

Politics Assignment

Voting behaviour is looking at how people vote. There are two main theories when it comes to examining this. These are the sociological model and the rational choice model. The sociological model, according to Butler and Stokes (Source A) is voting in accordance to your social class. It would have been predictable as to which way an individual would vote if you were to see which social class they belonged to. Between 1945 and 1978 this was the dominant model. It was seen to be as simple as middle class voters voting Conservative and working class voting Labour. However as a result of partisan dealignment the sociological model is on its way out. A series of short term factors (sociological model) such as party leadership and ~~politics~~ policies have seen to become more indicative as to which way an individual would vote. This is why it can be seen that the sociological model is no longer the dominant model when it comes to voting behaviour.

Ivor Crewe said that social changes such as more females in work and changes in the labour market is what has resulted in dealignment in recent times (Source D). Dealignment is the weakening link between social class and party support. He also ~~the~~ further explained why there was a move away from the sociological model. In 1961, 44% of the electorate were strongly identifying with Conservatives or Labour but in 2010 this number had reduced to 10%. Partisan dealignment has meant individuals no longer vote how they used to. It cannot be said that working class will vote Labour and middle class Conservative as this is no longer the case. Parties cannot rely on specific sections of society to vote for them and therefore have to work increasingly harder in order to gain the support of the 'floating voters'. This could explain why 80s Conservatives saw an increase in their working class support. This could be a result of Thatcherism. The Conservatives introduced a series of policies attractive to the working class such as allowing the purchase of council houses, lower taxation and allowing the public to buy shares into recently privatised industries such as gas and electricity.

and unskilled work

Geographical Differences can play a role in how voters vote. Working class voters in the South of England are more likely to vote Conservative than professionals in the North. This would suggest that voters of all classes had not forgotten the damaging impact the Conservatives had on Northern industry. This clearly indicates your location can impact how you vote. Labour's ~~social~~ Social class can still impact voting in some areas of the UK though. Labour's safe seats tend to be in inner-city constituencies. Contrastingly, Conservative safe seats are in suburbs and rural areas of South England. First Past the Post System divides the country. Labour struggles to gain votes in South England and recently Scotland, while Conservatives struggle in North England. In the 2015 General Election (Source C) Labour won 1.3 million votes however only gained 8 of the 193 seats available in South England. However, this pattern is more fluid and results are becoming more difficult to predict.

The 2015 election in Scotland saw class voting losing its value completely with Nationalism becoming the most prominent factor in voting behaviour. In the lead up to the 2014 Independence Referendum, the unionist parties didn't expect to have to put up much of a fight. Opinion polls suggested only a quarter to a third of Scots wanted independence. Labour hoped this would block the SNP's ~~move~~ move and consequently increase their popularity. This was not the case. The referendum saw an increase of interest in political parties that didn't exist before and the SNP became hugely popular. Nationalism had become the leading factor in influencing voting behaviour. Johann Lamont, Labour's leader resigned stating reasons that the party was not separate from the London branch. While Labour's leader resigning saw a decline in votes the SNP, bringing in Nicola Sturgeon as party leader benefited them greatly. While the independence referendum resulted in a 'no' vote it was far closer than anyone could have predicted and SNP won 56 out of 59 seats in the 2015 General Election (Source C) showing the impact of nationalism was limited as the referendum results did not match the General Election results.

Although ~~as seen~~ seen in the impact of leadership nationalism was not necessarily the only factor that resulted in this outcome. ~~lead~~

Leadership among other factors such as issue voting and media make up the Rational Choice Model of voting behaviour. Since the 70s this has been the most dominant model in a further move away from the sociological model. This model examines short term factors that influence how people vote. In the lead up to elections parties produce manifestos outlining how they plan to make positive changes and their key issues. Particularly issues such as the economy which will remain a key issue when it comes to the majority of voters. Before the 2015 General Election 39% thought Conservatives had the best economic policy with Labour and Liberal Democrats gaining 23% and 26% respectively. Due to the Conservatives victory this indicates how important this policy is to the public. Leaders become the face of the election more than ever following the introduction of the 2010 Leader debates. Voters tend to make their judgement of a party based on how capable they feel their leader is. 29%

thought David Cameron was most capable of running the country with only 12% thinking the same for Gordon Brown.^{*} Additionally, leadership and policies ^(source B) tied in importance, in the eyes of the voters at 33%, previously being 10%.^{**}

Finally, one of the main aspects of the rational choice model is media.

Media is distinguished into two sections new, old and new. Old media is TV and newspapers; and new media is social media. With over 60% of adults having a social media account it was expected that new media would dominate the 2010 election. Instead it was TV that transferred the election. With all three leaders participating in the leader debates this gave Nick Clegg a chance to break away from the traditional two party system. Opinion polls saw the Liberal Democrats increase by 10 points following the debate however this was not translated in actual voting. Furthermore, there was an estimated ~~7~~ million tweets to politicians in the 10 weeks leading up to election. Social media allow people to interact with people they wouldn't normally engage with in day-to-day life and therefore puts people in touch with more political opinions than their own. The downfall of social media is that it is mostly influential to

young people and this is the age group least likely to vote. For example, during the Independence Referendum, 80% of tweets were supportive of the 'Yes' campaign yet this was not reflected in the voting where 'Yes' only received 45% of the vote. (Source B).

However, it would be correct to dismiss ^{not} social class. ^{the influence of} Up until the late 90s social class was still considered the dominant factor in voting behaviour. Oxford political scientist, P. J. Pulzer said in 1967 "class is the basis of British party politics; all else is embellishment and detail" (Source A). He found that people would vote for the party which best represented their social class. Between the 40s and 60s most people voted for one of the two major parties. The majority of the middle class would vote Conservative and the majority of the working class would vote Labour. In the 1960s when you took middle class Conservative voters and working class Labour voters this accounted for 64% of the electorate (Source B). Furthermore, in 1951 97% of the electorate voted either Conservative or Labour (Source B). These statistics demonstrate voting patterns that highlight long term feelings of loyalty to one of the two major parties. This party identification was passed down from generation to generation and was unlikely to change. However, ~~under the 20s~~ social class has been on the decline with other factors taking a more central role in voting behaviour.

Other factors that fall under the rational choice model are age, gender and ethnicity. There are clear links between age and party support. Within the last five election Labour received 42% of the 18-24 year old vote, with Conservative only receiving 28%. (Source D) Contrastingly, the older generation have always favoured the Conservative party with 47% of the 65+ voting them and only 23% of 65+ voting Labour. (Source B) Additionally, the older generation are far more likely to vote, benefitting the Conservative party. In 2015 only 44% of those under 25 voted compared to 78% of over 55s. Age is particularly important in Scotland where 16 and 17 year olds have been given the vote. This is not the case in the UK

where David Cameron refused to give 16 and 17 year olds the vote in the EU referendum sparking political debate. Gender is another factor which can influence voting: Up until 1997 women were more likely to vote Conservative than men but following that election became more likely to vote Labour. Linking with age women under 35 are more likely to vote Labour with 40% doing so compared to 30% voting Conservative (Source B). Again, linking with age 47% of women over 65 vote Conservative. There are more women than men in this category benefitting the Conservatives. Finally, ethnic minorities have always been far more likely to vote Labour. However, after the Iraq war Labour lost 5.5% of their support from Muslim voters in the 2005 election. It is clear that long term factors such as these can also influence voting indicating the sociological model still holds relevance in voting behaviour.

In Conclusion, the sociological model is no longer dominant when it comes to voting behaviour. Instead, Rational choice among other factors such as ~~the~~ geographical differences and Nationalism have prevailed. The move away from social class and other long term factors have been a result of societal changes and class disillusionment. Between the two models it is far more reliable to look at rational choice model when it comes to ~~voting behaviour~~ predicting results of elections. Issue voting leadership and media are some of the main reasons people vote for who they vote for. While defining features about ourselves like age, gender, ethnicity and social class can play a role they are no longer the main reasons. People have become more informed in making their own decisions than blindly voting for 'who they are meant to vote for' leading to the downfall of the sociological model. ~~that~~ It is still important to note that class and income are important factors just not as important as they once were.

Politics Source Sheet

Source A

<http://www.s-cool.co.uk/a-level/sociology/voting/revise-it/voting-behaviour>

Pulzer (1967), claimed:

'Class is the basis of British party politics; all else is embellishment and detail.'

Traditionally then, political sociologists have identified social class as the most important factor associated with voting behaviour. This is hardly surprising given that one of the major political parties - Labour - was founded upon a commitment to a class, and whose origins lie in the organised trade union movement.

The sociological model of voting behaviour, associated with Butler and Stokes, was based on the consistent finding that social class was the most accurate indicator of likely voting intention. In general, working class voters did vote for the Labour Party, and middle class voters voted Conservative. Usually, about two-thirds of the working class voted Labour, while four-fifths of the middle class voted Conservative.

Source B

Higher Modern Studies Democracy in Scotland and the UK Textbook - Frank Cooney, Gary Hughes and David Sheerin

Source C

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/election/2015/election/2015/results/>

Source D

<http://www.google.co.uk/amp/s/sociologytwynham.com/2008/11/01/social-influences-on-voting/amp/>

Statistics

- 1961 44% strong Con or Lab , 2010 10%
- 2015 GE Lab 1.3 million votes, only 8 of 193 seats in South England
- 2015 GE SNP won 56 out of 59 seats
- Before 2015 GE best economic policy 39% Con, Lab and Lib Dem 23% and 26%
- 29% thought David Cameron most capable, 12% Gordon Brown
- Leadership and policies tied at 33%, previously 10%
- 80% tweets supported yes campaign but 45% result
- 1960s middle class Con voters and working class Lab was 64%
- 1951 97% voted Con or Lab
- Last 5 elections, Lab 42% of 18-24 vote, Con 28%
- Con, 47% of 65+, 23% Lab
- 44% of under 25 voted, 78% of over 55s
- Women under 35 40% Lab, 30% Con
- Older women, 47% Con
- Lab lost 5.5% of Muslim vote in 2005