

The Alternative Vote System

What is it and how does it work?

The same constituency boundaries are used and voters would elect one person to represent them in parliament, just as we do now.

However, rather than marking an 'X' against their preferred candidate, each voter would rank their candidates in an order of preference, putting '1' next to their favourite, a '2' by their second choice and so on.

If a candidate receives a majority of first place votes, he or she would be elected just as under the present system. However if no single candidate gets more than 50% of the vote, the second choices for the candidate at the bottom are redistributed.

The process is repeated until one candidate gets an absolute majority.

The alternative vote is not actually a proportional system, but a *majoritarian* system. It looks most similar to the current electoral system.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of Alternative Voting

The advantages of the Alternative Voting system are:

- The direct link between voters and constituency MPs remains.
- The winning candidate is supported by a majority of voters.
- A clear parliamentary majority for one party is the most likely outcome.

The disadvantages of the Alternative Voting system are:

- Minority parties are still likely to be under-represented.
- The system may encourage or compel voters to cast lower preference for candidates of whom they know little or nothing.

Alternative voting is also known as; Instant runoff voting and is used to elect members of the Australian House of Representatives, the President of Ireland, the national parliament of Papua New Guinea, and the Fijian House of Representatives. IRV is employed by several jurisdictions in the United States, including San Francisco and Oakland in California and Minneapolis and St. Paul in Minnesota. It is used to elect the leaders of the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats in the United Kingdom and the leader of the Liberal Party of Canada in a national primary and in the elections of city mayors in a number of countries including the United Kingdom and New Zealand.

Many large private associations use IRV, including the Hugo Awards for science fiction and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in selection of best picture.