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Why
AV?

**Why AV? The
case for change**

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The case for change

The coming referendum will offer voters a choice between the current **First-Past-the-Post (FPTP)** voting system and the **Alternative Vote (AV)**.

For voters AV just means swapping the 'X' on your ballot paper for a '1, 2, 3...' Voters can rate the candidates how they see fit, and if their favourite gets knocked out, they can still have a say.

The principle behind AV is very simple: a winner should need the support of a majority of the people. So if no candidate commands 50% support, the last placed candidate drops out and their voters' second choices come into play. This continues until one candidate has majority support.

By making this simple change to what we do on Election Day, we can make a profound, positive impact on how politics works in the UK.

1. MPs that need your support Barely 1 in 3 of MPs are supported from a majority of their voters. It's an historic low. Politicians now speak for the many, having won support from just the few.

The FPTP system encourages politicians – the good and the bad – along the low road to power. It breeds complacency, and has allowed many to take their voters for granted.

AV restores a strained constituency link. To win and keep their seats with AV politicians have to work harder, go further and reach out to the majority.

2. A simple, tried & tested alternative

AV is as easy as 1,2,3. With AV you can rank as few or as many candidates as you feel are up to the job.

AV is simple and effective. Millions of people voting in unions, charities and membership organisations already use it for that very reason. It's the system of choice for politicians, used to select party leaders, the Commons speaker, indeed any role that requires a winner to have the widest possible support.

When politicians are the voters – when they are electing their own – AV is the system they choose.

3. The End of Tactical Voting Voters face unwelcome 'tactical' voting decisions in every election. Why should we have to abandon the party we actually support, just to prevent the party we least support getting in? That dilemma facing millions of voters is often characterised as the choice between "voting with your head or your heart". AV allows people to do both.

FPTP encourages 'tactical voting'. AV simply eliminates the need for it. Supporters of parties large and small can vote sincerely for their favourite party in the knowledge their vote can still help decide the winner.

4. Shutting down Extremism Extremists can get in by the back door under FPTP. We've already seen BNP candidates elected to our town halls. And in each case, they have scraped in with minority support.

AV doesn't let candidates slip in with just a minority of the votes. Winners need the goodwill of the majority. For extremists AV is a brick wall.

5. A Real Choice AV allows voters to make grown-up choices. Under FPTP when voters mark their single 'X'

by one candidate, it's taken as a statement of equal contempt for all the others.

Real life decisions just aren't like that. In a modern multi-party Britain people generally have mixed feelings of partial support and opposition for every candidate and every party. AV recognises this reality and gives voters more freedom to state what their feelings really are.

6. A chance for more honest, positive politics Voters are tired of Punch and Judy politics. When parties need to win the goodwill of as many voters as possible, they lack the incentive to create imaginary differences or to focus on negative campaigning.

AV rightly rewards politicians who are prepared to reach out to a wide variety of voters.

□ Electoral □ Reform □ Society

The Electoral Reform Society is campaigning to change the way we choose our politicians.

We take our message on fair votes and effective representation to politicians of all parties. *You can help us deliver it.*

Strong Voters We want to increase the power of the public in elections by giving everyone a vote that really counts, and choice and competition on polling day.

Accountable Politicians Voters need a real link with their representatives, and the chance to hold them to account.

Popular Government We want our government elected and supported by the majority of voters, and not the few.

Mature Politics We need politics where debate and cooperation takes the place of confrontation and fake theatre.

www.electoral-reform.org.uk