

## ELECTED SENATES

In our study of Senates around the world in 2014, we identified three ways of holding Senate elections:

- **elections by direct universal suffrage,**
- **elections by indirect universal suffrage, and**
- **mixed elections.**

Senate **elections by direct universal suffrage** occur when all citizens are called on to choose senators from a slate of candidates.<sup>1</sup> Of the 41 “elected” Senates, 21 are elected by direct universal suffrage. The best example of this situation is the Senate of the United States of America. In 48 of the 50 states, the elected candidate is the one who obtains the largest number of votes (an absolute majority is not required). The states of Georgia and Louisiana have adopted a double-ballot, uninominal majority election system. In the first round, a candidate who obtains the absolute majority is elected. In the absence of a majority vote, there is a second ballot for the two candidates who obtained the most votes in the first round. One-third of the U.S. Senate is renewed every two years. That explains why only one of the two senators for each state is voted in during an election. A number of other Senates are elected by direct universal suffrage, such as the Swiss, Brazilian and Mexican Senates.

In Senate elections by **indirect universal suffrage** there is an intermediate body between the electorate and the designation. More specifically, the voting is indirect when voters through their vote designate intermediaries who in turn will elect the Senators.<sup>2</sup> Direct universal suffrage is used in 16 of the 41 “elected” Senates. In South Africa, for example, senators are elected by indirect universal suffrage by the provincial assemblies of the country’s nine provinces, which must choose 10 senators each. First, each province must choose four senators according to the issues debated by the National Council of Provinces. Next, each province chooses six additional senators according to the weight of each political party represented in the provincial assembly. A similar system is used for the Senates of Germany and France, where senators are chosen by regional governments.

Last, there is the **mixed election** system where members who sit in the upper chamber are designated in elections by both direct universal suffrage and indirect universal suffrage. Four of the 41 “elected” Senates use this system. In Spain, for example, 208 of 266 senators are designated following direct universal suffrage in the provinces. The remaining 58 senators are indirectly elected. There is one senator designated by each of the 17 autonomous communities. Then there is one additional senator for every million inhabitants. This results in provincial delegations between one and eight (Andalusia has the largest number).

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<sup>1</sup> <http://perspective.usherbrooke.ca/bilan/servlet/BMDictionnaire?iddictionnaire=1526>

<sup>2</sup> <http://perspective.usherbrooke.ca/bilan/servlet/BMDictionnaire?iddictionnaire=1526>