

Comparison between Block Vote and Open List Proportional Representation

	Block Vote	Open List Proportional Representation
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.	Open List is a form of Proportional Representation in which voters can vote for one or more candidates from a party list. The votes cast for individual candidates on a list determine the rank ordering of each party's candidates and therefore which candidates from a party receive the seats allocated to that party.
main variants		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the number of seats allocated to a party can be based on the party's share of all the votes cast for the candidates of all parties, or by a separate party vote in addition to the votes for one or more candidates • voters may be restricted to voting for the candidates of a single party (e.g. the party they supported with a party vote) or they may be allowed to vote for the candidates of any party (sometimes called a 'free vote' system)
some of the countries that use the system	Cayman Islands, Kuwait, Laos, Lebanon, Maldives, Mauritius, Palestinian Authority, Syria	Brazil, Ecuador, Finland, Kosovo, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Poland, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland.
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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • seats are shared fairly between parties • allows smaller parties to be represented • more votes count towards the election of candidates • encourages cooperation between parties in the legislature • in the absence of remedial measures, parties need 'balanced' lists to attract votes, thus promoting representation of women and minorities • allows voters to override parties' list ranking decisions • reducing parties' control over who is elected may result in the election process being regarded as more legitimate • 'free vote' provides the most flexibility by allowing voters to vote for the candidates of more than one party

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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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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, thus increasing the risk of invalid votes. In the free vote version, large ballots can cause voters not to cast all the votes to which they are entitled, thus undermining a major objective of the open list system. • election results may be delayed, since it is more complex to count votes and calculate the results • can improve the chances of extremist candidates • if voters must vote for a party and then have the option of voting for a candidate but choose not to do so, open lists can be ineffective in changing parties' ordering of 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.	Larger electoral districts tend to produce more proportional results.
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	Can weaken parties and their leaderships because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • voters can override parties' list ranking decisions, and • candidates of the same party must compete with each other for votes

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