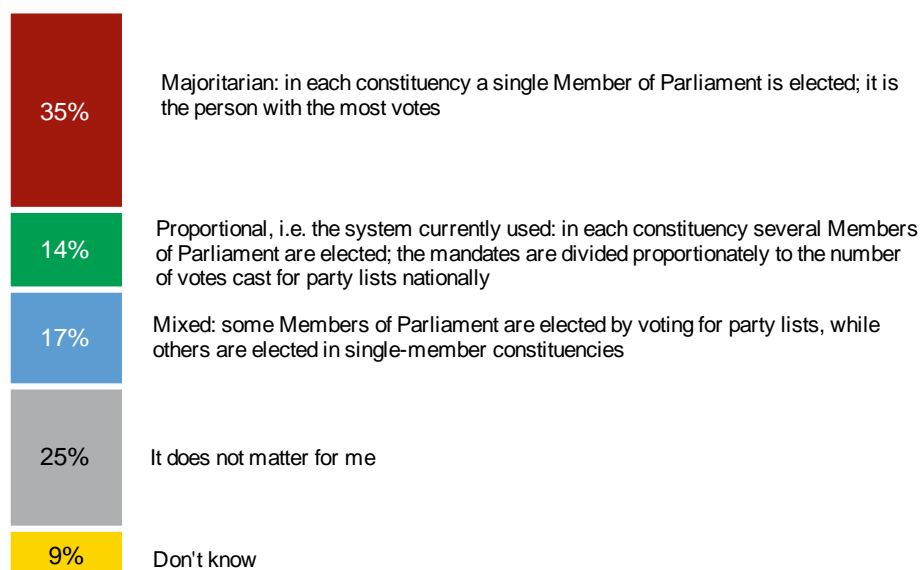


Preferences for electoral system

In Sejm elections the proportional representation (PR) electoral system is used. On 6th September there will be a referendum in which citizens will have the opportunity to voice their opinion about a change of the electoral system consisting in the introduction of single-member constituencies. Regardless of the result, the final decision will be made by parliament. Even a binding referendum would not close the issue, as there exist several variants of electoral systems using single-member constituencies. In search for a compromise between PR and single-member constituencies, a mixed system is often proposed, in which some mandates are allocated in single-member constituencies, while other MPs are chosen by PR.

Survey results show that a majoritarian system in single-member constituencies is the most popular, being selected by 35% of respondents. The PR system used currently is supported by 14% only, while a mixed system is advocated by a slightly higher number of respondents (17%). For one-third of Poles the type of electoral system is either unimportant or they cannot express their opinion in this matter.

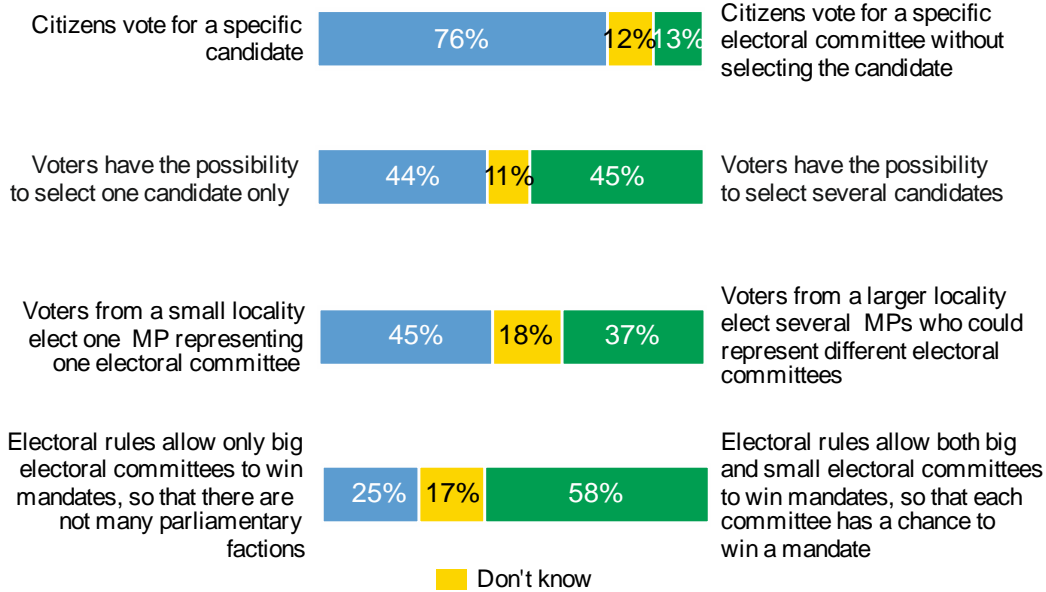
Which electoral system is best and should be used in Poland?



Citizens' knowledge about different variants of electoral systems and consequences of their application is limited, and the support for single-member constituencies is based on several key slogans heard in public debate and on generalized expectation of a fundamental change in the political system. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that there are inconsistencies in opinions about the preferred electoral system. Polish voters are attached to the system in which the vote is personalised, i.e. they select a candidate, in addition to choosing an electoral committee with candidate lists: 76% of respondents share the opinion that in Sejm elections voters should vote for a specific person, while 13% think that they should vote for an electoral committee, without indicating particular candidates; such a system exists in some countries using PR with closed lists. It is interesting to note that almost half of Poles (45%) would like to have the opportunity to vote for several candidates, unlike in all elections held since 1991. Almost the same proportion (44%) prefer the current system, in which each voter indicates one candidate only. In the context of upcoming referendum, decisions based on the criteria of territorial vs. party representation are also important. A sizeable part of respondents (45%) would prefer a system in which voters from a locality elect one Member of Parliament, representing one electoral committee (this is a simplified description of single-mandate constituencies). A large proportion, however (37%), prefer a system in which voters are elected from a larger territorial unit and MPs representing such a constituency could belong to different political groupings. In spite of a

relatively strong support for single-member constituencies, Poles tend to reject the dominance of biggest parties in the Sejm. Only a quarter support a system which would give a premium to largest parties and reduce the number of factions in the Sejm. A clear majority (58%) advocate election rules which would allow both big and small electoral committees to win mandates.

Which rules should be observed in elections to the Sejm



More information about this topic can be found in CBOS report in Polish: "Preferences for electoral system", July 2015. Fieldwork for national sample: June 2015, N=1011. The random address sample is representative for adult population of Poland.