

Chapter 2

Voting Strategically in Canada and Britain

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The objective of this paper is to ascertain the level of strategic voting in Canada and Britain through a simple “direct” approach. We wish to show that the level of strategic voting is remarkably constant over time and across space; it varies little from one election to the next in Canada and the level of strategic voting is about the same in Britain and Canada. We show that though the overall degree of strategic voting is low in each of the elections examined, it represents a substantial fraction of those for whom strategic voting is a meaningful option.

We define strategic voting as a vote for a party or candidate that is not the preferred one, motivated by the intention to affect the outcome of the election (Blais et al. 2001). This entails that in order to determine whether a vote is strategic or not, we need to know the person’s vote choice, her preferences, and her perceptions of the likely outcome of the election (Blais and Bodet 2007).

There are two basic approaches to the measurement of strategic voting: direct and indirect (Blais et al. 2005). The direct method consists in specifying the conditions that need to be satisfied in order for us to conclude that a vote is strategic. The indirect (or parametric) method consists in constructing a model of vote choice and in estimating, on the basis of simulations, how many individuals would have voted differently if perceptions of the likely outcome of the election had had no effect on their decision. In this paper, we make use of the direct approach.

We first apply this method to Canadian elections. Since 1988, Canadian Election Studies have included questions about voters’ perceptions of the various parties’ chances of winning in their constituency, questions that are required to ascertain strategic voting in single-member plurality systems. We then turn to the 2005 British Election Study, which incorporated questions about perceived chances of winning.

Clarifying What a Strategic Vote Does and Does Not Entail

The concept of strategic voting is often left undefined and/or unspecified. We identify concretely in the next paragraphs the conditions that have to be met for us to conclude that a vote is strategic.

We start with the simplest case, where there are only three candidates, and each voter rank orders the three candidates from the most liked to the most disliked and from the most likely to win to the least likely. Our definition of strategic voting explicitly refers to one condition: the person must vote for the candidate who is not the most preferred one. The second part of the definition states that the vote choice must be based on the motivation to make one’s vote “count” (Cox 1997). The implication is that the voter takes into account the candidates’ perceived chances of winning. How the voter factors in those considerations needs to be specified. As we show later, this condition amounts to stating that the person must vote for the preferred candidate among the top two contenders.

Figure 2.1 illustrates six possible scenarios when there are three candidates and no ties in preferences and perceived chances. The number indicates whether the candidate is the first, second, or third most preferred, and the rank order refers to perceived chances. In scenario A, the best-liked candidate is perceived to have the best chance, followed by the second and third preferences. In scenario F, the preferred candidate is perceived to be last in the race and the most disliked candidate is viewed as leading.

The first and most obvious observation to be made is that there is no reason not to vote for one’s preferred candidate when that candidate is perceived to be the top contender. So strategic voting is not an option when one’s first choice is perceived to be leading. Strategic voting is impossible under scenarios A and B.

Strategic voting is a real option when one’s preferred candidate is perceived to be third, as in scenarios D and F. Under both scenarios, the voter may decide to vote for her second choice candidate, who is perceived to have better chances of winning than her first choice candidate. The person would prefer her first choice to win but she reasons that this is very unlikely and that she would be better off with her second choice than with the third (most disliked) candidate. We should add that if the person votes for her third choice, this should *not* be construed as strategic voting. Such a person is apparently not attempting to maximize her utility (at least in the conventional sense of utility). The most plausible interpretation would be that this person enjoys being on the winning side; this is more aptly characterized as “bandwagon” voting (Bartels 1988). The strategic voter never votes for the candidate she dislikes the most.

Then there are the two scenarios, C and E, where the preferred candidate is perceived to be second in the race. We can quickly dispose of scenario E. The voter

A	B	C	D	E	F
1	1	2	2	3	3
2	3	1	3	1	2
3	2	3	1	2	1

Fig. 2.1 Strategic voting: three candidates (source: authors’ calculations)

has no reason to vote for her most disliked candidate nor for her second choice, who is trailing behind her first choice. Finally, there is scenario C. According to most accounts, and we subscribe to that view, no strategic voting is possible here. It is not clear why a voter would vote for her second choice in such a context. There are two possibilities. The first is that the voter simply likes to be on the winning side, and this is bandwagon voting, not strategic voting. The second is that the voter wants to make sure that her most disliked candidate does not win and so she supports the candidate who is most certain to defeat the disliked option. Such voters could be construed as casting a strategic vote on the basis of our definition, but we believe there are unlikely to be many of them. They would have to have very strong negative views about the disliked candidate, *and* they would have to believe that the disliked candidate's chances are not that small (even though the candidate is perceived to be trailing), *and* they would have to be strongly risk-averse, which would make them anxious about the distant possibility that the candidate with the weakest chance of winning could, against all odds, get elected. The most prudent approach is to assume that a voter who under scenario C votes for her second choice does *not* cast a strategic vote.

In short, in a three-way race, a vote is strategic when a person finds herself under scenarios D or F, and she votes for her second choice. This corresponds to the following two conditions: (a) the person finds herself in a situation where her preferred candidate is not one of the top two contenders, and (b) she votes for the candidate she likes the most among the top two contenders.¹

Our approach is exactly the same with four candidates. Figure 2.2 lists the 24 possible scenarios. The simplest situation concerns all cases where the preferred candidate is one of the top two contenders (scenarios A-F, G and H, M and N, and S and T). In all these cases there is *no* reason for a voter to strategically desert her first choice.

Whenever the preferred candidate is perceived to be third or fourth in the race, that is, in all the other scenarios, strategic voting becomes a real option. In such contexts, a strategic vote is simply a vote to support the candidate that the voter likes the most among the top two contenders. In some cases (scenarios Q and R), this entails voting for the third rather than the second choice. In no case does a strategic vote go to the most disliked candidate. Usually, but not always, the person votes for her second choice.

The approach proposed here has many advantages. It clearly specifies two simple conditions that must be met for a vote to be construed as strategic. The conditions can be applied to any context, whether there are three, four, five, or more candidates.

These conditions are consistent with standard interpretations of strategic voting. They are consistent with the standard interpretation that in a single-member constituency, the equilibrium should be to have two "viable" candidates, and that supporters of the nonviable candidates will be inclined to strategically support whoever they prefer among the two viable candidates (Duverger 1954; Cox 1997). The two-step approach allows us to first screen out those for whom strategic voting is a relevant option and then to determine who actually decides to cast a strategic vote.

A	B	C	D	E	F
1	1	1	1	1	1
2	2	3	3	4	4
3	4	2	4	2	3
4	3	4	2	3	2

G	H	I	J	K	L
2	2	2	2	2	2
1	1	3	3	4	4
3	4	1	4	1	3
4	3	4	1	3	1

M	N	O	P	Q	R
3	3	3	3	3	3
1	1	2	2	4	4
2	4	1	4	1	2
4	2	4	1	2	1

S	T	U	V	W	X
4	4	4	4	4	4
1	1	2	2	3	3
2	3	1	3	1	2
3	2	3	1	2	1

Fig. 2.2 Strategic voting: four candidates (source: authors’ calculations)

All the scenarios shown in Figs. 2.1 and 2.2 involve no tie. Allowing for ties increases exponentially the number of possibilities (see Blais and Nadeau 1996). We assume that observed ties in preferences reflect measurement imperfections that voters have a “true” order of preferences among the candidates running in their constituency, but that slight differences cannot always be captured by a single question, even with a 0–100 scale. So tied preferences are untied by using predicted feelings toward the parties – these predicted scores being obtained through regressions linking feelings toward the parties to party identification, leader evaluations, and socio-demographic characteristics.

Perceived tied chances are dealt with differently because our procedure requires us only to identify the top two contenders. When two parties are tied for first place, these two are obviously the top two contenders. When two parties are tied for second place, then the three top parties are considered “viable” parties.² The same logic applies to three- or four-way ties.

Voting Strategically in the 1988 Canadian Election

We start with the 1988 Canadian election, contested by three major parties: the Progressive Conservatives, the Liberals, and the NDP.³ We use the 1988 Canadian Election Study (CES). The campaign survey consists of 3,609 completed interviews, with a response rate of 57% (Johnston et al. 1992). The survey contains questions about vote choice, preferences, and expectations about the outcome of the election. Vote choice is measured by the typical vote intention questions. The analysis is confined to those who indicate a vote intention for one of the three major parties. Preferences are measured by 0–100 feeling thermometer questions about each of the parties. Expectations are tapped by questions about the perceived chances, on a 0–100 scale, of each party winning in the respondent’s local constituency.⁴

The first stage of our analysis leads us to sort out those for whom strategic voting is a meaningful option, that is, those whose first choice is perceived to have the weakest chances of winning (scenarios D and F in Fig. 2.1). All in all, 10% of voters find themselves in such a situation (Table 2.1). This is a relatively small percentage. This stems from the fact that only about 20% of voters prefer the candidate who actually finishes third in their constituency and that among them many believe that their first choice is one of the top two contenders (Blais 2002; Blais and Turgeon 2004).

Among this pool of voters who had to decide whether to vote sincerely or strategically, about a third did vote strategically. This gives us 3% strategic votes in the whole electorate. This is relatively little.

We assume that the propensity to vote strategically depends on the intensity of preferences and on the perceived weakness of the preferred party. More specifically, we predict that the inclination to vote strategically is weaker when one very much likes her first choice and when one thinks that her preferred party still has some chance of winning, even if that party is not one of the top two contenders (Blais 2002).

Preferences are measured by an index combining party identification, party ratings, and leader ratings. Expectations are measured by a CHANCE variable, which indicates the perceived (standardized) chances of the preferred party (see the Appendix for a description of the variables). Note that the analysis is confined to the pool of voters for whom strategic voting was a real option, that is, those whose preferred party was perceived not to be one of the top two contenders.

Table 2.1 The amount of strategic voting in Canada and Britain

Canada	Potential strategic vote (%)	Strategic vote (%)
1988	10.0	3.0
1993	11.2	2.2
1997	15.0	2.5
2000	11.3	3.8
Britain		
2005	15.1	5.0

Sources: Canadian Election Study (CES), various years; British Election Study 2005

Table 2.2 confirms those predictions. The more lukewarm one is about her preferred party and the worst its perceived chances, the greater the propensity to vote strategically. Many voters like their first choice quite a bit (the average is 0.56 on PREFERENCE) and many think that their first choice, even if it is third in the race, still has some chance of winning (the average on CHANCE is 0.15). As a consequence, a majority stick to their first choice and vote sincerely.

It could be argued that a person will cast a strategic vote only if she has both a weak preference for her first choice and thinks that her first choice has no chance of winning. According to that perspective, there should be an interaction effect between preferences and expectations. Table 2.2 tests for the presence of such an interaction effect. We find none. This is consistent with the absence of interaction effects between B and P in models of voter turnout (Blais 2000).

In the Canadian 1988 election we thus observe a relatively small amount of strategic voting. This may be surprising. This was the “free trade” election, and those opposed to free trade (FTA) had to consider which of the two parties against the free trade agreement, the Liberals and the NDP, was more likely to defeat the pro-FTA Conservatives in their own constituency (Johnston et al. 1992). The issue of strategic voting was hotly discussed during the campaign, and yet there appears to have been relatively little.

Voting Strategically in the 1993, 1997, and 2000 Canadian Elections

Perhaps the 1988 election was an exception. So let us look at the following three elections. The 1990s saw the explosion of the Canadian party system, with the advent of the Reform party outside Quebec and of the Bloc Québécois in Quebec. We now had a four-party system, and this theoretically increases the possibilities of

Table 2.2 Strategic voting, expectations, and intensity of preferences

	Can. 1988	Can. 1993	Can. 1997	Can. 2000	Brit. 2005
CHANCE	-1.95 (0.86)*	-0.69 (0.90)	-2.21 (1.06)*	-1.51 (1.04)	-2.33 (0.58)**
PREFERENCE	-2.07 (0.49)**	-1.34 (0.43)**	-1.71 (0.37)**	-1.26 (0.37)**	-1.14 (0.25)**
INTERCEPT	0.76 (0.31)	0.01 (0.26)	0.26 (0.24)	0.46 (0.26)	0.46 (0.18)**
N	229	319	334	236	595
Pseudo R2	0.09	0.04	0.07	0.04	0.04
	Can. 1988	Can. 1993	Can. 1997	Can. 2000	Brit. 2005
CHANCE	-0.15 (2.61)	-2.35 (2.62)	-4.99 (2.84)	-0.91 (2.85)	-2.19 (1.69)
PREFERENCE	-1.62 (0.79)*	-1.84 (0.80)*	-2.21 (0.58)**	-1.16 (0.56)*	-1.12 (0.35)**
CH * PREF	-3.45 (4.64)	3.28 (4.78)	5.27 (4.59)	-1.05 (4.68)	-0.24 (2.63)
INTERCEPT	0.52 (0.46)	0.25 (0.43)	0.52 (0.35)	0.40 (.36)	0.45 (0.23)
N	229	319	334	236	595
Pseudo R2	0.09	0.04	0.08	0.04	0.04

Sources: Canadian Election Study (CES), various years; British Election Study 2005

strategic voting. As can be seen in Figs. 2.1 and 2.2, a strategic vote is a meaningful option in half of the potential scenarios in a four-party system, compared with a third in a three-party system.

Our approach is the same as for the 1988 election. We use vote intention, preferences are measured by 0–100 feeling thermometer questions and expectations by questions about the parties' perceived chances of winning in the respondent's local constituency, on a 0–100 scale. As previously, missing observations are imputed and ties in preferences are untied by using predicted party feeling scores.

The only difference is that we now have four parties, the fourth party being the Bloc Québécois in Quebec and the Reform party elsewhere for the 1993 and 1997 elections. In the 2000 election, the Reform party had become the Alliance and was present in Quebec as well, obtaining 6% of the vote in that province, more than the Conservatives and the NDP. For that last election, we keep the four "main" parties in Quebec (the Liberals, the Bloc Québécois, the Alliance, and the Conservatives), which all had more than 5% of the vote, and we drop the NDP, which had only 2%.

The first stage of the analysis consists in sorting out those who found themselves in a situation where a strategic vote was a real option, that is, those whose first choice was not one of the top two contenders. There were slightly more of them: 11% in 1993 and 2000 and 15% in 1997 (Table 2.1), but the numbers are not substantially higher than in 1988. In Canadian elections, it would seem that the pool of potential strategic vote is a small fraction of the electorate.

Within that pool of potential strategic voters, about one out of five in 1993 and 1997, and one in three in 2000, voted for the preferred party among the top two contenders, thus casting a strategic vote. All in all, this amounts to 2% of the vote being construed as strategic in 1993, 2–3% in 1997, and 4% in 2000.

In Canadian elections, it would seem that there is relatively little strategic voting. Most voters have no reason (*sic*) to even think about casting a strategic vote because they perceive their preferred candidate to be among the top two contenders in their constituency.

As we have done in the case of the 1988 election, we can test whether the propensity to cast a strategic vote hinges on the strength of one's preferences and on assessments of the viability of the preferred party in the constituency. Table 2.2 reports the findings for 1993, 1997, and 2000. These results confirm that those who very much like their first choice and/or think that it has some chance of winning (even if the party is trailing in the constituency) are less inclined to vote strategically. All the coefficients have the expected (negative) sign. Note, however, that the coefficient of CHANCE is not statistically significant in 1993 and 2000. Finally, as in 1988, there is no evidence of an interaction effect, and thus no support for the hypothesis that it is only those who have weak preferences *and* who think that their preferred party is not viable are willing to cast a strategic vote.

Like in 1988, then, the majority of those whose first choice is perceived to be last in the local constituency stick to their party either because they feel some loyalty to that party or because they have not given up hope that, despite all the odds, that party could win.

Voting Strategically in the 2005 British Election

Perhaps things are different in Britain. Indeed the literature on strategic voting in Britain suggests that between 5 and 10% of the vote can be construed as strategic (see the review by Alvarez and Nagler 2000). We use the 2005 British Internet campaign survey. For the first time, the British Election Study included questions about respondents' perceptions of the various parties' chances of winning in their local constituency, and for the first time we are able to apply the same methodology to British data.

As in Canada, vote choice is measured by vote intention questions, preferences are tapped by party rating questions, and expectations by questions about the parties' chances of winning in the respondent's constituency. In the British case, party ratings and perceived chance questions use 0–10 scales, not 0–100 scales as in Canada. Like in Canada, tied preferences are untied on the basis of predicted party ratings. We confine ourselves to England and to the three major parties: Labour, Conservatives, and Liberal Democrats.

All in all, as indicated in Table 2.1, 15% of British voters perceived their first choice to not to be one of the top two contenders. Within this pool of potential strategic votes, about one-third, corresponding to 5% of the total sample, intended to cast a strategic vote.

Strategic voting appears to be slightly higher in Britain than in Canada, about 5% against typically around 3%. This is a combination of two factors. First the pool of potential strategic voters is slightly larger in Britain; the pool appears to be closer to 10% in Canada and closer to 15% in Britain. And the probability of deserting one's first choice was about one-third in Britain while it ranged from one-sixth to one-third in Canada.

Our estimated amount of strategic voting in Britain is substantially lower than that suggested by previous analyses, the typical estimate being around 10%. British Election Studies (BES) usually relied on a question in which respondents are invited to indicate the main reason for their vote, one of these options being "I really prefer another party but it stands no chance of winning in this constituency." The 2005 BES added another category: "I vote tactically."

All in all, 8% of the respondents indicated that they preferred another party that had no chance of winning and another 7% said that they were voting tactically, for a total of 15% referring to strategic motivations. This is slightly more than the percentage reported in previous elections,⁵ and a lot more than our estimate of 5%.

There are problems with the "British" question. First, as shown by Fisher (2004) (see also Fisher and Curtice 2006), quite a few respondents who report a strategic motivation appear to vote for the party to which they give the highest rating, which leaves one wonder whether they really prefer another party. Second, our own analyses show that the majority (71%) of those who said they preferred another party that had no chance placed that "no chance" party among the top two contenders, 36% even putting that party as having the best chance of winning.⁶

We would contend that our methodology, which directly flows from our conceptualization of what a strategic vote does and does not entail, is more adequate than the British Election Study approach, which consists in asking voters to tell us whether their motivation is strategic. The BES approach assumes that voters are able to identify the reasons why they vote the way they do, and that all the major reasons have been properly identified in the other response categories. Some respondents may opt for the strategic vote “reason” only because none of the proposed “nonstrategic” reasons looks appropriate.

According to our estimations, then, strategic voting is limited in Britain, as in Canada, and for the same basic reason: relatively few voters find themselves in a situation where thinking strategically makes sense since their preferred party is perceived to be one of the top two contenders.

Still the potential pool of strategic votes is slightly larger in Britain and within that pool the propensity to desert one’s preferred party is slightly higher than in Canada. Why? The simplest response is that British voters who find themselves in the pool of potential strategic votes tend to be slightly more pessimistic about their preferred party’s chances (the overall mean for CHANCE is 0.14 in the four Canadian elections and it is 0.10 in Britain) and this perception seems to have a slightly larger impact on their vote choice than in Canada (the strongest CHANCE coefficient in Table 2.2 is observed for the 2005 British election).

There are some small differences between Canada and Britain, and between elections in Canada, but the basic story is the same. The potential for strategic voting is between 10 and 15% and the actual amount between 2 and 5%.

All our analyses are based on campaign survey data. Strategic considerations may get primed by media emphasis on the horse race and the publication of polls, and so the propensity to vote strategically may increase as the campaign progresses. We have tested that possibility, and we have estimated the amount of strategic voting in the first and second halves of each campaign. Table 2.3 shows no support for the hypothesis that the inclination to vote strategically strengthens over the course of the campaign.

Table 2.3 Strategic voting over the course of the campaign

	Can. 1988 (%)	Can. 1993 (%)	Can. 1997 (%)	Can. 2000 (%)	Brit. 2005 (%)
Pool of strategic vote					
First half	11.3	11.3	15.5	10.5	15.0
Second half	8.8	11.1	14.5	11.9	15.3
(<i>p</i> -value)	(0.07)	(0.11)	(0.45)	(0.78)	(0.30)
Strategic vote					
First half	3.6	2.3	2.9	3.9	4.9
Second half	2.2	2.2	2.2	3.7	5.1
(<i>p</i> -value)	(0.13)	(0.19)	(0.09)	(0.17)	(0.51)

Sources: Canadian Election Study (CES), various years; British Election Study 2005

Conclusion

We have proposed a strict definition of strategic voting, a vote for a party or candidate other than the preferred one, motivated by the intention to affect the outcome of the election, and we have outlined two specific conditions that must be met for a vote to be construed as strategic: the person perceives her preferred candidate/party not to be one of the top two contenders, and she votes for the candidate/party she likes more among the top two contenders.

We have proceeded to estimating the amount of strategic voting on the basis of these two criteria in four Canadian elections (1988, 1993, 1997, 2000) and one British election (2005). We have shown that the pool of potential strategic votes is between 10 and 15% and the overall amount between 2 and 5%. Strategic voting is limited, and the main reason is simply that most voters perceive their first choice to be one of the top two contenders and they have no incentive to think strategically. Among those who find themselves in a situation where a strategic choice is a meaningful option, a substantial minority do vote strategically.

We have found some small differences between the five elections examined here, and there appears to be slightly more strategic voting in Britain than in Canada, but we are struck by the similarities. There were some elections where strategic considerations were widely discussed by the parties and the media and others where they were not part of the agenda, yet the final amount of strategic voting did not vary that much from one election to the next.

Does this mean that Duverger was wrong? Yes and no. There is clear evidence that among those who see their first choice to be third or fourth in the local horse race a substantial fraction is willing to support one of the top two contenders. But relatively few people are faced with the dilemma of choosing between a “weak” first choice and a “strong” second choice, and so strategic voting is limited.

We should acknowledge that we have confined ourselves to the choice between the main three or four parties. In each constituency, there are many more “very weak” parties or candidates, whose chances of winning must be tiny or nil. We have no way of estimating how many voters strategically desert these parties, because respondents are not invited to rate them or to evaluate their chances of winning. It is fair to assume that the propensity to vote for a more viable alternative must be even stronger among supporters of these very weak candidates.

Our estimates are based on a rather strict definition of strategic voting. Different definitions would yield different estimates. In our view the mere observation of a hiatus between preference and vote choice, in particular, is not sufficient to conclude that a vote is strategic. We assume, like Cox (1997), that a strategic vote is motivated by the concern to make one’s vote count, and that it must be distinguished from other motivations such as the mere pleasure of being on the winning side, which we associate with the bandwagon effect.

Our analyses, contrary to almost all previous studies, are based on data coming from campaign surveys, rather than postelection surveys. Postelection surveys have one advantage over campaign surveys; they provide information about actual vote

choice rather than vote intention. They have, however, one major shortcoming; they cannot tell us about voters' expectations about the outcome of the election. These expectations, it seems to us, are central in the standard conception of strategic voting; the voter does not vote for her preferred party because she thinks that the preferred party has no (little) chance of winning. We would thus contend that campaign surveys are more appropriate than postelection surveys when it comes to ascertaining strategic voting.

Finally, our findings should not be construed as indicating that very few voters are motivated by strategic considerations. They rather suggest that strategic considerations are rarely *decisive*, in the sense that they lead voters to vote for a party other than the one they would have supported otherwise. Many more voters may well vote for their preferred party partly because they perceive that party to be viable, that is, they might have voted differently if they had thought that the party had no chance of winning. A "strategic" voter does not always cast a strategic vote (Blais 2004).

Appendix: Survey Questions

*Party Evaluation**

1988–2000 (Canada):

"How would you rate (name of the party)? The thermometer runs from 0 to 100°, where 0 represents a very negative feeling and 100 a very positive feeling."

2005 (Great Britain):

"Now, some questions about the political parties. On a scale that runs from 0 to 10, where 0 means strongly dislike and 10 means strongly like, how do you feel about (name of the party)?"

Leader Evaluation

1988–2000 (Canada):

"How would you rate (name of the leader)? The thermometer runs from 0 to 100 degrees, where 0 represents a very negative feeling and 100 a very positive feeling."

* Questions vary slightly in Canada between 1988 and 2000. For example, in the 2000 election survey, respondents were asked "how do you feel..." instead of "how would you rate (name of the party)?" The question number in parenthesis is for 1988.

2005 (Great Britain):

“Now, thinking about party leaders for a moment. Using a scale that runs from 0 to 10, where 0 means strongly dislike and 10 means strongly like, how do you feel about (name of the leader)?”

Vote Intention**1988–2000 (Canada):**

“If you do vote, which party do you think you will vote for?”

2005 (Great Britain):

“If you do vote in the general election, have you decided which party you will vote for, or haven’t you decided yet? Which party is that?”

Local Chance (Standardized)**1988–2000 (Canada):**

“We will be using a scale, which runs from 0 to 100, where 0 represents no chance for the party, 50 represents an even chance, and 100 represents certain victory. Using the 0–100 scale, what do you think the (name of the party) chances are of winning in your riding?”

2005 (Great Britain):

“On a scale that runs from 0 to 10, where 0 means very unlikely and 10 means very likely, how likely is it that (name of the party) will win the election in your local constituency?”

PREFERENCE (Average Score)

- (a) The evaluation given to the preferred party, from 0 to 1
- (b) The evaluation given to the leader of the preferred party, from 0 to 1
- (c) A dummy that equals 1 if the respondent’s party ID is the preferred party, and 0 otherwise

CHANCE

Local chance (standardized) given to the preferred party, from 0 to 1.

Notes

1. The attentive reader will have noticed that the criterion used in the definition of strategic voting, that the person votes for a candidate who is not the most preferred, does not appear as an explicit condition. This is because if a person's preferred candidate is not one of the top two contenders and if that person votes for the candidate that she likes most among the top two contenders, it necessarily follows that she votes for someone who is not the preferred candidate.
2. This corresponds to what Cox (1997) calls a non-Duvergerian equilibrium.
3. All other parties received only 5% of the vote. Only one party, the Reform party, got more than 1%. No minor party candidate was elected.
4. Missing values on preferences and expectations were imputed using Stata command "IMPUTE."
5. The increase is most likely due to the presence of two «strategic» response categories in 2005 (previous BES surveys did not have the «I vote tactically» response).
6. The proportion who placed their preferred party among the top two contenders is slightly higher among «I vote tactically» respondents (78%) than among «I really prefer another party that has no chance» respondents (65%).



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