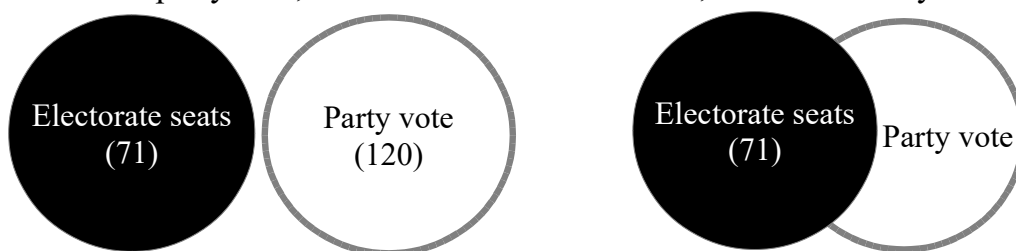


You get two votes. An electorate vote, and a party vote. Easy guide to MMP:

The country is split into electorates. Each electorate represents a separate group of people, and they get to vote for someone to represent them as a group. There are 71 electorates, which means that there are 71 electorate seats in Parliament.

Then there is the party vote. Every person gets to vote for a party to represent them.

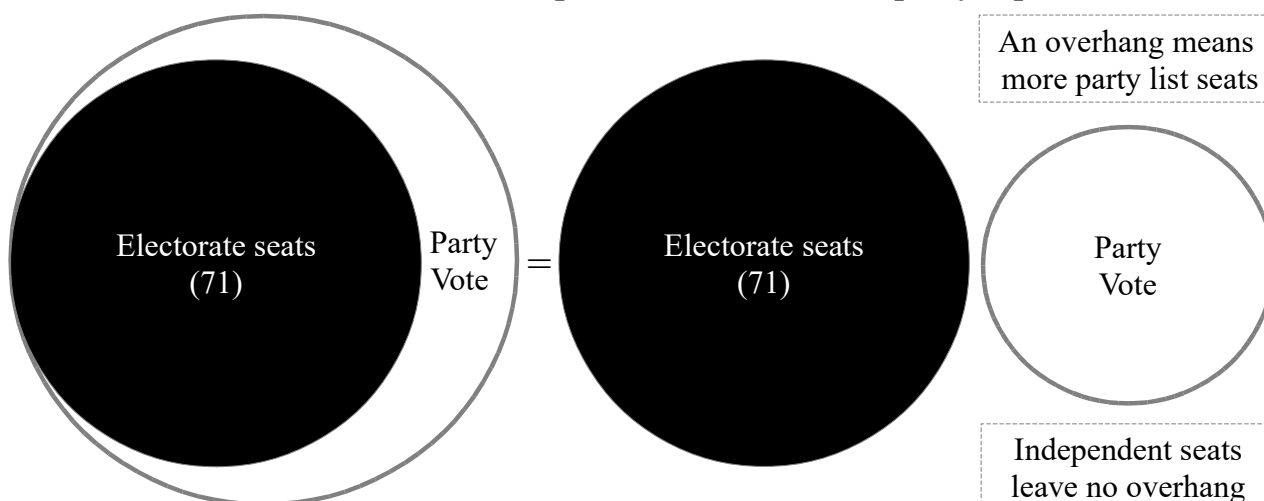
There are 120 seats in Parliament. The electorate seats take precedence over the party seats. This means that 71 electorate seats count because they are final. Party seats are proportional to the total party vote, and divides it into 120 seats, and forfeits any overlapping party seats.



There is “overlap” between the electorate seats and the party vote, when electorate seats are won by registered parties, rather than independent candidates, or an unregistered party. Less overlap can also result in extra “party vote” list seats available, called an “overhang”: if the share of the party vote can't be doubled-up by a party, to be cancelled-out and consolidated.

If the 71 electorate seats were won by independent candidates, there would only be 49 seats left to share between the entire proportional party vote, out of 120 total, with no overhang.

Most of the time, there is 100% overlap because we lack non-party representation.



You don't notice that the party vote only amounts to a share of 49 seats, because when a party wins a lot of electorate seats, they lose their party vote list seats in favour of electorate seats. It balances out because the party vote seats are shared mostly by the smaller parties.

These are two separate and democratic ways of electing representatives, working in tandem.

This is why criticism of seeking electorate seats isn't correct. This might be disappointing for anyone who only wants the party vote to count. Electorate seats don't change in number.

MMP and electorate seats

Why should we believe in electorate seats, and is it democratic to vote for individuals and leaders, as well as a party, and it's policy? Why have a dynamic system?

Does anybody think that independents do not have a place in our democracy?

Must they join an established party? Realistically limiting the freedom, and openness, of our democracy for regular people. Limiting the right to both represent, and the right to vote for varied representation. It is a question of who and what loses, and how.

We already have a system that wants both, so why aren't we utilising it?

The party vote has a threshold of 5%, and I'd say that makes sense, because a party under that size probably needs a democratically elected leader to be successful in Parliament, but is it democratic to exclude the many small parties that might otherwise gain traction?

It's not necessarily a perfect formula.

I don't like the false idea that vying for electorate seats is considered by some as "cheating" the system. Under some circumstances it could produce an unfair result.

Define fair, define what the problem is, how do we avoid it?

Do we actually only allow independent candidates to run, currently, as long as they don't win? Who is cheating here? Or, is it exactly the point, when warranted by individuality and merit, as well as democratic support, for individuals to be elected in a seat? Yes or no.

Is it even fair, to expect each separate electorate to only vote for an official registered party representative? Because that is the expectation if you support only the party vote.

On the face of it, just dividing the party vote up evenly seems simple, fair, and democratic. But when you look closer, is that really the case?

If regular people want to represent, and don't agree with the currently available parties, as many people do not, so much so that it is a cliché, do they need to start their own political party from the ground up? Is that fair entry into the NZ political system?

Clichés and bureaucracy controlling our New Zealand Government.

MMP is possibly a system of representation and leadership.

People trying to split their vote, are still thinking about the idea of splitting two party votes, instead of, potentially, the real advantage of the system, which is individual representatives with individual qualities and strengths. This can include the strength and backing of a party and policy. You have two votes. You can choose to consolidate the party vote if you wish to.

Many don't want to waste their vote, and think it's a foregone conclusion.

The problem is that the main parties don't have any real competition for the electorate seats, except amongst themselves.

They are the ones who double up the vote by underperforming. So much so, that we think it's normal. Why not potentially run as both an independent and as a list MP?

You risk splitting the vote. The risk that is not comfortably running on the party name, can also be the advantage. Will an independent not retain a coalition-like arrangement with their party, but act with the freedom of their own democratically elected mandate?

Think of the math. If a party gains a double-up on a party vote and electorate seat, they do benefit; it is a consolidation of a share of the democratic vote, merging both parallel voting systems. The pool of seats is smaller than it could be, which equals a greater share of power.

Why do we consider the effect of the electorate seats as an “overhang” when the democratic vote expands and contracts with the electorate vote by design. If not forethought.

You could think of “leadership” as it's own political party requiring a share of the vote. If it is simply not utilised, it defers to the internal leadership within a party construct. But it does consolidate the vote by not allowing the seat quota to expand. It is not a wasted vote. So, why not vote for “leadership”? Real people, and real policy. Real freedom of democracy.

It makes sense, in a way, that an official political party that wins an electorate seat benefits less, because, realistically, the ability for “leadership” from within a party, is not as great as it is for an independent.

Are the electorate seats the real democratic vote, and is the party vote made up of list MPs the real overhang? Electorate seats don't change in number at all, technically. If people had different priorities it could be, but as it is, it is just a few recognisable members and a leader, and the party itself, carrying the people that we elect, more often than the other way around.

Are the Maori seats really a problem? I'm not sure. If they want to vote for their own leadership in a separate way, because no one else wants to use the system that we have, rendering it pointless to vote for leadership in the main electoral role: then I'd say that they have an argument. It could be a problem for democracy if no one cares to meet them there.

Maybe when the “statistics” show that there is no disparity between race, then maybe that argument weakens, and the seats won't be needed. Although, I do firmly support people being treated as individuals and not statistics. Who is not motivated to find solutions?

Why not contest the Maori seats, and present leadership for the benefit of Maori, if people are so worried about the failing of democracy? They are free to do so.

If a group of people want to circle themselves off and call themselves a town, a group, or an electorate, are they not allowed to? Is it not reasonable? What is the qualifier? Location? Number of people? If you are talking about choosing an elected representative, and a leader, I think that people can group themselves how they like for the purposes of this. How unified they are, or open to other ideas, is not the point. It's not so different than location, to be fair.

It is easy to understand why it seems like a problem, practically speaking, in regards to party vote. What actually happens with an “overhang”?

When an official registered party gains, however many, electorate seats, they will usually balance out with the percentage of the party vote. This means forfeiting a party list seat in favour of merging two into one: into the electorate seat. This is also a consolidation of the share of party vote, it shrinks it, so that no one else has that share of it.

When a party doesn't have a party vote “list” seat to “consolidate”, the overhang is “added” to the available share of party vote; not to the electorate seats; they stay the same amount.

This actually means that all other parties vying for the party vote gain seats, proportionally, and the result is that the size of government expands, instead of the “usual” contracting.

Think of fractions: $\frac{2}{3}$ is a bigger share than $\frac{2}{5}$. The electorate seats are, ideally, there to be won independently of the party vote. So it seems to me.

How much of a difference does it make? A party that has two unbalanced electorate seats, will add two available seats to the party vote. It's like a 1:1 ratio where one side is set to 71.

The party vote is split proportionally into 120 seats. So, this is maximumly 71:120. If for some reason the parties created a maximum overhang by receiving a complete 100% split in electorate votes and party vote, and vice versa. A very unlikely scenario.

It consolidates down to the electorate seats, 71:49.

Independent candidates, unregistered parties, and “component parties” have a different effect; they don't create an overhang, they only remove an available party list seat, and consolidate down like the other electorate seats, without the need of the party vote. They are a “pure” electorate seat. This makes sense if you think of the purpose of the electorate seats.

And the way that candidates vying for electorates are often a front for a big party, more than an individual mandate, or a leader voted in purely on their own strength of character.

What this also means, is that the electorate seats take precedence over the party vote, quite heavily, and yet people often throw their electorate vote away, thinking that it is a wasted vote. And here's the thing, it kind of can be. Our election is still dominated by the idea of a “two horse race” in the electorate seats. It adds up. Potentially. “And yet, the fact remains.”

It's even a bit rigged, because, “consolidating” the vote is still a big advantage against the alternative. So big parties who win electorate seats, if only by default, do benefit, it is still a bigger share of power, and of the “available seats”. Even though the electorates balance out with the party vote, or, create an overhang if necessary, of the proportional, but not all equal, party vote. Arguably, an advantage could be warranted over time, by big parties, in practice.

The point is, also, that somebody should know all this. Somebody designed the systems we have, and the reasons why. The technical aspects are relevant when required. We should lift, and work on, the structural organisation, accessibility, and availability, of free information.