

Information about the different voting systems

MMP – MIXED MEMBER PROPORTIONAL

This is the system we currently use to elect our Parliament.

There are 120 Members of Parliament (MPs). There are 70 electorates, including the Māori electorates. Each elects one MP, called an Electorate MP. The other 50 MPs are elected from political party lists and are called List MPs.

Each voter gets two votes.

The first vote is for the political party the voter chooses. This is called the party vote and largely decides the total number of seats each political party gets in Parliament.

The second vote is to choose the MP the voter wants to represent the electorate they live in. This is called the electorate vote. The candidate who gets the most votes wins. They do not have to get more than half the votes.

Under current MMP rules, a political party that wins at least one electorate seat OR 5% of the party vote gets a share of the seats in Parliament that is about the same as its share of the party vote. For example, if a party gets 30% of the party vote it will get roughly 36 MPs in Parliament (being 30% of 120 seats). So if that party wins 20 electorate seats it will have 16 List MPs in addition to its 20 Electorate MPs.

Coalitions or agreements between political parties are usually needed before Governments can be formed.

FPP - FIRST PAST THE POST

There are 120 Members of Parliament. Each of the 120 electorates, including the Māori electorates, elects one MP.

Each voter has one vote to choose the MP they want to represent the electorate they live in. The candidate who gets the most votes wins. They do not have to get more than half the votes.

Large parties – and in particular the winning party – usually win a share of the seats in Parliament larger than their share of all the votes across the country. Smaller parties usually receive a smaller share of seats than their share of all the votes.

A government can usually be formed without the need for coalitions or agreements between parties.

PV - PREFERENTIAL VOTING

There are 120 Members of Parliament. Each of the 120 electorates, including the Māori electorates, elects one MP.

Voters rank the candidates – 1, 2, 3, etc – in the order they prefer them.

A candidate who gets more than half of all the first preference votes (that is votes marked “1”) wins.

If no candidate gets more than half the first preference votes, the candidate with the fewest number “1” votes is eliminated and their votes go to the candidates each voter ranked next.

This process is repeated until one candidate has more than half the votes.

Large parties – and in particular the winning party – usually win a share of the seats in Parliament larger than their nationwide share of the first preference votes. It is hard for smaller parties to win seats in Parliament,

but votes for smaller party candidates may influence who wins the seat because of second, third, etc preferences.

A government can usually be formed without the need for coalitions or agreements between parties.

STV - SINGLE TRANSFERABLE VOTE

There are 120 Members of Parliament. Each electorate has more than one MP. This includes the Māori electorates. It is likely the 120 MPs would be divided between 24 and 30 electorates, each with 3 to 7 MPs.

Each voter has a single vote that is transferable. Voters either rank the individual candidates – 1, 2, 3, etc – in the order they prefer from all the candidates, OR they may vote for the order of preference published in advance by the political party of their choice.

MPs are elected by receiving a minimum number of votes. This is known as the quota and is based on the number of votes in each electorate and the number of MPs to be elected.

Candidates who reach the quota from first preference votes are elected.

If there are still electorate seats to fill, a two-step process follows.

First, votes the elected candidates received beyond the quota are transferred to the candidates ranked next on those votes. Candidates who then reach the quota are elected.

Second, if there are still electorate seats to fill, the lowest polling candidate is eliminated and their votes are transferred to the candidates ranked next on those votes.

This two-step process is repeated until all the seats are filled.

The number of MPs elected from each political party roughly mirrors the party's share of all the first preference votes across the country.

Coalitions or agreements between political parties are usually needed before governments can be formed.

SM - SUPPLEMENTARY MEMBER

There are 120 Members of Parliament. There are 90 electorates, including the Māori electorates. Each elects one MP, called an Electorate MP. The other 30 seats are called supplementary seats. MPs are elected to these seats from political party lists and are likely to be called List MPs.

Each voter gets two votes.

The first vote is to choose the MP the voter wants to represent the electorate they live in. This is called the electorate vote. The candidate who gets the most votes wins. They do not have to get more than half the votes.

The second vote is for the political party the voter chooses. This is called the party vote. The share of the 30 supplementary seats each party gets reflects its share of the party vote.

For example, if a party gets 30% of the party vote, it will get about 9 List MPs in Parliament (being 30% of the 30 supplementary seats) no matter how many electorate seats it wins.

This makes SM different from MMP where a party's share of all 120 seats mirrors its share of the party vote.

Under SM, one or other of the major parties would usually have enough seats to govern alone, but coalitions or agreements between parties may sometimes be needed.