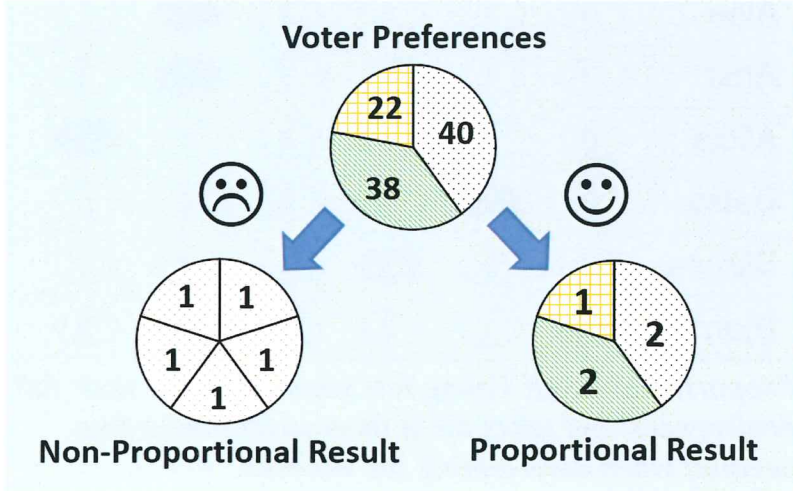


What is Proportional Representation?

Proportional representation means that the characteristics that the electorate cares about the most (ideology, ethnicity, etc.) are proportionally reflected in an elected body. A political group comprising 20% of the electorate should win about 20% of all seats.



Electing Multi-Member Bodies

There are two basic ways to elect a governmental body such as a city council or legislature:

- Single-winner elections by district (e.g., US House) or staggered elections (e.g., US Senate)
- Multi-winner elections: either for the jurisdiction “at large” or with multi-member districts

Single-winner elections can lead to disproportionate outcomes (see back of pamphlet). **Some multi-winner voting methods** (but not all – see inside) **ensure proportional representation.**

Notable Elections with Disproportionate Outcomes

- **Wisconsin State Assembly 2018**
Consequence of gerrymandering
 - Statewide votes: **44.8% R**, **53.0% D**
 - Seats: **63 R**, **36 D**
- **Massachusetts US House Delegation 2022**
Republican voters are so spread out that drawing a majority-R district is mathematically impossible
 - Statewide votes: **69.7% D**, **29.6% R**
 - Seats: **9 D**, **0 R**

Proportional voting methods would have yielded fair representation in both states.



When your vote matters, you are more likely to **turn out to vote!**

LWV of Boulder County
Voting Methods Team
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lwvbc.org → Teams at Work → Voting Methods

*Interested in better single-winner voting methods?
See our single-winner voting methods pamphlet.*



Should a party with 40% of the vote win zero seats in a legislative body?

Should gerrymandering and geography determine partisan control?

Should voters in “swing” districts wield all the influence?

Proportional Multi-Winner Voting Methods



Problems with Single-Winner Districts

- Winner-take-all. If your representative doesn't share your values, you won't feel represented.
- Sizeable minority groups may not form a majority of voters in any district and so may not be represented at all in the elected body.
- Voters in safe districts wield less influence than voters in competitive "swing" districts.
- Gerrymandering can determine partisan control.

Non-PR Multi-Winner Voting Methods

Some multi-winner voting methods don't yield proportional representation (PR). Avoid them!

- In 5-winner Plurality Block Voting, people vote for up to 5 candidates and the top vote-getters are elected. It can reduce representation for racial minorities, leading to lawsuits under the Voting Rights Act.
- In some Utah towns, voters rank candidates using a non-proportional form of Ranked Choice Voting. One group may win multiple seats while a slightly smaller group wins none.

Proportional Representation and Women

Australia uses a proportional voting method to elect its Senate, but single-winner districts to elect its House. Women have been a larger percentage of Australian Senators than House members in every year since 1943 – the first year a woman was elected to either body.

Proportional Voting Methods

Proportional Ranked Choice Voting

Rank up to five candidates. Mark no more than one oval in any column or row.	First Choice	Second Choice	Third Choice	Fourth Choice	Fifth Choice
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
	Alba	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Amir	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Alicia	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Betsy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Blanca	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bjorn	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

This voting method, aka Single Transferable Vote, has been used for more than seven decades to elect the Cambridge, MA City Council and the Australia Senate. Recently, Albany (CA), Portland (ME), and Portland (OR) adopted it.

Party List Methods

Voters select their preferred party, and parties win seats proportional to how many votes they received. Variants of Party List are used in dozens of countries, including Brazil, Germany, Israel, Italy, and Japan.

Proportional STAR Voting

Score your favorite(s) a 5, your least favorite(s) a 0, and the others according to your level of support. Unscored candidates receive a 0.

Alba	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
Amir	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
Alicia	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 5
Betsy	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
Blanca	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
Bjorn	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5

Proportional STAR Voting lets voters express their full preferences and takes all of these preferences into account when determining the winners.

Proportional Approval Voting

Vote for all the candidates you support.

Alba	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Amir	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Alicia	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Betsy	<input type="checkbox"/>
Blanca	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bjorn	<input type="checkbox"/>

Proportional Approval Voting uses the simplest ballot.

Multi-winner voting methods can promote proportional representation which fosters diversity of our elected officials.

-- Excerpt from the LWVCO Voting Methods position