

## ELECTIONS

# Half of Britons Would Hold Vote to Redefine Electoral System

*Two-in-five would switch to "alternative vote" system, while three-in-ten would retain the "first past the post" approach.*

[LONDON – Feb. 5, 2010] – People in Britain hold mixed views on the possibility of changing the way they cast ballots in General Elections, a new Angus Reid Public Opinion poll has found.

Under the current "first past the post" system, candidates win seats in the House of Commons by getting more votes than any rival in a specific constituency. Earlier this month, Prime Minister Gordon Brown proposed adopting the "alternative vote" system for General Elections.

The "alternative vote" system allows voters to rank their first, second and third preference in a specific constituency so that, if no candidate gets 50 per cent of the first-choice votes, the second and third choices are added to the tallies until a candidate achieves a majority.

In the online survey of a representative national sample of 2,010 British adults, 52 per cent of respondents think there should be a referendum on whether to stick with the "first past the post" system or move to an "alternative vote" system.

If a vote on the proposed change were to take place, 40 per cent of respondents would back the "alternative vote" system, while 31 per cent would cast a ballot to retain the "first past the post" system. Six per cent of respondents would not vote, and 23 per cent are undecided.

### KEY FINDINGS

- **62% are satisfied with "first past the post" system**
- **52% would hold a referendum on whether to change the electoral system**
- **40% would adopt the "alternative vote" system; 31% would retain "first past the post" approach**

Full topline results are at the end of this release.

*From February 2 to February 3, 2010, Angus Reid Strategies conducted an online survey among 2,010 randomly selected British adults who are Springboard UK panelists. The margin of error—which measures sampling variability—is +/- 2.2%. The results have been statistically weighted according to the most current education, age, gender and region data to ensure samples representative of the entire adult population of Great Britain. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.*

### CONTACT:

Andy Morris, Research Director, London, + 44-207-065-7272, [andy.morris@angus-reid.com](mailto:andy.morris@angus-reid.com)

Overall, 62 per cent of Britons claim to be satisfied with the current "first past the post" system for UK General Elections, while 38 per cent are dissatisfied.

Brown has also proposed lowering the voting age to 16. An Angus Reid poll conducted in August 2009 found that 55 per cent of Britons oppose allowing 16-17 year olds to vote in General Elections.

*Teenage Voting in Britain, the United States and Canada:* <http://www.angus-reid.com/polls/view/34102>

**Follow us on Twitter:** <http://twitter.com/AngusReidGlobal>

---

**CONTACT:**

Andy Morris, Research Director, London, + 44-207-065-7272, [andy.morris@angus-reid.com](mailto:andy.morris@angus-reid.com)

### Elections

How satisfied are you with the current 'first past the post' system for UK General Elections?

|                          | Great Britain | Age 18-34 | Age 35-54 | Age 55+ |
|--------------------------|---------------|-----------|-----------|---------|
| <b>Very Satisfied</b>    | 11%           | 8%        | 11%       | 13%     |
| <b>Satisfied</b>         | 51%           | 59%       | 50%       | 47%     |
| <b>Dissatisfied</b>      | 30%           | 26%       | 31%       | 30%     |
| <b>Very Dissatisfied</b> | 8%            | 6%        | 8%        | 10%     |

### Elections

Do you think there should be a referendum on whether to stick with the 'first past the post' system or move to an "alternative vote" system?

|                   | Great Britain | Age 18-34 | Age 35-54 | Age 55+ |
|-------------------|---------------|-----------|-----------|---------|
| <b>Yes</b>        | 52%           | 45%       | 49%       | 60%     |
| <b>No</b>         | 20%           | 17%       | 21%       | 21%     |
| <b>Don't know</b> | 38%           | 38%       | 30%       | 19%     |

### Elections

If there were a referendum and given what you currently know about the two systems, how would you vote in a referendum if the question were: 'Do you think General Elections in the UK should use the 'first past the post' or the 'alternative vote' system?

|                            | Great Britain | Age 18-34 | Age 35-54 | Age 55+ |
|----------------------------|---------------|-----------|-----------|---------|
| <b>First past the post</b> | 31%           | 26%       | 33%       | 34%     |
| <b>Alternative vote</b>    | 40%           | 33%       | 36%       | 48%     |
| <b>Would not vote</b>      | 6%            | 14%       | 4%        | 2%      |
| <b>Don't know</b>          | 23%           | 27%       | 26%       | 16%     |

#### CONTACT:

Andy Morris, Research Director, London, + 44-207-065-7272, [andy.morris@angus-reid.com](mailto:andy.morris@angus-reid.com)

*Angus Reid Public Opinion is a practice of Vision Critical—a global research and technology company specializing in custom online panels, private communities, and innovative online methods. Vision Critical is a leader in the use of the Internet and rich media technology to collect high-quality, in-depth insights for a wide array of clients. Dr. Angus Reid and the Angus Reid Public Opinion team are pioneers in online research methodologies, and have been conducting online surveys since 1995*

*Vision Critical is now one of the largest market research enterprises in the world. In addition to its five offices in Canada—located in Vancouver, Calgary, Regina, Toronto, and Montreal—the firm also has offices in San Francisco, Chicago, New York, London, Paris and Sydney. Its team of specialists provides solutions across every type and sector of research, and currently serves over 200 international clients.*

*Angus Reid Public Opinion polls are conducted using the Angus Reid Forum ([www.angusreidforum.com](http://www.angusreidforum.com)), Springboard America ([www.springboardamerica.com](http://www.springboardamerica.com)) and Springboard UK ([www.springboarduk.com](http://www.springboarduk.com)) online panels, which are carefully recruited to ensure representation across all demographic and psychographic segments of these populations. Panel members pass through rigorous screening and a double opt-in process ensuring highly motivated and responsive members. These premier online survey platforms present respondents with highly visual, interactive, and engaging surveys, ensuring that panel members provide thoughtful and reliable responses. Each survey is actively sampled and weighted to model that characteristics of the universe required and employs the latest in quality control techniques to ensure data validity.*

*Since 2006, Angus Reid has covered eight provincial elections in Canada—more than any other pollster in the country—and the results have accurately predicted the outcome of each of these democratic processes.*

*Angus Reid, the only public opinion firm to exclusively use online methods to follow the views of the electorate during the 2008 federal campaign, offered the most accurate prediction of the results of Canada's 40th election. More information on our electoral record can be found at:*  
<http://www.visioncritical.com/record-of-accuracy>

*More information on the way Angus Reid conducts public opinion research can be found at*  
<http://www.visioncritical.com/what-we-do/practices/angus-reid-public-opinion/>

- 30 -

**For more information, please contact  
our spokesperson listed in the footnote.**

**Copies of this poll are available on our website:**  
<http://www.visioncritical.com/category/global-opinions-and-trends>

---

**CONTACT:**

Andy Morris, Research Director, London, + 44-207-065-7272, [andy.morris@angus-reid.com](mailto:andy.morris@angus-reid.com)