

**In a UK General Election, do you vote for a party, or for a candidate?
With our system you only have one vote.**

When we vote in the UK in a General Election there are two key considerations.

We have a Representative Democracy

Our political system is based on political parties.

If these constraints are accepted, there are two important and separate outcomes from a General Election. The electorate vests democratic power in

- 1 The political party of their choice.
- 2 An MP to be their local constituency representative in parliament,

With our 'First past the post' system these aspects are conflated. They shouldn't be. If there are two separate votes, many of the perceived disadvantages of FPTP and proportional representation can be overcome.

With FPTP, we don't vote directly for a party. If we give the voter a vote for their party of choice, the collective votes cast for each party could determine how many votes each parliamentary party has in the new parliament.

On the second aspect, electing the constituency MP, FPTP conflates the votes for Party and MP, but gives one parliamentary vote to each MP. This makes the election distinctive but disproportional.

If the voter has another separate vote to elect the MP, the two aspects are no longer conflated. The outcome could be a PR system where all the MPs are elected in single member constituencies.

To explain further, rather than casting a block vote, the Parliamentary Parties votes can, mathematically, be shared out equally between its elected members, the MPs. In this way they can individually exercise a vote, an equal share of the total party vote. It's not how we do it at present, but with digital electronic systems this is no handicap.

There are advantages if we elect someone to represent the people who live in a discrete geographical community, ie a constituency, so this is worth preserving. Such election campaigns have a local dimension, involve local people, allow candidates to be tested as individuals and are constrained by local geography – they are not just a reiteration of national campaigns. (The smaller the constituency, electorate size, geographical area - the more local, the better.)

Should MPs from different parties exercise a different vote value? The answer to this is that each MP has an equal share of a democratic mandate that stems from the party vote, not the vote for the MP.

As an individual MP they are elected as individuals. A vote for the MP is not a vote for the party.

The implications of any change to the electoral system are complex and difficult to predict. The practical implications of the change I propose would be benign – no change to constituency boundaries and many similarities to FPTP would make it a relatively simple change for the electorate and party organisations. This new system would change the balance of power between parties, MPs and their electorate, and I believe this would be almost wholly benign. Voting habits would take time to adjust to the new system.

Arguably all main voting systems are unsatisfactory. We need significant change to our electoral system. The Additional Member System might be considered closest to the ideal but has shortcomings. The system I propose I have called Direct Party and Representative Voting or DPR Voting addresses these shortcomings. It is a radical solution. That should not put you off.

You will find more at www.dprvoting.org