world of electoral specialists.

14.45 The Commission's analysis suggests that the impact of using new electoral systems has not been as dramatic, in either direction, as supporters and opponents of PR have suggested. It is important to distinguish between the creation of devolved bodies and the use of PR, as well as wider, political and cultural factors. Many of the changes in political behaviour, such as the selection of more women candidates, have had little to do with PR as such. But, in general, the new bodies elected under PR have produced stable, if not always popular, government; increased the number of parties represented; increased proportionality and maintained links between constituents and their elected representatives. Devolution has not produced an adverse public reaction and is now broadly accepted in Scotland, Wales and London.

14.46 The question of relevance to Westminster comes down to the issue of the distribution of power. Do we want it concentrated under the winner-take-all system of first-past-the post, or do want it spread between parties as is probable under PR?

14.47 Inevitably, this report is a snapshot of work-in-progress. The conclusions are tentative after just two elections in Scotland and Wales, and one (before June 2004) in London and, under PR,

for the European Parliament. Moreover, within a few years, assemblies in up to three regions in England could be elected on the basis of PR. If an elected element is introduced into the House or Lords, it could be by a regional list form of PR. This might be the most important example of all, since the nature of elections for the second chamber could powerfully influence the debate over the Commons. The adoption of a regional list system for the election of a substantial minority of the Lords might strengthen, rather than weaken, the case for continuing to elect the Commons on the familiar first-past-the-post system to produce single party majority governments.

14.48 The debate is developing, not static, as every new body created since 1997 has used electoral systems other than first-past-the-post. That does not make PR inevitable, or automatically desirable, for the House of Commons. What has happened with the devolved bodies is not precisely relevant for the Commons. But the broad and still developing experience with PR outside Westminster cannot be ignored. There are clear lessons which may, and should, dispel many of the charges often heard on either side of the argument about PR. The debate about electoral systems is still open.

Appendices

In order to give an indication of the possible effects of PR on Westminster, we present some simulations conducted by two academics Patrick Dunleavy and Helen Margetts. They used a computer programme to estimate Westminster results under different electoral systems. Obviously, it is impossible to make accurate predictions of an election to the Commons held under PR. These simulations can only takes into account the results obtained by parties now contesting Westminster elections, assuming that exactly the same parties would have contested each constituency and people would have voted for them in the same proportions. This is unlikely to be the case.

As chapter eight showed, both parties and voters change their behaviour knowing that a wider range of candidates can be elected. A similar warning applies to preferential systems such as AV, SV and STV. The STV simulations are based on five member seats. The preference orderings here was based on large scale polls carried out by ICM immediately after the 1992 and 1997 general elections. However, we have no way of knowing how consistent voters would be in their preferences or how they would be affected by particular campaigns. For instance, the Tories are shown as losing out

under STV because Labour voters give their second preference to Liberal Democrats, and vice versa. This is contingent on the particular circumstances of 1997 and 2001 and is not inherent in STV. This table was calculated using the 1997 election results. The figures presented would differ little if the 2001 election results were used given that the outcome of 2001 was almost identical to 1997.

Measures of disproportionality (DV scores) are based on the Loosmore-Hanby method. DV involves calculating the difference between each party's percentage vote-share and seat-share; summing all deviations (ignoring minus signs); and halving the total.

Comparing the seats won by the parties in Britain under alternative electoral systems, 1997

Voting Method	Lab	Con	LibDem	SNP/PC	Others	DV score (%)	Lab majority
Supplementary Vote (SV)	436	110	84	10	19	23.5	+213
Alternative Vote (AV)	436	110	84	10	19	23.5	+213
Actual election (FPTP)	419	165	46	10	19	21	+179
AMS (90:10)	378	181	70	11	19	14.4	+97
STV	342	144	131	24	8	13.5	+35
AMS (83:17)	354	190	82	14	8	10.8	+60
AMS (75:25)	330	196	98	16	19	7.3	+1
AMS (67:33)	305	206	112	18	8	4.7	-39
AMS (57:43)	296	207	117	21	8	4.7	-57
AMS (50:50)	296	206	118	21	8	4.7	-57
Pure proportionality	285	202	110	16	36	0	-79

Source: Dunleavy and Margetts, 1998.

Appendix B: Election Results

National Assembly for Wales, May 1999

Party	first-past-the-post Votes	Seats	List Votes	Total Seats	% List Votes	% Seats	%S-%V
Labour	37.6	27	361,657	28	35.5	46.7	11.2
Plaid Cymru	28.4	9	312,048	17	30.6	28.3	-2.3
Conservative	15.8	1	168,206	9	16.5	15.0	-1.5
Lib Dem	13.5	3	128,008	6	12.6	10.0	-2.6
Green	0.1	0	25,858	0	2.5	0.0	-2.5
Socialist Labour	0.4	0	10,720	0	1.1	0.0	-1.3
Others	4.2	0	13,469	0	1.3	0.0	-1.3
Total	**100**	**40**	**1,019,966**	**60**	**100**	**100**	

Disproportionality: 11.2% (Loosmore-Hanby); 8.6% (Least Squares)

Turnout: 46%

| National Assembly for Wales, May 2003 | | | | | | | |
Party	first-past-the-post Votes	Seats	List Votes	Total Seats	% List Votes	% Seats	%S-%V
Labour	340,515	30	310,658	30	36.6	50.0	13.4
Plaid Cymru	180,185	5	167,653	12	19.7	20.0	0.3
Conservative	169,432	1	162,725	11	19.2	18.3	-0.8
Lib Dem	120,220	3	108,013	6	12.7	10.0	-2.7
Marek	8,749	1	11,008	1	1.3	1.7	0.4
Green	0	0	30,028	0	3.5	0.0	-3.5
UKIP	19,975	0	29,427	0	3.5	0.0	-3.5
Socialist Labour	410	0	10,358	0	1.2	0.0	-1.2
Ind Wales	0	0	6,466	0	0.8	0.0	-0.8
Others	11,099	0	13,216	0	1.6	0.0	-1.6
Total	**850,405**	**40**	**849,522**	**60**	**100**		

Disproportionality: 14.1% (Loosmore-Hanby); 10.4% (Least Squares)
Turnout: 38%

| Scottish Parliament, May 1999 | | | | | | | |
Party	first-past-the-post Votes	Seats	List Votes	Total Seats	% List Votes	% Seats	%S-%V
Labour	38.7	53	786,618	56	33.6	43.4	9.8
SNP	28.7	7	638,644	35	27.3	27.1	-0.2
Conservative	15.5	0	359,109	18	15.4	14.0	-1.4
Lib Dem	14.2	12	290,760	17	12.4	13.2	0.7
Green	0.0	0	84,024	1	3.6	0.8	-2.8
Socialist Labour	0.2	0	55,232	0	2.4	0.0	-2.4
Scottish Socialist	1.0	0	46,635	1	2.0	0.8	-1.2
Falkirk West	0.7	1	27,700	1	1.2	0.0	-2.1
Others	0.6	0	49,989	0	2.1	0.0	-2.1
Total	**100**	**71**	**2,338,911**	**129**	**100**	**100**	

Disproportionality: 10.5% (Loosmore-Hanby); 7.5% (Least Squares)

Turnout: 58%

Scottish Parliament, May 2003

Party	first-past-the-post Votes	Seats	List Votes	Total Seats	% List Votes	% Seats	%S-%V
Labour	633,983	46	561,379	50	29.3	38.8	9.5
SNP	455,736	9	399,659	27	20.9	20.9	0.1
Conservative	318,279	3	296,929	18	15.5	14.0	-1.5
Lib Dem	294,347	13	225,774	17	11.8	13.2	1.4
Green	0	0	132,138	7	6.9	5.4	-1.5
Scottish Socialist	118,764	0	128,026	6	6.7	4.7	-2.0
Senior Citizens	1,597	0	28,996	1	1.5	0.8	-0.7
PP	0	0	28,655	0	1.5	0.0	-1.5
MacDonald (Ind)	0	0	27,144	1	1.4	0.8	-0.6
Socialist Labour	0	0	21,657	0	1.1	0.0	-1.1
UKIP	0	0	11,969	0	0.6	0.0	-0.6
Canavan (Ind)	14,703	1	0	1	0.0	0.8	0.8
Turner (Ind)	10,988	1	0	1	0.0	0.8	0.8
Others	38,589	0	53,530	0	2.8	0.0	-2.8
Total	**1916986**	**73**	**1915856**	**129**	**100**	**100**	

Disproportionality: 12.5% (Loosmore-Hanby); 7.3% (Least Squares)

Turnout: 49%

London Assembly, May 2000

Party	first-past-the-post Votes	Seats	List Votes	Total Seats	% List Votes	% Seats	%S-%V
Labour	31.6	6	502874	9	30.3	36.0	5.7
Conservative	33.2	8	481053	9	29.0	36.0	7.0
Lib Dem	18.9	0	245555	4	14.8	16.0	1.2
Green	10.2	0	183910	3	11.1	12.0	0.9
Christian Alliance		0	55192	0	3.3	0.0	-3.3
BNP		0	47670	0	2.9	0.0	-2.9
UKIP		0	34054	0	2.1	0.0	-2.1
London Socialist	2.9	0	27073	0	1.6	0.0	-1.6
Ind		0	22862	0	1.4	0.0	-1.4
Pro-Tube		0	17401	0	1.0	0.0	-1.0
Soc. Lab		0	13690	0	0.8	0.0	-0.8
Pro-motorist		0	13248	0	0.8	0.0	-0.8
Others	3.1	0	15048	0	0.9	0.0	-0.9
Total	**100**	**14**	**1659630**	**25**			

Disproportionality: 14.8% (Loosmore-Hanby); 7.6% (Least Squares)

Turnout: 36%

European Parliamentary Elections, June 1999					
Party	Votes	Seats	%Votes	%Seats	%S-%V
Conservative	357,8217	36	35.8	42.9	7.1
Labour	280,3821	29	28.0	34.5	6.5
Lib Dem	126,6549	10	12.7	11.9	-0.8
UKIP	696,057	3	7.0	3.6	-3.4
Green	625,378	2	6.3	2.4	-3.9
SNP	268,528	2	2.7	2.4	-0.3
Plaid Cymru	185,235	2	1.9	2.4	0.5
Pro-Euro Con	138,097	0	1.4	0.0	-1.4
BNP	102,647	0	1.0	0.0	-1.0
Liberal	93,051	0	0.9	0.0	-0.9
Socialist Lab	86,749	0	0.9	0.0	-0.9
Others	157,944	0	1.6	0.0	-1.6
Total	**10,002,273**	**84**	**100**	**100**	

Disproportionality: 14.1% (Loosmore-Hanby); 7.9% (Least Squares)

Turnout: 24%

Northern Ireland Assembly Election June 1998				
Party	1st Pref votes	% 1st pref.Vote	%Seats	% S-%V
SDLP	177,963	22.0	24	2.2
UUP	172,225	21.3	28	4.6
DUP	146,917	18.1	20	0.4
Sinn Fein	142,858	17.6	18	-0.9
Alliance	52,636	6.5	6	-0.9
UK Unionist	36,541	4.5	5	-0.1
PUP	20,634	2.5	2	-0.6
NI Women	13,019	1.6	2	0.3
Ulster Democratic	8,651	1.1	0	-1.1
Others	38,801	4.8	3	-2
Total	**810,245**	**100**	**100**	

Disproportionality: 6.0% (Loosmore-Hanby); 2.6% (Least Squares)

Turnout: 68%

Northern Ireland Assembly Election November 2003

Party	1st Pref votes	% 1st pref.Vote	%Seats	% S-%V
DUP	177,944	25.7	30	2.1
Sinn Féin	162,758	23.5	24	-1.3
UUP	156,931	22.7	27	2.3
SDLP	117,547	17.0	18	-0.3
Alliance	25,370	3.7	6	1.9
Prog Unionist	8,032	1.2	1	-0.2
Deeny (ind)	6,158	0.9	1	0.0
NI Women	5,785	0.8	0	-0.8
UK Unionist	5,700	0.8	1	0.1
Unrepresented	25,801	3.7	0	-3.7
Total	692,026	100	100	

Disproportionality: 6.4% (Loosmore-Hanby); 2.8% (Least Squares)

Turnout: 63%

Appendix C: Survey Results – YOUGOV

YouGov created an online panel, containing a representative sample of more than 3,300 electors throughout Great Britain. The panel was first questioned in March 2003, before the campaigns for the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly; in May 2003, after the elections, and again in July 2003. In each case, the raw data was weighted to reflect the demographic, social and political profile of Great Britain as a whole.

YouGov Surveys for PR Commission

Wave 1 results

Sample Size: 3339

Fieldwork: 8-11 April 2003
All figures are percentages

How satisfied are you with the way democracy works in the UK?

Very satisfied	12
Fairly satisfied	62
Not very satisfied	20
Not at all satisfied	4
Don't know	2

Which of these opinions about different forms of government is closest to your own?

Democracy is the best form of government, whatever the circumstances may be	82
In certain cases a dictatorship can be positive	9
For someone like me, it wouldn't make any difference	5
Don't know	4

a) Would you say these days too many MPs are women, too few, or is the number about right?
b) Would you say these days too many MPs are from Britain's black and Asian communities, too few, or is the number about right?
c) Would you say these days too many MPs are Independent and belong to none of the political parties, too few, or is the number about right?

	Too many	Too few	About right
Women MPs	7	43	37
Black and Asian MPs	10	38	36
Independent MPs	9	36	31

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
Most Members of Parliament are out of touch with the rest of the country…	77	21	3
I feel I have a pretty good understanding of the main issues facing the UK…	79	18	4
People like me don't have any say about what the government does...	77	23	1
My vote really counts in elections...	53	44	3
The first-past-the-post electoral system results in good quality people being elected to Parliament.	24	20	9

Which of these statements comes closest to your views?

It is more important that elections should produce a clear
    winner so that it is voters who decide who forms a government'   50
It is more important that elections should produce a fair result
    even if this means it is not clear who should form a government'   45
Don't know   5

Which of these statements comes closest to your views?

It is better to have just one party in government so that it is clear who should be blamed if things go wrong'   34
It is better to have two or more parties in the government so that more people's views are represented'   56
Don't know   10

People have different views about how their area should be best represented in a parliament. Which of these statements comes closest to your views?

I would rather have one member of parliament for the area I live in'   55
I would rather have several members of parliament, possibly from different parties, but covering a larger area' 37
Don't know   9

In the following institutions, what do you think matters more: that an election should produce a clear winner with more than half the seats, or that the election should ensure that the parties get the same share of seats as their share of votes

	Clear winner	Same share of seats	Don't know
In the House of Commons...	36	56	8
In the new devolved institutions - the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Assembly and the London Assembly...	26	55	19
In your local council...	30	62	8

Which view comes closer to your own…?

We should change the voting system for the House of Commons   44
That we should keep it as it is   41
Don't know   15

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
'So many people vote, my vote does not make disagree much difference to who is in government.'	36	59	5
'Whatever I think about the parties and candidates, I really do think it is my duty to go out and vote in a general election.'	86	12	2
'So many people vote, my vote does not make much difference to which candidates are elected.'	36	63	2

Wave 2 results
Sample Size: 2705
Fieldwork 16-21 May 2003

When you vote, what do you feel you are doing? Please rate the options below in order of importance to you.

	Most important	2nd most important	3rd	4th
Saying which party you want to run the country	55	17	11	11
Saying which party you want to represent you	30	39	17	9
Giving your say about which person you want to represent you in Parliament	25	18	27	19
Thinking of a particular individual you want to represent your constituency	12	16	22	32
Stopping a particular person or party from winning	10	11	13	10

When there is a conflict between what your MP feels is best and what he or she thinks the people in his/her constituency want, do you think he/she should follow his/her own conscience or follow what the people want?

Follow his/her own conscience	11
Follow the views of his/her constituency	53
Depends on the issue	34
Don't know	2

If you had to choose, do you think your MP should be primarily concerned with looking after the needs and interests of his/her own constituency, or do you feel that he/she should be primarily concerned with looking after the needs and interests of the nation as a whole

Should primarily look after the needs of his/her own constituency	67
Should primarily look after the needs of the whole nation as a whole	30
Don't know	3

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Don't know
'I am presented with a good choice of candidates on the ballot paper.'	37	29	33	2
'I sometimes feel that I am voting for the best of a bad bunch.'	69	15	14	1

The first-past-the-post system is the method used in Britain to elect MPs to the House of Commons. In Britain, the country is divided into 659 separate constituencies, each electing one MP. In order to vote, you simply put an X beside the name of the candidate you support. The candidate who gets the most votes wins, regardless of whether they have more than 50% support or not. A typical ballot paper looks like this (example shown)

Do you agree or disagree with then following statements…

	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Don't know
'The first-past-the-post system is easy to understand.'	85	6	7	2
'The first-past-the-post system offers a great deal of choice.'	38	33	25	4

Is it important to you that the party which goes into Government has an overall majority of seats, or not?

Very important   28
Fairly important   47
Not very important   18
Not important at all   4
Don't know   3

Once members have been elected individually, the party with the most seats in Parliament normally forms the next government.

An argument FOR this system is that it generally produces a decisive winner and leads to one party having an overall majority in Parliament.

An argument AGAINST this system is that countrywide, more people might actually vote against a party than for it, but that party might still end up winning an election and going into Government.

Another argument FOR this system is that it returns one MP per constituency, giving him/her a clear set of responsibilities.

Another argument AGAINST this system is that it is very difficult for candidates from small parties or minority groups to become elected.

a) Is it important to you that an electoral system produces a decisive winner, or not?

b) Is it important to you to have a single MP for each constituency, or not?

c) Is it important to you to have an electoral system which allows more opportunity to give your vote to women, or to any minority groups that currently might not be that well represented, or not?

	Very important	Fairly important	Not very important	Not at all important
a) Decisive winner	33	43	18	4
b) Single MP for each constituency	26	41	25	5
c) Vote for under-repreesnted groups	11	33	30	20

In this system, a candidate can win with less than 50% of the votes - so there may be more voters who don't want that person to be their MP, but the candidate ends up winner anyway.

How does this information affected your attitude to the first-past-the-post system?

A lot more in favour   3
Somewhat more in favour   7
Neither more in favour nor against   51
Somewhat more against   26
A lot more against   9
Don't know   5

Countrywide, more people might actually vote against a party than for it, but that party might still end up winning an election and going into Government.

How does this information affect your attitude to first-past-the-post?

A lot more in favour	2
Somewhat more in favour	6
Neither more in favour nor against	42
Somewhat more against	34
A lot more against	11
Don't know	5

Is it important to you that the party which goes into Government has an overall majority of the vote, or not?

Very important	23
Fairly important	52
Not very important	18
Not important at all	3
Don't know	4

The next system is known as a 'party list' system. It is currently used in the UK to elect members of the European Parliament.

In this system, you simply choose your preferred party. You have no direct say as to which individual candidates you elect.

For example, in a hypothetical voting area, there are 10MPs. Each party draws up a list of up to 10 candidates.

The number of seats won by each party depends on its total vote. The person the party most wants to be an MP is at the top of the list.

Everyone has one vote, which you can give to one party. A typical ballot paper could look like this (example shown)

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Don't know
'The party list system is easy to understand.'	58	14	26	3
'The party list system offers a great deal of choice.'	44	25	28	4
'I would prefer to be able to vote for individual candidates rather than for a party list.'	57	21	19	3

An argument FOR this system is that it can allocate seats to each party in proportion to the votes for that party, i.e. 30% of the votes for the Brown Party translates into 30% of the seats for the Brown Party in Parliament.

An argument AGAINST this system is that you have no direct say as to which individual candidates you elect. You vote for a party which selects its own candidates.

How does this information affect your attitude to party list voting?

A lot more in favour	4
Somewhat more in favour	21
Neither more in favour nor against	40
Somewhat more against	21
A lot more against	9
Don't know	5

The party list system can tend to increase the number of political parties contesting elections, including small and extremist parties.

How does this information affect your attitude to party list voting?

A lot more in favour	4
Somewhat more in favour	19
Neither more in favour nor against	42
Somewhat more against	23
A lot more against	8
Don't know	5

In order to limit the number of political parties contesting elections, including small and extremist parties, some countries impose mandatory thresholds, usually of 5%.

Thus, a political party would have to achieve 5% of the vote in order to get anyone elected.

How does this information affect your attitude to party list voting?

A lot more in favour	9
Somewhat more in favour	41
Neither more in favour nor against	34
Somewhat more against	9
A lot more against	2
Don't know	6

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: 'The party list voting system seems to be an improvement on the traditional first-past-the-post system.'

Agrtee	37
Neither agree nor disagree	27
Disagree	30
Don't know	6

On a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 means 'would DISLIKE voting this way a lot' and 7 means 'would LIKE voting this way a lot', how much would you like to vote this way in the future?

1	13
2	10
3	12
4	22
5	18
6	11
7	7
Don't know	7

The final system is known as the 'additional member system'. It is currently used to elect the Scottish Parliament and National Assembly of Wales. In this system you have two votes.

The first vote is for a single constituency MP. You vote for them like you do now - first-past-the-post.

Your second vote is for a party. The party draws up a list of candidates in each region (or possibly nationally).

To the party's MP elected in the constituencies are added a number of regional MPs from the party lists.

The percentage of party list votes each party wins decides the party's total number of MPs.

So, if a party wins 3 seats in the first-past-the-post constituencies, but its share of the party vote suggests it should have 5 MPs, then the other 2 will come from the party lists. A typical ballot paper could like like this (example shown)

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Don't know
'This system is easy to understand.'	43	16	39	4
'This system offers a great deal of choice.'	49	30	15	6

An argument FOR the additional member system is that it allows parliamentary seats to be allocated to parties in proportion to their vote while maintaining single-member constituencies.

An argument AGAINST this system is that voters cannot rank their preferences for individual candidates within parties in the list section.

How does this information affect your attitude to this system of voting?

A lot more in favour	5
Somewhat more in favour	25
Neither more in favour nor against	43
Somewhat more against	17
A lot more against	4
Don't know	6

The additional member system provides more opportunity for the voter to vote for small parties or minority groups that currently might not be that well represented.

How does this information affect your attitude to this system of voting?

A lot more in favour	5
Somewhat more in favour	31
Neither more in favour nor against	44
Somewhat more against	12
A lot more against	4
Don't know	6

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Don't know
I would prefer to be able to vote for individual candidates rather than for a party list.	51	28	17	4
This voting system seems to be an improvement on the traditional first-past-the-post system.	44	27	24	5

On a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 means 'would DISLIKE voting this way a lot' and 7 means 'would LIKE voting this way a lot', how much would you like to vote this way in the future?

1	9
2	10
3	14
4	22
5	19
6	13
7	6
Don't know	7

Out of the 3 electoral systems reviewed here, first-past-the-post, party list and the additional member system, which do you prefer? Please say which system would be your first choice, which would be your second and which would be your third. (please tick one box in each column)

	1st choice	2nd choice	3rd choice
My first choice would be...			
First-past-the-post system	41	28	26
Party list system	25	31	34
Additional member system	29	32	28
Don't know	6	9	12

How far do you agree or disagree that the UK should introduce proportional representation so that the number of MPs each party gets in the House of Commons matches more closely the number of votes each party gets?

Agree strongly	20
Tend to agree	42
Neither agree nor disagree	15
Tend to disagree	11
Disagree strongly	7
Don't know	5

Do you think future elections to the Scottish Parliament/Welsh Assembly should...

	Scottish parliament	Welsh Assembly
Continue to be held under the present system	42	41
Be held under a different system of proportional representation	32	35
Use the traditional British system of first-past-the-post	18	14
Don't know	8	10

In the election on May 1, people used a two-ballot electoral system to elect the Scottish Parliament / Welsh Assembly. Some people say that filling in the ballot papers is very difficult. Others say that it is not difficult. How difficult do you think it is?

Very difficult	2
Fairly difficult	12
Fairly easy	46
Very easy	37
Don't know	4

Wave 3 results

Sample Size: 2436

Fieldwork: 15th - 21st July 2003

As you may know, MPs must weigh several considerations when deciding how to cast their votes in the parliament. The next questions will ask how you think MPs should decide how to cast their votes in the parliament.

If there is a conflict between what an MP believes is the best policy and the policy preferences of their constituents, should the MP base their vote on their own personal judgment or their constituents' preferences?

Own judgment	18
Constituents' preferences	76
Don't know	7

If an MP perceives a conflict between the policies advocated by their party and the policy preferences of their constituents, which should be more influential on the MP's vote in the parliament:

Party position	10
Constituent preferences	83
Don't know	8

(Following questions in italics related only to Scottish and Welsh electors; n = 317)

When you voted in the recent Scottish Parliament or Welsh Assembly elections, to what extent were you aware that you had two votes, one for a constituency representative and one for a regional representative?

Highly aware	61
Mostly Aware	23
Not aware	4
Did not vote	11
Don't know	1

And thinking of this 'first' or 'constituency' vote, which one of the following reasons comes closest to the main reason you voted for the party you chose?

I always vote that way	17
I thought it was the best party	59
I really preferred another party but it had no chance of winning in this constituency	6
Other	9
Don't know	10

Still thinking of this 'first' or 'constituency' vote, which of the statements on this card comes closest to the way you voted on the 'first' or 'constituency' vote?

I voted for a party, regardless of the candidate	44
I voted for a party only if I approved of the candidate	35
I voted for a candidate, regardless of his or her party	9
Don't know	12

When you were deciding how to vote in the Scottish parliamentary or Welsh National Assembly elections, did you vote...

Mostly according to what was going on in Scotland / Wales	52
Mostly according to what was going on in Britain as a whole	12
Both equally	21
Other	4
Don't know	11

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Agree	Neither	Disagree
AMS (the electoral system used for the Scottish Parliament/Welsh Assembly) is much fairer than the old first-past-the-post system.	51	32	8
Splitting your votes is always more effective than casting them both for the same party.	33	34	22
Because Labour wins so many of the single-member seats, there is no point in giving it my second (regional) vote.	18	27	48
AMS gives too much power to small parties.	14	40	35
Voters, not parties, should decide which of the candidates on the party list get the seats the party has won.	68	17	7
Parties should say before election day what other parties they would prefer to work in a coalition government.	62	17	16
Parties should put forward similar numbers of male and female candidates.	28	39	30

Over the last four years have you had any kind of contact with a Member of the Scottish Parliament/ Welsh Assembly for your area?

Yes	29
No	71

(If 'yes') Was that with the local Member of the Scottish Parliament/Assembly Member for your constituency, with one of the list MSPs/AMs for your region, or both?

Local MSP for constituency	63
List MSP for region	6
Both	25
Don't Know	6

And over the last four years have you had any kind of contact with the Member of Parliament who represents your area in the House of Commons / local councillor for your area?

	MP	Cllr
Yes	17	43
No	83	57

Which kind of MSP or AM do you think would be better able to help you?

The local MSP for your constituency	51
One of the list MSPs for your region	5
Both would be equally able to help me	31
Don't know	13

As you may know, a new electoral system is being introduced for Scottish Local Elections. It is called the Single Transferable Vote or STV for short.

It is a proportional system but it works differently to the Additional Member System as used for elections to the Scottish Parliament.

Please look at the ballot paper shown below (example shown). Under this system you choose as many or as few candidates as you like, numbering them 1,2 etc up to a maximum of 17. You may choose candidates from the same or different parties.

Four candidates will be elected. For example, if your first choice candidate was David McLetchie of the Conservative Party, you would write '1' in beside his name.

If your second choice was Richard Baker from the Labour Party, you would write a '2' beside his name.

Alternatively, if your second choice had been Jim Wallace of the Liberal Democrats, you would write a '2' in beside his name. You continue until you have assigned as many preferences as you like.

On a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 means 'would DISLIKE voting this way a lot' and 7 means 'would LIKE voting this way a lot', how much would you like to vote this way in the future?

1	19
2	4
3	11
4	14
5	20
6	11
7	12
Don't know	9

(Full GB sample) People have different views about how their area should be best represented in a parliament. Which of these statements comes closest to your views?

I would rather have one member of parliament for the area I live in	64
I would rather have several members of parliament, possibly from different parties, but covering a larger area	26
Don't know	10

Of the three possible influences on the voting decisions of MPs, which should be the most influential on a MP's parliamentary voting decisions: the MP's party, the MP's personal preferences, or the MP's constituent preferences?

Which of these influences should have the most influence on a MP's parliamentary voting decisions? And which should have the least influence?

	Most influence	Least influence
Party position	9	32
Personal preferences	12	58
Constituent preferences	79	10

In the House of Commons, what do you think matters more: that an election should produce a clear winner with more than half the seats, or that the election should ensure that the parties get the same share of seats as the share of their votes.

Clear winner with more than half the seats	39
Same share of seats as their share of votes	51
Don't know	10

If a referendum were held today on the electoral system for the House of Commons, would you vote to retain first-past-the-post or would you vote to replace it with an alternative electoral system?

Vote to retain first-past-the-post	33
Vote for an alternative system	43
Would not vote	6
Don't know	18

(If alternative system) What type of electoral system would that be?

STV	14
AMS (as used for the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly)	23
Other type of PR system	21
Don't know	43

Appendix D: Survey Results: National Centre for Social Research

Survey work undertaken by the National Centre for Social Research

This document provides the final set of results of the survey work undertaken in behalf of the Independent Commission on Proportional Representation in Scotland and Wales in the period immediately after the 2003 elections. It also compares these results with the results of similar work undertaken after the 1999 elections.

The data come from the Scottish Social Attitudes survey and the Welsh Life and Times Survey.

The Scottish Centre for Social Research (formerly the National Centre for Social Research Scotland) interviewed face to face a random sample of 1,508 adults aged 18+ resident in Scotland between May and October 2003. This represented a 59% response rate. The sample was drawn from the postcode address file, with a single respondent chosen for interview by a random selection method at each successfully contacted address. The data have been weighted to compensate for unequal selection probabilities and a deliberate oversampling of respondents in rural areas. Most of the questions reported here appeared in a self-completion booklet that was completed by 1,327 of the original 1,508 respondents.

The National Centre for Social Research interviewed face to face a random sample of 988 adults aged 18+ resident in Wales between May and July 2003. This represented a 64% response rate. The sample was drawn from the postcode address file, with a single respondent chosen for interview by a random selection method at each successfully contacted address. The data have been weighted to compensate for unequal selection probabilities. Most of the questions appeared in a self-completion booklet that was completed by 797 of the original 988 respondents.

For details of the survey work conducted in 1999 see John Curtice, Ben Seyd, Alison. Park and Katharine Thomson, 'Wise after the event?' Voter attitudes to PR following the 1999 Scottish and Welsh elections' London: Constitution Unit, 2000.

In certain tables and charts in the report , a summary figure for Scotland and Wales is stated. This was produced by averaging the figures for both elections in each jurisdiction.

Complexity

Table 1

Some people say that filling in the ballot papers is very difficult. Others say that it is not at all difficult. How difficult do you think it is filling in the ballot papers for the Scottish Parliament/Welsh Assembly election?

1999	Scotland	Wales
	%	%
Very difficult	1	
Fairly difficult	8	
Not very difficult	36	
Not at all difficult	42	
Can't choose	12	

2003	Scotland	Wales
	%	%
Very difficult	1	3
Fairly difficult	11	11
Not very difficult	33	30
Not at all difficult	39	40
Can't choose	13	15

Table 2

Some people say that it is difficult to understand how the number of seats a party wins in worked out under the new system. Others say that it is not at all difficult. How difficult do you think it is understanding how the seats are worked out?

1999	Scotland	Wales
	%	%
Very difficult	7	9
Fairly difficult	33	33
Not very difficult	33	29
Not at all difficult	12	7
Can't choose	14	19

2003	Scotland	Wales
	%	%
Very difficult	6	10
Fairly difficult	34	31
Not very difficult	35	30
Not at all difficult	9	12
Can't choose	14	16

Knowledge Quiz

1. You are allowed to vote for the same party on the first and second vote (TRUE)
2. People are given two votes so that they can show their first and second preferences (FALSE)
3. No candidate who stands in a constituency contest can be elected as a regional party list member (FALSE)
4. Regional party list seats are allocated to try to make sure each party has as fair a share of seats as is possible (TRUE)
5. The number of seats won by each party is decided by the number of first votes they get (FALSE)
6. Unless a party wins at least 5% of the second vote, it is unlikely to win any regional party list seats (TRUE).

Table3: Correct Answers to Knowledge Quiz

1999		**% correct**
	Scotland	**Wales**
Allowed to vote for same party	78	63
List seats allocated to make fair share	63	63
Need 5% to win list seats	43	35
No constituency candidate elected on list	31	23
No. of seats decided by 1st votes	30	21
Show 1st and 2nd preferences	26	22
2003		**% correct**
	Scotland	**Wales**
Allowed to vote for same party	64	62
List seats allocated to make fair share	48	43
Need 5% to win list seats	33	30
No constituency candidate elected on list	24	23
No. of seats decided by 1st votes	42	23
Show 1st and 2nd preferences	25	31

Devolved PR

Table 4

How much do you agree/disagree that the Scottish Parliament [Welsh Assembly] should be elected using PR?

1999	**Scotland**	**Wales**
Strongly Agree / Agree	66%	58%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	23%	26%
Strongly Disagree / Disagree	9%	14%
2003	**Scotland**	**Wales**
Strongly Agree / Agree	59%	57%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	28%	27%
Strongly Disagree / Disagree	11%	13%

Westminster PR

Table 5

How much do you agree/disagree that the UK should introduce PR so that the number of MPs each party gets in the House of Commons matches more closely the number of votes each party gets?

1999	Scotland	Wales
Strongly Agree / Agree	59%	55%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	28%	27%
Strongly Disagree / Disagree	11%	18%

2003	Scotland	Wales
Strongly Agree / Agree	55%	53%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	31%	30%
Strongly Disagree / Disagree	12%	15%

Table 6

The new way of voting [the voting system used in Scottish Parliament/Welsh Assembly elections] should be used in future to elect MPs to the House of Commons

1999	Scotland	Wales
Strongly Agree / Agree	50%	39%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	21%	23%
Strongly Disagree / Disagree	15%	22%
Can't Choose	11%	

2003	Scotland	Wales
Strongly Agree / Agree	33%	30%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	27%	23%
Strongly Disagree / Disagree	16%	19%
Can't Choose	21%	25%

Table 7

Some people think we should change the voting system for general elections to the House of Commons to allow smaller parties to get a fairer share of MPs. Others say that we should keep the voting system as it is to produce effective government. Which comes closer to your own view?

1999	Scotland	Wales
Change the voting system	39%	37%
Keep it as it is	53%	57%

2003	Scotland	Wales
Change the voting system	39%	32%
Keep it as it is	52%	60%

Local Election Voting

Table 8

The new way of voting [i.e. that used in elections for the Scottish Parliament/Welsh Assembly] should be used in future local council elections in Scotland [Wales]

1999	Scotland	Wales
Strongly Agree / Agree	53%	45%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	20%	21%
Strongly Disagree / Disagree	14%	17%
Can't Choose	10%	15%

2003	Scotland	Wales
Strongly Agree / Agree	40%	39%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	27%	22%
Strongly Disagree / Disagree	13%	14%
Can't Choose	18%	23%

Table 9

2003

Some people say we should change the voting system used in local elections to ensure that all parties are fairly represented. Others say that we should keep the existing system for local elections as it ensures that there is a close link between local councillors and their voters. Which view comes closer to your own ...

	Scotland	Wales
Change the voting system…	33%	27%
Keep it as it is	58%	64%

Table 10

2003

And how much do you agree or disagree that local councils in Scotland/Wales should be elected using proportional representation so that the number of councillors each party gets matches more closely the number of votes each party gets?

	Scotland	Wales
Strongly Agree/Agree	59%	56%
Neither agree nor disagree	27%	28%
Strongly Disagree/Disagree	12%	15%

The Positives and Negatives of Reform

Table 11

The new voting system [the voting system used in Scottish Parliament/Welsh Assembly elections] is much fairer than the one usually used at elections

1999	Scotland	Wales
Agree strongly / Agree	54%	39%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	23%	31%
Disagree strongly/Disagree	9%	12%

2003	Scotland	Wales
Agree strongly / Agree	36%	30%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	33%	31%
Disagree strongly/Disagree	9%	12%

Table 12

There is more point voting under the new system {under the voting system used in Scottish Parliamen/Welsh Assembly elections} because every vote counts

1999	Scotland	Wales
Agree strongly/Agree	62%	54%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	20%	21%
Disagree strongly/Disagree	6%	9%

2003	Scotland	Wales
Agree strongly/Agree	47%	39%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	27%	24%
Disagree strongly/Disagree	8%	10%

Table 13

The new voting system {...} gives too much power to small parties

1999	Scotland	Wales
Agree strongly / Agree	16%	16%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	28%	33%
Disagree strongly/Disagree	44%	35%

2003	Scotland	Wales
Agree strongly / Agree	17%	16%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	26%	30%
Disagree strongly/Disagree	39%	29%

Table 14

People have different views about how their area should best be represented in a parliament. Which of these statements comes closest to your views?

	Scotland	Wales
I would rather have one member of parliament for the area I live in	63%	61%
I would rather have several members of parliament, possibly from different parties, but covering a larger area	23%	24%

	Scotland	Wales
I would rather have one member of parliament for the area I live in	59%	63%
I would rather have several members of parliament, possibly from different parties, but covering a larger area	24%	22%

Open and Closed Lists

Table 15

I would have preferred to have been able to vote for individual candidates on the regional vote rather than for a party list

1999	Scotland	Wales
Agree strongly / Agree	43%	44%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	28%	27%
Disagree strongly/Disagree	17%	14%

2003	Scotland	Wales
Agree strongly / Agree	41%	45%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	25%	23%
Disagree strongly/Disagree	13%	11%

Table 16

Parties, not voters, should decide which of the candidates on their regional list get the seats their party has won

1999	Scotland	Wales
Agree strongly/Agree	23%	19%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	19%	18%
Disagree strongly/Disagree	47%	51%

2003	Scotland	Wales
Agree strongly/Agree	16%	16%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	19%	32%
Disagree strongly/Disagree	48%	46%

Table 17

MSPs/AMs elected through the regional party list will be too much under the control of their party

1999	Scotland	Wales
Agree strongly/Agree	30%	26%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	36%	38%
Disagree strongly/Disagree	15%	7%

2003	Scotland	Wales
Agree strongly/Agree	39%	37%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	32%	27%
Disagree strongly/Disagree	8%	9%

Outcomes

Table 18

Which of these statements comes closest to your views?

1999	Scotland	Wales
It is better to have just one party in government so that it is very clear who should be blamed if things go wrong	33%	41%
It is better to have two or more parties in government so that more people's views are represented	55%	47%

2003	Scotland	Wales
It is better to have just one party in government so that it is very clear who should be blamed if things go wrong	31%	37%
It is better to have two or more parties in government so that more people's views are represented	54%	48%

Table 19

Which do you think would be generally be better for Scotland [Wales] nowadays

1999	Scotland	Wales
To have a government in Edinburgh [Cardiff] formed by one political party on its own?	41%	48%
To have a government in Edinburgh [Cardiff] formed by two political parties together - in coalition?	51%	47%

2003	Scotland	Wales
To have a government in Edinburgh [Cardiff] formed by one political party on its own?	40%	42%
To have a government in Edinburgh [Cardiff] formed by two political parties together - in coalition?	50%	45%

Table 20

Which do you think would be generally be better for Britain nowadays?

1999	Scotland	Wales
To have a government at Westminster formed by one political party on its own?	42%	55%
To have a government at Westminster formed by two political parties together - in coalition?	48%	41%
2003	**Scotland**	**Wales**
To have a government at Westminster formed by one political party on its own?	42%	46%
To have a government at Westminster formed by two political parties together - in coalition?	47%	44%

Table 21

Having a government made up of two parties rather than one is better as it means that more people are represented

1999	Scotland	Wales
Agree strongly/Agree	50%	43%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	17%	18%
Disagree strongly/Disagree	21%	23%
2003	**Scotland**	**Wales**
Agree strongly/Agree	48%	46%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	19%	16%
Disagree strongly/Disagree	21%	26%

Table 22

Governments should only be made up of parties that win at least half the votes in an election

1999	Scotland	Wales
Agree strongly/Agree	44%	44%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	19%	19%
Disagree strongly/Disagree	23%	21%
2003	**Scotland**	**Wales**
Agree strongly/Agree	38%	43%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	24%	18%
Disagree strongly/Disagree	24%	22%

Table 23

The new voting system will lead to unstable government

1999	Scotland	Wales
Agree strongly / Agree	14%	16%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	28%	29%
Disagree strongly/Disagree	43%	36%

2003	Scotland	Wales
Agree strongly / Agree	10%	13%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	29%	27%
Disagree strongly/Disagree	37%	31%

Table 24

All parties should have told us before polling day who they would prefer to work with in a coalition government

1999	Scotland	Wales
Agree strongly/Agree	53%	41%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	20%	27%
Disagree strongly/Disagree	14%	16%

2003	Scotland	Wales
Agree strongly/Agree	45%	44%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	20%	19%
Disagree strongly/Disagree	16%	14%

Purpose of Elections

Table 25

Which of these statements comes closest to your views?

1999	Scotland	Wales
It is more important that elections should produce a clear winner so that it is voters who decide who forms the government	41%	51%
It is more important that elections should produce a fair result even if this means it is not clear who should form the government	43%	36%

2003	Scotland	Wales
It is more important that elections should produce a clear winner so that it is voters who decide who forms the government	39%	49%
It is more important that elections should produce a fair result even if this means it is not clear who should form the government	43%	35%

Devolution Division of Labour

Table 26

SCOTLAND 2003

There are different kinds of politicians people can contact if they need help. First of all, over the last four years, have you ever contacted a Member of the Scottish Parliament for your area?

Yes	10%
No	90%
(Don't know)	*

IF 'yes' Ask:
b. Was that … READ OUT …

…the local MSP for your constituency,	6%
one of the list MSPs for your region,	2%
both,	1%
or, are you not sure?	1%

ASK ALL
D16. And over the last four years, have you ever contacted the Member of Parliament who represents your area in the House of Commons?

Yes	8%
No	92%
(Don't know)	*

D17. And over the last four years, have you ever contacted the local councillor for your area?

Yes	20%
No	80%
(Don't know)	*

Table 27

WALES 2003

There are different kinds of politicians people can contact if they need help. First of all, over the last four years, have you ever contacted a Member of the National Assembly of Wales for your area?

	Yes	7%
	No	93%
	(Don't know)	*

IF 'yes' Ask:

b. Was that … READ OUT …

...the local AM for your constituency,	5%
one of the list AMs for your region,	1%
both,	1%
or, are you not sure?	1%

ASK ALL

D16. And over the last four years, have you ever contacted the Member of Parliament who represents your area in the House of Commons?

Yes	12%
No	88%

D17. And over the last four years, have you ever contacted the local councillor for your area?

Yes	24%
No	76%
(Don't know)	*

Table 28

2003
Who best able to help on problem with?

	Government Benefit		NHS Treatment	
	Scotland	**Wales**	**Scotland**	**Wales**
MP	24%	38%	20%	34%
MSP/AM	33%	21%	37%	24%
Both equally	37%	36%	38%	36%

The National Centre for Social Research interviewed a random sample of 4,432 adults aged 18+ across Great Britain south of the Caledonian canal. This represented a response rate of 59%. 3,710 of the interviews were conducted in England. The sample was drawn from the postcode address file, with a single respondent chosen for interview by a random selection method at each successfully contacted address. The data have been weighted to compensate for unequal selection probabilities. The questions reported here were asked of a one quarter sample comprising 1,160 respondents of whom 975 were resident in England.

Table 29

1997	Scotland	Wales	England
Single	56	-	52
Coalition	35	-	41

1999	Scotland	Wales	England
Single	43	57	-
Coalition	48	40	-

2003	Scotland	Wales	England
Single	42	46	44
Coalition	47	44	50

1997	Scotland	Wales	England
Change voting	33	-	36
Keep as is	60		60

1999	Scotland	Wales	England
Change voting	39	37	35
Keep as is	53	57	63

2003			
Change voting	39	32	36
Keep as is	52	60	60

Appendix E: Evidence received

A number of individuals and institutions wrote to the Commission with views on electoral reform.

1. Mr Bob Granville
2. Mr Stephen Roberts
3. Mr George Avery
4. Mr Alex Metcalfe
5. Mr Dane Clouston
6. Councillor Andrew Burns
7. Mr Chris Howells
8. Mr David Oliver
9. Mr Derek Knights
10. Mr Trevor Stearn
11. Mr John Martin
12. Mr John McCut
13. Mrs Margaret Goudie
14. Mr Neil Thompson
15. Mr Nick Trier
16. Mr Peter Jubb
17. Mr Richard Lyesgreen
18. Mr Rob Lacey
19. Mr Tim Malburn
20. Mr Tim Pilkington
21. Mr Trevor Stearn
22. Mrs Sheila Howe
23. Mr Alex Cross
24. Mr Colin Beveridge
25. Mr Ahron Nathan
26. Mr Hugh Armitage
27. Mr Ralph Hill
28. Mrs Jane Buchanan
29. Mrs Joan Davis
30. Mr Roderick Clarke
31. Cllr Marcelle Lloyd—Hayes
32. Mr. Philip Kestelman
33. Assembly Secretariat, Greater London Authority
34. Make Votes Count in South London
35. The Electoral Reform Society
36. Independent Group, Local Government Association

Appendix F: Academic Advisory Group

The Commission was fortunate to have a strong group of academic advisors. They corresponded with the Commission over its life-cycle, read drafts of the text and met at a one day seminar in Nuffield College, Oxford in July 2003. The members of this panel were:

1. Mr Chris Ballinger, Queens College, Oxford
2. Professor Vernon Bogdanor, Brasenose College Oxford
3. Dr. Adrian Blau, Merton College, Oxford
4. Professor Patrick Dunleavy, London School of Economics
5. Dr. Geoffrey Evans, Nuffield College, Oxford
6. Professor Ron Johnston, University of Bristol
7. Professor Anthony King, University of Essex
8. Dr. Michael Gallagher, Trinity College, Dublin
9. Dr. Bill Hartas, University of Newcastle
10. Professor David Farrell, University of Manchester
11. Professor Helen Margetts, University College London
12. Dr. Clive Payne, Nuffield College Oxford

Appendix G: Seminars

The Commission held a number of seminars in 2002 and 2003 to gauge opinion on the effect of the new electoral systems. Seminars were held in Cardiff and Edinburgh in November 2002, in the European Parliament Office in London in January 2003 and in University College London in February 2003. In addition, the chairs and secretariat made a number of fact finding visits to Scotland and Wales.

Appendix H: Online Consultation

In July 2003, the Commission engaged the Hansard Society to run an on-line consultation exercise. This involved members of the public registering with a website and responding to discussion points about electoral systems. The consultation period lasted two weeks and was moderated by Mark Rickard of the Hansard Society. The consultation drew over 150 respondents, many of whom having also participated in the YouGov surveys. Discussion was wide-ranging and extensive.

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9 The wording of this question was slightly different in 2003 asking people whether they thought that 'The new voting system [the voting system used in Scottish Parliament/Welsh Assembly elections] is much fairer than the one usually used at elections. The fact that the question was amended in this way shows that a decline in support for PR may be a reaction to the Scottish Parliament or National Assembly for Wales rather than the electoral system itself.

10 For more systematic analysis of how electoral systems can be distinguished in terms of ballot structure, see inter alia: Matthew Shugart, 'Electoral 'Efficiency' and the Move to Mixed-Member Systems', *Electoral Studies.* 20 (2001): 173-93; David Farrell and Ian McAllister, 'Voter Satisfaction and Electoral Systems: Does Preferential Voting in Candidate-Centred Systems Make a Difference?', paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Philadelphia, 2003.

11 Indeed, voting in AMS systems in this combination – constituency vote for larger parties and list votes for smaller parties – is the most rational way for strategically using a vote. For discussion, see Hans-Dieter Klingemann and Bernhard Wessels, 'The Political Consequences of Germany's Mixed-Member System: Personalization at the Grass Roots?', in Matthew Shugart and Martin Wattenberg (eds), *Mixed-Member Electoral Systems: The Best of Both Worlds?* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

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59 It might be noted that in making this objection Hain and Steel overlook the fact that in House of Commons elections an individual can currently stand for election in more than one constituency, be defeated in one but be successful in another.

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63 Thomas, A. (1985) p.218. However the 1994 European Representation Study of members of the European Parliament seems to present different conclusions. MEP's were asked to rate the importance of casework defined as 'helping individuals with particular problems' from (1) 'not very important' to (7) 'very important'. Surprisingly Britain emerged as the country where casework was regarded as being most important (ranking it at 5.5). In countries using PR the hierarchy was Germany (5.3), Ireland (4.8) and Denmark (4.4). However, the issue of casework was not specifically defined in this survey.

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65 STV in Tasmania (known locally as the Hare-Clark system) differs from the Irish system in that the elector must indicate at least three preferences on the ballot sheet. Candidates are also grouped by party on the ballot. Finally there are no by-elections. Instead, the ballot papers of the departing candidate are re-

examined an the transfers are re-allocated. See Rydon, J. (1985) in Vernon Bogdanor (ed) *Representatives of the People?* Aldershot: Gower. pp. 86 -102.

66 The Lib-Lab Pact in 1977-78 involved the Liberals supporting the Labour government, rather than being brought into government. The Pact was thus a means by which a single party minority administration gained legislative support, and not an example of a formal coalition

67 Seyd, Ben (2004) *Coalition Governance in Scotland and Wales*, London: The Constitution Unit, forthcoming

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69 *Ibid, p 291.*

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81 *Your Region, Your Choice* (Cm 5511, May 2002) para 7.24.

82 Sandford, Mark and McQuail, Paul (2001) *Unexplored Territory: Elected Regional Assemblies in England*, London, The Constitution Unit, July 2001, p 107 Table 8.6. 75 per cent of the first elected members of the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly also had prior political experience.

83 Adonis, Andrew (1998) *Voting in Proportion: Electoral Reform for Scotland's Councils*, Edinburgh, Scottish Council Foundation.

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