



### Election Systems

Election System	Description	Pros	Cons	Examples
<b>By-District</b>	Candidate runs for office in a particular council district and is elected only by the voters from that district.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensures that every area of the city is represented and has an elected advocate; according to the National League of Cities, it "gives all legitimate groups, especially those with a geographic base, a better chance of being represented on the city council, especially minority groups;"</li> <li>2. Reduces cost of campaigning and easier to campaign because there are fewer voters that a candidate needs to reach out to;</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Can create more intra-city council conflict as each member tries to maximize resources for their particular district;</li> <li>2. Mini-mayor effect;</li> <li>3. Seats in a district will only be accessible every four years, as opposed to citywide every two years due to staggered terms.</li> </ol>	Tends to be used by larger cities (12%, 59 cities); number is growing due to civil rights litigations and has increased threefold since 2002 when the CVRA was adopted; 16 more cities are transitioning to this method by 2017 and 2018. <b>Cities with by-district elections are much more likely than cities with at-large elections to adopt majority-winner voting methods. Thirty-two percent of cities (19) with by-district elections use either the two-round runoff or IRV.</b>
<b>At-Large</b>	City council candidates run city-wide and are elected by a citywide electorate; each voter may cast a number of votes equal to the number of seats up for election.	Better qualified individuals are elected to the council because the candidate pool is larger; leads to focusing on the whole community vs. a single district.	May lead to certain areas, especially low-income and minority areas, being unrepresented and politically neglected; in addition, a cohesively voting majority can potentially elect every seat on the city council, preventing a minority population from having any representation.	<b>Most cities (415 cities, 86%) in California elect their city councils at-large; popular among small and mid-size cities; due to civil rights violations, several cities transitioning away from at-large.</b>
<b>At-Large from District</b>	Candidates run to represent (and must reside in) a district but elected citywide; voters can cast one vote per district.	Provides broader geographic representation on the city council while ensuring that council members are accountable to the electorate as a whole.	It can enable a majority of the electorate to win every available seat, shutting out minority representation.	Eight cities in California use this form of election.
<b>At-Large by Seat (used by Santa Clara)</b>	Candidates may run for any seat up for election; seats do not represent a geographic area; voters cast one vote per seat.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Promotes greater political accountability because candidates may target specific incumbents to challenge.</li> <li>2. Allows voters to vote citywide for all seats without the vote dilution seen in the regular at-large system.</li> </ol>	It can enable a majority of the electorate to win every available seat, shutting out minority representation.	<b>Two charter cities use this system: Santa Clara and Sunnyvale.</b> Chula Vista and Modesto used to use this system but both recently transitioned to by-district election; superior court elections use this system and school and community college districts are authorized to use this system.

\*California Common Cause, Municipal Democracy Index 2016, see <http://www.commoncause.org/states/california/research-and-reports/california-municipal.pdf>



### Voting Methods

Voting Methods		Description	Pros	Cons	Examples
<b>Majority</b>		Candidate that receives a majority (over 50%) of votes is elected.			Used by large cities (20 cities, 4% of population).
<b>Majority-</b>	<b>Two Round Runoff</b>	If no candidate receives a majority vote in the primary election, the two top vote getters advance to a second runoff election.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Promotes majority support;</li> <li>2. Provides a second election for the majority to consolidate its vote on the representative of the two remaining candidates.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. More expensive; city has to pay for two elections;</li> <li>2. Depending on when the first-round and second-round elections are scheduled, there can be vastly different turnout between these elections; when city run-offs are not synchronized with higher visible state elections, runoff turnout will likely depend on how excited voters are about that particular race, for example, when the runoff is consolidated with the November election, voter turnout tends to increase.</li> </ol>	<b>Sixteen cities use this method including San Jose, Los Angeles, Sacramento, Burbank, Long Beach, and Stockton;</b> adopted by charter cities who use by-district election; general law cities cannot use this voting method.
<b>Majority-</b>	<b>Top Two Runoff System</b>	A variation of the two round runoff; candidates first run in a primary election and top two candidates in the primary then advance to a runoff general election, regardless of whether one of those candidates received a majority in the primary election; ensures that a runoff always occurs.	In addition to points (one and two) mentioned above in the two round runoff, the November electorate always provides the final say; when the runoff is consolidated with the November election, voter turnout tends to increase.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. More expensive; city has to pay for two elections;</li> <li>2. Depending on when the first-round and second-round elections are scheduled, there can be vastly different turnout between these elections; when city run-offs are not synchronized with higher visible state elections, runoff turnout will likely depend on how excited voters are about that particular race.</li> </ol>	<b>San Diego will transition into the mandatory top two runoff system beginning in 2018.</b> Most elections are decided without the need for a runoff and by a smaller, less diverse electorate; thus San Diego voters chose to transition to the new system ensuring the November electorate will always have the final say.

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Voting Methods		Description	Pros	Cons	Examples
Majority-	<b>Instant Runoff Voting (IRV), or Ranked Choice Voting (RCV)</b>	<p>Voters rank the candidates on their ballot in order of preference; if no candidate has a majority of first-choice votes, then a process of elimination and transferring of votes begins:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. candidate who received the fewest votes is eliminated;</li> <li>2. voters who selected eliminated candidates as first-choice will have those votes redistributed to voters' second choice;</li> <li>3. The votes are then recounted to see if any candidate now has a majority;</li> <li>4. If not, this process repeats, eliminating the lowest-scoring candidates sequentially and redistributing their votes, until a candidate receives a majority of the continuing votes and is elected.</li> </ol> <p>IRV gets its name since voters' preferences between candidates are known in advance; it can simulate the results of a runoff instantly, without a second election.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provides majority-winner benefits of the two-round runoff;</li> <li>2. Because a winner can be determined without a second election, it has none of the turnout discrepancies that can accompany runoffs;</li> <li>3. Eliminates need for second election;</li> <li>4. Reduces campaign fundraising cycle;</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Vote-counting methodology tends to confuse voters, especially minority and low-income voters who may be disenfranchised as a result; voters may not understand the concept of ranking vs. selecting candidates;</li> <li>2. Can be expensive and time-consuming to count the ballots;</li> <li>3. Voters may need to be more informed about all candidates and positions;</li> <li>4. Can prevent or stifle debates between all candidates and lead to focus on debate with front-runner only</li> <li>5. Feasibility in Santa Clara County unknown.</li> </ol>	<p>First used in CA municipal elections in 2004; <b>four Bay Area cities use IRV: Berkeley, Oakland, San Francisco, and San Leandro; it is only available to charter cities.</b></p> <p>True-ranked choice voting systems allow voters to rank every candidate; Bay Area voting systems only allow for three rankings, in order of preference.</p>
	<b>Plurality (used by Santa Clara)</b>	<p>The candidate that receives the most votes is elected, even if less than a majority.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Easy to understand and administer;</li> <li>2. Can be scheduled at the same time as the state general election when turnout is highest since it only requires one election.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Due to <b>vote-splitting</b>, it can result in winners who have little popular support; for example, in single-seat elections, candidates are sometimes elected even though 2/3 preferred someone else; in every CA single-seat city election from 2006-2004, 13% of winning candidates were elected with less than majority support; in races with 3 or more candidates, 42% of candidates were elected without majority support.</li> <li>2. Also known as the <b>spoiler effect</b>, which is when the electorate is so divided and the winning candidate is the most disliked candidate.</li> <li>3. Conversely, multi-seat plurality elections can result in over-representation of the majority's preferences.</li> </ol>	<p>Ninety-six percent of all cities (462) use this method; <b>state law requires general law cities to use plurality voting; Santa Clara uses this method.</b></p>

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Voting Methods		Description	Pros	Cons	Examples
Plurality-	<b>Cumulative Voting</b>	Traditional at-large voting in which candidates run at-large, voters are allocated a number of votes equal to the number of seats to be filled, and the winner is determined by plurality vote; however, a voter is not required to cast each vote for a separate candidate; voters have the option of allocating all their votes to the same candidate.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Empowers minority communities in at-large voting systems;</li> <li>2. Results in better representation for political and racial minorities than traditional at-large voting;</li> <li>3. Results in better representation for ethnic minorities than by-district elections where the underrepresented group is dispersed across the city and cannot be drawn into its own district.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Incentivizes strategic voting and remains vulnerable to the spoiler effect; can lead to inconsistent results, sometimes giving voting blocs far more or far fewer seats than they deserve;</li> <li>2. Feasibility in Santa Clara County unknown.</li> </ol>	<b>Not used in the State of California; several cities in California have considered this method to settle or address CVRA lawsuits.</b> In 2015, Santa Clara reached a settlement agreement with the CVRA plaintiffs to adopt cumulative voting; however the judge rejected the settlement agreement on the grounds that Santa Clara is a general law city and is not authorized to adopt this voting system; Jurisdictions in other states use this system: Alabama, Delaware, New Mexico, Illinois, Texas.
	<b>Single Transferable Vote (STV), AKA Choice Voting, Proportional Representation</b>	<p>Multi-seat version of IRV; voters rank candidates in order of preference and candidates are elected at-large, but, unlike traditional at-large voting, they must receive a certain threshold of voter support to be elected; the percent of the vote needed to be elected depends on the number of seats to be filled. The equation to calculate the voter threshold is <math>\text{Votes Cast}/(\text{Seats} + 1) + 1</math>.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A candidate who reaches the voter threshold from first choice votes is elected, and any excess votes over the threshold are then counted for the voters' second choices.</li> <li>2. After excess votes are counted, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated.</li> <li>3. The voters who selected the defeated candidate as a first choice will then have their votes counted for their second choice.</li> <li>4. This process continues until all seats are filled.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Effectively elects a legislative body that matches the diverse preferences of the electorate as a whole;</li> <li>2. More likely to result in representation for a substantial minority voting bloc than any other at-large election system.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. System is confusing;</li> <li>2. Can enable fringe candidates to win;</li> <li>3. Feasibility in Santa Clara County unknown.</li> </ol>	Extensively used abroad for parliamentary procedures; only one city in the U.S. uses it today: Cambridge, Massachusetts; general law cities are not able to use this system; U.S. cities, including Sacramento, used to use this system in the early 20th century; <b>has not been supported in Santa Clara County in the past.</b>

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