

The Block Vote electoral system

description	Block Vote is a plurality/majoritarian system used in multi-member districts. Voters have as many votes as there are candidates to be elected. The candidates with the highest vote totals win the seats. Voters vote for candidates and may use as many, or as few, of their votes as they wish.
some of the countries that use the system	Cayman Islands, Kuwait, Laos, Lebanon, Maldives, Mauritius, Palestinian Authority, Syria
advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iraq has used Block Vote previously • includes a significant role for parties • voters can vote for candidates from different parties • where two parties have about the same numbers of seats, smaller parties may play a very important role through alliances, and their decision about who to support can determine the outcome of elections
disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Block Vote is likely to be highly disproportional, resulting in perceptions of a lack of legitimacy of the electoral process. For example: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) in the recent Palestinian elections, Hamas and its affiliated candidates won 45% of the votes for the Block Vote seats and won 68% of those seats, whereas Fatah and its affiliated candidates won 44% of those votes and 26% of those seats; (2) Mauritius 1982, 1995: a party won 100% of the seats on 64% and 65% of the votes respectively. • The disproportional effect of Block Vote can be seen more clearly on a district level. In one district in Lebanon, one list won all 11 seats with approximately 49% of the vote. A second list, with approximately 47% of the vote, won no seats. • there is a risk that large numbers of votes will be wasted because they do not count towards the election of any candidate or party. • May need large ballots if all the candidates of each party must appear on the ballot, e.g. if Baghdad governorate was a single electoral district, voters could be entitled to mark up to 60 names out of several thousand candidates. Large ballots create increased costs and logistical issues, and cause voter confusion (increasing the risk of invalid votes), and voter exhaustion (not casting all the votes to which they are entitled). • if the larger ballots mean voters take longer to vote at the polling station, security threats could increase • can improve the chances of extremist candidates • can increase incentives for vote buying
effect of the number of seats in a district	The disproportional effect of Block Vote is slightly less in smaller electoral districts.
implications for drawing district boundaries	Block Vote is extremely sensitive to where district boundaries are located. As seen above, small shifts in voters between districts can result in large shifts in seats between parties.
implications for political parties	favors parties that are well-organized with disciplined supporters; can weaken parties because candidates of the same party must compete with each other for votes
representation of women	Voters' choices of candidates can negate parties' efforts to promote the election of women candidates even if there are mandatory quotas of women candidates. Other options are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reserved seats to which only women can be elected; or • seats being allocated to highest polling unsuccessful women candidates until a mandatory level of representation is achieved.
representation of minorities	Voters' choices of candidates can negate parties' efforts to promote the election of minority candidates even if there are mandatory quotas for minority candidates. Other options are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reserved seats to which only minority candidates can be elected; or • seats being allocated to highest polling unsuccessful minority candidates until a mandatory level of representation is achieved.

Example 1	electoral district with 5 seats, 1000 voters, 5000 valid votes				
		party A	party B	party C	party D
	candidate 1	20	25	10	150
	candidate 2	10	65	550	200
	candidate 3	300	900	40	290
	candidate 4	40	20	1200	100
	candidate 5	460	260	200	160
	total votes	830	1270	2000	900
	winning candidates: C4, B3, C2, A5, aA3 party representation: A 2, B 1, C 2, D 0				
Example 2	electoral district with 10 seats, 100,000 voters and 1,000,000 valid votes				
		party A	party B	party C	
	candidate 1	50,000	25,000	10,000	
	candidate 2	45,000	20,000	15,000	
	candidate 3	35,000	30,000	15,000	
	candidate 4	60,000	24,000	18,000	
	candidate 5	65,000	36,000	11,000	
	candidate 6	38,000	34,000	28,000	
	candidate 7	60,000	22,000	15,000	
	candidate 8	92,000	23,000	13,000	
	candidate 9	65,000	29,000	12,000	
	candidate 10	70,000	29,000	11,000	
	total votes	580,000	272,000	148,000	
	% votes	58.0	27.2	14.8	
	winning candidates: A8, A10, A5, A9, A4, A7, A1, A2, A6, B5 party representation: A 9, B 1, C 0				