

UK Labour's votes have become inefficiently distributed since 2010

Written by Adrian Beaumont, Honorary Associate, School of Mathematics and Statistics, University of Melbourne

The Conservatives lost their majority last Thursday 8 June in an election that did not have to be held until May 2020. While this outcome was shocking for the Conservatives, it would have been even worse had Labour's vote not been inefficiently distributed.

At the [2010 UK general election](#), Labour trailed the Conservatives by 7.1 points on popular vote share, yet the Conservatives won only 49 seats more than Labour.

[Last week, Labour trailed](#)

by just 2.4 points on popular votes, but the Conservatives won 56 more seats. Constituency boundaries used at this election are the same as those used in 2010.

At the 2010 election, the Liberal Democrats won 57 seats, with more of those seats naturally Conservative than Labour. In 2015, following a five-year coalition government with the Conservatives, the Lib Dem vote collapsed and they were reduced to just eight seats. Both major parties gained at the Lib Dems' expense, but the Conservatives gained more seats.

During the Blair/Brown governments, the Lib Dems moved to Labour's left on some issues, and benefited from protest votes in inner city seats that would never ever vote Conservative. After the Conservative/Lib Dem coalition, the Lib Dems' left vote returned to Labour, but did not help Labour win more seats from the Conservatives.

At last week's election, Labour won over 70% in 37 of the 650 seats, and over 80% in 10 seats, while the Conservatives had no seats where they won over 70%. Thus Labour wasted many more votes in seats they were always going to win. [Britain Elects has a spreadsheet](#) with results of each constituency that can be analysed.

At the 2010 election, Labour [won 41 of the 59 Scottish seats](#) on 42.0% of the Scotland vote, while the Conservatives won just one seat on 16.7%. Labour's vote in Scotland was far more efficiently distributed in 2010 than it is now. Owing to the rise of the Scottish National Party (SNP), [Labour won just 7](#) last week, [Scottish seats](#) to 13 for the Conservatives, despite being only 1.5 points behind the Conservatives on Scotland-wide votes.

UK Labour's votes have become inefficiently distributed since 2010

Written by Adrian Beaumont, Honorary Associate, School of Mathematics and Statistics, University of Melbourne

If preferential voting had been used, the Conservatives would have lost a few more seats, but the overall results would be similar. In Scotland, the SNP and Labour detest each other, so Labour preferences would flow only weakly to the SNP. In most Labour/Conservative contests, the combined vote share for the two major parties was over 90%, and preferences would have a limited impact.

Preferences would have a larger impact in the Conservative/Lib Dem contests where Labour was a distant third. At this election, Labour voters would have far preferred the Lib Dems to the Conservatives. In [Richmond Park](#), the Conservatives defeated the Lib Dems by 0.1 points with Labour on 9%. In [St Ives](#), the Conservatives won by 0.6 points with Labour on 14%.

[YouGov has a post-election survey](#) of over 50,000 respondents, showing a massive difference in the parties' votes by age, education level and newspaper readership. Although 18-24 turnout was up on 2015, 84% of those over 70 voted, compared with 58% of those aged 18-24.

Macron's party set for French lower house landslide

The first round of the French lower house elections was held on 11 June. President Emmanuel Macron's new REM party (La République En Marche!) and its ally, the Democratic Movement, won an [overall 32.3% of the votes](#). Centre right parties had an overall 21.6%, and centre left parties 9.5%. Marine Le Pen's National Front won 13.2%, the hard left Unsubmissive France 11.0% and the Greens 4.3%.

Only 4 of 577 seats were decided on the first round, where a vote majority is required. The top two candidates in each seat qualify for the second round next Sunday 18 June (polls close at 4am Monday Melbourne time). Candidates other than the top two who receive over 12.5% of registered voters in the first round also qualify. As [only 47.6% of registered voters](#) cast a valid vote, just one seat will be contested by three candidates in the second round.

As the REM will benefit from the votes of excluded candidates regardless of which opponent it faces, projections using the first round vote show a REM landslide, with [390-445 of the 577 seats](#)

Two US House by-elections on 20 June

UK Labour's votes have become inefficiently distributed since 2010

Written by Adrian Beaumont, Honorary Associate, School of Mathematics and Statistics, University of Melbourne

Next Tuesday, US House by-elections will occur in two Republican-held seats, Georgia's sixth Congressional District (CD) and South Carolina's fifth CD. Polls in both CDs close at 9am Wednesday 21 June Melbourne time.

Democrats have a good chance of gaining the Georgian sixth, as Trump won this district by just 1.5 points against Clinton in 2016. The Democrat candidate, Jon Ossoff, won 48.1% at a first round "jungle primary" in April, but he needed a vote majority to avoid a runoff. In the runoff, Ossoff faces a single Republican, Karen Handel. [Polling indicates](#) that Ossoff is narrowly ahead.

Trump won South Carolina's fifth CD by 57-39. Although Democrats have little chance of winning this district, a big swing from Trump's margin would be a good indicator for Democrats at the 2018 midterm elections.

Essential at 52-48 to Australian Labor

In [this week's Essential](#), primary votes are 38% Coalition, 36% Labor, 10% Greens, 8% One Nation and 3% Nick Xenophon Team. One Nation's vote has jumped three points since last fortnight. Essential uses a two-week sample of 1790 with additional questions based on one week's sample.

46% thought the government should spend more on anti-terror measures, 30% thought current spending is about right, and 9% thought we should spend less. 54% thought there should be more restrictions on rights and freedoms of some people, 12% less restrictions and 19% thought current laws strike the right balance. By 47-24, voters approved of Turnbull's handling of terrorism.

45% preferred a Low Emission Target (LET), while 20% preferred an Emissions Intensity Scheme. 29% thought carbon capture and storage should not be considered a low-emission source under a LET, 27% thought it should and 44% were undecided.

In [last week's Essential](#), 60% (down 2 since August 2016) supported same sex marriage and 26% (down 1) were opposed. 61% thought a national vote should decide this issue, while 27% favoured a parliamentary vote.

UK Labour's votes have become inefficiently distributed since 2010

Written by Adrian Beaumont, Honorary Associate, School of Mathematics and Statistics, University of Melbourne

10% thought less than 1% of the Federal budget went to foreign aid, 9% thought foreign aid was about 1% of the budget, 15% thought it was 2%, 10% thought it was 5% and 12% more than 5%. 41% thought Australia spends too much on foreign aid and 16% too little. However, those who correctly said foreign aid is less than 1% thought we spend too little on foreign aid by 47-24.

41% thought there was a trade-off between tourism jobs from the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) and coal industry jobs, and that GBR jobs should be prioritised. 21% thought there was no trade-off between GBR jobs and coal jobs, and 12% thought coal jobs should be prioritised.

When asked which should be prioritised in energy policy, 28% opted for keeping the cost of energy down, 21% for reducing carbon emissions and 19% for maintaining the reliability of energy supply.

Authors: Adrian Beaumont, Honorary Associate, School of Mathematics and Statistics,
University of Melbourne

Read more <http://theconversation.com/uk-labours-votes-have-become-inefficiently-distributed-since-2010-79112>