ELECTION 2007

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The paper provides an analysis of the 2007 Scottish Parliament election. In particular it covers the Scottish Parliament electoral system, the election campaign, electoral behaviour and the polls, turnout, spoilt ballots, the impact of the result upon the political parties, the regional vote and the new composition of the Parliament.

The briefing also contains perspectives on the election from a range of external commentators. The views expressed by these authors are their own and do not represent the views of SPICe or of the Scottish Parliament. The external commentators are:

James Mitchell, Professor of Politics at the University of Strathclyde.

Charlie Jeffrey, Professor of Politics at the University of Edinburgh and Co-Director of the Institute of Governance at the University of Edinburgh.

Douglas Fraser, Scottish Political Editor of the Herald newspaper.

John Curtice, Professor of Politics at the University of Strathclyde.

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Peter Lynch, Senior Lecturer in Politics at the University of Stirling.

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The Scottish Parliament

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ELECTION FACTS

- The 2007 Scottish Parliamentary election produced the following result in terms of MSP numbers:

  - Scottish National Party   47
  - Scottish Labour Party   46
  - Scottish Conservatives   17
  - Scottish Liberal Democrats   16
  - Scottish Green Party   2
  - Margo MacDonald   1

- Turnout in the election was 51.7% in the constituency vote and 52.4% in the regional vote up from 2003 where the turnout was 49.4% in both the constituency and regional vote

- Turnout varied on the constituency vote from 63.4% in Eastwood to 33.4% in Glasgow Shettleston

- The opinion polls were broadly in line with the actual election result for the SNP, Conservative and Liberal Democrats but underestimated Labour support and overestimated support for the Greens, Socialists and Independents

- Of the 129 MSPs there are 41 MSPs (31.8%) who did not serve in the previous term

- 43 women (33.3% of MSPs) have been elected to the third Scottish Parliament

SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT ELECTORAL SYSTEM

The system used for elections to the Scottish Parliament is a form of proportional representation (PR) known as the *Additional Member System* (AMS).

Using this system, each voter has two votes. One is to elect *regional* Members of whom there are 56 across 8 regions. The system is designed to ensure that, as far as possible, the share of MSPs in the Scottish Parliament reflects the share of votes cast for each party. The other vote is cast for a *constituency* MSP, of whom there are 73, via the same *First Past the Post* (FPTP) system used for elections to Westminster.

Under AMS in the three elections to the Scottish Parliament so far, no single party has achieved an overall majority. In 1999, the seats were distributed to the four largest political parties (Labour 56, SNP 35, Conservatives 18 and Liberal Democrats 17), as well as one each for the Greens, the Socialists and the independent candidate, Dennis Canavan.

The 2003 election saw a move towards a 'rainbow parliament' in a shift towards smaller parties and independents, and away from Labour and the SNP on both the regional and constituency vote, as well as the total seats (Labour 50, SNP 27, Liberal Democrats 17 and Conservatives 18). The smaller parties did better than in 1999, the Greens gaining 7 seats and the Socialists 6 and there were 3 independents elected - Jean Turner, Dennis Canavan and Margo MacDonald - and John Swinburne was elected under the Scottish Senior Citizens Unity Party banner. A governing coalition was formed between Labour and the Liberal Democrats.

In the 2007 election this trend was reversed, returning the Parliament to a pre-2003 make-up, but with the SNP in the lead on 47 seats, Labour on 46, Conservatives on 17 and Liberal Democrats on 16. The Green Party won 2 seats and the only elected independent member was Margo MacDonald.

These results are illustrated in Figures One to Three below, taking into account all three elections to the Scottish Parliament. Figure Four depicts party representation in the Chamber.

Figure 1: Share of Constituency Vote by Party (%)

	2007	2003	1999
Labour	32.1	34.6	38.8
SNP	32.9	23.8	28.7
Conservatives	16.6	16.6	15.6
Liberal Democrats	16.2	15.4	14.2
Green	0.1	0	0
Others	2.1	9.6	2.7
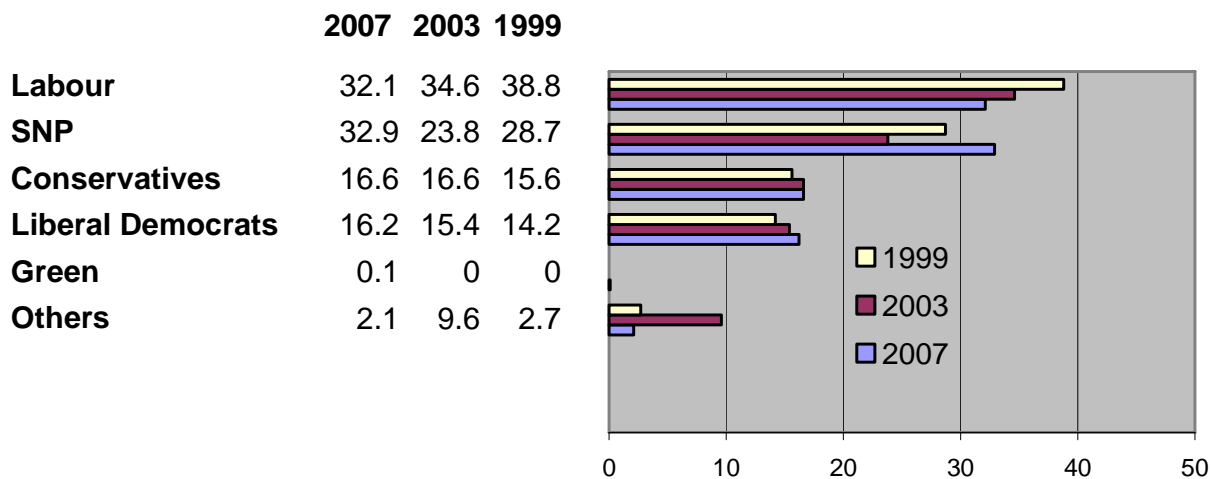
Figure 2: Share of Regional Vote by Party (%)

	2007	2003	1999
Labour	29.2	29.3	33.6
SNP	31	20.9	27.3
Conservatives	13.9	15.5	15.4
Liberal Democrats	11.3	11.8	12.4
Green	4	6.9	3.6
Others	10.6	15.6	7.7
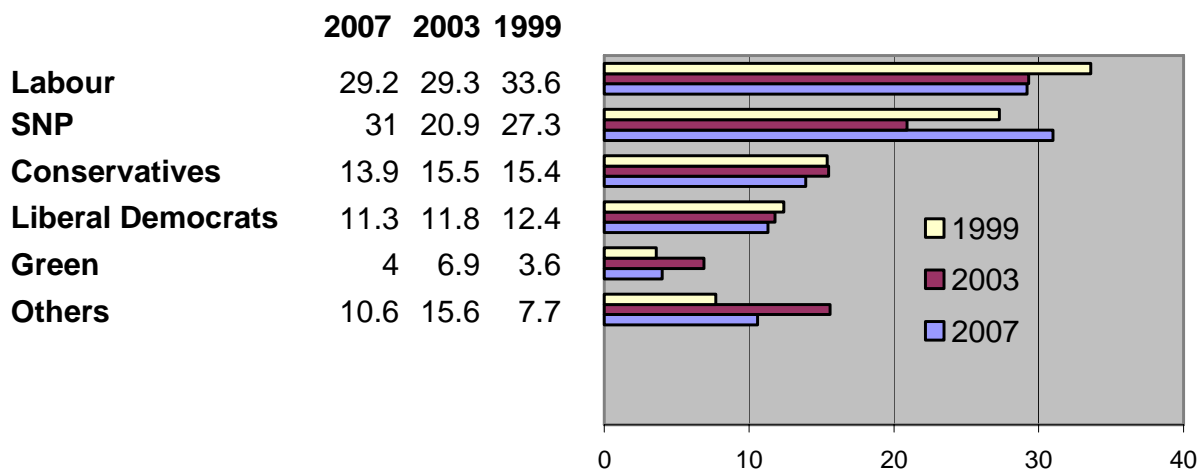
Figure 3: Total Seats by Party

	2007	2003	1999
Labour	46	50	56
SNP	47	27	35
Conservatives	17	18	18
Liberal Democrats	16	17	17
Green	2	7	1
Others	1	10	2

Figure 4: Chamber Map

Scottish Parliament Election Results 2007

47	SNP
46	Labour Party
17	Conservative Party
16	Liberal Democrats
2	Green Party
1	Independents
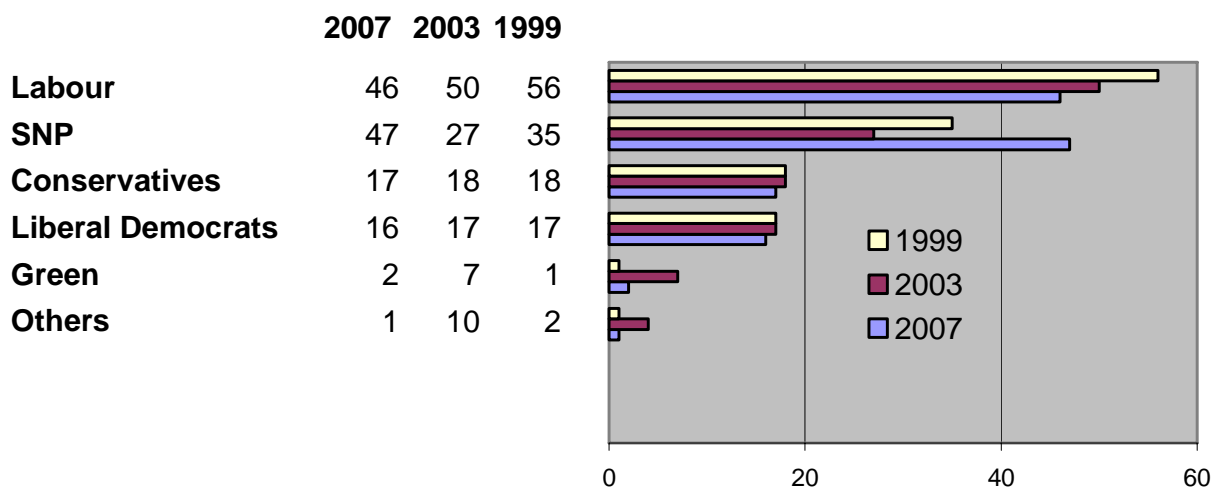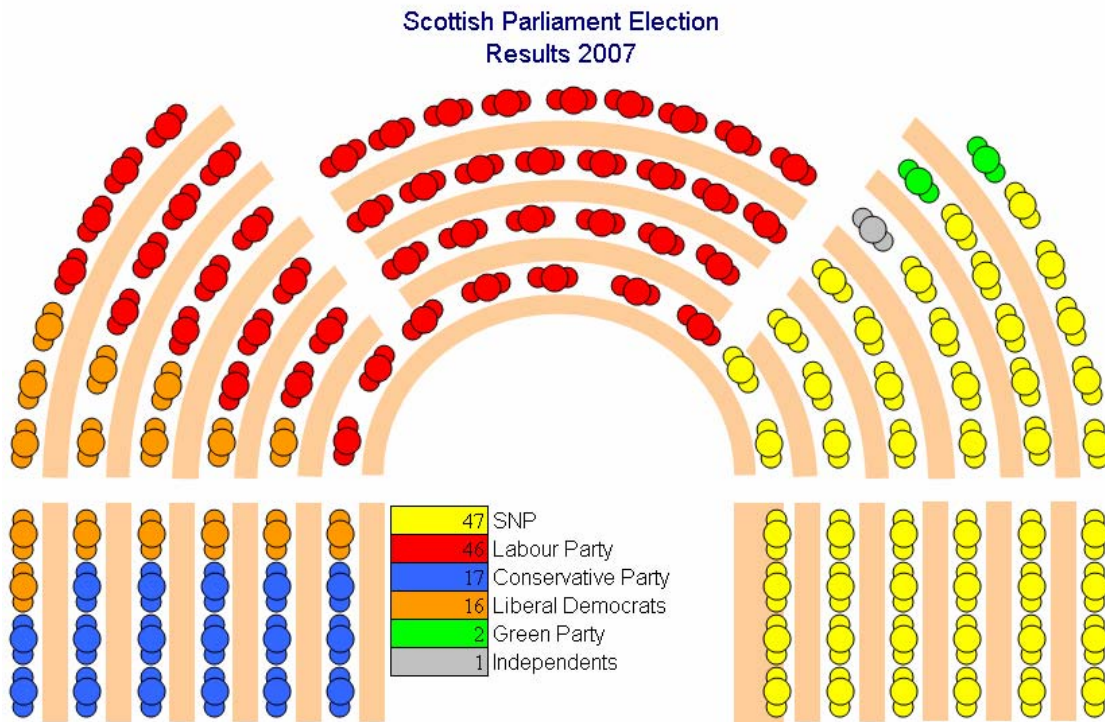
The electoral map of Scotland is divided into eight regions:[1]

- Central Scotland
- Glasgow
- Highlands and Islands
- Lothians
- Mid Scotland and Fife
- North East Scotland
- South of Scotland
- West of Scotland

In each of these regions, seven *additional* MSPs are elected. The choice for voters in the regional vote is between the different *party lists*. These lists are submitted by each registered party with their candidates listed in the order in which they would be elected via the regional list. If a party succeeds in winning one of these additional seats, the person named as first on the list will be elected. If a party wins two seats, then the first two will be elected, and so on.

There are two exceptions to the outcome portrayed above. First, a *party list* can be an individual person who is standing at the regional level rather than in a constituency. A prominent example of this in the 2003 and 2007 elections was Margo MacDonald who successfully stood in the Lothians region.

Second, a candidate can stand both in a constituency and on a regional top-up list. If they succeed in a constituency, this takes priority and their name is then removed from the regional

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[1] The eight regions are based on the constituencies that are used to form the basis of Scottish elections to the European Parliament.

list so they cannot be elected twice. In the 2007 election, this was the case with the election of Alex Salmond who won his constituency seat in Gordon and could therefore not be elected to the North East Scotland list, despite appearing on that list.

The formula used for deciding which parties win regional top-up seats is known as the d'Hondt system. First, party list votes are totalled from each of the parliamentary regions. These totals are then divided by the number of constituency seats each party has won, plus one. The party with the highest total after this calculation elects one additional member. That party's divisor is then increased by one (because of its victory in the first round) and new figures calculated. Again, the party with the highest total wins a seat. The process is then repeated until all seven additional members are elected.

Under the d'Hondt system, it is intended that the parties which perform well in terms of constituency votes, but fail to translate that success into elected constituency members, will be rewarded via the additional member system. Conversely, parties which do well in terms of securing constituencies will win fewer top-up seats.

The effects of the AMS system are best illustrated by an example. In Central Scotland region, Labour obtained 39.58% of the regional vote, yet this translated into no regional seats because the party had won 8 constituency seats in that region already. On the other hand, the SNP had won only 2 constituency seats in Central Scotland and with 31.6% of the regional vote, obtained 5 list seats in the region.

However the regional seats only partly compensate for disproportionality on the constituency vote as over half of the Parliament's 129 seats are allocated through the FPTP system.

In the next section James Mitchell considers the implications of the election result for the formation of a new Government in Scotland and in the section following that Charlie Jeffrey situates the election result within a UK context.

IMPACT OF THE RESULT ON SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT/GOVERNANCE

James Mitchell

GOVERNMENT FORMATION

There was little real prospect of anything other than a Labour-Liberal Democrat coalition following the 1999 and 2003 elections. This allowed an almost seamless transition from the Westminster system of one party government, resulting from the consequences of first-past-the-post, to coalition government, resulting from the additional member system. This was a gentle introduction to the consequences of multi-party, multi-minority politics facilitated by the continuation of the legacy of Labour-Liberal Democrat collaboration in the old Scottish Constitutional Convention. The challenge after 2007 is the transition to a post-Convention legacy, 'new politics plus'. As was signalled in an interview on BBC television, the Liberal Democrats will not enter a coalition with the Labour Party nor with the SNP. This was not formally articulated during the election campaign. But this may prove to be part of the normal negotiating tactic.

The permutations of theoretical options can be identified but it is much more difficult to list in order of the most likely outcomes. A number of assumptions are made in much of the literature on coalition formation:
- i.   minimal winning coalitions;
- ii.   connected winning coalitions;
- iii.   electoral competition considerations;
- iv.   rules governing or influencing coalition formation;
- v.   other considerations.

I. MINIMAL WINNING COALITIONS

William Riker's classic work, *The Theory of Political Coalitions*, drew on games theory to demonstrate a 'size principle' which he defined as, 'with complete and perfect information, winning coalitions (usually taken to mean having an overall majority) tend toward the minimal winning size'. In other words, parties are unlikely to offer to share power with more other parties than is necessary to win.

II. CONNECTED WINNING COALITIONS

Riker's theory has been criticised for failing to take account of ideological similarities/differences. In other words, a party that falls short of the necessary winning majority might be able to identify a small party which would provide it with an overall majority but with which it has little in common ideologically. It might be more attracted to coalesce with a party that is much larger – and would thereby have to concede more

Ministerial offices and/or policy measures but would be broadly in agreement with on policy. In other words, coalition might be expected to be between parties which are connected ideologically.

III. ELECTORAL COMPETITION CONSIDERATIONS

However, connected winning coalitions may be less attractive in circumstances when parties are relatively close ideologically but are in fierce competition electorally.

IV. RULES GOVERNING OR INFLUENCING COALITION FORMATION

The rules governing coalition formation in Scotland are relatively relaxed compared with the complex and entrenched rules in Northern Ireland but the legal requirements of the Scotland Act and the Parliament's own Standing Orders are prescriptive and potentially tight (especially the interplay between the two). There is no need for the affirmation of a coalition as such but there is a need to decide who should be First Minister within 28 days. The Standing Orders of the Parliament require that the first vote on a First Minister should be within fourteen days and this may all depend on the prior election of a Presiding Officer at its first meeting.

V. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Other considerations include whether a party feels it would benefit from office either in providing it with power to pursue its policy agenda and/or a higher public profile: the implications for internal party unity especially if any government formation arrangement involves the dilution or abandonment of core policy or principle and perceptions of public opinion.

In other words, competing logics exist when parties consider whether to enter a coalition. At the end of the day, the determination of whether a party joins a coalition will depend on which consideration is uppermost in its priorities.

Taking these general observations as a starting point, it is possible to consider the range of theoretical coalitions in turn starting with no coalitions, but minority government.

SINGLE PARTY MINORITY ADMINISTRATION

Assuming the Parliament accepted a First Minister, a Minority Administration could be formed which would not have a majority in the Parliament but would be able to govern, albeit it in circumstances where it cannot expect to achieve all or even most of its manifesto programme. Controversial measures that could not be passed would have to be dropped or face rejection. The Administration would have a much reduced power to control the political agenda but would still have extensive powers. It would be subject at any time to a vote of no-confidence which, if passed, would remove it from office and probably trigger an extraordinary general election.

An SNP Minority (47 MSPs)[2] would be unable to legislate for a referendum on independence, without the support or at least acquiescence of other parties and MSPs. But there are parts of its manifesto that could be enacted. The likelihood would be that the SNP would engage in a series of complex negotiations. The Parliament's role in policy making would be enhanced but at a significant cost in terms of coherent government and forward planning. A Labour Minority Government (46 MSPs) would face similar problems but would have the additional problem of having become Scotland's second party, and so capable of being outvoted at any time by just one opposition party, the SNP.

TWO PARTY MINORITY ADMINISTRATION

The electoral arithmetic shows that the only prospect of two parties combining to have an overall majority is the SNP and Labour with 93 seats. There are different views as to whether the two parties would constitute a 'connected winning coalition' in the sense that they share a broad policy consensus. There are obvious points of difference, most notably on the constitutional status of Scotland but also on the council tax and other matters. It is also contentious whether these two are the most obvious 'connected winning coalition'. In other words, there may be other combinations that are ideologically closer. In addition, these parties are in extremely strong electoral competition across Scotland and this is likely to be the main consideration ruling out its prospect.

However, practical circumstances may enable a government without a formal overall majority (ie 65 seats) to govern for some time, perhaps the whole session. This may depend on who becomes the Presiding Officer and assuming that the previous practice that the Presiding Officer has no vote, other than a casting vote and is politically impartial as to how other parties and MSPs behave. A minority Labour Government in the House of Commons, with its highly adversarial form of politics, lasted from 1976 until 1979.

An SNP-Liberal Democrat coalition (63 seats) might be seen as offering a more obvious 'connected winning coalition' though again, the issue of the referendum on independence creates a problem. On a range of other matters, there are differences though these may be matters of emphasis such as on a local income tax. There are constituencies in which these parties are in strong competition and that will influence whether such a coalition was possible.

A Labour-Liberal Democrat coalition (62 seats) has many of the same problems identified with an SNP-Liberal Democrat coalition and also has been weakened by the electoral success of the SNP and the perception that the electorate has refused to give anything approaching a vote of confidence in this combination. Again, there are a number of seats in which these two parties are in direct competition.

The Conservatives have ruled out any prospect of a formal coalition while the Greens offer only two seats making a two party coalition with that party having little to commend itself to other parties.

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[2] All figures are based on the size of the parties at the time of the election and take no account of the appointment of a Presiding Officer.

MULTI-PARTY COALITION

The prospect of more than two parties combining in coalition may be deemed necessary to achieve a winning minimal coalition but might create a strained connected winning coalition. The ideological distance grows the larger the number of members of a coalition. The implications are that such a coalition would be more severely restrained in its programme for government.

An SNP-Liberal Democrat-Green coalition (65 seats) would create a broader and thereby attenuated coalition though it would, assuming party discipline operated, be able to govern reasonably effectively. There are obvious points of difference that are, inevitably, increased as more members join or are necessary in the creation of a multi-party coalition. However, the electoral competition consideration is more limited on account of the Greens reluctance to contest constituencies. Similarly, a Labour-Liberal Democrat-Green coalition (64 seats) would assume similar characteristics with the additional problem of greater ideological differences.

Prospects for coalition formation will be determined by the relative importance of a number of factors each having implications for the kind of government that is created and for Parliament-Executive relations. And, of course, as happened in Wales, there is no need to assume that whatever is decided at the outset need last the whole session. Minority government may in time give way to coalition or vice versa.

SITUATING THE RESULT IN A UK CONTEXT

Charlie Jeffrey

Putting the Scottish Election in Perspective

We are not yet very good at analysing the meaning of devolved election results. Commentary in Scotland all too easily gets over-excited and fails to put the results in the considered perspective they deserve. And commentary in the London-based media all too easily draws out misguided implications from the Scottish and Welsh results for the next Westminster elections.

<u>Winners and Losers</u>

So who won and who lost? Well, the SNP won a historic victory over Labour in Scotland, while in Wales Labour stacked up yet another win. True of course, but not the whole story. The SNP's victory in Scotland is historic; the party has never before bettered Labour Scotland-wide, and its commitment to Scottish independence gives the victory added bite. But the SNP's win is hardly surprising. Most political systems see an alternation between governments led, in sequence, by the two largest parties, with alternations happening after one of the parties has had a good run in power and begins to look tired.

In Scotland the two main parties are Labour and the SNP, and Labour has been in power for eight years. Time was getting on for a change (a mood strengthened of course by the growing hostility across the UK to the other Labour government led by Tony Blair). Labour in Scotland was experiencing diminishing returns at the devolution ballot box, heading down from 38.8% on the constituency vote in 1999 to 34.5% in 2003 and 32.2% in 2007. The SNP's 2003 result – a poor 23.7% compared to 28.7% in 1999 – looks like an aberration, with the 32.9% it won in 2007 looking more like the resumption of normal service. Of course at some point the SNP will peak and Labour will recover, and the alternation process will resume.

Wales still appears some way from an alternation in power, even though Welsh Labour recorded its worst result since the First World War, dropping from 40% in 2003 to 32.2% in 2007 on the constituency vote. Labour in Wales and Scotland in other words are neck and neck in (un)popularity. Welsh Labour only 'won' because the opposition is divided between two now more or less equal forces – the nationalist Plaid Cymru and a recovering Conservative Party – and because the variant of the PR electoral system used there is less proportional and gives more weight to constituency contests, where Labour still dominates. Even so Labour in Wales will need to find a coalition partner if it is to govern again.

The Conservatives had little to shout about in Scotland. The consensus was that Annabel Goldie had a good campaign as Conservative leader. But the Conservative vote refused to budge, equalling the modern Conservative Party's worst ever Scottish performance in the constituency vote (16.6%) and setting a new low – at 13.9% - on the list vote. No Cameron bounce here. And the Liberal Democrats (as they did in Wales) trod water, underperforming their expectations and perhaps, belatedly, suffering also from a 'time for a change' mood they

had tried to deflect by distancing themselves from labour during the campaign.

Coalition Politics

Though the Liberal Democrats in Wales and Scotland flatlined at the polls, they remain fundamental to the coalition equation in both places. As negotiations on government formation unfold, three points should be borne in mind. First, what is most important is not what parties said during the campaign about who they might work with, and under what conditions, but the arithmetic produced by the election result; that arithmetic may force parties to moderate apparently irreconcilable positions. Second, minority government is hard work so the parties with first bite at the cherry of building a government will do what they can to build a majority coalition.

Third there is often one party which is in principle open to working with a range of partners and which wields influence in government formation disproportionate to its popularity among the voters. In Scotland (as in Wales) that party is the Liberal Democrats, which worked smoothly enough with Labour under successive First Ministers, yet which worked hard in the latter part of the campaign to position itself for coalition with the SNP. An SNP-LibDem coalition, plus perhaps the Greens to create a slim overall majority, would work easily enough on most policy issues, where there is little ideological difference between the parties.

The sticking point is on the constitutional question and on the SNP's proposed referendum on independence in particular, which the Liberal Democrats have consistently opposed. That does not mean a solution cannot be found which would allow both parties to maintain their credibility, and various have already been mooted. Some of the more unhinged media commentary on the issue – the *Sun*'s hangman's noose by far the worst example – needs to be reined in. The SNP, whose goals are clear, did emerge as largest party, and it does express an important political cleavage in Scottish politics (union vs. independence), so we should not be unduly surprised if that gets reflected in some way in the programme of Scotland's government.

Devolved Elections and UK Politics

What significance do the devolved elections have for UK politics? Electorally very little. One of the more remarkable features of Scottish and Welsh voters is how many of them have so quickly come to make voting decisions for the Scottish Parliament and National Assembly for Wales on different grounds than their decisions for Westminster elections. There is a clear pattern: Labour and the SNP/Plaid Cymru trade off votes; Labour does better in Scotland and Wales in UK elections than in devolved elections, and the nationalists vice versa. Even though Labour's vote is eroding generally the pattern still holds in 2007.

Survey research has shown that this electoral to-and-fro is not simply a matter of mid-term protest against the sitting Westminster government; many voters appear, as John Curtice put it, to pose Scottish questions in Scottish elections and give Scottish answers, while having a different set of UK-level calculations in mind at Westminster elections. A YouGov poll towards the end of the campaign (18-20 April, for the *Sunday Times*) confirms what now appears to be a systematic distinction of the two electoral arenas. Asked how they would vote in 'the next general election' which 'could be up to three years away', 36% opted for Labour, and 27% for the SNP. In other words, compared with 2007, Labour will likely do better in Scotland at the

next UK election and the SNP will do worse. Any attempt to extrapolate from the Scottish or Welsh devolved elections results in 2007 to the next UK election – as much of the London-based commentary cannot help doing – will be no guide as to what is likely to happen. The big question will be whether the Labour vote will erode from the 2005 level of 38.9% and whether, in a UK context, David Cameron's leadership can haul the Conservatives out of the electoral Mariana Trench into which they fell in Scotland during the 1990s.

That is not to say the 2007 Scottish results will have no impact on UK politics. If the SNP does succeed in creating a stable government we will for the first time see party-political 'incongruence' between Scottish and UK politics. So far Westminster and Holyrood have had Labour-led administrations. So far it has been relatively easy to manage differences and finesse disputes within the Labour family. The victory of any other party than Labour in either Scotland or at Westminster would make the challenge of coordinating divergences in UK and Scottish priorities more difficult. An SNP-led government may ratchet up the degree of difficulty further, not least because differences could easily be presented through the polarising lens of union vs. independence. Neither the SNP in Scotland nor Labour in Westminster sought to avoid rhetoric of confrontation and polarisation during the 2007 election campaign. The practice of intergovernmental relations may of course be approached more pragmatically once the heat of the election has died down. What is sure is that the robustness of the current devolution settlement will be severely tested.

THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN

THE MANIFESTOS

The manifestos of each of the main political parties were published early in the campaign. The following table summarises some of the main policy areas.

	Labour	SNP	Conservatives	Liberal Democrats	Greens	SSP	Solidarity
Constitution	Backs status quo	Independence Referendum within 4 years targeted at 2010	No commitment to more powers but willingness to debate and discuss the subject	Favours extra powers for Parliament, but opposes independence referendum. Constitutional convention to look at Holyrood powers	Supports an independence referendum and independence	Wants an independence referendum early in the next Parliament	Independence referendum within the first 100 days of new Parliament
Economy	Establish a "full employment agency"; 50,000 Modern Apprenticeships by 2011; double business rate relief for small businesses	Remove rates for 120,000 businesses and cuts for 30,000; create Scottish Futures Trust to provide lower cost borrowing for capital projects than PFIs	Spend £150m reducing business rates for SMEs; mutualise Scottish Water; create "Town Centre Regeneration Fund"	Cut business rates below levels in rest of UK; mutualise Scottish Water; set long term target of threefold increase in business R&D	Improve ability of small businesses to tender for public sector contracts, block use of PFIs; create national forum for sustainable development	Minimum wage of £8 per hour; 5,000 new apprenticeships in construction related trades, end PFIs, abolish domestic water charges	Minimum wage of £8.50 per hour, scrap Scottish Enterprise using money to scrap domestic water charges

Local taxation	No above inflation Council Tax increases, propose new council tax band in Band A and H	Abolish Council Tax and set Local Income Tax nationwide at 3p (at basic and higher rates)	Retain Council Tax, cutting it by 50% for all households where occupants are over 65	Abolish Council Tax and introduce Local Income Tax from 2009-10. Set locally, the average rate would be 3.5% to 3.75%	Replace Council Tax and business rates and replace with a Land Value Tax	Abolish Council Tax and replace with a Scottish Service Tax, with people earning less than £11k exempt	Abolish Council Tax and replace with a Scottish Service Tax with those earning under £10k exempt
Education	Raise to 18 the age to which Scots must be in employment, education or training, create 100 skills academies; literacy and arithmetic tests for school leavers	Abolish graduate endowment and pay off graduate debt; cut class sizes to 18 in primary one to three	Councils to be given control of education budgets; more power to be devolved to headteachers; pilot a city academy	Open 250 new and refurbished schools; bring in 1,000 new teachers to reduce class sizes; one hour of physical activity for every school child every day	Max primary school class size of 20; integrate state-funded religious schools, bonuses for teachers successful in raising educational standards in deprived areas	Free school meals and max class sizes of 20; increase adult literacy and numeracy programmes; abolish graduate endowment	Cut class sizes in primary schools to average of 19; employ and train extra teachers, abolish graduate endowment
Justice	Retain DNA and fingerprints of all crime suspects; justice centres to allow criminals to carry out "pay back" duties in communities	Extra 1,000 police; end short term jail sentences; more information for communities on dangerous paedophiles in their area	Extra 1,500 police officers; additional investment in drug rehab services; review operation of bail giving judges discretion to refuse	Extra 1,000 police; tougher community sentences with offenders working to repay crimes and cut re-offending; youth justice boards	Increase victim-offender mediation services; only jail offenders posing "genuine risk to the public"	Cut prison population by expanding alternatives to custody; end arrest and prosecution for cannabis possession	Propose a change in the law allowing Holyrood to ban airguns

Health	Waiting time of 18 weeks for outpatient treatment; ban sale of cigarettes to under 18s; full health check for men aged 40	Legally binding waiting times for patients; reverse planned closure of local hospitals; introduce directly elected health boards	A "money follows patient" system allowing patients to choose hospital; review NHS 24; £10m extra for mental health treatment	Extra 200 dentists; 2,000 extra nurses; 100 new and refurbished local health centres	Rule out fluoridation of water supply; increase student nurse bursary to £10,000; raise legal age for buying tobacco to 18	Free school meals; free prescriptions; expand drug and rehab services	Free school meals; free prescriptions; invest £10m to improve support for young carers
Environment	Climate change Bill to cut CO_2 emissions by 60% by 2050; recycle 70% of waste by 2020; 50% of electricity from renewables by 2050	Oppose nuclear power stations; mandatory carbon reductions of 3% per annum; cut carbon emissions by 80% by 2050	£12m per annum funding for grants for households, communities and small businesses to install energy-saving devices	100% renewable electricity by 2050; 70% recycling by 2020	Zero waste target by 2020; create Minister for Sustainable Development and Climate Change; no new nuclear	No new nuclear; free public transport; grants for insulation and double glazing in private homes	Bill to create a not-for-profit renewable energy corporation for Scotland
Transport	Take forward Glasgow crossrail project; investigate options for quicker Glasgow-Edinburgh rail journeys; support new Forth crossing	Abolish Forth and Tay Road Bridge Tolls; "early delivery" of new Forth crossing; abandon Edinburgh airport rail link project	Investigate high speed rail links between Glasgow and Edinburgh and Scotland and London; remove Tay and Forth road bridge tolls; £30m per annum to improve key trunk roads; replace Forth crossing	Investigate quicker Glasgow-Edinburgh rail journeys; replace Forth crossing; remove tolls on Tay road bridge and tolls for multi-occupancy vehicles using the Forth road bridge	Increased spending on walking and cycling; legislate for road traffic reduction; Improve bus services and conduct an inquiry into rural services and pricing	Free public transport; re-regulate buses; transfer the Scotrail franchise, when it expires in 2011, to a new publicly-owned Scottish national rail company	Bring Scotland's railways back into public ownership, with services run by a not-for-profit company

CAMPAIGN ISSUES

This section highlights some of the key issues raised during the campaign.

BBC Poll

At the start of the campaign, the BBC published the findings of a poll commissioned to canvass views on a variety of policy areas. The poll was carried out by ICM who asked for voters' views on 25 policy issues. Voters were asked to prioritise policies from a list, giving each policy a mark out of 10 for importance to them. The priorities, in order of importance to voters, were as follows:

1. Ensure that all schools and hospitals are built and run by public bodies rather than private companies
2. Put more police on the streets
3. Reduce the council tax for everyone over 65
4. Stop closing local hospitals even if they cost more to run
5. Provide more money to support Scotland's farming and fishing communities
6. Ban young people who cause trouble from going out at night
7. Give free school meals to all school children
8. Spend more money on improving Scotland's buses and trains instead of building new roads
9. Get rid of all tuition fees and charges for university students
10. Get more minor criminals to do work in the community instead of sending them to prison
11. Require all young people to stay in school or training until they are 18
12. Raise the money councils need through a local income tax rather than the council tax
13. Phase out nuclear power stations and replace with wind and wave power
14. Spend more money on helping people to get off drugs
15. Increase the number of people who go to university
16. Encourage more people to come to Scotland in order to stop Scotland's population falling
17. Hold a referendum on whether Scotland should become an independent country
18. Create secondary schools that specialise in teaching children who are very good at science
19. Generate more of Scotland's electricity from wind and wave power even if it means electricity bills will go up
20. Scrap prescription charges for everyone
21. Ask the UK government to transfer responsibility for setting and raising taxes in Scotland to the Scottish Parliament
22. Reduce taxes on business
23. Give more responsibility for policing local communities to local wardens rather than the police
24. Charge car drivers for bringing their cars into city centres
25. Charge motorists for driving on motorways

Source: ICM 2007

Local Taxation

Since devolution, Scottish elections have been fought on both devolved and reserved issues, usually with the most significant differences between the political parties being found in areas reserved to Westminster. In 1999, Kosovo loomed large as a dividing line between Labour and the SNP, with Alex Salmond describing the actions of the UK government as "unpardonable folly". In 2003 the

decision to go to war in Iraq was a major election issue in Scotland, and, arguably, a significant factor in the fall in support for Labour and the increasing support for smaller parties and independents.

The 2007 election also saw significant debate and differences between the political parties, with reserved issues like Trident, Iraq and the constitution all being intensely debated (see below). However, in this election, arguably for the first time since devolution, there were clear differences between the major political parties over a crucial **devolved** matter: namely, how we pay, and who should pay for local services.

The choice presented by the major political parties was whether we pay for local government through a tax on property (Labour and Conservatives) or through a tax on earned income (SNP and Liberal Democrats). The policy proposals were also subject to intense media and academic scrutiny. All leaders were questioned on their plans in the various television interviews and debates throughout the campaign, and there were a number of interventions via the press from academic figures like Arthur Midwinter and David Bell.

The SNP and Liberal Democrats proposed the abolition of council tax and the introduction of a tax on income. The SNP proposed a rate set nationally at 3p on both the basic and higher rates of income tax. The Liberal Democrats proposed an income tax giving local authorities discretion to vary the rate at which they set income tax, with the likely average across local authorities ranging from 3.5% to 3.75%. Added to the mix was the debate over whether, if council tax was abolished, the Scottish Executive would be able to claim back from the Treasury the £381m it currently receives via council tax benefit. The debate over the plans of the SNP and Liberal Democrats for local income tax was interesting in that it related to how local government was funded (a devolved matter) with how much people in Scotland receive by way of welfare benefits (a reserved matter). Over the course of the campaign, the SNP was put under pressure over how the gap would be filled between the total revenue expected to be produced by the local income tax (£1.3bn) and currently by the council tax (£2.1bn). The Liberal Democrats were also pressured over the potentially different rates of income tax being paid by someone in, for example, North Lanarkshire and someone in South Lanarkshire, and the effects this may have on employers. Both the SNP and Liberal Democrats also faced questions over why owners of expensive homes living on unearned income would pay nothing at all.

The Labour and Conservative parties also faced tough questioning over their plans for local government finance. Both proposed keeping the council tax. Labour proposed two new extra bands by splitting Band A and H, but were unable to explain where the division in the Bands would be placed, when and how the necessary revaluations in these bands would take place, how many houses would be affected and how much more or less households in the new top and bottom bands would pay. The Conservatives proposed no change to the existing council tax system, but a 50% reduction in council tax bills for all pensioner households where the occupants are over 65. Some commentators described this as being of assistance only to the better off pensioners, who do not currently qualify for council tax benefit, and not necessarily beneficial to those in most need who already receive substantial council tax benefit (Midwinter 2007).

All four of the main political parties were subject to close scrutiny of their proposals for local government finance. Perhaps this was because, as John Curtice said, "if a tax is changed, it is likely

that some people will be better off, others worse off…..As a result, the parties' proposals on tax receive closer scrutiny than those on spending" (Curtice 2007).

Cost of Independence

Despite the fact that this was an election to decide the next devolved administration of Scotland, independence, and its potential costs and benefits, was a constant theme of the campaign. Discussion of this issue was arguably kick-started in advance of formal campaigning with the publication of *Government Expenditure and Revenue in Scotland 2004-05* (GERS) (Scottish Executive 2006) in December 2006. Although this is a document detailing the fiscal flows to Scotland within the existing UK fiscal set-up, it is often used by opponents of independence as an indicator of the viability of an independent Scotland. The SNP and supporters of independence have questioned the figures in this document and counter that it tells us nothing about an independent Scotland and the different dynamic effects of being an independent state.

Early in the campaign, the Labour party claimed independence would cost every Scottish household £5,000 (Scottish Labour 2007). The SNP countered with its plans for economic growth targets for Scotland claiming that if an independent Scotland grew at the average rate of other small European nations, it would be worth £10,000 to every family in Scotland (SNP 2007). The Conservatives and Liberal Democrats were critical of Labour for presenting an overly negative picture of an independent Scotland rather than "talking-up" the Union. In one of his visits to Scotland during the campaign, David Cameron accused Labour of using "bone chilling" language to frighten Scots, arguing that voters were more concerned with "bread and butter issues" like health, education and crime (BBC online 2007).

Independence Referendum and the Powers of the Scottish Parliament

Nevertheless, the question of independence and an independence referendum was never far away during the campaign. In terms of the major parties' stance on the powers of the Scottish Parliament, the Labour Party favoured the status quo in terms of the Parliament's powers albeit not ruling out a gradual accretion of powers; the SNP proposed an independence referendum with the target date of 2010; the Liberal Democrats favoured more powers for the Scottish Parliament, and the creation of a constitutional convention on what powers to devolve; and the Scottish Conservatives stated that while they were staunch defenders of the Union, they were open to having a debate on the powers of the Scottish Parliament.

Much of the debate on the issue of a referendum on independence centred on the SNP and Liberal Democrats and whether they would be able to negotiate a coalition deal despite their contrasting stances. While the SNP favoured a referendum on the "straight question" of independence, the Liberal Democrats continually stated that they were opposed to any kind of referendum on independence.

Iraq

Continuing Iraqi, UK and American fatalities meant that the issue of Iraq again played heavily in a Scottish election campaign and the political leaders admitted as much in the live televised debate on the Sunday prior to the election. Asked in the debate about the impact of Iraq on the Scottish election, Jack McConnell (2007) said:

"…while I also think that people have very strong views on this, and I understand that - and it will be a factor in some people's choice on Thursday - I think it's vitally important that one particular issue does not cloud our views on the economic importance of the 300-year-old Union.

Nor, for that matter, the priorities of the Scottish Parliament over the next four years."

When asked about Iraq, Alex Salmond (2007a) said that it was impossible for voters to "reserve issues" and "reserve your conscience" during an election campaign.

Given that Iraq is linked in many voters mind with Tony Blair, the issue of punishing Blair one last time was raised several times in the campaign, including by Blair and McConnell who both warned against giving Blair "one last kicking" as this was an election over issues devolved to the Scottish Parliament. Iain MacWhirter (Herald 2007) argued that Tony Blair could have helped the Labour election cause by announcing a firm date for his resignation:

"Press coverage would change over night, as the media started to look back on the career of the most electorally successful leader Labour has ever had. Scottish voters would no longer have a reason to kick him out the door. The paradox is that the Prime Minister is personally popular in Scotland at the same time as importing negatives such as Iraq and cash for honours into the Scottish campaign."

Cash for honours

Another reserved issue, linked in the mind of voters with Tony Blair, is the "cash for peerages" investigation which was ongoing during the election campaign. During the campaign, the issue was frequently in the news and on 20 April, the police handed over its file on the case to the Crown Prosecution Service for them to decide whether to bring charges against anybody. The SNP, whose Angus MacNeil raised the complaint to initiate the entire investigation, was keen to keep raising this issue. For example, when questioned on Brian Soutar's donation to the SNP, Alex Salmond (2007b) stated that Brian Soutar was not looking for "a policy or a peerage".

Trident

The renewal of Trident was another reserved matter raised during the campaign. The SNP, Liberal Democrats, Greens and Socialists all oppose the renewal of Trident, and the Greens stated during the campaign that "nuclear power" was the one "red line" issue they had in terms of forming a coalition (Harper 2007). Although this was not a major campaign issue, it was raised on several occasions within the context of the powers of the Scottish Parliament, and the SNP often made the argument that being "nuclear free" would be one of the benefits of independence. In fighting its corner, Labour and the Conservatives made the point that nuclear weapons were part of the UK defence system, and that their non-renewal would have implications not just for UK defence, but also for jobs.

The costing of policy proposals

The costings presented in manifestos were also brought under scrutiny during the election campaign. This was not only in the context of local government finance (as mentioned above), but also in terms

of the overall costs of the main party plans in the context of an expected tightening fiscal environment. Research by the Centre for Public Policy for Regions (CPPR) produced analysis of the various party manifestos and placed those plans against the money likely to be available to the Scottish Executive over the next four years. It estimated that between 2007 and 2011, the Scottish Executive would receive an extra £3.4bn for new spending commitments, but staff costs could account for half of this, leaving just £1.7bn. The report concluded that there would be "significant pressure" on the Scottish budget in the next few years and that "this leaves little room for significant additional spending by any incoming Administration." It also questioned the ability of a new Executive to deliver "efficiency savings" "without having a detrimental effect on service level, if we are not talking about a fundamental structural change within the public sector" (CPPR 2007).

This was an interesting development and served as a signal to the parties that with the big increases in public spending unlikely to continue, tougher spending choices would be required in the next Parliament.

Anniversaries

There were two significant anniversaries which coincided with the campaign. On 1 May there was the 300th anniversary of the Act of Union between Scotland and England; followed on 2 May by the 10th anniversary of Tony Blair taking office. These were significant in that they allowed for reflection on the past and a look to the future. Tony Blair used his anniversary to endorse Gordon Brown as his successor, highlighting Brown's Scottishness in the context of his leading the UK government:

> "In all probability, a Scot will become Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, someone who has built our economy into one of the strongest in the world, and who, as I have said many times before, would make a great Prime Minister for Britain." (Scotsman 2007)

The SNP was keen to emphasise Tony Blair's leadership as being the reason why the Union should end, pointing to the Scottish people's opposition to the Iraq war and the renewal of Trident.

Party Endorsements

Another theme of the election campaign was the push by the parties to capture business and celebrity endorsements. On 23 April, the SNP published a list of 100 supporters from the business community claiming that "Scotland can be more successful". There followed on 25 April a newspaper advert of 150 business men and women supporting the union and claiming that "the break-up of Britain would damage Scotland".

The search for endorsements of the SNP, Labour or the Union was a consistent theme of the election campaign, with football "legends" coming out in favour of the union and artists, musicians and actors taking sides in the election fight.

International Interest

Another feature of the campaign was the high level of interest in the result from outside of Scotland. There was extensive coverage from UK-wide TV and press, as well as extensive coverage from overseas journalists, most of which centred on the constitutional debate. Le Monde from France, the Globe and Mail from Canada, Die Welt from Germany, Der Standard from Austria, and the New

Zealand Herald all covered the campaign in detail. Andy O'Neill from the Electoral Commission said he had been inundated with requests from abroad – from TV stations in Poland, Italy, Spain and Canada (BBC online 2007b). In addition, hosted by the British Council, journalists from countries including Afghanistan, Sudan, Malawi, Palestine and Saudi Arabia spent three days shadowing parliamentary candidates from all the major parties.

Two horse race and the exclusion of other parties

The fact that the campaign was presented by the media as a "two horse race" meant that much of the coverage focused on Labour and the SNP. This led to all the other parties "being squeezed" in terms of their media coverage. There are TV rules around air time and the number of party election broadcasts the smaller parties receive, but this campaign was notable for the dearth of coverage of parties outside the "big four". There were, however, other developments in the campaign trail involving some of the other parties.

There was the fight for the "socialist" vote between the SSP and Solidarity after the acrimony of the Tommy Sheridan News of the World case. Both parties fought to create some "clear red water" between each other, with the SSP advocating free public transport for all, and Solidarity promising to abolish Scottish Enterprise.

One running comment during the election campaign related to the extent of the influence of smaller parties and whether they would be squeezed by the election contest being presented in the media as a two-horse race. There was also the issue of the opinion polls and the reliability with which they were able to "capture" support for the smaller parties and independents. Following on from that, there was the unpredictable nature of the effect that the smaller parties would have on the overall result. Certainly, the result of only three members from outside the "big four" showed that the smaller parties had been squeezed, perhaps because of the perception in voters' minds of a "two-horse race".

TV debates

The party leaders of all the parties were subject to various TV interviews and debates. The major party leaders plus those of the Socialists, Solidarity and the Green's leaders were all interviewed by Gordon Brewer on the BBC's Newsnight Scotland, and by Bernard Ponsonby on STV.

The BBC leaders debate at the end of the campaign attracted 220,000 viewers and gave the leaders the opportunity to launch the proverbial "knock-out punch" as the campaign entered the final round. Not surprisingly given that most of the issues raised in the debate had already been well-rehearsed during the campaign, the consensus in the aftermath of the debate was that no one leader had been able to strike any decisive blows. Hamish MacDonell (Scotsman 2007b) described the debate thus:

> "By the end of an hour, it was stalemate. None had made a gaffe, none had been caught out by the others and each had managed to get a clear party message across.

> But there was much more to it than that. Mr McConnell performed competently but conceded ground, both on his leader, Tony Blair, admitting that there were voters willing to "give him a kicking" and on Iraq, saying he favoured bringing the troops home as soon as practicable.

Mr Salmond was confident on Iraq and Mr Blair, but less sure on his plans to replace the private finance initiative.

Mr Stephen sided with Mr McConnell over the PFI and Mr Salmond over Iraq, but refused to be drawn on the prospect of a coalition with the SNP.

Ms Goldie emerged with some credit, standing firmly behind the Union, the police, the war in Iraq and the PFI without wavering.

It was clear that the leaders had been in this position so many times that they were able to deal with most of the problematic questions with relative ease."

This was, after all, the fifth debate of the campaign and the penultimate one before polling day."

The press and new media

This election was unusual in that the largest party achieved its success despite not having the explicit support of any mainstream newspaper throughout the campaign. This is possibly indicative of a declining newspaper influence in politics and the increasing influence of alternative media forms, like the internet as well as Television. It was striking that the SNP chose not to conduct many newspaper interviews during the campaign, opting instead to use the internet to launch SNP TV and focusing mainly on one-to-one television interviews, perhaps believing that this reduced the chance of their message being "spun" in a particular way.

However, in several editorials prior to the election, a number of newspapers came out in favour of an SNP-led Executive (see below). That these were often heavily qualified endorsements (for instance, the Scotland on Sunday and Sunday Times) suggests that this was possibly a case of public opinion and opinion polls influencing the press, rather than the other way around.

One of the main developments in recent years in politics worldwide has been the increasing power of new forms of media. This campaign was no different. There were blogs from mainstream journalists, like Brian Taylor of the BBC, and blog space for interactive messages at the bottom of articles posted on newspaper websites. There was also the development of a number of websites, specifically focusing on the Scottish election campaign, like youscotland and Holyrood 2007; not to mention the ready availability of interviews, blogs and party election broadcasts on youtube, where clips from the campaign often "went viral".[3]

What the Papers said

As mentioned above, it was notable that during the course of the campaign, the SNP retained its poll lead despite not having the explicit endorsement of any major newspaper in Scotland. Despite this, at the end of the campaign period, several editorials in Scotland came out in support of an SNP led coalition.

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[3] Viral, when used as a computer term, refers to a reoccurring practice or pattern of internet use that moves from person to person.

The Sunday Herald editorial piece, entitled "a vote for change is a leap of faith. It's a leap this newspaper is prepared to make" stated:

> "It is our belief that the Scottish Labour Party has not earned the right to a third term…..We could have reached that conclusion solely on the basis of its support for a war in Iraq, a conflict this newspaper has consistently opposed.
>
> But it is not just that cataclysmic error that has eroded our belief in the Labour Party. Their election campaign has been unremittingly negative."

The Sunday Herald opinion was that the "best outcome" would be:

> "a coalition led by Alex Salmond. Like you, we can weigh up promises and add up economic policies, but in the end a vote for change is a leap of faith. It's a leap this newspaper is prepared to make."

Its sister paper, the Herald opted not to specifically endorse any particular party, stating:

> "It is true that we could end up with a period of horse trading to form the new government, involving any number of parties in any number of permutations. Perhaps this is where Scotland needs to be, at this stage in its history within the Union. It takes time for democratic institutions to mature.
>
> Questioning the 300-year-old settlement, for the benefit of Scotland and the other parts of the United Kingdom, is part of the process. If this results in a minority administration which is voted down with regularity, the political landscape could become unsettled. Perhaps this will be necessary before the landscape can stabilise. When it does, we would expect the parliament to be stronger and wiser in fighting Scotland's corner within the Union. At present, most Scots do not want the process of evolution to encompass independence. But they do want a parliament with more powers to run Scotland's affairs. That is the right direction to head in.
>
> In keeping with its stance during past elections, The Herald will not endorse any party. All we would ask is that, with so much at stake on so many fronts and so many uncertainties to face, every effort is made to vote. Our evolving Scottish polity would be the loser if apathy were the winner."

There was some qualified support for the SNP from traditionally Unionist publications. The Scotland on Sunday editorial argued that an SNP-led coalition "offers the best chance of restoring public confidence in our democracy, and a new sense of possibility among the people of this country." However they went on to state that:

> "…we have no intention of becoming a cheerleader for the SNP in government. We are all too aware that an SNP-led administration carries risks. Salmond, although a charismatic leader, is untested in office. There are question marks over the party's fiscal competence and a suspicion that tax-and-spend policies are deeply embedded in its DNA. The SNP manifesto contains some policies that have serious question marks about their practicability. In particular, both the SNP and the Lib Dems need to rethink their

plans to replace the council tax with a local income tax, a policy that will hit hundreds of thousands of Scots hard."

Its sister newspaper, the Scotsman, made a similar argument, pointing out its concerns, in particular with the local income tax proposals, but nevertheless, arguing for an SNP-led coalition:

"…[the Scotsman] has considerable concerns about the SNP, but this time not enough to suggest that the voters should deny it a role in the government of our country and a chance to show what it can offer modern Scotland."

The Sunday Times also backed an SNP led coalition, but with support for the Union heavily emphasised. It argued:

"The Sunday Times has always been a Unionist paper. It may seem strange therefore that we should now come out for an SNP-led coalition. Yet that is our position. The Union is not immediately in danger. Its future will not be determined by this election. The choice now is not between the Union and independence, but between a Labour party that has run out of ideas and the SNP which promises more vigorous and imaginative government. We need a change of government, and only the SNP can provide this. Within the confines of devolution, and in the awareness that there will be another opportunity to vote for the Union, we have concluded that an SNP-led coalition is the best option for voters."

Labour did better in garnering support from the tabloid press, with endorsements from the Daily Record and the Sun. The Daily Record reinforced the Labour campaign theme that a vote for the SNP is a vote for independence:

"Do not vote for Alex Salmond today – unless you want independence. This election is not about the war in Iraq. It is not about cash for honours. It is not about Tony Blair. It is about who will run Scotland best. It is about which party can keep our economy growing at record rates. It is about schools, hospitals and law and order. And on these issues, the only sensible vote is for Labour.

SNP leader Alex Salmond has fought a magnificent campaign. He has talked freely on every issue except one: Independence. Yet it is his party's one core policy. Their stated aim is to separate Scotland from the rest of the UK. The clue is in the name, the Scottish NATIONAL Party. Yet that name will not appear on your ballot paper today. Instead you will be urged to vote for Alex Salmond for First Minister on the regional list. That is how far Salmond has gone to distance himself from a policy that fewer than one in four Scots support. We cannot let him pull the wool over our eyes. We cannot sleepwalk into independence."

The Daily Record's sister paper, the Sunday Mail argued that Tony Blair had been a burden on the Scottish Labour Party campaign, and that Jack McConnell deserved to remain First Minister stating that:

"If Blair cared about Labour's chances, he would have gone already. His insistence that Scots would be fools to consider independence was only counterproductive. Most of us do not just suspect that Scotland has the talent and initiative to become a successful independent nation. We know it.

But according to polls, most Scots do not believe the real benefits of being equal partners in a United Kingdom should be jeopardised for a gamble on our future. Why sever such deep cultural and economic ties with our neighbours?.......

Jack McConnell has had a good campaign. He shares the patriotism of most Scots and has a passion to build a better future. He deserves the chance to lead another Executive."

The Sun's front page on election day carried images of a noose, warning voters against voting SNP. Its editorial entitled "only Labour can save us from a living nightmare" stated:

"This is the biggest decision in our recent history. Go and vote today and, when you do, ask yourself if you want to wake up tomorrow having stumbled into four years of tax and turmoil, because, make no mistake, an SNP government would increase your taxes, create turmoil, and put all you've achieved at risk.

Scotland is a great country. Don't let the SNP wreck it. If ever your vote counted, it is today. Vote Labour today for a positive future for Scotland within the Union."

Despite not being overly enthusiastic about the Labour-Liberal Democrat coalition, the Scottish Daily Mail urged its readers to "vote for the Union":

"It is undeniable that the past eight years of devolved government under a woeful Lib-Lab coalition has sickened people with politics. But such understandable alienation should not persuade any citizen to stand aside and let a vociferous minority determine the future of our country.

The forces of separatism are already celebrating the destruction of Britain. The polls show beyond dispute that is not the will of the democratic majority. So it is crucial that majority should resist the temptation to sit on its hands. Vote for the Union today: tomorrow will be too late for regrets."

Douglas Fraser discusses the media campaign in the section below.

THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN FROM A MEDIA PERSPECTIVE

Douglas Fraser

Election 2007 was a strange kind of horse race. Numerous contestants started, most of them falling at the first credibility hurdle, including two Christian parties who loathed each other. Eight parties could be taken seriously because they won seats four years ago.

Yet the election often seemed like a two-horse race. Parties, polls and pundits combined to draw public interest into the Labour-SNP race. All but two of the polls put the SNP ahead. The margin averaged around 5 points on the constituency vote, and rose as high as 10 points, with a squeeze becoming evident in the closing stages. The same polls found unusually high numbers of undecided voters, a factor the parties also noted, making this a contest over the loyalties of former Labour voters who were having doubts about returning to the fold, either needing reassurance or looking to shift their allegiance elsewhere.

Opinion surveys found it difficult to track the smaller parties, which made it hard for the media to tell a clear story about what was happening behind the front runners. That may, in turn, have fed into the squeeze on these smaller parties when the votes were counted.

In the two-horse race, voters backed both contenders, with the SNP edging ahead by the narrowest of margins in vote and seat share, but with a much bigger lead in momentum that unquantifiable but essential commodity with which a new administration can be formed.

Polls had a particularly high profile because they were the only unpredictable element in a largely predictable campaign. That is a tribute to the professionalism of the parties, for the most part sticking doggedly to their strategies and messages. They had carefully rolled out manifesto commitments over previous months, their national campaigns then pursuing only a few themes intended to reach target voters.

Women received particular attention, reflecting the polls finding that they were markedly more reluctant to back Alex Salmond and the Nationalists. Annabel Goldie launched the Conservative manifesto in a Galashiels play centre. Nicol Stephen used his own children to boost his family-friendly credentials, and sought to be pictured with young people around Scotland in a Lib Dem campaign that verged on the bland and vacuous.

After campaign and manifesto launches that failed to give much momentum, the latter marred by technical difficulties and cut short, the Lib Dem was the only party leader who found it hard to stay on message. Media attention kept returning to the potential for coalition deals. Unlike 2003, when the focus was on tiny differences between Lib Dem and Labour justice programmes, the 2007 focus was almost entirely on whether the Lib Dems and SNP could work together.

The prospects for an independence referendum were picked over in minute detail, with interest maintained by Mr Stephen's stock response to the proposition falling short of a firm 'no'. Alex Salmond overtly courted the Lib Dems throughout the campaign, offering compromise on the referendum questions - even while his Gordon constituency campaign machine was steam-rollering

his Lib Dem opponent, Nora Radcliffe.

Tories tried to avoid talk of constitutional politics, with Annabel Goldie focussed on 'bread and butter issues'. She had a limited range of policies, making no pretence that she could lead a government, and taking a risk by arguing she didn't even want to be in power, least of all in an 'unprincipled' coalition.

It was an odd selling proposition, particularly for a party that has traditionally seen itself as the natural party of government. But it meant she did not come under much pressure, and could take the opportunity of the leadership limelight to project herself as a big personality, straight-talking, genuine, a bit eccentric and likeable. As with all the party campaigns - with the exception of the SNP's Nicola Sturgeon - there was not much attempt to project those other than the leader.

As a prelude to the constitutional battle, there had been a heavy artillery barrage of economic statistics, much of which had taken place over winter. One part of the Labour campaign - the Gordon Brown/Wendy Alexander part - invested heavily in making the economic case against independence and also a financial case against the SNP spending plans. Several different 'black holes', comprising multiple billions of pounds, were talked up, and a £5000 per average household was used as the bill for SNP independence. The SNP responded with its own figures and then with disdain. Its polling suggested Labour's figures were not believed.

Council taxation was also given close attention. With the SNP and Lib Dems for the replacement of council tax by a local income tax, and with Labour and Tories offering modest reform, this was the biggest debate around devolved policy.

That SNP policy launch got off to a bad start, and had to claw back the initiative by campaigning heavily on the scrapping of 'unpopular, unfair' council tax more than the problems with the alternative. Labour wanted to focus on the alternative, but its proposal for tinkering at the margins of council tax was poorly worked out, the subject of internal campaign tensions, and it got Jack McConnell into repeated difficulties in media interviews.

Few other issues gained detailed, hotly debated attention from parties or media. There was little meaningful discussion of the future direction of the health service, except to argue vaguely that it should be local except for the parts that had to be central. On education, there was a brief flurry on university financing. The varying manifesto pledges to boost economic growth were given limited attention, most often on efforts to turn around declining high street shopping. The party's assertions of how to tackle crime focussed simplistically on the number of extra police and prison places that might be required.

That lack of detailed analysis may have reflected how similar the party platforms had become. It may also be to the credit of the Labour-Lib Dem Executive that they had effectively neutralised attacks on the big devolved issues. Their opponents were able to play on a general and vague sense of disappointment, but were not able to point at any one failure that encapsulated that feeling. It is not clear that Lib Dems suffered from that sense of disappointment, even though their result was a let-down, while the reasons for not voting Labour were much more likely to be reserved issues; the Iraq war, cash-for-peerages, Trident weapons, Westminster factionalism, the revelation, at the start of the

campaign, that Gordon Brown had ignored 1997 advice that his tax changes would harm pensions.

This points to Labour's campaign conundrum. Its polling found Jack McConnell was not well placed to beat Alex Salmond in a contest for First Minister, so Gordon Brown and Tony Blair featured prominently instead. They were able to command attention and punch home their anti-SNP messages. But they brought north reminders of those negatives for their party, their presence tended to undermine McConnell's authority, and Labour drowned its positive, manifesto messages with negativity.

The media was able to fight much of the campaign on front pages and high in the bulletins, unlike 1999 and 2003, when war reporting filled much available space. The SNP sought to dampen pro-Labour bias, sending polling evidence to newspaper editors to stress how many of their readers were pro-Nationalist.

In the early stages, there was more balance in politically-committed papers than before, but as Labour's campaign failed to impact on the SNP's poll lead, several editors turned up the heat on the Nationalists. This became ferocious on polling day, with The Sun depicting an SNP victory with a hangman's noose.

Other papers shifted significantly towards the SNP as a vehicle for change. The final Sunday of campaigning saw four newspapers back Alex Salmond as First Minister, and The Scotsman followed suit. Only one national newspaper, The Sun, had backed the SNP before, and it only did that in 1992.

Broadcasters were required to provide balanced coverage. A novelty from the BBC was the use of a campaign bus while STV with sharply reduced resources compared with previous campaigns though they were criticised for their refusal to include smaller parties in leaders' debates. Commercial radio continued to build its significance as a means for politicians to reach key voters.

Developing campaign features included a lively blogosphere and newspaper websites carrying a strong critique of the media as well as heavy doses of conspiracy theory. But just as the media audience fractures, the ballot form fiasco showed the difficulty that campaigners have - even well-funded ones in explaining the new voting system - in reaching those who are switched off from politics.

A further significant development was the SNP's use of its own polling, employing YouGov data to provide illustration of its campaigning points. As well as using newspaper readerships' political loyalties to pressure editors, Nationalists used such poll findings to drive their claim the Scots wanted a referendum on their constitutional future, to highlight public dislike of the council tax and to show when Labour's anti-SNP attacks were not believed.

The SNP also made careful and effective use of endorsements. This was not a new feature of campaigning: Sir Sean Connery has regularly boosted the Nationalist cause, and Labour had amassed lists of supportive business people. But it reached a new plane in this campaign.

The winter-long statistical warfare had brought several leading economists and business leaders into

the battle. It came alive in mid-March when the SNP announced the support of Sir George Mathewson, former chairman of the Royal Bank of Scotland. This was on the morning of a Prime Ministerial visit, and wrong-footed him. The next day, at the SNP conference in Glasgow, a £500,000 donation and endorsement from transport tycoon Brian Soutar built momentum at a point in the election cycle when the SNP had previously seen its poll leads begin to slip.

The SNP kept the endorsements coming, Labour struggled to respond and other parties didn't seem to try. The penultimate week of campaigning featured a strange business-and-celebrity endorsement battle, as Labour shifted ground to find big name backers of the Union with England, only belatedly finding a group of prominent backers for the party itself, while the SNP ran into the final week with a series of 'ordinary' people lists, such as students and pensioners.

But that is to reflect only on the national picture. All politics is local, and a mixed map of results suggest the local picture was more influential than usual in deciding constituency contests. Where the SNP put in local campaign effort, it produced surprises but also fell short in some places where Labour could see the threat and dug in its defences.

And that is to say nothing of a local council campaign that was barely visible for those of us reporting the national campaigns. The Greens and far left parties each held a national event to highlight their council campaigns. But the larger parties did not bother to do so at any time. No wonder, then, that most national media followed their lead.

ELECTORAL BEHAVIOUR

In the 1999 elections, the polls accurately predicted the result, but not the relative strengths of the parties. This is arguably because the elections were the first to be held to the Parliament under a voting system which was new to Scotland (and indeed the UK). Over the four years of the first term of the Parliament the only major polling company to provide a consistent set of polling data over this period was System Three for The Herald newspaper.

Opinion polls over the first three terms of the Scottish Parliament for the constituency and regional vote are outlined in Figures 5 and 6. These graphs cover the opinion poll data for the year leading up to each of the last three elections and aim to provide a 'moving average' of poll support between 1998 and 2007. The tables below show the polls for constituency and regional votes in the year leading up to each of the 1999, 2003 and 2007 elections. They also include the election results for each of the last three Scottish parliamentary elections. The graphs indicate the relative of polls in the run-up to elections.

Figure 5 details voting intentions for the constituency vote in the Scottish Parliament. The polls clearly indicate that Labour and the SNP have been significantly ahead of the other parties in terms of voting intentions throughout the period. Initial polls in the year before the 1999 election put the SNP ahead of Labour, but behind Labour by the time of the election itself. In the year leading up to the 2003 election, Labour remained ahead of the SNP. This scenario was reversed in the run-up to the 2007 election, where the SNP overtook Labour some months before the poll, but the gap between the parties narrowed as the date of the election drew nearer.

Although a similar pattern is discernible in Figure 6 for regional seats, the gap between Labour and the SNP is much narrower in the year leading up to the 2003 election and reasonably wide in the run-up to the 2007 election.

Figure 5: Trends In Opinion Polls: Constituency Vote 1998 – 2007
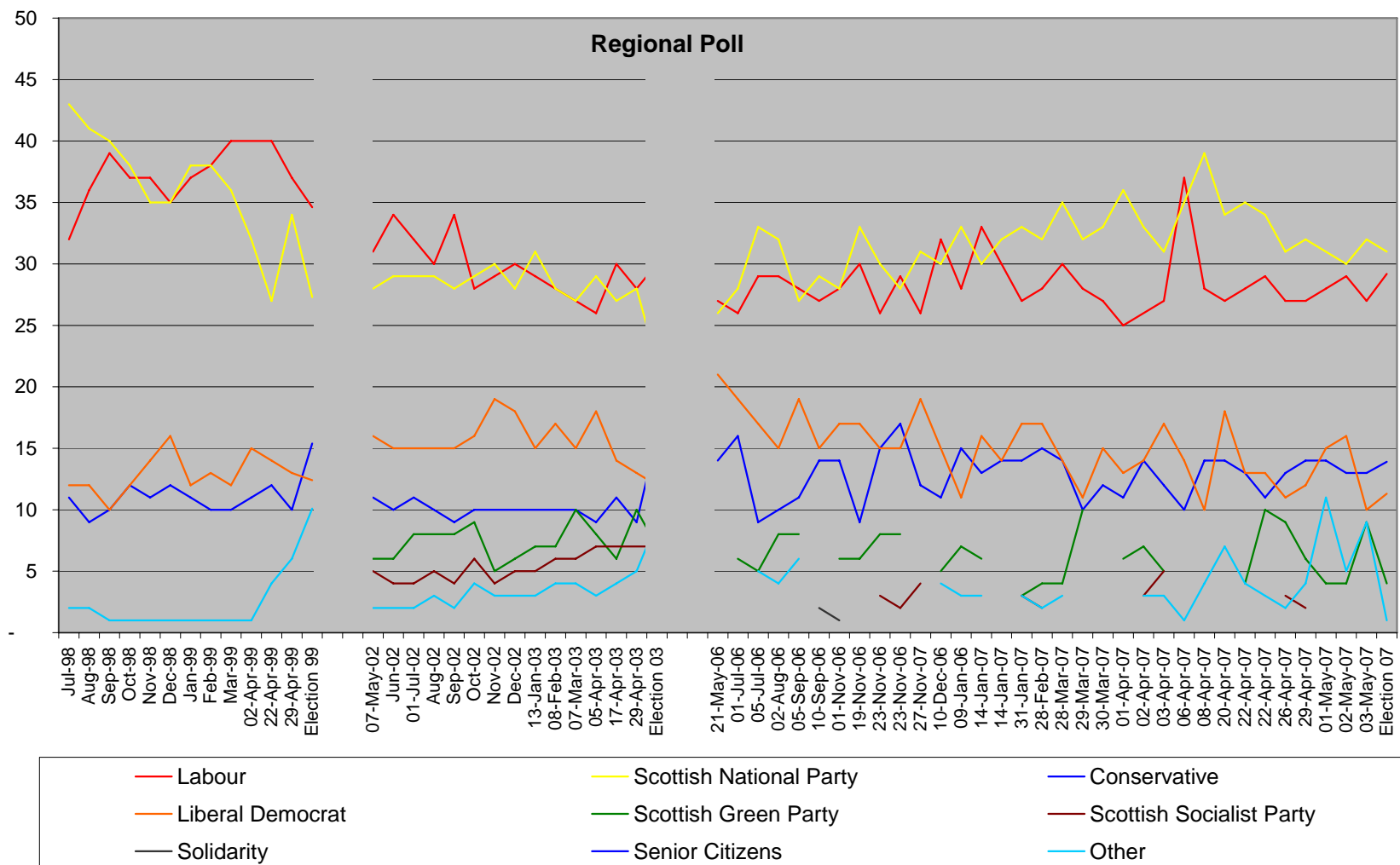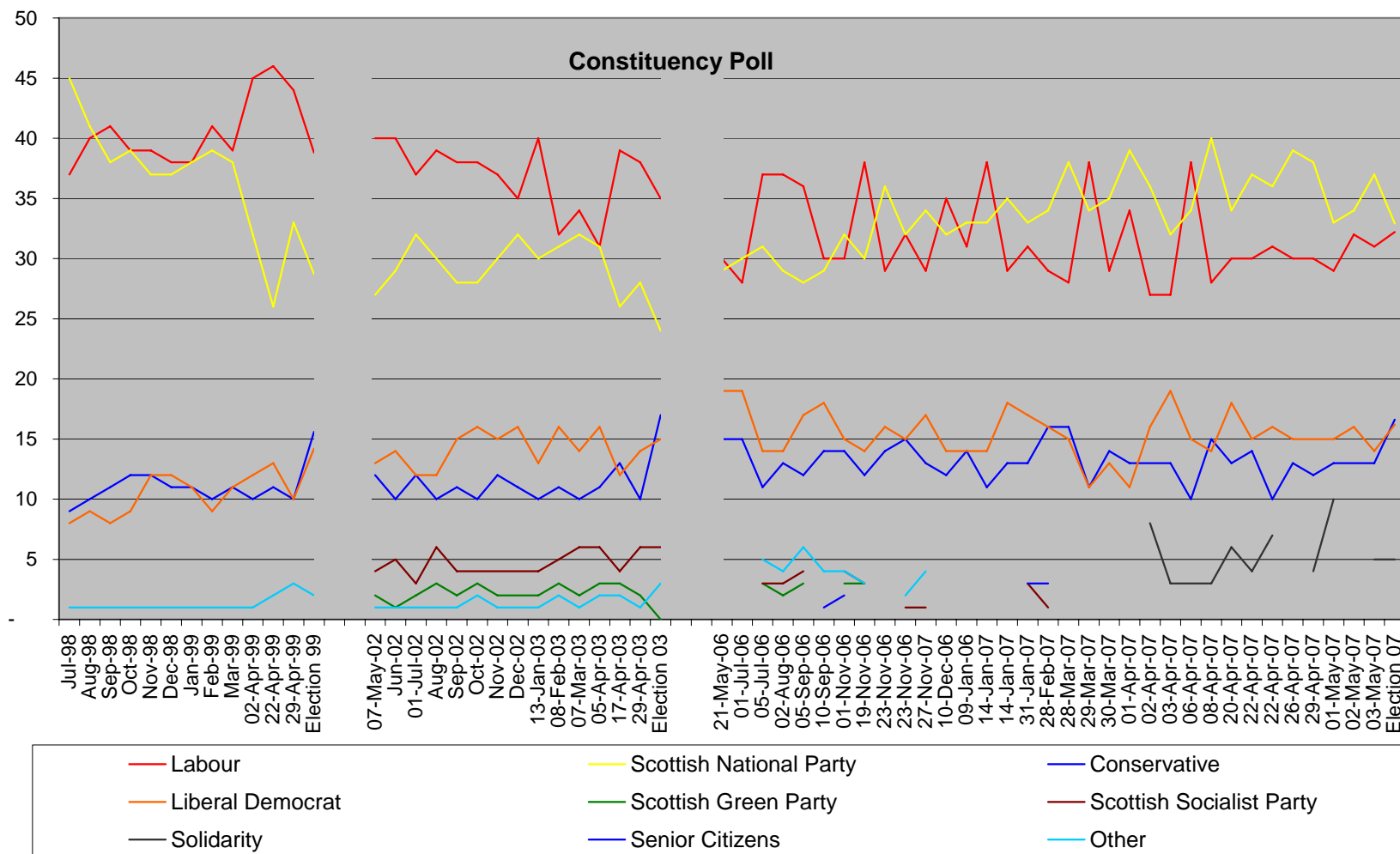
Figure 6: Trends In Opinion Polls: Regional Vote 1998 – 2007

During the first year of the Scottish Parliament Labour tended to hold a lead over the SNP of between five and 10 per cent. However, this lead diminished during the parliamentary term. The first term marked a turbulent time for the Labour party both in Scotland and the UK with opposition to Section 2a, the untimely death of Donald Dewar in Scotland and fuel protests across the UK.

From March 2001 Labour regained a significant poll lead over the SNP with the gap between the two parties frequently around 10-15%. However, from January 2003 the two parties were virtually 'neck and neck' in terms of voting intentions until the latter stage of the election when the Labour party regained a lead in the polls. The actual election result suggests that the polls were fairly accurate in measuring voting intentions with regard to Labour but rather overestimated support for the SNP.

There was not much polling undertaken after the 2003 election, but this resumed in 2006. The two parties remained close in the opinion polls, although a trend began to emerge giving the SNP an increasing lead. Reasons for this have included national (UK) disillusionment with the Labour Party over the war in Iraq and the cash for honours scandal among other issues.[4]

This has been reflected in lower levels of support for the Labour Party in Scotland, with corresponding rises in support for the SNP, as well as for the Conservative Party.

The Conservatives and Liberal Democrats both tended to poll between 10% and 15% of voters sampled by NFO System Three between July 1999 and the end of 2001. However, from 2002 onwards the Liberal Democrats polled consistently above the level recorded for the Conservatives with the Lib-Dem vote tending to fluctuate around 15% and the Conservative vote at around 10-12%. This trend continued in the NFO System Three polls up until the 2003 election, but reversed itself in the run-up to the 2007 election.

In the first Parliament, separate data was not collected for the Green Party and the Scottish Socialist Party and therefore these two parties were included in the 'other' category accounting for the relatively high level of support for 'other' parties in the first six months of the Parliament. The SSP tended to poll around 3-4% of the vote from 1999 although this rose to 6-7% in early 2003. It subsequently dropped to between 2 and 3% with the 2006 split of the SSP into the Socialist Party and Solidarity.

The Green Party polled fairly steadily throughout the lifetime of the first Parliament at 2-3%, rising to between 5 and 7 percent in the run-up to the 2003 election and as high as 9% in the run-up to the 2007 election.

Voting intentions for other parties was fairly consistent at 1-2% of the electorate's constituency voting intention and between 4 and 6 per cent of the regional voting intention.

When it comes to polls and their reliability, it is also worth noting that minor parties tend to be under-represented in polls. This was evident in the polls leading up to the 2003 election which saw significant gains for both the Greens and the Socialists. These gains were lost however in the 2007 election.

Figure 7 provides a poll of polls. It uses three average polls which are converted to parliamentary seats.[5] The first is the average of polls taken between 6 May 2006 and 4 May 2007, the second all polls in 2007 and the third all polls between 1 April and 3 May 2007. The final bar of the graph indicates the actual result of the 2007 election. The indication is that while the polls were broadly in line with SNP, Conservative and Liberal Democrat support, they under estimated Labour support and over estimated support for Greens, Socialists and independents.

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[4] See *What the Papers Said*, earlier in this Briefing
[5] Using the calculator on http://www.scotlandvotes.com/

Figure 7: Poll of Polls
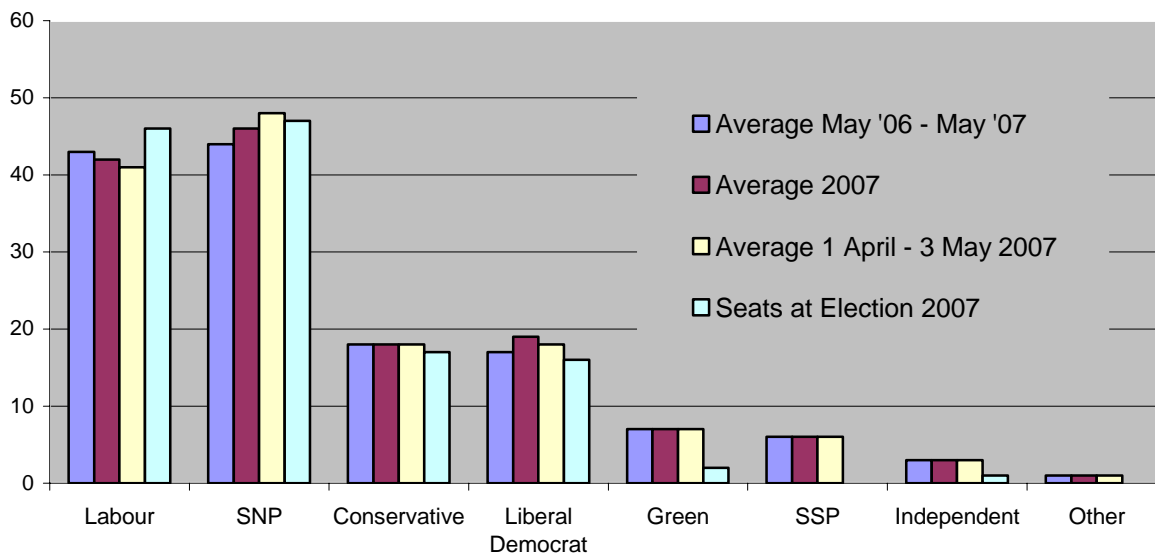
TURNOUT

Turnout at the 2007 Scottish Parliament election was 51.7% on the constituency vote and 52.4% on the regional vote reflecting that 25,109 more votes were cast on the regional vote than were cast in the constituency vote. In 2003 341 more votes were cast on the constituency vote than were cast in the regional ballot and the equivalent figure at the 1999 election was 3,574 more constituency votes. The larger number of regional votes cast in 2007 appears to be a reflection of voter confusion with regard to the restructured ballot paper for the Scottish Parliament election which placed the regional and constituency vote on the same ballot paper. Turnout varied considerably geographically. As Table 1 displays on the constituency vote, turnout ranged from 41.6% in Glasgow to 56.5% in the West of Scotland. On the regional vote turnout was again lowest in Glasgow (43.3%) and highest in the West of Scotland (56.8%).

TABLE 1 - TURNOUT COMPARING CONSTITUENCY AND REGIONAL VOTE

Region	Constituency Vote	Regional Vote
Central Scotland	50.49%	50.86%
Glasgow	41.61%	43.26%
Highlands and Islands	54.71%	55.00%
Lothians	54.06%	55.28%
Mid Scotland and Fife	52.83%	53.19%
North East Scotland	50.71%	51.41%
South of Scotland	53.64%	53.86%
West of Scotland	56.51%	56.80%
Scotland	**51.72%**	**52.37%**

In comparison with previous Scottish Parliament elections, based on the turnout on the constituency vote, turnout in 2007 was 2.3% higher than in 2003. However the 2007 turnout is 6.4% lower than the 1999 turnout of 58.2% (see Table 2).

TABLE 2 - TURNOUT (BASED ON THE CONSTITUENCY VOTE)

Region	Turnout 1999	Turnout 2003	Turnout 2007
Central Scotland	59.40%	48.53%	50.49%
Glasgow	47.92%	41.47%	41.61%
Highlands and Islands	61.17%	52.29%	54.71%
Lothians	61.07%	50.47%	54.06%
Mid Scotland and Fife	59.32%	49.70%	52.83%
North East Scotland	54.52%	48.28%	50.71%
South of Scotland	61.72%	52.34%	53.64%
West of Scotland	61.54%	53.31%	56.51%
Scotland	**58.16%**	**49.42%**	**51.72%**

The maps overleaf detail turnout by constituency in 2007 and turnout by Parliamentary region.

Turnout 2007
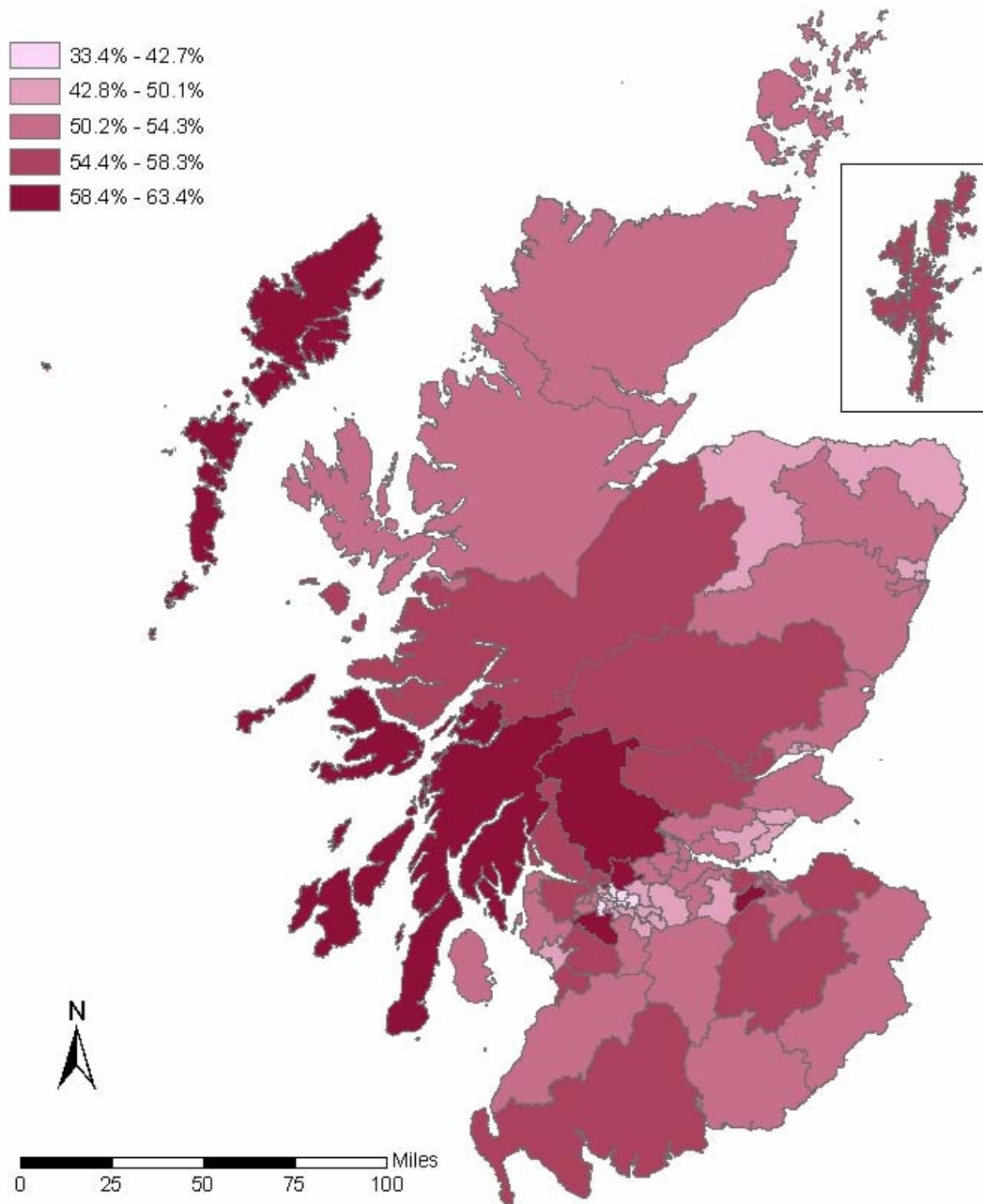
Legend:
- 33.4% - 42.7%
- 42.8% - 50.1%
- 50.2% - 54.3%
- 54.4% - 58.3%
- 58.4% - 63.4%

N

0 25 50 75 100 Miles

This map is based on Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey. Scottish Parliament Corporate Body 10039291

38

Turnout by Region 2007

43.3%
43.4% - 51.4%
51.5% - 53.9%
54.0% - 56.8%

N

| 0 | 20 | 40 | 60 | 80 |
Miles

This map is based on Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey. Scottish Parliament Corporate Body 10039291
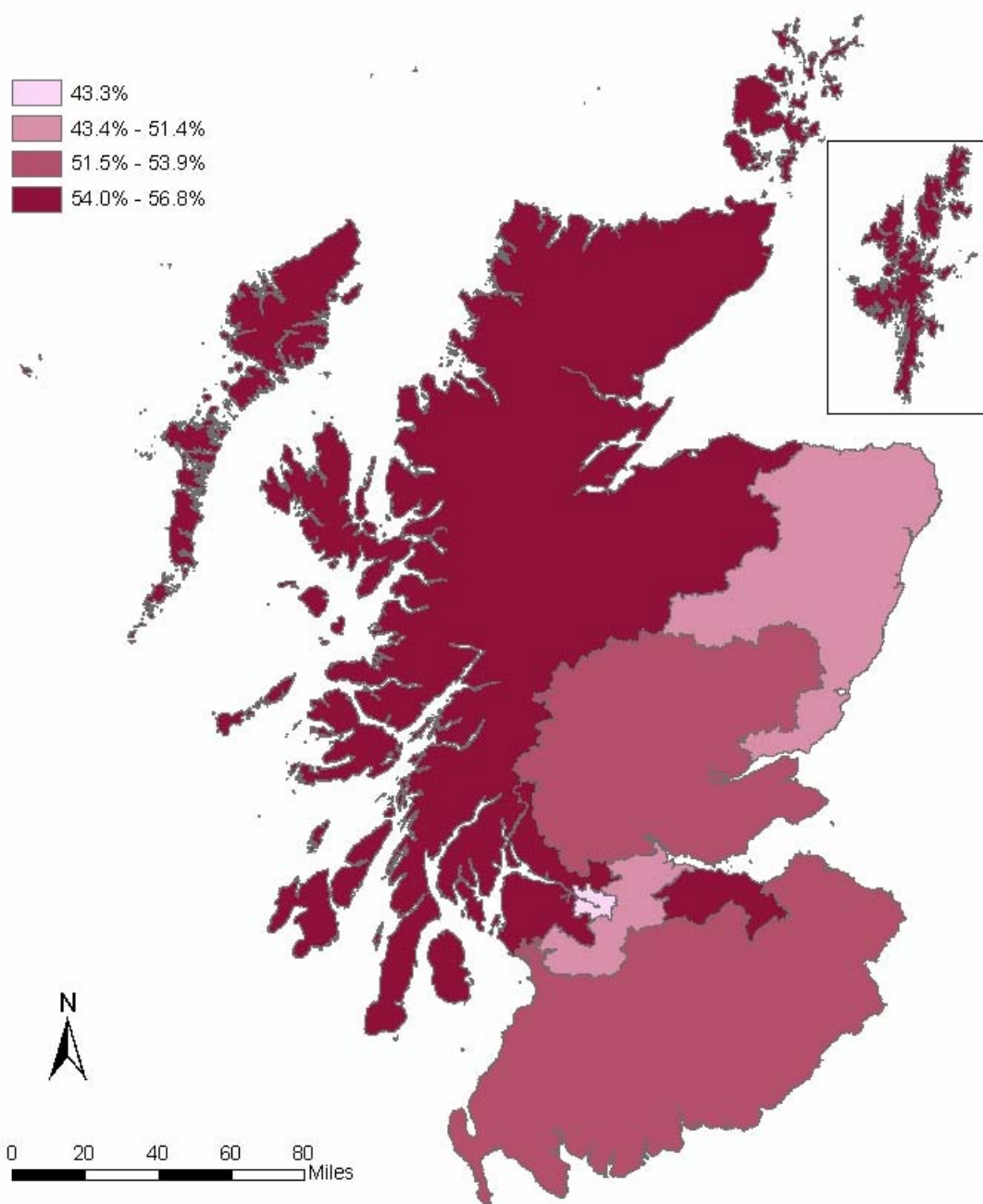
Turnout in 2007 was higher on the constituency vote across all Scottish Parliamentary regions than was the case in 2003. The largest increase was in Lothian of 3.6% whilst the lowest increase was in Glasgow (0.14%). Lower levels of turnout in 2007 than had been the case in 1999 was true of all Scottish Parliament regions on the constituency vote. The largest decline in turnout, in comparison to 1999, was 8.91% in Central Scotland whilst the smallest decline was 3.82% in North East Scotland (see Table 3).

TABLE 3 - CHANGE IN TURNOUT 1999-2007 (BASED ON CONSTITUENCY VOTES)

Region	2007 - 2003	2007 - 1999
Central Scotland	1.96%	-8.91%
Glasgow	0.14%	-6.31%
Highlands and Islands	2.42%	-6.46%
Lothians	3.59%	-7.01%
Mid Scotland and Fife	3.12%	-6.49%
North East Scotland	2.43%	-3.82%
South of Scotland	1.30%	-8.08%
West of Scotland	3.21%	-5.03%
Scotland	2.31%	-6.44%

The 10 highest and lowest turnouts by constituency on the constituency vote are listed below. The highest constituency turnout was in Eastwood (63.4%) whilst the 10 constituencies with the highest turnout were spread fairly broadly across Scotland. In contrast the 10 constituencies with the lowest turnout in 2007 are all located in urban locations with nine of the ten constituencies being Glasgow constituencies. The only non-Glasgow constituency in the list is Aberdeen Central whilst the lowest constituency turnout at the Scottish Parliament election was 33.4% in Glasgow Shettleston (see Table 4).

TABLE 4 - HIGHEST AND LOWEST TURNOUT BY CONSTITUENCY ON THE CONSTITUENCY VOTE

Highest Turnout	%	Lowest Turnout	%
Eastwood	63.38%	Glasgow Shettleston	33.43%
Western Isles	61.79%	Glasgow Maryhill	35.96%
Stirling	61.71%	Glasgow Springburn	37.46%
Strathkelvin and Bearsden	60.60%	Glasgow Baillieston	38.93%
Edinburgh Pentlands	59.37%	Glasgow Pollok	41.15%
Argyll and Bute	58.94%	Glasgow Kelvin	42.65%
West Renfrewshire	58.34%	Glasgow Cathcart	45.29%
Edinburgh West	58.08%	Aberdeen Central	45.33%
Galloway and Upper Nithsdale	57.66%	Glasgow Govan	45.40%

Of the 37 constituencies which Labour won in 2007 the average turnout was 49.37%. This compared to a turnout of 52.96% in the 21 constituencies won by the SNP, 56.76% in the four constituencies won by the Conservatives and 54.4% in the eleven seats won by the Liberal Democrats.

John Curtice discusses turnout and electoral behaviour in the section below.

TURNOUT AND ELECTORAL BEHAVIOUR

John Curtice

The SNP's success in coming first in the 2007 Scottish Parliament election was truly historic. Apart from the 1979 European Parliament elections. Labour had never previously failed to come first in a nationwide contest since 1955. It was the first time ever that the SNP themselves came first in a Scottish election. Moreover the party's 32.9% of the constituency vote was its highest share of the vote ever, clearly exceeding the previous high of 30.4% in the October 1974 UK general election.

Yet it was also the narrowest of victories. The SNP won just one more seat than Labour. If Labour had managed to hang on to Cunninghame North, lost by just 48 votes, it would have been ahead by one. This is despite the fact that across Scotland as a whole the SNP were 0.7 of a percentage point ahead of Labour on the constituency vote and no less than 1.8 points ahead on the key regional vote.

The SNP nearly failed to realise its ambition of coming first in seats for one simple reason – despite being one of its stated ambitions the party failed to enhance its ability to turn constituency votes into seats. If the 5.8% nationwide swing from Labour to SNP had occurred in every constituency across Scotland the SNP would have gained 12 constituency seats. This is precisely the tally the SNP achieved.

Not that the SNP won the exact dozen seats it 'ought' to have won. Indeed it won only five of them. As well as failing to capture Galloway from the Conservatives and Tweeddale from the Liberal Democrats, the party also failed to capture five of its top targets from Labour. However, the party compensated for these failures by capturing two other seats from the Liberal Democrats, including Gordon, the Falkirk West seat vacated by Dennis Canavan, together with four seats from Labour that required swings larger than 5.8% to capture.

If any party succeeded in enhancing its ability to win constituencies, it was Labour. All but one of its best eleven performances – as measured by the change in its share of the vote since 2003 – were in constituencies where the party was defending a majority of 20 percentage points or less. Seemingly the threat of defeat galvanised some Labour MSPs and their parties into action – in some cases that at least ensured they saved their political careers.

Indeed, if the election had been held under the first past the post system Labour would, despite coming second in votes, not just have had more seats than anyone else, but would actually have had an overall majority of one. Doubtless for critics of first past the post the outcome of the 2007 election will have justified the use of proportional representation for Scottish Parliament elections.

Even so, the Holyrood system only just managed to deliver the party with most votes the largest number of seats. In truth, as in 1999 and 2003, there were not always enough list seats in a region to correct the disproportionality generated by the constituency outcomes. In both Glasgow and the West of Scotland Labour won more constituency seats than it would have done if all the seats in those regions had been allocated (on the bases of the regional vote) using the d'Hondt formula. Two of these seats were obtained at the expense of the SNP, one from the Conservatives. In addition the Liberal Democrats gained an extra seat in the Highlands & Islands at the SNP's expense.

In short, the inability of the list seats to compensate fully for the disproportionality of the constituency outcomes reduced what would otherwise have been a SNP lead over Labour of seven seats to a lead of just one. But for this inability the SNP would have secured 50 seats, equalling Labour's tally in 2003. The arguments about who does and does not have the 'moral' authority to govern in the wake of the election result would doubtless have been more confused and acrimonious if the electoral system had indeed given most seats to the party that came second.

The Conservatives avoided coming fourth as they did in 2003. Indeed they managed to retain the 16.6% share of the vote that they won in the constituencies in 2003. At the same time the party managed to add an extra constituency seat to its portfolio by capturing Roxburgh from the Liberal Democrats. However, on the regional vote their support fell by more than one and a half points to just 13.9% - the lowest nationwide vote ever recorded by the party. It evidently still has to reverse the precipitate decline in its fortunes in Scotland in recent years.

The Liberal Democrats too had difficulty winning regional list votes. While they won 16.2% of the constituency vote, up nearly one point on 2003, their support fell back on the regional list to just 11.3%, down half a point. It is clearly ironic that a party that has long been committed to proportional representation finds it so difficult to win votes in a proportional contest. It certainly casts doubt on the claim that people are reluctant to vote for the party in first past the post elections because they think it is a 'wasted' vote.

Rather the result apparently confirms the degree to which Liberal Democrat MSPs win elections on the basis of their personal popularity and local issues. Victorious Liberal Democrat candidates often heavily outpolled their party's regional list vote in their constituency – in Tavish Scott's case in Shetland by a staggering 31 points. Equally, the party's ability to follow up its success in the Dunfermline West UK parliament by-election last year by capturing the Scottish Parliament Dunfermline West seat simply indicated how much the party's success there was a peculiarly local success.

The greatest disappointment of all, however, was experienced by the smaller parties. All six SSP/Solidarity MSPs lost their seats. The SSP's support fell to just 0.6% of the regional vote, putting it behind five other smaller parties including Solidarity on 1.5%. Solidarity's leader Tommy Sheridan came closest to saving his seats, with 4.1% of the regional vote in Glasgow, but even so he was more than 2,000 votes short of what he needed to win the last list seat.

The failure of the SSP to put up any candidates in the constituency contests meant that the 6% of the constituency vote that the party won last time was potentially available to other parties. There had been some speculation that the SNP might benefit most on the grounds that it no longer had to compete with the SSP for the votes of those disaffected with Labour. In the event this does not appear to have been decisive. Leaving aside the exceptional seats of Falkirk West and Strathkelvin & Bearsden, the swing from Labour to SNP averaged 5.3% in the ten seats with the highest SSP vote in 2003 and 5.6% in the ten seats with the smallest.

The Greens suffered far less of an electoral reverse. But the fall in their vote from nearly 7% in 2003 to just 4% now (only a little above its 1999 level) meant they were the wrong side of the 5-6% level typically required to pick up a regional seat. It may be the party suffered from the close fight between Labour and the SNP, a fight that might have dissuaded some voters from casting their regional vote for the Greens, as happened on a significant scale in 2003. It may also be the case that the party suffered from the redesign of the ballot paper that placed the regional vote on the left hand side, thereby making it impossible for the party to repeat the double entendre it had previously used as its campaign slogan, 'Second Vote Green'.

The close contest between Labour and the SNP certainly appears to have helped bring more voters to the polls. Just under 52% of the eligible electorate cast a valid vote in the constituency contests, up from the slightly under half that did so in 2003. However, this figure clearly understates the greater willingness of the public to participate in this election; but for the large number of spoilt ballots on the parliamentary vote the official turnout would have been around 54% on the constituency vote. Evidently the Parliament has had some success in reconnecting itself with the public.

However, the increase in turnout was far from even. It was typically twice as big in rural, more middle class seats where turnout was already higher in 2003, than it was in more urban ones, including not least in Glasgow, where turnout has previously been lowest. Thus turnout on the constituency vote reached 62% in the Western Isles (up more than three points on 2003) and 63.4% in Eastwood (up 5.4% on 2003), but fell 2% in Glasgow Shettleston to just a third. The participation gap in Scotland appears to have widened yet further, something perhaps for all of Scotland's politicians to ponder.

SPOILT BALLOTS

The level of spoilt ballots has been a subject of considerable debate due to the substantial increase in the number of spoiled ballots at the 2007 election in comparison to other Scottish Parliament elections or indeed other elections which have been held in Scotland more generally. Unfortunately a full list of the number of spoilt ballots in each constituency and region was not available at the time of going to print due to variations in the reporting patterns of Returning Officers. SPICe has obtained the number of spoilt ballots in 64 constituencies on the constituency vote and has a list of spoilt ballots for 2 parliamentary regions on the regional list (Glasgow and Lothian). The results provided in this section of the paper are based on these figures which, it is our understanding, is the most comprehensive available at the time of going to print. Details of the data on spoilt ballots by constituency is available in Annex One.

In the 64 constituencies for which we have data there were 76,604 spoilt ballots on the constituency vote. This equates to an average of 1,197 spoilt ballots in each constituency on the constituency vote. In 1999 across the same 64 constituencies for which we have data there were 6,907 spoilt ballots or 108 per constituency. In 2003 there were 10,757 spoilt ballots across the same 64 constituencies or 168 spoilt ballots per constituency. Accordingly, based on 64 constituencies at the 2007 election there has been an average of an extra 1,029 spoilt ballots in comparison to 2003 and of 1,089 spoilt ballots in comparison to 1999 in each constituency on the constituency vote. The number of spoilt ballots per constituency ranged from 2,521 in Edinburgh East and Musselburgh to 285 in Orkney. The five highest and lowest levels of spoilt ballots on the constituency vote are detailed below.

5 highest number of spoilt ballots		*5 lowest number of spoilt ballots*	
Edinburgh East and Musselburgh	2,521	Orkney	285
Glasgow Pollok	2,106	Shetland	294
Glasgow Shettleston	2,035	Western Isles	446
Edinburgh West	1,905	Roxburgh and Berwickshire	599
Glasgow Maryhill	1,877	Stirling	633

If the average of 1,197 spoilt ballots is replicated in all 73 Scottish constituencies then there would have been 87,736 spoilt ballots across Scotland as a whole on the constituency vote. This equates to 4.33% of the total votes cast on the constituency vote in 2007. This compares to 12,303 spoilt ballots on the constituency vote in 2003 and 7,839 spoilt ballots in 1999 across Scotland as a whole. In other words we estimate that across Scotland as a whole there has been 75,073 more spoilt ballots than in 2003 and 79,537 more than in 1999.

If our estimate of all spoilt ballots across 73 constituencies is added to the votes cast on the constituency vote then the total votes cast would be 2,104,376 on the constituency vote. This would equate to a turnout on the constituency vote of 53.96%. In other words adding spoilt ballots to votes cast on the constituency vote would increase turnout by 2.24%.

Of the 64 constituencies for which data is available there are 15 constituencies in which the number of spoilt ballots is greater than the majority of the winning candidate. These constituencies are:

Airdrie and Shotts	Fife Central
Falkirk West	Dunfermline West
Glasgow Govan	Ochil
Argyll and Bute	Stirling
Edinburgh Central	Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale
Edinburgh East and Musselburgh	Cunninghame North
Linlithgow	Eastwood
Livingston	

As noted above data on spoilt ballots is only available for two Scottish Parliamentary regions: Glasgow and Lothian. In Lothian there were 9,804 spoilt ballots on the regional vote and in Glasgow there were 9,000 spoilt ballots. Accordingly there were 6,315 fewer spoilt ballots on the regional vote than on the constituency vote in Lothian and 7,933 fewer in Glasgow. In Lothian spoilt ballots accounted for 3.16% of regional votes cast and in Glasgow for 4.36% of regional votes cast.

Preliminary statistical analysis of the spoilt ballot data by Dr Chris Carman[6] on the incomplete data currently available has indicated the following statistically significant relationships:

- There is a significant relationship between turnout and the number of spoilt ballots in a constituency. As turnout increases in a constituency the number of spoilt ballots *decreases*. In other words there are more spoilt ballots associated with constituencies that have a lower turnout (an increase of 1% in turnout predicts about 27 fewer spoilt ballots in a constituency). This statistic holds 'constant' the total number of votes cast in a constituency and all other variables.
- There is a relationship between median age in a constituency and spoilt ballots – as the median age increases so does the number of spoilt ballots
- There is *not* a significant relationship between the number of spoilt ballots in the 2003 election and the number of spoilt ballots in the 2007 election on the constituency vote. In other words, the issue is related to the 2007 election and not to other elections.
- Total votes cast is a significant predictor of more spoilt ballots in that constituency. For every 50 votes cast in a constituency there is about one more spoilt ballot.
- There is significant variation across regions in the number of spoilt ballots on the constituency vote. There is not a significant difference between the Glasgow and Lothian regions. However, there is a significant difference between these regions and all other Scottish Parliament regions. All other regions had significantly lower levels of spoilt ballots in their constituencies.

Nicola McEwen, a former member of the Arbuthnott Commission, considers the 2007 election in the context of the recommendations of the Commission below.

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[6] Dr Chris Carman is a senior research lecturer in the Department of Government at Strathclyde University. The statistical analysis undertaken is an Ordinary Least Squares regression of the number of spoilt ballots in a constituency in 2007 (the dependent variable) on constituency level socio-demographic indicators, the number of spoilt ballots in each constituency in 2003, turnout rate in 2007, the total number of votes cast in a constituency and a series of indicators classifying constituencies by region. Full statistical results are available upon request to Dr Carman at christopher.carman@strath.ac.uk.

THE 2007 ELECTION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ARBUTHNOTT COMMISSION

Nicola McEwen

> "In our view, decoupling the elections would reduce the complexity of voting, potentially reduce voter confusion and help keep the numbers of invalid votes to a minimum. It would also reduce administrative complexity in the planning, management and counting of the elections, and enhance the transparency of the electoral process…"
>
> Report of the Commission on Boundary Differences and Voting Systems
>
> (Arbuthnott Commission), January 2006, para. 4.91.[7]

Under the provisions made in the Scottish Local Government (Elections) Act 2002, Scottish Parliament elections and local government elections are held on the same day. The rationale for 'coupling' these elections was to increase voter turnout in elections to local government. Although a laudable aim, this has always been at the expense of democratic accountability, as local government issues become dwarfed by the contest for power at Holyrood. It now appears that the combined elections may also have been a key factor increasing voter confusion in the 2007 Scottish Parliament election. The unacceptably high number of spoilt ballot papers – reportedly in excess of 75,000 papers on the constituency vote alone[8] – has cast a shadow over the Scottish Parliament election and has brought Scotland's democratic process into disrepute.

The Arbuthnott Commission expressed concern about the potential consequences of combining these elections, and recommended that they should be decoupled. In particular, the Commission was concerned that combining the Scottish Parliament election, using a relatively new electoral system, with the local government elections, using a completely new and significantly different electoral system, would be a recipe for confusion. In recommending decoupling, the Commission reflected the views of the majority of those responding to its consultation. The Local Government Elections bill, introduced in the Scottish Parliament by David Mundell, then a Conservative MSP for the South of Scotland, also favoured decoupling the elections, as did a majority of those responding to that bill's consultation process. Whether any of those arguing for decoupling anticipated the degree of confusion that would emerge in the 2007 elections is open to debate, but it seems clear that whatever the benefits the combined elections produced with respect to voter turnout, the costs were much too high.

Combining two elections and two electoral systems was not the only problem. Concerns have also been expressed that the design of the Scottish Parliament ballot paper may have contributed to voter confusion. A key recommendation of the Arbuthnott Commission was that the terminology associated with the voting system should be revised and the ballot paper redesigned to reflect more accurately the way mixed member systems operate. The Commission did not design a ballot paper, but commended the ballot paper used in New Zealand's mixed member system, which includes helpful explanations of the two votes to be cast.[9]

The Commission expressed particular concern that the habit of referring to the regional vote as a 'second vote' – commonplace in Scotland prior to 2007 – fuelled the perception that the

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[7] The author was a member of the Arbuthnott Commission.

[8] SPICe

[9] In the New Zealand system, these are referred to as the 'party vote' (for a national party list) and the 'electorate vote' (for a local member of parliament).

regional vote was of secondary importance. Indeed, many voters may have mistakenly assumed that the 'second vote' was for a second preference. A survey conducted in the wake of the 2003 Scottish Parliament election found that over one third of respondents did not know that they were allowed to vote for the same party on 'the first and second vote', and less than a quarter of respondents were able to correctly identify that regional list seats were allocated to try to ensure that parties had a fair share of seats in the Parliament.[10] The importance of the regional vote in addressing the disproportionality of the 'first past the post' constituency vote, and ensuring a closer proximity between a party's popular support and its share of seats, was clearly demonstrated in Thursday's election. However, the larger parties continue to fare disproportionately well from the new system. The SNP won 36.4% of seats in the Parliament, and the Labour Party won 35.7%, having received, respectively, 31% and 29.2% of the popular regional vote. The Green Party, by contrast, secured just 2 parliamentary seats, when a purely proportionate allocation would have given the party 5 seats.

The Electoral Reform Society has suggested that including the regional vote and the constituency vote on the same ballot paper may have added to the confusion.[11] Yet, ballot papers in the mixed member systems in New Zealand and Germany combine both votes on a single ballot paper, apparently without creating misunderstanding among their electorates. Questions can be raised about the particular design of the ballot paper selected by the Scotland Office. For example, it did little to convey the significance of each vote, and was considerably less clear than its New Zealand counterpart in instructing voters to cast only one vote in each column. It also appears to have undergone very little testing; one report suggested that it was chosen after 5 different ballot paper designs were tested among 100 voters across Scotland, with no "live" testing of the final ballot paper design.[12]

Clearly, the design of the ballot paper will have to be re-examined in advance of the next Scottish Parliament election, and this should include a re-evaluation of the decision to have a single ballot paper. Any revisions should be subject to adequate trials to ensure they are easily understood, and reinforced by a more extensive voter education campaign than was evident at these elections. However, if a decision is made to revert to having the regional vote and the constituency vote on two separate ballot papers, this should not mean a reversion to the problematic terminology of first and second votes.

In addition to the confusion evident among a significant proportion of the electorate, there were clearly some problems in the process of e-counting and in the interpretation of ambiguous ballot papers, with evident inconsistencies in decisions over which papers should be accepted and which rejected.

These problems are all inter-related. The confusion emerging from combined elections may have been compounded by revisions to the ballot paper. Meanwhile, decisions over the aspects of the design of the ballot paper, such as the size of the ballot paper and the size of the text guiding voters on how to cast their vote, appear to have been made with at least as much regard to their compatibility with electronic counting machines as to their ease of understanding for voters. Perhaps one of the biggest problems in the 2007 elections was that the Scotland Office and the Scottish Executive tried to introduce too many innovations at the one time.

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[10] Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, 2003. See also Curtice, J, 2004, 'Proportional Representation in Scotland: public reaction and voter behaviour', *Representation*, 40, p.7.
[11] Electoral Reform Society news release, 4 May 2007
[12] 'The ballot blunders', by James Cusick and Rachelle Money, *Sunday Herald*, 6 May 2007.

STATE OF THE PARTIES

The 2007 Election resulted in the SNP being the largest party with 47 seats (+20); Labour second with 46 (-4); the Conservatives on 17 (-1); the Liberal Democrats with 16 (-1); the Greens on 2 (-5) and Margo MacDonald the sole independent MSP.

In terms of the share of the constituency vote and the number of seats gained, the SNP improved on its 2003 position by 9.1% and 12 seats; Labour fell by 2.5% and 9 seats; the Conservatives share remained the same at 16.6% with their number of constituency seats increasing by 1; and the Liberal Democrats share of the constituency vote increased by 0.8%, but their number of constituency seats fell by 2.

The number of candidates standing in the 73 constituencies was 335. The vast majority of constituencies (64 out of 73) had four or five candidates standing. There were six constituencies with six candidates (Coatbridge and Chryston; Hamilton North and Bellshill; Glasgow Govan; Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley; Paisley North; Strathkelvin and Bearsden); and three constituencies with seven candidates standings (Motherwell and Wishaw, Glasgow Kelvin and Gordon).

There were 27 political parties and 9 independents standing in the election.

The total number of candidates on the list by region was 715 broken down by region as follows:

- Central Scotland   93
- Glasgow   98
- Highlands and Islands   80
- Lothians   103
- Mid Scotland and Fife   84
- North East Scotland   72
- South of Scotland   87
- West of Scotland   98

Table 5 details the voting pattern and the distribution of seats in the 2007 election.

TABLE 5 – VOTES AND SEATS BY PARTY, 2007

Party	Constituency	Seats	Regional	Seats	Total	Seats
Labour	648,374	37	595415	9	1,243,789	46
SNP	664,227	21	633401	26	1,297,628	47
Lib Dem	326,232	11	230671	5	556,903	16
Con	334,743	4	284005	13	618,748	17
Green	2,971	0	82584	2	85,555	2
Others	40,431	0	216033	1	256,464	1
Total	2,016,978	73	2,042,109	56	4,059,087	129

Table 6 details the share of the vote for the political parties elected to the Scottish Parliament in the 2007 election for each of the Scottish Parliament elections held to date.

TABLE 6 - SHARE OF THE VOTE BY PARTY – 1999-2003

Party	1999		2003		2007	
	Regional List %	Constituency %	Regional List %	Constituency %	Regional List %	Constituency %
Labour	33.6%	38.8%	29.3%	34.6%	29.2%	32.1%
SNP	27.3%	28.7%	20.9%	23.8%	31.0%	32.9%
Lib Dem	12.4%	14.2%	11.8%	15.4%	11.3%	16.2%
Con	15.4%	15.6%	15.5%	16.6%	13.9%	16.6%
Green	3.6%	0.0%	6.9%	0.0%	4.0%	0.1%

Table 7 displays the change in the vote for each of the parties elected to the Scottish Parliament in 2007 between the 2003 and 2007 election and the 1999 and 2003 election. The Labour vote declined less in 2007 than it had done in 2003 falling by 2.5% on the constituency vote and remaining virtually static on the regional list. This compared to declines of just over 4% on both votes in 2003 in comparison to the 1999 election. The SNP vote increased considerably in 2007 – 10.2% on the regional vote and 9.1% in the constituency vote – as compared to declines on both votes in 2003. The Liberal Democrat regional vote fell by roughly the same proportion in 2003 and 2007 and the constituency vote declined slightly less than had been the case in 2003. The Conservative vote in 2007 declined by 1.6% on the regional vote and remained unchanged on the constituency vote. The Green Party vote declined by 2.9% on the regional list in 2007 contrasting with the 3.3% increase experienced in 2003. The Green Party fielded one constituency candidate, in Glasgow Kelvin, where the party came third and polled 2,971 votes, and this is reflected in their 0.1% share on the constituency vote in 2007.

TABLE 7 - CHANGE IN SHARE OF THE VOTE

	1999-2003 Differences		2003-2007 Differences	
	Regional %	Constituency %	Regional %	Constituency %
Labour	-4.3%	-4.1%	-0.1%	-2.5%
SNP	-6.4%	-4.9%	10.2%	9.1%
Lib Dem	-0.6%	1.1%	-0.5%	0.8%
Con	0.1%	1.1%	-1.6%	0.0%
Green	3.3%	0.0%	-2.9%	0.1%

The Independent, Margo MacDonald, was re-elected to the Parliament in 2007 on 19,256 votes or 6.71% of the votes cast on the Lothian regional list. This compares to the 27,143 votes or 10.22% of the votes cast on the Lothian regional list which she received in 2003. Accordingly the vote for Margo MacDonald declined by 7,887 or 3.51% of the votes cast on the Lothian regional list.

The electoral statistics for the parties which were previously represented in the 2003 Parliament were as follows:

Solidarity

- Polled 31,066 votes across Scotland as a whole or 1.52% of votes cast on the regional vote. Support for Solidarity ranged from 4.14% of regional votes in Glasgow to 0.77% in North East Scotland. Accordingly the party lost its two MSPs and will have no representation in the new Parliament.

Scottish Socialist Party

- Polled 12,731 votes across Scotland as a whole or 0.62% of votes cast on the regional list across Scotland. Support ranged from 1.25% of regional votes in Glasgow to 0.4% in the North East of Scotland and South of Scotland. As a result, the party, which had 4 MSPs in the previous Parliament, will not be represented in the new Parliament.

Scottish Senior Citizens Unity Party

- Polled 38,743 (1.9%) votes across Scotland on the regional list compared to 28,996 votes (1.51%) in 2003 on the regional list. However in 2003 the SSCUP only obtained votes in 3 Parliamentary regions including 6.52% of regional votes in Central Scotland (the party also obtained votes in Glasgow and the West of Scotland). In 2007 the SSCUP polled votes in every Parliamentary region. However, the largest proportion of the regional vote obtained was 2.48% in Central Scotland resulting in the party losing representation in the Scottish Parliament.

Jean Turner MSP

- Jean Turner's vote in the Strathkelvin and Bearsden constituency was 6,742 (18.4% of the vote) in 2007, a fall of 12.7% on the 2003 result where she gained 10,988 votes. The seat was won by David Whitton, for Labour, with 11,396 votes (31.1%).

In the section below, Peter Lynch, considers the performance of the political parties at the 2007 election and the impact of the election upon the political parties.

IMPACT OF THE ELECTION RESULT ON THE PARTIES

Peter Lynch

This election can be explained by four distinct developments: the SNP-Labour battle, the static support for the Conservatives and Lib Dems, the collapse in support and representation for the small parties and the range of problems associated with postal votes, electronic counting and spoiled ballots, that meant we all had to wait until 6pm the next day to see the final result.

Every Scottish election so far has been cast as a contest between Labour and the SNP, yet this is the first time it has actually turned out this way. Despite opinion poll leads for months, the SNP had an electoral mountain to climb because of Labour's FPTP lead in constituencies and the fact that the SNP was so far behind in terms of seats and votes. However, against the odds, the SNP overtook Labour if only marginally, on seats (47 to Labour's 46), constituency votes (32.9% to Labour's 32.1%) and list votes (31% to Labour's 29.2%). In addition, the SNP was the winner of the election in terms of gains – it won 20 more seats than in 2003 – whilst all other parties lost seats to varying degrees. In terms of how the election is framed, victory across all three electoral measures was highly significant. Not least because Labour has not faced this situation since 1959 – when it came second to the Tories in terms of the popular vote in Scotland.

For Labour, things were bad, but could have been much worse. Labour lost some unexpected seats to the SNP – Edinburgh East and Musselburgh, Cunninghame North and Stirling – but also held on in seats such as Aberdeen Central, Cumbernauld and Kilsyth and Paisley South. It held off the Conservatives in Dumfries and the Lib Dems in Edinburgh Central. In addition, where it did lose seats, it found some level of compensation via the regional party lists – meaning that its losses overall were limited as it picked up 3 regional list seats in Mid-Scotland and Fife and 1 in the Lothians compared to 2003. However, whilst there is comfort here for Labour – and the potential for Labour to offer an alternative coalition partner throughout the 4 year term of the next Scottish Parliament – there is not that much comfort for the party leadership and for Jack McConnell despite the closeness of the result. The opposition benches beckon for the party's MSPs, with a change of Scottish leadership also on the cards.

For the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats, these elections were mixed. The Conservatives retained third place in terms of votes (16.6% in the constituencies and 13.9% on the list) and seats (17) – no mean achievement in itself – and made one gain in Roxburgh and Berwickshire. It held off the SNP in Galloway, but failed to overtake Labour in marginal Dumfries. Former leader David McLetchie performed well in Edinburgh Pentlands, whilst current leader, Annabel Goldie increased her vote in Renfrewshire West to come second to Labour (ahead of the SNP). No sign of any Cameron effect, but not completely blown away by the Nationalist surge either. However, the Lib Dem's performance was quite different. The party had increased its support at the 2005 UK election, to become the second party in Scotland. This advance was followed by the Dunfermline and West Fife by-election victory. The party was on the up then, but dipped at the Scottish election to come fourth on 16.2% on the constituency vote and 11.3% on the list. It may have taken Dunfermline West from Labour, but lost Argyll and Bute, Gordon and Roxburgh and Berwickshire. Holding onto Edinburgh South and Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale were plus points however, as the party could have seen its constituency performance severely damaged. Since devolution began, the Lib Dems have been more of a constituency party than one reliant on the lists, but here they needed the lists to maintain their position. A further problem for the Lib Dems is the fact that, in spite of doing so badly compared to expectations, the party remains kingmaker and likely to do a deal with the party which put its advance into reverse gear – the SNP.

The performance of the small parties and independents was almost exactly the reverse of that in 2003. Almost all of them arrived via the list at the expense of the SNP and almost all of them exited due to the SNP's regional list surge across Scotland. Whilst much of the coverage of the election may have focused on the constituency contests – and whether the SNP could take seats from Labour – less attention was paid to the SNP's list strategy. Top of most regional list ballot papers was the designation Alex Salmond for First Minister – an attempt to benefit from Salmond's popularity and convert the list vote into a semi-Presidential contest. This was ambitious, but hugely successful as the SNP took a large number of list seats – 5 MSPs in the south of Scotland, 4 seats in West of Scotland and even picked up 2 MSPs on 40.5% of the vote in the North East in spite of winning new FPTP seats in that region (including Salmond's spectacular win in Gordon, from third place).

The small parties and independents were the ones who suffered most at this election as their vote melted away in all regions in face of the SNP juggernaut. Dennis Canavan retired before the election and his constituency seat went to the SNP, whilst hospital campaigner Jean Turner saw her Strathkelvin and Bearsden seat revert to Labour. The SSP and Solidarity lost all of their seats in spectacular fashion across Scotland – though some of the loss in support was entirely self-inflicted. Even in Glasgow, where the SSP had succeeded in 1999 and 2003, there was no joy, as Tommy Sheridan's Solidarity won just 4.1% compared to 15.2% in 2003. The SSP in Glasgow fell even further back to win just 1.2% - behind the Christian Peoples Alliance, which is a measure of how far the far left has lost support. Across all 8 regions, the SSP could only manage 12,731 votes and 0.6% whilst Solidarity did slightly better with 31,066 votes and 1.6%. Moreover, it is not as if Solidarity and the SSP cut each other's throats at the election, even their combined vote would have failed to elect MSPs in 7 of the 8 regions. Only in Glasgow would they have stood a chance, at the expense of the Greens.

The Greens, meanwhile, just held on to two list seats in Edinburgh and Glasgow, but lost in all other regions (meaning 5 MSPs down compared to 2003), as the party crashed to 4.1% of the vote and 82,584 across Scotland. The sole surviving independent, was Margo McDonald on the Lothians list, with 6.7% of the vote just enough to get her elected.

The final story of this election involved the range of difficulties with voting – from late delivery of postal ballots to problems with electronic counting, to the fact that there were so many spoiled ballots on election night. A range of problems clouded the counting of the votes and the results, leading to the prospect of legal challenges to the outcome in certain constituencies and potential changes to the composition of the parliament itself. The SNP want to move on from this to coalition formation through talks with the Lib Dems and Greens, whilst Labour is keen to examine legal challenges to undermine any sense of a clear SNP victory. It's now up to the SNP to see whether they attract the Lib Dems and Greens to form a viable coalition administration.'

The maps overleaf depict the constituency seats won by each of the political parties in 2007, the constituencies gained by parties in 2007 and the share of the vote for the SNP, Labour, Conservatives and Liberal Democrats.

Constituency Seats by Party 2007
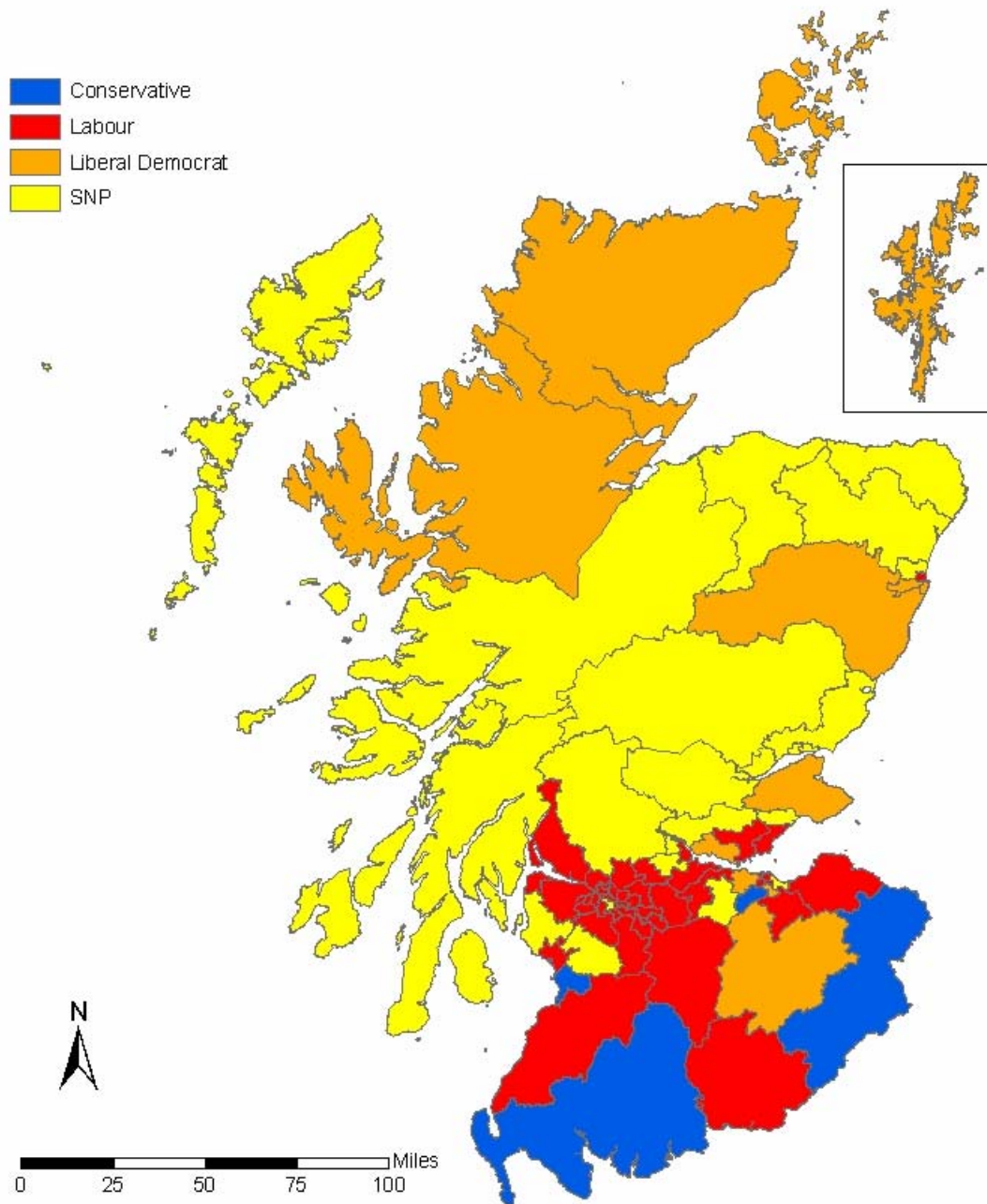
Conservative
Labour
Liberal Democrat
SNP

N

Miles
0   25   50   75   100

This map is based on Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey. Scottish Parliament Corporate Body 10039291

Constituency gains by Party 2007
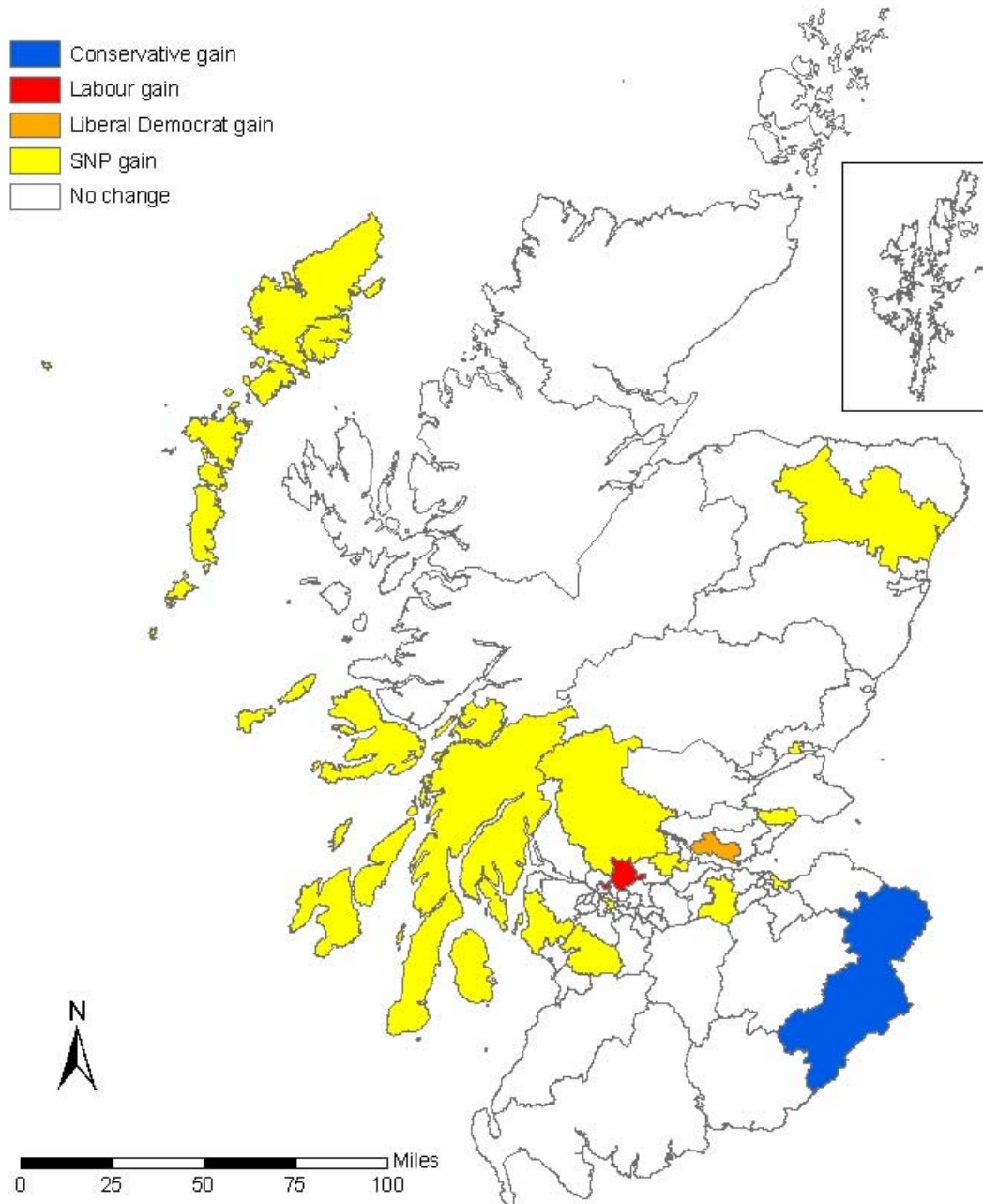
Conservative gain
Labour gain
Liberal Democrat gain
SNP gain
No change

N

Miles

| 0 | 25 | 50 | 75 | 100 |

This map is based on Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey. Scottish Parliament Corporate Body 10039291

SNP share of Constituency vote 2007

16.1% - 22.4%
22.5% - 29.4%
29.5% - 35.7%
35.8% - 44.2%
44.3% - 58.8%

N

0   25   50   75   100   Miles

This map is based on Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey. Scottish Parliament Corporate Body 10039291

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Labour share of Constituency vote 2007

- 6.4% - 19.1%
- 19.2% - 33.5%
- 33.6% - 39.9%
- 40.0% - 46.1%
- 46.2% - 56.9%

N

Miles
0   25   50   75   100

This map is based on Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey. Scottish Parliament Corporate Body 10039291

Conservative share of Constituency vote 2007

5.5% - 9.4%
9.5% - 14.2%
14.3% - 21.2%
21.3% - 30.2%
30.3% - 44.2%

N

Miles

0   25   50   75   100

This map is based on Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey. Scottish Parliament Corporate Body 10039291

Liberal Democrat share of Constituency vote 2007

- 4.2% - 9.6%
- 9.7% - 16.8%
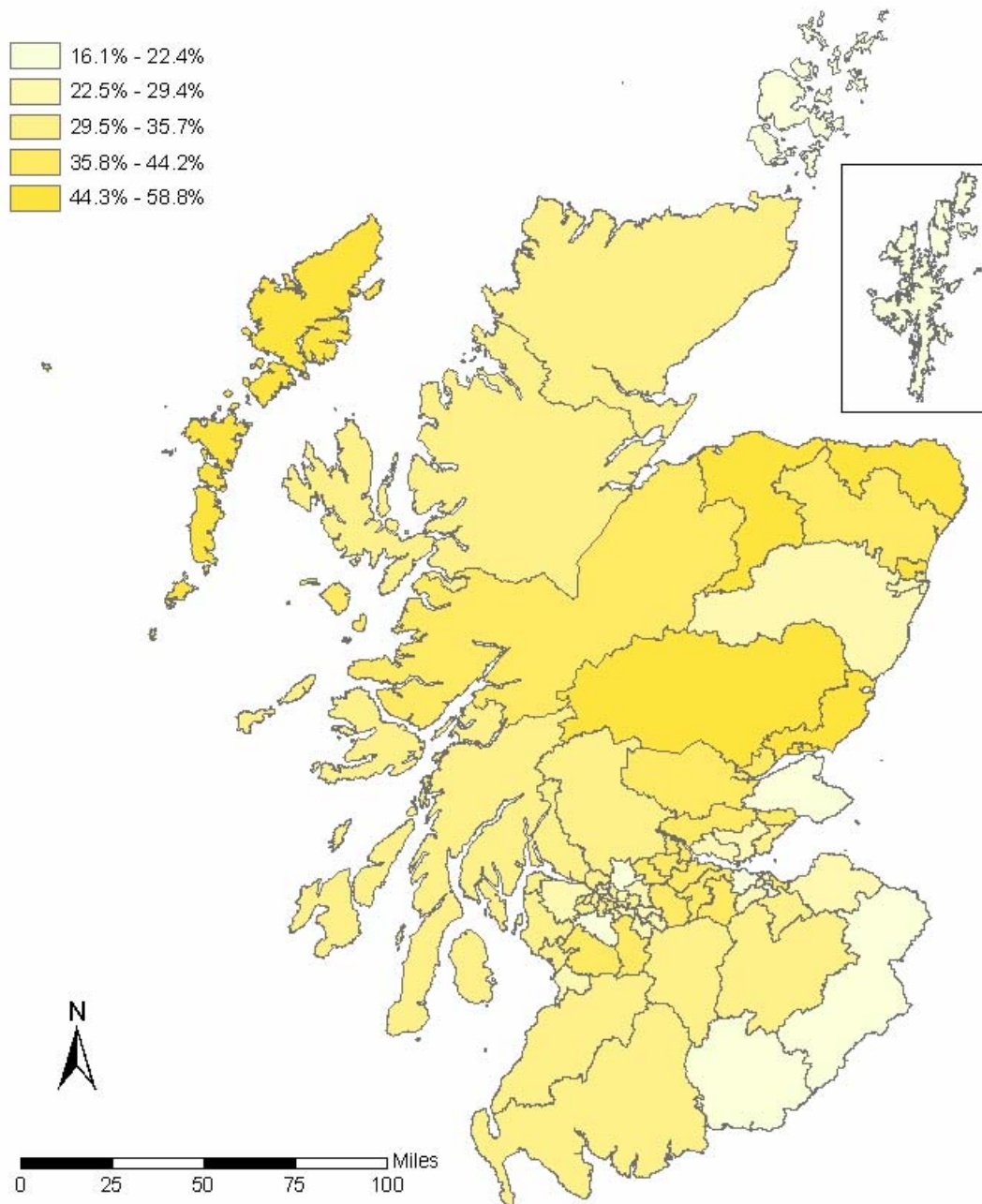- 16.9% - 27.7%
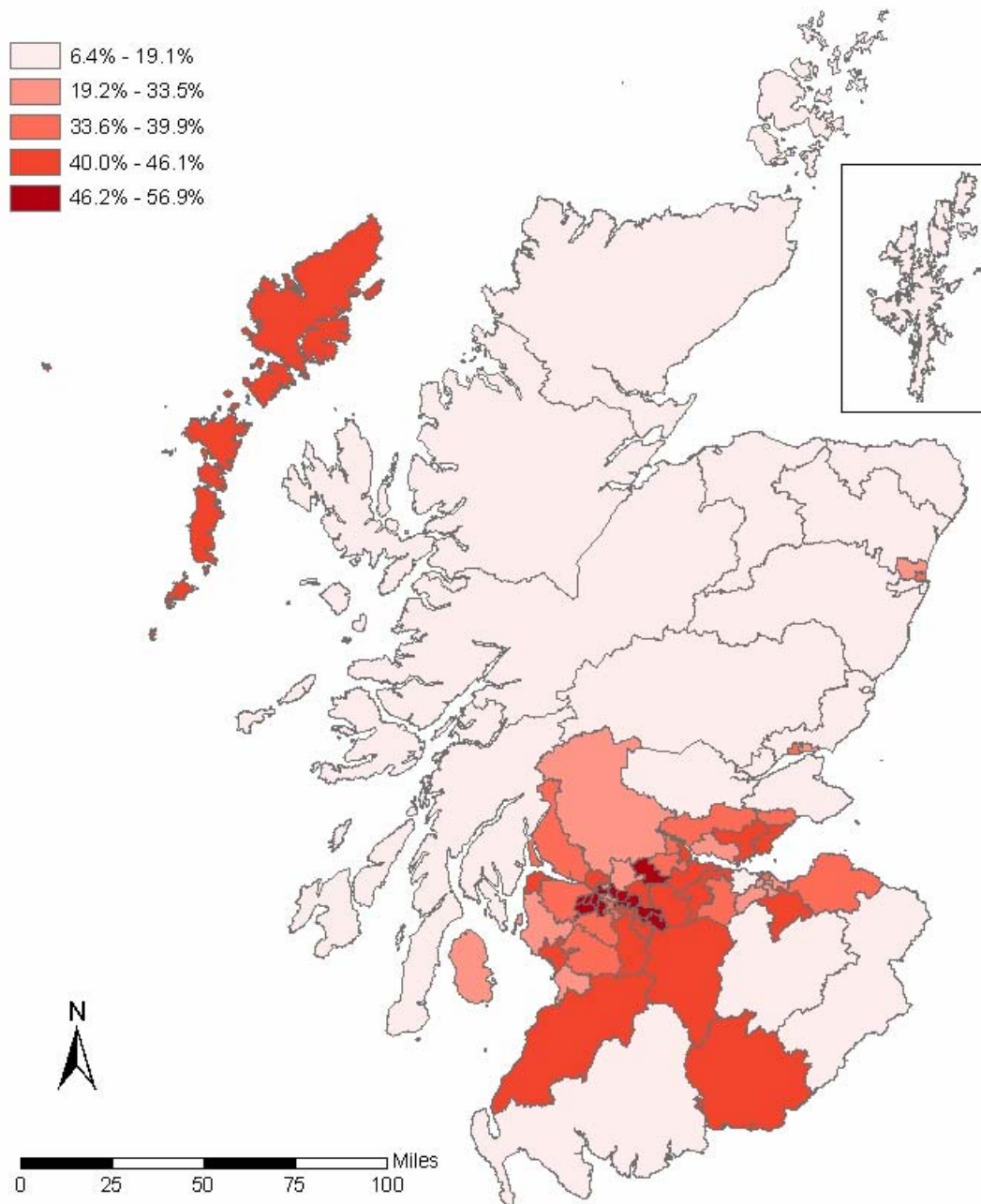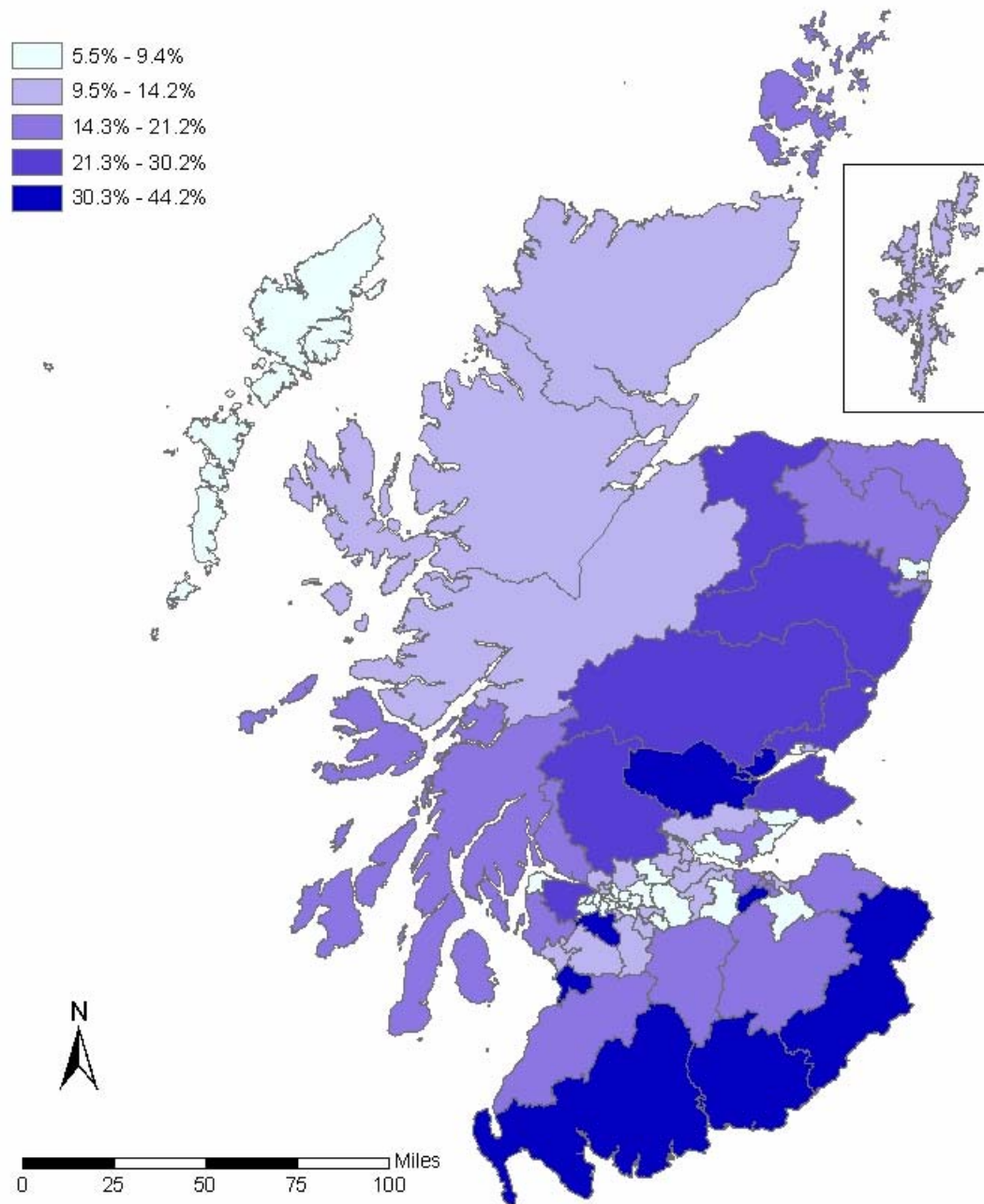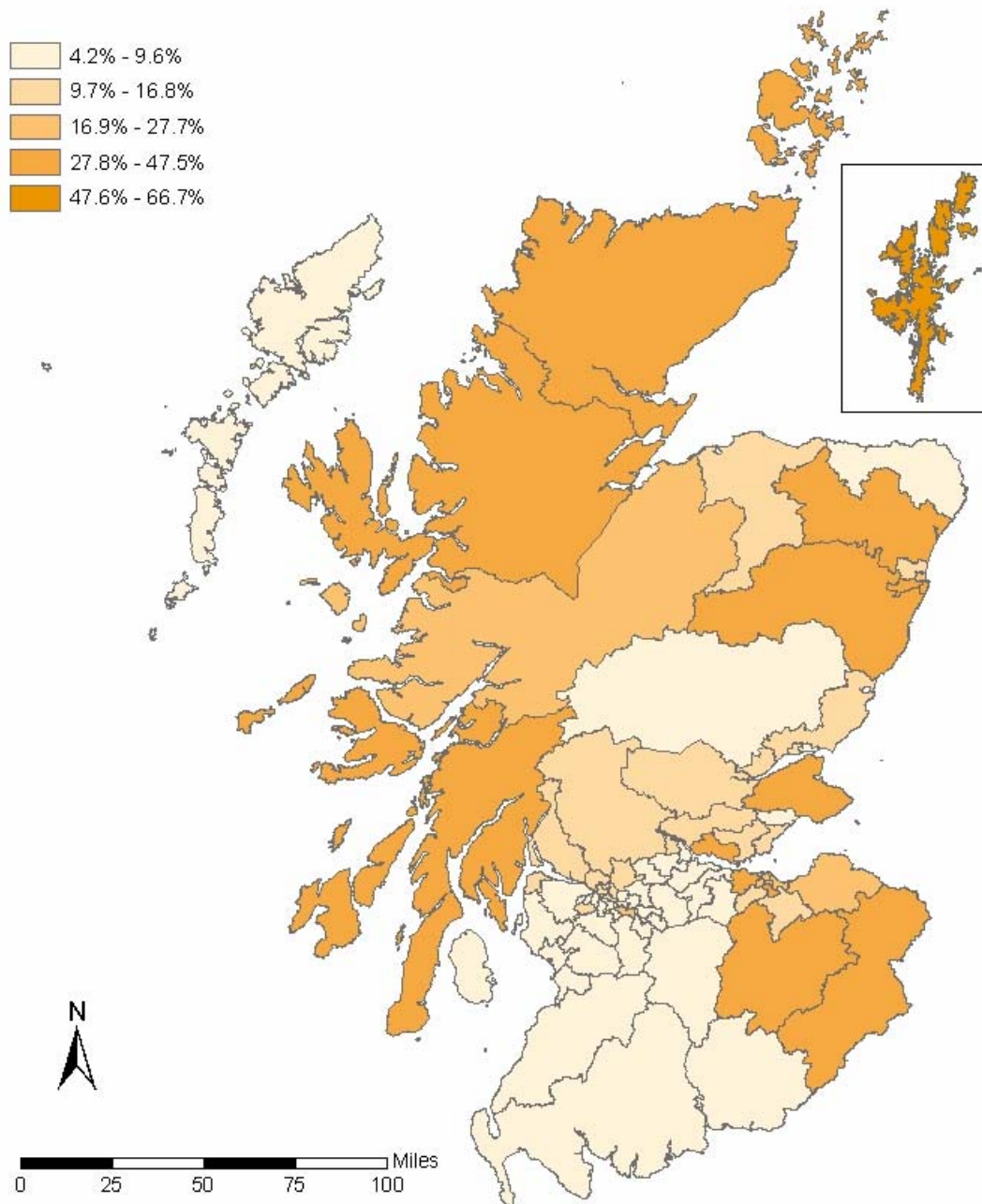- 27.8% - 47.5%
- 47.6% - 66.7%

N

Miles
0   25   50   75   100

This map is based on Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey. Scottish Parliament Corporate Body 10039291

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REGIONAL VOTE

In both the 1999 and 2003 Scottish Parliamentary elections one of the biggest impacts was made by the "smaller" parties who were able to take advantage of the additional member system used in Scottish elections to ensure the allocation of seats more accurately represents the proportion of votes cast for a party.

In both the 1999 and 2003 elections the number of votes cast in the constituency vote was more than the number cast in the regional vote. For instance in 2003, 723 less votes were cast in the regional vote. The 2007 election saw a change in this trend. For the first time in a Scottish election more votes were cast in the regional vote than in the constituency vote. In total 25,109 more votes were cast in the regional election.

In 1999, the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP), the Scottish Green Party and the independent Margo MacDonald all picked up seats through the regional list system. This trend accelerated in the 2003 election with the SSP winning 6 seats, the Greens winning 7 seats, a new party, the Scottish Senior Citizens Unity Party winning 1 seat and Margo MacDonald retaining her seat on the Lothian's list. This meant that in the 2003 election, 15 regional seats went to smaller parties or Independents across Scotland. With the increasing opportunities for election the number of candidates standing on the regional list also increased – from 500 in 1999 to 605 in 2003.

The trend of an increasing number of candidates standing in the regional vote continued into the 2007 election with 715 candidates standing. This increase in the number of candidates for smaller parties and individuals standing on the list may in part be responsible for splitting the votes cast for those outside the main four parties (Labour, SNP, Conservative and Liberal Democrats). In particular the Greens lost 2.8% of their support on the Regional List across Scotland whilst the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) and Solidarity together lost 6.1% in comparison to the SSP's result at the 2003 election. This meant only the Greens managed to retain some of their regional vote representation (with 2 seats) whilst Margo MacDonald was re-elected on the Lothian's list. At the same time "other" candidates outside of the main parties, the Greens and the SSP/Solidarity secured around 8.5% of the regional vote which is around 0.4% less than they secured in 2003.

Across Scotland, Labour's vote fell only fractionally – by 0.1% - on the regional vote, whilst the Scottish National Party gained 10.2% in comparison to its 2003 performance. This allowed it to win 26 regional seats compared with 18 in 2003. The SNP's increase in the number of seats won on the regional list was largely as a result of votes which appear to have been taken from the smaller parties and individuals. Whilst it is not entirely clear how many voters switched their support from smaller parties to the SNP, it is clear that many did and it meant that the Greens and SSP/Solidarity largely fell short of achieving the 5-6% of the vote needed to win a seat. As a result of this decline, it left the SNP to pick up many of the regional seats available.

One of the major reasons for the shift in support from the smaller parties to the SNP was probably the predicted closeness of the race between the SNP and Labour. This has clearly cost smaller parties – and in particular the Greens – support in the regional vote:

> "It may be that the close contest between the SNP and Labour meant that fewer voters were willing to express sympathy for the Greens by giving them their regional vote – as they appeared to do in 2003." (John Curtice, The Scotsman, page 23. Saturday 5 May 2007

Although it is difficult to measure the way in which voters use their two votes to vote for different parties, it is possible to show the way in which voters might choose to split their ticket and vote for different parties. For example in 1999 and 2003, the four major parties (Labour, SNP, Conservative and Liberal Democrats) polled fewer votes in the regional list in comparison to the support they received in the constituency ballot for each region. The 2007 election saw a continuation of this trend, but the difference in vote for Labour and the SNP was less marked than it had been in 2003. It also shows that the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats saw their regional vote in comparison to their constituency vote continue to fall – by 2.69% and 4.87% respectively - as happened at the 1999 and 2003 elections. Annex Two provides detailed data on the differences between constituency and regional voting patterns by party for each Scottish Parliament election.

SNP and Labour support solidified in the 2007 election with them each recording a smaller difference between their constituency and regional votes. This change was probably largely due to the predicted closeness of the race and in the case of support for the SNP may have been influenced by the SNP's decision to stand in many regions under the banner "Alex Salmond for First Minister, Scottish National Party". This means that it is likely that Labour and SNP supporters may have voted twice for their party whilst supporters of the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats in the constituency votes were more inclined to "split their ticket" and vote for another smaller party or individual in the regional vote.

The maps below detail regional vote by party.

SNP share of Regional vote 2007
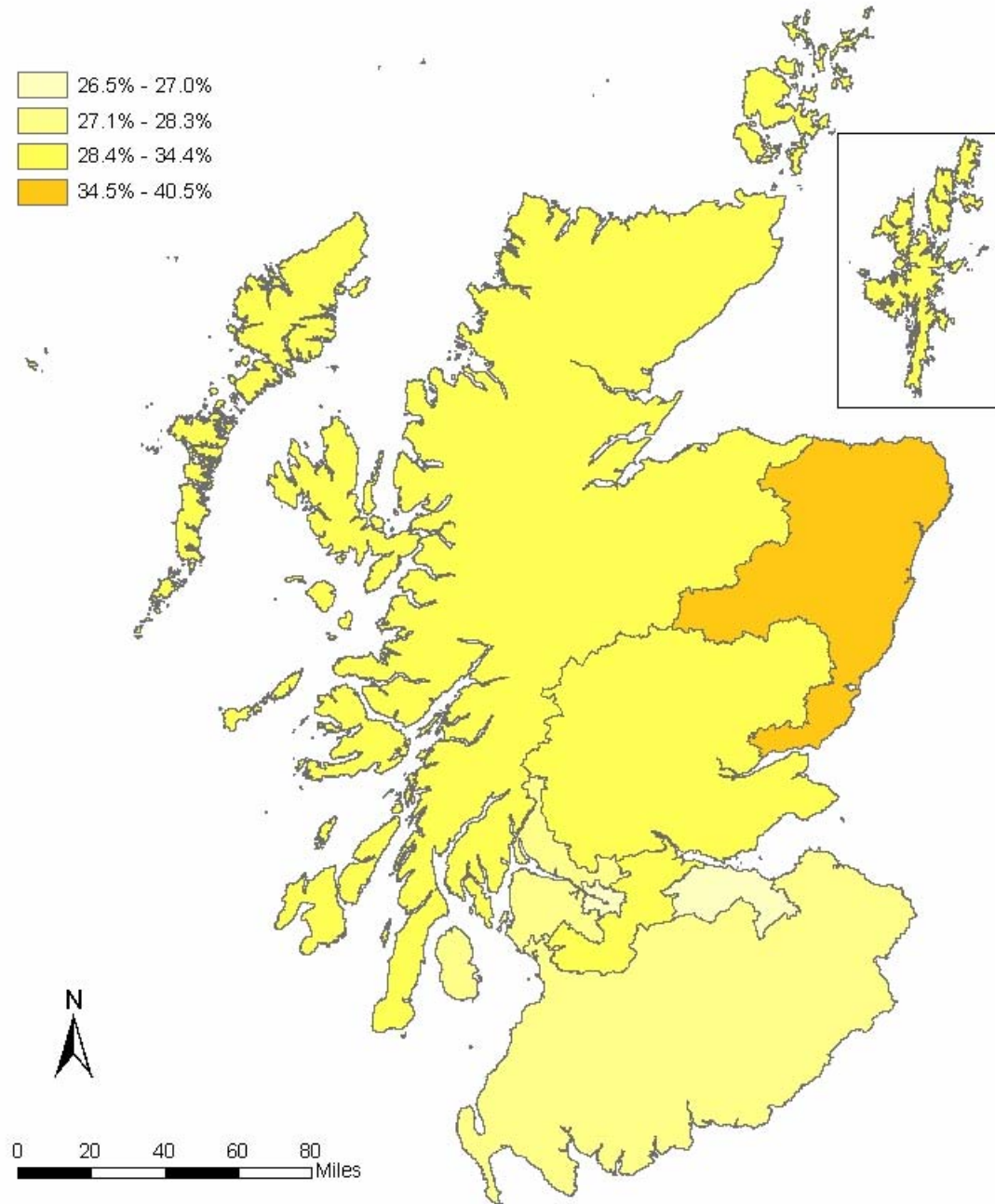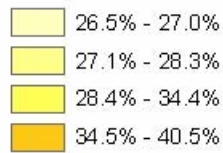
26.5% - 27.0%
27.1% - 28.3%
28.4% - 34.4%
34.5% - 40.5%

N

0   20   40   60   80
                    Miles

This map is based on Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey. Scottish Parliament Corporate Body 10039291

Labour share of Regional vote 2007
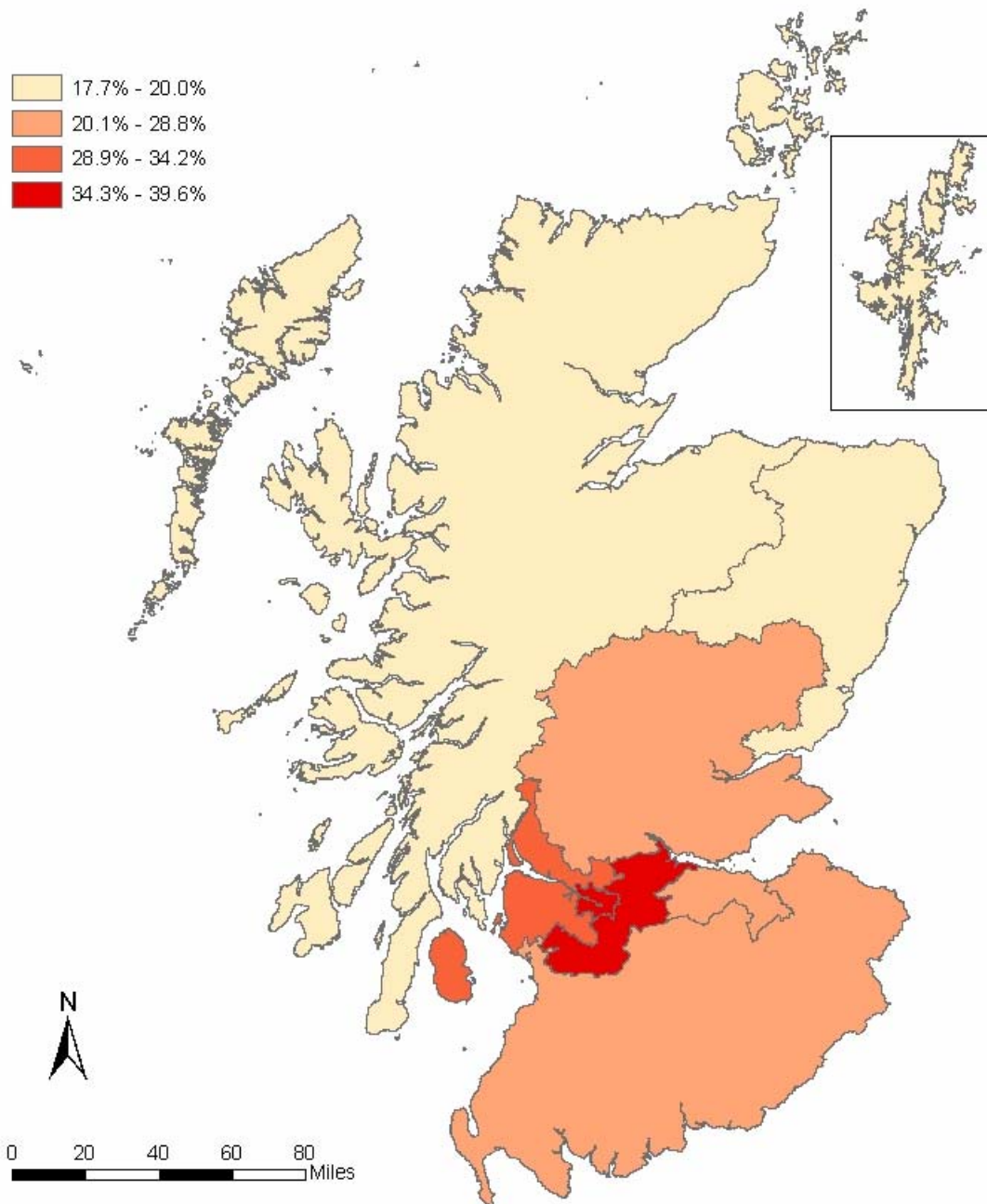
17.7% - 20.0%
20.1% - 28.8%
28.9% - 34.2%
34.3% - 39.6%

N

0   20   40   60   80
Miles

This map is based on Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey. Scottish Parliament Corporate Body 10039291

Conservative share of Regional vote 2007
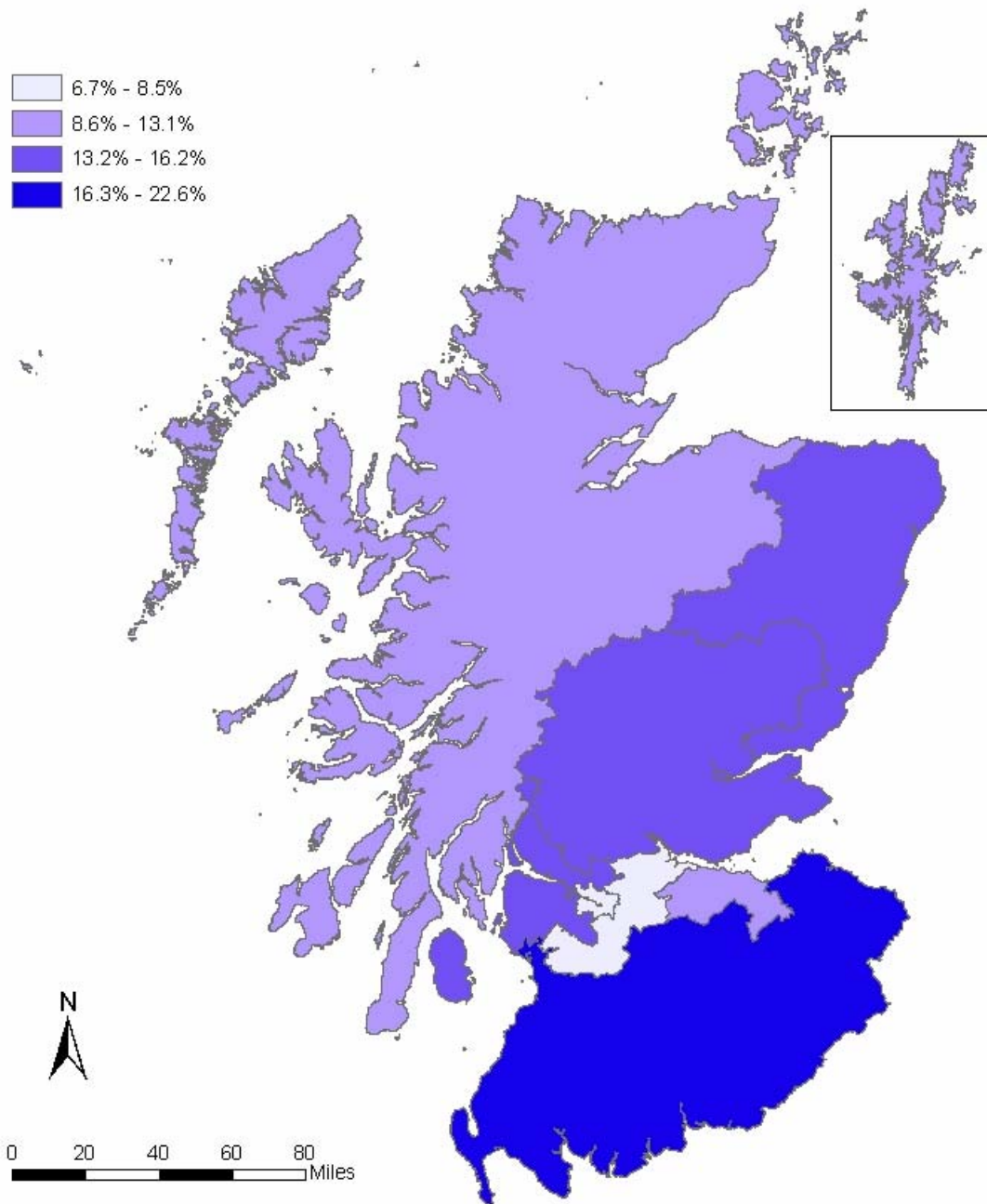
6.7% - 8.5%
8.6% - 13.1%
13.2% - 16.2%
16.3% - 22.6%

N

0   20   40   60   80
                    Miles

This map is based on Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey. Scottish Parliament Corporate Body 10039291

Liberal Democrat share of Regional vote 2007

5.1% - 7.1%
7.2% - 10.1%
10.2% - 15.7%
15.8% - 19.9%

N

| 0 | 20 | 40 | 60 | 80 |
Miles

Green share of Regional vote 2007

2.5%

2.6% - 3.8%

3.9% - 5.2%

5.3% - 7.0%

N

0   20   40   60   80
Miles

This map is based on Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey. Scottish Parliament Corporate Body 10039291

COMPOSITION OF THE PARLIAMENT

The advent of the Scottish Parliament was intended to herald a fresh start for Scotland with a Parliament that was truly representative of the people. In many ways during the first two sessions of the Parliament it did deliver diversity. During the first session of Parliament, 6 different parties were represented in addition to 2 independents. The 2003 election saw another new party – the Scotti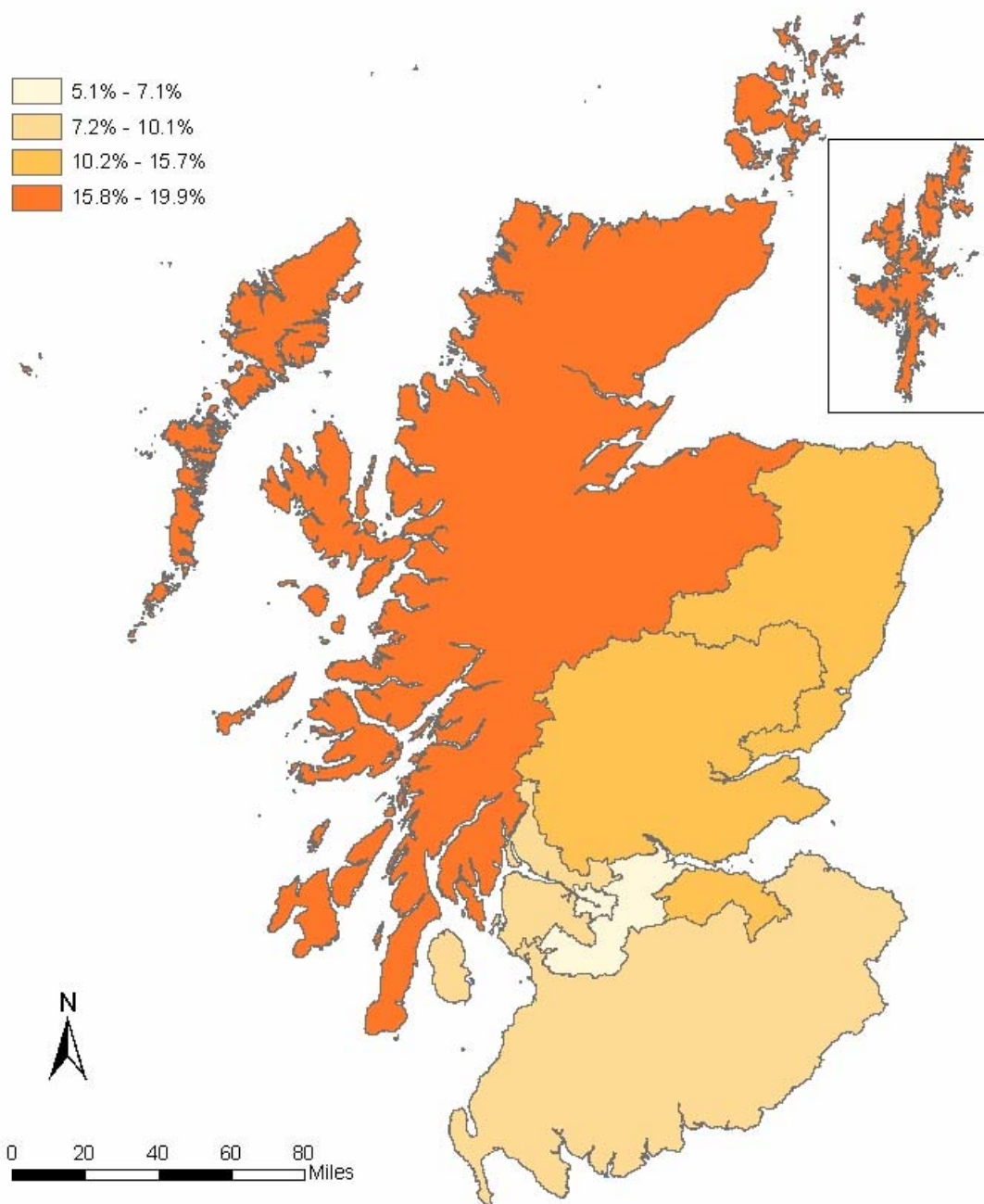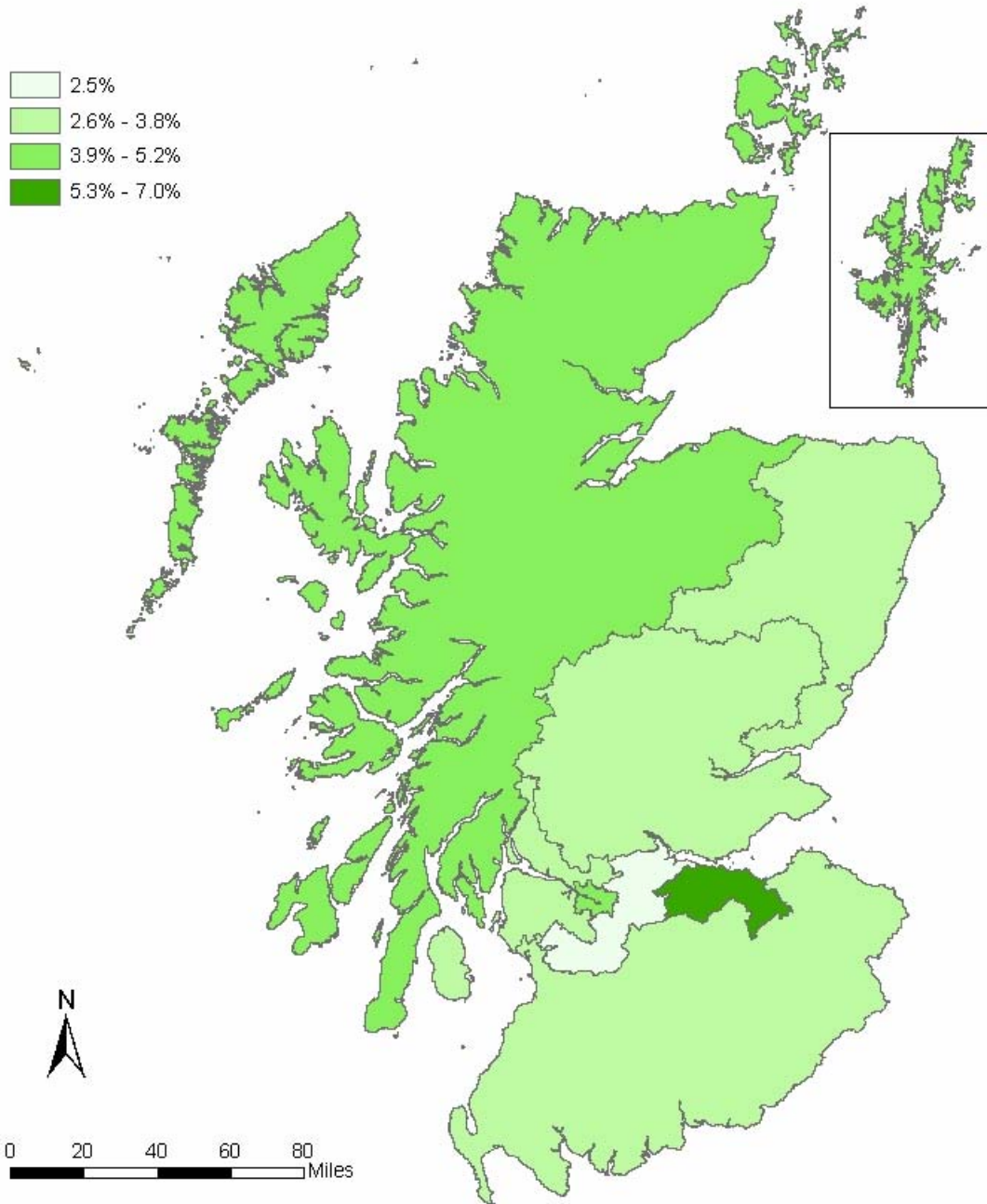sh Senior Citizens Unity Party – take its place in the Parliament along with another independent member – Dr Jean Turner – whilst all the other parties retained their representation in the Parliament.

The first Parliamentary session also saw 48 female MSPs returned (37% of MSPs). This number increased to 51 or 39.5% of all MSPs after the 2003 election. This figure compares to the 128 women elected at the UK General Election making up 19.8% of the House of Commons. (House of Commons, 2005 General Election 2005 p82).

Whilst in these areas it was clear that the Scottish Parliament was making some progress in being more representative, it was yet to welcome any ethnic minority representation. This compared with the 2005 UK General Election at which 15 ethnic minority candidates had won seats in the House of Commons accounting for 2% of all MPs (House of Commons, 2005, p82).

The 2007 election reversed many of the trends seen in the first two sessions of the Scottish Parliament. The number of female MSPs elected dropped to 43, accounting for 33.3% of all MSPs. In addition the number of parties represented in the Parliament dropped back down to 5 and there was only one successful independent candidate. However, an ethnic minority candidate was elected to the Parliament. Bashir Ahmad was returned on the Glasgow Regional list becoming the Scottish Parliament's first MSP from an ethnic minority background.

The 2007 election also saw the election of 41 new MSPs who did not serve during Session 2 of the Parliament (although had some served in the first session of Parliament). This represented 31.8% of all MSPs. The following sections compare the composition of the 2007 Parliament with that of 1999 and 2003. This is done in terms of age, educational background, political background and previous occupation.

Table 8 compares the age profile of MSPs elected to the Scottish Parliament in 1999, 2003 and 2007. These figures show a gradual increase in the age profile of MSPs. The number of Members in the 30-39 and 40-49 age brackets has fallen whilst the number in the 50-59 and 60-69 age brackets has risen. This reflects the number of MSPs being re-elected at the 2003 and the 2007 elections. It is important to note that at this point we only have age data for 123 MSPs in 2007.

TABLE 8 - AGE PROFILE OF MSPS

Age Band	1999		2003		2007	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
18-29	5	3.9%	1	0.8%	2	1.6%
30-39	33	26.0%	21	16.4%	14	11.4%
40-49	48	37.8%	46	35.9%	40	32.5%
50-59	33	26.0%	43	33.6%	46	37.4%
60-69	7	5.5%	14	10.9%	20	16.3%
70-79	1	0.8%	3	2.3%	1	0.8%
Total	127	100%	128	100%	123	100%

Table 9 compares the educational background of MSPs elected in 2007, to that of those elected in 1999 and 2003. The educational background of MSPs elected in 2007 is similar to that of those elected previously in that the vast majority have been educated to at least either degree

or post-graduate level. It is important to note that we have educational data for 120 MSPs in 2007 compared to 116 in 2003 and 124 in 1999.

TABLE 9 - EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND OF MSPS

Educational Background	1999		2003		2007	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
School	10	8.1%	10	8.6%	14	11.7%
Vocational	23	18.5%	18	15.5%	18	15.0%
Degree Level	52	41.9%	52	44.8%	66	55.0%
Postgraduate	36	29.0%	32	27.6%	17	14.2%
PhD	3	2.4%	4	3.4%	5	4.1%
Total	124	100%	116	100%	120	100%

The political background of MSPs is shown in Table 10. The figures for 2007, relating to 125 MSPs for whom we have details, show a slight fall in the number of local councillors elected compared with 2003 and an increase in the number of Members elected who had previously contested elections. This may be in part caused by the big increase in the number of newly elected members in comparison to 2003. The number of Members who had previously been Members of the UK Parliament has also continued to fall.

TABLE 10 - POLITICAL BACKGROUND OF MSPS

Political Background	1999		2003		2007	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Local Councillor	41	32.0%	47	36.4%	40	32.0%
Contested Elections	25	19.5%	28	21.7%	40	32.0%
MP	15	11.7%	12	9.3%	9	7.2%
MEP	1	0.8%	0	0%	0	0%
Other	14	10.9%	12	9.3%	6	4.8%
No Previous Experience	32	25.0%	30	23.3%	30	24.0%
Total	128	100%	129	100%	125	100%

Table 11 shows the occupational background of MSPs for the 120 MSPs in 2007 for whom we have such details. The number coming from the education and finance/business sectors has fallen to 13.3% of all Members for each sector. Members from the social welfare/health sectors and from other occupations have seen the largest increases – to 18.3% and 20% respectively. The number of politicians has halved from 18 to 9 whilst the number of Members with a legal background has increased to 9 bringing it back to 1999 levels.

TABLE 11 - OCCUPATIONAL BACKGROUND OF MSPS

Occupational Background	1999		2003		2007	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Blue Collar/Industrial	3	2.3%	3	2.3%	4	3.3%
Education	20	15.6%	25	19.5%	16	13.3%
Finance/Business	26	20.3%	29	22.7%	16	13.3%
Legal	8	6.3%	4	3.1%	9	7.5%
Local Gov't	7	5.5%	7	5.5%	7	5.9%
Media	6	4.7%	3	2.3%	5	4.2%
Social Welfare/Health	16	12.5%	18	14.1%	22	18.3%
Trade Union	5	3.9%	4	3.1%	8	6.7%
Other	17	13.3%	17	13.3%	24	20%
Politician	20	15.6%	18	14.1%	9	7.5%
Total	128	100%	128	100%	120	100%

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ANNEX ONE – SPOILT BALLOTS BY CONSTITUENCY

Constituency	2007 Spoilt Votes (64 Seats)	2003 Spoilt Votes	1999 Spoilt Votes	% share of the Vote 2007
Airdrie and Shotts	1536	239	148	5.66
Coatbridge and Chryston	1285	205	94	5.00
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	803	95	72	3.04
East Kilbride	-	182	146	-
Falkirk East	1019	240	141	3.36
Falkirk West	1157	153	69	4.02
Hamilton North and Bellshill	1345	180	116	5.30
Hamilton South	-	183	88	-
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	1018	185	151	3.04
Motherwell and Wishaw	970	113	84	3.71
Glasgow Anniesland	1736	128	82	7.84
Glasgow Baillieston	1850	128	71	10.71
Glasgow Cathcart	1717	101	143	7.93
Glasgow Govan	1220	149	151	5.67
Glasgow Kelvin	1195	169	148	5.09
Glasgow Maryhill	1877	138	169	11.33
Glasgow Pollok	2106	103	115	10.85
Glasgow Rutherglen	1495	179	76	6.16
Glasgow Shettleston	2035	143	115	13.75
Glasgow Springburn	1702	155	99	9.66
Argyll and Bute	900	206	117	3.13
Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross	867	0	95	3.88
Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber	1249	209	134	3.15
Moray	1018	212	110	3.36
Orkney	285	59	42	3.29
Ross, Skye and Inverness West	1419	221	158	4.47
Shetland	294	73	79	3.00
Western Isles	446	74	70	3.27
Edinburgh Central	1501	257	127	5.11
Edinburgh East and Musselburgh	2521	252	106	8.41
Edinburgh North and Leith	1536	243	119	4.85
Edinburgh Pentlands	1528	200	105	4.44
Edinburgh South	1403	246	129	4.31
Edinburgh West	1905	177	114	5.48
Linlithgow	1722	185	96	5.81
Livingston	1634	173	114	4.92
Midlothian	1649	193	102	6.57
Central Fife	1256	95	58	4.66
Dunfermline East	1162	151	84	4.73
Dunfermline West	757	108	89	2.56
Kirkcaldy	954	152	87	3.94
North East Fife	762	222	86	2.42
North Tayside	-	227	109	-
Ochil	1016	158	100	3.22
Perth	-	157	90	-
Stirling	633	163	102	1.94
Aberdeen Central	-	153	72	-
Aberdeen North	-	104	78	-

Aberdeen South	-	133	78	-
Angus	873	239	98	2.73
Banff and Buchan	1443	180	85	5.29
Dundee East	913	225	97	3.40
Dundee West	978	172	112	4.03
Gordon	849	153	99	2.40
West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine	984	147	88	2.83
Ayr	873	145	114	2.81
Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley	1432	176	145	4.24
Clydesdale	-	230	139	-
Cunninghame South	1055	125	97	4.50
Dumfries	1006	187	166	3.01
East Lothian	1069	268	91	3.10
Galloway and Upper Nithsdale	977	154	77	3.22
Roxburgh and Berwickshire	599	223	145	2.33
Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale	814	0	134	2.68
Clydebank and Milngavie	1400	237	121	5.23
Cunninghame North	1015	223	116	3.36
Dumbarton	1014	207	156	3.37
Eastwood	990	179	123	2.35
Greenock and Inverclyde	1099	182	95	4.76
Paisley North	667	130	110	2.87
Paisley South	1115	169	100	4.37
Strathkelvin and Bearsden	-	177	132	-
West Renfrewshire	956	204	71	3.28
Scotland	87376	12303	7,839	4.33

ANNEX TWO – DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CONSTITUENCY AND LIST VOTES BY PARTY

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CONSTITUENCY AND LIST VOTES FOR PARTIES (REGIONS), 1999

Region	Con	Lab	Lib-Dem	SNP	Soc Lab	SSP	Green (1)	Others
Central	-0.4	-7.3	-0.4	-2.1	+1.9	+1.4	+1.8	+5.0
Glasgow	+0.2	-5.4	-0.9	-2.4	+1.5	+1.0	+4.0	+2.1
H&I	+0.6	-1.9	-6.8	-0.8	+1.4	+0.9	+3.8	+2.9
Lothians	-0.1	-10.0	-1.3	-1.1	+3.3	+0.9	+6.9	+1.4
Mid & Fife	0	-3.0	-0.1	-2.8	+1.4	+1.0	+3.9	-0.4
NE	+0.4	-0.7	-3.7	-0.7	+1.2	+0.3	+2.8	+0.4
South	-1.2	-5.9	-2.7	-0.4	+4.4	+1.0	+3.0	+1.8
West	-0.7	-5.0	-0.3	-1.0	+1.4	+1.3	+2.6	+1.5
Scotland	-0.1	-5.2	-1.8	-1.4	+2.2	+1.0	+3.6	+1.8

Source: Denver et. al. (2000), p.210
(1) All Green party votes count as an increase but candidates did not stand for the constituency vote.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CONSTITUENCY AND LIST VOTES FOR PARTIES (REGIONS), 2003

Region	Con	Lab	Lib-Dem	SNP	SSP	Green*	Others
Central	-0.13%	-4.89%	0.30%	-2.59%	0.71%	4.66%	1.94%
Glasgow	-1.24%	-8.14%	-2.13%	-2.20%	0.70%	7.13%	5.88%
H&I	-0.41%	-0.36%	-9.12%	-3.14%	0.09%	8.27%	4.68%
Lothians	-2.99%	-10.88%	-8.08%	-4.86%	-0.59%	12.01%	15.39%
Mid & Fife	-1.65%	-4.52%	-2.10%	-4.34%	0.05%	6.86%	5.71%
NE	-0.16%	-1.38%	-5.53%	-3.05%	0.95%	5.22%	3.95%
South	-2.50%	-5.25%	-2.32%	-1.83%	0.60%	5.72%	5.57%
West	0.53%	-5.64%	-1.24%	-1.26%	1.32%	5.66%	0.64%
Scotland	-1.11%	-5.32%	-3.57%	-2.92%	0.49%	6.90%	5.54%

* All Green party votes count as an increase as did not stand for the constituency vote.
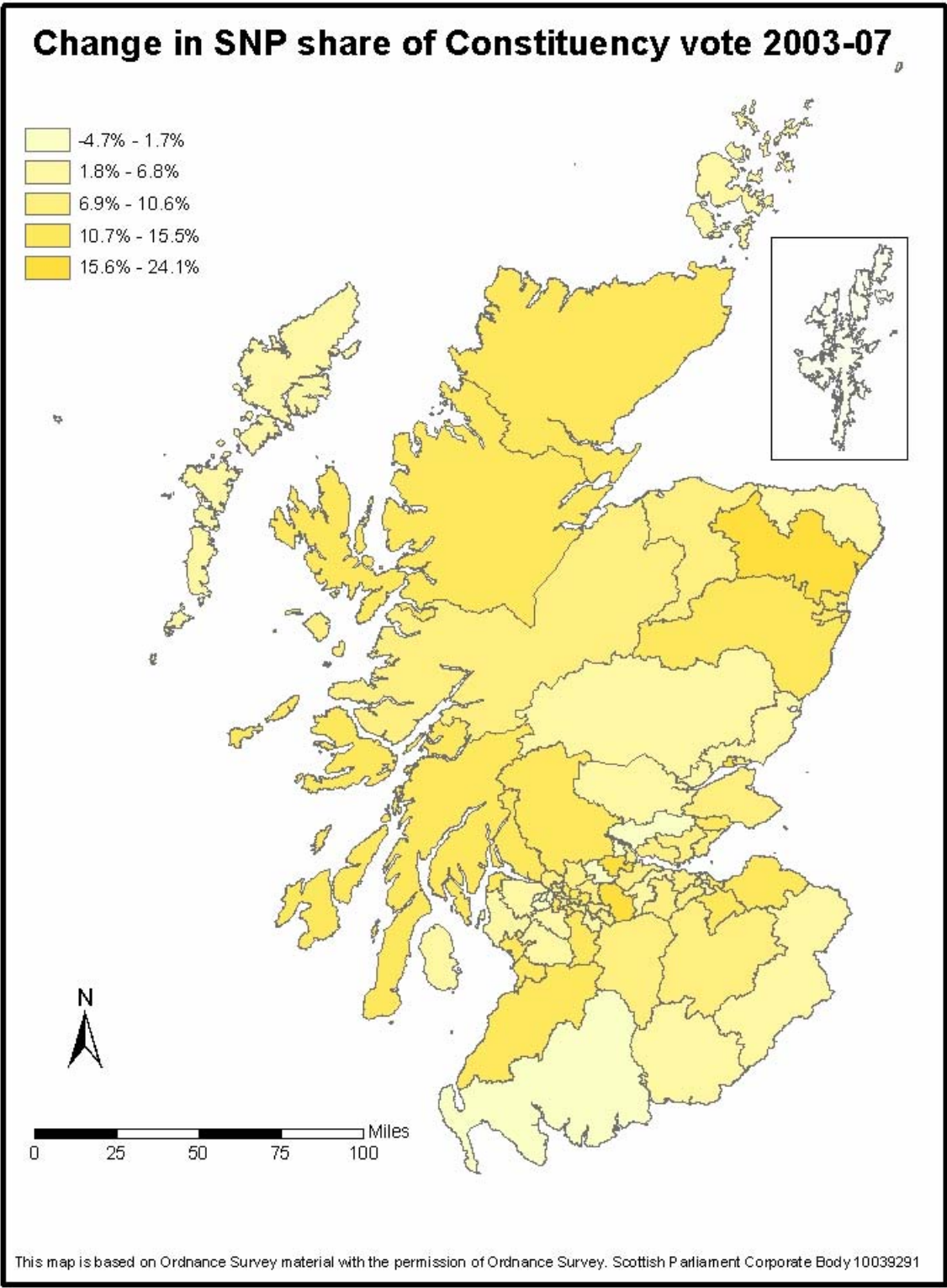
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CONSTITUENCY AND LIST VOTES FOR PARTIES (REGIONS), 2007

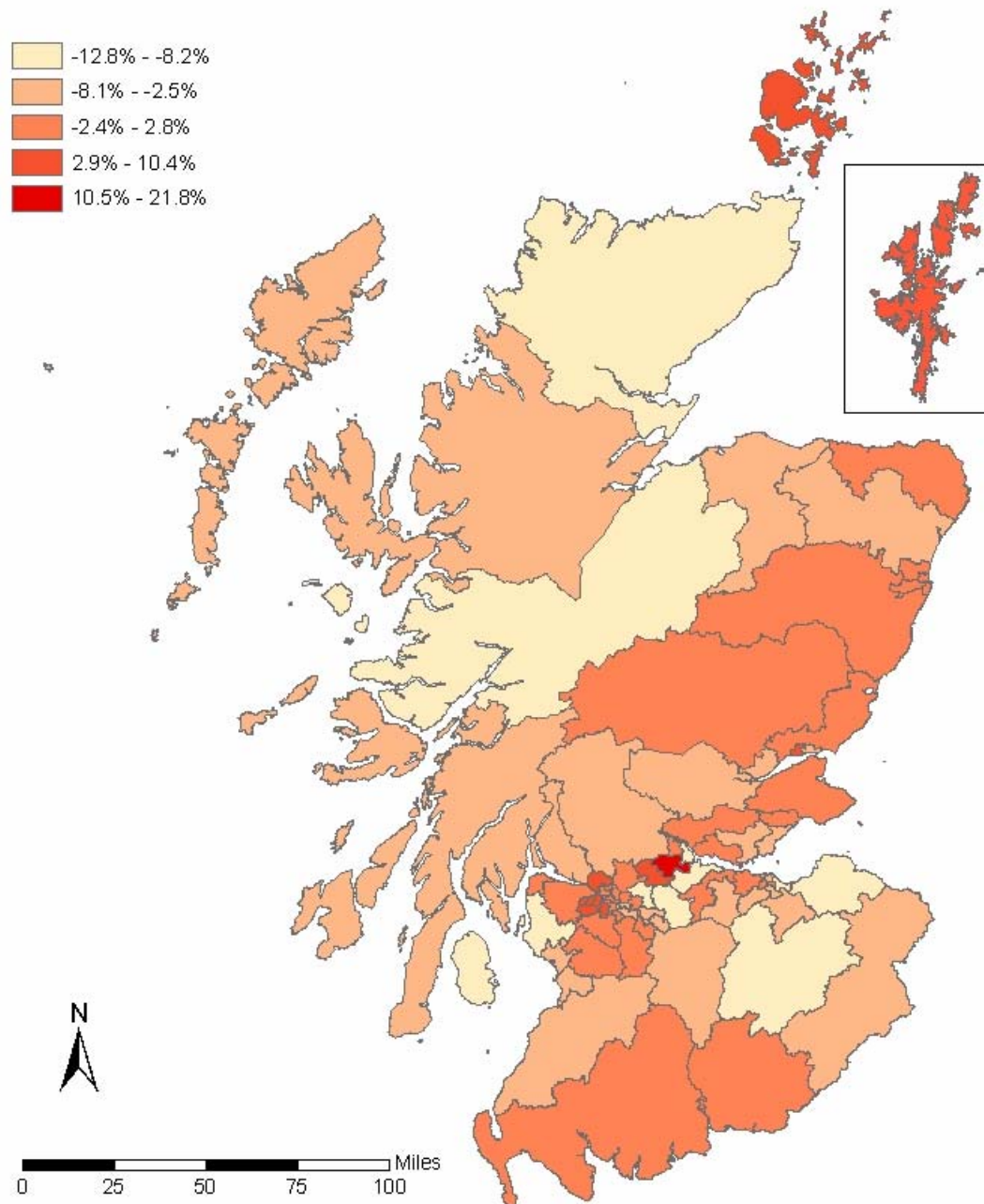| Region	Con	Lab	Lib-Dem	SNP	SSP/Sol	Green	Others
Central	-1.68%	-4.42%	-1.75%	-4.14%	2.53%	2.53%	6.93%
Glasgow	-1.84%	-7.34%	-3.35%	-3.48%	5.39%	3.71%	6.91%
H&I	-1.74%	0.54%	-11.28%	-2.16%	1.51%	4.63%	8.50%
Lothians	-3.42%	-5.4%	-8.26%	-2.92%	1.73%	7.02%	11.25%
Mid & Fife	-3.26%	-0.86%	-4.05%	-2.21%	1.31%	3.78%	5.29%
NE	-1.71%	0.05%	-6.46%	-0.91%	1.17%	3.13%	4.73%
South	-4.54%	-1.7%	-3.57%	-0.37%	1.64%	3.34%	5.20%
West	-2.55%	-4.7%	-2.00%	0.62%	2.22%	3.04%	3.37%
Scotland	-2.69%	-2.99%	-4.87%	-1.91%	2.11%	3.90%	6.46%

All Green party and SSP/Solidarity votes count as an increase as they both only stood in one constituency.
For the purposes of comparison with the 1999 and 2003 elections the SSP and Solidarity votes have been combined..

ANNEX THREE – CHANGING SHARE OF CONSTITUENCY VOTE BY PARTY

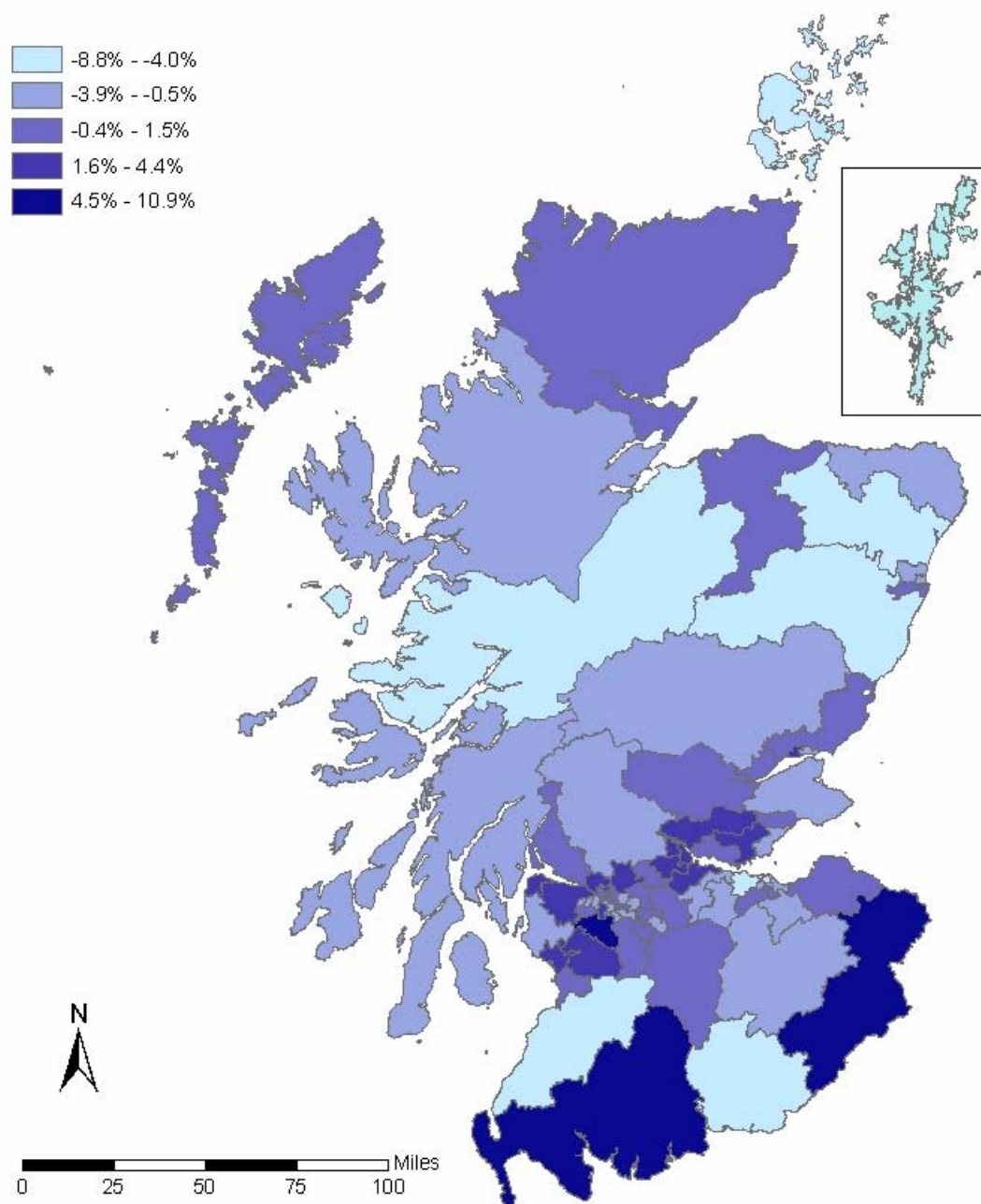Change in SNP share of Constituency vote 2003-07

- -4.7% - 1.7%
- 1.8% - 6.8%
- 6.9% - 10.6%
- 10.7% - 15.5%
- 15.6% - 24.1%

This map is based on Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey. Scottish Parliament Corporate Body 10039291

Change in Labour share of Constituency vote 2003-07

Legend:
- -12.8% - -8.2%
- -8.1% - -2.5%
- -2.4% - 2.8%
- 2.9% - 10.4%
- 10.5% - 21.8%
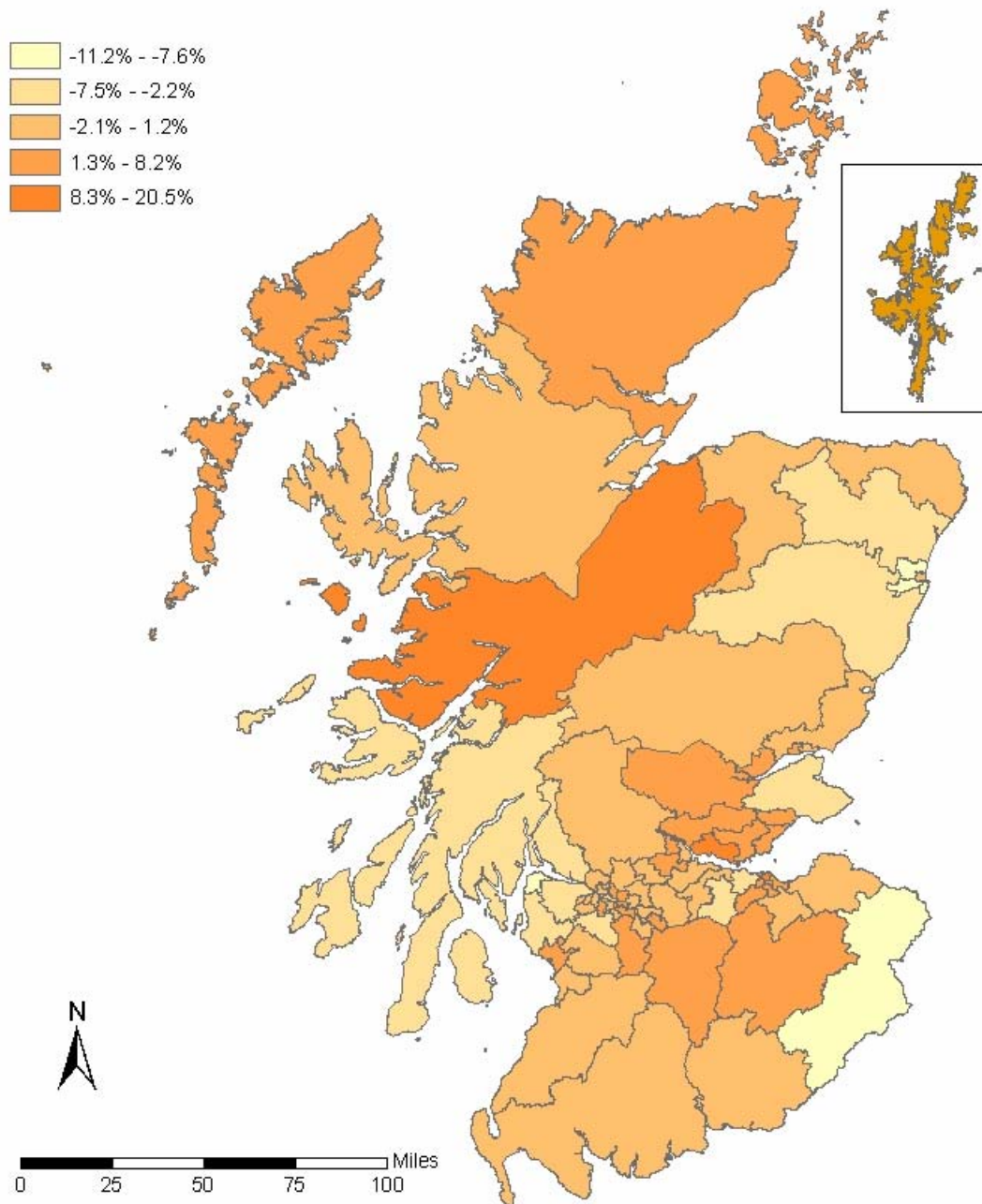
N

Miles
0   25   50   75   100

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Change in Conservative share of Constituency vote 2003-07

▢	-8.8% - -4.0%
▢	-3.9% - -0.5%
▢	-0.4% - 1.5%
▢	1.6% - 4.4%
▢	4.5% - 10.9%

N

Miles
0   25   50   75   100

This map is based on Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey. Scottish Parliament Corporate Body 10039291

Change in Liberal Democrat share of Constituency vote 2003-07

- -11.2% - -7.6%
- -7.5% - -2.2%
- -2.1% - 1.2%
- 1.3% - 8.2%
- 8.3% - 20.5%

N

Miles

0   25   50   75   100

This map is based on Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey. Scottish Parliament Corporate Body 10039291

ANNEX FOUR – REFERENCE MAPS
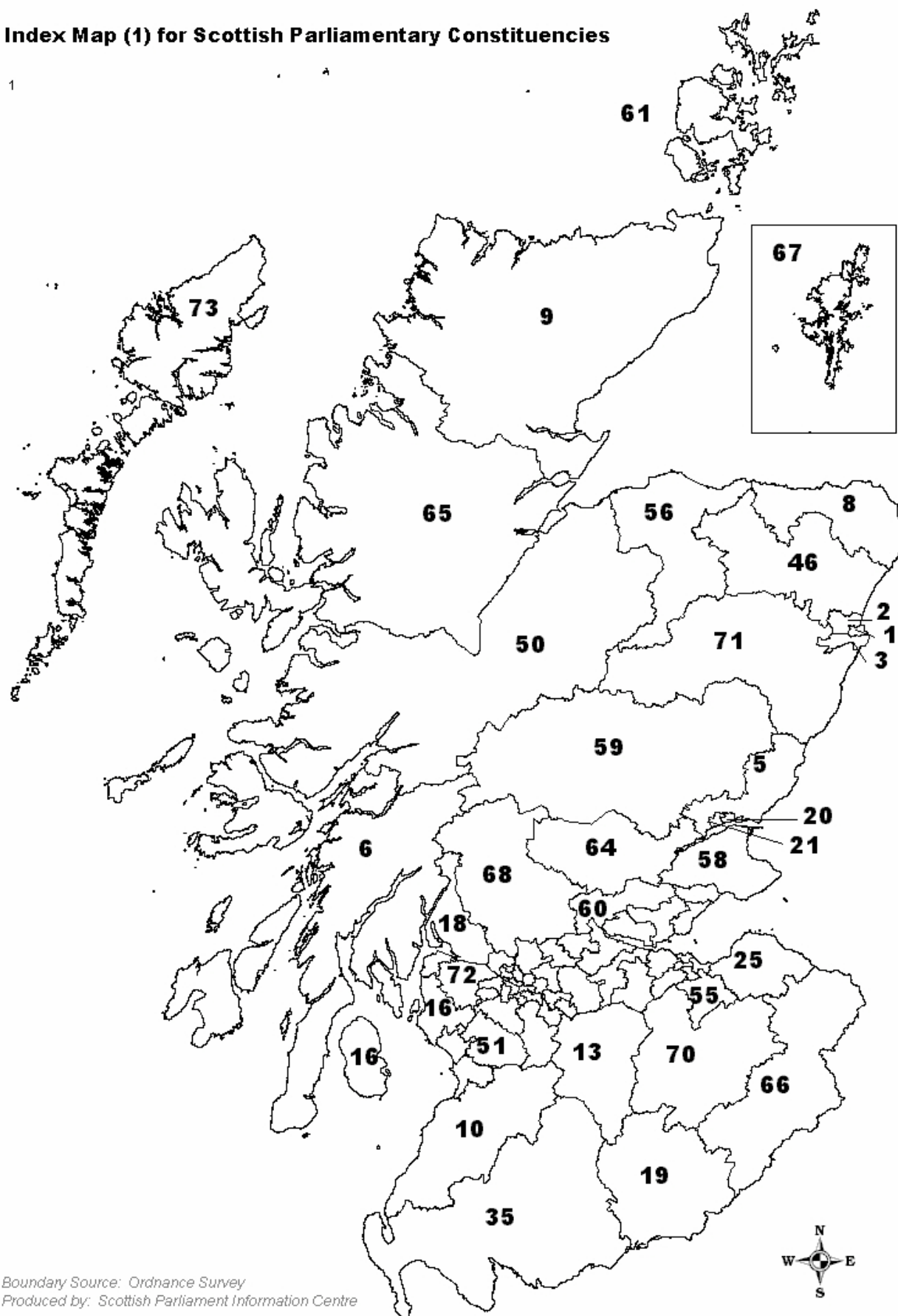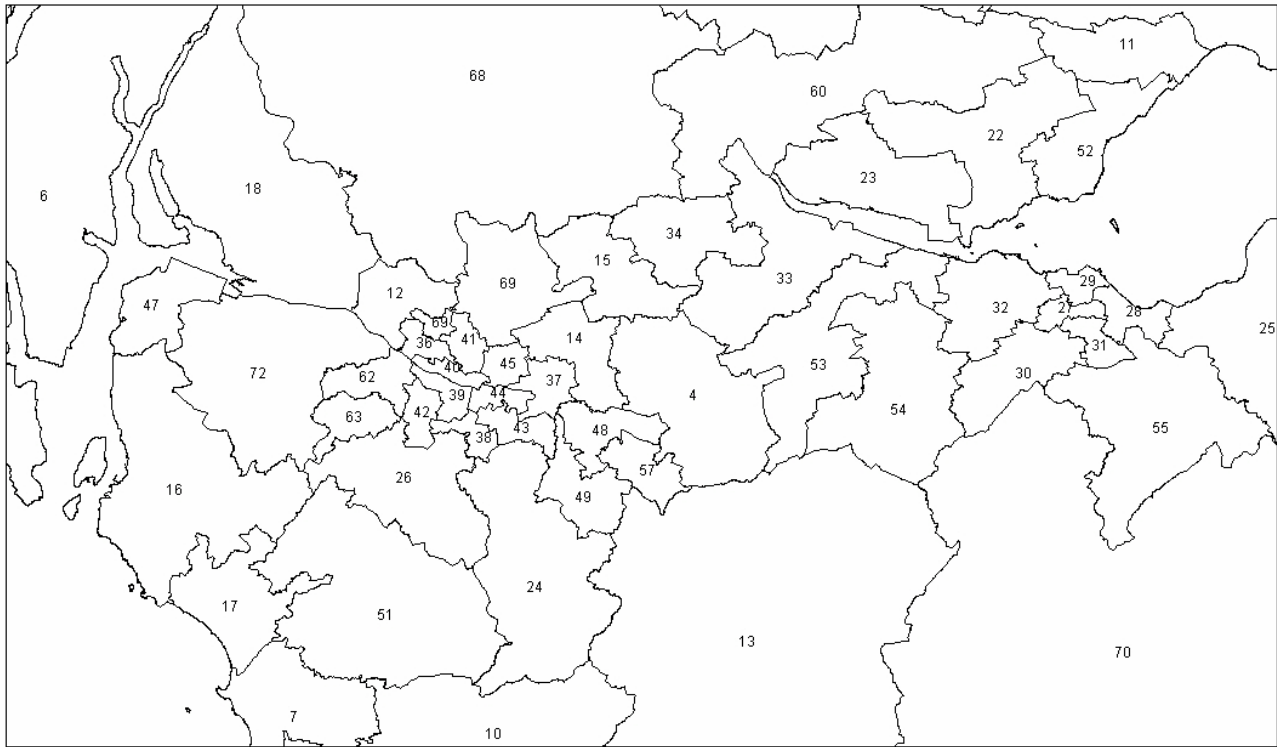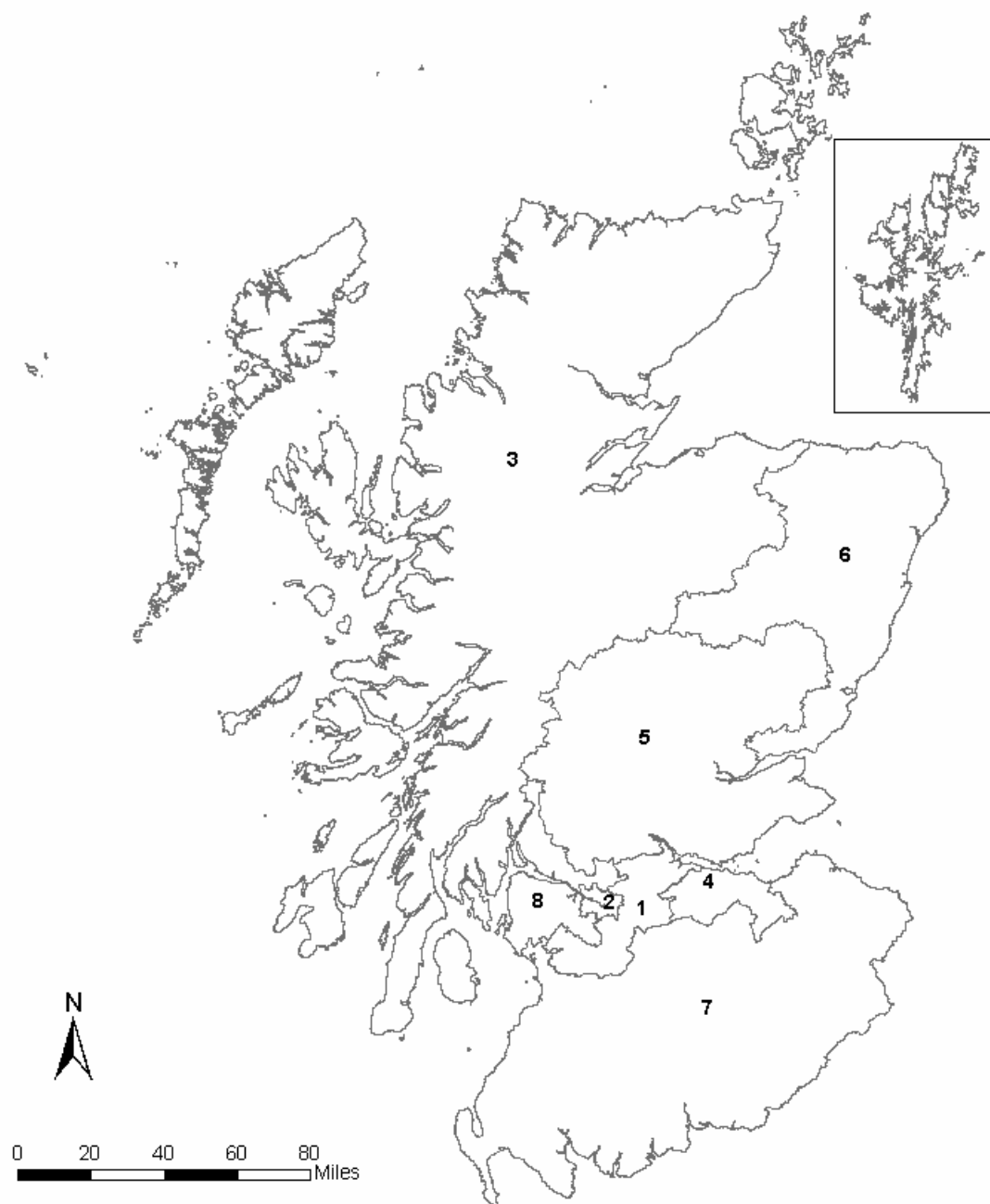
Index Map (1) for Scottish Parliamentary Constituencies

Boundary Source: Ordnance Survey
Produced by: Scottish Parliament Information Centre

Boundary Source: Ordnance Survey
Produced by: Scottish Parliament Information Centre

Scottish Parliament Regions

This map is based on Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey. Scottish Parliament Corporate Body 10039291

ANNEX FIVE – INDEX OF PARLIAMENT CONSTITUENCIES AND REGIONS

1	Aberdeen Central	52	Kirkcaldy
2	Aberdeen North	53	Linlithgow
3	Aberdeen South	54	Midlothian
4	Airdrie and Shotts	55	Midlothian
5	Angus	56	Moray
6	Argyll and Bute	57	Motherwell and Wishaw
7	Ayr	58	North East Fife
8	Banff and Buchan	59	North Tayside
9	Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross	60	Ochil
10	Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley	61	Orkney Islands
11	Central Fife	62	Paisley North
12	Clydebank and Milngavie	63	Paisley South
13	Clydesdale	64	Perth
14	Coatbridge and Chryston	65	Ross, Skye and Inverness West
15	Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	66	Roxburgh and Berwickshire
16	Cunninghame North	67	Shetland Islands
17	Cunninghame South	68	Stirling
18	Dumbarton	69	Strathkelvin and Bearsden
19	Dumfries	70	Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale
20	Dundee East	71	West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine
21	Dundee West	72	West Renfrewshire
22	Dunfermline East	73	Western Isles
23	Dunfermline West		
24	East Kilbride		**Regions**
25	East Lothian	1	Central Scotland
26	Eastwood	2	Glasgow
27	Edinburgh Central	3	Highlands and Islands
28	Edinburgh East and Musselburgh	4	Lothian
29	Edinburgh North and Leith	5	Mid Scotland and Fife
30	Edinburgh Pentlands	6	North East Scotland
31	Edinburgh South	7	South of Scotland
32	Edinburgh West	8	West of Scotland
33	Falkirk East		
34	Falkirk West		
35	Galloway and Upper Nithsdale		
36	Glasgow Anniesland		
37	Glasgow Baillieston		
38	Glasgow Cathcart		
39	Glasgow Govan		
40	Glasgow Kelvin		
41	Glasgow Maryhill		
42	Glasgow Pollok		
43	Glasgow Rutherglen		
44	Glasgow Shettleston		
45	Glasgow Springburn		
46	Gordon		
47	Greenock and Inverclyde		
48	Hamilton North and Bellshill		
49	Hamilton South		
50	Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber		
51	Kilmarnock and Loudoun		