



INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH SEMINAR



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Reallocating Wasted Votes in Proportional Parliamentary Elections with Thresholds

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Abstract

In many proportional parliamentary elections, electoral thresholds (typically 3-5%) are used to promote stability and governability by preventing the election of parties with very small representation. However, these thresholds often result in a significant number of “wasted votes” cast for parties that fail to meet the threshold, which reduces representativeness. One proposal is to allow voters to specify replacement votes, by either indicating a second choice party or by ranking a subset of the parties, but there are several ways of deciding on the scores of the parties (and thus the composition of the parliament) given those votes. We introduce a formal model of party voting with thresholds, and compare a variety of party selection rules axiomatically, and experimentally using a dataset we collected during the 2024 European election in France. We identify three particularly attractive rules, called Direct Winners Only (DO), Single Transferable Vote (STV) and Greedy Plurality (GP).