CHAPTER THREE

Electoral Systems and Evaluations of Democracy

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Introduction

Elections are a substitute for less fair or more violent forms of decision making. Democracy is based on the assumption that it is both fairer and less costly to let the party or parties with more votes govern, rather than the groups with more military might, the right lineage, or just more money.

Democracy, however, is not without its challenges. Central to the notion of making decisions through the ballot box is the assumption that participants in a democracy will abide by democratic outcomes. The hope is that even those who lose an election will consent to being governed by their "enemies," presumably because they accept the process through which the governors were chosen. Voters' consent is also crucial in a democracy. Citizens must believe that democracy is working properly.

This chapter addresses the fundamental question of the influence of electoral systems on individuals' assessment of democracy. As more and more jurisdictions, in Canada and abroad, consider electoral reform, this becomes an increasingly important question. As discussed in Chapter 1, this importance is only increased by the tendency of reform proponents to assert that electoral reform can help cure democratic malaise. This chapter tests that proposition. Our demonstration takes four parts. First, we outline why it matters whether people evaluate the democratic process positively or negatively, and we present complementary aspects (and measures) of that assessment. Second, we discuss

why and how we would expect various factors, including electoral systems, to affect people's evaluation of the democratic process. Third, we present and discuss our results. Finally, we conclude.

Why Citizens' Views Matter

For democracy to be perceived as a good substitute for other decision-making processes, a number of conditions must be fulfilled. First, and perhaps most crucial, citizens must feel that the elections in which they participate (or choose to not participate) are conducted fairly and justly. If citizens feel that elections are rigged in some fashion, that some groups or parties have an undue advantage, that the system is biased against them or their views, then they are more likely to cease participating in elections, or, worse, seek other methods for the selection or removal of their political leaders.

Second, democracy relies on a certain level of trust among citizens that politicians can affect change, that who is elected matters, and that politicians are responsive to the demands of citizens. If citizens lack this basic level of trust in the actions of their elected representatives, then they are less likely to participate in the electoral process.

We should note that citizens need not evaluate the democratic process in black or white terms, as a complete success or a complete failure. They may well appreciate certain aspects of the process while being critical of other dimensions. And they may express degrees of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. While democracies—especially long-established ones—face a low risk of collapse, they still depend to a good extent on the consent of citizens at large. The absence of such consent is likely to jeopardize the quality of representation.

In this chapter, we consider three dimensions of respondents' assessments of the democratic process: their evaluation of the fairness of the most recent election, their evaluation of the responsiveness of elected representatives, and, finally, their overall satisfaction with the way democracy works in their country.

To obtain a cross-national sample of respondents, we utilize the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES). This survey includes election studies in 32 countries between 1996 and 2001. These election studies consist of a series of interviews of between 1,000 and 2,500 individual voters in each country, most often immediately after an election. They present the obvious advantage of a wide range of countries and a very wide range of party supporters, and thus enable us to examine the impact of country-level and party-level factors, as well as individual-level factors.

To simplify our analysis, we consider only legislative elections, and among those only elections in which a presidential election did not occur concur-

rently. By limiting our analysis to legislative elections we can unambiguously identify those voters who chose winners, those who chose losers, and those who chose not to vote at all. As a result of this paring, we consider 20 elections in 19 countries: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Great Britain, Iceland, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland. Spain is the only country in our sample with two election studies.

Overall satisfaction with democracy was measured by a standard question: "On the whole, are you satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied, or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in (country)?" Evaluation of fairness was tapped by the following question: "In some countries, people believe their elections are conducted fairly. In other countries, people believe that their elections are conducted unfairly. Thinking of the last election in (country), where would you place it on this scale of one to five, where ONE means that the last election was conducted fairly and FIVE means that the election was conducted unfairly?" That question was not asked in Australia and Belgium, and so the number of cases is slightly reduced with respect to that dimension.

Three questions were designed to determine the degree of responsiveness. The first has to do with the capacity of elected representatives to understand the concerns of ordinary voters: "Some people say that members of Parliament know what ordinary people think. Others say that members of Parliament don't know much about what ordinary people think. Using the (one to five) scale, where would you place yourself?" The second concerns the willingness of parties to respond to voters' concerns: "Some people say that political parties in (country) care what ordinary people think. Others say that political parties in (country) don't care what ordinary people think. Using the (one to five) scale, where would you place yourself?" The third question ascertains the system's perceived responsiveness: "Some people say it makes a difference who is in power. Others say that it does not make a difference who is in power. Using the (one to five) scale, where would you place yourself?"

The responses to these three questions were combined and then averaged to form a responsiveness index. The following analysis thus utilizes three dependent variables: "satisfaction," "fairness," and "responsiveness," which constitute three dimensions of voters' overall assessment of how electoral democracy works in their country. Each of these three dimensions is measured on a scale where −1 represents the most negative evaluation and +1 represents the most positive evaluation. The correlations between the three variables are modestly strong, ranging between .24 (fairness and responsiveness) and .29 (satisfaction and fairness).

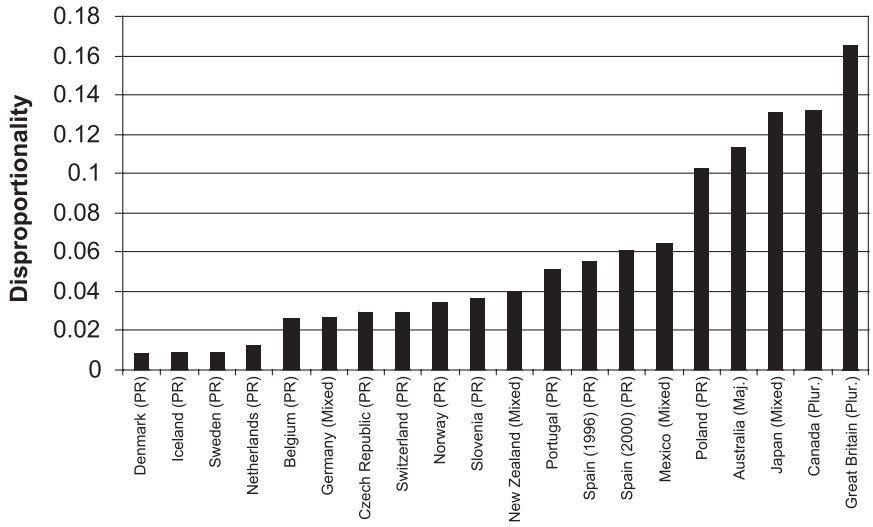
What Affects Evaluations of Democracy?

Our main objective is to determine whether citizens' assessments of electoral democracy depend on the kind of electoral system that is used in their country. The basic argument advanced in favour of proportional representation (PR) is that it is a fairer system. If indeed people believe that fairness is a crucial dimension of democratic representation, we would expect evaluations of the democratic process to be more positive in PR systems than in other countries.

The question is thus whether assessments of democracy vary across electoral systems. Two principal challenges confront the researcher who wishes to know how electoral systems affect evaluations of democracy. First, we need a good measure to distinguish between different electoral systems. Second, we need to consider and control for the other factors that are likely to also affect citizens' evaluations of their satisfaction with democracy. We first justify our measure of systemic differences—namely, the disproportionality index—and then turn to identifying other factors likely to affect satisfaction.

The literature distinguishes four basic types of electoral systems (Blais and Massicotte 2002), each with its own logic. In plurality systems, the candidates with the most votes win. In majority systems, candidates are required to obtain a majority of the votes (more than 50%) to be elected. In systems of proportional representation, the number of seats a party wins is proportional to

Figure 3.1: Disproportionality



Source: Official election returns in each country

its votes. And, finally, there are mixed systems, as in Germany, where plurality constituency races are combined with proportional representation in the allotment of extra seats.

There are, however, many varieties of PR systems, and PR systems vary much in the degree of proportionality (between vote and seat shares) they produce, depending on the size of the districts, the electoral formula, and the presence or absence of thresholds and/or upper tiers. We thus propose to distinguish electoral systems on the basis of the degree of disproportionality between vote shares and seat shares that is observed at a given election. To that effect, we use the disproportionality index proposed by Gallagher (1991), which tells us how disproportional the percentage of seats a party won is to the percentage of votes it obtained. The more a system is biased—that is, the more it rewards those parties that received the most votes—the more disproportional it is. The scores of our countries are graphed in Figure 3.1. It can be seen that Denmark, Iceland, Sweden and the Netherlands are the most proportional systems, while, Britain, Canada, Japan, Australia, and Poland are the most disproportional.[1]

Table 3.1: Distributions of voters by country

	% voting for losing parties	% voting for winning parties
Norway (PR)	72.59	27.41
Spain (1996) (PR)	66.70	33.30
Canada (Plur.)	64.86	35.14
Denmark (PR)	64.05	35.95
Sweden (PR)	61.62	38.38
Japan (Mixed)	58.97	41.03
New Zealand (Mixed)	54.27	45.73
Portugal (PR)	52.55	47.45
Great Britain (Plur.)	51.78	48.22
Czech Republic (PR)	49.91	50.09
Spain (2000) (PR)	49.46	50.54
Germany (Mixed)	49.10	50.90
Australia (Maj.)	47.99	52.01
Poland (PR)	47.73	52.27
Slovenia (PR)	43.15	56.85
Mexico (Mixed)	40.98	59.02
Iceland (PR)	37.66	62.34
Netherlands (PR)	36.87	63.13
Belgium (PR)	34.84	65.16
Switzerland (PR)	15.36	84.64

Source: Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), www.cses.org

How, then, do we expect differences in electoral systems to affect evaluations of democracy? The hypothesis is that citizens feel more negative about electoral democracy in more disproportional systems. The logic underlying this is that losing parties receive more fair treatment in more proportional systems, as their seat share better corresponds to their vote share. While supporters of losing parties may dislike the outcome of the election, they can less easily reason that their party was unfairly treated. Moreover, as Lijphart (1984) observes, the more proportional a system is, the more it moves from the majoritarian ideal of rule by the majority of the population to the proportional response of "as many people as possible." As such, disproportional systems generate a larger number of losers than more proportional systems. This can be seen in Table 3.1, which charts the percentage of individuals who voted for losing and winning parties in the elections studied, with winning parties defined as those who took part in the government formed after the election. As can be seen, proportional representation systems generally have more winners. Furthermore, it is only in systems with some element of proportionality (i.e., mixed and pure PR) that more than 50% of voters chose parties that eventually formed the government.

There is a second reason why proportional systems may generate more satisfaction. Specifically, more proportional systems generally feature a more equal balance between men and women within national legislatures. Such systems are likely to be seen as more representative of the total population, and thus as more responsive and fair.

Finally, there is a contrary reason why more proportional systems may generate lower evaluations of democracy. Specifically, the most proportional systems are less likely to be comprised, in whole or part, of locally elected representatives responsible to a clearly defined geographic area. As such, respondents may evaluate such a system as less responsive.

We are also interested in a direct consequence of electoral systems that may affect citizens' judgments of democracy, and that is whether the government that is formed after the election is a single-party government or a coalition government. PR systems usually lead to coalition governments, and disproportional systems, most especially first past the post, generally produce single-party majority governments (Blais and Carty 1987). We expect the presence of coalition governments, everything else being equal, to lower peoples' evaluation of democracy. Specifically, coalition governments are much more likely to involve messy negotiation. This, in turn, is likely to lead to frustration with the short-term operation of democracy. Moreover, this is likely to lead to policy outcomes that represent a compromise between the positions of the coalition

parties. Such a compromise is likely to disappoint the supporters of each respective party, and thus reduce satisfaction with democracy.

We also expect citizens' evaluations to be affected by characteristics of the country they live in, the type of party they vote for, and the kind of persons they are.

We use three measures to capture the type of country a respondent lives in. The first two regard its democratic history, while the third measures its level of economic development. Our first hypotheses concern the length of the democratic experience in a country and its current degree of democracy. To this end, we distinguish three types of countries. First, those that were clearly democratic at the time of the examined election and that had a long, established experience with democratic elections. We regard these as "established democracies." Second, those countries that were clearly democratic at the time of the election, but whose experience with democracy is comparatively recent, are considered "non-established democracies." Finally, those countries whose current level of democracy is more dubious are considered "non-democracies."

To determine the level of a democracy in a country, we turn to Freedom House scores. Following a long- and well-established procedure, we consider those countries that received the "best" scores of 1 or 2 on political rights to be democratic. Any score worse than this leads to a country being considered a non-democracy. Of the 19 countries considered, 13 qualify as established democracies, meaning they have had significantly high scores (1 or 2) on political rights ratings over the previous 20 years: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Iceland, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Britain, Sweden, and Switzerland. Six countries are considered non-established democracies: Spain, Slovenia, Portugal, Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. These six countries are coded as 1 on our "non-established" democracy variable. We have only one country, Mexico, which is considered non-democratic.

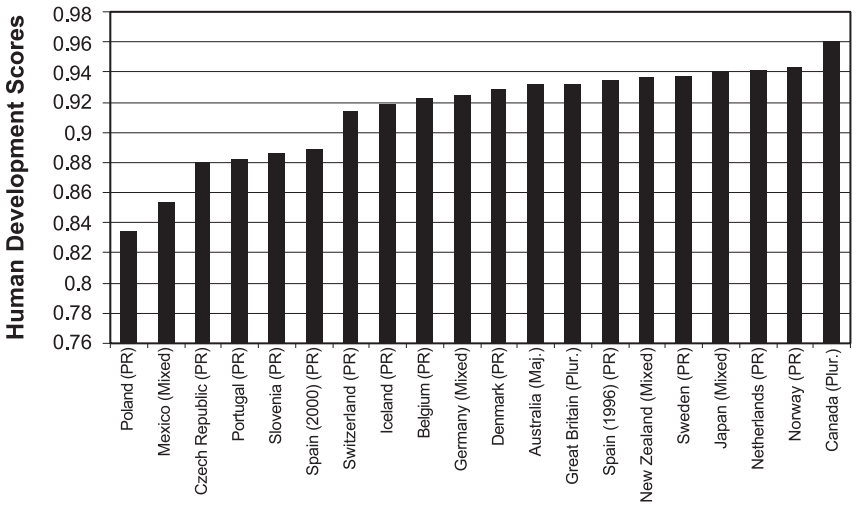
Our hypothesis is that individuals in established democracies are more likely to be satisfied than those in non-democracies. It should be the case that in countries where basic political rights are strongly respected even losers are willing to recognize that elections are conducted fairly, that politicians care about voters, and that elections matter. The proposition may appear tautological, though it must be kept in mind that judgments are subjective calls and that expectations may be higher in more democratic countries and that these higher expectations may sometimes feed disappointment.

We also make a distinction between established and non-established democracies. Among other things, democracy involves messy compromises between

different segments of the population. It may take time for citizens to appreciate that such messiness remains valuable. It may also take time for losers to understand that there are many viewpoints in society and that it is unfortunately impossible to satisfy every one of them, that it is impossible for everyone to win every time. Thus the hypothesis: citizens' evaluations are more negative in non-established than in established democracies. The opposite pattern could also occur. It could be that those who have experienced how bad things can be when certain basic political rights are not respected are more appreciative of the benefits of democracy and are more prone to accept its shortcomings.

The final hypothesis concerning the type of country a respondent lives in regards the level of economic development in each country. The observation has been especially made by Lipset (1959) that a substantial level of economic development is required for a functioning democracy. As such, we hypothesize that individuals feel more positive about electoral democracy in more economically developed countries. We take as our indicator the United Nations Human Development Index. Country scores are graphed in Figure 3.2. We do note, however, that the importance of the economy in evaluating democracy has been seriously questioned, specifically in Eastern Europe (Evans and Whitefield 1995).

Figure 3.2: Human development scores



Source: United Nations Human Development Index country data

Every election produces winners and losers. Thus, we can divide respondents based on whether they voted for the elections' eventual winning party (or parties) or if they voted for the losing party (or parties). Winning parties are those that took up positions in the government following the election. We hypothesize that those who vote for winning parties are more likely to feel satisfied with democracy than those who voted for a losing party. Moreover, we feel that those who do not vote are less likely to be satisfied with democracy than those who vote. To test these hypotheses we create a variable that measures whether an individual voted for a winning party and another to measure whether a voter chose a losing party. Accordingly, those who did not vote score 0 on both of these variables.

Finally, we distinguish between different types of respondents, focusing on education and ideological orientation. We expect the better educated to provide more positive evaluations of electoral democracy. Education makes people more tolerant of opposing viewpoints and more open-minded (Hyman and Wright 1979). Moreover, tolerance is related to support for democratic values (Gibson 2002). Finally, those with more education are more likely to have been exposed to the dominant norm that one should lose gracefully in a democracy (McClosky and Zaller 1984). Education is coded from 0 to 7, from no schooling at all to a completed university education.

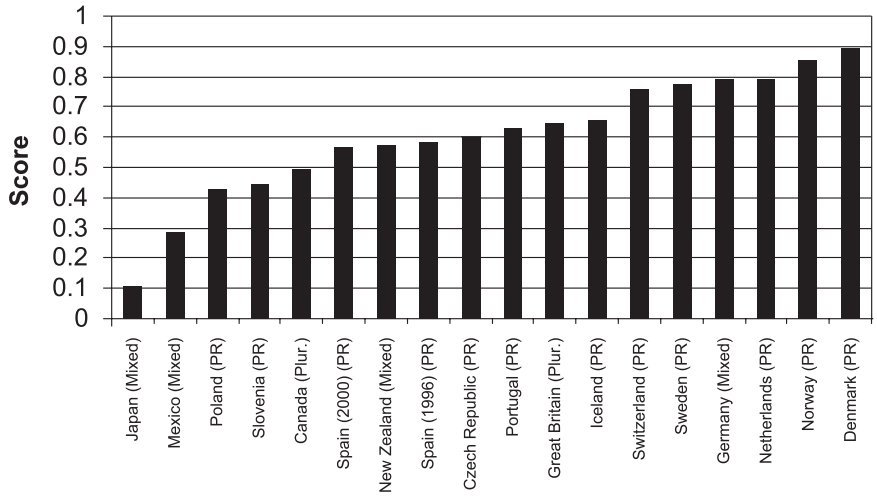
It is easier to be satisfied in a democracy when one does not hold strong views about what government should and should not do. If governments are eager to find compromises that are bound to displease those who favour substantial changes to the status quo, we should find individuals who hold "radical" views to be particularly critical of electoral democracy. Everything else being equal, therefore, citizens who are on the extreme right and those who are on the extreme left of the political spectrum should provide more negative assessments of representative democracy.

The CSES survey included the following question: "In politics people sometimes talk of left and right. Where would you place yourself on a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?" Those who placed themselves at 0, 1, or 2 on the scale are construed to be on the extreme left, and those who placed themselves at 8, 9, or 10 are considered to be on the extreme right. All others constitute the reference group. The left/right question was not asked in Japan, and so the following multivariate analyses do not include Japanese respondents.

Results and Discussion

Figures 3.3, 3.4, and 3.5 report mean evaluation of fairness and responsiveness as well as overall degree of satisfaction, on the -1 to +1 scale. Figure 3.3 shows that most citizens in the countries examined here thought that the last election had been conducted fairly. In fact, 76% of the respondents gave a favourable evaluation on this criterion,[2] so that the mean score is positive in all countries. That being said, evaluations are particularly positive in the Scandinavian countries, which all have systems of proportional representation, and much more ambivalent in Japan and Mexico, which are mixed systems. Note that Canada scores relatively low on this dimension.

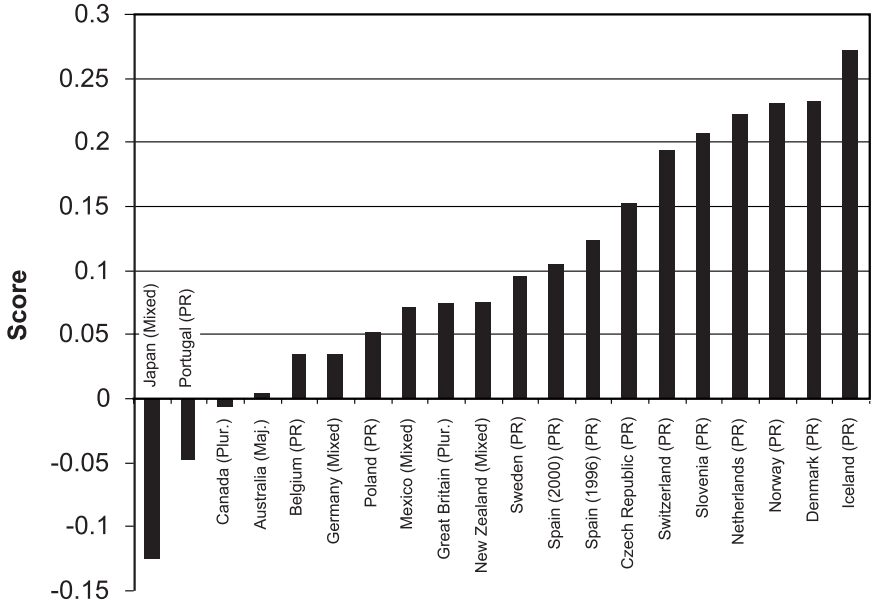
Figure 3.3: Evaluation of fairness



Source: Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), www.cses.org

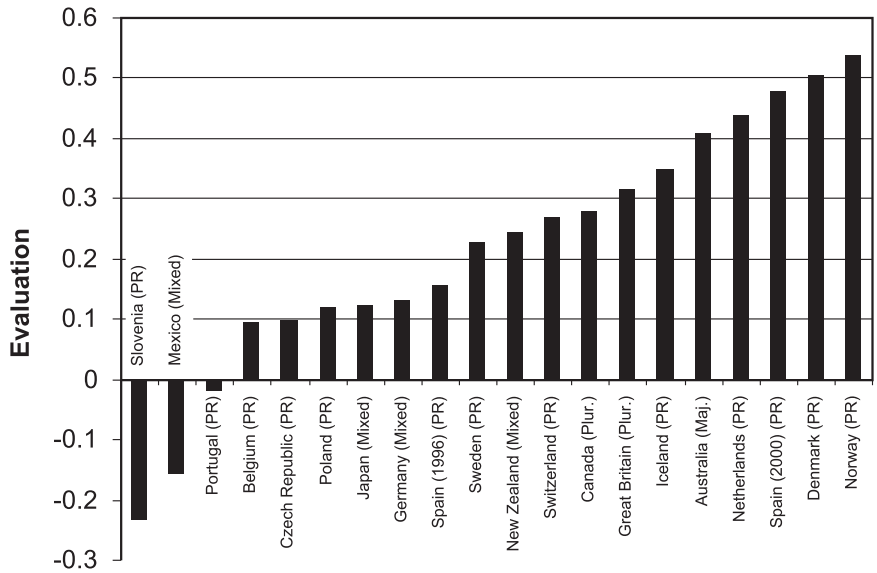
Figure 3.4 indicates that assessments of responsiveness are muted. All in all, 54% of the scores on the responsiveness index are positive. Iceland, Denmark, and Norway, all of which use proportional representation, get the most positive evaluations, while Japan, Portugal, and Canada, representing mixed, proportional, and plurality systems, respectively, come at the bottom. Taken separately, the three questions used to determine evaluations of responsiveness indicate that only 15% of respondents felt that who they vote for makes a difference, that 69% believe who is in power makes a difference, and that 29% believe that political parties care what ordinary people think.

Figure 3.4: Evaluation of responsiveness



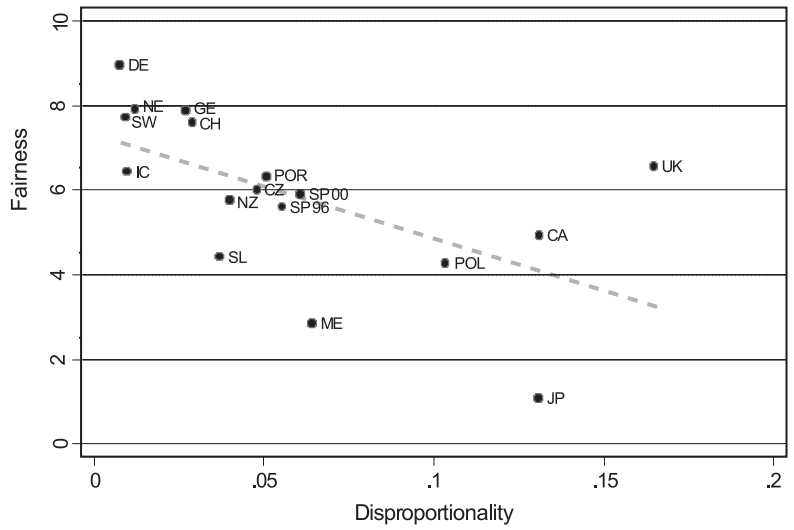
Source: Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), www.cses.org

Figure 3.5: Evaluation of satisfaction



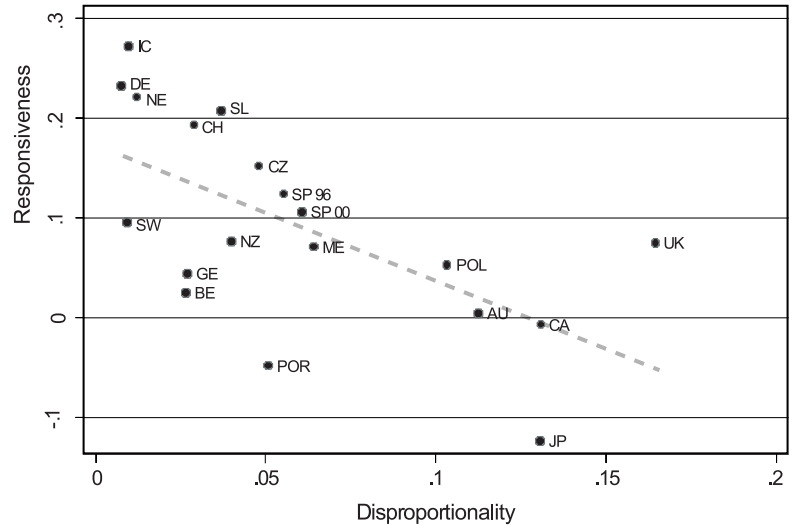
Source: Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), www.cses.org

Figure 3.6: Disproportionality and fairness



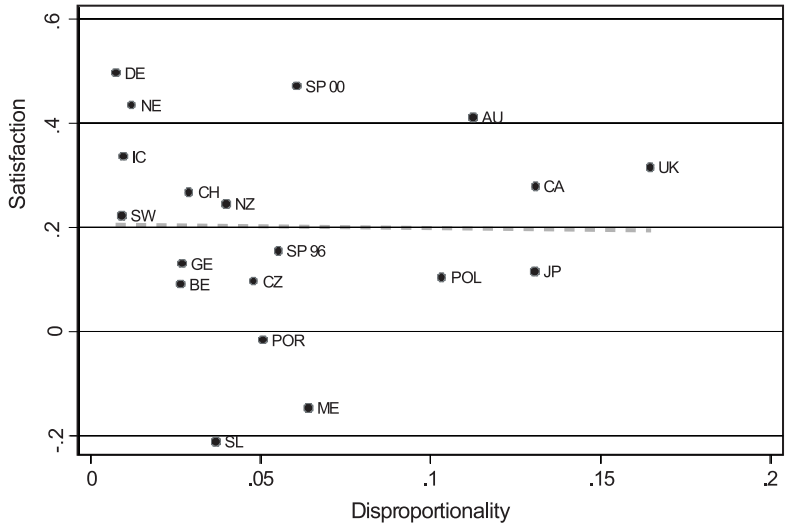
Source: Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), www.cses.org

Figure 3.7: Disproportionality and responsiveness



Source: Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), www.cses.org

Figure 3.8: Disproportionality and satisfaction



Source: Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), www.cses.org

Figure 3.5 displays mean overall satisfaction scores. Citizens tend to be relatively satisfied with the way democracy works in their country: 68% of the respondents across the 19 countries said that they are satisfied or fairly satisfied. The highest scores are again found in Norway and Denmark, and the lowest in Slovenia, Mexico, and Portugal. It is interesting to observe that on this issue Canadians appear quite sanguine.

The question is whether cross-country differences are systematically related to characteristics of electoral systems, most importantly, their degree of proportionality or disproportionality. Figures 3.6, 3.7, and 3.8 provide some useful information to that effect. Figures 3.6 and 3.7 show a clear and systematic pattern: assessments of fairness and responsiveness are much more negative (or less positive) in countries where there is a poor fit between seat and vote shares. As can be seen in Figure 3.6, mean scores are typically around .8 in very proportional systems, while they tend to hover around .4 in the least proportional ones. The same pattern emerges with respect to evaluations of responsiveness.

The situation is somewhat different in the case of overall satisfaction with democracy. There is no apparent correlation between the degree of disproportionality and mean satisfaction with democracy. This is illustrated by the fact that while Canadians are somewhat less satisfied than the Danes and the

Table 3.2: Evaluations of the fairness of the most recent election

	Coefficient	Standard error
Non-democracy	-0.52**	0.03
Non-established	-0.19**	0.01
Human Development Score	-0.73**	0.20
Disproportionality	-1.42**	0.09
Coalition	-0.06**	0.01
Education	0.02**	0.00
Left	-0.03**	0.01
Right	0.02*	0.01
Voted for winner	0.15**	0.01
Voted for loser	0.10**	0.01
Constant	1.36**	0.19
N	28144	
Adjusted R2	0.08	

*** Significant at 0.01
* Significant at 0.05

Source: Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), www.cses.org

Table 3.3: Evaluation of the responsiveness of elected officials

	Coefficient	Standard error
Non-democracy	0.05*	0.02
Non-established	0.06**	0.01
Human Development Score	0.65**	0.16
Disproportionality	-0.65**	0.07
Coalition	0.02*	0.01
Education	0.02**	0.00
Left	0.01*	0.01
Right	0.09**	0.01
Voted for winner	0.13**	0.01
Voted for loser	0.07**	0.01
Constant	-0.65**	0.15
N	32558	
Adjusted R2	0.04	

** Significant at 0.01
* Significant at 0.05

Source: Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), www.cses.org

Table 3.4: Satisfaction with the functioning of democracy

	Coefficient	Standard error
Non-democracy	-0.52**	0.03
Non-established	-0.18**	0.01
Human Development Score	0.01	0.23
Disproportionality	-0.40**	0.11
Coalition	-0.14**	0.01
Education	0.02**	0.00
Left	-0.13**	0.01
Right	0.07**	0.01
Voted for winner	0.13**	0.01
Voted for loser	0.08**	0.01
Constant	0.25	0.22
N	32319	
Adjusted R_2	0.06	

** Significant at 0.01
* Significant at 0.05

Source: Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), www.cses.org

Norwegians, who have proportional systems, they are slightly more than the Swedes, who also have a proportional system. These initial analyses thus suggest that the degree of disproportionality of the electoral system affects citizens' evaluations of fairness and responsiveness but not necessarily their overall satisfaction with democracy.

These analyses are only suggestive, however. We need to take into account the other factors that may also influence citizens' evaluations. This is what is done in Tables 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4, which present a multivariate model of our three dependent variables.

Our findings confirm many of the hypotheses formulated above. As expected, those in non-democracies are less likely to feel that the election in question was conducted fairly. They also feel less satisfied about the general functioning of democracy in their country. They are, however, slightly more sanguine than those in established democracies about the responsiveness of their electoral officials. Those in non-established democracies give lower evaluations of the fairness of elections than those in established democracies, but these evaluations are more positive than those in non-democracies. They are similarly less satisfied about the general functioning of democracy than those in established democracies, but more content than those in non-democracies.

Finally, contrary to our expectations, those in non-established democracies feel marginally more positive about the responsiveness of their electoral representatives than those in established democracies.

Contrary to our expectations, higher levels of human development do not foster greater satisfaction with the way democracy works. In fact, people from more developed countries are less likely to feel that the election in question was fair, perhaps because they have higher expectations. They do, however, have more positive feelings about the responsiveness of elected officials.

The electoral system performs as expected. Indeed, the more disproportional an electoral system, the lower respondents' evaluations of the fairness of the election, the less satisfied they are,[3] and the more negative their feelings about the responsiveness of their elected officials.

But PR systems often entail the formation of coalition governments, and our findings indicate that the presence of a coalition government may contribute to more negative evaluations. Respondents tend to be less satisfied in general, and with the fairness of the election in particular, in countries with a coalition government. The presence of a coalition seems, however, to have a small positive effect on perceived responsiveness.

Our results also confirm that those who voted for winning parties are more positive on all measures than those who voted for losing parties. The latter are, in turn, more positive than those who did not vote.

Finally, we turn to individual characteristics. Education consistently performs as expected. Indeed, as education increases, so does every indicator. The better schooled simply possess more positive feelings about democracy, regardless of the electoral system in which they vote and/or the country in which they live. The results are more mixed for ideology. As expected, those on the left are less positive about the general functioning of their political system, as well as less positive about the fairness of the last election. However, contrary to our expectations, those on the right are more positive than those in the center for all three measures, and those on the left are marginally more positive in their assessments of the responsiveness of elected officials than those in the center.

To bring these data closer to home, we extend these estimates to New Brunswick, a province that has recently considered movement from a single-member plurality system to a mixed-member system. Table 3.5 shows the predicted impact associated with a change in the electoral system that would substantially reduce the degree of disproportionality in New Brunswick from .2125 (the mean disproportionality index in the last two elections) to .05, the median disproportionality index observed in our sample. Because a change to a more proportional system may also increase the probability of a coalition

Table 3.5 Simulated effects of switching electoral systems on evaluations of democracy

Switch	More proportional, no coalition	More proportional, coalition
Fairness	0.23	0.17
Responsiveness	0.11	0.13
Satisfaction	0.07	-0.08

Source: Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), www.cses.org

government, the simulations also indicate the predicted impact depending on whether a coalition government would be formed.[4]

These simulations are only suggestive, because many citizens' evaluations of democracy depend on many factors besides the electoral system, and they should thus be interpreted cautiously. Nevertheless, they indicate that evaluations of fairness and responsiveness are likely to become more positive after a change in the electoral system, particularly if the system still produces one-party governments. Things are more ambiguous with respect to overall satisfaction. In this case, the simulations suggest that satisfaction would slightly increase with a one-party government and somewhat decrease with a coalition government.

Conclusion

We have argued that for a democracy to perform optimally citizens must be satisfied with how their electoral system functions in a general sense, they must have a feeling that elections are administered fairly and justly, that elections matter, that politicians care, and that their elected representatives are responsive to their demands.

We have found that assessments of satisfaction and of the fairness of elections are lower in weak and non-established democracies, but that assessments of responsiveness are higher. We have found that education uniformly increases assessments of the fairness of elections and the responsiveness of electoral officials, as well as overall satisfaction. And we have found that those who are more ideological have mixed feelings about the functioning of democracy. We have also found that those who vote for winning parties are more satisfied on all measures than those who vote for losing parties.

Most importantly, we have found two consistent and strong effects related to electoral systems. First, we have demonstrated that disproportionality consistently reduces individuals' assessments of fairness and responsiveness, as well as overall satisfaction. More proportional systems simply produce more satisfied

individuals. In sum, holding all other factors constant, an electoral system will generate more positive evaluations the more proportional its results.

Second, we have found that the presence of a coalition government dampens individuals' evaluations of the fairness of elections and their general satisfaction (and marginally increases their evaluations of responsiveness). It should be said, though, that coalitions are not a given in proportional systems. Indeed, Sweden and Norway are both examples of highly proportional systems that have been governed by single-party governments as often as by coalitions.

There is, in conclusion, no single factor that determines individuals' evaluations of democracy. But it is clear that individuals in more proportional systems are more likely to possess the consent that makes democracy an acceptable substitute for war. This finding provides support to those who argue that electoral system reform is an appropriate response to citizen disaffection with their democratic institutions and practices.

Notes

1. In recent elections, New Brunswick has produced disproportionate results. In the 1999 election, the disproportionality score was 0.24, which would make New Brunswick more disproportional than all the elections considered here. In the closely fought 2003 election, the disproportionality score was a smaller 0.07. However, even this score makes the province's current electoral system less proportional than 15 of the elections considered.
2. That is, 75% gave a 1 or a 2 on the questionnaire scale that went from 1 to 5. In our analyses, 1 was transformed to +1, 2 to +.5, 3 to 0, 4 to -.5, and 5 to -1.
3. Note that there is no significant bivariate correlation (see Figure 3.6). But Table 3.4 shows that, after controlling for the other factors, overall satisfaction is indeed lower in more disproportional systems.
4. Given the small size of the province, one-party majority governments would still be possible with the new electoral system, as would one-party minority ones.

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