

POLITICAL METEOROLOGY: AN ENQUIRY INTO THE ABILITY OF BY-ELECTIONS TO FORECAST THE OUTCOME OF THE SUBSEQUENT GENERAL ELECTION DURING THE PERIOD FROM THE THIRD REFORM ACT TO THE GREAT WAR 1885-1910 *OR ANECDOTE NOT DATA*

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Abstract: This paper examines the value of by-elections as predictors of the next general election during the period from the third reform act to the passing of the parliament act of 1911. It finds that gross counts of party changes or swings in voting percentage provide no statistical insight. A heuristic review of the by-elections during the last year of a parliament occasionally provides some explanatory intuition.

A by-election provides an opportunity for the voters in a constituency to evaluate, speak, and vote upon current government's performance. The results of by-elections are often taken as prognosticating the outcome of future general elections. Two objects from the Late Victorian through Edwardian period reflect this common perception.

One of these is the cover of a collection of essays on Parliamentary by-elections from 1832-1914¹. The illustration is a cartoon from the 13 March 1913 issue of *Punch*. Its title is 'Set Stormy' and it is described as 'a contemporary view of the meteorology of by-elections'.² The cartoon shows Lloyd-George and a Liberal party by-election candidate standing in a hallway. Through the window one can see a fierce rain falling. The by-election candidate is bundled up and has an umbrella in his hand. The Chancellor is wearing a smoking jacket and enjoying a good cigar. The dialogue in the caption reads:

Candidate: 'I say, this looks pretty hopeless. Still going down.'

Lloyd-George: 'OH! It'll be all right in a few years.'

Candidate: 'Yes, but I have to go out now.'

The second object is a quote from the *Liberal Unionist* of 1 February 1889.³ The newspaper complained of the 'terrific outburst of political meteorology' associated with the outcome of recent by-elections. Gladstone had been touting the by-election returns as a rejection of Salisbury's government.⁴ In a series of articles in 1887, 1889, and 1891, he used arbitrary and arcane arguments to predict combined Liberal and Home Rule majorities of 78 to 120, 109 to 116, and 100 to 160, respectively.⁵ Their actual majority was forty in the 1892 general election.

¹ Otte, T.G., and Readman, Paul, *By-elections in British Politics, 1832-1914* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2013), front cover.

² Ibid, back cover.

³ *Liberal Unionist*, 1 February 1889 cited in Roberts, Matthew, '“A Terrific Outburst of Political Meteorology”: By-elections and the Unionist Electoral Ascendancy in Late-Victorian England', Otte, T.G., and Readman, Paul, *By-elections in British Politics, 1832-1914* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2013), p.179. (Further cites to this work are abbreviated by 'O&R'. A second cite of an article in this volume is by author's name and 'O&R'.)

⁴ See Gladstone, W.E., 'Electoral Facts of 1887', *Nineteenth Century* 24 (September 1887); 'Electoral Facts of To-Day' *Nineteenth Century* 26 (December 1889); and 'Electoral Facts, No III' *Nineteenth Century* 30 (September 1891).

⁵ Roberts, 'O&R', p. 187.

These two objects raise the question of the effectiveness of ‘political meteorology’ defined as using by-election results forecast to a general election.⁶ Can the patterns of by-election outcomes provide clues to predict the winner of the next general election, especially during the period of the objects?

The figures cited below are displayed in the attached table, entitled ‘By-elections 1885-1910’.

This was a period of significant political turmoil. The electorate was evenly divided. There were four Liberal governments and three Conservative; however, the Conservatives were in power sixty per cent of the time. Before examining the by-election data, a review of the politics of the period provides background.

In the period between the third reform act and the outbreak of the First World War, 1884-1914, there were seven general elections.⁷

The November 1885 general election was the first under the Third Reform Act’s expanded electorate and seat redistribution.⁸ The result was that the 23rd parliament was hung (i.e. no party had a majority.) Liberals won 319 seats with sixteen independent liberals, providing enough support for Gladstone to form a government.⁹ However, this was a short lived parliament, lasting only six months. Gladstone’s epiphany with respect to Irish home rule rent his party. The parliament was dissolved in June 1886 when the Irish home rule act failed. Due to its short sitting, sixty per cent of the by-elections were ministerial.¹⁰

The election for the 24th parliament in July 1886 also resulted in a hung parliament. There were 316 Conservative members returned compared to 192 Gladstone Liberals; however, 77 Liberal Unionists were also returned. This faction, led by Chamberlain and Hartington, had split from Gladstone and the rest of the Liberal party over the Irish home rule issue. These schismatic members supported the Conservative leader, Salisbury, in forming a government, but did not immediately join the cabinet. This parliament ran almost its full term, being dissolved in June 1892.

The election for the 25th parliament in July 1892 again produced a hung parliament. The Conservatives returned 268 seats; Liberal Unionists 45;¹¹ Liberals 272; and Irish Nationalists 81. The combination of Liberals and Irish Nationalists, totalling 353, allowed Gladstone to form his fourth ministry. He resigned in March 1894 over a dispute with his own cabinet over naval estimates. He was succeeded by Rosebery, a Liberal imperialist. Fifteen months later, this government fell over a purported army cordite supply scandal.

⁶ Roberts, ‘O&R’, p. 178.

⁷ All figures are from Rallings, Colin and Thrasher, Michael, eds. and comps., *British Electoral Facts 1832-1999* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000).

⁸ Before the third reform act there were 196 single-member constituencies and 211 two-member constituencies. (There were also twelve three-member and one four-member constituency for a total of 658 seats.) After the act, there were 616 single-member and only twenty-seven two-member constituencies.

⁹ There were 670 seats in parliament during this period. Thus the 319 Liberal with 16 liberal independent represented exactly half the seats. Further, the 86 Irish Nationalists supported Gladstone due to his Irish home rule initiative.

¹⁰ The 1707 act of succession required that a member of Commons who took a royal appointment had to stand for re-election in his constituency. The purpose of the re-election was to assure the independence of Commons vis-à-vis the crown. By the time of the third reform act, this requirement was constitutionally obsolete. This requirement was severely limited in 1919 and abolished in 1926. See Pugh, Martin ‘Queen Anne is dead’: The Abolition of Ministerial By-elections, 1867-1926’ *Parliamentary History*, 21 (2002), 277-305.

¹¹ Many Liberal Unionists drifted back to The Liberal party reconciling to Gladstone and home rule. On the Liberal Unionist party movement, see Cawood, Ian, *The Liberal Unionist Party A History* (London, I.B. Tauris: 2012).

The election for the 26th parliament in July 1895 produced a Conservative majority of 411 seats including 71 Liberal Unionists. There were 177 Liberals and 82 Irish Nationalists. The Liberal Unionists immediately joined Salisbury's government, most notably Chamberlain as the Colonial Secretary. The later years of the parliament were dominated by the Second Boer War. In September 1900 the parliament was dissolved on encouraging war news.

The election, known as the 'Khaki election', for the 27th parliament in October 1900 again produced a Conservative majority with 402 combined seats between the Conservatives and Liberal Unionists. The Liberals held 183 seats and the Irish Nationalists 82. This parliament also saw the first two Labour members returned. An ailing and failing Salisbury resigned in July of 1902. He was succeeded by his nephew Balfour. In 1903, Chamberlain divided the Conservative party over the imperial preference tariff, reversing the free trade policy.¹² Balfour resigned after a series of poor by-election results and intraparty dissension resulting in a parliamentary dissolution in January 1906.¹³

The election for the 28th parliament in January 1906 was a Liberal landslide. The Conservatives and Liberal Unionists retained only 156 seats. The Liberals won 399 seats. Labour increased to 29,¹⁴ and the Irish Nationalists maintained 82 seats.¹⁵ Campbell-Bannerman served as the Liberal prime minister for the first two plus years of the parliament until ill-health forced his resignation. Asquith was his successor. In 1909 the Chancellor, Lloyd-George brought forth the 'people's budget'. It was rejected by the House of Lords, causing a constitutional crisis. Lords by tradition did not reject finance bills. Parliament was dissolved in January 1910 to ask for a mandate on the 'people's budget'.

The election for the 29th parliament in January 1910 resulted in neither the Liberals nor Conservatives receiving a majority. The Conservatives with their Liberal Unionist¹⁶ allies won 272 seats. The Liberals obtained 274. There were 40 Labour members and 82 Irish Nationalists. In return for support of home rule, the Irish Nationalists backed a continuation of the Liberal Asquith government. The Lords passed the 'people's budget'. The government, however, wanted a bill to limit permanently the Lords' power. The new king, George V, demanded a new election be fought before he would agree to create the necessary peers to pass the bill. Accordingly the parliament was dissolved in November 1910 after sitting for less than a year.

The election for the 30th parliament in December 1910 had results similar to the previous January 1910 election. Neither the Conservatives nor the Liberals received a majority. There were 271 Conservatives (including Liberal Unionists), and 272 Liberals.¹⁷ Labour and Irish Nationalists each gained each two seats, totalling 42 and 84 respectively. Again Irish Nationalists supported the continuation of Asquith's Liberal¹⁸ government. The act to limit Lords was passed without having to pack Lords. An Irish home rule bill was also passed, but the outbreak of the Great War put its implementation on hold. This parliament sat until the end of war.

¹² An interesting narrative about the Conservative party during this period is Green, E.H.H., *The Crisis of Conservatism: The politics, economics, and ideology of the British Conservative party 1880-1914* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 1995).

¹³ Rallings, Colin and Thrasher, Michael, *Electoral Facts*, p. 157.

¹⁴ For an overview of the rise of the Labour party, see Tanner, Duncan, *Political change and the Labour party 1900-1918* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990).

¹⁵ The Irish Nationalist ran only 86 candidates of which 82 were returned with 73 of them unopposed.

¹⁶ The Liberal Unionist party formally merged into the Conservative party in 1912.

¹⁷ There was one independent conservative elected. If he is included into the Conservative party sum then both the Liberals and Conservatives won the same number of seats.

¹⁸ For a dated but still interesting view of the dissipation of the Liberal party after the second 1910 general election see Dangerfield, George, *The Strange Death of Liberal England* (Stanford, CA: SUP, 1997)

The statistical question becomes: Do the by-elections during the n th parliament provide any insight into the voting for the n plus one parliament. A look at the characteristics of by-elections provides insight into their ability to forecast.¹⁹

Between the 1885 election of the 23rd parliament and the December 1910 election of the 30th parliament, there were 668 by-elections. This is an annual turnover of 4.3%.²⁰ This is equivalent to almost twenty-nine by-elections per year. The highest turnover was during the short 1885 23rd parliament at 11.3%, driven by the governmental change. The lowest turnover was 3.2% during the 1900 27th parliament. The two adjoining elections had below average turnovers of 3.4% for the 1895 26th parliament and of 3.8% for the 1906 28th parliament.

Of the 668 by-elections, there was a party change in only 108 (or 16.2%). In the short January 1910 29th parliament there were no changes of party in any by-election. Given the highly political atmosphere during the ‘people’s budget’ dispute and the limiting of Lords’ power, this was understandable. The small changes between the results of the January 1910 and December 1910 general elections demonstrate that the political party lines were hard set. The other short parliament, 1885 23rd, had three changes, all liberal losses. Two were to Conservatives and one to an independent. During the 1900 27th parliament there were thirty-one changes in party, resulting in a net gain of sixteen for the out-of-power Liberal party, which won the 1906 general election. During the 1886 24th parliament there were twenty-six changes in party. The out-of-power Liberals had a net gain of twenty seats. They also won the 1892 general election. During the 1895 26th parliament, eighteen seats changed party. This resulted in a net of loss eleven seats for the ruling Conservatives, which despite this setback handily won the 1900 general election. During the 1906 27th parliament, sixteen seats changed party, all losses by ruling Liberal party. The Conservatives gained twelve seats and Labour four. Despite this setback, the Liberals maintained control of the government after the January 1910 general election. During the 1892 25th parliament, fourteen seats changed, the out-of-power Conservatives gained net four seats and won back control of parliament in the July 1895 election. The pattern is clear, but from the perspective of ‘political meteorology’ disappointing. During each parliament the incumbent, controlling party lost seats. The size of the loss does not provide any indication of the success of the incumbent party. The controlling party also did not gain seats at the next general even if it retained control. Looking at the net seat changes as a percentage does not add any further insight.²¹

The converse of a party change is the party retaining or holding the seat. During the period, the incumbent party held the seat 83.8% of the time in the by-election. For the same seats, however, the party held the seat 85.8% in the next general election.

Of the 136 ministerial by-elections, only two resulted in a change in party. One was the 4 May 1905 Brighton defeat of an incumbent Conservative by a Liberal.²² It was one of seven Conservative losses in the last year of the 27th 1900 parliament. There were no Conservative

¹⁹ The by-election data are based upon Craig, F.W.S., ed. and comp., *Chronology of British Parliamentary By-elections 1833-1987* (Chichester: Parliamentary Research Services, 1987). It is expanded upon and cross referenced with Craig, F.W.S., ed. and comp., *British parliamentary Election Results* (Chichester: Political Reference Publications, 1972) and Walker, Brian M., *Parliamentary election Results in Ireland, 1801-1922* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1978)

²⁰ This statistic is the number of by-elections in a parliament divided by the product of the number of seat times the length of the parliament. This statistic measures the frequency of by-elections commensurably between parliaments of different lengths.

²¹ The final part of the attached table provides a complete breakdown of losses and gains by parliament and by party.

²² The second was the famous 24 April 1908 Manchester NW defeat of the then liberal Winston Churchill standing after being appointed president of the board of trade.

gains in that pre-election year. The Conservatives held six seats, or slightly under half of those contested that year. That is not a good record when over eighty per cent of the time the incumbent held. The Liberals held the seat in all three by-elections they contested. This scenario is consistent with the January 1906 general election Liberal landslide. Since the Conservatives lost a net total of only sixteen seats during the entire sitting it may have looked as if storm clouds had gathered for the Conservative party.

During the next parliament, 28th January 1906 the incumbent party also lost a net of sixteen seats. In the last year of parliament, 1909, the Liberals contested eight elections: winning four and losing four. Three of the losses were to the Conservatives and one to Labour. The Conservative held the two contested by-elections. Possible storm clouds were looming again for the incumbent party. The weather was even more ominous: The only contested by-election in Britain after Lloyd George introduced his 'people's budget' was Bermondsey on 28 October 1909.²³ It was a loss of a 'safe' Liberal constituency to a Conservative. The Liberals had won the seat with over 61% of the vote in 1906. The Conservatives won the three way by-election with 47.5% of the vote. This result caused Labour to trim its ambitions for the upcoming election. Labour was concerned that in certain districts a three-way race would assure a Conservative result. This action by Labour prevented enough storm clouds from forming so that the Liberal government with Labour and importantly Irish Nationalist support was retained after the January 1910 election. Bermondsey seat comfortably returned a Liberal in the January 1900 election with 55% of the vote in a two-way race. To push the metaphor, Labour seeded the clouds.

During the 1886 24th parliament the incumbent Conservatives lost twenty seats net. Gladstone had been using these results to predict a Liberal triumph in his *Nineteenth Century* articles. In the twelve months before the July 1892 election were there any storm clouds? Of the eleven contested British by-elections in which the Conservative was the incumbent, the Conservatives held nine seats. Thus 81.8% of the seats contested were held. This was nearly the 83.8% observed average over the entire 1885-1910 period. The Liberals held all three contests in which they were the incumbent. This seems to be hardly threatening weather. Gladstone's weather gauge did not improve as the general election got closer.

During the 1892 25th parliament, the Liberals lost a net of only four seats in by-elections. They were to lose ninety-eight in the 1895 general election. How was the weather during the last year before that July 1895 election? The Liberal incumbents were challenged in nine contests and were successful in six, losing three. This hold percentage of only 66.7% is below the observed average. There were seven contested by-elections with Conservative or Liberal Unionist incumbents. They were also successful in six, losing only one. This 85.7% retention percentage was above average. Thus during the last year, the Liberals lost a net of two seats. The net loss for the Liberals was only four seats during the three year sitting of the parliament; however, half of the net loss occurred in the last year. Some clouds, perhaps?

The only multi-year parliament not yet discussed with respect to the by-elections during the last year of its sitting is the 1895 26th parliament. The incumbent Conservatives lost a net of eleven seats; however, they maintained their majority in the October 1900 general election. In the year before the 'Khaki election', the Conservatives won all seven contested by-elections in which they were incumbents. Similarly the Liberals won all three of the contested by-elections in which they were incumbents. The results were neutral which may have meant fair weather for the sitting Salisbury government.

²³ The full story of the contest is detailed in O'Brien, Phillips Payson, 'Lloyd George, Limehouse, and the Realignment of British Politics: The Bermondsey By-election of 1909' in 'O&R' pp. 251-272.

So far we have looked at raw totals of seats changes and patterns in the last year before a general election. Whilst some clever anecdotes can be drawn, nothing of statistical significance can be determined. The next step is to look a little deeper into the vote totals to find a pattern. To do this one needs to look at changes in voting percentage or 'swing' at each separate by-election. This analysis of swing between the previous general election, the by-election, and the next general election cannot be applied to all 668 by-elections.²⁴ This is due to both sephological and political factors. The 127 Irish by-elections are not considered because the politics of that island during this period was all one issue: home rule. Except for four counties in northeastern Ulster and the Dublin University, the Irish representation was consistently Nationalist. There can be no insight from these returns about the relative position of either the Conservative or Liberal party. Next the 186 uncontested British by-elections are eliminated as there are no vote totals. Further, the thirty-one by-elections in a two-member district are omitted because multi-member races do not provide comparable returns.²⁵ This leaves 324 contested British single-member by-elections to be studied. However another 106 of those do not have fully comparable data. For example, a general election was uncontested, or a Labour party candidate won in a general. Therefore there were only 218 (or 32.6%) by-elections for which satisfactory comparable by-election swing data exists.

Looking at the parliaments historically, there were four by-elections with complete swing data during the 1885 23rd parliament. From the 23rd to the 24th parliament, the Conservative percentage of the vote increased from 45.6% to 51.8%.²⁶ This was a gain of 5.6%. However, in a constituency with a by-election the Conservative lost 2.3% at the by-election but rebounded with a 5.2% gain from the by-election to the next general. Given the small sample size any inference is suspect. That said, a drop at the by-election is not an indicator of success at the general.

For the next 1886 24th parliament, there were sixty-one by-elections. This was the largest number for all of the parliaments which this paper considers. In Britain the Liberal party vote increased only 1.0% from the 24th to 25th general election. At the by-election the Liberal vote increased on average 3.8% and from the by-election to the next general, 1892, the Liberals gained an additional 0.5% of the votes. This healthy gain at the by-election may be a source of Gladstone's meteorology.

During the 1892 25th parliament, the Conservatives gained 1.3% at the by-election and another 0.5% from the by-election to the 1895 general. The Conservative gain of 1.0% from general to general might have seemed a bit less than the trend resulting from the by-elections.

During the 1895 26th parliament, the Conservative swing from the general to the by-election was negative 3.2%. The Conservative gained 3.6% from the by-election to the 1900 general election. The Conservative gain from the 1895 to 1900 general election was 0.5%. These figures reflect that the incumbent party often loses seats at by-elections during parliament even if it retains control at the next election.

During the 1900 27th parliament, the swing to the Liberals was 4.8% from the general election to the by-election. The swing from the by-election to the 1906 election was an additional 2.2% to the Liberals. The Liberals gain from 1900 Khaki election to the 1906 Liberal landslide was 3.1%. The by-election swing was greater than the result of the next general.

²⁴ This handy little trio of general, by-election, and general is complicated by the fact fifty-three times a constituency had more than one by-election during a parliament.

²⁵ Some attempts have been made at measuring swing from a multi-member race to a single member race and back again to a multi-member race. All seem arbitrary and lack elegance.

²⁶ This figure is only for Great Britain as the Irish by-elections are not considered.

During the 28th parliament, the Liberals drop from the 1906 general to the by-election was 11.2%. The Liberals rebounded and gained 5.5% from the by-election to the January 1910 general election. Overall in Britain, the Liberals lost 5.5% of the vote from 1906 to January 1910. This was consistent with sum of the by-election loss plus the recovery at January 1910. However one cannot predict the general recovery from the significant loss at the by-elections.

During the short 29th parliament, the Liberals dropped 2.3% from January 1910 general election until the by-election. From the by-election to the December 1910 general election the liberal percentage slipped another 0.5%. However the Liberals actually gained 1.1% of the British vote from the January to December elections. There was not much meteorology in these vote swings figures.

Again, after a detailed discussion of these numbers, nothing appears as the statistically consistent pattern. Looking at raw election results, by-elections in the year before the next general election, and by-elections vote swings during parliaments, lead to some interesting anecdotes but sadly to no grand conclusions.

TABLE

	By-elections 1885-1910							
	1885-1886	1886-1892	1892-1895	1895-1900	1900-1906	1906-1910	1910-1910	Total
Number of Parliament	23rd	24th	25th	26th	27th	28th	29th	
Election date	Dec 1885	Jul 1886	Jul 1892	Jul 1895	Jul 1900	Oct 1900	Jan 1910	
Start date	Jan 1886	Aug 1886	Aug 1892	Aug 1895	Dec 1900	Feb 1906	Feb 1910	
Disillusion	Jun 1886	Jun 1892	Jul 1895	Sept 1900	Jan 1906	Jan 1910	Nov 1910	
Term (in months)	6	58	35	60	64	47	8	278
Number of By-elections	38	179	103	113	114	100	21	668
Candidates per election	1.42	1.61	1.56	1.77	1.76	1.90	1.48	
Turnover annual	11.3%	5.5%	5.3%	3.4%	3.2%	3.8%	4.7%	4.3%
Subsequent by-election	1	25	6	8	9	4	0	53
By-elections party changes	3	26	14	18	31	16	0	108
% Changing party	7.9%	14.5%	13.6%	15.9%	27.2%	16.0%	0.0%	16.2%
Turnover annual	0.9%	0.8%	0.7%	0.5%	0.9%	0.6%	0.0%	0.7%
Uncontested by-elections	24	77	50	34	33	32	11	261
% Uncontested	63.2%	43.0%	48.5%	30.1%	28.9%	32.0%	52.4%	39.1%
Turnover annual	7.2%	2.4%	2.6%	1.0%	0.9%	1.2%	2.5%	1.7%
Party winning next election	Con	Lib	Con	Con	Lib	Lib	Lib	
By-election net gains	2	20	4	-11	16	-16	0	

% of total party changes	66.7%	76.9%	28.6%	-61.1%	51.6%	-100.0%	0.0%	
General election gains	144	80	98	-9	216	-125	-2	
% gain from previous general	57.8%	41.7%	31.3%	-2.2%	118.0%	-31.3%	-0.7%	
Party hold at by-election	92.1%	85.5%	86.4%	84.1%	72.8%	84.0%	1.0%	83.8%
Party hold at general	86.8%	92.7%	83.5%	83.2%	73.7%	89.0%	1.0%	85.8%
Revision at general	0.0%	2.8%	6.8%	6.2%	9.6%	90.0%	0.0%	5.8%
Change at general	13.2%	4.5%	9.7%	10.6%	14.9%	2.0%	0.0%	8.1%
Election results								
Controlling party	Lib	Con	Lib	Con	Con	Lib	Lib	Average
Con	249	393	313	411	402	156	272	313.7
Lib	319	192	272	177	183	399	274	259.4
Lab					2	29	40	23.7
Nat	86	85	81	82	82	82	82	82.9
Ind	16		4		1	4	2	5.4
total	670	670	670	670	670	670	670	670.0
Party winning next election	Con	Lib	Con	Con	Lib	Lib	Lib	
Con	393	313	411	402	156	272	271	316.9
Lib	192	272	177	183	399	274	272	252.7
Lab				2	29	40	42	28.3
Nat	85	81	82	82	82	82	84	82.6
Ind		4		1	4	2	1	2.4
total	670	670	670	670	670	670	670	670.0
Breakdown of by-elections								
Total by-elections	38	179	103	113	114	100	21	668
Irish by-elections	5	34	11	23	26	24	4	127
British uncontested	22	53	43	24	18	19	7	186
Multi-member contested	3	5	6	8	5	4	0	31
British contested single member	8	87	43	58	65	53	10	324
	21.1%	48.6%	41.7%	51.3%	57.0%	53.0%	47.6%	48.5%
Incomparable data	4	26	7	23	31	13	2	106
Net comparable	4	61	36	35	34	40	8	218

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	10.5%	34.1%	35.0%	31.0%	29.8%	40.0%	38.1%	32.6%
Percentage of vote GB								
Controlling party	Lib	Con	Lib	Con	Con	Lib	Lib	
Con	45.6%	51.2%	49.5%	50.5%	51.0%	43.0%	47.1%	
Lib	51.8%	48.6%	49.6%	48.0%	46.5%	49.6%	44.1%	
Party winning next election	Con	Lib	Con	Con	Lib	Lib	Lib	
Con	51.2%	49.5%	50.5%	51.0%	43.0%	47.1%	47.0%	
Lib	48.6%	49.6%	48.0%	46.5%	49.6%	44.1%	45.2%	
Gain in percentage winning party	5.6%	1.0%	1.0%	0.5%	3.1%	-5.5%	1.1%	
By-election percentage gains	Con	Lib	Con	Con	Lib	Lib	Lib	
By over previous	-2.3%	3.8%	1.3%	-3.2%	4.8%	-11.2%	-2.3%	
Subsequent over by	5.2%	0.5%	0.5%	3.6%	2.2%	5.5%	-0.5%	
Changes in party	3	26	14	18	31	16	0	108
Con to Lib		22	5	14	20			61
Con to Lab					1			1
Con to Nat					1			1
Con to Ind					5			5
Con losses		22	5	14	27			68
Lib to Con	2	2	9	3	2	12		30
Lib to Lab					2	4		6
Lib to Nat								
Lib to Ind	1	1		1				3
Lib losses	3	3	9	4	4	16		39
Lab losses								0
Nat to Con								
Nat to Lib		1						1
Nat to Lab								
Nat to Ind								
Nat losses		1						1
Ind losses								0
Con gains	2	2	9	3	2	12		30
Con net	2	-20	4	-11	-25	12	0	-38

Lib gains		23	5	12	20			60
Lib net	-3	20	-4	8	16	-16	0	21
Lab gains					3	4		7
Lab net	0	0	0	0	3	4	0	7
Nat gains					1			1
Nat net	0	-1	0	0	1	0	0	0
Ind gains	1	1		1	5			8
Ind net	1	1	0	1	5	0	0	8

