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## **THE INTERNATIONAL USE OF THE SINGLE TRANSFERABLE VOTE An Annotated Bibliography**

This annotated bibliography lists works examining the current international use of STV.

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## INTRODUCTION

In 2009, British Columbians will be deciding whether to adopt the single transferable vote system (STV), a form of proportional representation modeled on preferential ballots and multi-member ridings. The referendum follows a 2004 British Columbia Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform recommendation to switch to an STV system. In 2005, a referendum to adopt STV in BC was narrowly defeated by a two percent margin. Currently, British Columbia utilizes a single-member district plurality system called "first past the post."

Internationally, several countries elect their political representatives with forms of STV. Australia, Ireland, Malta, and Scotland currently use preferential ballots in varying degrees for local, national, and senate elections.<sup>1</sup> A brief description of STV is given below, followed by an annotated bibliography of selected sources examining the current international use of STV.

## WHAT IS STV?

Although variants of STV exist, the main distinguishing feature of this system is its use of preferential ballots and multi-member electoral districts. Voters are able to rank multiple candidates in numbered order of preference. Candidates are then elected based on a quota system whereby those receiving a calculated number of votes are deemed victorious. If a candidate has more votes than is necessary for election, votes above the required amount are then transferred to the next ranked person for an additional round of counting. Conversely, if no candidate has enough votes to be elected, the person with the fewest count is dropped from the ballot and their votes are transferred to the voter's next preference. This process continues until a district has elected all of its representatives. Sources containing more detailed descriptions of STV can be found below under the sections "General and Comparative" and "Further Readings."

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<sup>1</sup> STV has been sporadically used elsewhere throughout the twentieth century in places including India, New Zealand, the United States, Canada, South Africa, and Gibraltar. STV is currently used for civic and school board elections in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and for district and city council elections in New Zealand. A history of the uses of STV internationally can be found in David M. Farrell and Ian McAllister, "Through a Glass Darkly: Understanding the World of STV," in *Elections in Australia, Ireland, and Malta under the Single Transferable Vote*, Bowler, Shaun and Bernard Grofman, eds (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2000), 81-113.

## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

### General and Comparative

Amy, Douglas J. *Behind the Ballot Box: A Citizen's Guide to Voting Systems*. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 2000.

This book provides an introductory overview of different electoral systems. Chapters are devoted to discussion of specific voting practices, including STV. Amy supplements his survey of electoral systems with figures, tables, and ballot examples. Brief sections are allocated throughout the text to specific topics of debate.

David M. Farrell and Ian McAllister. "Through a Glass Darkly: Understanding the World of STV." In *Elections in Australia, Ireland, and Malta under the Single Transferable Vote*. Bowler, Shaun and Bernard Grofman, eds. 17-36. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2000.

Farrell and McAllister survey types of STV and trace their historical and current use internationally. The authors contend that STV is a rare and poorly-understood electoral system that varies considerably in the forms that it takes. Party strategies and STV and implications for the political system under STV are discussed. Noting cases both for and against STV, Farrell and McAllister argue that modern political parties interested in preserving power over the electorate have accounted for halting the spread of STV internationally.

Farrell, David M., Malcolm Mackerras, and Ian McAllister. "Designing Electoral Institutions and their Consequences." *Political Studies* XLIV (1996): 24-43.

This article examines the origins and development of STV, and the implications for political systems that use it. The authors discuss implemented forms of STV in different national settings and contend that the multiple characteristics of STV systems make it impossible to identify any single generic type. The variant forms of STV in use in Australia, Ireland, Malta, and the United Kingdom are briefly discussed.

Gallagher, Michael. "The (Relatively) Victorious Incumbent under PR-STV: Legislative Turnover in Ireland and Malta." In *Elections in Australia, Ireland, and Malta under the Single Transferable Vote*. Bowler, Shaun and Bernard Grofman, eds. 81-113. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2000.

Gallagher discusses the relationship between STV and rates of re-election and asks whether STV systems result in greater candidate turnover. This article highlights differences in electoral results in Malta and Ireland and argues that incumbents do not suffer extraordinarily high rates of defeat under STV systems.

Norris, Pippa. *Electoral Engineering: Voting Rules and Political Behavior*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Do changes to electoral rules result in shifts in voting behaviour? Or does human preference override the ability of electoral reforms to alter voting patterns? *Electoral Engineering: Voting Rules and Political Behavior* asks whether rules matter in electoral reform. Comparing three dozen international parliamentary and presidential elections, Pippa concludes that electoral rules have the ability to both directly and indirectly influence political behaviour.

Pearse, Hillary. "Geographical Representation and Electoral Reform." *Canadian Parliamentary Review* Vol. 28 No. 3 (August 2005): 26-32.

Geographic representation has traditionally defined the link between parliamentarians and their constituents in Westminster parliamentary systems. This article examines the basis for the continuing attachment to geographical representation. Pearse suggests that the close relationship between representatives and their constituencies is often exaggerated, inhibiting the parties and representatives from exploring the full potential of new electoral systems.

### **Australia**

Australia has a lengthy history of using STV. Tasmania's lower house has used STV uninterrupted since 1909; several Australian state and territorial upper houses are also elected with STV, including New South Wales (since 1978), South Australia (1982), and Western Australia (1989). Australia's Capital Territory implemented STV in its unicameral legislature in 1995. Representatives of Australia's federal or Commonwealth Senate have also been elected with an STV system since 1949.

Hughes, Colin A. "STV in Australia." In *Elections in Australia, Ireland, and Malta under the Single Transferable Vote*. Bowler, Shaun and Bernard Grofman, eds. 155-177. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2000.

This chapter surveys the use of STV in Australia. Hughes discusses the introduction of STV in various Australian state and territorial assemblies as well as the Commonwealth Senate. Examining the impact of STV, this chapter contends that STV results have varied across different jurisdictions. Many of the perceived positive effects of STV in Tasmania, Hughes concludes, have been conflated with the results of STV in other Australian upper houses.

Kaminsky, Jackie and Timothy J. White. "Electoral Systems and Women's Representation in Australia." *Commonwealth & Comparative Studies* Vol. 45 No. 2 (2007): 185-201.

Women are under-represented in governments around the world. Kaminsky and White examine the history of national Australian elections under STV and question whether multi-member STV systems elect more women than single member district systems. Citing a range of factors endemic to Australian STV—such as centralized control of party nominations—Kaminsky and White argue that striking differences in women's representation in Australia's two houses can only be explained by the different electoral systems used in each. This article concludes that more women are elected under the STV system.

Lijphart, Arend. "Australian Democracy: Modifying Majoritarianism?" *Australian Journal of Political Science* Vol. 34 No. 3 (1999): 313-326.

This article discusses the impact of STV in Australian Senate elections. Lijphart argues that the use of STV in Senate elections has increased differences between the two houses, resulting in a strengthened bicameral system. The article also suggests that the use of STV has increased overall proportional representation in the Senate. Lijphart cites evidence of greater political representation of women, higher voter turnout, and democratic satisfaction as proof that proportional representation systems outperform non-proportional ones.

Reilly, Benjamin. "The Global Spread of Preferential Voting: Australian Institutional Imperialism." *Australian Journal of Political Science* Vol. 39 No. 2 (July 2004): 253-266.

Reilly discusses the diffusion of preferential voting systems around the world. Examining the rising use of STV and alternative voting systems internationally, this article considers the extent to which the use of

preferential voting in Australia has contributed to its adoption in other global contexts.

### **Ireland**

Ireland has used STV for all parliamentary and other public elections since 1922. Part of the European Union, Ireland is a bicameral parliamentary republic.

Bowler, Shaun and David M. Farrell. "Voter Behavior Under STV-PR: Solving the Puzzle of the Irish Party System." *Political Behaviour* Vol. 13 No. 4 (1991): 303-320.

This article assesses the extent to which voters cast ballots based on party or candidate specific loyalties under Ireland's STV system. Bowler and Farrell discuss theories of voter behaviour and the results of two surveys, concluding that party candidacy exerts significant influence on voter patterns.

Cohan, A.S., R.D. McKinlay, and Anthony Mughan. "The Used Vote and Electoral Outcomes: The Irish General Election of 1973." *British Journal of Political Science* Vol. 5 No. 3 (1975): 363-383.

In the Irish general election of 1973, a coalition of the FineGael and Labour parties succeeded in winning a majority. This article discusses the results of the election and how the incumbent Fianna Fail party was defeated despite receiving a higher percentage of first-preference votes than in the earlier election of 1969. The authors argue that the coalition victory was a result of the effective influence of vote transfers and reductions in the number of slated candidates.

Laver, Michael. "STV and the Politics of Coalition." In *Elections in Australia, Ireland, and Malta under the Single Transferable Vote*. Bowler, Shaun and Bernard Grofman, eds. 131-152. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2000.

This article studies the ability of STV system in Ireland to influence the post-electoral government formation process. Laver speculates that since voters may be forced to rank candidates representing more than one party, strategic choices can influence lower-preferences votes.

———. “Analysing Structures of Party Preference in Electronic Voting Data.” *Party Politics* Vol. 10 No. 5 (2004): 521-541.

Examining voter patterns in electronic results from the 2002 Irish general election, Laver observes that Irish voters cast very incomplete ballots and typically do not make full use of STV; instead, voters rank very few candidates and rarely adhere to strict party affiliations. This article suggests that Irish voters seem to use STV as a form of “disapproval” voting by refusing to rank candidates from a given party. STV elections typically but not invariably, Laver notes, result in the most preferred candidates being elected.

Lijphart, Arend and Galen A. Irwin. “Nomination Strategies in the Irish STV System: The Dail Elections of 1969, 1973 and 1977.” *British Journal of Political Science* Vol. 9 No. 3 (1979): 362-369.

This study assesses the results of the three Irish general elections and tests the hypothesis that parties’ decision to limit the numbers of slated candidates increases their chances of election. Challenging conclusions drawn by A.S. Cohan, R.D. McKinlay, and Anthony Mughan in “The Used Vote and Electoral Outcomes: The Irish General Election of 1973,” Lijphart and Irwin argue that random vote rankings can actually benefit political parties. Cohan provides a rejoinder in conclusion.

Marsh, Michael. “Candidate Centered but Party Wrapped: Campaigning in Ireland under STV.” In *Elections in Australia, Ireland, and Malta under the Single Transferable Vote*. Bowler, Shaun and Bernard Grofman, eds. 114-130. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2000.

Is voting behaviour influenced by party preferences or by local candidate considerations? This article discusses the influence of each of these elements in STV elections in Ireland. Irish election campaigns, Marsh concludes, are structured by the need to emphasize both partisanship and localism and to manage the potential conflict between the two.

———. “Candidates or Parties? Objects of Electoral Choice in Ireland.” *Party Politics* Vol. 13 No. 4 (2007): 500-527.

Examining the results of the 2002 Irish election, Marsh revisits the question of whether voters decide on candidate-centered or party-centered factors. Marsh contends that while voters appear to favour candidates, the relative importance of candidate and party is often under-accounted for.

## Malta

STV has been in continual use in the Republic of Malta since 1921. Initially a British colony, Malta continued to use STV following its independence from the United Kingdom in 1964, and its subsequent emergence as a republic ten years later. Malta's government consists of a unicameral House of Representatives.

Hirczy de Mino, Wolfgang and John C. Lane. "Malta: STV in a Two-Party System." In *Elections in Australia, Ireland, and Malta under the Single Transferable Vote*. Bowler, Shaun and Bernard Grofman, eds. 178-204. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2000.

This chapter assesses the institutional features and practices associated with the use of STV in Malta. Hirczy and Lane discuss the dynamic aspects of Maltese elections such as party, candidate, and voter behaviour. The final section attempts to assess the results and performance of Maltese electoral arrangements.

Lane, John C. "The Election of Women under Proportional Representation: The Case of Malta." *Democratisation* No. 2 (1995): 140-157. [online version <http://www.maltadata.com/m-women.htm>]

Historically, Malta has had the lowest percentage of women in its parliament of any other Western democracy. Lane examines whether this is the product of lack of ballot positions, a paucity of women candidates, or voter prejudice against women. Malta's sparseness of women candidates, Lane concludes, results from the unwillingness or inability of party elites to recruit a substantial number of women candidates. This article notes that Malta's experience serves as a caution against optimistic expectations that the adoption of STV will produce greater legislative opportunities for women.

———. "Are Maltese Party Loyalties Waning?: An Exploration of the Election Data." *Bank of Valletta Review* No. 10 (Autumn 1994): 52-60. [online version <http://www.maltadata.com/loyal.htm>]

The identification of voters with one particular political party has been a prominent feature of Maltese elections for many years. This article examines the results of the 1992 election and whether party allegiances are lessening in Malta. Lane examines election data and concludes that party-based voting remains a prominent feature in Maltese elections.

## Scotland

In 2007, Scotland adopted an STV system for local government elections. Scotland is one of the most recent jurisdictions to adopt the STV system. Previously governed by the United Kingdom, Scotland acquired its own unicameral parliament and executive in 1999.

Clark, Alistair and Lynn Bennie. "Electoral Reform and Party Adaptation: The Introduction of the Single Transferable Vote in Scotland." *The Political Quarterly* Vol. 79 No. 2 (April-June 2008): 241-251.

Clark and Bennie examine party campaign strategies and the results of the 2007 election. The authors conclude that while Scottish parties appear not to have yet recognized or exploited the opportunities presented by the new electoral system, it is likely that parties will develop new strategies and techniques in future elections.

## Further Readings

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Farrell, David M. *Electoral Systems: A Comparative Introduction*. New York: Palgrave, 2001.

Grofman, Bernard and Arend Lijphart. *Electoral Laws and their Political Consequences*. New York: Agathon Press, 1986.

Lijphart, Arend. *Electoral Systems and Party Systems: A Study of Twenty-Seven Democracies*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

New Zealand. Department of Internal Affairs. "Single Transferable Vote."  
<http://www.stv.govt.nz/STV/index.htm> (Accessed 8 December 2008).

"Understanding BC-STV." <http://www.understandingstv.ca/> (Accessed 8 December 2008).