



The Electoral System in Zimbabwe

An **electoral system** is as a method by which votes are translated into legislative seats. The choice of the system would therefore determine the nature of representation and the format by which seats are allocated.

There are four main types of electoral systems used throughout the world namely the Single Member Plurality (SMP), Single Member Majority (SMM), Proportional Representation (PR) and the Mixed Member Proportional System (MMP). The type of the system selected has an impact on the participation, especially that of women and other disadvantaged groups.

Zimbabwe's electoral system is a mixed system consisting of the Single Member Majority system, the Single Member Plurality System popularly known as the First-past-the-post system and the Proportional Representation System.

SINGLE MEMBER MAJORITY

The Single Member Majority system is applied for the Presidential election. In this system the winner must obtain an absolute majority of votes the minimum being 50% plus one vote. If a candidate fails to secure an outright majority, a run-off election is conducted between the two candidates with the highest number of votes.

What does this mean?

Scenario 1

If there are only two candidates to the Presidential election then the person who receives the greater number of votes is declared the winner.

Scenario 2

If there are more than two candidates to the Presidential election the person who receives **more than half** the number of votes cast i.e. 50% plus one vote is declared winner. (Note it is not enough to receive more votes than the others, it has to be more than half the votes cast. Further it cannot be just 50% of the votes cast because the law talks of “**more than half**” so the one vote added to the 50% is what will tilt the scales.

Scenario 3

Where there are more than two candidates to a Presidential election and no candidate receives the required 50% plus one vote then a run-off election shall be held on a date fixed by the

President in the Proclamation calling for elections. (That date has currently been fixed as Saturday 8 September 2018)

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION SYSTEM

The Proportional Representation System is applied for 60 members of the upper house of Parliament i.e. the Senate, 60 members of the National Assembly all of whom must be women and for the Provincial Councils in the 8 non-metropolitan provinces.

To qualify a party must have filed nomination papers for election under the PR System. So a Party that has not filed a party-list nomination form for election under the PR System is not eligible to be allocated seats.

To allocate seats the officer responsible must first determine a quota.

How is this done?

1. Ascertain the total number of votes cast for each participating party e.g. if a province has 3 constituencies add together the number of votes received by each party in all the 3 constituencies.
2. Add together the totals of each party to get the total votes received by all the participating parties in the province.
3. Divide total number of votes received by all parties in the province by the number of seats being contested for (6 for Senate, 6 for National Assembly and 10 for Provincial Councils)

Example:

- 3 Parties (Parties A, B and C) filed party-list nomination forms.
- Province has 3 constituencies (X, Y, and Z constituencies)
- Table below shows number of votes received by each party in each of the 3 constituencies

Name of Party	Votes received per constituency			Total Votes received in Province
	Constituency X	Constituency Y	Constituency Z	
A	205	404	601	1 210
B	300	125	405	830
C	80	210	167	457
TOTAL	585	739	1 173	2 497

So the province has 2 497 votes cast for the 3 political parties.

Next determine the quota by dividing the total votes cast by the parties by the number of seats to be allocated i.e. **2 497 divided by 6 = 416.1** So quota is 416.

After quota has been determined the responsible officer must then allocate the seats to the parties.

How is this done?

Stage 1

Each political party is allocated a seat for each number of votes that constitute the quota. This is determined by dividing the number of votes cast for each party by the quota

Name of Party	Total No. of Votes received	Votes divided by quota	Provisional allocation of seats	Unallocated votes
A	1 210	(1 210 divide by 416 =2.9)	2	378
B	830	(830 divided by 416 = 1.9)	1	414
C	457	(457 divided by 416 = 1.0)	1	41

The provisional allocation allocates 4 seats, that is, 2 seats to party A, 1 seat to party B and 1 seat to party C leaving 2 seats unallocated.

Stage 2

The responsible officer will then allocate the remaining seats to the parties with the greatest number of unallocated votes. In the example above party B has the largest number of unallocated votes namely 414 followed by party A with 378. So the 2 remaining seats are allocated to Party B and Party A.

SENATE PR SYSTEM

For the upper house of Parliament (the Senate) 60 senators (six from each of the 10 provinces) are elected on the basis of party-list proportional representation (PR system). The proportion of seats to be given to each party is calculated based on the provincial returns of votes for parties fielding candidates in the National Assembly elections. On each party-list for the Senate, male and female candidates are listed alternatively, with every list headed by a female candidate (Zebra list). The remaining 20 seats of the Senate are distributed amongst

the Chiefs, persons with disabilities and the President and Deputy President of the National Council of Chiefs.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PR SYSTEM

For the National Assembly Women's Quota) 60 members (six from each of the 10 provinces) are elected on the basis of party-list proportional representation (PR system). The proportion of seats to be given to each party is calculated based on the provincial returns of votes for parties fielding candidates in the National Assembly elections. The party-lists must contain only women candidates.

PROVINCIAL COUNCIL PR SYSTEM

For the Provincial Councils 10 members from each of the 8 non-metropolitan provinces are elected on the basis of party-list proportional representation (PR system). The proportion of seats to be given to each party is calculated based on the provincial returns of votes for parties fielding candidates in the National Assembly elections. On each party-list for the Senate, male and female candidates are listed alternatively, with every list headed by a female candidate (Zebra list).

FIRST-PAST-THE-POST SYSTEM

The First - Past – the - Post, that is, Single Member Plurality System is used for elections in the lower house of Parliament (the National Assembly) and for local authority elections. Under this electoral system the country is divided into 210 electoral constituencies and 1958 wards, each of which is represented by a candidate. The candidate with the highest number of votes is declared the winner. The winner in each constituency is the candidate who receives a minimum of one vote more than the other candidate(s).

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