

Transcript

Out for the Count: The Mathematics of Voting Systems

Counting: First Past The Post

Andrew Potter: You should now have a set of ballot papers – either printed out and cut out like me, or a digital version. Each ballot contains the voter’s preferred candidates, ranked from 1 to 4, with 1 being their first preference. For the first count, we’re only going to pay attention to who each voter’s *first* preference is, and ignore all the other preferences.

The first way of counting is probably the most familiar to you – it’s called “First Past The Post”. It’s a very simple premise, and is the way that Westminster elections are counted. We count only the voter’s first preference, and whichever candidate has the most votes wins!

So who wins this election by First Past The Post? Over to you! Make piles of votes for Candidates A, B, C and D respectively, counting only the first-preference votes. Once you’ve decided who wins, think about whether this system of counting is “fair” or not. There is no correct answer here – fairness is necessarily subjective, but have a think about the reasons someone might think this system *was* fair, and the reasons someone might think this system *wasn’t* fair. Then come back to me!