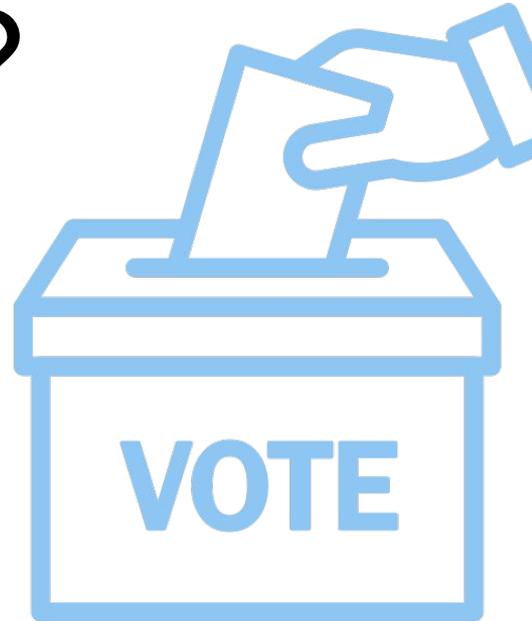


Why not RCV?

Annie Kallen
June 22, 2022



Summary:

1. RCV doesn't prevent vote splitting.
2. RCV is not transparent.
3. Too much uncertainty with Portland/ Gresham.
4. RCV is not equitable.

I started out as a big RCV supporter and planned to help bring it to Oregon. So what changed to make me so opposed to it now?

1. RCV doesn't prevent vote splitting.

RCV doesn't do the main thing people expect it to do. *It does not prevent vote splitting.*
The more candidates in a race, the more likely vote-splitting is to occur.

[Check out this video from Oregon Representative Zach Hudson.](#)

If your favorite candidate is eliminated in the final round, your second choice is *never* counted.

“When using Ranked Choice Voting, we figure in the second choices from the voters whose candidates get eliminated, but we never figure in the second choices from the voters whose favorite candidate is still in the running... Those second choices never end up influencing the vote. This is a crucial flaw.” - Rep. Hudson

Ideal RCV

RCV says that Favorite voters can still vote. Favorite but not risk spoiling the election, because their second choice (Compromise) will be counted.



Number of voters	Rankings
10	Awful, Compromise, Favorite
6	Compromise, Favorite, Awful
3	Compromise, Awful, Favorite
4	Favorite, Compromise, Awful
Round 1	Total votes
Awful	10
Compromise	9
Favorite	4
Favorite is removed...	

RCV doesn't prevent vote splitting (continued)

In [simulations](#) run by Dr. Warren Smith, ranked choice voting (aka instant runoff voting) **actually performed worse** than plurality plus top two, **which is the voting method Multnomah County uses now.**

Method	Condorcet Winner	Bayesian Regret
1. Score + Top Two	15,574	0.148
2. Approval + Top Two	15,054	0.168
3. Score	11,796	0.163
4. Approval -1,0,+1	11,439	0.173
...
7. Approval 0,+1	10,997	0.215
...
41. Plurality + Top Two	8,823	0.499
42. Instant Runoff Voting	8,387	0.501
...
50. Plurality	6,357	0.644

These findings are consistent with other statistical simulation studies:

- [Strategic Voter Simulations](#), John Huang

Results show that Condorcet systems such as ranked_pairs, smith_minimax, and smith_score are excellent performers. STAR voting is also a top performing system. The worst performing systems are plurality, top-two, and instant-runoff (IRV).

- [Voter Satisfaction Efficiency](#), Dr. Jameson Quinn

- [Research on voting backfiring in RCV](#)

It has long been recognized that Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) suffers from a defect known as nonmonotonicity, wherein increasing support for a candidate among a subset of voters may adversely affect that candidate's election outcome. The expected frequency of this type of behavior, however, remains an open and important question, and limited access to detailed election data makes it difficult to resolve empirically. In this paper, we develop a spatial model of voting behavior to approach the question theoretically. We conclude that monotonicity failures in three-candidate IRV elections may be much more prevalent than widely presumed (results suggest a lower bound estimate of 15 % for competitive elections). In light of these results, those seeking to implement a fairer multi-candidate election system should be wary of adopting IRV.

2. RCV is not transparent

Sample RCV results:



[Registrar of Voters](#) > [Voting](#) > [Ranked-Choice Voting](#) > [Results](#) > [November 2010 Results](#) > [Mayor of Oakland](#)



Ranked-Choice Voting Official Final Accumulated Results - Mayor of Oakland

Official Final Accumulated results last updated: Friday, November 19, 2010

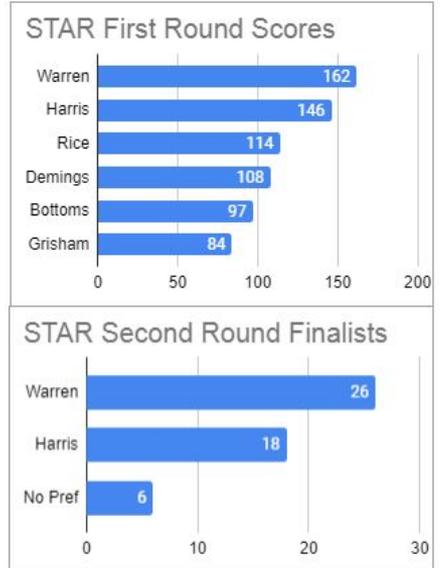
[Accumulated Results Detail \(PDF\)](#) ** [Ballot Image File \(TXT\)](#) [Master Lookup File \(TXT\)](#) [Ballot Image Help \(PDF\)](#) ** [Comprehensive Report \(PDF\)](#) **

	Round 1			Round 2			Round 3			Round 4			Round 5			Round 6		
	Votes	%	Transfer	Votes	%	Transfer	Votes	%	Transfer	Votes	%	Transfer	Votes	%	Transfer	Votes	%	Transfer
DON PERATA	40342	33.73%	+32	40374	33.80%	+81	40455	33.90%	+151	40606	34.08%	+122	40728	34.24%	+86	40814	34.39%	+550
TERENCE CANDELL	2315	1.94%	+1	2316	1.94%	+70	2386	2.00%	+111	2497	2.10%	+116	2613	2.20%	+67	2680	2.26%	-2680
GREG HARLAND	966	0.81%	+2	968	0.81%	+91	1059	0.89%	+28	1087	0.91%	-1087	0	0.00%	0	0	0.00%	0
DON MACLEAY	1630	1.36%	+6	1636	1.37%	+41	1677	1.41%	+42	1719	1.44%	+133	1852	1.56%	-1852	0	0.00%	0
JEAN QUAN	29266	24.47%	+33	29299	24.53%	+92	29391	24.63%	+123	29514	24.77%	+131	29645	24.93%	+855	30500	25.70%	+384
ARNOLD FIELDS	733	0.61%	+5	738	0.62%	-738	0	0.00%	0	0	0.00%	0	0	0.00%	0	0	0.00%	0
JOE TUMAN	14347	12.00%	+10	14357	12.02%	+114	14471	12.13%	+81	14552	12.21%	+228	14780	12.43%	+169	14949	12.60%	+253
MARCIE HODGE	2994	2.50%	+5	2999	2.51%	+34	3033	2.54%	+122	3155	2.65%	+45	3200	2.69%	+50	3250	2.74%	+375
LARRY LIONEL "LL" YOUNG JR.	933	0.78%	+6	939	0.79%	+37	976	0.82%	-976	0	0.00%	0	0	0.00%	0	0	0.00%	0
REBECCA KAPLAN	25813	21.58%	+18	25831	21.62%	+59	25890	21.69%	+136	26026	21.84%	+91	26117	21.96%	+379	26496	22.32%	+335
Write-In	268	0.22%	-268	0	0.00%	0	0	0.00%	0	0	0.00%	0	0	0.00%	0	0	0.00%	0
Exhausted by Over Votes	355		+1	356		+6	362		+9	371		+5	376		+4	380		+21
Under Votes	2306		0	2306		0	2306		0	2306		0	2306		0	2306		0
Exhausted Ballots	0		+149	149		+113	262		+173	435		+216	651		+242	893		+762
Continuing Ballots	119607	100.00%		119457	100.00%		119338	100.00%		119156	100.00%		118935	100.00%		118689	100.00%	
TOTAL	122268		0	122268		0	122268		0	122268		0	122268		0	122268		0
REMARKS	*Tie resolved in accordance with election law.																	

* Portable Document Format (PDF) file requires the free [Adobe Reader](#).

** To view Microsoft Office Word, Excel, or PowerPoint documents, you can [download a free trial version of Office 365](#). Per Microsoft, you will be able to continue viewing files even after the trial has expired.

Sample STAR results:



3. Too much uncertainty with city measures

I don't believe that RCV is legal in Portland since it is in three different counties, and RCV requires central tabulation. It hinges on the interpretation of ORS 246.200.

If it turns out that Portland cannot legally implement RCV, but Multnomah County does implement RCV, it will effectively prevent Portland from implementing any other voting method in the future that has a contrasting ballot format.



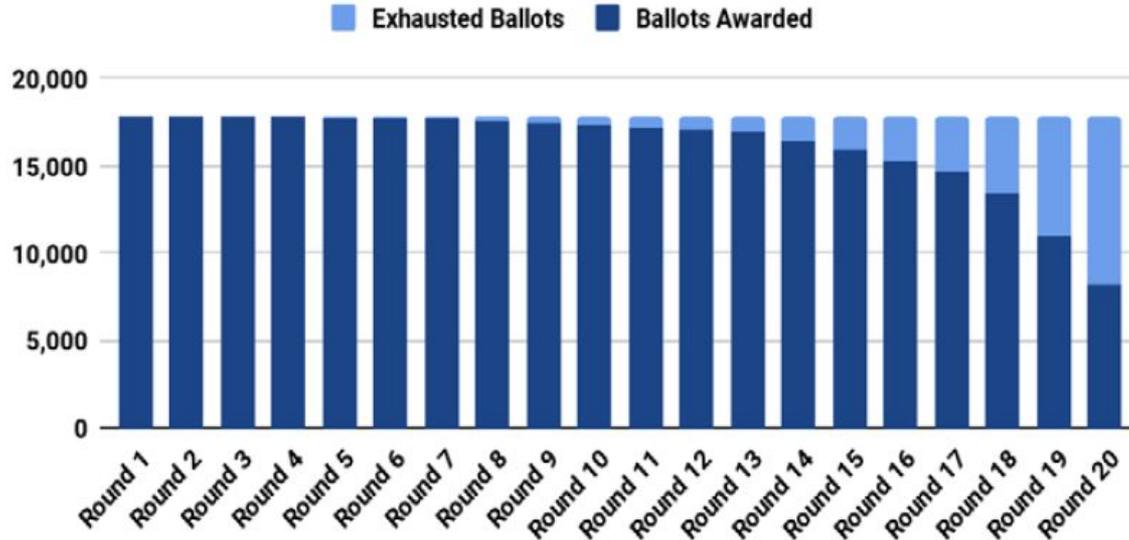
Gresham is also going through their charter review process and considering different voting method options. We don't know yet what they will decide to do and we shouldn't risk conflicting with their decision.



4. RCV is not equitable

Some voters' ballots won't count in the final round (exhausted ballots), *even if their preference should have made a difference* in the election. Real-life example:

Figure 2: Exhausted Ballots in San Francisco's Board of Supervisors Election - District 10 (2010)



Source: City of San Francisco, Department of Elections

San Francisco allows voters to rank up to 10 candidates, but because this election had a large number of candidates running, more than half of ballots were exhausted by the final round.

This is an extreme case, but ballot exhaustion of around 10% is typical, and often is greater than the margin between the winner and the second place candidate.

[Graphic source](#)

RCV is not equitable (continued)

- Groups least likely to rank all candidates (and thus have ballots exhausted) are [African Americans, Latinos, voters with less education, and those whose first language is not English.](#)
- Some voters' rankings are skipped.
- Some voters have more rankings counted than other voters.
- Some voters would get a better result by not voting than by voting. (This is even worse than in choose-one-only voting where, at worst, voting produces a result no better than not voting.)



My recommendation:

Either:

1. Do not take any action on voting methods at this time, and wait for a future charter review committee (or other process) to take that on once we see how things shake out in Portland and Gresham.

Or:

2. Update the charter to require a preference voting method which allows voters to indicate support for multiple candidates. (We can add other specific requirements too.) Then the commissioners will need to decide exactly how to make that happen, and we should give them enough time to convene a task force to study voting methods.

Or:

3. Recommend Approval Voting for county elections. (This is a simple and surprisingly great voting method that doesn't change the ballot appearance and is being used in two U.S. cities. It may also be adopted by Seattle soon.)

Further reading:

Fair Vote Canada*: [Out of the Frying Pan Into the Fire: Lessons on Ranked Ballot from Australia](#)

*Note: Fair Vote Canada is not affiliated with FairVote (U.S.). Both organizations advocate for STV, but Fair Vote Canada is opposed to single-winner RCV (which they call Alternative Vote).

The Center for Election Science: [The Limits of Ranked Choice Voting](#)

Lindsey Cormack: [Cataloging the Promises of RCV in New York City](#)

Maine Policy Institute: [False Majority: The Failed Experiment of Ranked Choice Voting](#)

Alaska Policy Forum: [Report: The Failed Experiment of Ranked Choice Voting](#)