The Interactive Electoral System (IES)
Compared to
Other Forms of Democracy

Democracy Comes In Different Forms

Democracy can be done a lot of different ways. Some work better than others. Some are better for some cultures than others. Some are better for some economic situations than others. Some make it easier than others to hold members of governments accountable. There is no one correct way to do it.

There are two tools most commonly used to practice democracy. One is to elect people to act as decision makers. The other is to vote on referenda so that the people can make individual choices together.

If you doubt that democracy is a balance between pleasing the highest number of people (popularity) and making decisions quickly (expedience), you might find your doubt diminishing while reading the next few pages. Some forms of democracy may be better at making sure decisions are acceptable to larger numbers of people but take more time to make. Other forms of democracy may result in swift decisions but more people displeased by those decisions.

Wouldn't it be nice if every single decision ever made for a society was pleasing to every single member of that society? Sure it would be nice, but it's impossible. Okay fine, so how close can we get to that? How close do you want to get to that?

The interactive electoral system (IES) gives voters the ability to not only have an influence over every decision made but also to choose the balancing point between popularity and expedience themselves. As a participant in an IES, you can use your vote to sway the decision making process in favour of popularity or expedience, and you can learn how to do that by reading on.

Compare IES to Referendums

A referendum is a decision made by a group of people to decide between choices that they all are affected by and all ideally have an equal democratic voice in deciding between. If consensus (every single person agreeing) is the most desired result in a decision, then a referendum is the most clear way to see how close a society has managed to come to it.

There are two inherently unfair things about a conventional referendum: the *deadline* and the *threshold*.

The *deadline* is the date set for voters to make their choices. Who chooses it? The party who chooses the deadline can in some cases manipulate the selection of the deadline date to favour the side that it prefers. A referendum always puts a certain portion of the voters in the position of making a decision before being ready to make that choice.

The *threshold* is the number of votes that must be cast in favour of a choice for it to be selected. A larger number of voters preferring one choice over another is commonly used as the threshold to make the decision, but this is not always the most fair or effective choice. As a simple example, if an office uses a referendum to choose what radio station it listens to every day, and 45% of the staff like one radio station, 44% of the staff like another radio station, and 11% don't care, then 45% of the staff get to listen to the radio station they prefer 100% of the time.

The IES is a form of democracy designed to let the voters have flexible control over the deadline and threshold of decisions. As stated above, it is impossible to set a deadline or a threshold for a collective decision without some portion of the people feeling unfairly treated, but this system allows the voters to choose the optimal balance to maximize satisfaction. Instead of making each decision in isolation, the full set of decisions are looked at as a whole. An office choosing a radio station would add in a list of other decisions and balance them out so that the 44% that like the alternative station could listen to their station some of the time by compromising a little bit on some of the other decisions made by the representatives elected using this system.

An IES is a way to elect decision makers. Each voter has one vote that can be cast for any candidate at any time and changed to a different candidate at any time after that.

Because of the natural dynamics of an IES, the candidate with the leading number of votes, "the leader", can't stay in office without consulting other candidates to some extent on decisions. Depending upon how many votes the other candidates have, the leader must find compromises on decisions so that the maximum portion of the electorate is satisfied, not just with each individual decision, but with the total combination of decisions made altogether by the elected body, "the council". Each candidate that holds any votes is a member of that council. The views of a candidate who holds more votes may be given greater weight by the leader in a decision.

In the example of the office, several different decisions made by an interactively elected council chosen by the staff could include radio station, locations and numbers of water tanks, times for breaks, location of photocopier, that sort of thing. This is how these compromises can be negotiated and considered by all parties over all disputed issues.

The Mayor of interactivilly

For a more complex example, let's create a town called "Interactivilly". The town has 100,000 voters and elects its mayor using an IES. Several different possible distributions of electoral support can show us several inherent features of an IES to help us understand better how our part as individuals in the collective decision making process leads to an overall compromise that gives us each an equal part in choices while balancing out the resulting decisions to get the maximum proportional satisfaction of the full membership of the electorate. Each of the following charts illustrates the amount of votes standing for each candidate for mayor at a particular time. Who knows if any of those votes will change over the next five minutes? Later, we'll get to what happens when votes change. For now, let's say for the sake of this example that the votes are presently remaining steady while the town council discusses its plans in front of the media.

Here is a chart that shows 4 main candidates and a comparably low number of uncast votes.

interactive election for mayor of Interactivilly
4 main candidates, low uncast
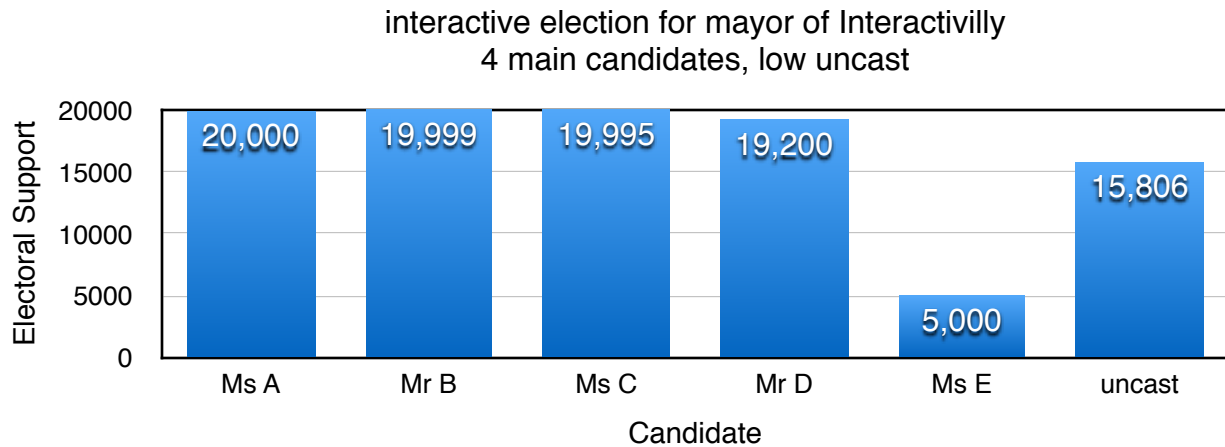
This chart illustrates a situation where decisions require some kind of agreed upon compromise between four main candidates, who hold a collective total of 79.2% of the total vote.

Not only must their agreements satisfy that 79.2% of the electorate, but consider the 15.8% who have not cast a ballot. Any 2 of those voters could put Mr B in the lead over Ms A. Any 6 of those voters could put Ms C in the lead. 801 of them (that's 5% of those uncast voters) could put Mr D in the lead. At any time! Scary? After reading on, you may agree that this is not scary at all. You might see that many decisions can be made by interactively elected representatives that remain sensitive to the circumstances of the abstained voters to the extent that it is a rarity for any such sudden upsets to occur.

Also look at Ms E. Ms E can advise a small number of her voters to change their votes from her to Mr B, Ms C, or Mr D and put one of those candidates in the lead. If Ms A does not make decisions that satisfy Ms E and her supporters to some extent then Ms E can persuade one of the other candidates to alter a decision in some way to satisfy her supporters. Ms E may represent the least enfranchised voters in the electorate, but she still has a substantial amount of influence to make sure their interests are given consideration. Ms E holds 5% of the total votes, compared to 20% held by the mayor. Ms E and her supporters may appear likely to be the least satisfied voters with the decisions typically made by this council.

In a referendum, any amount more than 50% of voters in support is generally enough to finalize a decision. With the IES, we can see 80% of voters in this situation being satisfied with a final decision reached, and arguably more. Even if Ms E or the abstained voters can't persuade the four leading candidates to alter a decision they're making, they can use their collective numbers to perhaps alter a decision previously made or ask for some consideration in an upcoming decision on the books.

The deadline set for each decision made must satisfy a threshold of 80% of the electorate and then the decision itself must satisfy 80% of the electorate. If a particular decision is not made expediently enough for the prevailing electorate, then the deadline can be moved forward by voters altering the above standings. If a decision is planned too quickly and the electorate objects, then the deadline can be moved back by electoral changes from the voters. Later you will learn how you as a participant in an IES can use your vote to do either.

This next chart shows the same five candidates as in the previous one with similar relative electoral support but with a much higher proportion of uncast votes. This can say a lot about two prevailing aspects of the electorate: contentment and/or apathy.

interactive election for mayor of Interactivilly
4 main candidates, high uncast
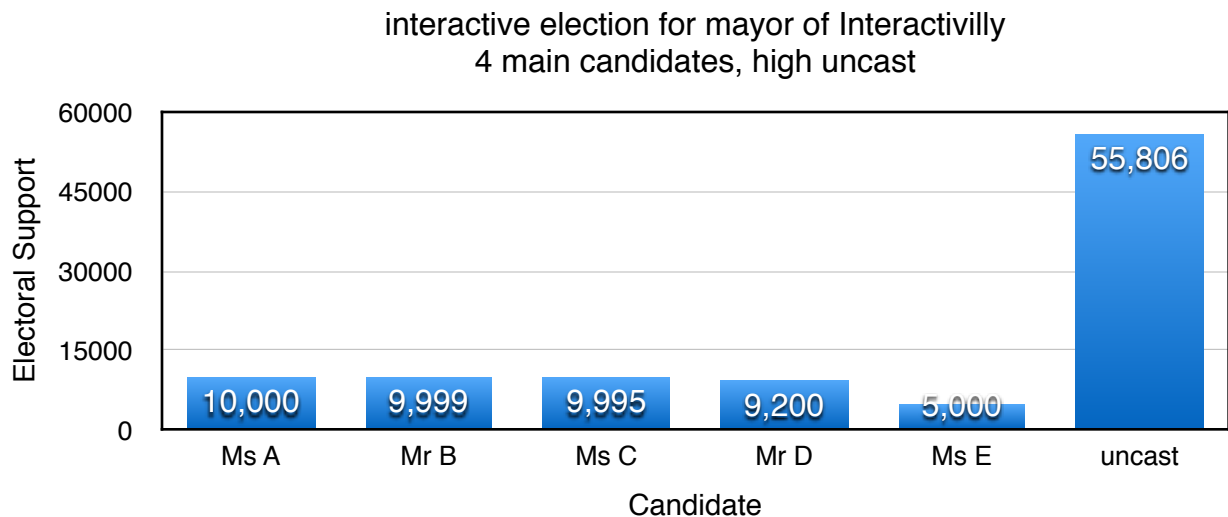
To find out whether the majority of abstained voters are generally content with the council's decisions or just apathetically disinterested in paying attention to those decisions would require more than just a look at the numbers above. It is entirely possible that the 55.8% of abstained voters have paid attention to every single decision made by the council and have found no reason to try to alter the dynamics of these five candidates finding acceptable compromises in their decisions. It is also possible that all of these voters just don't care. Most likely it is always somewhere in between.

If a voter supporting Ms E is unhappy with a decision being made by the four main candidates, how do you think that voter would treat a person whose vote is uncast during a discussion about that decision?

Imagine your vote is standing for Mr B. Imagine you completely agree with Mr B's stance on a particular decision. Imagine a supporter of Ms E gives you some reasons why she would feel more fairly treated if the decision were altered in some way that you find marginally detrimental to your circumstances but more fair to Ms E's supporters. How would you communicate this to Mr B, the candidate who holds your vote? If Mr B is unsympathetic to Ms E's supporters, might you consider listening to what Ms C or Mr D publicly present as their stance on this issue to see if your vote could be better placed? Do you enjoy helping cause others to be treated more fairly?

This chart shows a situation where decisions can be expected to be made more quickly.

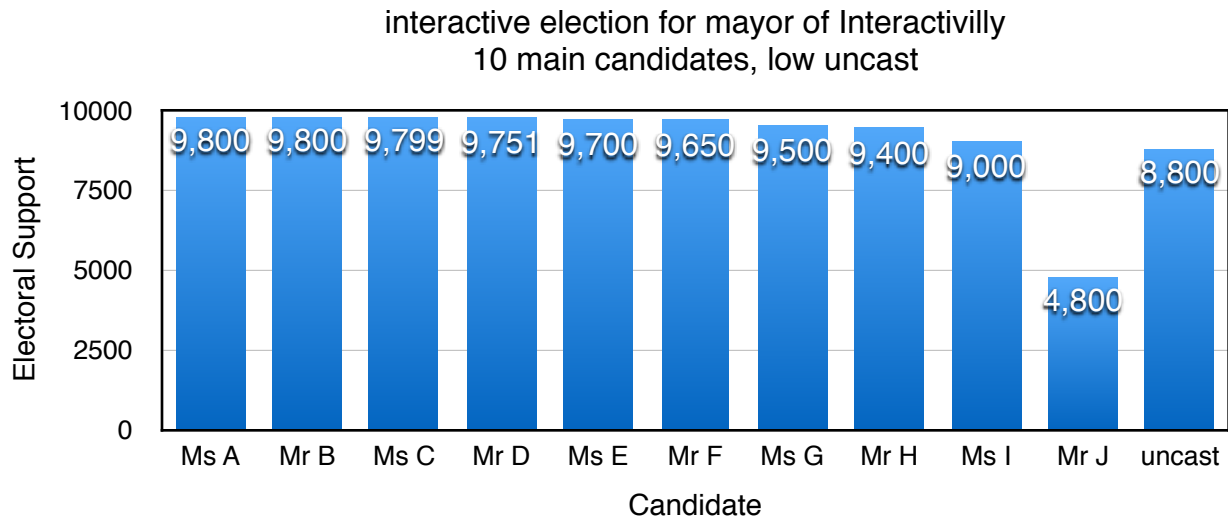interactive election for mayor of Interactivilly
2 main candidates, low uncast
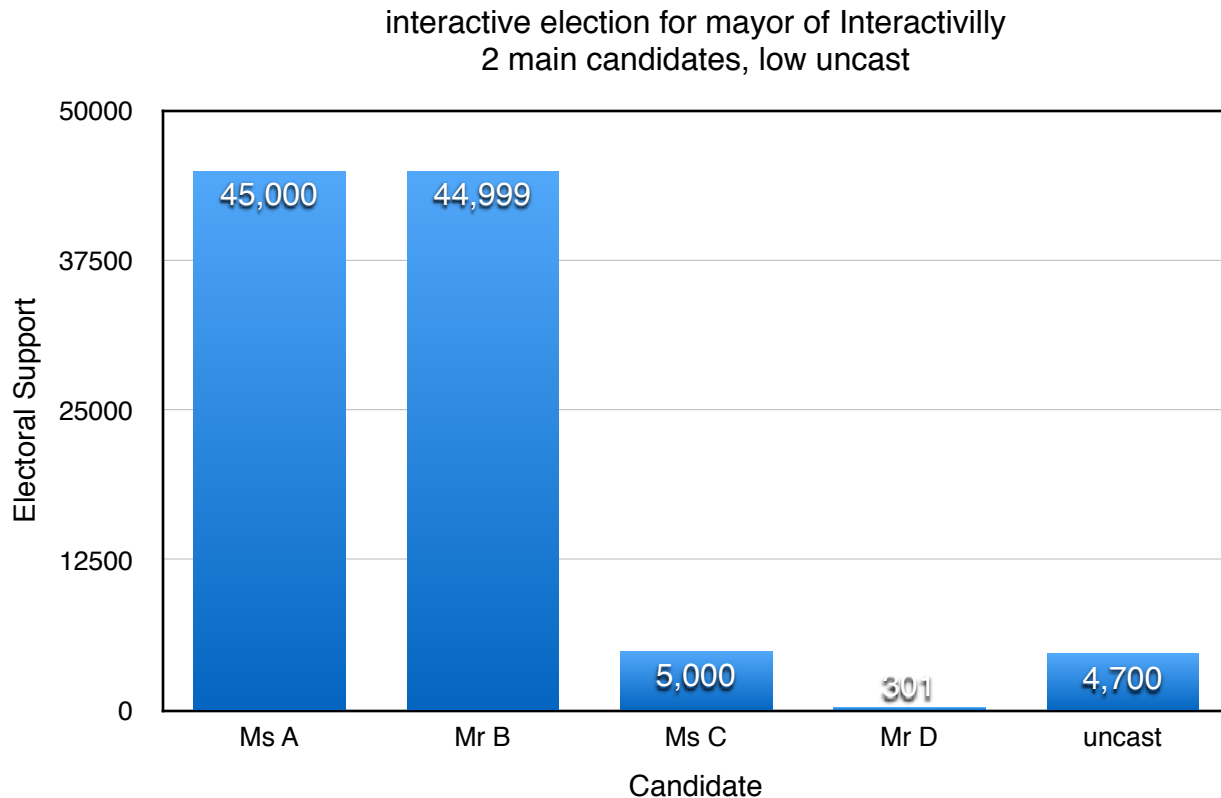
When two candidates hold most of the electoral support, such as here, where the two leading candidates together hold 90%, there are less diverse compromises made but the decisions happen quicker.

With this situation, decisions will be made somewhat more similarly to a conventional referendum process, where 50.1% of voters (or less) can have their way 100% of the time. However, Ms A and Mr B each have more than 100 times as many votes as Mr D, and yet Mr D still has enough supporters to be able to put Mr B in the lead by persuading a few of them to change their votes to Mr B at some point in time. Even a highly polarized electorate still leaves open the possibility for minorities to have some influence in the decision making process.

In a conventional periodic election to choose a mayor, Mr D would be described as a "loser". In an interactive electoral system, Mr D is a representative of a small minority of voters, likely united by some sort of common interest, who is capable of limiting the disenfranchisement they are exposed to because of their small numbers.

Even though the unfairness inherent in a deadline for a referendum is somewhat paralleled by the IES when the electoral support is distributed in this way, there is more flexibility in setting a final date of a decision made by an interactively elected council. The council can remain open to the views of the electorate as to how many alternative modifications can be made to make the decision more amenable to a higher proportion of the electorate. It works in the reverse too. A decision that shows minimal objection by the electorate can be made more quickly than the initial projected date of decision.

Here is a chart that illustrates a situation where decisions might be expected to take a longer time, but everyone will generally be a lot more satisfied with those decisions.

interactive election for mayor of Interactivilly
**10 main candidates, low uncast**

Our mayor, Ms A, now has a candidate with an equal number of votes. However, if Mr B gains one more vote, that does not instantly make him mayor. There is a three month guaranteed term of office for the mayor of Interactivilly. It's written in the town's Constitution. This means if Mr B gains another vote, then Ms A remains mayor for three more months. If Ms A hasn't regained the lead by the end of those three months, then Mr B becomes mayor at that time. If Ms A does regain the lead, then she remains mayor until another candidate gains the lead again, at which time her three month guaranteed term of office begins again.

A vote for a leading candidate here, which would include Ms A, Mr B, and Ms C, is a message to the council to make decisions more quickly. If decisions are taking longer than members of the electorate desire, then those members will have incentive to switch their votes from any of the other candidates to these three. Abstained members who decide that the decision making process has been less expedient than desired will be incentivized to cast a vote for one of the leading candidates to work toward an electoral distribution more like one of the ones looked at above.

The previous chart, with two main candidates, displayed a situation where the electorate had favoured expedience, quick decisions. This chart shows a situation where the electorate favours popularity, decisions pleasing more people.

Here are the same 10 candidates as above, with similar comparable tallies in relation to each other, but with a much higher proportion of uncast votes. What does this mean?

interactive election for mayor of Interactivilly
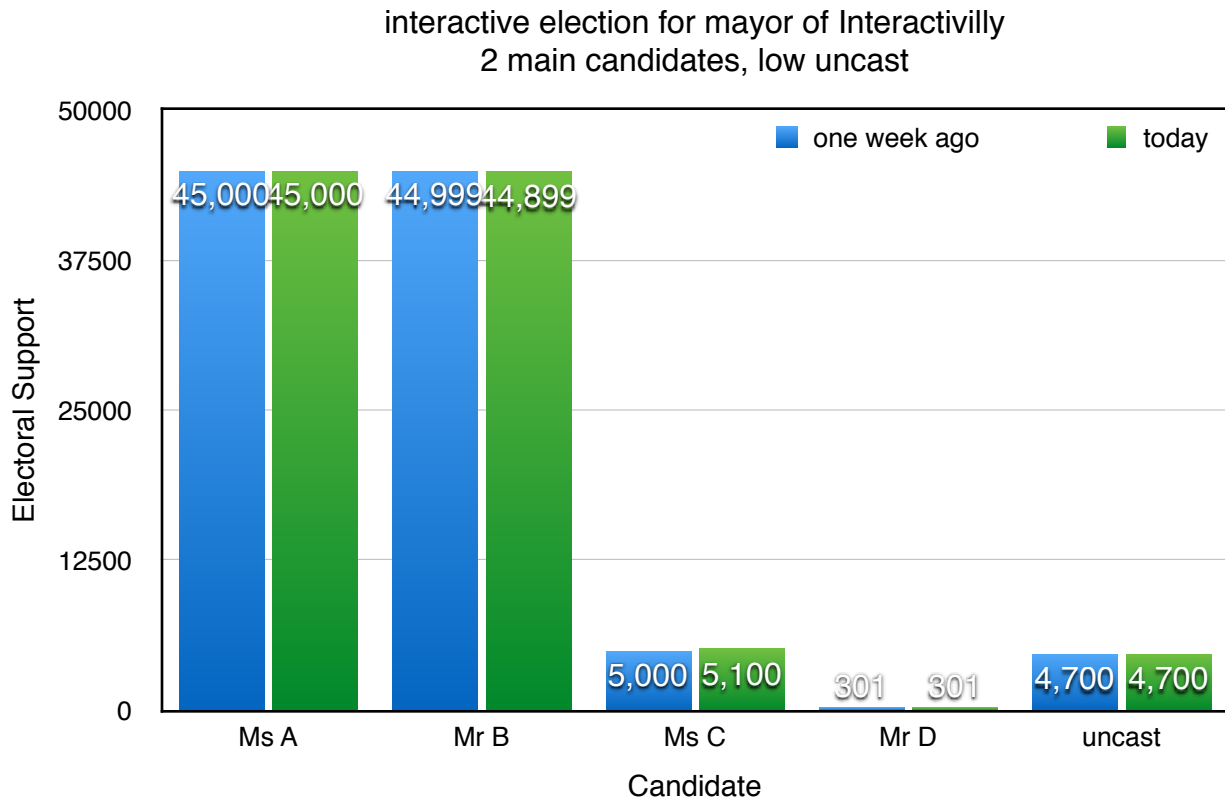10 main candidates, high uncast
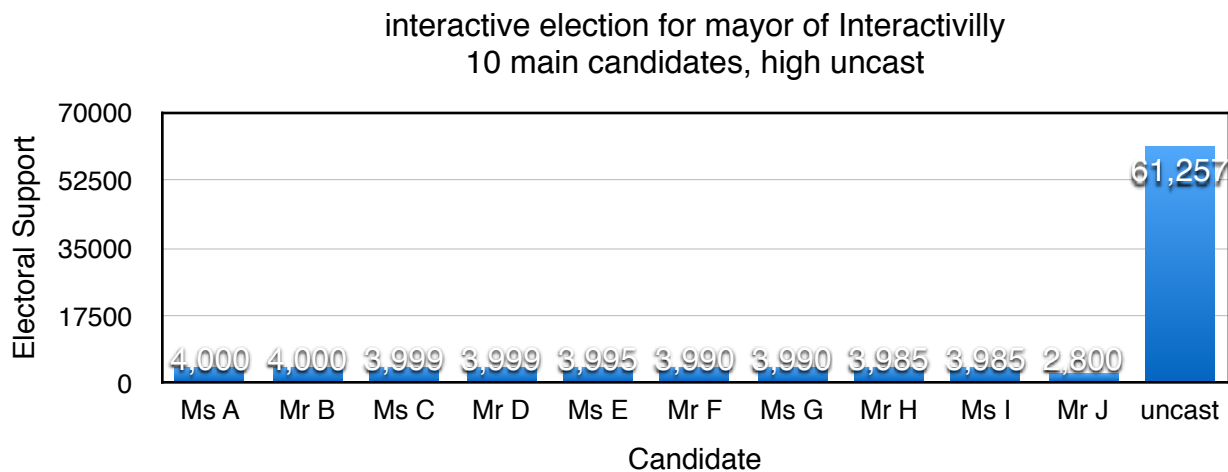
For starters, if a decision takes too long, and the uncast voters see that happening, then they will respond by putting their votes on candidates that want to get the thing done and get it done quickly. Two candidates who speak most strongly on either side of the decision in question may experience a surge in electoral support.

If that happens, then as two candidates gain an advantage in electoral support over all the other candidates, the decision making process will start experiencing less delays, but also there will be less ability to achieve as high of a satisfaction level with each decision. Under the present distribution as shown above, a decision might have a 98% satisfaction rating because it takes so long to work through it until nearly everybody's happy. If the electorate becomes unhappy with the time taken to generally make decisions, and polarization occurs by two candidates gaining an advantage, that satisfaction rating might typically be reduced to 60%. Still, compare this to the 50% satisfaction rating that a referendum typically allows.

When polarization occurs, a vote for any of the leading candidates is essentially a vote for quicker decisions. Conversely, a vote for an outlying candidate is a vote to take more time to ponder decisions to see if more people can be shown consideration.

Assume for the sake of argument that all of the uncast voters are completely apathetic. They don't pay any attention to the decisions made by the ten candidates, they follow the laws agreed upon by those candidates or go through whatever "punishment" the law calls for when those laws are violated, they pay whatever taxes are agreed upon by those candidates to charge, etc. If your vote were standing for Mr B and you disagreed with Ms A on an issue that is very important to you, would you think that an uncast voter had a responsibility to listen to you explain why? Are they doing any harm to you or your society if they are not interested in listening to you explain your grievances? How would you feel if an uncast voter had spoken to several of Mr B's supporters and was considering giving him that one vote he needed to be in the lead and wanted to hear another opinion first and asked for yours? What if he then went to speak to one of Ms A's supporters to keep a balanced view of both sides? Would it feel nice to know that you were helping an apathetic person become more involved in the political process?

Here is a chart showing a change in votes. During the course of one week, 100 voters changed their votes from Mr B to Ms C. Previously, Ms A was one vote ahead of Mr B. Now, Ms A is 101 votes ahead of Mr B.

interactive election for mayor of Interactivilly
2 main candidates, low uncast

	one week ago	today
Ms A	45,000	45,000
Mr B	44,999	44,899
Ms C	5,000	5,100
Mr D	301	301
uncast	4,700	4,700

(Y-axis: Electoral Support, 0 to 50000; X-axis: Candidate)

If all of the 45,000 voters who have voted for Ms A did so because they agree with every single position she takes on any decision, then of course the above change will have no effect on their decision to leave their votes standing for her.

However, if there is any issue that has been most commonly disagreed upon by any portion of her voters, then those voters are now free to find another candidate who agrees with them on this issue, while still leaving Ms A in the lead so that all of the other issues which they do agree with Ms A on remain in their favour. One of her own supporters might do this and be able to pick up a quick 100 votes, or Mr D might jump in and express a stance on that issue and go from 301 to 401.

This chart shows why it is very common in an IES for the leading candidates to remain very close in electoral support. You may have noticed in all the previous charts that there was never one candidate with a strong lead over all the others. Now you know why.

By moving their votes from Mr B to Ms C, these 100 voters have acted to influence the decision making process more toward popular decisions but away from having them made expediently. This is the effect of making the electoral distribution less polarized.

Here is a chart that might push some buttons and ring some bells.

interactive election for mayor of Interactivilly
the 99% versus the 1%, no abstains
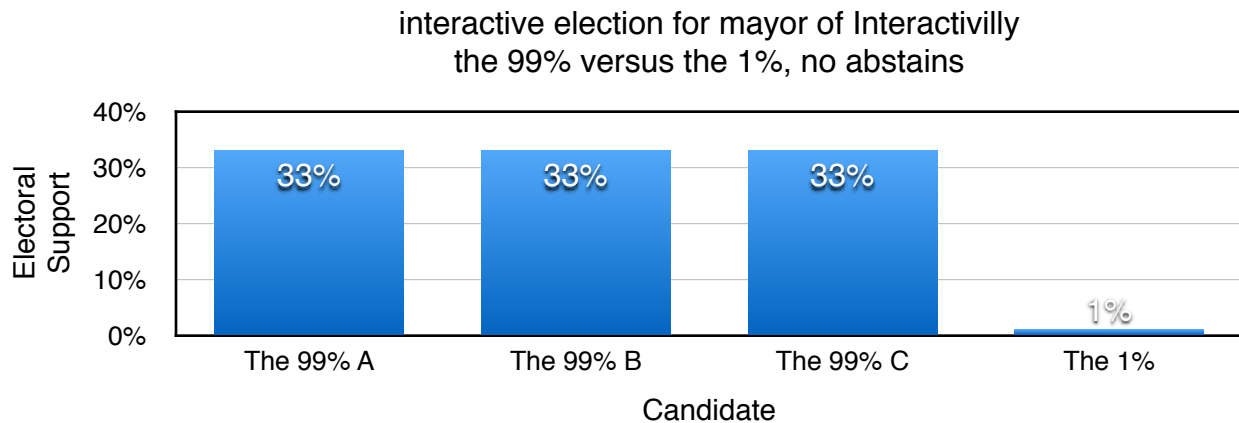
The Occupy Movement, started in 2011, popularized the idea that 1% of the world's population has a sizeable advantage over the other 99% in wealth and power that is neither deserved nor fair. If this were true, then it would be interesting to know how the IES would affect this advantage if it were used commonly throughout the world. Not only is it important to know how this alleged advantage would be affected, but also to know that implementation of the IES would not cause the members of "the 1%" to be treated in a way that might resemble persecution or punitive action because of a new form of democracy being more empowering to a majority than previously existing forms. You may agree that making society more fair is a desirable goal but punishing people for having previously had an advantage that existed simply because of a lack of a fair and democratic decision making process is not.

The above chart shows a situation where the 1% of residents of Interactivilly who are most wealthy and influential have chosen a candidate to represent their political interests in the town while the other 99% have found three candidates that have distinctive and varied approaches to decision making. As seen in previous charts, the minority candidate is not without any influence in the decision making process. Compromises can be made between the three majority candidates but the minority candidate can still find ways to be included in those decisions.

A common reservation about democracy is the use of wealth to influence the democratic process. For instance, most democratic nations have laws, with severe penalties for violating them, limiting the amount of money that may be contributed to a political candidate's campaign. However, it is commonly believed that these laws are not perfectly effective at preventing wealthy individuals from having more influence over the political process. So even though the 1% seems to have a limited influence over the political process judging by the above chart, there may still be other factors to consider in assessing the ability for wealthy people to influence the political process of a council elected using IES.

An interesting thing to note is that a person who finds a way to use their wealth to influence the political process when politicians are only elected once every few years only has to do so occasionally. A person who does so when an IES is being practiced must pour in a constant flow of cash, which makes it more difficult to stay wealthy. Also, if it is being done illicitly, then the potential for being caught and jailed is far more constant.

Here is something that might look a little more resemblant of Canadian politics, because the number of abstained voters is a little closer to what really happens.

interactive election for mayor of Interactivilly
### the 99% versus the 1%, high abstention
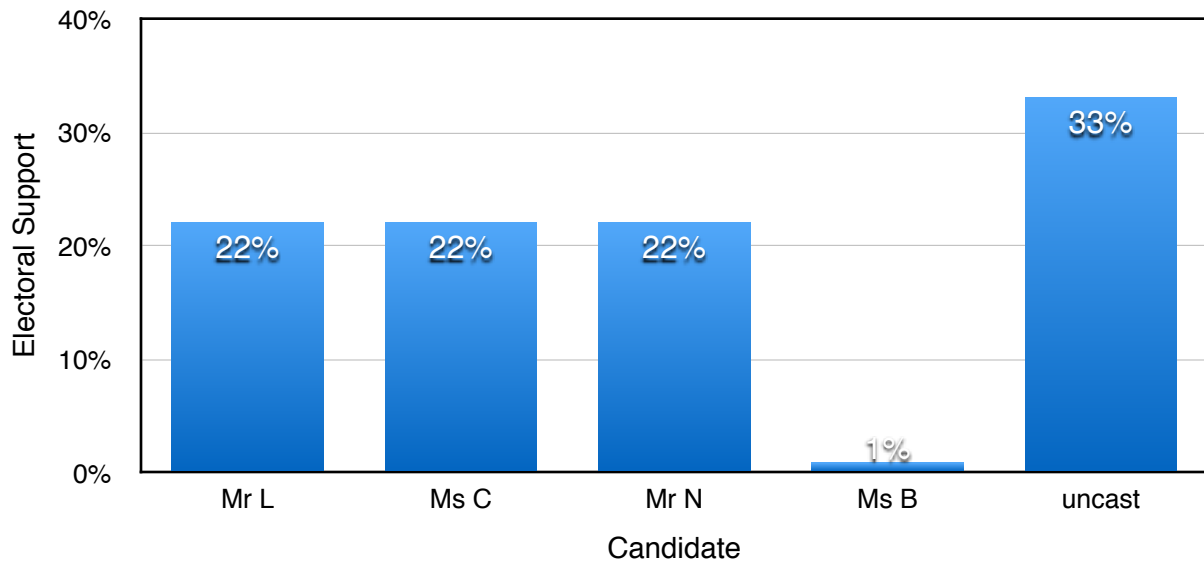
Two thirds of the votes are cast. The other third is uncast. Of the cast votes, 99% are standing for three parties. The other 1% seems to still be represented and capable of assuring that its unique and human interests are shown respect and sensitivity. Would you expect them to be persecuted or punished or hated in this situation from what you know of voters? It is possible that they'll just be given their proper place in a free and democratic society with all of their fundamental human rights and freedoms kept intact.

Imagine that the 1% of cast votes represents a class that has privileged status, perhaps financially privileged for instance. The uncast voters are high enough in number to very quickly put Ms B in the lead over any of the other three candidates if that privileged class is treated unfairly or prejudicially in decisions made by the other three candidates. It is possible that the unwillingness of those uncast voters to take sides in whatever disagreements exist between the main three candidates might indicate stronger abilities to show sympathetic support for the unique situations of Ms B's voters. Therefore it might be expected that a good general strategy for Ms B's voters would be to appeal to uncast voters instead of the voters supporting the other three candidates.

If uncast voters in an IES are treated with respect instead of being shamed for an alleged lack of social responsibility, do you see this as a positive feature of this electoral system?

Here's another look at a chart we've already seen.

interactive election for mayor of Interactivilly
4 main candidates, low uncast
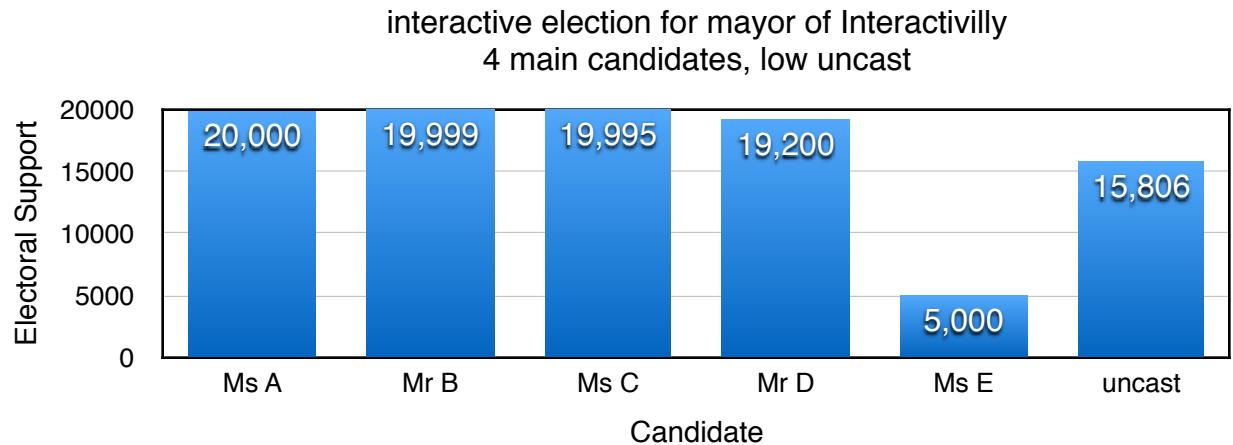
When we looked at this chart before, it was said that "Ms E and her supporters may appear likely to be the least satisfied voters with the decisions typically made by this council". Having looked at the other depictions of the politics of Interactivilly, it might now be apparent that in actuality, the candidate most likely to be dissatisfied overall with decisions made by the council is Mr B. In fact it might now seem that all of the candidates other than Mr B are likely to be more satisfied with the council's decisions than Mr B.

If this is not apparent yet, or you don't believe it, then that's great. Don't believe it. Nothing makes democracy stronger than open dissent. However, imagine if Ms C is the only candidate who disagrees with the council's decision on issue X and Mr B is the only candidate who disagrees with the council on issue Y. If even 2 of Ms C's supporters were willing to compromise on issue Y so that they could have their way on issue X, then Mr B would be able to get enough votes to be in the lead over Ms A.

Whatever the most important contentious issue (or overall political ideology) is to the highest portion of the electorate, that issue may be expected to pick up the largest number of voters for a candidate who represents the opposition to the status quo or to the council's overall political ideology. Is it okay for a society to make decisions that 20% of its members oppose? Maybe not. Maybe that is disrespectful to too large of a proportion of that society's members for it to be considered fair. If you agree with this, then it is likely that you are not the only person who does. Hopefully there are enough people like you amongst the supporters of all of the candidates other than Mr B so that some compromises are made to be fair to the demographic that Mr B represents. If not, then this is simple majority rule. Is that democracy? No, it's not. Democracy is Greek. "Demos" means people. "Kratos" means rule. It means the people rule. It does not mean "a large enough proportion of the people rule so that the dissenters don't really matter". The people means *all* of the people.

So please, if you are ever in the position of being a supporter of any candidate other than Mr B in a similar situation to what's shown above, try to support compromises to help Mr B's supporters get some kind of fair shake. Ideally, politics should be about sharing our world, not fighting over it. I sincerely trust you to do that and I hope that you can pass that forward by trusting (and reminding) others to do it. Let's not think that just because we have a majority it gives us the right to rule over a minority. It's not fair.