

The Senate count process

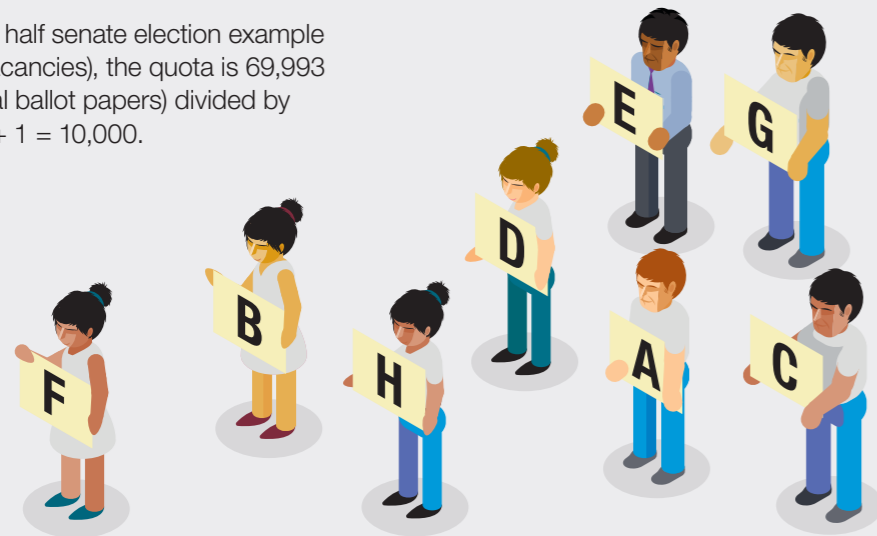
Counting Senate votes starts after 6pm when polling places close to the public. Counting of first preferences begins but due to the high number of votes the full count cannot be completed until several weeks after the election. Senate ballot papers are scanned and checked for formality – the final number of formal votes is needed to determine the quota.

To be elected, a candidate needs to win a quota – a set proportion of the electorate’s votes. This is known as proportional representation. The quota is worked out by dividing the total number of formal votes by one more than the number of vacancies to be filled and then adding one to the result.

In this half senate election example (six vacancies), the quota is 69,993 (formal ballot papers) divided by $(6+1) + 1 = 10,000$.

Any surplus votes from elected candidates (votes in excess of the quota), are transferred to the continuing candidates who are the next choice of voters on those ballot papers. Because it is not possible to determine which votes actually elected the candidate and which votes are surplus, all the elected candidate’s ballot papers are transferred at a reduced rate. When a candidate is excluded, their votes are distributed at the transfer value at which they were received, in the order of highest to lowest transfer value.

Note: the example is for educational purposes only.



CANDIDATES: 8 VACANCIES: 6 FORMAL VOTES: 69,993 QUOTA: 10,000

CANDIDATES ▶		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
FIRST PREFERENCE VOTES									
COUNT 1	TOTAL FIRST PREFERENCE VOTES ▶	15,001	16,000	500	2,000	9,493	13,500	4,799	8,700
	TOTAL AFTER COUNT 1	15,001	16,000	500	2,000	9,493	13,500	4,799	8,700
	Candidates B, A and F elected.	ELECTED (2) SURPLUS 5,001	ELECTED (1) SURPLUS 6,000				ELECTED (3) SURPLUS 3,500		
SUBSEQUENT COUNTS									
COUNT 2	All Candidate B ballot papers are distributed to the next preferred continuing candidate. The transfer value of Candidate B ballot papers is calculated by dividing the total number of surplus votes accrued by the total number of ballot papers received, e.g. 6,000 (surplus) ÷ 16,000 (ballot papers) = 0.375. The transfer value is 0.375. A quota of votes remains with the elected candidate.			C 2,000 x 0.375 D 3,500 x 0.375 E 1,000 x 0.375 G 7,000 x 0.375 H 2,500 x 0.375	750	1,312	375	2,625	937
	TOTAL AFTER COUNT 2	15,001	10,000	1,250	3,312	9,868	13,500	7,424	9,637
COUNT 3	All Candidate A ballot papers are distributed to the next preferred continuing candidate. The transfer value of Candidate A ballot papers is calculated by dividing the total number of surplus votes accrued by the total number of ballot papers received, e.g. 5,001 (surplus) ÷ 15,001 (ballot papers) = 0.3334. The transfer value is 0.3334.			C 900 x 0.3334 D 10,200 x 0.3334 E 0 x 0.3334 G 3,001 x 0.3334 H 900 x 0.3334	300	3,400	0	1,000	300
	TOTAL AFTER COUNT 3	10,000	10,000	1,550	6,712	9,868	13,500	8,424	9,937
COUNT 4	All Candidate F ballot papers are distributed to the next preferred continuing candidate. The transfer value of Candidate F ballot papers is calculated by dividing the total number of surplus votes accrued by the total number of ballot papers received, e.g. 3,500 (surplus) ÷ 13,500 (ballot papers) = 0.2593. The transfer value is 0.2593.				2,074	1,296	0	C 8,000 x 0.2593 D 5,000 x 0.2593 E 0 x 0.2593 G 500 x 0.2593 H 0 x 0.2593	129
	TOTAL AFTER COUNT 4	10,000	10,000	3,624	8,008	9,868	10,000	8,553	9,937
There are no further surpluses to be distributed, so the candidate with the lowest votes (Candidate C) is excluded. Their votes are distributed to the remaining candidates at the next counts (one count for each transfer value of votes they hold).									
COUNT 5-8	Counts five to eight continue with Candidate C ballot papers being distributed to the remaining candidates at the transfer value at which they were received, in order of decreasing transfer value.								
	Candidate E is elected.								
	TOTAL AFTER COUNT 5-8	10,000	10,000	0	9,908	10,168	10,000	9,976	9,937
						ELECTED (4) SURPLUS 168			
COUNT 9	All Candidate E ballot papers are distributed to the next preferred continuing candidate. The transfer value of Candidate E ballot papers is 168 (surplus) ÷ 11,393 (ballot papers) = 0.0147. The transfer value is 0.0147.					124			
	TOTAL AFTER COUNT 9	10,000	10,000	0	10,032	10,000	10,000	9,994	9,961
	Candidate D is elected.								
						ELECTED (5) SURPLUS 32			
COUNT 10	All Candidate D ballot papers are distributed to the next preferred continuing candidate. The transfer value of Candidate D ballot papers is 32 (surplus) ÷ 36,530 (ballot papers) = 0.0009. The transfer value is 0.0009.								
	TOTAL AFTER COUNT 10	10,000	10,000	0	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,006	9,980
	Candidate G is elected.							ELECTED (6)	NOT ELECTED
		A	B		D	E	F	G	
		ELECTED	ELECTED		ELECTED	ELECTED	ELECTED	ELECTED	

The Senate count story

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