

Scotland's Voting Systems

Key Points

- The system for voting in Scottish Local Government elections has changed
- It is now a form of Proportional Representation known as Single Transferable Vote (STV)
- Scottish Parliamentary elections haven't changed – the system used is the Additional Member System

There are four types of election that take place in Scotland:

- Scottish Parliamentary elections
- Local Government elections
- UK Parliamentary elections
- European Parliamentary elections

Each uses a different type of voting system.

Scottish Parliamentary elections and Local Government elections both involve forms of Proportional Representation, also known as PR.

Forms of Proportional Representation Used in Scotland

Proportional Representation (PR) is the term used to describe a variety of electoral systems that aim to allocate elected members in proportion to the total votes cast.

In Scotland, forms of PR are used in:

- Scottish Parliamentary elections
- Local Government elections
- European Parliamentary elections

Scottish Parliamentary elections use the Additional Member System.

Scottish Local Government elections used to be first-past-the-post but on 3rd May 2007 this will change to a form of PR known as Single Transferable Vote (STV).

You can find out more information on European Parliamentary Elections at www.aboutmyvote.co.uk

Single Transferable Vote (STV)

Historically, Local Government elections have used a first-past-the-post system to elect Councillors, based on the election of one Councillor to each council ward.

On 3rd May 2007, this will change to a form of Proportional Representation known as Single Transferable Vote.

The size of the council ward will be increased and either three or four Councillors will be elected to each ward.

When you vote you will be asked to rank candidates in order of preference (1, 2, 3 etc) rather than by making a single choice with a cross (X).

Put a "1" beside the candidate you like best, then a "2" beside your second choice, "3" beside your third choice and so on. You can vote for as many or as few candidates as you like.

The numbers you use must be in sequence. If you make a mistake, your vote will be valid up to when you made the error – for example, if you miss out a "4" and just rank 1,2,3 and 5, only your first three preferences will be valid.

The candidates you vote for may be from the same party, from several different parties or be independents – but every single choice counts!

If your first choice has already won enough votes to be elected, then your vote is transferred to your second choice and potentially on to your third choice and so on, until either three or four candidates have been elected, depending on the size of the ward.

Additional Member System (AMS)

Scottish Parliamentary elections use a type of Proportional Representation called the Additional Member System (AMS).

With AMS, each voter has two votes:

- Constituency vote
- Regional vote

Constituency Vote

The constituency vote can be cast by marking your ballot with an X for any candidate standing in your constituency.

The candidate winning the largest number of votes in a constituency wins the seat on a first-past-the-post basis.

Regional Vote

The regional vote applies to a larger electoral area, known as a region.

Your vote can be cast by marking the ballot paper with an X for a political party or for a candidate standing as an independent within the region.

There are eight Scottish Parliament regions, and each region has seven additional seats in Parliament.

The number of votes for each party or candidate is divided by the number of constituency seats won plus one. This allows parties or individual candidates who have not won any constituencies to be included in the rest of the calculation.

The party or individual candidate with the highest figure after this calculation gains the first additional seat.

This calculation is redone to allocate the remaining additional seats, but each time any additional seats gained are added in.

By the end of the calculations, the ratio of votes to seats for each party or individual candidate has been made more even.

UK & European Parliamentary Elections

There is more information about the voting systems used in [UK and European Parliamentary elections](#) on aboutmyvote.co.uk