

## Candidate 4 evidence

5/2

The FPTP electoral system is outdated and in need of reform. Discuss.

Arguments regarding Westminster's electoral system First Past the Post (FPTP) have been ongoing for decades. However, in the light of the 2017 election immense concern has been raised to whether the present system has broken down. This is due to another hung parliament and the extremely uneven way in which votes are converted into seats. In addition, the effects of a coalition government hinder FPTP as, such as in 2010 because it prevents the limits policy disagreements place on the <sup>power of the</sup> government ~~power~~. The results produced by FPTP has called its legitimacy as an electoral system into question and led many people to believe that reform is needed to restore a legitimate electoral system within the UK. However, not everyone agrees, supporters of FPTP praise its ability to form strong and stable single party governments. Although many argue that its lack of representation and proportionality outweighs the effects of a single party government. This essay will however the arguments for and against the current electoral system and suggest alternatives that could be put in place as FPTP is outdated and in need of reform.

513

One of the main arguments so why FPTP is not outdated is that it usually avoids the outcome of a hung parliament. In other words, it creates a strong, stable single party government with a sizable majority. Majority governments make it easier to ~~to~~ create, pass and amend legislation and ~~also~~ also allows parliament to survive full terms. ~~The results~~

Throughout the 1980s 1990s 2000s, at the time of Thatcher and Blair, FPTP could be seen to be effective in producing single party governments with evidence showing that Thatcher and Blair and a combined total of 4 majorities. ~~On~~ In the lead up to the 2015 general election opinion polls suggested that a hung parliament was on the horizon but people still had faith in the electoral system to avoid such outcomes. When the results were announced it was shown that once again FPTP had delivered its promise of a single party government. With the Conservative party winning with 331 seats and Labour trailing behind with 232. However it can be argued that FPTP does not always produce a single party government with a reputable source of Matt Walker in Politics review September 2017 stating that "During the last 3 elections, with two hung parliaments and

5/4

a small single party majority - it is now 13 years since a party has achieved a sizeable majority. The one thing FPTP was supposed to do, it no longer seems capable of doing". This shows that although FPTP has showed its potential of creating a strong single party government with a sizeable majority it has no longer been able to fulfil its promise which has left many questioning its place in society today.

Another reason to retain FPTP is ~~the~~ because it accommodates great public interest. In the 2015 election great public interest was shown in terms of participation and voting with some areas such as Scotland having a turnout of a soaring 71%. This results from FPTP being simple and easy to understand which encourages and motivates voters. In addition due to its simplicity it attracts young people in the nation. For example in the 2017 election young people turned out in greater numbers than before with the turnout of 18-24 year olds reaching 60%, which had risen from 43% in 2015. However when the electoral system was first changed to FPTP in the Euro Elections of 1990 ~~the~~ critics argue that the turnout was not impressive with Richard Kelly,

5/5

Politics review September 2015, stating that "critics of FPTP may have recalled that, when the electoral system was changed for the Euro elections of 1990, turnout fell by 12%". This shows that at first voters were ~~seen~~ sceptical about using a new voting system as they were not confident using the new system and this could have resulted in poor turnout. In addition, poor turnout could also have been caused by disengaged voters due to the European Parliament election and simply people ~~be~~ not interested in voting. But in recent years FPTP still ~~accommodates~~ accommodates great public interest. ~~the~~ with Richard Kelly going on to say "Indeed turnout in British elections using other systems has never exceeded 55% and has usually been much lower". and in the ~~2015~~ <sup>2015</sup> general election turnout reached 66.1% showcasing that FPTP is popular within the nation and is producing a greater amount of public interest than in previous years.

~~However~~ in regards to representation and proportionality, FPTP has an inability to produce either. Its lack of proportionality can be seen in recent ~~to~~ elections with small parties, such as UKIP and the green party gaining few seats in comparison to votes. Not only does FPTP under represent smaller parties it overrepresents

5/6

larger parties such as Conservative and Labour. This is due to the uneven ratio of votes to seats. A reputable source of Richard Kelly, "Politics Review" September 2015 stated that "in the 2015 election UKIP won more than twice the number of votes as SNP however received 55 fewer seats. It took under 26,000 votes to elect an SNP MP but UKIP required 3.8 million votes to elect an MP". This shows the SNP's imbalance as they gained more parliamentary seats than constituency votes. In addition in the 2017 election the SNP won over 900,000 votes and gained 35 seats in parliament however the Liberal Democrats won over 2 million votes but only gained 12 seats in parliament. This can be seen to be undemocratic as minority groups are not being equally represented inside of parliament. Although this system can be said to have a lack of representation, it can be argued that the way the FPTP system operates (as a two-party system) creates a strong government with a clear mandate as although a proportional system would create fairer representation for citizens there would be a high possibility of a coalition government as an outcome. The problems that arise from a coalition government is they weaken the power and authority held by the government.

5/7

as they must run their policy making by the other party in government whereas single party governments hold a great deal of power within governments as they are not hindered by the burden of a second party in power. However, coalition governments are not always a bad thing. For example, the 2010 coalition government between the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats did all odds and proved to be strong and stable. Although there was elements of confusion over issues such as tuition fees, there is no denying that the government survived its full five-year term. This shows that although FPTP can be seen to have inadequate representation, ~~the~~ a system that is more proportional will increase the likelihood of hung parliaments and coalition governments which increases the chance of an illegitimate government with weakened power over the electorate.

Another reason to reform FPTP is that it encourages citizens to vote tactically during elections. Some votes count more than others. For example votes cast for the two main parties (Conservative and Labour) can be seen to be

5/8

more valuable than as ~~are~~ in most elections one of these parties will take the power of government. In addition voters that live in 'marginal' constituencies, meaning constituencies held by a small majority and vulnerable to swing parties, are more valuable than safe seats and as parties design their manifestos to appeal to them in marginal constituencies the likelihood of gaining a marginal seat is far greater as that seat is seen as weaker. Safe seats are virtually ignored in elections as they are held by a large majority and are unlikely to be switched. A poll taken by the Electoral Reform Society showed that almost 3 million people planned to vote tactically in the 2015 election. Tactical voting is a thought-out process that where a voter goes against their own beliefs to prevent an undesirable outcome. In other words, voting for someone in order to prevent another from winning. However, not everyone plans to vote tactically. Tactical voting can be said to defeat the purpose of voting. Many people take into consideration the party that will meet the needs of their constituency before voting. In addition, a blog produced by Kern Agency in May 2011 stated

5/9

that tactical voting is a conservative strategy as it maintains the status quo. This shows that although FPTP created tactical voting due to voters believing their votes would be wasted due to the two party system, ~~the~~ voters should be able to vote for who they wish and implementing an alternative system which eliminates the possibility of tactical voting would allow this to be successful.

~~If the FPTP is outdated and in need of reform, the question remains: what will be its alternative? Labour MP Jonathan Reynolds believes that the Additional Member System (AMS) should be initiated as it retains some of the qualities of FPTP but integrates a great deal of proportionality. A poll cast by the independent found that 51% of the UK population said they need~~

A poll made by the independent stated that ~~around~~ 51% of the UK population said they were unhappy with the current electoral system and want it to change compared to 28% who wanted to keep FPTP. So the question remains, what will be its alternative. Labour MP Jonathan Reynolds believed



5110

The Additional Member System (AMS) should be instated as it retains some of the qualities of FPTP but introduces a great deal of proportionality\*. The most on to say on the back of the UK Parliament website that "FPTP as a system for electing MPs is simply unfair and no longer fit for purpose. It has led to a narrow and underrepresentative politics, which has turned people off voting and politics as a whole". It is a strong and stable a single. This shows that the population of the UK are not confident in their voting system and required in poor turnout and participation. However, when the public had an opportunity to change voting system they did not take it as recorded by the BBC the 2011 referendum regarding the UK of the 'alternative vote' was lost with 67.9% voting no compared to 32.1% voting yes. This shows that in regards to electoral systems the UK population are opposed to change.\* This shows that although FPTP is in need of reform as due to its lack of proportionality it is an undemocratic system. By instating the AMS smaller parties would have a chance to advance within parliament.

5/11

and represents minority groups

\* This system will ~~not~~ retain the element of FPTP that every voter has a local MP but add a regional MP by a 2nd ballot known as a party list.

\*<sup>2</sup> In addition, many believe that the AMS is too complex as there is now two classes of representatives.

To conclude, ~~it is~~ determining whether FPTP is outdated and in need of reform depends on the question of what is an electoral system for? Supporters of FPTP believe it is to create a single party government with a clear mandate and that a fairer outcome. On the one hand, FPTP's ability to produce a strong single party government allows parties to hold a powerful government within the UK. However, it has been proven that FPTP does not always produce a single party government. For example the current government which is a confidence and supply deal between the Conservative Party and the DUP. On the other hand FPTP, underrepresentation is a large role

5/12.

issue as it can be seen as undemocratic as minority groups are not fairly represented within parliament. Creating a more proportional system would increase legitimacy, as smaller parties would be able to have their voices heard inside of parliament and represent minority groups by doing so. Overall, FPTP is outdated and in need of reform. The introduction of the Additional Member System would retain the successful elements of FPTP and create a fairer and equal system for every citizen in the UK as an electoral system should be reflective of the people, not a selected group of people. The fear of changing to a new system is projected onto us by the two main parties, Conservative and Labour as they have a lot to fear and challenge in regards to a new system as it will no longer be reflective of two parties. However, the Additional Member system is already used successfully in Scottish and Welsh parliamentary elections meaning the result of its success can be more or less predicted.

5/13

Politics Higher Resource Sheet	
Candidate Name	Scottish Candidate Number
<p>“During the last 3 elections, with two hung parliaments and a small single party majority- it is now 13 years since a party has achieved a sizeable majority. The one thing FPTP was supposed to do, it no longer seems capable of doing” Matt Walker Politics Review September 2018</p> <p>“Critics of FPTP may have recalled that, when the electoral system was changed for the Euro elections of 1999, turnout fell by 12%. Richard Kelly Politics Review September 2015</p> <p>“Indeed, turnout in British elections using other systems has never exceeded 55% and has usually been much lower” Richard Kelly Politics Review September 2015</p> <p>In the 2015 election UKIP won more than twice the number of votes as SNP however received 55 fewer seats. It took under 26,000 votes to elect an SNP MP but UKIP required 3.8 million votes to elect an MP. Richard Kelly Politics Review September 2015</p> <p>Almost 3 million people planned to vote tactially in the 2015 election. <a href="http://www.electoral-reform">www.electoral-reform</a></p> <p>51% of the UK population said they were ‘unhappy with the current electoral system and want it to change’ compared to 28% who wanted to keep FPTP. <a href="http://www.independent">www.independent</a></p> <p>“FPTP as a system for electing MPs is simply unfair and no longer fit for purpose. It has led to a narrow and underrepresentive politics, which has turned people off voting and politics as a whole” Labour MP Jonathan Reynolds 2015 <a href="http://www.parliament.uk">www.parliament.uk</a></p> <p>2011 referendum regarding the use of the ‘Alternative vote’ 67.9% voted no compared to 32.1% voting yes. <a href="http://www.bbc">www.bbc</a></p>	