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Make Votes Matter

WHAT COULD FUTURE ELECTORAL SYSTEMS LOOK LIKE?



MAKE VOTES MATTER

Make Votes Matter (MVM) is the cross-party movement to introduce Proportional Representation (PR) to the House of Commons.

MVM formed in the aftermath of the hugely disproportionate 2015 general election and is now the leading organisation working towards making seats match votes. MVM combines the power of people taking grassroots action with coordinated activity by an alliance of politicians, public figures, parties and organisations to win PR in years, not decades.

MVM does not endorse or support any party or alliance of parties but aims to encourage all parties, organisations and individuals to support the adoption of a proportional voting system for general elections so that Parliament, specifically the House of Commons, reflects the voters.

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With thanks to Ceinwen McMillan who edited the report

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Emma Harrison
Chief Executive
Make Votes Matter



FOREWORD

Trust in politics is at an all-time low in the UK. There are many reasons that faith in politicians has been rocked, it could be the repeated scandals, a lack of accountability, or a perception that politicians prioritise personal or party interests over the public good. Broken promises, misleading campaigns, and policies that fail to address widespread concerns have also fuelled disillusionment.

But it's the electoral system that has truly eroded confidence. Too many voters feel powerless and disconnected from decision-making, deepening the democratic deficit. First Past the Post (FPTP) is outdated, unfair, and unaccountable. Every vote should count. Every citizen should have a real say in how the country is run. Our Parliament should represent all of us, not just a privileged few.

As the campaign for PR reaches a pivotal stage – closer to success than at any time in decades – one question keeps coming up: "What will reform look like?" Supporters of PR are eager to discuss the best system, while opponents hope the debate will divide us. The reality is simple: any form of PR is better than FPTP. That has always been the guiding principle of Make Votes Matter (MVM), the leading campaign for PR. While there are different types of PR, our core mission is clear – abolish FPTP and ensure seats in Parliament reflect the way people vote.

We want the best possible PR system for the UK. That's why we developed the Good Systems Agreement (GSA) – a landmark cross-party and cross-society framework defining the principles of a fair and effective PR system for Westminster. The GSA sets out 10 key principles that any UK voting system should meet, endorsed by leading experts and signed by five parliamentary parties – Alliance, the Green Party, the Liberal Democrats, Plaid Cymru, and the Scottish National Party – alongside a broad coalition of reform organisations, politicians, and public figures.

This report aims to build on the GSA and highlight the options that a bold, forward thinking government could implement to replace the old-fashioned First Past the Post system.

The time for change is now.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report makes it clear that Proportional Representation (PR) in UK elections is possible, practicable and could have a dramatically positive impact on our politics. It seeks to inform political parties, supporters of electoral reform and the government as FPTP comes under increased scrutiny.

The 2024 General Election marked a turning point in our politics. More voters than ever were effectively disenfranchised, with millions having their votes rendered irrelevant due to geography. Alongside this, trust in politics has continued to flatline. Shockingly, despite being a 'change election', the British public weren't motivated to vote, with the second lowest turnout in our history. Far from proving to bolster trust in our democracy, our institutions and the political culture they foster now engender apathy, rather than a feeling of agency. This guide seeks to support the rebuilding of one of those crumbling institutions – our voting system.

There are multiple proportional systems which would be appropriate for the UK House of Commons. Although there are trade-offs between them, each would represent a vast improvement over FPTP. Using research into best practice electoral system design, the report appraises the merits and drawbacks of three internationally and domestically (devolved) implemented PR systems, as well as an untested but revised version of Jenkins AV+ system. All of these systems are considered well supported, well-understood and practicable for the House of Commons.

This report draws on the Good Systems Agreement (GSA), the consensus between political parties, politicians, key organisations and public figures on the key principles in the design of electoral systems. With growing calls to explore the options available for policymakers in deciding a fair and effective system to better serve our politics, this report will test each of the most commonly advocated systems against the GSA, putting its principles into practice.

The systems considered in this report are the **Single Transferable Vote (STV)**, **Regional-List PR** and a range of **Mixed Systems**:

Single Transferable Vote (STV)

MPs are elected in small, multi-member constituencies. Voters rank their preferred candidates. MPs are elected by exceeding a certain threshold, once voters' preferences are taken into account. STV maximises voter choice between candidates, while ensuring that parties are represented proportionally.

Regional-List PR

MPs are elected in small, multi-member constituencies. Each voter has one vote which they use to support a party list. MPs are then elected from the list in proportion to the number of votes their party received. Flexible or open lists can be used to allow voters to vote for individual candidates on party lists.

Mixed Systems:

Additional Member Systems

The AMS system we consider works by combining a certain number of MPs elected under FPTP with a number of 'top-up' MPs to ensure proportionality. Voters have one vote for a local representative and another for a preferred party. AMS allows voters to have local representation within a proportional legislature.

Alternative Vote +

Recommended by the Jenkins Commission, though not a tried and tested system for elections. It is a mixed system that keeps single-member constituencies but elects their MPs with the Alternative Vote, and then corrects the overall result with a regional 'top-up' tier. The design pairs majority-mandate constituency representation with an overall House of Commons that is broadly proportional to how the nation voted.

The report assesses each system against the principles of the GSA, taking into account international evidence and implementability.

INTRODUCTION

The case for PR is stronger now than it has been in decades. The 2024 election result sent a shockwave through our politics. The two party system of old was firmly rejected by the public, with the Labour Party and Conservative Party receiving their lowest combined vote share in British electoral history. Incredibly, four parties received more than 10% of the vote for the first time, with a fifth party not far behind.

Despite a change of government, trust in politics hasn't recovered, with a record 46% of the public stating that they 'almost never' trust governments of any party to place the needs of the nation above the interests of their own political party¹. This is 22 points above the figure recorded in 2020 during the height of the pandemic. As many as 58%, also a record high, say they 'almost never' trust 'politicians of any party in Britain to tell the truth when they are in a tight corner'². With dissatisfaction at a record high, it's clear that FPTP underpins a political system that fails to deliver.

Current research indicates that there is record support for changing the voting system, with 60% backing an end to FPTP³, up from 27% in 2011⁴. This rise in support has been mirrored by a growing dissatisfaction with our political system, with IPPR finding that trust in politicians is at its lowest level on record⁵.

More and more people recognise that our voting system undermines trust and satisfaction with our democracy. When Labour Together polled the public on which democratic reform would have the most positive impact on British politics, the answer was clear: PR topped the poll, above Lords reform, deeper devolution and citizens' assemblies among other reforms⁶. Unprecedented support for change now spans the entire political spectrum, with supporters of all major political parties, including the Conservative Party, backing a change to the voting system⁷.

FPTP has never been under such scrutiny. The step change in public attitudes has been matched in Parliamentary support too. The All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Fair Elections has become the largest in this Parliament. Most recently, the Labour Government has acknowledged the dangers of small personal mandates in elections, moving away from FPTP in mayoral elections. And public support for electoral reform is consistently high, reflecting a widespread desire for change.

Unrepresentative, unstable, unsustainable – our democracy is in need of urgent repair. As close supporters of the APPG for Fair Elections, we are calling for a National Commission on Electoral Reform⁸ to determine a suitable voting system to replace FPTP. This report seeks to support that call by exploring and weighing the relative principles that might underpin any new system.

This report is intended to be a resource for practitioners – campaigners and politicians. As stated earlier, it aims to put the principles laid out in the GSA into practice, and to consider how they might be applied to systems in use in the UK and around the world.⁹

1 Curtice & NatCen (2025)
2 Curtice & NatCen (2025)
3 Curtice & NatCen (2025)
4 Butt, Clery & Curtice (2022)
5 Quilter-Pinner, Statham, Jennings & Valgarðsson (2021)

6 Cooper & Williams (2023)
7 Curtice & NatCen (2025)
8 Free But Not Fair (2024)
9 Make Votes Matter (2019)

Throughout this report every design choice is tested against the Good Systems Agreement's ten principles, a cross-party benchmark that defines what counts as a good UK voting system; meeting the GSA is therefore the report's core yardstick, not an optional extra. Voting reform is not an abstract, theoretical problem; the failings of FPTP must be kept in the foreground of system redesign. Rather than simply looking to ameliorate the worst excesses of the UK system, we must aim to abolish FPTP once and for all.

A PR system would go a long way towards addressing these failures of democracy. In some cases, it would practically solve them overnight. With PR, far fewer votes are wasted and elections are not decided by a handful of marginal constituencies. Over time, this would improve our democracy in broader ways. We would be more likely to have higher turnout, by at least 5% and possibly up to 8% – as more voters would see the correlation between their vote and the election outcome – and we would see a better representation of women and minorities.¹⁰

While these improvements to democracy themselves offer a strong case for PR, they are not the only benefits of reforming the voting system. Strengthening democracy has significant downstream implications: improving policy-making and outcomes. Studies show how countries with PR have lower income inequality, lower poverty and lower regional inequality.¹¹ They were faster to legalise same-sex marriages and took faster action on the climate crisis.¹² They have higher rates of growth and lower unemployment and inflation.¹³ While most cross-national studies find associations between PR and lower inequality, faster climate action, and more stable economic outcomes, causality is debated. Institutional co-variation and historical context also play roles¹⁴. Nonetheless, the balance of evidence supports PR systems correlating with better socio-economic outcomes.

This makes logical sense: if we improve the way we elect MPs, rebalancing our political system away from a disproportionate focus on marginal voters and towards the electorate at large, MPs will be better able to focus on the issues they entered politics to tackle. With a more diverse range of politicians, a stronger democratic mandate and a more long-term political outlook, our politics will have a stronger platform to achieve outcomes that will enhance society across the board.

The causal mechanisms of achieving these outcomes are varied, but most of them hinge on having governments which have the support of close to 50% of voters. This means that politicians must extend their appeal or work collaboratively to achieve their goals. Other reforms could go some way to addressing democratic deficits, but only reform of the House of Commons can fundamentally improve the balance of power in this country. A disproportional system will not deliver the benefits of PR, nor will it retain any supposed benefits of FPTP. After all, given the UK's recent record, what would we want to keep?

The vast majority of our democratic peer nations use a form of PR. These include the devolved parliaments and assemblies in London, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Each country has their own specifications of PR, but these systems largely fall into a number of broad categories. As has been demonstrated repeatedly, the key distinction in electoral systems is between proportional (PR) and disproportional systems. That is why it has always been Make Votes Matter's policy to advocate the principle of greater proportionality, rather than a specific system. This does not mean to say that wider system design should be neglected.

We believe that the best possible system should be adopted for the House of Commons. It is this belief that led to the above-mentioned Good Systems Agreement, which we outline in detail below.

10 Norris (2004), Pilon (2007), Lijphart (2012)
11 Austen-Smith (2000); Iversen & Soskice (2006), Manow (2009), Persson & Tabellini (2009) Becher (2016) Spicer (2018) Jurado & León (2019), Paulsen (2022) Zuazu (2022)
12 Fredriksson and Millimet (2004), Dunn, Orellana & Singh (2009), Orellana (2010)
13 Lijphart (1994a), Crepaz (1996), Knutsen (2011), Knutsen & Rasmussen (2018)
14 Bawn & Rosenbluth (2006)

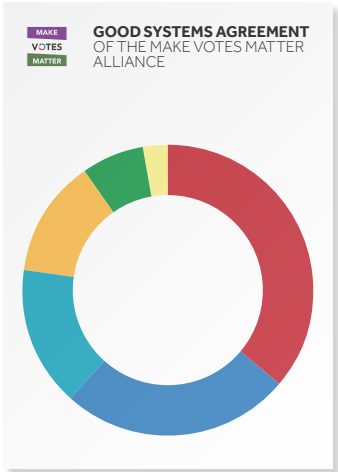
The guiding principles of this report are based on that of the GSA. This report also recognises that many of the benefits of PR set out above flow from having a significant degree of proportionality, so there is a particular focus on that criterion.

The GSA suggests that any system for the House of Commons should deliver results that are at least as proportional as the Scottish system. However, of course, disproportionality varies from election to election. The Scottish system has had an average Gallagher Index score – a measure of disproportionality between votes received and seats allotted in the legislature – of 6.99 since its first election in 1999.

Critics of electoral reform will decry any change as experimental. As such, this report also briefly considers the issues of implementation and international experience. We deem it to be of critical importance that the proposed system for reform is in tune with systems in use in the UK and around the world. Though AV+ as a distinct system is not in use anywhere, we have deemed it necessary to examine it within this report due to its historic role in the debate around options for alternative voting systems in the UK. Another key assumption is that under all systems, the size of the House of Commons must remain the same, without compromising on overall proportionality.

The Good Systems Agreement (GSA)

The GSA, launched in 2019, sets out the key principles of system-design that guide MVM. In this report, we compare systems against these principles to consider areas of strength and potential mitigating measures which can ensure compliance with the GSA.



The principles of the GSA are as follows:

1 Proportionality

Good systems ensure that seats closely match votes, with parliamentary representation at least as proportional as the Scottish Parliament.¹⁵

2 Representation

Good systems ensure MPs and governments represent the views of the voters.

3 Equal Votes

Good systems ensure that the value of individual votes is not distorted by factors such as geography, and minimise the need for tactical voting.

4 Local links

Good systems maintain links between MPs and specific geographic areas.

5 Diversity

Good systems encourage the election of parliaments reflecting the population.

6 Voter choice

Good systems allow voters a wide choice of parties, and allow voters to express preferences for people rather than just parties. Any lists used must be democratically determined.

7 Accountability

Good systems ensure MPs and governments are accountable to the voters.

8 Balance of stability and flexibility

Good systems engender stable, flexible governments that have the ability to compromise.

9 Sustainability and adaptability

Good systems are able to respond and adapt to changing needs without requiring frequent or fundamental change.

10 Voting simplicity

Good systems and ballot papers are easy for voters to understand and use.

Implementation

As discussion of FPTP's unsustainability and unsuitability gains momentum, discussion will soon turn to alternative systems of electing our politicians and how these might be implemented. We consider all of the systems outlined in this report to be relatively simple to introduce. This is also consistent with principle 9 from the GSA, which encourages systems to be adaptable. Those systems which are most easily implemented now, will be more likely to have the flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances, such as demographic changes. We expect further work on implementation will be conducted across the pro-reform sector before the next General Election and steadfastly back calls for a new system to be explored and implemented through a National Commission on Electoral Reform.

Experience

If we are to be able to accurately assess the strengths, necessary mitigation and implementability of any system, real world experience is critical. The majority of our international peers use PR in one form or another. In the UK, too, multiple PR systems are, or have been in use as already mentioned. As such, there is a wide pool of evidence and experience to draw from. Any attempt to design a unique system will be attacked as 'untested'. This is especially relevant to the AV+ design, which fails the experience test, though may have some level of support, or discussion, due to its historic significance. It is on this basis, and acknowledging the barriers to implementation, that it is included as an option in this report. We are confident that there is enough flexibility in the proposed systems to allow for potential local adjustments, where needed.

Systems for consideration

Based on the criteria above, four broadly defined systems are considered by this report – the **Single Transferable Vote**, **Mixed Systems** – in this case the Additional Member System (AMS) and AV+ system – and a version of **Regional-List PR**. These systems have been outlined above and are discussed in more detail in the sections which follow.

¹⁵ Unless otherwise stated, the measure of disproportionality used in this report is the Gallagher Index/Least Squares Index. This is because it is less sensitive to the number of parties competing and generally highly correlated with other commonly used methods. (Gallagher, 1991)

HOW FIRST PAST THE POST FAILS THE GOOD SYSTEMS AGREEMENT

GSA-Based Scorecard for FPTP

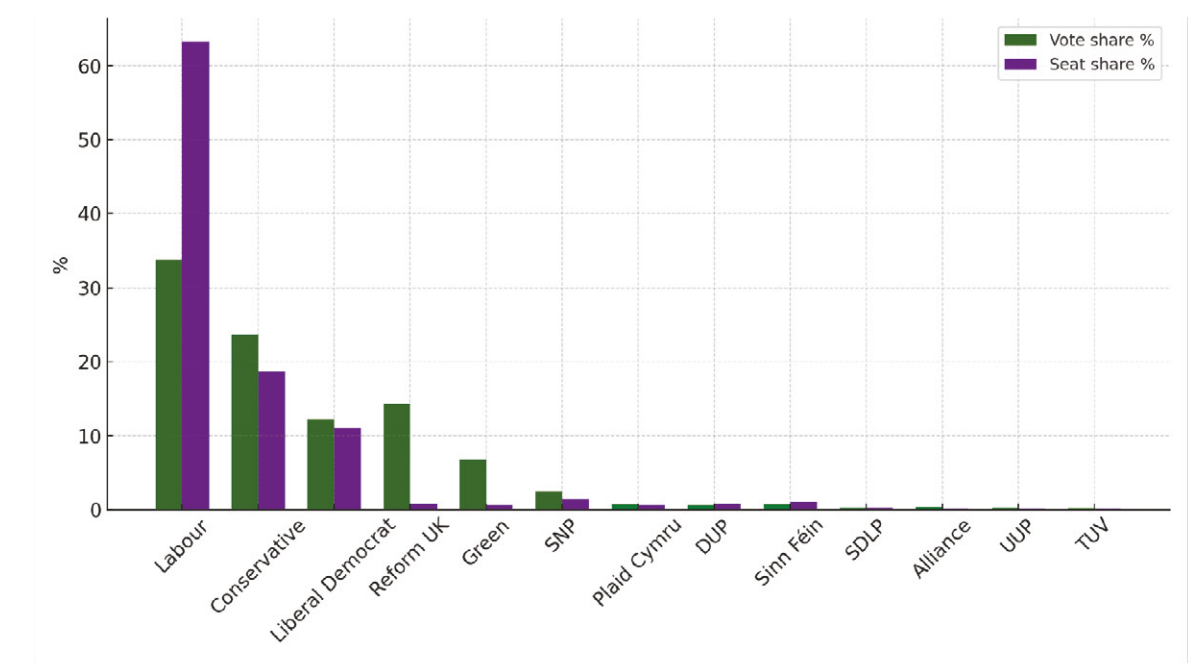
GSA Principle	Meets Standard?	Evidence (UK)
Proportionality	●	Gallagher $\approx$ 23.6 in 2024
Representation	●	57.8 % of voters unrepresented ¹⁶
Equal Votes	●	Marginal Voters have votes of higher worth than others – causing geographical distortion and inequality
Local Links	●	Single named MP per constituency
Diversity	●	FPTP Parliaments are found to be less diverse than Proportional ones
Voter Choice	●	Forces trade-off between local and national preference; no intra-party choice
Accountability	●	Governments can be removed, but individual MPs can avoid accountability through safe seat status
Stability & Flexibility	●	Can lead to drastic swings in policy direction
Sustainability & Adaptability	●	Fails to facilitate new voter preferences and changes to party political landscape
Voting Simplicity	●	Voter expresses one preference

¹⁶ Defined here as votes for losing candidates plus surplus votes above the winning threshold under each system.

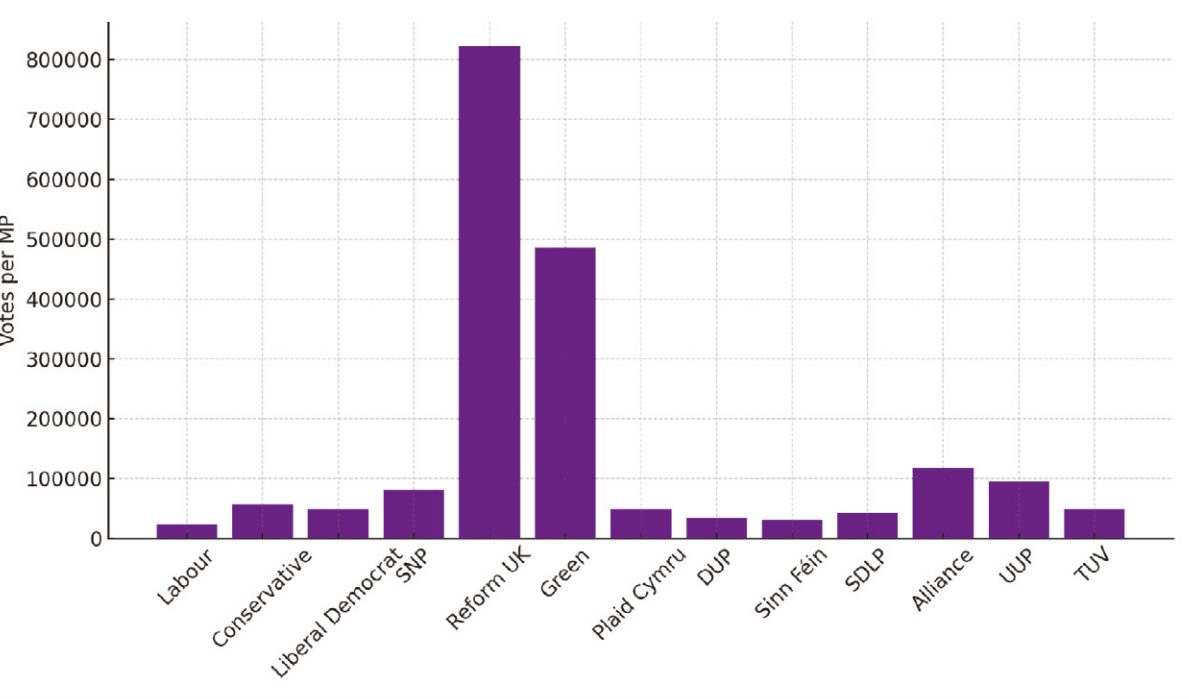
FIRST PAST THE POST

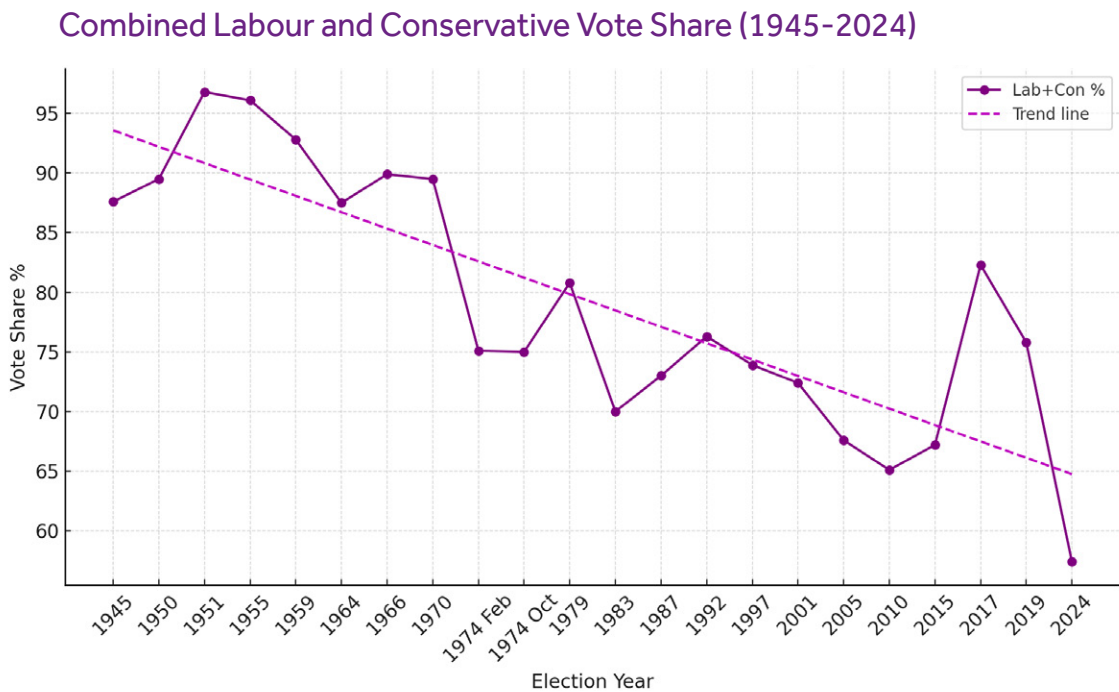
OUT OF TOUCH

Vote Share vs Seat Share (2024)



Votes per MP by Party (2024)





At its core FPTP distorts our politics, our democracy, and with it, our political, social and economic outcomes. It works as follows. Each constituency elects a single MP. The candidate with the highest total of votes is elected, no matter how low that total is, or how close the contest is. All other votes for losing candidates are effectively disregarded. The consequence is clear: the election of a parliament that does not reflect political parties' national level of public support.

We've seen stark examples of this in recent years. In 2015, the Scottish National Party won 1.5 million votes and 56 MPs. On the same day, UKIP, the Green Party and the Liberal Democrats won 7.5 million votes between them, but elected only 10 MPs. At the 2024 election, the Labour Party won their second ever largest number of MPs, 411 (63.2% of MPs), on only 33.7% of the vote. It took only 23,622 votes to elect a Labour MP in 2024, whilst it took 460,781 to elect a Green Party MP, and a shocking 823,522 votes for a Reform UK MP¹⁷.

Worryingly, 2024 also saw turnout drop by 7.5% points when compared with 2019, falling to 59.8%. Between votes for losing candidates and surplus votes for winners, 57.8% of voters were left unrepresented at the 2024 general election. In many constituencies, thousands of voters could have stayed at home without changing the result. Politicians, meanwhile, scramble to represent the small minority of voters who could swing the next election, rather than focusing on representing the country as a whole.

2024's step change into a multi-party political landscape, far from dissipating has proved to be durable, with 5 parties now regularly polling into double digits¹⁸. FPTP is designed to force voters into two, binary camps. Yet voters are refusing to be straitjacketed any longer, stating their preference for a more pluralistic politics – preferring coalitions to single-party government for the first time¹⁹. In 2025's local elections, only 16% of those elected had more than 50% of the vote, down from 65% in 2021²⁰. This trend towards hypermarginality was even more pronounced in Mayoral elections, with the West of England mayor being elected on a shocking 25% of the vote²¹. Under these conditions, with many marginal constituencies contested more than three ways, and seats potentially being won on record low percentages of the vote, the next election could see a party win majority government on as little as 30% of the vote. FPTP was never the guarantor of stability its supporters claimed it was, but it is now rendering elections no more predictable than a fruit machine.

17 Electoral Reform Society (2024)

18 Politico (2025)

19 BSA (2025)

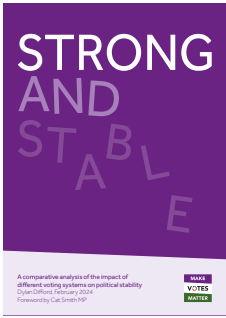
20 More in Common (2025)

21 Make Votes Matter (2025)

The most prominent example of FPTP's distortion is the difference between 'safe' and 'marginal' seats. Marginal seats are those which are closely fought by two or more parties. Politicians and activists flock to these constituencies to campaign. Policy decisions are explicitly made with reference to these key marginal seats, while journalists often consider how political events might be received in so-called 'key marginals'. In safe – or 'stale' – seats, by contrast, voters are ignored, and areas languish, with scarce campaigning, little influence and a voice which can be safely ignored by politicians.

So, rather than aiming to represent the whole country, politicians almost exclusively target key voters. This turns elections into efficiency drives, and a race to the bottom to attract the minimal acceptable share of public support to secure a slim majority in a small section of the country. In fact, only one government since the Second World War was formed of parties which won a majority of the vote between them. The entire system is built around perverse motives. Far from seeking to facilitate the formation of governments that can appeal to a broad base of public opinion, parties in our system are incentivised to hyperfocus on the interests of a select few, meaning whoever wins an election, the country at large will struggle to see themselves and their values in their government. The consequence of this is unstable, short-sighted governments elected on a minority of the vote, who are able to rush through legislation without proper scrutiny in parliament.

FPTP not only fails voters, but fails potential MPs. There is a significant body of research showing that fewer women are elected under FPTP systems.²² Similarly, FPTP has been shown to discriminate against the voting preferences of poorer people.²³ Across the board, proportional systems tend to better represent minority groups, with multi-member districts allowing for wider representation than the single-member majoritarianism of FPTP.²⁴ Supporters of FPTP often claim that disproportionality is a price worth paying for the ability to build a durable programme for government. However, this myth has been thoroughly discredited. Dylan Difford, when analysing 17 comparable democracies, found that the best performing nations across a range of measures of political stability were PR users, with no clear causal relationship between voting system usage and political stability.²⁵



2024 General Election – At a Glance	
Indicator	2024 Election Figure
Gallagher disproportionality index	23.6 ²⁶
Wasted votes (losing + surplus)	58% ²⁷
Safe seats (winner margin ≥ 10 pp)	364 / 650 (56%) ²⁸
Turn-out drop since 2019	-7.5 pp (67.3 → 59.8 %) ²⁹
Votes per MP (Lab / Grn / Ref)	23622 / 460781 / 823522 ³⁰

22 Krook & Schwindt-Bayer (2013), Thames (2017).

Inter-Parliamentary Union (2022b)

23 Bernauer, Giger & Rosset (2015)

24 Norris (1997)

25 Difford (2024)

26 Gallagher (2025)

27 Electoral Reform Society (2024)

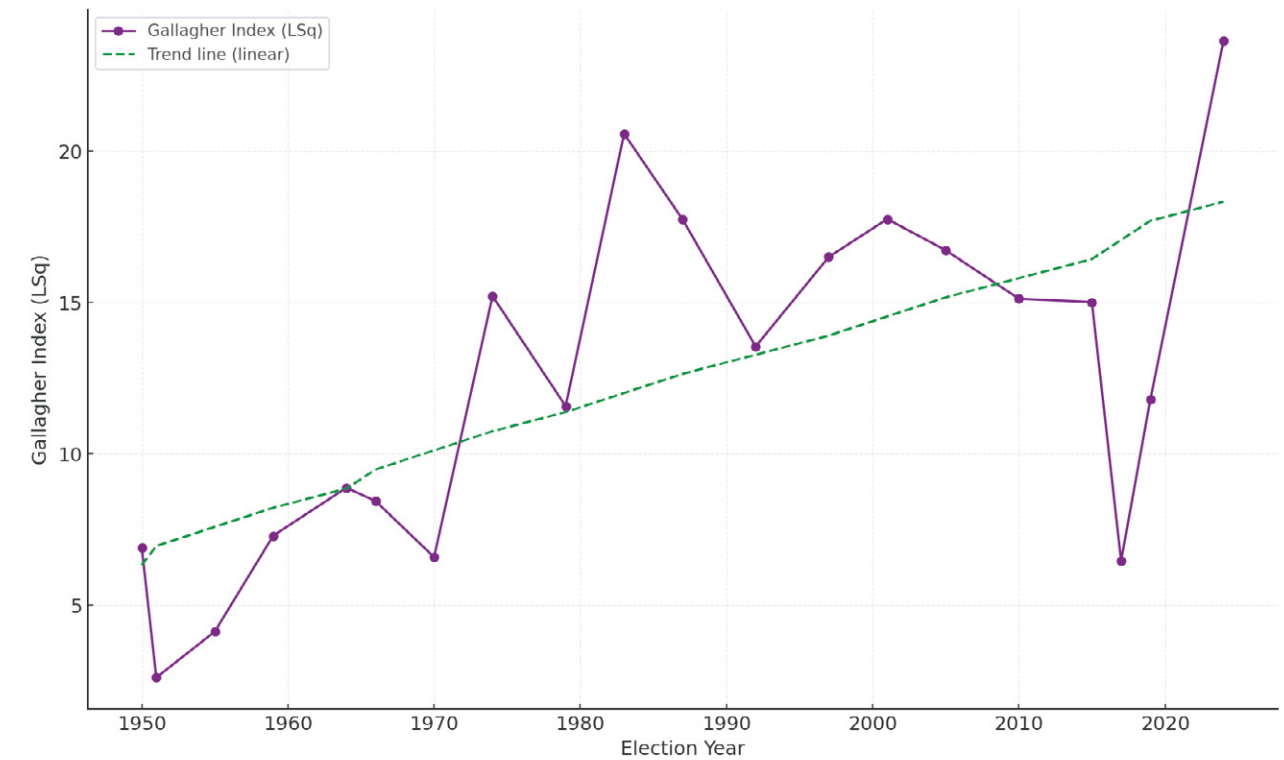
28 Electoral Reform Society (2024)

29 House of Commons Library (2025)

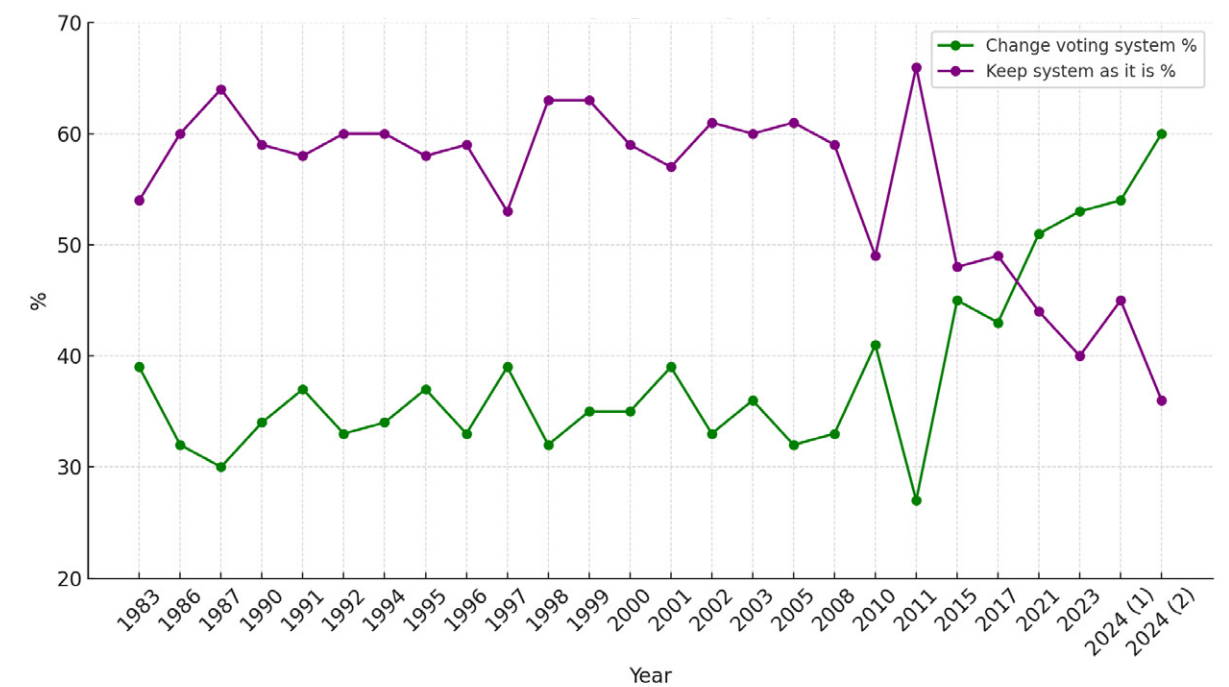
30 Electoral Commission (2024) - figures used to compute votes-per-MP ratios

THE LANDSCAPE FOR CHANGE

Gallagher Index (Disproportionality) in UK General Elections (1950-2024)



Public Opinion on Changing Voting System (1983-2024)



British elections over time

The past seven-and-a-half decades since 1945 have seen a total transformation of UK electoral norms.

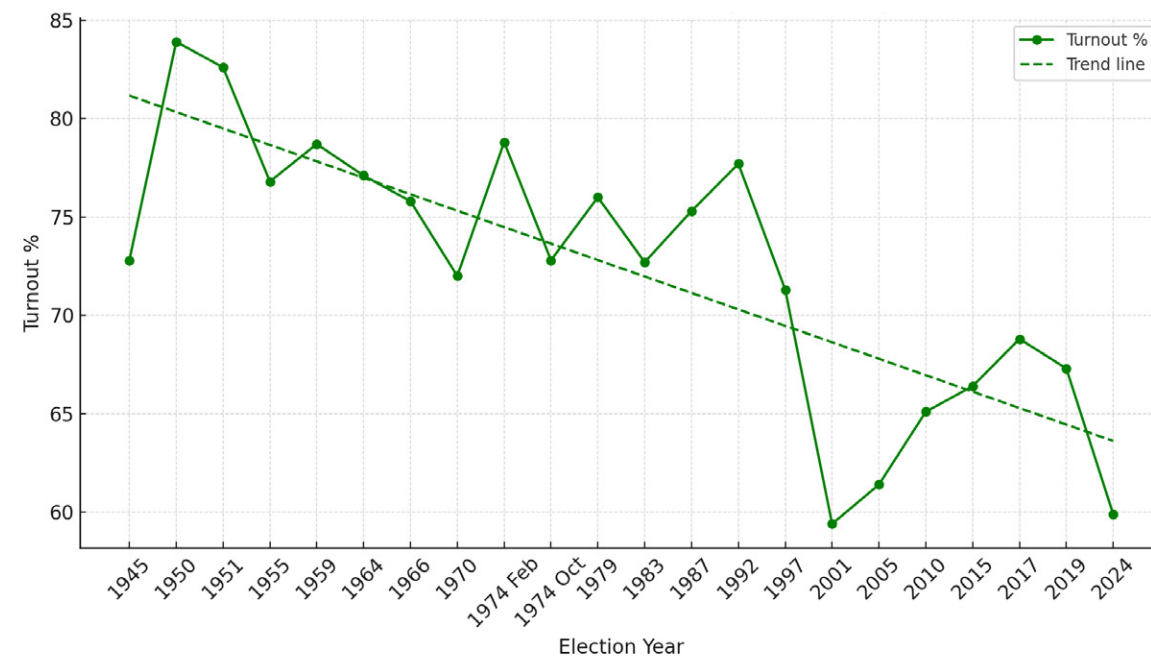
During the high-participation, two-party era of the 1950s and early-1960s, Labour and the Conservatives routinely commanded more than 90% of the vote. FPTP translated that concentration into seats with a relatively high level of proportionality. The electoral shifts of the 1970s exposed the fragility of that equilibrium: the share of the vote going to the two-parties dipped beneath 80%, and as a result, disproportionality more than doubled in a single cycle, with FPTP suffering its first hairline crack. Turnout began its gradual decline at roughly the same time. A second break occurred after 1997. Although the Labour landslide initially concealed distortion, the underlying trend persists – by 2010 combined Conservative-Labour support had slipped even further to the mid-60s and the effective number of parties passed four³¹.

In the 2019–24 period fragmentation accelerated again; with so called ‘smaller parties’ such as Reform UK and the Greens securing a combined one-fifth of the vote, two-party support fell to a record low of below 60 % and the Gallagher index reached an unprecedented 23.6.

Public support for PR tracks this structural drift with a small lag. In the 1980s and 1990s well over half the electorate preferred to keep FPTP, and backing for change rarely exceeded one-third. The turning-point follows the 2010 AV referendum. While the proposal itself was rejected, the campaign made electoral reform a national conversation just as volatility rose and FPTP’s two-party straightjacket became increasingly difficult to defend amongst a changing party landscape. Between 2010 and 2015 support for keeping FPTP fell by more than ten points; whilst the call for change climbed steadily even in the referendum’s aftermath. From 2019 onward, political realignment after Brexit and a visibly disproportional 2024 result consolidated the shift in the demand for change. By 2023 a clear plurality favoured replacing the system, and from 2024 a record majority does so.

Taken together, these trajectories describe a politics that has outgrown the institutional assumptions built into FPTP. When two parties dominated and most votes helped elect an MP, the system’s excesses were less damaging, though still inequitable. However, FPTP now fails on its own terms. As the party system fragments and electoral engagement softens, its increasingly damaging distortion has become impossible to justify. The electorate’s gradual but decisive move toward reform suggests not a temporary mood but recognition that the voting system must adapt to a permanently plural landscape, reflecting the needs and expectations of a modern electorate.

UK General Election Turnout (1945–2024)



31 Laakso & Taagepera (1979)

Crossing the multi-party Rubicon

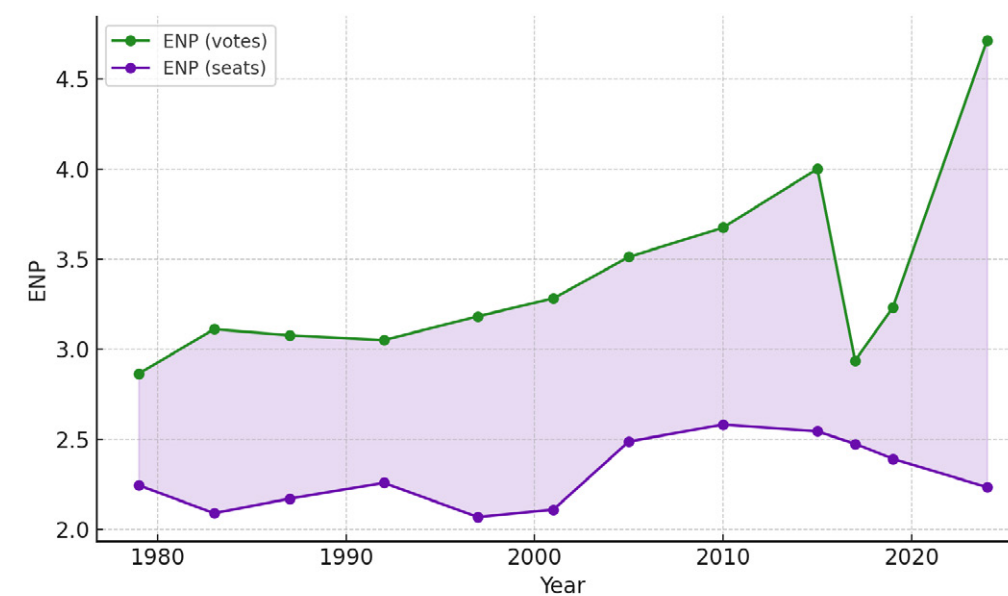
So, clearly, British politics has experienced a step change in party composition, engagement, and the demand for change, but what does this mean in the context of the conditions needed for reform? Dennis Pilon’s research on the experience of other nation’s pathways to electoral reform suggests that there is no objective numerical trigger, however, he stresses that plurality systems become politically vulnerable once the electorate has clearly moved beyond a binary contest – that is, when three or more parties win substantial and stable chunks of the popular vote³². At that stage the two leading parties can no longer rely on the mechanical seat bonus of first-past-the-post, and legitimacy shocks follow when rising third forces see their vote shares translated into few or no seats³³.

2024 General Election: fragmentation at the ballot box

As referenced earlier in the report, July 2024 contest smashed post-war records in terms of the number of parties attracting a significant vote share. Five parties cleared eight per cent of the vote and four crossed double digits for the first time, signalling that the British electorate has firmly exited a two-party universe despite a record inequity in Commons seat allocation. Calculated solely on vote shares, in 2024 the effective-party index hit 4.65³⁴ – up from 2.6 in 2010 and eclipsing even the coalition year of 2015. It is unsustainable for the Commons to continue to suppress voter preferences at the same rate.

Polling averages one year into the new Parliament show no sign of reconsolidation. Weekly ENP-vote calculations oscillate between 4.5 and 5.2³⁵, driven by sustained significant support for parties such as Reform UK, the Greens and the Liberal Democrats. The threshold for a new multiparty politics has not simply been crossed, it was crossed at speed. This underscores the current and likely continuing legitimacy crisis facing our voting system, and its status as a liability in facilitating the democratic expression of the electorate in any meaningful or stable way.

Effective Number of Parties (1979–2024)



32 Pilon (2007)

33 Pilon (2022)

34 Effective number of vote-winning parties (ENP) for the 2024 General Election, calculated from official national vote shares – Labour 33.7 %, Conservative 23.7 %, Reform UK 14.3 %, Liberal Democrats 12.2 %, Greens 6.4 %, SNP 2.5 %, all other parties 7.2 % combined – is 4.65 using the Laakso–Taagepera formula ($1 / \sum p^2$).

35 Calculation based on 30 day average Politico (2025) UK Poll of Polls as of July 2025.

WESTMINSTER COUSINS THAT MOVED ON

New Zealand: from misrepresentation to Mixed-Member Proportional

Two elections in quick succession pushed electoral reform into centre stage New Zealand. In both 1978 and 1981 the opposition Labour Party won the popular vote yet emerged with fewer seats than the ruling National Party. After years of inquiry the electorate was offered a binding referendum in 1993 and chose Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP) by a clear margin.

The impact was immediate. The nationwide Gallagher disproportionality index dropped significantly from figures above sixteen to consistently under five, meaning more voters than ever had a representative of their choosing³⁶. Coalition culture replaced single-party dominance, and Māori representation has risen to levels broadly in line with population share. Academic surveys conducted by the Broadcasting Standards Authority report a marked rebound in public trust – evidence, perhaps, that voters value seeing their preferences translated into seats without arithmetic distortion³⁷.

Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland: home-grown precedents

Devolution in the late 1990s led to the establishment of a host of new political chambers. The Scottish Parliament and Welsh Senedd were founded with AMS, while the Northern Ireland Assembly adopted STV as part of the Good Friday Agreement's power-sharing blueprint. STV's candidate-centred proportionality was seen as essential for cross-community legitimacy in Belfast, whereas AMS offered Edinburgh and Cardiff a workable balance between local representation and proportional top-ups. None of them chose to adopt FPTP.

Measured over six Scottish elections, the Gallagher score averages about seven³⁸ – respectable by European standards and well inside the Good Systems Agreement benchmark. Wales, with a lower list share, records a mild ten, which is one of the core arguments made in seeking the forthcoming Senedd reforms towards regional-list model, alongside the need for a larger Senedd to effectively administer its expanded powers. Wales's impending reform will be considered in greater depth later in the report. Northern Ireland's STV outperforms both on proportionality and has proven robust enough to survive intense political turbulence.

³⁶ Laakso & Taagepera (1979)

³⁷ Broadcasting Standards Authority New Zealand (2022)

³⁸ Scottish Government (2022)

GSA COMPLIANT VOTING SYSTEMS

SINGLE TRANSFERABLE VOTE

The Single Transferable Vote (STV) is a PR system which aims to maximise voter choice, allowing voters to rank individual candidates, regardless of their party. Each voter has one vote, and they rank candidates by preference. So if their first choice doesn't win, their vote will transfer to their next preference until a candidate is elected, reducing the number of wasted votes and ensuring proportionality. STV was invented in the UK and is currently used in national elections for the lower houses of Ireland and Malta. It is also used widely in the UK, for elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly, and for Northern Irish and Scottish local elections.

How does it work?

Under STV, the country is split into multi-member constituencies. This system has been used in Ireland since 1922, Northern Ireland since 1973 and Scotland since 2007. In Ireland, each constituency has 3-5 MPs.³⁹ In Northern Ireland, the number is 5, while in Scotland's council elections it is 2-5. At the ballot box, voters are presented with a list of candidates. Each party can field multiple candidates as more than one MP will be elected. In most STV systems, voters can rank as many candidates as they like, and are not obligated to rank every candidate. This process is simple: 1 next to their favourite candidate, 2 next to their second favourite, etc. Ranking candidates makes intuitive sense, and voters in Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland consistently have low rates of spoiled ballots. The counting process is slightly more complex.

Firstly, a quota is set. This can vary, but it is typically equal to the total number of votes divided by one more than the number of MPs to be elected.⁴⁰ The specific differences between quotas is beyond the scope of this report. Any candidate who has exceeded the quota is elected in the first round. Then, surplus votes (that is, votes above the threshold) are redistributed in proportion to the second preferences of that candidate's voters. If any candidates are above the threshold, they are elected and their surplus votes are redistributed. If no candidates are above the threshold, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated. Their voters' second preferences (or their highest preference who has not yet been eliminated) are used to redistribute their vote. This process is repeated until every position is filled.

The logic of STV is that every vote contributes to the final result, unless the voter has not ranked all of the candidates. Voters for winning candidates above the threshold have the opportunity to influence the subsequent candidates elected, while voters for losing candidates still have their lower preferences counted among those yet to be elected. In effect, this simulates a multiple round system, without voters having to turn out to vote again.

Strengths

Voter Choice

The biggest strength of STV is voter choice. Voters can choose between any party, any candidate within that party, or even multiple candidates from different parties. Everyone, regardless of their first choice, can have their say in who is elected, if they choose to rank multiple candidates. Under STV, parties may strategically choose which of their own candidates to support, but they cannot dictate the order of candidates to be elected. More than any system considered, STV ensures voters have the final say over which individual MPs are elected.

Accountability

Partly due to the strength of voter choice under STV, it also has a strong record of accountability. Voters can choose to reward or punish MPs, without feeling like they have abandoned their preferred party. Individual MPs stand on their record, rather than solely on the party platform. This is a big improvement over FPTP, under which voters are expected to express their opinion both on the local candidate and the national government with one vote, often an impossible task.

Representation

Representation is another particular strength of STV. This is because voters can express preferences between candidates at the same time as parties. This allows them to differentiate within parties. For example, Labour Party MPs are as diverse in ideology as Tony Blair and Jeremy Corbyn. Under FPTP, most voters have no choice about their local Labour candidate, so a vote for Labour is a vote for whichever brand of Labour politics is represented in the local candidate. With STV, this choice of local representation filters up into government, with voters across the country able to endorse a party and specific candidates who best reflect their views. Governments, then, must be made up of MPs who collectively have the support of a majority of voters (including preferences), who will be more representative than those who are simply elected for their party membership.

Implementability and Adaptability

STV can be relatively simply implemented in the UK, using the new boundaries recommended by the Boundary Commission.⁴¹ STV can be adapted by varying the number of members elected per constituency. This means that, in densely populated areas, constituencies can be enlarged, while in rural areas or those with natural or cultural boundaries, constituencies can be geographically smaller than with FPTP. For example, there were significant protests against the (now revised) prospect of a constituency which spanned the Cornwall-Devon border.⁴² Under STV, a Cornwall-wide constituency could, for example, vary between 5 or 6 MPs, as required by population. By grouping together the current constituencies (existing or proposed), an STV boundary system could be developed relatively quickly.

³⁹ Marsh (2018)

⁴⁰ Described here is the Droop quota, because it is most widely used. The main alternative is the Hare Quota

⁴¹ Boundary Commission for England (2022), Boundary Commission for Scotland (2022) Boundary Commission for Wales (2022)

⁴² Morris (2010)

Ensuring Compliance with the GSA

Proportionality

The main risk with using STV is that the results are insufficiently proportional. Taken to the extreme, STV with a single member constituency is also known as the Alternative Vote (AV), which will be discussed in a later chapter.

In Ireland, for example, with 3-5 MPs per constituency, disproportionality has been relatively high among PR systems in recent years, although much lower than FPTP systems. This means that, at times in Ireland’s history, it has been governed by a single-party majority elected on a minority of first preference votes – like the UK system. With STV, those governing party MPs will have received significant numbers of second preferences to be elected, but this still represents a source of disproportionality.

The GSA points to the Scottish Parliament as an example of maximum acceptable disproportionality. Ireland, with 3-5 member districts, has usually had lower disproportionality than the Scottish Parliament, with some exceptions.⁴³ Marsh (2018) calculates that in Ireland, the ‘effective threshold’ where a party has a 50% chance of winning a seat, is 17% in a 3 MP district, 13% with 4, and 11% with 5. As a result, smaller parties are significantly more likely to win MPs in constituencies with 5 MPs, rather than 3.

Therefore, to ensure that STV delivers results that are at least as proportional as the Scottish Parliament, there should be a higher number of MPs per constituency than is currently the case in Ireland. We recommend a median number of MPs per constituency of 5, ranging between 4 and 6 in most areas of the UK. In particular cases, such as island constituencies or areas with natural or cultural boundaries, a smaller number of MPs could be elected per constituency, but this should be set out in legislation. For this reason, we recommend that the number of MPs per constituency varies within the usual range of 4-6.

Diversity

Another area which STV should be treated with slight caution is diversity. To be clear, there is no evidence that STV is a worse system than FPTP when it comes to diversity. There is also a case to be made that STV performs well at increasing political diversity, with people of different perspectives able to win a seat in parliament due to intra- and inter-party preferences. However, there is some evidence that STV lags behind other PR systems on representing diversity in demographic terms, particularly the representation of women.⁴⁴

One issue is that the candidate-centred nature of STV rewards incumbency, meaning that it is harder for women to break into the male-dominated legislature⁴⁵ than in party-centred systems. However, the evidence of significant prejudicial voting is mixed, and there may be some benefits to candidates from minority backgrounds in multi-member districts.

To ensure STV fulfils the principle of diversity from the GSA, we would encourage the adoption of STV to be paired with efforts to increase the representation of women and minority groups. Other measures could require political parties to record data on the diversity of their candidates or put forward ‘balanced’ slates of candidates.

Minimum Preferences

A final consideration is the number of preferences a voter is required to give. In most STV systems, voters can give as few as one preference and as many preferences as there are candidates. In Australia, however, STV used for the senate has a minimum number of preferences for a vote to be valid. This is purportedly to reduce invalid votes and prevent votes being ‘exhausted’ (when all candidates a voter has given a preference to have been eliminated). Alternatively, under the Australian system, if a voter does not want to preference all candidates, they can instead vote ‘above the line’. This effectively means giving their preferences to a party to distribute itself.

The effect of these rules is to drastically increase the control that parties have over the system and to undermine voter choice.⁴⁶ While decreasing the number of exhausted votes, this system prevents many voters from giving their true preferences, potentially turning the Australian system into a closed list where parties can strategically influence other parties’ election prospects. The strategic use of ‘above the line’ votes has, in the past, allowed fringe parties to secure the election of candidates who received a tiny proportion of first preference votes. For these reasons, we recommend there are no minimum preferences for a vote to be valid.

43 Gallagher (2021)

44 The small number of countries which use STV does make this finding somewhat tenuous. Schwindt-Bayer, Malecki and Crisp (2010) argue being a woman has a particularly negative effect on candidate success in Ireland, suggesting that STV may not be the key factor.

45 McGing (2013)

46 Terry (2012)

Northern Ireland Assembly – STV performance against all ten principles		
Principle	NI evidence	Verdict
1 Proportionality	Mean Gallagher score 4.7 (1998-2022)	✓
2 Representation	Multi-party Executives reflect plural electorates; Unionist, Nationalist & Other MLAs elected every cycle	✓
3 Equal Votes	Tactical voting not needed due to preferential ballot	✓
4 Local Links	Five-member constituencies	✓
5 Diversity	Cross-community representation guaranteed by system design	✓
6 Voter Choice	Open preferential ranking across and within parties	✓
7 Accountability	Incumbents can be unseated by intra-party rivals	✓
8 Stability & Flexibility	Executive collapses tied to power-sharing rules, not electoral fragmentation	✓
9 Sustainability & Adaptability	Shifted from 6- to 5-member districts in 2017; chamber size capped at 90	✓
10 Voting Simplicity	Preferential ballot paired with voter education drive	✓

Recommendations

1 STV should have a median number of 5 MPs per constituency. This should be allowed to vary for unusual cases but, in general, the minimum number of MPs per constituency should be 4.

2 To ensure local representation and to avoid a proliferation of candidates, the maximum number of MPs per constituency should generally be 6.

3 The number of MPs per constituency should be allowed to vary across constituencies, rather than having a uniform number of MPs per constituency across the board.

4 Voters should not have to select a preference for every candidate. Although this could mean that voters do not maximise their vote-efficiency, from a practical standpoint it increases the number of voters who are able to select meaningful preferences.

GSA COMPLIANT VOTING SYSTEMS

REGIONAL-LIST PR

Regional-list systems achieve PR by allocating MPs proportionally in multi-member constituencies. These constituencies vary in size across systems, but here we consider the use of small constituencies electing a group of local MPs. A variant of this system will be used for the Welsh Senedd elections in 2026, after MSs voted to support reform away from a mixed system. A list system was also previously used to elect UK Members of the European Parliament, although the small number of MEPs being elected meant that much larger constituencies (corresponding with UK regions) were required.

How does it work?

In each constituency, multiple MPs are elected. Voters cast a single vote for their favoured party. The number of MPs each party receives is decided by a formula to maximise proportionality, and the MPs elected are chosen from a list presented by the party itself. The formula used can vary slightly, depending on the desired outcome, but this paper assumes the D'Hondt formula, the one most commonly used in the UK.

Below is an example of the process of seat allocation using the D'Hondt system. Further explanation of the formula underpinning the process can be found in appendices B and C.

The D'Hondt formula has been shown to slightly overrepresent larger parties but with a sufficient number of MPs per constituency it can be highly proportional.⁴⁷

Regional-List PR is the most widely-used system that is considered in this report. In the UK, the system was used for European Parliament elections between 1999 and 2019, introduced by the Labour Government with encouragement from the European Parliament.⁴⁸ For European Parliament elections, UK constituencies elected 3 to 7 MEPs each. The system was criticised for having constituencies that were too large, corresponding to statistical regions and nations of the UK. This was due to the fact that only 73 MEPs were elected. To elect 650 MPs, far smaller geographical constituencies would be used. As referred to above, a regional-list system will be used in the next elections to the Welsh Senedd. The Welsh system will have 6 MSs per constituency. Outside the UK, a form of Regional-List PR is used in many countries including Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain and Sweden.

One of the most significant ways that regional-list systems vary between countries is in the number of MPs per constituency. Regional-List PR can operate with anywhere between 2 MPs per constituency (as was the case in Chile before 2017) and a single national constituency for all MPs (as in the Netherlands and Israel). Most regional-list PR systems have a median number of MPs per constituency between 4 and 20.⁴⁹ Research has suggested that systems with a median of between 4 and 8 MPs per constituency can have highly representative parliaments, combined with better outcomes on measures of government efficacy.⁵⁰

Seat Allocation Process (6 Rounds)							
Party	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Round 4	Round 5	Round 6	Total Seats
A	52%	26%	26%	17.33%	13%	13%	3
B	30%	30%	15%	15%	15%	15%	2
C	16%	16%	16%	16%	16%	8%	1
D	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	0
Bold = official elected in this round							

47 Lijphart (1994b)

48 Winter & Jordan (2019)

49 Carey & Hix (2011)

50 Carey & Hix (2011)

Open, Flexible and Closed Lists

Some forms of Regional-List PR system use ‘Open Lists’. Open lists allow voters to express a preference between candidates on a party’s list, or to simply vote for a party. This is different to a ‘Closed List’, in which the parties choose the candidate order. Alongside closed and open lists are ‘Flexible Lists’. These give voters the option of voting either for a party or for individual candidates.

A fully-open list allows voters to vote for individual candidates. Each party is then awarded seats in proportion to the number of votes it has received overall. Once a party’s number of seats is decided, those seats are assigned to its candidates according to their individual votes. For example, a party entitled to 3 MPs would be represented by the three individuals from that party with the highest number of individual votes.

Flexible lists are similar to open lists, while allowing voters to choose to vote for the party’s list option.⁵¹ The Expert Panel describes one way of achieving a flexible list, with voters able either to endorse the party’s list order, or to support an individual candidate. The system they describe is used in Sweden. The number of MPs per party is decided in the same way as with a closed list, with the total votes for the party order, combined with those for specific candidates, determining the number of seats that their party is allocated. Then, any candidates with a personal vote above a certain threshold are moved to the top of the party list (in order of number of personal votes). In Sweden, this threshold is set at 5% of the total number of votes cast for the party in that constituency. So, if a party were to win 9,000 votes (as per the Expert Panel’s example), an individual candidate would need 450 personal votes to affect the order of the party list.

There are trade-offs when deciding how ‘open’ a list system should be. Some argue that voter choice should be the priority, with voters having ultimate say over the order that candidates are elected from each party. Politically, this system would operate similarly to STV.⁵² On the other hand, giving voters the choice between individual candidates can impede attempts to improve diversity of the legislature in other respects, particularly for women.⁵³ Open lists tend to give preference to candidates with high public profiles and access to resources, which underrepresented groups may struggle to gain. While under closed lists, parties are incentivised to choose a broad set of candidates to represent the whole constituency.⁵⁴ Open lists put this process back into the hands of voters, who may be prejudiced against certain groups.⁵⁵ One of the key reasons stated for the use of closed lists in the Senedd reforms was to ensure it was possible to use ‘zipping’⁵⁶ to increase gender diversity of the Senedd. It was said that using open lists would leave this effort vulnerable to voter prejudice. The use of flexible lists could offer the ability to facilitate voter choice, whilst still offering a level of party control in improving the diversity of their elected officials⁵⁷.

Strengths

Diversity
One significant strength of Regional-List PR is its implications for candidate diversity. With list systems, parties are incentivised to select a group of candidates who reflect society more broadly.⁵⁸ Voters, choosing between a slate of candidates, will be likely to notice if the group of candidates is dominated by certain groups. Under FPTP, for example, it is common for large areas of the UK to be represented by only men, only white people, or only older people. For example, Dorset’s eight MPs are currently all men. Under FPTP, the voter only sees the single candidate in their area. Under a regional-list PR system, by contrast, it would appear bizarre for a party to put forward only male candidates for a whole region. By reducing intra-party competition for selection, while increasing inter-party competition for election, parties have greater incentive to represent the public, rather than selecting ‘typical’ internal figures. As discussed, open lists would increase intra-party competition, affecting these incentives.

Voting simplicity
Another strength of regional-list PR systems is voting simplicity. Unlike mixed-member systems, with two separate votes, and STV, with candidate ranking, most regional-list PR systems give voters a single vote to endorse one party or candidate. Having a single vote under a regional-list system gives voters the clearest intuitive sense of their vote translating from the ballot box to the legislature – especially given that far fewer votes are wasted under the Regional-List system than FPTP.

Implementability and Adaptability
A final strength of the Regional-List PR system is that it is easily implementable and adaptable. As with STV, the number of MPs per constituency can vary as needed. This allows constituencies to follow natural boundaries. For example, the county of Cornwall would make a sensible 6-member constituency, following the historic county borders. Areas with dense populations could have higher number of MPs per constituency, while sparse areas have lower, to reduce the geographic size of constituencies.⁵⁹ Again, as with STV, a regional-list system could be devised using existing constituency boundaries. There is a precedent for this, with the new Senedd regional-list electoral system being based on grouping together pairs of Westminster constituencies, under the new boundaries confirmed in 2023.⁶⁰

51 Expert Panel on Assembly Electoral Reform (2017)
52 Expert Panel on Assembly Electoral Reform (2017)
53 Thames and Williams (2010) Valdini (2013)
54 Norris (1997)
55 Ragauskas (2021)
56 Special Purpose Committee on Senedd Reform (2022)– the process of alternating lists order between female and male candidates to improve gender diversity.
57 As argued by Make Votes Matter in Senedd evidence hearings.
58 Norris (1997)
59 Although this needs to be balanced against fairness for urban voters, see Monroe and Rose (2002)
60 Boundary Commission for Wales (2022) Special Purpose Committee on Senedd Reform (2022)

Ensuring compliance with the GSA

Proportionality
As discussed above, the D’Hondt formula can have a distorting effect, overrepresenting larger parties if the number of MPs per constituency is not sufficient.⁶¹ However, there is also evidence that low-magnitude PR systems tend to perform best on a range of government quality measures.⁶² No significant groups in the UK are pushing for a PR system with a number of MPs per constituency like that of Israel or the Netherlands. There is a broad recognition of the importance of some form of constituency representation in the UK context. This comes alongside the benefit of an ‘effective’ threshold, i.e. the share of votes parties effectively need to be represented, which is higher than that of Israel or the Netherlands. Given this, Make Votes Matter recommends that a regional-list PR system has a number of MPs per constituency which is high enough to be as proportional as the Scottish Parliament system (as per the Good Systems Agreement), while being low enough to ensure effective local representation.

It is difficult to estimate the number of MPs per constituency who would be needed for a regional-list system to be as proportional as the Scottish Parliament system. European Parliament elections in the UK between 1999 and 2019, with 3-11 member constituencies, had significantly higher disproportionality. This is partly because the number of seats being elected (72-87) was much smaller than the House of Commons. Carey and Hix (2011) find that there is a ‘flattening out’ in the relationship between the number of MPs per constituency and disproportionality once the number increases above 5 or 6. To ensure reasonably proportional results, we recommend a median number of MPs per constituency of 6.

61 Lijphart (1994b)
62 Carey & Hix (2011)

Voter choice
In line with the debate above, open versus closed systems, there is the question of voter choice. The GSA suggests:

“Good systems allow voters a wide choice of parties, and allow voters to express preferences for people rather than just parties. Any lists used must be democratically determined.”

While closed-list systems give voters a choice over a wide range of parties, they do not allow voters to express preferences for candidates rather than just parties. As such, we do not deem these lists to be sufficient to pass the voter choice or accountability elements of the GSA. We recommend the use of either open or flexible lists to allow voters to have their say over individual candidates, while giving other voters the opportunity to simply support the party as a whole. We believe flexible lists with a reasonable threshold have the optimal balance of voter choice – allowing voters to give an especially strong endorsement to one candidate – and diversity, with party lists as a whole chosen to reflect the public.

Case Study – Israel's National-List PR



Why it fails the GSA on Voter Choice and Local Links

Israel elects all 120 members of the Knesset from one nationwide closed party list. Voters mark a single X for a party; seats are shared proportionally using the D'Hondt formula, with a 3.25 % threshold. While this design scores an impressive Gallagher index of 2–3 (far better than the GSA's proportionality benchmark of ≤ 7), it eliminates constituency representation altogether and keeps the power to rank candidates firmly in party headquarters. Voters cannot split tickets, rank individuals, or influence which names on a slate become MPs.

Because every MP answers to a national party list, no member has a geographic mandate, breaching the GSA's 'Local Links' and weakening day-to-day accountability. The closed-list rule also violates the GSA's 'Voter Choice' principle: electors choose only between party logos, not people. Finally, the pure national list has fostered chronic fragmentation – 15 parties entered the Knesset in 2022 – contributing to five elections in four years and coalition churn that undermines the GSA's balance-of-stability test. In sum, Israel's system falls far short of the criteria needed to pass the GSA on a range of measures.

Case Study – Wales's 2026 Senedd Reform



Why it falls on Voter Choice and Accountability

From 2026 the Senedd will jump from 60 to 96 Members, all elected from six-seat regional constituencies by a single closed party list. Voters put one cross beside a party; the D'Hondt formula turns those votes into seats, and a statutory zipping rule alternates women and men on every slate. The design will almost halve disproportionality (projected Gallagher 4–5).

Yet the same mechanics undermine two other core GSA principles. Voter Choice suffers because electors cannot split their ballot or express any preference for individual candidates; party headquarters alone decide who gets the safest list slots. Nor can voters reject or promote specific incumbents – every MS would owe their seat to internal ranking, not to personal endorsement.

That, in turn, weakens accountability: list MPs face career incentives to satisfy party selectors rather than a distinct electorate. In short, Wales's closed-list model delivers a clearer outcome in proportionality but leaves voters without the power to choose or punish the people who fill them – failing the GSA tests for Voter Choice and, to a lesser extent, Accountability, as Make Votes Matter argued in Senedd Bill Committee Evidence Sessions⁶³.

Recommendations

1 A regional-list PR system for the UK should have a median number of MPs per constituency of 6. This should be allowed to vary for unusual cases, but in general the minimum number of MPs per constituency should be 5.

2 To ensure local representation and to avoid excessive fragmentation, the maximum number of MPs per constituency should generally be 8. This is significantly higher than the maximum number of MPs per constituency for STV because there is no need for voters to assign preferences to a large number of individual candidates, which can be challenging for some.

3 The number of MPs per constituency should be allowed to vary across constituencies, rather than prescribing a uniform number of MPs per constituency.

4 Flexible lists should be used to allow voters to endorse individual local candidates, while retaining the option for voters to endorse the party list as a whole.

GSA COMPLIANT VOTING SYSTEMS

MIXED SYSTEMS

Mixed systems combine single member districts with a proportional top up system at either local or national level. In our system design, we deem regional top ups to be more in keeping with the local link element of the GSA, and therefore all discussion of lists from here on will be regional.

By mixed systems, we are referring to the Additional Member System (AMS) and AV+ system. These mixed systems work by combining a certain number of MPs elected in single-member constituencies (as under FPTP) with a so-called 'top-up slate', elected to ensure proportionality. Mixed systems are common internationally, and are used in countries including Germany and New Zealand. In the UK, mixed systems are currently used to elect the Scottish and Welsh Parliaments and the London Assembly. AMS systems are also sometimes referred to as MMP (mixed member plurality systems), from here on we will refer to this type of system as AMS.

Additional Member Systems

How does it work?

AMS combines elements of the current FPTP system with regional lists to ensure both local representation and proportionality. Every voter has two votes: one for a local representative and one for their favoured party. A certain proportion of MPs are elected as they are currently, using FPTP, while another group of MPs are elected as a 'top-up'. The top-up MPs are elected to balance out disproportionality in the FPTP group across the region, so they are not chosen from the parties with the most votes but instead from the parties which are most underrepresented.

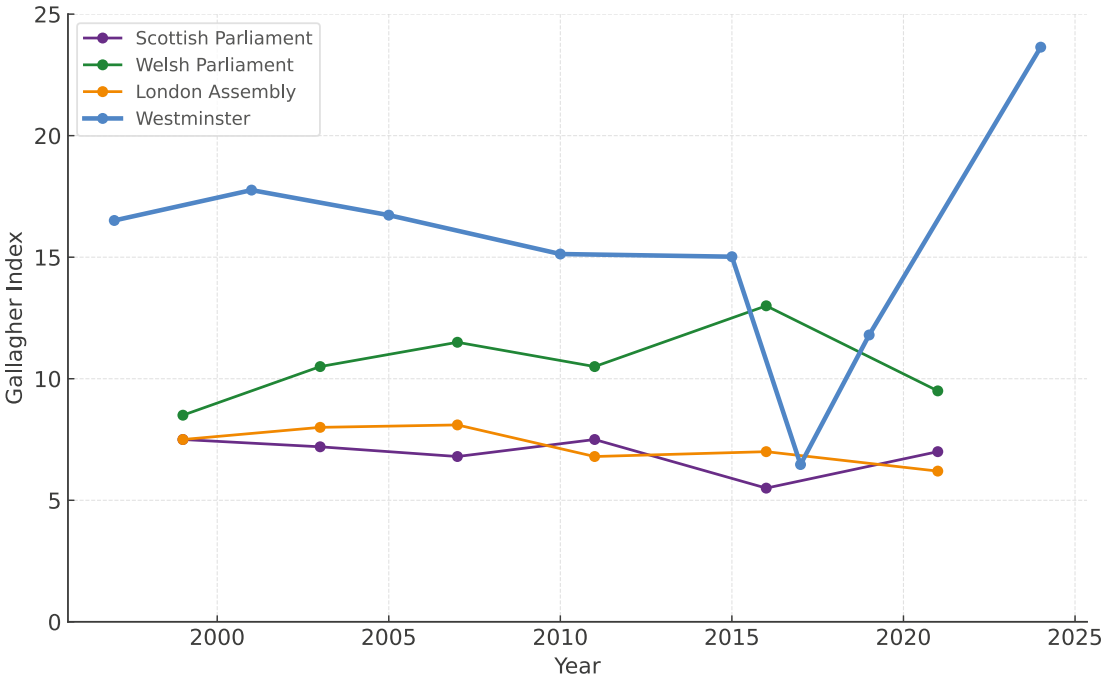
For example, consider an election for 100 MPs with 50 constituencies and 50 top-up MPs. If a party won 20% of the 'favoured party' vote and 20 out of 50 constituency MPs, we would not expect them to receive any top-up MPs. But, if a party won 20% of the vote and only 5 out of 50 constituency MPs, they would likely receive around 15 top-up list MPs. This allows constituency representation with broadly proportional overall results.

In most cases, the list MPs are assigned using the D'Hondt formula, as outlined in Appendix B. For an example of a recent election to the Scottish Parliament, see Appendix C. This works by counting the constituency votes, and finding which MPs are elected, before beginning to allocate the top-up MPs. The top-up MPs are allocated according to D'Hondt, but with the quotient calculated to account for the constituency MPs already elected. So, while under a normal regional-list system, parties have a quotient equal to $V/(S+1)$, where V is the number of votes received and S is seats currently assigned, under a mixed system, the quotient is $V/(C+S+1)$, where C is the number of constituency MPs already elected.

AMS systems can either have a fixed number of MPs, as seen in New Zealand, or a variable number of MPs to ensure a reasonable degree of proportionality, as in Germany. The variable system has the benefit of higher proportionality but can risk very high numbers of MPs, as happened in 2017 when Germany elected 736 MPs, including 138 additional MPs. We do not consider there to be significant support for a system with a flexible number of MPs elected to Westminster, and therefore a key assumption with system design for mixed systems is ensuring that top-up lists facilitate an acceptable level of proportionality without the need for a larger house.

Proportionality in Elections under AMS in the UK
Three electoral jurisdictions – London, Scotland and until next year, Wales – use mixed systems (AMS) for their elections.

Gallagher Index Disproportionality



	Scottish Parliament	Welsh Senedd / Parliament	London Assembly	Jenkins AV+ System
Total number of members	129	60	25	659
Proportion elected as top-up members	43%	33%	44%	15-20%
Median regional number of MPs per constituency	16	12	25	~8
Average Gallagher Index Score	6.99	10.54	7.30	-

Just as with a regional-list system, the number of MPs per constituency is a key determinant of proportionality. There must be a high enough number of MPs per regional constituency to allow for proportional results, using D'Hondt. In the case of a mixed system, the required number of MPs per constituency is higher because a proportion of the seats are elected using FPTP. This means the top-up element must be able to overcome the disproportionality from the FPTP seats. This is why the total percentage of members elected as a top-up is also important. In Wales, for example, the proportion of top-up members is insufficient to account for Labour's dominance in the FPTP tier.⁶⁴

Finally, the total number of members elected is consequential. Although the London Assembly has the highest number of MPs per constituency and proportion of top-up seats, it has a higher disproportionality than the Scottish Parliament, simply because there are fewer members to elect. A perfectly distributed proportionality cannot be achieved in cases where there are a small number of seats.

We can also see from this table how unusual the Jenkins Commission proposal was. It would have had little effect on the overall proportionality of UK elections, especially compared to AMS as it was established in devolved elections. Most regions had only a single top-up MP, which would not be able to account for huge disproportionality under AV votes.

Strengths

Local Links

A clear strength of a mixed system is that it retains constituency MPs to reflect local interests. This also gives constituents a single local point of contact to take their concerns, alongside regional representatives who might be more reflective of wider issues. As Shugart and Wattenberg (2003) argue, mixed systems are "more likely than any other class of electoral system to simultaneously generate local accountability as well as a nationally-oriented party system."⁶⁵ The combination of local and regional representatives has the unique advantage of MPs with different priorities, reflecting both national and local interests.

64 Dunleavy and Margetts (2004)
65 Shugart and Wattenberg (2003)

Voting Simplicity

Another strength of mixed systems is voting simplicity. As we have seen in Scotland, Wales and London, the principle of one vote for a local representative and another for a preferred party is intuitive for voters. There is no evidence that these systems produce higher numbers of spoilt ballots, for example. These systems also draw from voters' present experience, voting for candidates in local constituencies, while combining an element which will be familiar from European Parliament elections – voting for a party list. The experience of voting in Scotland, Wales and London Assembly elections further means that a significant proportion of the UK population is familiar with the list system.

Voter Choice

The separation of voting for local candidates and party lists allow voters to express different preferences. Under FPTP, voters are expected to endorse a manifesto, a local MP, a party and a government with one vote. Under mixed systems, there is a much clearer link between the ballot paper and the mix of representatives in Parliament. On the one hand, voters can prioritise the most effective local advocates, while on the other, they can dictate the composition of parliament overall.

Implementability and Adaptability

Mixed systems could be relatively easily implemented for UK General Elections. Existing or currently proposed boundaries could be used initially to design the system, with parliamentary constituencies combined to form new constituencies. Regional top-up MPs could be elected on the basis of statistical regions and nations – the same as former European Parliamentary constituencies – or smaller regions, such as combinations of counties. These regions can be adaptable, with different numbers of MPs per constituency to suit local needs. For example, the county of Merseyside might make one region – with 8 constituency MPs and 7 top-up MPs, with distinctive local and regional voices.

Ensuring Compliance with the GSA

Proportionality

The most important risk with mixed systems is disproportionality. Scottish AMS is the most proportional of the systems used in devolved parliaments and assemblies. The GSA specifies that a PR system for the UK should be at least as proportional as the Scottish Parliament system. For that reason, we recommend that a Mixed System for the House of Commons is made up of at least 43% top-up MPs and that they are elected from regions with a median number of MPs per constituency of at least 16. This will ensure that any majority government needs broad support from the public and smaller parties have a reasonable chance of winning some representation for their voters.

Possibility of Manipulation

Closely linked to the question of proportionality is the risk of manipulation, as set out by Bochslers (2023). Bochslers points out that political parties can manipulate mixed systems by encouraging their voters to split their votes between tiers. If a party is overrepresented in the single-member/FPTP tier, they could encourage their voters to support a different party on the party list, in the knowledge that their party will not win any top-up MPs. In doing this, parties can artificially distort the proportionality of the system. In Scotland, the Alba Party attempted to engineer this form of manipulation in 2021, encouraging SNP voters to support the Alba Party with their top-up vote, knowing that the SNP would likely maximise its representation on the constituency tier.⁶⁶

To help avoid this, there are some precautions which can be taken in legislation. Parties should be prevented from actively pursuing collusion with other parties. In Germany, voters who support a candidate in their constituency not associated with a party list do not have their top-up list vote counted.⁶⁷ However, this should be weighed against the risk of disadvantaging independent candidates. Ensuring that the number of overhang seats is limited – by having a high proportion of top-up members and high number of MPs per constituency in the top-up regional list – also reduces the risk of manipulation. There is also the option of introducing a top-up list nationwide (also known as ‘levelling seats’), explicitly for circumstances where there are a high number of overhang seats from the constituency tier.⁶⁸

66 McCall (2021), Winter (2021)
67 Bochslers (2023)
68 Weinmann & Grotz (2021)

Case Study – Italy’s Rosatellum



Why it fails on Proportionality and Voter Choice

Italy’s current electoral system, nicknamed Rosatellum, is a parallel mixed system: roughly 37 % of deputies are elected in single-member districts by first-past-the-post, while the remaining 63 % come from regional party lists⁶⁹. Crucially, the list tier is non-compensatory – it does not correct the distortions produced by the winner-takes-all seats. In the 2022 and 2024 elections the governing coalition secured an average seat bonus of 10-12 percentage points over its vote share; the national Gallagher disproportionality score hovers between 9 and 12, well above the GSA’s proportionality ceiling of 7⁷⁰. In short, Rosatellum tilts the playing field rather than levelling it.

From a voter-choice perspective the design also falls short. Each elector casts one combined X that simultaneously elects their local candidate and transfers to that candidate’s linked party list. There is no option to split tickets, no ability to rank preferences, and the party lists themselves are closed, meaning party headquarters – not voters – decide which list candidates enter parliament⁷¹. Voters who like a local candidate from Party A but a national platform of Party B have no way to express both preferences. By restricting split-ticket freedom and denying voters any say over list order, Rosatellum breaches the GSA’s ‘Voter Choice’ and ‘Accountability’ principles. As such, we would not consider this a suitable system for the United Kingdom.

69 D’Alimonte (2019)
70 Gallagher (2023) Ministero dell’Interno (2022)
71 Chiaramonte & Emanuele (2020)

Case Study – New Zealand’s Mixed-Member Proportional System



Why it satisfies the Good Systems Agreement

New Zealand abandoned FPTP in 1996 and has since elected all 120 MPs by Mixed-Member Proportional system. Voters cast two separate ballots: one for a local electorate MP (FPTP) and one for a party list. Roughly 48 % of seats are compensatory list mandates; once single district winners are known, ‘top-up’ MPs are allocated nationally so each party’s total seat share mirrors its party-vote share. The result is a Gallagher disproportionality score that averages 3–5 – well inside the GSA’s ≤ 7 threshold.

Crucially, MMP also excels on Voter Choice. Electors may split their ballots – supporting, say, a popular local independent while giving their party vote to a different national platform. Within parties, candidate lists are set by member-driven conferences and published well before polling day, ensuring transparency and intra-party democracy. These features keep the system compliant with the GSA’s ‘Accountability’ principle: single district MPs remain answerable to defined constituencies, while list MPs depend on the overall party vote and democratic list rankings.

Other GSA tests are likewise met. Equal Votes are secured by the compensatory formula; Local Links are maintained through 72 single-member electorates; Diversity has improved markedly – women now comprise 50 % of the House and Māori representation closely tracks population share. Finally, coalition governments have proved stable but flexible: five full MMP terms have completed without early dissolution, yet coalition membership can adjust between elections via confidence-and-supply agreements – demonstrating balance, sustainability, and adaptability.

Recommendations

- 1 To ensure overall proportionality, at least 43% of MPs should be elected from top-up lists, with a maximum of 57% of MPs elected from Single-Member Districts.
- 2 To ensure regional proportionality, top-up lists should be elected from regions with a median number of MPs per constituency of at least 16.
- 3 Except for unusual circumstances, the minimum number of MPs per constituency should generally be 10.
- 4 The number of MPs per constituency should be allowed to vary across constituencies, rather than adopting a uniform number of MPs per constituency.
- 5 Permit dual candidacy (allowing candidates to stand both in a constituency and on the regional list) to mitigate ‘two-class MP’ perceptions and encourage competitive local contests.⁷²

72 Appendix D

GSA COMPLIANT VOTING SYSTEMS

ALTERNATIVE VOTE PLUS (AV+)

AV plus is a mixed system similar conceptually to AMS, however, it elects those in single member districts under the Alternative Vote instead of FPTP. As previously stated, AV is not considered a proportional system, and as originally proposed, the Jenkins system fails to meet the GSA criteria. Principally it fails in terms of proportionality and real world experience. In the Jenkins Commission's projections of elections under the system proposed, elections would be expected to far exceed the GSA's maximum Gallagher Index score of 7.

Due to its lack of experiential comparisons, we deem AV+ to be a less optimal option than the other three tried and tested systems, however, given its significance in debates around electoral reform, we have decided to explore what a GSA compliant version of it would look like. Given the lack of domestic and international precedent, much of the analysis of the system below is drawn from voter experiences and academic insights under other mixed systems. It should be noted that, though the combination of AV elections and a top up element is novel, elections under AV in single member districts have precedent, as do regional top ups.

The key failure of the Jenkins blueprint was that regional top-ups were limited to about one-sixth of the Commons – far too few to make a serious dent in the distortions produced by the single member plurality contests. The recommendation in this paper is that regional top-up lists should be between 35-40% of MPs. As such, this chapter will consider a top-up of 38% of MPs in its projections. Our simulations⁷³ using the 2019 General Election vote tallies indicate that this proportion should be sufficient to pull the nationwide Gallagher Index down to about 6.2, easily within the Good Systems Agreement's ceiling of seven, and within the margin of error for further party fragmentation.

How does it work?

AV+ combines contests in single member plurality districts, with compensatory regional lists. Its intention is to preserve the current interpretation of a constituency link with the desire to ensure the House of Commons better reflects parties' national support amongst parties.

Constituency Vote Under AV

Constituency level voting will take place under AV, in which each voter numbers the candidates – 1, 2, 3 and so on – according to personal preference, including selection of only one preference. If no one clears the fifty-per-cent threshold on first choices, the weakest candidate is eliminated and their ballots are redistributed to next preferences. The process repeats until one candidate secures an outright majority. Between 410 and 435 such constituencies would dot the new electoral map.

Regional Lists

The top-up element operates across eleven English regions plus Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. For each region the Boundary Commission first calculates the total seat entitlement on the same population formula used for Westminster reviews. We recommend between 35-40% regional list MPs, however, for our projections, exactly 38 per cent of that total – rounded to the nearest whole seat, but never fewer than five MPs – is then reserved for the list tier. That quota does not change at the election count; it is baked into the map and revisited only at the next Boundary Review. This lower list share when compared with AMS is feasible because AV marginally reduces constituency-level distortions before list seats are applied; AMS, by contrast, requires ~43% list seats to achieve the same predicted level of proportionality.

On the ballot paper parties must publish a ranked slate of candidates, however, we recommend those lists are flexible to facilitate voter choice. Electors may either put a single cross beside the party-logo box (thereby accepting the pre-set list order) or give a personal endorsement to one named individual. If that candidate's personal vote reaches at least five per cent of the party's regional tally, they move up the list depending on the performance of their party colleagues in terms of individual support. This flexible-list mechanism, inspired by Sweden, injects a modest dose of intra-party democracy without overwhelming the average voter with list length.

By-Elections and Vacancies

Should a constituency MP resign or die in office, a standard AV by-election fills the vacancy. When a list MP departs, the seat passes to the next unelected candidate on that party's slate – taking any flexible-list personal-vote reorderings into account.

Strengths

Local Links

AV+, like other mixed systems, preserves a local constituency link in the same way as AMS. Where AV elections differ from elections in other mixed systems is in the need to attract a higher level of local support through either first round, or subsequent rounds of votes. Under this system, a single member district MP must win an absolute majority of local preferences, compelling outreach to supporters of smaller parties and independents⁷⁴. Comparative constituency studies from Australia show that AV’s preference bargaining leads to candidates investing more in local case work and visible service of the community because second- and third-preference votes are contestable at the margin⁷⁵.

Voter Choice

With two ballot papers, electors can send distinct signals:

- **Local ranking (AV)** to endorse a local candidate of their choosing.
- **Regional list vote** to endorse the party whose national programme they prefer.

Post-election surveys report 15–25% deliberate split-ticketing in Scotland, Wales and New Zealand once voters grasp the twin-vote logic, and closer to 25% in mature German MMP elections⁷⁶. Experimental work before the 2011 UK referendum confirmed that AV by itself already lowers tactical-voting pressure, whilst we can infer that the additional list element would contribute further to this amelioration⁷⁷.

Stability and Flexibility

Fixing the compensatory tier at 38% of seats in every boundary cycle would mean that demographic drift self-corrects without periodic Acts of Parliament. Evidence from the Scottish and Welsh Additional-Member Systems shows that routine boundary reviews are enough to keep Gallagher disproportionality scores well below seven points for more than twenty years⁷⁸.

Ensuring compliance with the GSA

Proportionality

Without the proportional top up list element, AV would continue to breach the Good-Systems Agreement’s proportionality test. Historical simulations are stark: under AV alone Labour would have won a 108-seat majority on just 35 % of the vote in 2005, and would have finished almost level with the Conservatives in 2010 despite a seven-point deficit⁷⁹. Modelling the 2019 vote through AV + drives the Gallagher measure down to 6.2, safely inside the GSA threshold.

Evidence from Australian House contests run on AV, average Gallagher scores in the high single digits – better than FPTP but still ‘semi-proportional’⁸⁰. Analysis from Lijphart and Farrell & McAllister concludes that preferential voting on its own locks in two-party duopolies unless balanced by list seats⁸¹. New Zealand’s experience demonstrates how a generous list tier normalises proportionality while preserving electorate MPs, whereas the Jenkins Commission’s 20% model would have left the UK close to Australia’s semi-proportional pattern⁸². The Jenkins Commission’s own projections, with a meagre twenty-per-cent list, illustrate the perils of undershooting.

Lack of experience

Readers will rightly note that no country currently pairs AV with a proportionally compensatory list. The risk, however, lies in the combination, not the components. Ranked voting in single-member seats has operated smoothly in Australia since 1918, and regional compensatory PR has a three-decade pedigree in Germany, New Zealand, Scotland and Wales. Administratively, the machinery – preference counting plus D’Hondt allocation – is long-familiar; the novelty is political, not technical.

74 Flanagan (2001) & Farrell & McAllister (2005)

75 Farrell & McAllister (2005)

76 Johnston & Pattie (2002)

77 Renwick (2011)

78 Dunleavy & Margetts (2004)

79 Sanders (2011) & McIlveen (2010)

80 Lijphart (1994)

81 Lijphart (1994) & Farrell & McAllister (2005)

82 Jenkins Independent Commission on the Voting System (1998)

Ballot exhaustion

Crowded American IRV contests reveal a genuine danger: when voters rank only one or two names, 9.6 – 27.1% of ballots can ‘exhaust’ before the final round⁸³. Left unaddressed, such attrition would erode the majoritarian claim of constituency winners. AV + tackles the problem on three fronts. First, the separate list vote never exhausts, preserving proportional integrity even if some local papers fall out. Second, voter-education leaflets and a default five-box ranking template simulated UK exhaustion to below 8% – a level at which list seats comfortably absorb the distortion. Third, real-world evidence is reassuring: Australian informal-vote rates under compulsory AV hover around 5 %, and those elections also feature measurably fewer negative advertisements than plurality races, hinting at a modest civility gain⁸⁴.

Manipulation

Germany’s Bundestag ballooned from 598 to 736 seats in 2021 after parties learned to game overhang mandates with satellite brands; only a 2023 reform has halted the creep⁸⁵. To prevent a Westminster replay, AV + embeds two guard-rails. A 650 member cap on seats blocks runaway chamber enlargement, while a 5 % regional threshold denies representation to micro-brands launched solely for tactical gain. Policy-Exchange simulations confirmed that, under these twin constraints, decoy lists yield no net advantage – removing the incentive to deploy them⁸⁶.

83 Burnett & Kogan (2015)

84 Donovan et al. (2016), AEC (2023)

85 Behnke (2025)

86 McIlveen (2010)

Recommendations

1 Statutory Quota – enshrine a list share of between 35-40% (our model is based on 38 percent) of regional seats, with a hard minimum of five list MPs per region.

2 Boundary Integrity – retain the existing ± 5 per cent electorate tolerance and eight-year review cycle.

3 Dual Candidacy – allow candidates to appear both in a constituency contest and on the regional slate to dissolve perceptions of first- and second-class representatives.

4 Flexible List Threshold – set the personal-vote bar at five per cent of the party’s regional support.

5 Voters must be allowed to only select one preference vote, even if it risks exhaustion.

CONCLUSIONS

The campaign for PR for the House of Commons is moving into a new phase.

Britain's political landscape has entered unprecedented territory. We have entered a durable multi-party system, following a long term slide in support for the two traditional parties. A so-called 'change election' removing the previous government of 14 years, delivered no material improvement in public trust in politics, and instead gave the public a parliament more out of step with their voting preferences than ever before. And there is record public support for electoral reform, for the first time spanning supporters of all parties, including the Conservatives. This electoral landscape shift and growing public support for change has been met by growth in parliamentary support too.

Though symbolic, Sarah Olney's 10 Minute Rule Bill secured the first ever vote in favour of PR for Westminster, with cross-party support⁸⁷. This momentum has been supported by the growth of the APPG for Fair Elections, which MVM has supported to become the largest in this Parliament, creating real Parliamentary pressure for change. And most recently, the Labour Government in their English Devolution Bill, reformed mayoral elections away from FPTP citing the risk of small mandates.⁸⁸ Our supporters have been campaigning tirelessly up and down the country to make the case for a more representative, fair and effective politics for the last 10 years. It's clear to the public and politicians alike: FPTP is failing to meet the needs of our politics, and those of the public it is meant to serve. Maintaining our crumbling, volatile and unstable voting system is now incompatible with the cross-party mission to restore trust in politics.

As calls for a National Commission for Electoral Reform grow, the conversation will necessarily move to a discussion about what constitutes an appropriate voting system for Westminster elections. MVM does not take an official stance on which PR system would be preferable for the House of Commons. Instead, we recognise that there are many good systems which would be far preferable to FPTP. In this phase of the campaign, it is important that we begin to spell out how these good systems might be constructed to inform the coming debate. This report aims to support forthcoming discussions by examining international and domestic best practice and how to avoid some of the possible pitfalls of system-design.

We first initiated this process with the historic GSA, signed in 2019 by politicians, political parties and cross-party organisations and public figures. The electoral systems set out in this report are in keeping with the principles of the GSA. While many members of our alliance will have different preferred systems, STV, Regional-List PR, AMS and AV+ are those most commonly proposed for elections to the House of Commons.

Regardless of personal system preferences, we hope that supporters of the GSA will encourage politicians to adopt a PR system in the spirit of the recommendations above. We hope that by modelling to politicians and electoral reformers a version of each of the commonly used and advocated PR systems, we can improve the chances of achieving genuinely impactful reform. Whichever system is chosen, all of them better facilitate the views and wishes of the public than FPTP. This report proposes practicable electoral systems which would put power in the hands of voters, improve democracy, and create a political system which delivers the outcomes the public want to see: a healthier, wealthier, more equal, sustainable and peaceful country and world.

⁸⁷ UK Parliament (2025)

⁸⁸ UK Government – Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2025)

Single Transferable Vote

- 1 STV should have a median number of 5 MPs per constituency. This should be allowed to vary for unusual cases but, in general, the minimum number of MPs per constituency should be 4.
- 2 To ensure local representation and to avoid a proliferation of candidates, the maximum number of MPs per constituency should generally be 6.
- 3 The number of MPs per constituency should be allowed to vary across constituencies, rather than having a uniform number of MPs per constituency across the board.
- 4 Voters should not have to select a preference for every candidate. Although this could mean that voters do not maximise their vote-efficiency, from a practical standpoint it increases the number of voters who are able to select meaningful preferences.

Additional Member System

- 1 To ensure overall proportionality, at least 43% of MPs should be elected from top-up lists, with a maximum of 57% of MPs elected from Single-Member Districts.
- 2 To ensure regional proportionality, top-up lists should be elected from regions with a median number of MPs per constituency of at least 16.
- 3 Except for unusual circumstances, the minimum number of MPs per constituency should generally be 10.
- 4 The number of MPs per constituency should be allowed to vary across constituencies, rather than adopting a uniform number of MPs per constituency.
- 5 Permit dual candidacy (allowing candidates to stand both in a constituency and on the regional list) to mitigate ‘two-class MP’ perceptions and encourage competitive local contests.

Regional-List PR

- 1 A regional-list PR system for the UK should have a median number of MPs per constituency of 6. This should be allowed to vary for unusual cases, but in general the minimum number of MPs per constituency should be 5.
- 2 To ensure local representation and to avoid excessive fragmentation, the maximum number of MPs per constituency should generally be 8. This is significantly higher than the maximum number of MPs per constituency for STV because there is no need for voters to assign preferences to a large number of individual candidates, which can be challenging for some.
- 3 The number of MPs per constituency should be allowed to vary across constituencies, rather than prescribing a uniform number of MPs per constituency.
- 4 Flexible lists should be used to allow voters to endorse individual local candidates, while retaining the option for voters to endorse the party list as a whole.

Alternative Vote+

- 1 Statutory Quota – enshrine a list share of between 35-40% (our model is based on 38 percent) of regional seats, with a hard minimum of five list MPs per region.
- 2 Boundary Integrity – retain the existing ± 5 per cent electorate tolerance and eight-year review cycle.
- 3 Dual Candidacy – allow candidates to appear both in a constituency contest and on the regional slate to dissolve perceptions of first- and second-class representatives.
- 4 Flexible List Threshold – set the personal-vote bar at five per cent of the party’s regional support.
- 5 Voters must be allowed to only select one preference vote, even if it risks exhaustion.

A – Electoral Systems & Design Features

Abbreviation / Term	Plain Meaning
AMS	Additional Member System – local FPTP contests with compensatory top-ups.
AV / IRV	Alternative Vote (Instant-Runoff Voting) – ranked choice in single-member districts.
AV+	Alternative Vote Plus – AV constituencies combined with regional AMS top-ups.
FPTP	First Past the Post – single-member plurality used for Westminster.
PR	Proportional Representation – umbrella term for systems translating votes into seats proportionally.
STV	Single Transferable Vote – multi-member ranked ballot reallocating surplus and eliminated votes.
Compensatory list	MPs who are elected to address disproportionalities created by FPTP or AV contests
Parallel system	Mixed model where list seats do not compensate (e.g., Italy’s Rosatellum).
Dual candidacy	Rule allowing candidates to stand both locally and on the regional list concurrently.

B – Constituency & Regional Language. Constituency & Regional Language

Abbreviation / Term	Plain Meaning
Constituency / District	Defined geographic area electing MPs.
District magnitude	Number of seats in a multi-member district (e.g., STV).
List magnitude	Number of MPs on a regional list.
List MP	MP elected from a compensatory or regional party list.
Safe seat	Seats which would be unlikely to change hands in elections due to one party dominance. A common eventuality under FPTP.
Overhang seat	Party wins more constituencies than its proportional share.

C – Counting & Allocation Mechanics

Abbreviation / Term	Plain Meaning	Why We Need It
D’Hondt method	1-2-3 divisor formula for allocating list seats Full description in Appendix	The system used in existing PR systems in the UK
Effective threshold	Vote share likely to secure one seat	Guides list magnitude; ≈ 6 % in AV+ regions
Exhausted ballot	Ranked ballot with no further preferences when count continues	Informs mandate under AV/STV

D – Metrics & Methodology Metric

Metric	Formula (words)	Scale & Benchmarks
Gallagher (Least-Squares) Index / LSq	Square each party’s vote-seat gap, sum, halve, square-root	0 = perfect; GSA passes ≤ 7
Laakso-Taagepera ENP	$1 \div \sum(p^2)$, where p = party vote or seat share	ENP > ≈ 3 signals reform pressure (Pilon)
Row-stochastic transfer matrix	Table of second-preference probabilities summing to 1 for each first choice	Powers Monte-Carlo simulations

E – Institutions & Agreements

Acronym	Full Name
GSA	Good Systems Agreement – cross-party criteria for reform
MP / MSP / MS / MLA	Member of Parliament / Scottish Parliament / Senedd / NI Assembly
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MVM	Make Votes Matter – UK campaign for PR

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Appendix C – An example of the Scottish Mixed System

To see an example of AMS at work, we look at the 2021 Scottish Parliament election in Lothian. Under 'list votes', we see the number of party list votes each party has received. Under 'Constituency MSPs' we see the number of constituency MSPs that each party has already secured in the region. Each round of D'Hondt allocation is conducted as with the Regional-List system in Appendix B, but the denominator for the quotient accounts for the constituency MSPs already elected. For example, the SNP won 7 constituency MSPs, so before any list MSPs are allocated its quotient is $141,178 / (7 + 1) = 17,647$.

This shows how the top-up system effectively corrects for disproportionality under FPTP. The SNP already has its fair share of MSPs from the region (7), so it is allocated no top-up MSPs. The Conservatives, meanwhile, won no constituency MSPs with almost 20% of the vote. It is therefore allocated 3 list MSPs.

Party	List Votes	Constituency MSPs	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Round 4	Round 5	Round 6	Round 7
SNP	141,178	7	17,647	17,647	17,647	17,647	17,647	17,647	17,647
Conservative	78,595	0	78,595	39,298	39,298	26,198	26,198	26,198	19,649
Labour	76,689	1	38,345	38,345	38,345	38,345	25,563	25,563	25,563
Green	49,984	0	49,984	49,984	24,992	24,992	24,992	16,661	16,661
Liberal Democrats	28,433	1	14,217	14,217	14,217	14,217	14,217	14,217	14,217

The results of this election are:

	Constituency MSPs	Top-Up MSPs	Total
SNP	7	0	7
Conservative	0	3	3
Labour	1	2	3
Green	0	2	2
Liberal Democrats	1	0	1

Appendix D – Dual candidacy in Mixed Systems (AMS/ and AV+): concept and rationale

What is dual candidacy? Under AMS/MMP, dual candidacy lets an individual run simultaneously for a single-member constituency and also appear on their party's regional or national list. If they win the constituency, they take that seat and are skipped on the list; if they narrowly lose the FPTP race locally (but still command significant local support) but their party earns list seats, they can still enter Parliament via the top-up tier.

Why allow it? Keeping it encourages local campaigning for all candidates, strengthening voter choice in elections, as well as local representation. German, New Zealand and Scottish experience shows that permitting dual runs blurs the distinction and strengthens the constituency link by making elected candidates more visible.

Benefits

- Reduces 'second-class MP' narrative – list members can still build local credibility.
- Encourages stronger constituency contests – talented candidates can fight a seat without risking total exclusion.
- Aligns incentives – MPs rely on both local support and party vote, broadening accountability.

International practice

Country	Dual candidacy?
Germany (Bundestag)	Yes
New Zealand (MMP)	Yes

Appendix E – AV+

This appendix explains the arithmetic behind the headline ≈ 38 % list share when individual regional ratios drift above or below the national figure.

Simulations are based on 2019 vote shares because that is the most recent election for which constituency-level results and published preference-transfer data are available; equivalent 2024 transfer matrices are not available at scale.

National vs Regional Ratios

- National list share = total list seats ÷ 650. We fix 247 list seats, giving 247 ÷ 650 ≈ 38 %.
- Regional list share = list seats in that region ÷ (region’s total seats). Because seats must be whole numbers, regional percentages float around the national average.
- AV contest preference simulations based on based on Fieldhouse, E. (2020) GE 2019 dataset preferences

Illustrative Totals

Region	Total seats	List MPs (38 %)	Constituency MPs	Regional list %
South-East	91	35	56	38.5
London	75	29	46	38.7
East of England	61	23	38	37.7
South-West	58	22	36	37.9
West Midlands	59	22	37	37.3
North-West	73	28	45	38.4
Yorkshire & Humber	54	19	35	35.2
East Midlands	47	18	29	38.3
North-East	27	10	17	37.0
Scotland	57	22	35	38.6
Wales	32	12	20	37.5
Northern Ireland	18	7	11	38.9
UK total	650	247	403	38.0

Seat-Allocation Rules

- 1 Calculate each region’s list-seat quota = 0.38 × regional total.
- 2 Round to the nearest whole seat.
- 3 Guarantee a minimum of 5 list seats; no upper cap.
- 4 If rounding pushes the UK-wide list total off 38 % by one seat, make a single balancing adjustment in the region with the smallest rounding error (here, Yorkshire & Humber loses 1 list seat).

Appendix F – STV | illustrative projection

Regional Seat Allocation under UK-wide STV (Median = 5 MPs per district)

Assumptions

- **Commons Size** = 650 (unchanged).
- **District magnitude rule** = 4–6 MPs, target median 5.
- Existing 2024 single-member seats are grouped into **multi-member ‘STV districts’** within the same NUTS-1 region, respecting county/national identities (e.g., Cornwall kept whole).

Region	Seats 2024	No. STV districts	Typical MPs per district	Example groupings
South-East	91	18	5 (two 6-seat coastal belts)	Brighton-&-Hove + Lewes (5); Reading urban (5)
London	75	15	5	Borough clusters (e.g., Camden-Islington 5)
East of England	61	12	5 (one 6)	Cambs (Peterborough-Hunts 5); Norfolk Coast (6)
South-West	58	12	4-5	Cornwall West (5); Bristol urban (5)
West Midlands	59	12	5	Birmingham S-W (5); Black Country N (5)
North-West	73	15	4–5 (one 6)	Mersey-Riverside (6); Cumbria (4)
Yorkshire & Humber	54	11	5	Leeds N-E (5); Humber Estuary (5)
East Midlands	47	10	5	Derbyshire Peaks (4); Leicester Urban (5)
North-East	27	6	4-5	Tyneside urban (5); Durham Dales (4)
Scotland	57	11	5 (one 4)	Highland (4); Glasgow S-E (5)
Wales	32	7	4-5	Gwent Valleys (5); Ceredigion-Pembs (4)
Northern Ireland*	18	3	6	NI retains 3 existing 6-seat constituencies
UK total	650	132	-	-

*NI already uses STV with 18 MPs in 3×6 districts; retained for continuity.

Appendix G – Additional-Member System
illustrative projection

Regional Seat Split (Using 2024 Totals, 43 % List Quota)

Region	Seats 2024	List MPs (43 %)	Constituency MPs	Regional list %
South-East	91	39	52	42.9
London	75	32	43	42.7
East of England	61	26	35	42.6
South-West	58	25	33	43.1
West Midlands	59	25	34	42.4
North-West	73	31	42	42.5
Yorkshire & Humber	54	23	31	42.6
East Midlands	47	20	27	42.6
North-East	27	12	15	44.4
Scotland	57	25	32	43.9
Wales	32	14	18	43.8
Northern Ireland	18	8	10	44.4
UK total	650	280	370	43.1

Top-up seats allocated by region, then distributed to parties via D'Hondt as in Scottish AMS.

Appendix H – Regional-List PR (Median 6 MPs)
– illustrative projections

Constituency grid

Region	Seats 2024	No. STV districts	Typical MPs per district	Example groupings
South-East	91	15	6 (one 5)	Thames Valley (6); Sussex Coast (6)
London	75	12	6–7	West Central (6); East Thames (7)
East of England	61	10	6–7	Fenland (6); Essex North (6)
South-West	58	10	5-6	Devon (6); Bristol & Bath (6)
West Midlands	59	10	6	Birmingham Inner (6)
North-West	73	12	6	Merseyside Central (6); Pennine (6)
Yorkshire & Humber	54	9	6	Leeds Urban (6); Humber (6)
East Midlands	47	8	6	Nottinghamshire (6)
North-East	27	4	6-7	Tyne-Wear (7); Durham-Tees (6)
Scotland	57	9	6-7	Glasgow Metro (6); Highland & Islands (6)
Wales	32	5	6-7	South Wales Valleys (6)
Northern Ireland*	18	3	6	Current NI Euro regions (6)
UK total	650	108	-	-



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