

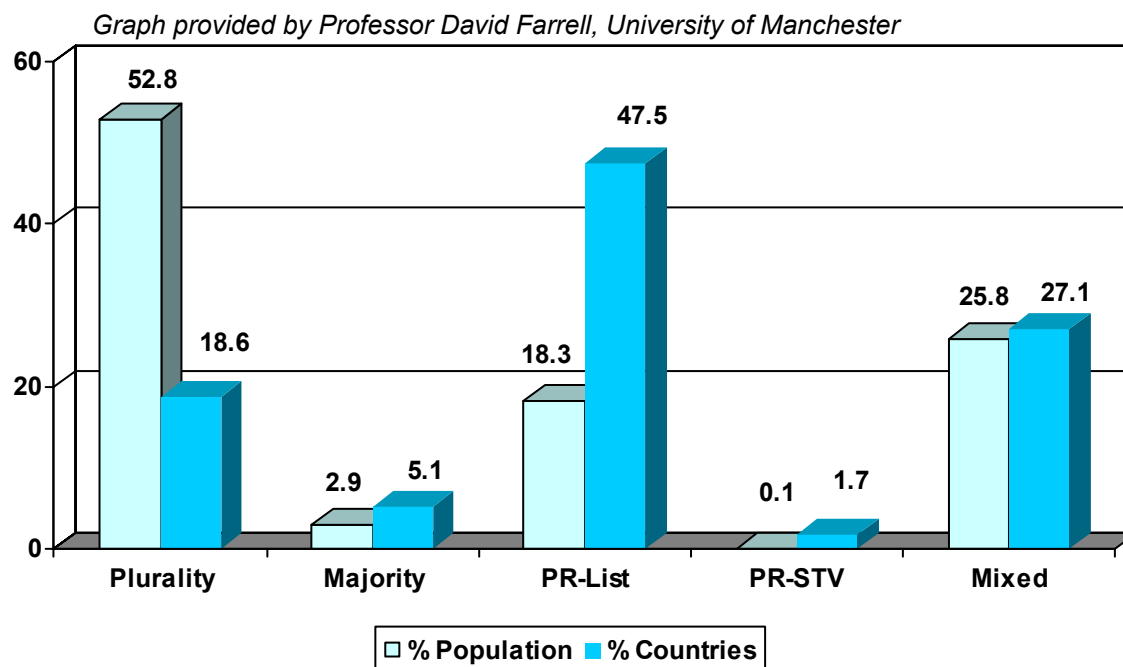
## Global context

### Global activity in electoral reform

Over the past 15 years, many countries – including both emerging and established democracies – have been actively engaged in selecting and implementing new electoral systems. Their experiences provide excellent learning opportunities for British Columbians as we now embark on our own exploration of electoral systems.

A number of former Soviet bloc countries in eastern and central Europe adopted new electoral systems as they emerged from Communism in the late 1980s. Within established democracies, the 1990s saw electoral reform at the national level in New Zealand, Italy, Japan, Israel and Venezuela and at the regional level in other countries.

### Popularity of electoral systems in world democracies



### Electoral reform in emerging, post-Communist democracies

When post-Communist countries were addressing electoral reform, existing political elites tended to favour non-proportional representation systems, believing these systems would give the establishment an advantage. Reformers, however, pushed for a proportional representation system that would give small emerging parties a better chance at success.

In holding their first elections, these emerging democracies employed a range of electoral systems, but a number subsequently changed to different systems. (See following chart) By 2002, these countries were all using either PR-List systems or mixed systems – predominantly semi-proportional mixed-member majoritarian (MMM) mixed systems. Most of these countries have also adopted a legal *threshold* – a minimum percentage of the popular vote – which parties must surpass to be awarded seats.

## **Emerging European democracies – electoral systems**

*Chart provided by Professor David Farrell, University of Manchester*

	Electoral system		Threshold
	<i>First election</i>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2002</b>
Albania	Majority	Mixed	2.5%*
Bosnia	PR-List	PR-List	
Bulgaria	Mixed	PR-List	4%
Croatia	Mixed	PR-List	5%
Czech Rep	PR-List	PR-List	5%*
Estonia	PR-STV	PR-List	
Hungary	Mixed	Mixed	5%
Latvia	PR-List	PR-List	5%
Lithuania	Mixed	Mixed	5%
Macedonia	Majority	Mixed	
Moldova	PR-List	PR-List	6%
Poland	PR-List	PR-List	5%*
Romania	PR-List	PR-List	5%*
Russia	Mixed	Mixed	5%
Slovakia	PR-List	PR-List	5%*
Slovenia	PR-List	PR-List	4%
Ukraine	Majority	Mixed	4%
Yugoslavia	PR-List	PR-List	5%

\* Higher thresholds for coalitions

## **Electoral reform in established democracies**

While New Zealand, Italy and Japan all adopted mixed systems, only New Zealand adopted a fully proportional system, known as a mixed member proportional (MMP) system. Each country's decision to change was driven by different circumstances and needs, with similarly differing results.

Today, in the United Kingdom, every family of electoral system is in use at some level:

European Parliament	PR-List
Northern Ireland Assembly	PR-STV
Mayor of London	Majority - Alternative Vote
Scottish Parliament	Mixed member proportional (MMP)
Welsh Assembly	MMP
London Assembly	MMP
House of Commons	SMP

## **Electoral system change – lessons from global experience**

(Courtesy of Professor David Farrell, University of Manchester, England, and Professor Elizabeth McLeay, Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand)

- Do not expect a new electoral system to cure all of a political system's problems
- Be patient with a new system; allow voters, parties, legislatures and political systems time to adjust to a change in electoral system
- It is impossible to predict all the effects of electoral system change – there will be some unanticipated consequences
- When considering a change in electoral system, factors to consider include:
  - government stability
  - the need to keep it simple
  - incorporation of minorities
  - trade-offs between features of various electoral systems
  - link between politicians and voters

**NOTE: More detailed information, including lecture notes, presentations and video recordings, is available on the Citizens' Assembly website.**

## **Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform**

604-660-1232 or 1-866-667-1232

Fax 604-660-1236

[info@citizensassembly.bc.ca](mailto:info@citizensassembly.bc.ca)

2288 – 555 West Hastings Street

PO Box 12118

Vancouver, BC Canada V6B 4N6

[www.citizensassembly.bc.ca](http://www.citizensassembly.bc.ca)