



UK House of Commons polls: 2019

At the United Kingdom's general election on 12 December 2019, candidates of the Conservative Party, led by the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Boris Johnson, won a very comfortable 56.2% absolute majority of the 650 single-member constituencies in the House of Commons after the Conservative Party's share of the United Kingdom vote rose to 43.6%. The turnout was 67.3%, compared with 68.8% in 2017.

Table 1 below shows that the Opposition Labour Party won 32.1% of the national vote, but won a slightly lower percentage of the seats. Candidates from other than the two largest parties collectively won 24.3% of the vote, but only 12.6% of the seats, so the it was candidates of the Conservative Party that were the main beneficiaries of those wasted votes. Over 50% of all votes were for defeated candidates, and those votes were thus totally wasted.

PARTY	% VOTES	% SEATS	
		Actual seats %	Minimum PR-STV %
Conservative Party	43.6	56.2	42.0
Labour Party	32.1	31.2	30.1
Liberal Democrats	11.6	1.7	11.2
Scottish National Party	3.9	7.4	3.8
Greens Party	2.7	0.2	2.6
Brexit Party	2.0	0.0	1.9
Democratic Unionist Party	0.8	1.2	0.8
Sinn Fein	0.6	1.1	0.6
Plaid Cymru (<i>Welsh Nationalist</i>)	0.5	0.6	0.5
Social Dem. & Labour Party	0.4	0.3	0.4
Alliance	0.2	0.2	0.2
Others*	1.6	0.0	5.9

* The 1.6% of votes for 'Others' wasted under non-transferable plurality rules could, under PR-STV rules, have been transferred to candidates in the 'Others' category, or to other candidates above, and thus elected 38 MPs.

Table 1: Percentages of House of Commons votes and seats gained by candidates of the parties shown

At the UK's 2017 general election, its electoral system of single-member districts and plurality counting - which is a 'winner-take-all' system in each district, but which does not even ensure that a plurality of overall votes give an absolute majority of seats - failed to produce a party with such a majority.

SCOTLAND: The UK's two largest parties fared very badly in Scotland's 59 single-member constituencies, where 55 of those constituencies (93.2%) were won by the Scottish National Party (SNP), which stood candidates in each of those 59 constituencies, but stood none outside Scotland. Of those two parties, Labour won 18.6% of the vote in Scotland, but gained only 1.7% of the seats there. That was less than 10% of the seats it would have been likely to win if a PR-STV system had applied.

Of the SNP's 55 seats, only ten were won with an absolute majority of the vote. The SNP's vote in those ten ranged from 50.2% to 54.0%. Its vote in the other 45 seats it won ranged from 35.2% to 49.6%. Unlike the case with a PR-STV system being used, well over 50% of voters failed to elect a candidate, as was graphically pointed out by STV-Action, which is a UK group campaigning for PR-STV as the only worthwhile replacement for the present system.

The UK's system of constituencies each electing a single MP using plurality counting resulted in the SNP's gaining its 93.2% of the seats in Scotland with only 45.0% of the votes, leaving the remaining 55.0% of Scotland's voters quite unfairly represented by only 6.8% of Scotland's Commons seats.

That 45.0% of the vote is little more than the 44.7% of the vote cast for independence for Scotland at the advisory poll in Scotland on that question in 2014.

In its insistent clamour for a second plebiscite on independence for Scotland, the Scottish National Party misleadingly uses as justification the 93.2% of the seats it received, not its 45.0% of the vote.

Using the single-member plurality system, rather than the much fairer PR-STV system, has become a significant factor in giving Scots voters a false impression that a majority of them would support separation of Scotland from the United Kingdom.

Even a second poll on that question would only remove the anomaly of the massive over-representation at Westminster that the single-member plurality system keeps providing to the Scottish National Party, by removing Scotland from the UK.

SA Local Government Minister proposes a reversion from PR-STV to ‘bottoms-up’

The PRSA’s South Australian Branch has made a submission in response to [a most unwelcome proposal in Item 6.3 \(Page 59\)](#) in a Discussion Paper by SA’s Minister for Local Government, [Hon. Stephan Knoll MLA](#), in August 2019.

That proposal is to amend [Section 48](#) of SA’s *Local Government (Elections) Act 1999* to revert to SA’s idiosyncratic ‘bottoms-up’ counting of votes in place of the [PR-STV](#) counting that replaced that ‘bottoms-up’ counting in 1999.

The Discussion Paper states that the SA Electoral Commissioner favours the change because it would enable a faster result of the count, with less reliance on counting software. Those reasons are quite implausible, given the use of such software by most electoral commissions in Australia, and the very fast conduct of the scrutiny that such software offers.

The predecessor of SA’s Electoral Commission had championed ‘bottoms-up’ before SA’s former [multiple plurality](#) system was replaced by a choice of ‘bottoms-up’ or PR-STV in 1984, so it was possibly not pleased when the Olsen Liberal Government - with strong PRSA(SA) support - removed that ‘bottoms-up’ option in 1999 after its 15 years of declining use, as Councils had steadily moved towards using the PR-STV option over that period.

OTHER STATES: As was reported in [QN2019B](#), the Andrews Labor Government proposed to undo a major reform of the Bracks Government, which was the preceding Labor Government in Victoria, by introducing a new [Local Government Bill 2019](#). In November 2019, it introduced that Bill, which will remove the option of multi-councillor wards and make the default system single-councillor wards, where PR-STV cannot be implemented.

The Palaszczuk Labor Government in Queensland is proposing to introduce - before the 2024 municipal elections - a bill that would replace the present multiple plurality counting in Queensland’s [undivided municipalities](#), which are its most numerous municipalities, with [PR-STV](#) counting and partial preferential voting.

No changes are proposed to counting systems in New South Wales, Western Australia, or Tasmania.

Plebiscite could help towards restoring New York City’s use of PR-STV voting

In November 2019, a voter poll in New York City, USA, was conducted on the question of introducing a form of transferable voting for elections to the New York City Council.

That Council changed in 1936 to adopt proportional using the single transferable vote ([PR-STV](#)) counting instead of [plurality counting](#) as a result of a plebiscite. Unfortunately, a plebiscite in 1947 led to a reversion to plurality counting.

Between those two years, PR-STV withstood repeal at two successive plebiscites, but its later rejection was attributed to [McCarthyist reaction](#) when two Communists were elected to the [26-member](#) Council during the time that PR-STV applied, although it was the Democratic Party that dominated the Council, and led the move to discontinue PR-STV.

The minority of Republican councillors supported the end of PR-STV, even though it led to their losing most of their representation. The end of the influence of the Democratic Party’s notorious Tammany Hall machine had [coincided](#) with that decade of PR-STV.

As a result of the 2019 voter poll, a new system, approved by over 73% of the voters, will apply to the Council’s system of entirely single-councillor wards. New York City Council’s present plurality counting will be replaced by a form of what Americans parochially call ‘[ranked choice voting](#)’. In this case it is the single transferable vote in single-councillor wards, but with indication of preferences arbitrarily limited to five, which is great improvement of the previous limit of one. It is now similar to the [Papua-New Guinea system](#), which has an arbitrary limit of three preference indications.

National Office-bearers for 2020-21

The Returning Officer for the elections of PRSA National Office-bearers, Mr Geoffrey Goode, Secretary of the Victoria-Tasmania Branch, has declared the candidates below elected unopposed for the term 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2021:

National President:	Dr Jeremy Lawrence
National Vice-President:	Mr John Pyke
National Secretary:	Assoc. Prof. Stephen Morey
National Treasurer:	Mr Bruce Errol