

Voting demonstration 1

One of a series of simple audience participation demonstrations intended to show how the Alternative Vote works compared with First-Past-The-Post.

This demonstration shows how similar rival candidates can cancel each other out in a first-past-the-post election and allow an unpopular third candidate to win.

There are four candidates: Adams, Brown, Clark, and Davis and a set of 32 voter profile cards each giving a voters opinion of each of the candidates.

- Hand out one voter profile and two ballot papers to each participant. The cards are numbered and should be used in order for best effect, particularly if the number of participants is small. If there are more than 32, use another pack.
- Instruct the participants to use one of their voting slips to vote for a single candidate by putting a X next to their name
- Collect the voting slips and sort into piles according to the vote. You should find that Adams has a clear majority, Clark and Davis have about the same, Brown gets very few.
- Ask for a show of hands of those who find the result:
 - Very unsatisfactory
 - Acceptable
 - What they were strongly in favour of
- Write the number of hands against these categories on a flip-chart or other writable display. Most voters should find the result very unsatisfactory. Few will find it acceptable and even fewer will have the result they wanted.
- Now ask the participants to vote according to the alternative vote system and put the numbers 1 to 4 in the boxes in order of preference.
- Collect the voting slips and sort them into piles according to first preference.

Brown should get the least number of votes. The voting slips in this pile are redistributed according to the second choice, ie the candidate with a 2 in their box. There are now three piles and smallest is almost certainly Davis. The voting slips in this pile are redistributed according to either the second preference where the first choice was for Davis or the third choice where the first and second choices were for Brown and Davis in either order.

There are now just two piles and Clark should be the clear winner.

- Again ask for a show of hands for the same questions and add the numbers to the flip-chart

This time the majority should find the results acceptable and few find it strongly unsatisfactory. The number who have got what they really wanted should be higher than the first time.

Download instruction sheets, voting slips and voter profile cards from: www.john-greenwood.co.uk/Voting.html