Problems with Plurality Voting

in Single-Winner Elections with 3 or More Candidates

Because you can show your support for only one candidate….

1) You can't express your preferences as clearly as in other voting methods.

2) You might be inclined to vote for a candidate who is not your favorite, or you might be discouraged and not vote at all.

3) Two similar candidates may split the vote, resulting in the election of a third, less desirable candidate.

The **plurality vote is pretty much the worst voting system** there is. – UC-Irvine mathematician Donald Saari

https://www.sciencenews.org/article/spoil-proofing-elections

See Inside for Examples of
3 Better Voting Methods

Some Notable
Plurality Elections
in which Most Voters Did Not Support the Winning Candidate

2018   Indiana: US Senate (GOP nominee)
Mike Braun 41.2%
Todd Rokita 30.0%
Luke Messer 28.8%

2018   Ohio: 12th Cong Dist (GOP nominee)
Troy Balderson 29%
Melanie Leneghan 28%
Tim Kane 17%
6 more candidates

2016   US President (GOP nominee)
Donald Trump, Jeb Bush, Ben Carson, Chris Christie, Ted Cruz, Carly Fiorina, John Kasich, Rand Paul, Marco Rubio, and other candidates

Maine Governors (winning percentage)
2014   Paul LePage 48.2%
2010   Paul LePage 37.6%
2006   John Baldacci 38.1%
2002   John Baldacci 47.2%
1994   Angus King 35.4%
1990   John McKernan 46.7%

2002   Colorado: 7th Congressional District
Bob Beauprez (81,789 votes – 47%)
Mike Feeley (81,668 votes – 47%)
3 others: Chandler, Good, Martin

1998   Minnesota Governor
Jesse Ventura 37%
Norm Coleman 34%
Hubert Humphrey III 28%

LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF COLORADO

MAKING

DEMOCRACY WORK®

Working Toward Better Voting Methods

Excerpt of the new LWV of Colorado position:

*The League supports authorizing and implementing **alternatives to plurality voting** that allow people to express their preferences more effectively. … The League supports voting methods that can **improve the election experience**, that encourage honest voting rather than tactical voting, and that consider ease of implementation.*
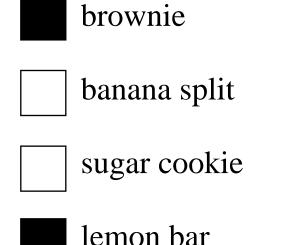
Approval Voting –

You can vote for more than one candidate even in a single-winner contest. You don't have to choose between two candidates with similar ideologies who would split the vote in a plurality election. The candidate with the most votes wins.

Approval voting is used in the University of Colorado – Boulder student government elections and has been recommended for municipal elections in Fargo, ND.

■ brownie

☐ banana split

☐ sugar cookie

■ lemon bar

Score or Range Voting –

You can rate every single candidate. The candidate with the highest total score wins. In the example below, the range is from 0 to 3 where 0 indicates no support and 3 indicates maximum support.

Score voting is familiar to those who use Yelp and Amazon ratings. Voters in two Oregon counties may get to adopt a version called STAR (Score Then Automatic Runoff) in 2016. These real-life examples determine winners a bit differently from the simple highest-total-score method.

brownie   0   1   2   ●

banana split ●   1   2   3

sugar cookie 0   ●   2   3

lemon bar   0   1   2   ●

Instant-Runoff or Single-Winner Ranked Choice Voting (IRV) –

You rank the candidates: 1 for your first choice, 2 for your second choice and so on. If a candidate receives a majority of 1st-choice votes, that candidate wins. Otherwise, the candidate with the fewest 1st-choice votes is eliminated. If your first choice gets eliminated, your vote will be transferred to your next-higher choice that has not yet been eliminated. The elimination process continues in sequential rounds until one candidate remains.

IRV is the most widely used alternative voting method in US government elections. In 2016 Maine voters adopted it for state elections.

brownie   ●   2   3   4

banana split   1   2   3   ●

sugar cookie 1   2   ●   4

lemon bar   1   ●   3   4