

Fiji's got it
**Papua New
Guinea's
got it**
**Australia's
got it**

And now, of all the
things that he could do,
Nick Clegg wants Britain
to have **it**

So what is **it**?

It is the system that only these three countries use to elect their governments

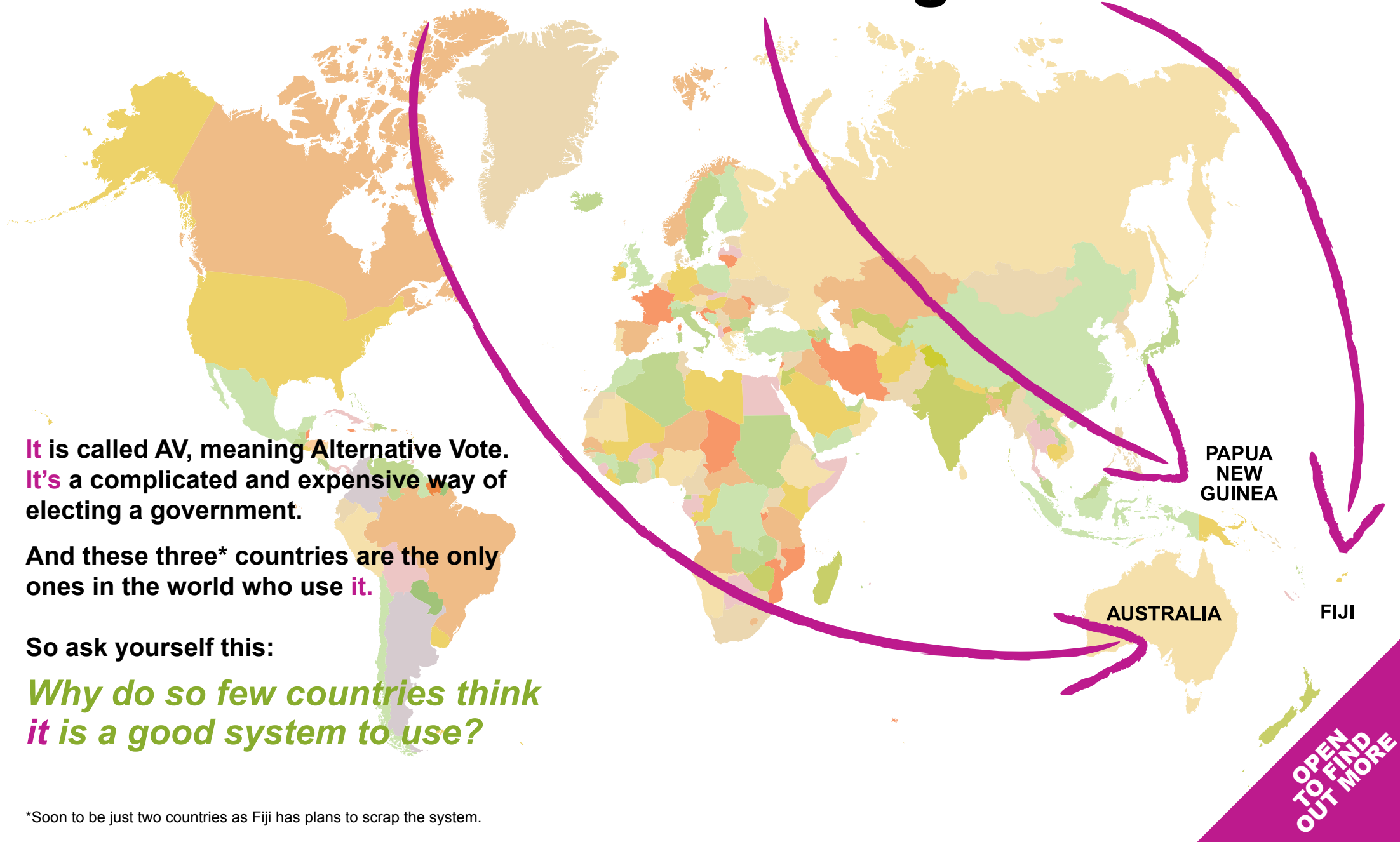
It is called AV, meaning Alternative Vote. **It's** a complicated and expensive way of electing a government.

And these three* countries are the only ones in the world who use **it**.

So ask yourself this:

*Why do so few countries think **it** is a good system to use?*

*Soon to be just two countries as Fiji has plans to scrap the system.



**OPEN
TO FIND
OUT MORE**

Learn about the proposals so you can make the best decision

Nick Clegg and the Liberal Democrats want Britain to change the way we vote to a method of voting called the 'Alternative Vote', sometimes called AV for short. A referendum is planned for May, when we all get to vote whether we agree with him or not.

This is an important referendum – changing the voting system is not something we should do lightly. It could have all sorts of unintended consequences. And we think it is right to be suspicious why the party that is pushing in the change is the Liberal Democrats.

We're all angry about the way some politicians abused our trust with their expenses – but that doesn't mean that the system for electing them is at fault. We may need better politicians, but we certainly don't need to change the way we elect them. After all, the current system, called 'First Past the Post' where the winner is the one that comes first, has stood our country, and many others around the world, in good stead for hundreds of years. At election after election, it has given the country the kind of government it was seeking – the occasional coalition mixed in with plenty of strong governments that reflected the type of leadership the country wanted at the time.

AV is unfair

Supporters of fringe parties can end up having their vote counted five or six times – and potentially decide the outcome of the election – while people who back the mainstream candidates only have one vote counted.

AV is not wanted

Even those who want to change the way we vote don't want AV. Before the general election, Nick Clegg described AV as "a miserable little compromise" and the Electoral Reform Society said they did "not regard it as suitable for the election of a parliament". Both Nick Clegg and the ERS now support the AV system and are campaigning for us to support it as well. But we know they'll want to change it again in a few years' time!

AV would have no effect on safe seats

In the 2010 UK General Election, over a third of MPs were elected with more than half of all votes cast. If the AV system were to be adopted, second and third choice votes in these seats would never be counted. This supposedly nationwide 'reform' will have absolutely no effect for the 15 million people living in those constituencies.

AV is not the reform we need

There are lots of genuine reforms which would go some way to restoring people's trust in politics – but changing our voting system to AV is not one of them. That's why it's a shame that we're spending months debating a system that nobody really wants – not to mention £90 million of taxpayers' money. That's the equivalent of paying the increase in tuition fees for 15,000 students.

The winner should be the winner

There's a very simple principle in politics and governments – whoever gets the most votes wins. It's wrong that the person who came second or third can overtake the person with the most votes and be allowed to win because the second and third choices of the little parties are counted again. Imagine applying the same principle at the Olympic Games and giving the gold medal to the person who came in third!

More coalition governments with the Alternative Vote system

Every election system will produce an occasional coalition government. It usually reflects the mood and needs of the country. The current system gave us coalition governments in the economic crisis of the 1930s, during the second world war, and again at the last election during another period of financial uncertainty.

But the Alternative Vote system is much more likely to produce a hung parliament, and the need for a coalition government. And coalition governments aren't always the strongest. First of all it takes ages to do the deals between the parties, with politicians horse-trading behind closed doors – remember May last year. Whilst that is going on the country is weak, the markets don't know who is running the show leading to financial uncertainty and instability.

Because politicians make these secret deals after the election, it means that any promises they made during the campaign are thrown out of the window. Just look at what Nick Clegg and the Liberal Democrats have done on tuition fees to get a flavour. And we're left with the crazy situation where it's the politicians who choose who forms the government, and what policies they keep or ditch, not the voters. And that has to be wrong.

The Lib Dems would always be part of a coalition government

And we've recently seen how they behave. As soon as they got a sniff of power they ditched their cast-iron pledge on tuition fees.

AV is complex

The Government will have to spend millions of pounds explaining to voters how AV works to prevent a fall in turnout at elections. In Australia, the only reason they have high turnout is because they made voting compulsory.

Only three other countries use AV

Out of all the countries in the world, only Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Australia use it. Australia had to introduce compulsory voting because turnout and participation in elections plummeted when it was first used, and a recent poll showed that a majority of Australians wanted to go back to First Past the Post. And Fiji have had enough of AV and are about to ditch it.

AV is unequal

AV treats someone's fifth or sixth choice as having the same importance as someone else's first preference – but there is a big difference between positively wanting one candidate to win and being able to 'put up with' another.

How the Alternative Vote system works

With this new system at the general election everybody would be given votes to say who their second, third and fourth or even lower choices are, as well as their first choice.

All the first choices are counted, and if one candidate gets over half of all votes cast then they are declared the winner. However, if no candidate achieves this, the candidate with the lowest number of first choice votes is eliminated and their votes are given to whoever they voted for as their second choice. This process continues until one person has won over half of all votes.

It takes ages to count. And it has

to be done by machine rather than by people. The cost of the counting machines make it a very expensive system.

Candidates from small fringe parties, such as the Monster Raving Loony Party, would be eliminated first. The second choices of their supporters would then be counted, giving them an influence over who wins.

And some of these parties are quite extreme. Think of the BNP or the Revolutionary Communist Party. Surely their supporters are not the kind of people we should be giving extra influence to in a general election?

Help us keep a fair voting system

NO to AV is a non-partisan, cross-party campaign whose aim is to keep our fair voting system by securing a No vote in the referendum on the Alternative Vote next May.

Website www.no2av.org **Telephone** 0844 573 6444 **Email** info@no2av.org

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NO to AV

SAY NO TO UNFAIR VOTES

WHY OUR CURRENT SYSTEM WORKS

1 It creates strong governments

The system creates strong accountable governments and means that coalitions are less common, with no horse-trading behind the scenes.

2 It's simple to understand

Each person votes for the candidate that they support and the candidate with the most votes is declared the winner.

3 It excludes extremist parties

Parties such as the BNP have never been able to get enough support in a single constituency to have one of their candidates elected as an MP.

4 It's cheap

Staying with our current system means we will not need to spend money on expensive vote counting machines.

5 It's fair

One person, one vote – unlike AV, where supporters of minority parties end up getting multiple votes.

6 It's the most widely used system in the world

People the world over have copied our tried and tested system. It's used in Canada, India and the USA amongst many others.

7 It's easy and quick to count

Because of its relative simplicity, our current system is easier and quicker to count than the AV system, which can take some time.

Look at what some of the people who want us to change the voting system were saying about AV just a few months ago...



“It’s a miserable little compromise”

Nick Clegg, leader of the Liberal Democrats speaking about AV

It’s obviously not so miserable that he won’t embrace it now he’s had a taste of power in a coalition government!

“As AV is not a proportional system, the Society does not regard it as suitable for the election of a representative body, e.g. a parliament.”

Electoral Reform Society

So why are they pumping millions of pounds into the campaign to change to the Alternative Vote system?

“The Alternative Vote does not give voters real power.”

Chris Huhne, Liberal Democrat and member of the coalition Cabinet

Do you think he has told his party leader this bit of information?