

**Ballot structure, parties and voters:
Measuring effects at the local elections, 2002-2006**

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Commission. Not for quotation without prior permission.

Introduction

The ease with which voters understand a voting procedure and interpret a ballot paper is of fundamental importance. When problems occur, as happened with the ‘butterfly ballot’ in Florida at the 2000 US Presidential election, the effects and consequences can be far-reaching. The ease of voting is seen by its supporters as one of the principal virtues of the ‘first past the post’ voting system. What could be easier than placing a single cross on the ballot paper, especially now that each candidate’s party description is also included? But since 1997 a series of constitutional and other changes have introduced additional voting systems that co-exist with FPTP. Despite this rapid growth there is a more or less unspoken assumption that electors understand these systems.

In this paper we focus on local elections in London and the metropolitan boroughs to highlight some interesting outcomes in multi-member elections i.e. simple plurality but for multiple rather than single-member vacancies. London borough elections use multi-member wards, mostly three-member since 2002 when new ward boundaries were implemented. We use the 2002 and 2006 borough elections in this analysis. By contrast, metropolitan borough elections are normally for single vacancies but with a crucial exception in 2004 when boundary changes necessitated a whole council election and three-member vacancies were filled in each ward. For occasional comparative purposes we use the most recent metropolitan borough election data from 2006, when elections reverted to single member vacancies.

A variable providing analytic leverage on voters’ behaviour at the aggregate level is that of ‘unused votes’. Assuming there are 5,000 people issued with a ballot paper in a three-member ward then there are potentially 15,000 votes cast. Of course, as with any election, some ballots cast will be deemed invalid by the local Returning Officer. Although they do not feature here the reasons for invalidating a ballot may also shed light on voters’ knowledge of the voting system. Regarding only valid ballots, however, we know from summing the votes for all candidates that there are *always* a proportion of voters who do not use their full allocation of votes. Moreover, the election returns show that it is extremely unusual that candidates from the same party receive the same number of votes as each other.

What are the potential explanations for variation among candidates from the same party and unused votes? First, some voters engage in split-ticket voting, dividing votes between candidates from different parties or Independents (Rallings & Thrasher, 2001; 2003). But if this was the only explanation then the number of total votes cast divided by the number of seats would equal the number of valid ballots counted. This does not happen and so clearly some votes remain unused. A second explanation that accommodates the existence of unused votes is that loyal and partisan voters respond rationally when their chosen party fails to present a full slate of candidates; spare votes are not distributed among remaining candidates (Rallings et al. 1998). A third potential and possibly controversial explanation is that voters simply do not understand the complexities of multiple ‘X’ voting. Using the aggregate data described above we explore the second two of these potential explanations for the level of unused votes.

On Being a Voter: How Many Crosses?

The introduction of new voting systems is welcomed in some quarters, especially among election specialists, proponents of proportional representation and some parties. But what of voters - is democracy properly served when people participate without fully understanding procedures?

Voters in London, for example, are now asked to use six (and possibly seven or eight) different voting methods. Parliamentary elections take place in single-member constituencies using FPTP but for more than a century London borough elections have used a subtle variation. Each borough is divided into multi-member wards and voters are asked to vote twice or three times (in the past there were six member wards), the winners determined by plurality.

But in the past six years these methods have been joined by others. The Greater London Authority, established in 2000, consists of two elected institutions – a directly elected mayor and 25-member Assembly. The Mayor is chosen by Supplementary Vote while the Assembly is selected using the Additional Member System. Prior to 1999 the European elections were determined by FPTP but since then PR-List voting has been used. London is organised as one electoral district and voters use simple ‘X’ voting to choose from a closed party list.

In some parts of London some ‘lucky’ voters may also experience at first hand other methods. The government’s New Deal for Communities specifies that non-party political boards should be directly elected to oversee the implementation of regeneration policy (Rallings et al. 2004). In some, for example, the Shoreditch board based in Hackney and the Ocean board in Tower Hamlets, members are chosen by Single Transferable Vote (STV). At one election for the Ocean board there were 12 vacancies to be filled and 45 candidates contested the election with only (some) candidates’ photographs on the ballot paper to assist voters. This provides a valuable opportunity to examine candidate image effects upon vote (Banducci et al. 2003) but the voters’ experience in determining a rank order over this number of candidates is likely to have been somewhat difficult. Similarly, the introduction of directly elected Hospital Foundation Trusts in some parts of the country, including London, makes it theoretically possible that a voter is asked to participate in yet another type of election.¹

London electors are positively spoiled by opportunities to vote but citizens in other areas have, or will shortly have, their own varied diet of voting systems and ballot paper designs to digest. From 2007, for example, voters in Scotland will grapple with STV to elect local councils, meaning that electors there will engage with four voting systems. Not to be outdone, there are calls for local councils in Wales to be elected by STV. As always, the English are being sold short and in those areas without directly elected mayors or urban regeneration boards or elected hospital trusts electors

¹ We are still assessing whether or not to collect and collate election results for these Hospital Trusts. There is a temptation in believing that somewhere ‘out there’ some Trust is using the Alternative Vote but another voice keeps telling us that you can have too much of a good thing and maybe it’s time to get a life and let someone else do the investigating.

may participate in just three (or even two) voting systems – FPTP/single member; FPTP/multi-member (possibly); PR-List.

But appearances of relative electoral system simplicity are deceptive. Periodic ward-level boundary changes mean that some local electors participate at an election where the rules of the game have been subtly altered. In the metropolitan boroughs covering the larger urban population areas outside London, for example, electors most frequently participate in single-member ward elections. Although wards in these boroughs actually have three members there is normally only one vacancy because annual elections are held for a fraction of the council. That is to say, except when new ward boundaries are implemented. Then, a whole council election is held and every seat in every ward is voted for; in essence the system switches from single member to multi-member. In order to participate fully, therefore, electors should understand that instead of one they now have up to three votes.

This extended menu of voting systems and ballot paper structures begs a rather important question: Do voters, increasingly turned off by politics and politicians, actually understand how these systems work? By this we do not mean in the strategic sense of optimising choice(s) but in the rather more prosaic sense of knowing where and how many times to mark the ballot paper to cast a valid vote. Laboratory experiments, survey data, and the interpretation of these data give a mixed picture of a person's capacity to understand (see for example, Dunleavy et al. 1992; Dunleavy et al. 1997; Bowler & Farrell, 1995). The fundamental problem with survey research that asks people whether they have understood procedures at an election in which they have just participated is that one risks less than honest responses. Laboratory experiments to test voter comprehension may, for one reason or another, create an artificial picture.

An alternative is to use aggregate election results as a data source. Of course, the dangers of ecological inference are well known but that should not act as a blanket prohibition on drawing conclusions from the aggregate data about what individual actors might be doing. The aggregate data may be useful in identifying *what* is happening and perhaps subsequent survey data can inform us better about *why* it is happening.

Unused votes

Unfortunately, we are unable to obtain from all London and metropolitan authorities the precise number of ward level valid ballot papers issued. Accordingly, we have assumed that the ward turnout and electorate details provided by each local authority for the 2002 and 2006 London and 2004 metropolitan borough elections are accurate.² Using the reported percentage turnout and electorate size we calculate number of valid ballot papers. Since reported turnout is invariably only given to one decimal place, however, there is some loss of precision that follows from using this procedure but any overall error is likely to be small. The total number of potential votes is calculated as a product of valid ballot papers and number of vacancies. Then the

² In some cases local authorities are calculating and reporting ward-level turnout by counting both valid and invalid ballots. However, we do not believe that the number of invalid ballots is sufficiently large to undermine our analysis.

variable of percentage unused votes is calculated by dividing the difference between these potential votes and actual total of votes cast by the total number of potential votes. After an initial examination we identified a small number of extreme cases from the data. So that these would not skew the distributions we chose to exclude from consideration those cases from the top percentile at each election. This lowers the mean values for unused votes slightly but we believe makes the findings more robust.

Figures 1-3 about here

Figures 1-3 are the subsequently amended frequency distributions for the percentage of unused votes at the 2002/2006 London and 2004 metropolitan borough elections respectively. In 2002, for example, the mean percentage of unused votes is 7% with standard deviation of 4.2. In 2006 the distribution is rather similar although the mean percentage is slightly higher with 7.7% of all potential votes unused. It is immediately apparent from Figure 3 that the scale and distribution of unused votes at the 2004 metropolitan borough elections is different to the pattern found in Figures 1 and 2. Here, the mean value, 15.2% is more than double that for the London boroughs and the range of values is larger also. In effect, this means that in London about one in twelve of potential votes are unused while in the metropolitan boroughs the figure is one in seven. But in a number of wards the proportion of unused votes rises to one in five in London and as much as four in ten in the metropolitan authorities.

Patterns of party competition

Of course, unused votes may simply be a reflection of party competition – partisan voters are acting rationally when, faced with a restricted range, they restrict the number of votes used to the number of their party's candidates.

Table 1 about here

Table 1 shows the extent of full and partial party slates at recent London and metropolitan borough elections. As expected, Conservative and Labour parties contest most, although not all vacancies. In 2002, Labour contested all but three seats and the Conservatives failed to fill their party slate in just twenty wards. The pattern is similar for 2006 but the picture is slightly different in the Labour-dominated metropolitan boroughs. Here, Labour contests most vacancies but the Conservative field full slates in just 72% of wards.

Although the Liberal Democrats generally poll well in local elections the party, conserving resources and perhaps struggling to recruit candidates, restricts the number of wards it contests as well as the number of candidates it fields. Thus, in recent London borough elections the party has had full slates in around three-quarters of wards while in 2004 it only provided a full choice in 63% of cases. Naturally, the minor parties too have no incentive to field a full slate of candidates except in a small number of targeted wards. For them it is often sufficient to field just a single candidate presumably in the hope that split-ticket 'protest' voters looking for an alternative party may opt in their favour.

A priori a pattern of fragmented party competition would be a strong favourite for the explanation of unused votes. We test this proposition by considering the level of unused votes in wards where *only* the three main parties contested the election but where less than full slates of candidates were presented. When all three parties each have a full slate then it follows that the number of ‘unused positions’ is equal to zero. If just one party fields two, rather than three candidates, then unused position is equal to one. All other possibilities of two or more unused positions are coded as a third category. If party competition is the *only* explanation for unused votes then we expect that in those wards where unused positions equal zero unused votes should also disappear.

Table 2 about here

Table 2 shows that in 2002 the mean value of unused votes is still 5.5% when all three parties field three candidates each. This rises to a mean of 8% when one party fields just two candidates and for larger numbers of unused positions the mean value is 12%. Although the number of cases is rather small in two categories the findings are statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The data from 2006 are similar; with a mean value of 6% unused votes when all three parties contest and virtually the same mean value with one unused position. However, when two or more positions are unfilled the proportion of unused votes rises to one in eight. Findings from the 2004 metropolitan boroughs are broadly similar although the overall mean values are higher.

When we relax the rather stringent conditions of three major party competition and include wards where another party contested, say the Greens, this increases the number of cases (see Table 3). These data are comparable with those described above, with mean values of similar magnitude and again with a higher proportion of unused votes in the metropolitan boroughs.

Table 3 about here

Two important conclusions are made at this point. First, it is clear that unused votes are indeed some function of the pattern of party competition. It seems that a significant proportion of voters, when offered a limited choice of candidates from which to choose, prefer not to cast any spare votes for remaining candidates. But second, it is also clear that even when voters are presented with a full slate of party candidates a number, about one in sixteen in London and about one in eight in the metropolitan boroughs are still not using their full quota of votes. Why is this?

Ballot structure and voters’ behaviour

A feature of multi-member ward elections, particularly in more recent times when the number of candidates is increasing, is the length of the ballot paper. Long ballots are the exception rather than the rule at parliamentary elections. For example, the all-time record of fifteen candidates contested Tony Blair’s Sedgefield constituency in 2005. A record average of 5.5 candidates per constituency contested the 2005 general election. Compared with local elections in authorities that use multi-member wards

these are rather modest numbers with ballot papers frequently featuring double-digit numbers of candidates. To what extent is the problem of unused votes simply one that some voters become confused with a rather long ballot paper?

Table 4 about here

To test for this possible source of confusion we considered the mean percentage of unused votes controlling for the number of candidates on the ballot paper (see Table 4). When ballot papers are relatively short, defined here as where up to eight candidates stood, the proportion of unused votes is quite large. This finding is entirely consistent with the conception of partisan voters presented with incomplete party slates unwilling to use any 'spare' votes – in three party politics it is normal to find nine candidates contesting a three-member ward. Beyond eight candidates the mean values decrease quite sharply and range from 5-6.4% in 2002, 6.1-7.6% in 2006 and in the metropolitan boroughs between 10.4-12% in 2004. However, as the ballots become larger there is no corresponding monotonic increase in mean values. We conclude from this that unused votes are not occurring because voters are confused by the *length* of the ballot paper.

If there is no clear relationship between number of candidates and unused votes that suggests the problem, such as it is, has occurred before a voter considers the actual ballot paper.

Our contention here is that some voters have not understood the fact that, unlike a general election, they have up to three votes to cast (see Bullock & Hood, 2002, for the US experience). Is there any pattern in the aggregate data that would allow us to test for this? We believe that the overall higher level of unused votes at the 2004 metropolitan borough elections compared to those contests in London is *prima facie* evidence that voter confusion is an important part of the explanation. Voters in these areas are familiar with single-member voting but are inexperienced with multi-member voting, which only happened because of new ward boundaries being implemented. But such confusion would only form an element in that explanation; even in the London boroughs, where multiple-member wards are the norm, votes are unused.

When a partisan voter in a multi-member election scans the ballot paper it is likely that their first thought is to find and vote for a candidate that represents their chosen party. Those voters that understand the voting rules will know that once a candidate that fits the criterion is found then the search process continues, finishing only when the requisite number of three votes are cast. Another group of voters, intent on some degree of 'split-ticket' voting will operate a different search algorithm, perhaps finding an alternative party candidate(s) before returning to their home party; or vice versa. A third set of partisan voters, however, misunderstanding the voting procedure, may vote for the first candidate of their chosen party, fold up the ballot paper and deposit it in the ballot box. If the second and third groups of voters exist then we should expect to find clues in the aggregate election data.

Among candidates from the same party we should discover alphabetic bias (for previous analyses discovering evidence of positional bias see, Bain & Hecock 1957; Scott 1972; Robson & Walsh 1973; Taebel 1975; Bakker & Lijphart 1980; Kelley &

McAllister 1984; Darcy 1986; Lijphart & Pintor 1988; Darcy and McAllister 1990; Hamilton & Ladd 1996; Miller & Kroznick 1998; Rallings & Thrasher 1998; Koppell & Steen 2004; Ho & Imai 2006a, 2006b, but see Darcy 1998 for a contrary view). This is presumably because when a person scans the ballot paper they do so from the top-down, stopping to vote when their eyes find the target party. Some split-ticket voters will scan down and vote for the target (or alternative) party and then resume downwards seeking the alternative (or target) party. Voters that simply misunderstand the rules will scan downwards, vote and then stop scanning.

Alphabetic voting

First, we consider as a control category only single-member wards. For these cases, taken from the 2006 metropolitan borough elections, we find no relationship between ballot order position and finishing position in the popular vote. This relationship holds regardless of the number of candidates contesting the seat. There is no alphabetic voting in this type of seat.

Next, we examine only three-member wards where parties fielded complete slates of candidates. The Spearman rank correlation coefficients are significant for a candidate's rank in the alphabetic order within the party slate and vote received. The coefficients are higher for London (0.44 for both years) than for the metropolitan boroughs (0.2) but all are significant at the one per cent level. In short, the higher the ballot order (i.e. the higher the candidate's surname in the alphabet) the better a candidate performs relative to candidates from the same party but placed lower in the alphabet/on the ballot paper.

Although the correlation analysis shows a relationship it is not clear how much of an advantage accrues to candidates from a superior ballot order. Table 5 considers full-party slates in three-member wards for the London and metropolitan boroughs. Candidates are located according to both their ballot order and finishing position within the slate, i.e. their vote relative to party colleagues.

Table 5 about here

Of the candidates placed highest in alphabetic/ballot paper order at the 2002 London borough election some 58.7% finished first within the party group, 28% finished second and just 13.3% finished in third and last place. A candidate at that election positioned highest on the ballot order was more than twice as likely to finish at the top rather than in second place on the party slate. The advantage is even greater when first is compared with third alphabetically; the former is four times more likely to have finished ahead in votes received.

Crucially, these findings from the 2002 elections are not an isolated example; in 2006, exactly the same pattern is identified when 1,814 separate party slates are examined. The alphabetic hierarchy between first and second translates into a two to one advantage in terms of vote finishing order; between first and third it is a four to one advantage. It appears from this initial analysis that when voters in London are not using their full allocation of votes, *despite the opportunity of a ballot paper with a*

complete party slate, then a large number are simply voting once, possibly twice, after scanning the ballot paper for a party description.

Interestingly, the alphabetic effect is smaller for the metropolitan borough elections, whilst remaining statistically significant. After examining over two thousand separate party slates we find that candidates with a superior surname in the ballot paper order finished highest in the party vote in 43% of cases and lowest in just 25% of cases. The reverse position holds for candidates whose surname places them third within the party list. This is clearly different than would happen by chance but the effect is not as strong as it is in London.

Although not reported in detail here we considered parties separately in order to discover whether alphabetic voting was more common for one rather than another party. This does not appear to be the case; votes for *all* parties appear skewed towards candidates at the top of the party ballot order. .

Table 6 about here

Thus far, our analysis has considered only full party slates. However, even when a party selects just two candidates rather than three, there is evidence to suggest that voters still favour ballot order (see Table 6). *Ceteris paribus*, candidates from the same two-party slate have a more or less even chance of finishing ahead of one another, but in fact a candidate in the leading ballot order position is about twice as likely to finish above their colleague after votes are counted.

Alphabetic voting and incumbency effects

One important aspect of the election data that has been ignored thus far is the effect, if any, of incumbency. Candidates seeking re-election must believe that four or more years on the local council will have provided them a degree of voter recognition. Surely, supporters of the incumbent ward party will recognise candidates who are sitting councillors rather more than a candidate who is perhaps contesting an election for the first time?

We again consider three member wards with full-party slates but now control for the number of incumbents. This allows for two types of configuration that may shed light on whether or not there is an incumbency as well a ballot paper order effect. The first configuration is where a party slate consists of a single incumbent and two non-incumbent or 'novice' candidates. The second configuration is the reverse position; two incumbents seeking re-election and joined in this quest by a novice candidate.

Table 7 about here

Table 7 suggests that incumbents do indeed have an advantage but that alphabetic order remains relevant. Incumbents highest in the ballot order are seven times more likely to have finished in first place at the 2002 London borough elections rather than in third place. These odds are similar for the 2004 metropolitan borough elections and even more pronounced at the 2006 London borough elections. Nevertheless, as incumbents descend the ballot order their advantage over non-incumbents also

diminishes. Indeed, in 2006 a London councillor seeking re-election placed third in ballot order behind two novice candidates was more likely to finish in third rather than first place, although the differences are rather small.

Table 8 about here

Next, we consider the reverse position with one incumbent and two novices seeking election (Table 8). The data for London show that a novice candidate may overcome any incumbency effects. Some 38.4% of new candidates in 2002 and 37.6% in 2006 finished ahead of their incumbent colleagues when they occupied first place in the ballot order; their finishing position was higher than would be expected by chance alone. However, the same effect is not found in the metropolitan boroughs. Of the 129 examples featuring two incumbents contesting alongside a novice candidate placed highest in the ballot order, the novice received most votes on just one in eight occasions but came third within the party vote more than half the time. When the novice candidate is placed third in the alphabetic list he or she is far more likely, between six and eight in ten times, to finish in third position after the votes are counted.

Table 9 about here

Finally, and to further test for the alphabetic effect, we consider only party slates where *all* those contesting are incumbents seeking re-election. Are voters sensitive to the relative merits of incumbents, rewarding or punishing their periods in office as occasion demands or are they apparently indifferent between sitting councillors. The results are shown in Table 9 and certainly do confirm the importance of alphabetic voting. Indeed, the findings are virtually identical to those discussed earlier. At the 2002 London borough elections, albeit when new boundaries were first implemented and sitting councillors may have fought in new areas, the incumbent placed highest in ballot order was four times more likely to have finished in first rather than third place. A councillor placed third on the list finished third in vote order in six out of ten occasions. Four years later, and when councillors should certainly have become more recognised in their new wards, alphabetic advantage for those higher in ballot order is even stronger! There are many more incumbent-only party slates in the metropolitan boroughs but here again the pattern is little different to the examples of London.

Candidates and councillors

Whilst there is evidence that unused votes are related to the finishing order of candidates it also appears that the effect is mitigated by whether or not a candidate is an incumbent seeking re-election. This will be of some comfort to sitting councillors but intriguingly prompts a further question. Perhaps those councillors owed their success initially to a ballot order position effect? In short, an incumbent candidate benefits from two potential ballot effects – name recognition and a surname placed higher rather than lower in the alphabet. It follows, therefore, that councillors as a group should have surnames that favour the high end of the alphabet compared with the population at large. To test for this possibility we compare the surnames of people that were elected with those that were not elected for the three elections studied here.

Figures 4-6 show that proportion of people whose surnames begin with the first four letters of the alphabet is higher among winners than losers and that the relationship is more pronounced for the London elections. For the London elections the differences are statistically significant at 0.05 levels (one-tailed Mann-Whitney test).

Figures 4-6 about here

However, this analysis considers only the bivariate relationship between ballot order position and a candidate's success. To take account of incumbency we perform a loglinear analysis of 3-way contingency tables - a useful procedure for considering the relationship between more than two categorical variables simultaneously (Agresti 2002).

The three dichotomous variables considered were: winners vs. losers; incumbents vs. non-incumbents; and those with surnames with the initial letters 'a-d' vs all other surnames. Three-way loglinear analysis reveals that the associations between 'winner' and 'initial letter' and between 'winner' and 'incumbency' are statistically significant for all three elections. In addition to that, the association between 'incumbency' and 'initial letter' is also significant for metropolitan elections.

Conclusions

It is important to note that this analysis of unused votes in multi-member wards is restricted to just two elections for the London boroughs and one election for the metropolitan boroughs. It finds that a significant fraction of voters do not use their full allocation of votes in multi-member wards. In London there are about 7% of votes that are unused but for the metropolitan boroughs there is double that amount when an election is fought on new boundaries and for the whole council. Party competition, or strictly speaking the absence of it, has a major part in explaining unused votes and sits comfortably with a conceptualisation of local voters making clear partisan choices.

But this is only part of the explanation for unused votes. Even where party competition is complete there are still voters unwilling/unable to use their full voting allocation. The analysis shows a clear relationship between ballot order position and finishing position and further examinations, controlling for the structure of contestation and incumbency effects confirms the alphabetic advantage. This advantage is found both for different types of local authority and across the range of parties. The consequences are that councillors, as well being unrepresentative of society in terms of age, sex and ethnicity are also, it appears, unrepresentative in terms of their surnames!

The relationships found for alphabetic voting and unused ballots in multi-member elections raise some important questions. Is it appropriate that the votes received by candidates from the same party are apparently related to their respective surnames? Is it acceptable that the chances of someone being elected or not may hinge on where their surname happens to place them on the ballot paper. If the answers to such questions are 'no', then perhaps the design of ballot papers should be reconsidered. One solution would be to emulate practice elsewhere (for example, since 1975, ballots

for some elected officials in the state of California) and randomize the ballot paper order, thereby nullifying some of the adverse aspects of alphabetic voting. In the spirit of other experiments in electoral procedure, the 2007 shire district council elections present an ideal opportunity to consider possible reform.

Another, more radical solution, would be to review the use of multi-member elections. There are arguments on both sides that deal with the value such wards play in local government but none of that debate considers how voters interact with the voting system. While it is a minority that do not use their full allocation of votes the spillover effect from this is that preference is given to candidates higher on the ballot paper order. Local authorities that use this method of election could, of course, undertake programmes designed to educate voters but we suspect that such publicity is likely to be missed by the very groups that it is intended to help.

Finally, and perhaps most controversially, these findings may have wider consequences beyond local government elections. Our contention is that alphabetic voting is symptomatic of participation by low information voters in a low information election. And yet the recent introduction of new voting systems seems more or less predicated on the assumption that voters have the necessary skills to encounter and adapt to systems that are sometimes quite different to FPTP voting. A majority probably do have such skills but, dependent on the voting system and interest in the election itself, we suspect that a significant minority of people who participate are not fully aware of how the method works. Consequently, we should find that the number of invalid ballots increases relative to a simple FPTP election and that voters adopt a heuristic that appears contrary to what specialists in electoral systems might expect. Instead of trying to conjure elaborate explanations about why some voters behave the way they do perhaps we should start with the simplest explanation – they do not understand what is going on.

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Table 1: Patterns of party competition in three-member wards*London boroughs 2002 (N=614)*

	Size of party slate			
	None	One	Two	Three
Con	3.1	2.4	0.8	93.6
Lab	0.0	0.2	0.2	99.7
LD	14.3	7.0	5.0	73.6
Green	49.5	30.6	5.4	14.5
UKIP	91.5	7.0	1.1	0.3
BNP	97.2	2.3	0.3	0.2
Independent	88.8	8.3	1.8	1.0
Other	70.8	17.3	5.4	5.4

London boroughs 2006 (N=614)

	Size of party slate			
	None	One	Two	Three
Con	0.7	2.6	1.0	95.8
Lab	0.7	0.7	2.1	96.6
LD	9.8	9.0	5.2	76.1
Green	42.0	38.8	4.2	15.0
UKIP	90.1	8.0	0.5	1.5
BNP	95.9	2.9	1.0	0.2
Independent	83.2	10.6	3.1	2.6
Other	76.2	9.1	2.1	7.8

Metropolitan boroughs 2004 (N=815)

	Size of party slate			
	None	One	Two	Three
Con	6.1	16.2	5.9	71.8
Lab	0.2	2.8	0.9	96.1
LD	12.6	20.5	3.8	63.1
Green	71.8	21.1	1.3	5.8
UKIP	94.1	5.6	0.1	0.1
BNP	73.0	25.9	0.6	0.5
Independent	80.4	12.9	2.9	3.3
Other	81.1	9.2	2.5	6.0

Table 2: Unused Votes and Unused Positions in Three-member Wards: Main parties contested only

London boroughs 2002

Unused Positions	Mean	Std. Dev	Min	Max	N=
None	5.5	2.7	1.6	16.0	137
One	8.3	2.8	4.2	11.6	8
Two or more	11.8	4.9	7.5	22.4	8
Total	6.0	3.2	1.6	22.4	153

London boroughs 2006

Unused Positions	Mean	Std. Dev	Min	Max	N=
None	6.2	2.5	2.1	17.2	112
One	5.6	1.3	3.7	7.3	5
Two or more	12.9	3.2	5.9	17.5	10
Total	6.7	3.1	2.1	17.5	127

Metropolitan boroughs 2004

Unused Positions	Mean	Std. Dev	Min	Max	N=
None	9.7	5.1	0.9	26.8	104
One	16.1	4.8	7.5	23.5	10
Two or more	18.9	6.9	7.3	35.9	118
Total	14.7	7.5	0.9	35.9	232

Table 3: Unused Votes and Unused Positions in Three-member Wards

London boroughs 2002

Unused Positions	Mean	Std. Dev	Min	Max	N=
None	5.9	2.6	0.0	18.2	295
One	8.0	3.6	2.9	16.3	21
Two or more	11.2	4.5	0.9	21.3	34
Total	6.5	3.3	0.0	21.3	350

London boroughs 2006

Unused Positions	Mean	Std. Dev	Min	Max	N=
None	7.2	3.2	1.1	23.9	327
One	6.7	3.1	2.0	17.8	37
Two or more	10.5	3.9	3.5	20.7	55
Total	7.6	3.5	1.1	23.9	419

Metropolitan boroughs 2004

Unused Positions	Mean	Std. Dev	Min	Max	N=
None	11.8	4.7	0.8	30.5	278
One	15.7	6.0	5.4	25.9	28
Two or more	19.0	6.5	1.0	32.4	128
Total	14.1	6.3	0.8	32.4	434

Table 4: Mean % of Unused Votes by Number of Candidates

Candidates	<i>London 2002</i>		<i>London 2006</i>		<i>Met Bors. 2004</i>	
	%	N=	%	N=	%	N=
4	25.2	1	-	-	33.6	3
5	22.6	6	24.9	2	29.8	24
6	10.5	30	15.3	7	22.4	59
7	11.5	29	13.8	21	17.6	144
8	10.7	38	10.5	38	18.8	88
9	6.2	169	6.9	149	12.0	152
10	6.3	126	7.6	153	12.7	143
11	6.4	71	7.3	71	12.9	85
12	5.7	78	6.8	96	11.1	56
13	5.8	30	6.5	33	10.5	26
14	5.0	12	7.6	21	10.5	14
15	6.3	7	7.4	13	10.4	6
16	5.8	4	6.1	3	11.8	1
Total	7.1	601	7.7	607	15.2	801

Table 5: Ballot Order Effects and Finishing Position within Party: 3-Candidate Slates

London boroughs 2002

	Finishing Position					
	First		Second		Third	
Alphabetic order	N=	Row %	N=	Row %	N=	Row %
First	1039	58.7	496	28.0	235	13.3
Second	461	26.0	810	45.8	499	28.2
Third	270	15.3	464	26.2	1036	58.5
Total	1770	33.3	1770	33.3	1770	33.3

London boroughs 2006

	Finishing Position					
	First		Second		Third	
Alphabetic order	N=	Row %	N=	Row %	N=	Row %
First	1050	57.9	509	28.1	255	14.1
Second	514	28.3	787	43.4	513	28.3
Third	250	13.8	518	28.6	1046	57.7
Total	1814	33.3	1814	33.3	1814	33.3

Metropolitan boroughs 2004

	Finishing Position					
	First		Second		Third	
Alphabetic order	N=	Row %	N=	Row %	N=	Row %
First	866	43.1	636	31.6	508	25.3
Second	681	33.9	746	37.1	583	29.0
Third	463	23.0	628	31.2	919	45.7
Total	2010	33.3	2010	33.3	2010	33.3

Table 6: Ballot Order Effects and Finishing Position within Party: 2 Candidate Slates

London boroughs 2002

	N=	Finishing Position			
		First		Second	
Alphabetic order		Row %	N=	Row %	
First	82	66.7	41	33.3	
Second	41	33.3	82	66.7	
Total	123	50.0	123	50.0	

London boroughs 2006

	N=	Finishing Position			
		First		Second	
Alphabetic order		Row %	N=	Row %	
First	79	66.9	39	33.1	
Second	39	33.1	79	66.9	
Total	118	50.0	118	50.0	

Metropolitan boroughs 2004

	N=	Finishing Position			
		First		Second	
Alphabetic order		Row %	N=	Row %	
First	93	63.3	54	36.7	
Second	54	36.7	93	63.3	
Total	147	50.0	147	50.0	

Table 7: Ballot Position Effects for Incumbent with Two Non-incumbents Seeking Election

London boroughs 2002

	N=	Finishing position for incumbent					
		First	Second	Third	Total		
Alphabetic order		Row %	N=	Row %	N=	Row %	N=
First	66	70.2	18	19.1	10	10.6	94
Second	37	42.5	37	42.5	13	14.9	87
Third	34	46.6	17	23.3	22	30.1	73

London boroughs 2006

	N=	Finishing position for incumbent					
		First	Second	Third	Total		
Alphabetic order		Row %	N=	Row %	N=	Row %	N=
First	62	83.8	10	13.5	2	2.7	74
Second	36	51.4	24	34.3	10	14.3	70
Third	19	34.5	15	27.3	21	38.2	55

Metropolitan boroughs 2004

	N=	Finishing position for incumbent					
		First	Second	Third	Total		
Alphabetic order		Row %	N=	Row %	N=	Row %	N=
First	60	72.3	14	16.9	9	10.8	83
Second	58	69.0	14	16.7	12	14.3	84
Third	39	52.0	22	29.3	14	18.7	75

Table 8: Ballot Position Effects for Non Incumbent with Two Incumbents Seeking Re-election

London boroughs 2002

	N=	Finishing position for non-incumbent						Total N=
		First Row %	Second Row %	Third Row %	First Row %	Second Row %	Third Row %	
Alphabetic order								
First	33	38.4	27	31.4	26	30.2	86	
Second	14	16.7	36	42.9	34	40.5	84	
Third	5	5.1	14	14.1	80	80.8	99	

London boroughs 2006

	N=	Finishing position for non-incumbent						Total N=
		First Row %	Second Row %	Third Row %	First Row %	Second Row %	Third Row %	
Alphabetic order								
First	32	37.6	30	35.3	23	27.1	85	
Second	16	18.8	34	40.0	35	41.2	85	
Third	11	11.6	24	25.3	60	63.2	95	

Metropolitan boroughs 2004

	N=	Finishing position for non-incumbent						Total N=
		First Row %	Second Row %	Third Row %	First Row %	Second Row %	Third Row %	
Alphabetic order								
First	16	12.4	40	31.0	73	56.6	129	
Second	15	14.4	39	37.5	50	48.1	104	
Third	9	8.7	19	18.3	76	73.1	104	

Table 9: Ballot Effects and Finishing Position: All Incumbents

London boroughs 2002

	N=	Finishing position						Total N=
		First Row %	Second Row %	Third Row %	First Row %	Second Row %	Third Row %	
Alphabetic order								
First	99	56.6	54	30.9	22	12.6	175	
Second	50	28.6	84	48.0	41	23.4	175	
Third	26	14.9	37	21.1	112	64.0	175	

London boroughs 2006

	N=	Finishing position						Total N=
		First Row %	Second Row %	Third Row %	First Row %	Second Row %	Third Row %	
Alphabetic order								
First	98	59.4	47	28.5	20	12.1	165	
Second	50	30.3	73	44.2	42	25.5	165	
Third	17	10.3	45	27.3	103	62.4	165	

Metropolitan boroughs 2004

	N=	Finishing position						Total N=
		First Row %	Second Row %	Third Row %	First Row %	Second Row %	Third Row %	
Alphabetic order								
First	170	44.6	110	28.9	101	26.5	381	
Second	116	30.4	156	40.9	109	28.6	381	
Third	95	24.9	115	30.2	171	44.9	381	

Figure 1: Percentage unused votes: London Borough Elections, 2002

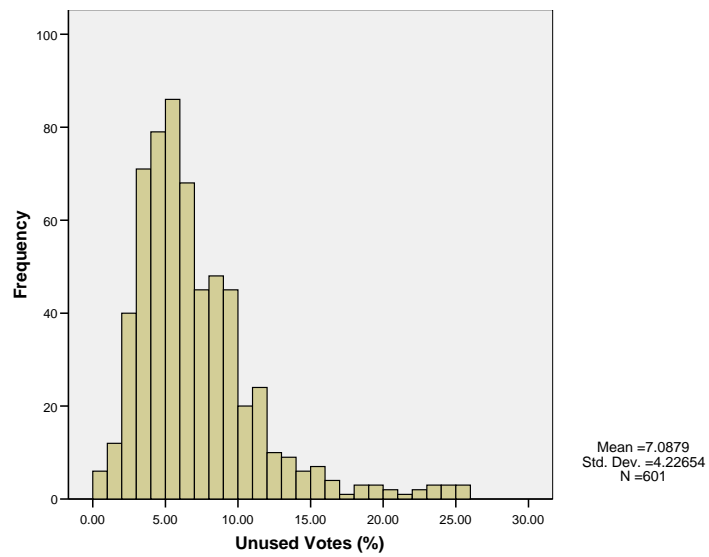


Figure 2: Percentage unused votes: London Borough Elections, 2006

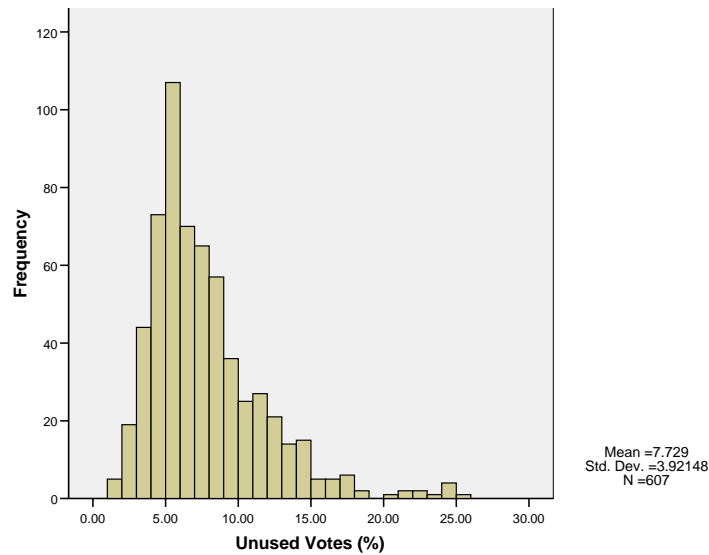


Figure 3: Percentage unused votes: Metropolitan Borough Elections, 2004

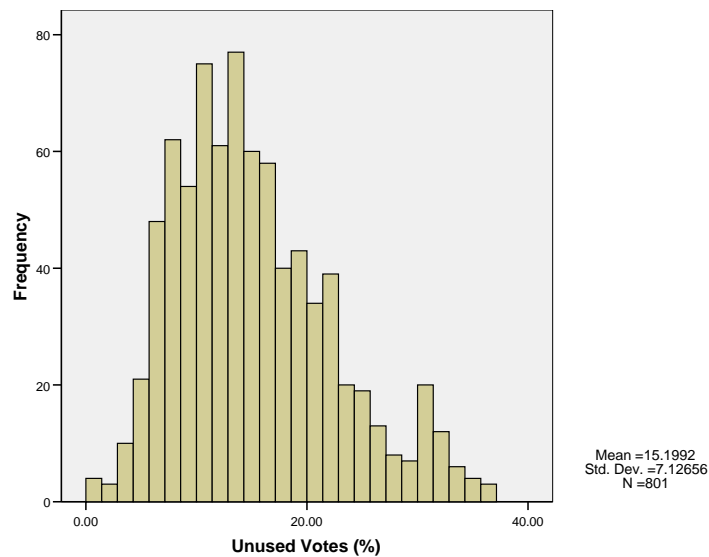


Figure 4: Distribution of Names for Elected and Non-Elected: London Borough Elections, 2002

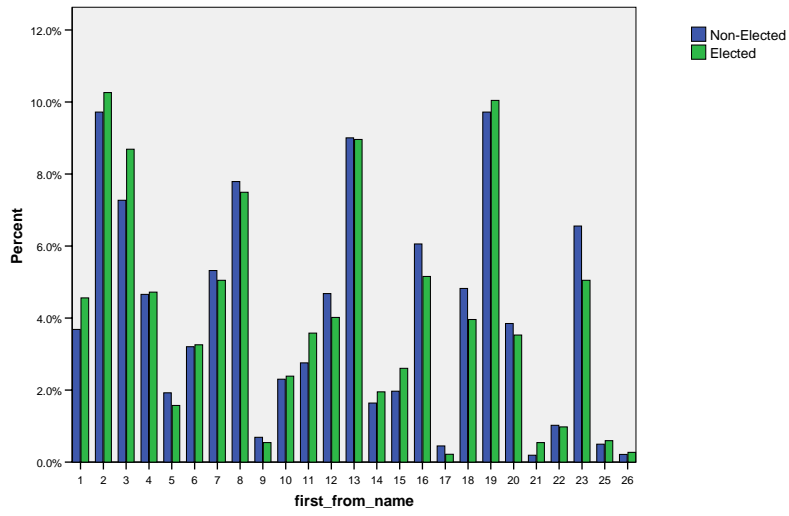


Figure 5: London Borough Elections, 2006

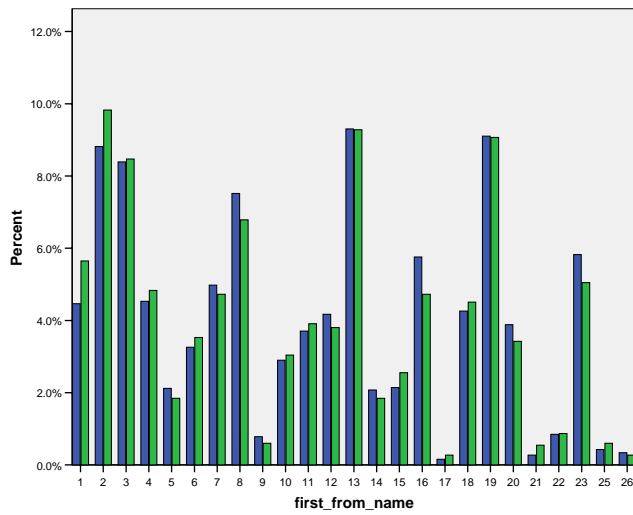


Figure 6: Metropolitan Borough Elections, 2004

