

Elections

Overview

1. What do elections do?
2. Why do people vote?
3. Types of Electoral Systems

What do elections do? (1)

- Choose candidates to represent individual citizens
 - Representative as “delegate”
 - Make policy as if she/he was reflecting a plebiscite of an electoral district
 - Representative as “agent”
 - Transfer authority to representative to decide what is best and attempt to produce an outcome that is best for the district

What do elections do? (2)

- mobilize support for regime,
- build legitimacy,
- create a sense of civic involvement, disseminate information, etc.

Why do people vote?

1. Instrumental
2. Expressive
3. Consumptive
4. Avoid Punishment (Defensive Voting?)

Instrumental Voting (1)

- People may vote on the chance that they may have a causal effect on the outcome of the election, and they care who wins the election.
 - The Paradox of Participation
 - If large number of people vote, then there's a vanishingly small chance of having a causal effect on the outcome.
 - As a result, no individual should vote in large elections.
 - If no one votes in large elections, than any individual that votes can determine the outcome

Instrumental Voting (2) “Irrationality of voting”

Suppose

1. there are two candidates (Gore, Bush) and for voter x ,
Gore P_x (Bush + \$10,000)
2. There are 1,000,000 voters

$$EU_x(\text{Vote for Gore}) = \$10,000 \times p$$

Where p is the probability that x is the tie breaking vote in the election. If x has as good a chance as any other voter of being “decisive”, then $p = 1/1,000,000$

Instrumental Voting (3) “Irrationality of voting”

If $p=0.000001$, then

$$\begin{aligned} EU_x(\text{Vote for Gore}) &= \$10,000 \times 0.000001 \\ &= \$0.01 \end{aligned}$$

Which means if the act of voting involved anything that x would not do in exchange for a penny, it would be irrational for x to go to vote for Gore

Expressive Voting

Perhaps people vote because

1. they care about the outcome and they want other people to know it!
 - Prof. Anna Harvey has argued that this is where parties come from.
2. they want other people to know they are “involved”
 - It’s “what one does”.

Consumptive Voting

Perhaps people vote because they get something out of the act itself

1. It's a "happening" like a sporting event, or concert.
2. It's a ritual that provides benefits unrelated to outcome
 1. Provides sense of community
 2. Civic religion
3. It's valued as an important element of democracy.
 1. Its "the right thing to do"

Defensive voting?

In some circumstances, people may vote to avoid punishment.

1. In some systems voting is compulsory
 - Australia, Soviet Union
2. In some countries voters are coerced into voting by partisans

Types of Electoral Systems

- Plurality Rule
 - Candidate(s) in electoral district with the most votes wins
- Proportional Representation
 - Parties receive share of legislative seats based on the share of votes they receive in the electoral district
- Single Transferable Vote
 - Voters rank candidates, any candidate who's total of first preference votes exceeds Droop quota ($v/(s+1)$) is elected
 - If seats remain un-filled, "surplus" first preference votes are transferred to voter's second choice
 - Process continues until all votes are filled

W. European examples of Proportional Representation Systems

Country	Electoral Threshold	Effective Choice of Candidate within Party
Finland, Spain	None	Yes
Belgium, Iceland, Netherlands Sweden		No
Denmark, Greece,	Less than 4%	Yes
Norway		No
Austria, Luxembourg, Switzerland	4% or more	Yes
Germany, Italy, Portugal,		No

Non-PR systems

Country	Constituency-Level Seat Allocation Formula
France	2-Ballot
Canada, India, UK, US,	Plurality

Country	System	Members of Lower House	Number of Districts	Avg. District Magnitude
France	2 Ballot	577	577	1.00
UK	Plurality	651	651	1.00
Italy	Semi-PR	630	476	1.32
Germany	Semi-PR	656	329	1.99
Ireland	STV	166	41	4.05
Austria	PR	183	43	4.26
Greece	PR	300	56	5.36
Belgium	PR	212	30	7.07
Norway	PR	165	20	8.25
Sweden	PR	349	29	12.03
Finland	PR	200	15	13.33
Netherlands	PR	150	1	150.00