First past the post system

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Meaning

The term *first past the post* (abbreviated FPTP or FPP) was coined as an analogy to horse racing, where the winner of the race is the first to pass a particular point on the track (in this case a plurality of votes), after which all other runners automatically and completely lose (that is, the payoff is "winner-takes-all"). There is, however, no "post" that the winning candidate must pass in order to win, as they are only required to receive the largest number of votes in their favour. This sometimes results in the alternative name "furthest past the post".

Historically, FPTP has been a contentious electoral system, giving rise to the concept of electoral reform and a multiplicity of different voting systems intended to address perceived weaknesses of plurality voting.

The simple plurality system, commonly known as the First Past the Post System (FPTP), was designed in 1885 by the Conservatives and the Liberals to ensure that radical parties would not win any seats in parliament

Plurality voting is used in 43 of the 191 countries in the United Nations for either local or national elections. Plurality voting is particularly prevalent in the United Kingdom and former British colonies, including the United States and Canada.

Simple example

The election of a member of parliament in the UK is a well known example of the First Past the Post electoral system. But the system is also used on a smaller scale.

Merits of first past the post system

Plurality is often conflated with Single-winner voting systems in general, in order to contrast it with Proportional Representation. See the advantages there for other advantages of plurality in this context, such as regionalism and accountability.

Simplicity

Plurality may well be the simplest of all voting systems. This implies specific advantages. It is likely to be quicker, and easier to administer; this may also imply that an election costs less to run. It may also have an effect on voters, because it is easy to explain and understand. Alternative voting systems may alienate some voters who find the systems hard to understand, and who therefore feel detached from the direct effect of their own vote.

Preservation of One Person One Vote principle

The arguments for a plurality voting system rely heavily on the preservation of the "one person, one vote" principle (often shortened to OMOV for "one man, one vote" or more recently "one member, one vote"), as cited by the Supreme Court of the United States,

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wherein each voter is only able to cast one vote in a given election, where that vote can only go to one candidate. Plurality voting systems elect the candidate who is preferred first by the largest number of voters. Other voting systems, such as Instant-runoff voting or Single Transferable Vote also preserve OMOV, but rely on lower voter preference to arrive at a candidate earning either absolute majority or droop quota, respectively.

One of the greatest advantages of the FPTP is that it tends to give the larger proportion of the total seats than its proportion of the votes, with the largest party usually having a clear majority. This ensures that the need of a coalition government tends to remain low, which is an advantage as coalition governments usually require.

Dmerits of first past the post system

Tactical voting

To a much greater extent than many other electoral methods, plurality electoral systems encourage tactical voting techniques, like "compromising". Voters are pressured to vote for one of the two candidates they predict are most likely to win, even if their true preference is neither, because a vote for any other candidate will be likely to be wasted and have no impact on the final result. This is known as Duverger's Law.

Because voters have to predict in advance who the top two candidates will be, this can cause significant perturbation to the system:

- Substantial power is given to the media. Some voters will tend to believe the media's assertions as to who the leading contenders are likely to be in the election. Even voters who distrust the media will know that other voters *do* believe the media, and therefore those candidates who receive the most media attention will nonetheless be the most popular and thus most likely to be in one of the top two.
- A newly appointed candidate, who is in fact supported by the majority of voters, may be considered (due to the lack of a track record) to not be likely to become one of the top two candidates; thus, they will receive a reduced number of votes, which will then give them a reputation as a low poller in future elections, compounding the problem.
- The system may promote votes against more so than votes for. In the UK, entire campaigns have been organised with the aim of voting against the Conservative party by voting for either Labour or Liberal Democrats based on which is most popular in each constituency, regardless of the voters' opinions of the policies of these parties.
- If enough voters use this tactic, the first-past-the-post system becomes, effectively, runoff voting - a completely different system - where the first round is held in the court of public opinion.

Effect on political parties

First-past-the-post tends to reduce the number of political parties to a greater extent than most other methods, thus making it more likely that a single party will hold a majority of legislative seats. (In the United Kingdom, 18 out of 22 General Elections since 1922 have produced a majority government.) Single party rule enables quicker decision-making with less need for back and forth negotiation; some argue that this is an advantage.

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FPTP's tendency toward fewer parties and more frequent one-party rule can also produce disadvantages. One such disadvantage is that the government may not consider as wide a range of perspectives and concerns. It is entirely possible that a voter will find that all major parties agree on a particular issue. In this case, the voter will not have any meaningful way of expressing a dissenting opinion through his or her vote.

It may also be argued that one-party rule is more likely to lead to radical changes in government policy that are only favoured by a plurality or bare majority of the voters, whereas multi-party systems usually require greater consensus in order to make dramatic changes.

Wasted votes

Wasted votes are votes cast for losing candidates or votes cast for winning candidates in excess of the number required for victory. For example, in the UK General Election of 2005, 52% of votes were cast for losing candidates and 18% were excess votes - a total of 70% wasted votes. This is perhaps the most fundamental criticism of FPTP, that a large majority of votes may play no part in determining the outcome. Alternative electoral systems attempt to ensure that almost all votes are effective in influencing the result and the number of wasted votes is consequently minimised.

Disproportionate influence of smaller parties

Smaller parties can disproportionately change the outcome of a FPTP election by swinging what is called the 50-50% balance of two party systems, by creating a faction within one or both ends of the political spectrum which shifts the winner of the election from an absolute majority outcome to a simple majority outcome favouring the previously less favoured party. In comparison, for electoral systems using proportional representation small groups win only their proportional share of representation. In the United States, this mechanism falls within one major reasoning (USA, Voting act, 1970s) favoring two-party, First-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral systems.

Conclusion

- ✓ Out of 217 countries 81 countries follows the first-past-the-post system in the world.
- ✓ But this election system is not appropriate/ proper for present context of Nepal.
- ✓ FPTP (first-past-the-post) election system doesn't include the ethnic group and population.
- ✓ In this election system different kinds of perception, ideologies and thought will make conflict among different political parties.
- ✓ Due to conflict between national political parties it harms/ effect in the development of whole country.
- ✓ Candidate with minority vote may win, so, majority of the vote may be wasted.
- ✓ At last the first past the post system was first time use in United Kingdom now also this system is in use. Actually this system is not so effective because it doesnot cover all the ethnic group of nation.

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