Mixed-Member Proportional Systems (MMP)

Just like STV and List systems, this also is a 'proportional' electoral system (i.e. PR): it seeks to provide a fair representation in parliament for all parties contesting the election roughly in proportion to the votes they win. This means that smaller parties have a chance of winning some seats.

As its title suggests this system is a mix of two separate electoral systems. While any number of possible mixes is possible, the most common mix is of the First-Past-the-Post system used in the UK and the PR-List systems common in much of Europe (both dealt with in separate briefing notes). As we shall see, in recent Irish debates over electoral reform there has been some discussion of mixing STV and List (e.g. with some TDs elected in multi-seat STV constituencies and others elected on national party lists).

Parliamentary constituencies
The big feature that stands out with this system is the fact that it produces two different types of MPs: a portion of the MPs (commonly half of the parliament) are elected in single-seat constituencies, with the remainder elected on party lists usually with constituencies that are large regions (though it can be the whole country). Supporters of the system argue that it offers the best of both of these systems because, it results in some MPs with a focus on constituency work and other MPs focused more on national political issues. Critics suggest that the two types of MP means the two might be regarded as having different levels of authority. As a matter of fact, this is not always borne out in practice.

How voting occurs in this system
Sample ballot papers from Germany and New Zealand are provided below. As you can see, in both cases, voters are asked to vote twice, for constituency candidates and for (closed) party lists.

How politicians are elected
The count occurs in three stages as follows:

1. First, the returning officer counts the FPTP constituency part of the ballot paper. The candidate with the most votes in the constituency race is deemed elected. However there is nothing to say that one could not use AV in this part.
2. The returning officer then counts the list part of the ballot paper, just like in the list electoral system dealt with separately. This determines how many seats each party is entitled to overall. The rules as to what the proportionality is based on can cause very different seat allocations.
3. Given that this is a proportional electoral system, the focus is on trying to ensure as much as possible that parties are awarded seats in proportion to the number of votes they win overall. Therefore, in this final stage, now that it is known how many seats each party is due, the returning officer has to subtract from that total any constituency seats already won in the first stage of the count and this determines how many list seats each party is awarded. This should result in a proportional result.

The consequence of the final calculation (in point 3) is that larger parties can end up having a lot of constituency seats and far fewer list seats; indeed, in one MPP election in Wales the Labour party ended up with only constituency seats).

Countries using this system

Germany is the first place in the world to use this system, having adopted it after the second world war. In recent years a small number of other countries have adopted it, most notably New Zealand, but also Bolivia and Venezuela. At sub-national level it is used to elect the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly.

Variations

Clearly this system offers the greatest scope for variation, among the most important being:

- The choice of which two systems to mix;
- Whether this system should be fully or only partially proportional (in the case of the latter there is no linkage between the results of the two systems so that a party that wins lots of constituency seats is still allowed to sweep up as many list seats as possible);
- The proportion of parliamentary seats that should be allotted to each part (e.g. in Germany half of MPs represent individual constituencies and the other half are elected on party lists);
- How open or closed the ballot should be on the list part of the system;
- Whether candidates should be allowed to run both as constituency and list candidates.

A German MMP ballot paper



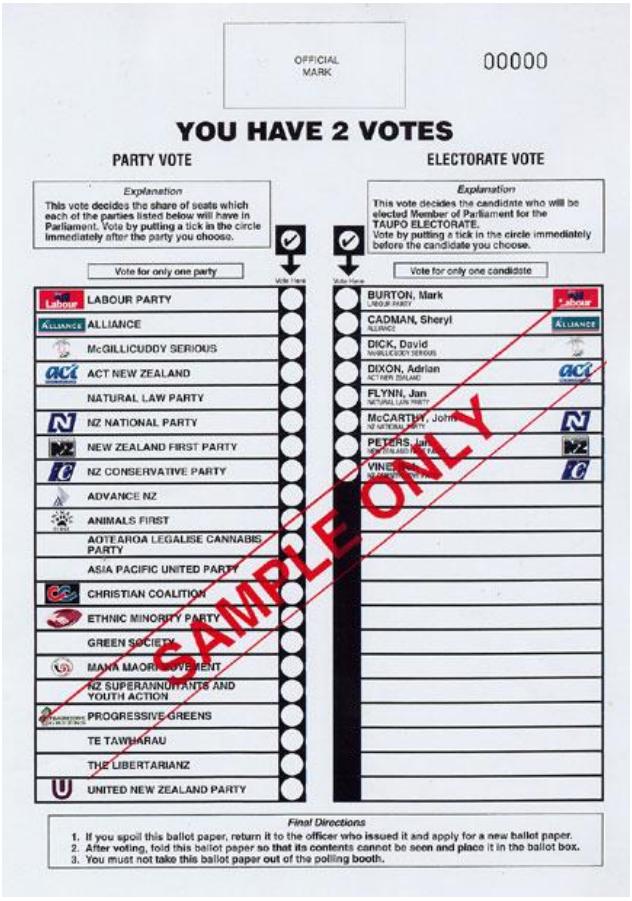
Sie haben 2 Stimmen

hier 1 Stimme für die Wahl eines Wahlkreisabgeordneten (Erststimme)

hier 1 Stimme für die Wahl einer Landesliste (Partei) (Zweitstimme)

1	Dr. Kreutzmann, Heinz Parl. Staatssekretär Bonken (Hessen) Kellerwaldstraße 7	SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands		SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands Leber, Matthöfer, Jahn, Frau Dr. Timm, Zander	1
2	Jagoda, Bernhard Obersekretär a.D. Schwalmstadt-Ziegenhain Am Weißen Stein 31	CDU	Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands		CDU	Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands Dr. Dregger, Zink, Dr. Schwarz-Schilling, Frau Geier, Haase	2
3	Wilke, Otto Elektromeister Diemelsee-Adorf Bredelarer Straße 1	F.D.P.	Freie Demokratische Partei		F.D.P.	Freie Demokratische Partei Mischnick, von Schoeler, Hoffie, Wurbs, Dr. Prinz zu Solms-Hohensolms-Lich	3
4	Funk, Peter Werkzeugmacher Baunatal 6 Triftweg 6	DKP	Deutsche Kommunistische Partei		DKP	Deutsche Kommunistische Partei Mayer, Knopf, Frau Dr. Weber, Funk, Frau Schuster	4
5	Keller, Gerhard Zivildienstleistender Friedendorf 2 Friedhofsweg 30	GRÜNE	DIE GRÜNEN		GRÜNE	DIE GRÜNEN Frau Ibbeken, Hecker, Horacek, Kerschgens, Kuhnert	5
					EAP	Europäische Arbeiterpartei Frau Ludwig, Haßmann, Stalleicher, Frau Kaestner, Stalla	6
					KBW	Kommunistischer Bund Westdeutschland Schmierer, Frau Mönch, Frau Eckardt, Dresler, Lang	7
					NPD	Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands Philipp, Brandt, Stürtz, Lauck, Bauer	8
					V	VOLKSFRONT Götz, Taufertshöfer, Konig, Rebe, Frau Weißert	9

A New Zealand MMP ballot paper



OFFICIAL MARK

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YOU HAVE 2 VOTES

PARTY VOTE

Explanation
This vote decides the share of seats which each of the parties listed below will have in Parliament. Vote by putting a tick in the circle immediately after the party you choose.

Vote for only one party

- LABOUR PARTY
- ALLIANCE
- McGILLICUDDY SERIOUS
- ACT NEW ZEALAND
- NATURAL LAW PARTY
- NZ NATIONAL PARTY
- NEW ZEALAND FIRST PARTY
- NZ CONSERVATIVE PARTY
- ADVANCE NZ
- ANIMALS FIRST
- AOTEAROA LEGALISE CANNABIS PARTY
- ASIA PACIFIC UNITED PARTY
- CHRISTIAN COALITION
- ETHNIC MINORITY PARTY
- GREEN SOCIETY
- MANA MAORI MOVEMENT
- NZ SUPERANNUITANTS AND YOUTH ACTION
- PROGRESSIVE GREENS
- TE TAWHARAU
- THE LIBERTARIANZ
- UNITED NEW ZEALAND PARTY

ELECTORATE VOTE

Explanation
This vote decides the candidate who will be elected Member of Parliament for the TAUPO ELECTORATE.
Vote by putting a tick in the circle immediately before the candidate you choose.

Vote for only one candidate

- BURTON, Mark
- CADMAN, Sheryl
- DICK, David
- DIXON, Adrian
- FLYNN, Jan
- McCARTHY, John
- PETERS, Ian
- VINE

SAMPLE ONLY

Final Directions
1. If you spoil this ballot paper, return it to the officer who issued it and apply for a new ballot paper.
2. After voting, fold this ballot paper so that its contents cannot be seen and place it in the ballot box.
3. You must not take this ballot paper out of the polling booth.