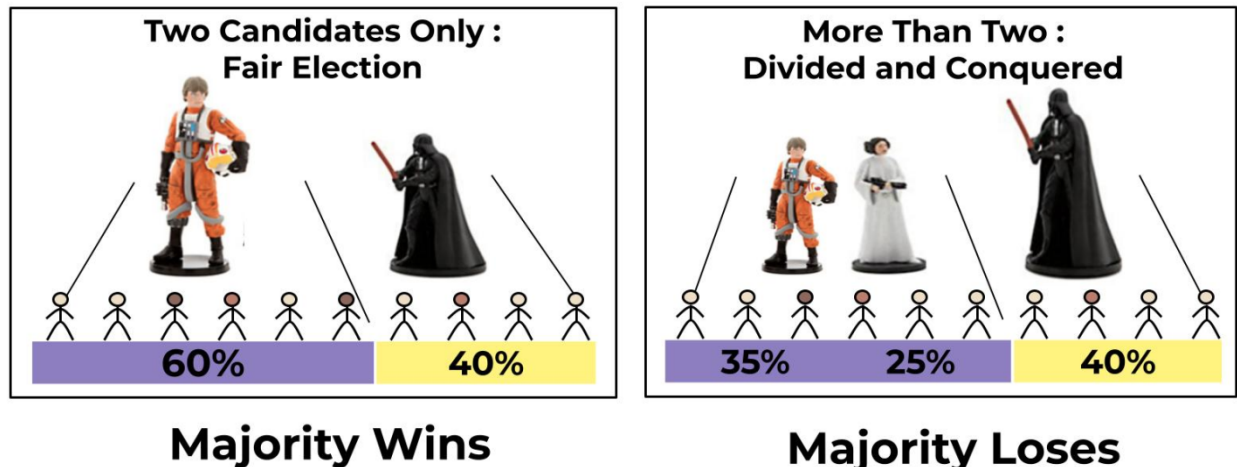


Vote-splitting: the problem and options to solve it

Vote-splitting is a problem that sometimes occurs when three or more candidates are running for office. Specifically, it happens when two or more like-minded candidates divide the voters in their party, allowing the other party to win. It is also called the spoiler effect.

Vote Splitting and the “Spoiler Effect”



There are numerous examples throughout our nation’s history. Some of the most commonly referenced are Ralph Nader’s spoiling of Al Gore’s presidential campaign in 2000, Ross Perot’s spoiling of George Bush’s presidential re-election campaign in 1992, and Theodore Roosevelt’s and William Taft’s spoiling of each other’s re-election campaigns in 1912.

A troubling consequence of this phenomenon is that many viable candidates choose to (or are pressured to) not run for office from fear of vote-splitting and causing their party to lose. This included Hillary Clinton in 2008, Bernie Sanders in 2020, and perhaps Nicky Halley in 2024. Arguably, political primaries came into being to allow the efficient use of political resources in backing one candidate instead of many, *and* to ensure candidates don’t interfere with each other’s chances of winning.

Many nations and civic agencies around the world have sought to mitigate this problem by setting a 50% voting threshold—if one candidate does not achieve “a majority,” the election is rerun with only the top two candidates. By reducing the voters’ choices to two, the method guarantees that the side with more supporters will win the election.

But this is not the only option. Several voting methods have been suggested for preventing vote-splitting. Among them are ranked-choice voting, approval voting, and STAR voting. Each of these has a different type of ballot for recording a voter’s preferences and a different method

for analyzing the collected ballots to determine who won the election. And each has an organized group of people advocating for it.

But there are other groups who feel that the cure may be worse than the disease. Do people want the level of complexity that goes with these new voting methods?

Where are you on this issue?

If you want to hear more about vote splitting, visit:

Ranked-choice voting focused: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q6pC5IJirrY>

Approval voting focused: https://electionscience.org/vote_splitting_poc

STAR voting focused: <https://www.equal.vote/problem>