

GV101

Introduction to Political Science

Week 09: Electoral Systems

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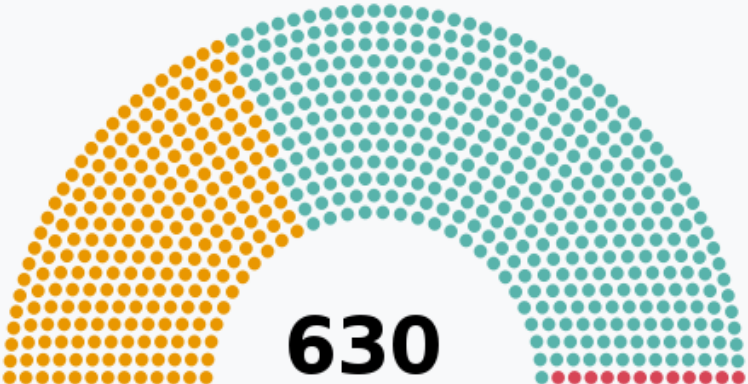
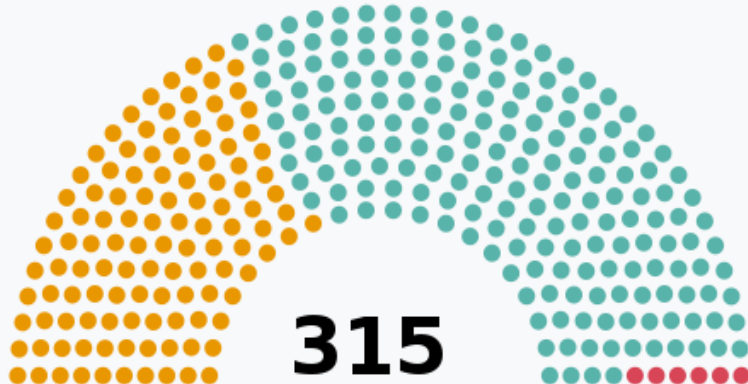
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Essential Reading Overview

- Clark, Golder and Golder outline the concept of electoral integrity, give (technical) detail of a range of majoritarian, proportional, and mixed electoral systems, and outline the following possible explanations for electoral system choice: ‘the self-interest of political parties, general interest concerns, historical precedent, external pressures, and idiosyncratic occurrences.’
- Carey and Hix use data on real countries to demonstrate that the traditionally observed trade-off between representativeness and accountability is not a linear one. The gains in proportionality and proximity of voters to government (used as indicators of representativeness) are most dramatic with small increases in district magnitude (above one). At the same time, whilst the number of parties in the system and government (used as indicators of accountability) do rise more sharply with those same small increases in district magnitude (above one), the effect is not so dramatic as to discount the gains in representativeness. Thus, there is a ‘sweet spot’ in which small multi-member districts promote representativeness without too many costs in terms of accountability.

Real-World Example

Italian electoral law of 2017

Chamber of Deputies			Senate of the Republic		
 630			 315		
Method	Seats	Percentage	Method	Seats	Percentage
First-past-the-post	232	37%	First-past-the-post	116	37%
Proportional representation	386	61%	Proportional representation	193	61%
Overseas constituencies	12	2%	Overseas constituencies	6	2%

Related news coverage

Italy's President Dissolves Parliament and Officially Opens Election Season



Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni of Italy spoke during his end-of-year news conference in Rome on Thursday. Giuseppe Lami/European Pressphoto Agency

Italy general election vote: Who's who and why it matters

🕒 3 March 2018

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Europe migrant crisis



Italians are choosing a new parliament on 4 March. Who is standing, what are they proposing and does the outcome matter? Here's a brief guide.