

**TAKING THE BLOOM OFF NEW LABOUR'S ROSE:  
PARTY CHOICE AND VOTER TURNOUT IN BRITAIN, 2005**

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On May 5th, Britain held its first general election in the post-9/11 era. Much had changed since 2001. At that time, Labour was in a very strong position -- the economy was robust, a substantial plurality of voters were Labour party identifiers, and the party was favoured on several key issues. Labour Leader, Tony Blair, was not especially popular, but the electorate was much more enthusiastic about him than his chief rival, Conservative leader, William Hague (see Clarke et al. 2004). Four years later, although the economy remained healthy, Labour's share of identifiers had declined, the set of salient issues was very different, and Mr. Blair was often maligned, not only by opposition supporters, but by many in his own party. In the run-up to the 2005 election, opinion polls showed that Labour held only a narrow lead over the Conservatives in the electorate as a whole, and it was possible that the Conservatives were actually ahead among likely voters. Although models of the conversion of votes to seats cautioned that it would take a massive swing in the popular vote for the Conservatives to win a parliamentary majority, a hung parliament was a nontrivial possibility. As the 2005 campaign began, the bloom was very much off New Labour's rose.

This paper uses newly available data from the British Election Study (BES) surveys<sup>1</sup> to analyze forces affecting party choice and voter turnout in the 2005 general election. We start by delineating the radically different issue agendas at play in the 2001 and 2005 elections, and discuss how the new mix of issues affected voting behaviour in 2005. We also consider the dynamics of party support during the four-week campaign leading up to polling day. Data from the 2005 BES Rolling Campaign Panel Survey show that Labour were fortunate that the Conservatives performed particularly badly and, in effect, lost the 2005 campaign. Had the Conservative campaign been as effective as that of the Liberal Democrats, a model of the conversion of votes to seats suggests that Labour might have lost its parliamentary majority. In the event, although Mr. Blair and his party obtained a majority of 66 seats, they emerged from the 2005 election in a

politically vulnerable situation. Vulnerable also is the traditional image of a British democracy characterized by high levels of voter turnout. Electoral participation in 2005 was only marginally greater than in 2001, with nearly two eligible voters in five choosing not to exercise their franchise. Consonant with results of earlier individual- and aggregate-level analyses, models of turnout indicate that there were strong long-term forces working to drive down the voting rate in 2005. In the conclusion, we summarize key findings and consider their possible implications for the next general election.

### **Post-9/11 Politics and the New Issue Agenda**

9/11 set in motion a series of events that altered Britain's political landscape. Coming soon after Labour's 2001 election victory, 9/11 combined with a post-election honeymoon to push the party's poll numbers above 50%. Although its impact on party support was transitory, the horrific attack became 'Exhibit A' for those who claimed that Saddam Hussein's rogue regime in Iraq should be a principal target in President Bush's war on terrorism. As debate about the wisdom of joining the United States in a 'coalition of the willing' against Iraq intensified, Labour support gradually declined. Prime Minister Blair, the leading proponent of British participation in the coalition, angered people outside of and -- perhaps more consequentially -- within his own party. For those on Labour's left, the prime minister's strident advocacy of the war provided definitive confirmation that Tony Blair was really 'Tory Blair.' In their view, by insisting on using British troops to oust the Iraqi dictator, Blair had revealed himself to be a neo-Thatcherite lapdog of a warmongering American president. As the build-up to the war went into high gear in early 2003, anti-war demonstrators staged massive protests in London and other major British cities.

Their efforts were to no avail and, indeed, the initiation of hostilities against Iraq in late March 2003 produced a sizable rally effect for the prime minister and a small one for his party.<sup>2</sup> These effects soon evaporated. As casualties mounted and weapons of mass destruction remained elusive, the war became increasingly unpopular and criticism of the government mounted. In mid-

July 2003 controversy over the conflict sharply intensified when British weapons expert, Dr. David Kelly, committed suicide. Kelly, an employee of the Ministry of Defence, had been identified by the government as the chief source for a BBC story that the prime minister's chief-of-staff, Alistair Campbell, had 'sexed-up' information concerning Saddam Hussein's capacity to deliver biological weapons. In the wake of controversy surrounding the suicide, Labour support plummeted. An independent judicial inquiry (the Hutton inquiry) subsequently cleared the government of wrongdoing, although many saw its report as a whitewash, and Labour's fortunes revived only modestly in the year preceding the election. The war had become decidedly unpopular, with opinion polls regularly reporting that 60 to 70% of the public opposed Britain's presence in Iraq.

On the eve of the 2005 election campaign, Iraq was one of several issues that had little or no resonance with the electorate four years earlier. When asked to identify the most important issue facing the country,<sup>3</sup> nearly half (48%) of the respondents in the 2005 BES pre-election in-person survey cited either crime, immigration, Iraq or terrorism (see Figure 1). Only 6% had cited these issues in 2001. In contrast, the emphasis on social services (health, education, etc.) was substantially reduced -- from 38% to 25%. Social service issues are traditionally a Labour strong suit, and their diminished salience did not augur well for the party. Also problematic for Labour was the fact that only one person in ten accorded top priority to an economic issue. Since the party had come to power in 1997, Britain had enjoyed a felicitous combination of uninterrupted economic growth combined with low rates of inflation and unemployment. Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown was widely credited for the happy state of affairs, and many voters believed that Labour rather than the Conservatives (45% v 35%), was best at managing the country's economy. However, the new 2005 issue agenda made it difficult for Labour to use its credibility on the economy to full advantage.

(Figure 1 about here)

How people evaluated Labour's performance in various policy areas further illustrates the party's difficulties with the 2005 issue agenda. In the immediate pre-campaign period, much of the electorate gave Labour failing grades in several areas (see Figure 2). Indeed, on newly salient issues such as immigration and Iraq, judgments about the government's performance were massively unfavourable, with the percentage of negative judgments exceeding positive ones by 65% and 42%, respectively.<sup>4</sup> The sole exception was terrorism (+18). Evaluations on more traditional issues such as crime, transportation and taxation, also tended to be unfavourable, with scores ranging from -13 to -36. Nor was there great enthusiasm about Labour's handling of public services. Judgments about its performance on education were mildly positive (+5), but they were mildly critical on health (-10), and very unfavourable on pensions (-31). Labour's only high positive mark was on the economy, where positive judgments outnumbered negative ones by 39%.

(Figure 2 about here)

Consistent with the negative tenor of these evaluations, only 25% of the 2005 BES respondents thought Labour was best equipped to handle their most important issue -- 9% less than in 2001 (see Figure 3). Although the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats' 'best party' numbers were up slightly, they remained weak, at 21%, and 6%, respectively. Still, the net result of these modest changes was to close the issue gap between Labour and its rivals. In 2001, Labour had led the Conservatives on party preference on most important issues by 19%, and the Liberal Democrats by fully 28%. Four years later, Labour's edge over the latter party remained substantial (19%), but its lead over the former one had closed to a slim 4%.

(Figure 3 about here)

Although prominent commentators on British voting behaviour typically have acknowledged that issues -- particularly economic ones -- have important influences, many have claimed that party leader images have minor, even trivial, effects (e.g., Butler and Stokes, 1969). However, the norms of scientific inquiry dictate that arguments from authority must give way to empirical evidence, and a new generation of aggregate- and individual-level analyses has

established that leader images have sizable impacts on electoral choice and the dynamics of party support between elections (e.g., Andersen and Evans, 2003; Clarke, Stewart and Whiteley 1998; Norpoth, 1997). These effects are not novel, but rather have been present at least since the mid-1960s (Clarke et al., 2004).

Tony Blair had been a major asset for Labour in both the 1997 and 2001 elections. In 2001, Blair's mean score on a 0-10 'dislike-like' scale was 5.2.<sup>5</sup> His lead over Conservative leader, William Hague, who scored at dismal 3.9 on the 0-10 scale, was substantial, and it increased over the campaign, with Blair scoring an average of 5.6 in the 2001 post-election survey compared to Hague's 4.1. In 2005, Blair's pre-campaign score had fallen to 4.7 points, whereas the average for Michael Howard, Hague's successor as Conservative leader, was 4.4 points. Blair's score increased only slightly during the campaign (to 4.9 points), whereas Howard's fell marginally (to 4.3 points). Thus, similar to the dynamics of party preferences on most important issues, the leadership gap between Blair and his chief rival decreased from 2001 to 2005. And, unlike 2001, Blair ended the 2005 campaign well behind Liberal Democrat leader, Charles Kennedy, whose average affect score rose to a healthy 5.5 points. These changes in feelings about the prime minister and his competitors proved to be highly consequential.

#### **A (Curvi)Linear Campaign**

Labour had reasons to be concerned in the run-up to the 2005 campaign.<sup>6</sup> Although polls put the party in the lead, its vote intention share was in the mid-to high-30's, only a few points ahead of the Conservatives. Once the campaign officially began in early April, the BES Rolling Campaign Panel Survey (RCPS) confirmed the possibility of a Labour-Conservative horserace. Indeed, the first BES six-day rolling average (for April 6-11th) showed the Conservatives slightly ahead of Labour among likely voters, with the two parties recording 36.6% and 35.0%, respectively. The Liberal Democrats were on 18.2%. Various opinion polls taken at the time painted a similar picture (Wlezien and Norris, 2005).

Recognizing the danger, Labour strategists attempted to focus the issue agenda on Labour's strength -- the healthy economy and Labour's historic image as the advocate and guardian of a broad panoply of cherished public services. Although the prime minister's close advisors initially had intended to isolate his chief competitor for the party leadership, Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown, from the national campaign, the mediocre poll numbers provided a wake-up call. As noted earlier, Brown was widely credited for the country's continuing prosperity, and polls indicated he was more popular than Blair.<sup>7</sup> 'Bringing Gordon back' was judged the smart thing to do. Accordingly, he was featured prominently in Labour's party political broadcasts engaging in earnest one-on-one conversations with Blair about how the strong economy would fund the many improved public services that Labour was promising.

The Conservatives also recognized the importance of controlling the issue agenda, as well as their strength on selected post-9/11 issues. Iraq was not helpful for the Tories because they had supported what had become an unpopular war. However, immigration and crime were high profile issues and, as discussed above, many voters were deeply dissatisfied with the government's performance in these areas. Heeding advisors who had successfully masterminded the Australian Liberal Party's unexpected election victory in October 2004, the British Conservatives made these issues centerpieces of their campaign. In a series of sombre party political broadcasts, Michael Howard simultaneously affirmed his party's commitment to cracking down on crime and curtailing immigration, while assuring voters that it was not racist to be concerned about these matters. Also, sensing an opening on social services, the Conservatives repeatedly accused the government of mismanaging the NHS. A Conservative government would shorten hospital waiting lists and clean up operating rooms plagued by deadly 'super bugs.'

For their part, the Liberal Democrats emphasized their dedication to bolstering public services, while trying to establish credibility as a serious contender for power by claiming that they had energized a successful coalition government in the Scottish Parliament. In addition, Charles Kennedy stressed that, unlike the larger parties, the Liberal Democrats would run a

positive campaign. Rather than disparaging their opponents, they would discuss the many good things that could be accomplished if Liberal Democrats could get a share of power at Westminster.

The BES RCPS survey and various opinion polls soon indicated that the Labour and Liberal Democrat strategies were working. Both parties were moving up in the polls, while the Conservatives were slowly, but steadily, falling. The RCPS survey shows that the Tories' downward trend continued throughout the campaign, with the correlation ( $r$ ) between the party's vote intention share and day of campaign being an impressive  $-.94$  (see Figure 4). In contrast, the trajectories for Labour and the Liberal Democrats were decidedly curvilinear. After its initial advance, Labour retreated, while the Liberal Democrats stalled in mid-campaign before surging in the week before election day. Overall, the Conservatives lost the official campaign, although Labour did not really win it since the party ended up pretty much where it began. Figure 4 shows that the Liberal Democrats were the real winners, moving their vote intention share upwards from just over 18% to over 23% in the closing days of the campaign. We examine the implications of the campaign in terms of the seats captured by the parties below.

(Figure 4 about here)

There were several reasons for Labour's decline in the latter part of the campaign. Renewed controversy over Iraq was one of them. Reacting to several media leaks, Downing Street was forced to publish advice the government had received on the legality of the war. Conservative Leader Michael Howard then fanned the flames by openly accusing Blair of lying about Iraq to the British public. Blair's disastrous performance in a nationally televised 'town hall meeting' was also damaging. In addition to being booed and charged by members of the studio audience of lying about WMD's in Iraq, Blair badly fumbled a question on waiting lists for medical care. In his answer, the prime minister clearly showed that he did not understand that his government's method of measuring the performance of the NHS provided doctors with a perverse incentive to inconvenience patients and deny them timely care. Some 28% of the RCPS

respondents reported seeing this program, and when asked which party leader performed most effectively, 41% chose Charles Kennedy, 27% chose Michael Howard, and only 20%, Tony Blair.

As the survey evidence indicates, salient issues in the 2005 election concerned the ability of various parties and their leaders to deal effectively with the economy, public services, and a complex of security-related matters related to immigration, crime and terrorism. In *Political Choice in Britain* (Clarke et al. 2004), we argued that such valence issues are an important component of a broader *valence politics model* that provides a powerful explanation of British voting behaviour. In the next section, we investigate the ability of the valence politics model to explain electoral choice in 2005.

### **Valence Issues and Valence Politics**

Traditionally, the dominant British model of electoral choice was one that gave pride of place to social class (e.g., Butler and Stokes, 1969). Indeed, in what quickly became the canonical formulation of the argument, class was said to be totally dominant, and ‘all else’ was dismissed as ‘embellishment and detail’ (Pulzer, 1968). However, recent research shows that the class politics model long has been inadequate for explaining the choices voters make in particular elections and, *a fortiori*, inter-election dynamics in party support (Clarke et al., 2004; Denver, 2003). Rival models that emphasize the importance of issues and party leader images have vastly superior explanatory power.

What Stokes (1963, 1992) called *valence issues* typically have dominated the issue agenda in successive British elections. Unlike position (pro-con) issues that drive spatial models of party competition (Downs, 1957; Merrill and Grofman, 1999), valence issues are ones where virtually everyone agrees that a particular goal is a good thing. In the world of valence issues, debate centres on which party and which party leader will accomplish the agreed-upon goal. The economy provides a classic example; although there is nearly unanimous public support for vigorous growth coupled with low rates of inflation and unemployment, argument regarding which party and which leader can deliver these economic goods is a staple of electoral

controversy. Health care, crime prevention and education are also good examples. Again, debate is not about whether these services should be provided, but rather which party will do best job in delivering them. In the post-9/11 Britain, these classic valence issues have been joined by immigration. Although immigration is not necessarily a valence issue, opinion polls show that large majorities of British voters wish to sharply curtail the admission of asylum seekers and reduce the flow of immigrants more generally.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the issue is linked in the public mind with serious social and political pathologies, most notably, violent crime and the threat of terrorism (Clarke et al., 2005; Whiteley et al. 2005).

The valence politics model of electoral choice also emphasizes the role of party leader images. In the language of political psychology, voters use leader images as heuristic devices (e.g., Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock, 1991). Lacking the information needed to determine which party will do the best job of handling (principally valence) issues of concern to them, voters rely on perceptions of party leaders' character and competence to guide electoral decisions. Given the many uncertainties of political life, a leader who is seen to be a 'safe pair of hands' is judged the best bet to deal with important, sometimes unanticipated, issues. In 1997 and 2001, Tony Blair was widely seen to be that leader. In 2005, Blair retained an edge in competence perceptions over his rivals,<sup>9</sup> but many voters expressed doubts about his responsiveness and trustworthiness. On 0-10 scales, Blair (5.0) trailed both Howard (5.1) and Kennedy (5.5) in average responsiveness ratings, and his average trustworthiness score was a dismal 4.4, just slightly ahead of Howard's (4.3), and well behind Kennedy's (5.2).

#### *Modelling Electoral Choice*

Table 1 presents binomial and multinomial logit models of voting in the 2005 general election.<sup>10</sup> The binomial model pits Labour voting against voting for any of the opposition parties, and the multinomial model analyzes voting for various opposition parties with Labour voting as the reference category. The Labour model testifies that party-issue linkages and party leader images had strong effects on electoral choice in 2005. In addition to variables tapping feelings

about the leaders<sup>11</sup> and judgments about which party is best able to handle the most important issues,<sup>12</sup> the model contains a variable that summarizes evaluations of the government's handling of the Iraq war<sup>13</sup> and several other predictors. The latter include economic evaluations,<sup>14</sup> party identification,<sup>15</sup> proximities to parties on a left-right ideological continuum and selected position issues,<sup>16</sup> and various demographic characteristics (age, ethnicity, gender, region of residence, social class).<sup>17</sup> The analyses show that, although not the entire story, key valence politics variables played prominent roles in explaining the Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat voting in 2005. Leadership variables have highly significant effects on voting for all three parties, as do several of the variables measuring party preferences on most important issues. The effects of partisan orientations -- which have display dynamic properties consistent with the valence politics model (Clarke et al., 2004) -- are clearly in evidence as well. In addition, economic evaluations and attitudes towards the Iraq war significantly affect Conservative voting.

(Table 1 about here)

Figure 5 shows changes in the probability of voting Labour as various statistically significant predictors (except demographics) are varied from their minimum to their maximum values while other independent variables are held at their mean values. Controlling for all other factors, changes in party preferences on most important issues have strong effects on the likelihood of voting Labour. Changing party preference from Conservative to Labour increases the probability of voting for the latter party by 37 points. Changing from Liberal Democrat to Labour also has a strong effect (32 points). Leader effects are even larger, with variations in feelings about the Conservative and Liberal Democrat leaders changing the probability of voting Labour by 30 and 54 points, respectively. Most impressive are feelings about Tony Blair. As feelings about him climb from their lowest to their highest level, the likelihood of casting a Labour ballot increases by fully 77 points.<sup>18</sup>

(Figure 5 about here)

Figures 6 and 7 display changes in the probability of voting for the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats, respectively. As in the Labour analysis, the probabilities are calculated by varying the values of significant predictors from their minimum to maximum values while other predictors are held at their mean values. It is again evident that feelings about the party leaders have strong effects. In the Conservative case, changes in Howard's thermometer score alter the probability of a Tory vote by fully 89 points. For the Liberal Democrats, the effect of feelings of Kennedy is also very large, 75 points. In both analyses, changing feelings about Blair are also influential, changing the probability of a Conservative vote by 49 points, and the probability of a Liberal Democrat vote by 32 points.

(Figures 6 and 7 about here)

Although impressive, the effects of party leader images are not everything that matters for opposition party voting. As illustrated in Figures 6 and 7, several other predictors are quite influential. For the Conservatives, identification with the party, selection of the Conservatives as best able to handle the most important issue, issue proximity to the party, economic evaluations and reactions to the Iraq war all are capable of altering the probability of a Tory vote by 20 points or more. Similarly large effects for the Liberal Democrats include party identification, preference for the Liberal Democrats on the most important issue, and issue proximity to the party.

When considering the determinants of electoral choice in 2005, it is noteworthy that evaluations of the government's handling of the war are not statistically significant in the Labour voting model. But, this does *not* mean that voters' reactions to Iraq were inconsequential. Rather, these reactions operate as the valence politics model would predict -- by affecting perceptions of party performance on important issues and images of Tony Blair. The BES data reveal that feelings about Mr. Blair increased from an average of 3.5 points among persons who strongly disapproved of Britain's involvement in the war to 5.8 points among those strongly approved. Similarly, feelings about Blair climbed from 3.3 points to fully 7.7 points, as evaluations of his government's handling of the war varied from 'very badly' to 'very well.' Judgments about Blair

trustworthiness, competence and responsiveness moved by similarly large amounts across these opinion groups. All of these relationships are highly statistically significant.

A multiple regression analysis of factors affecting feelings about Blair indicates that these strong bivariate relationships are not spurious. Controlling for several other predictors, affect for Blair increases by almost four points on the 10-point scale as judgments about the Iraq war vary from their minimum to maximum values (see Figure 8). The Labour voting model discussed above shows that such an increase in affect for the prime minister would boost the probability of casting a Labour ballot by fully 37 points. Reactions to the Iraq war thus had sizable, but indirect, effects on the choices British voters made in 2005.

(Figure 8 about here)

Panels A and B in Table 2 provide a summary of the performance of rival models of voting behaviour in 2005. As in 2001, pseudo  $R^2$  and Akaike Information Criterion (e.g., Burnham and Anderson, 1998) statistics indicate that the most attractive models are those featuring party leader images, party identification and party best able to handle most important issues. Economic voting and issue proximity models perform somewhat less well, and models employing social class and other demographic characteristics (age, ethnicity, gender, region) fare very poorly. However, and again similar to 2001, a composite model that includes variables from the several rival models has the best pseudo  $R^2$ . And, despite the steeper discount for its richer parameterization, the composite model also has the best (smallest) AIC value. Taken together, these results suggest that several types of variables affected Labour voting in 2005, and that key variables in the valence politics model were especially important.

(Table 2 about here)

### **From Votes to Seats in 2005 and 2009/10**

On election day 2005, Labour captured 35.2% of the UK-wide vote, with the Conservatives and Liberal Democrat taking 32.3% and 22.1%, respectively. In England, the Conservatives actually outpolled Labour by a slight margin (35.7% to 35.4%). Although

disheartening for the party faithful, these numbers did not combine to spell Labour's defeat, or even a hung parliament; rather, a heavily biased electoral system came to the party's rescue. The seat count was 355 (of 646) for Labour, 57 less than the party had captured in 2001. In contrast, Conservative and Liberal Democrat seat totals advanced from 166 to 197, and from 52 to 62, respectively. All of the other parties plus the Speaker won a combined total of 31 seats, 3 more than in 2001. Labour thus remained in office with a sharply reduced, but still working, majority of 66 seats.

It is not obvious from the electoral statistics how close Labour came to losing the general election, since a majority of 66 is more than adequate for sustaining the party in office. However, there is a good case for arguing that if the election had taken place on April 5th, the day that it was announced, instead of May 5th, Labour would have lost its overall majority. The evidence for this comes from a forecasting model, which is used to predict seat shares in a general election from vote shares in opinion polls (Whiteley, 2005). A forecast made in January 2005, using data from a poll conducted in the previous month, had Labour winning a majority of 70 seats in a May general election. So it was very accurate in calling the result of the election. We mentioned earlier that the Conservatives had a small advantage over Labour at the start of the election campaign among respondents in the BES RCPS who were very likely to vote. If these data are used to make a seat forecast for a hypothetical election conducted in the first week of April, the model indicates that Labour would have captured 320 seats -- 6 seats short of an overall majority. Assuming the model is accurate, it means that the Conservatives lost 28 seats, and Labour and the Liberal Democrats gained 36 seats and 7 seats respectively during the four-week campaign. Thus, although Labour won a working majority of 66 seats, the result was quite fragile.

Another indicator of Labour's vulnerability is the increased number of very marginal Labour-held seats. After the 2001 election, Labour held only 23 ultra-marginal seats, i.e., seats with a majority less than 5% of the vote, which made up just under 6% of its seat total. Following the 2005 election a total of 41, or just under 12% of Labour seats are now in the ultra-marginal

category. This doubling of the number of highly vulnerable seats for Labour has clear implications for the next general election. If the average swing from Labour to the Conservatives of 3% in 2005 were repeated again in 2009/10, the party would easily lose its overall majority.

Between 2001 and 2005, the Labour share of the vote fell by 5.4%, the Conservative's rose by 0.6% and the Liberal Democrats increased by 3.8%. It is possible to simulate a possible outcome of the next general election in terms of the number of seats captured by different parties by making various assumptions about the size of the (uniform) swings away from Labour that may occur between 2005 and 2009/2010. To get a reasonably realistic picture of a likely election outcome, it is important to take into account the differential flow of votes away from Labour to the other major parties. In this regard, it is well known that electors who defect from Labour generally find it easier to switch to the Liberal Democrats than they do to the Conservatives (see Clarke et al. 2004). This was, in part, why the swing from Labour to the Liberal Democrats in 2005 (4.6%) was larger than the swing from Labour to the Conservatives (3.0%). Roughly speaking, the Liberal Democrats took about two-thirds of the combined swing, leaving the Conservatives to pick up the remaining third.

The simulation in Figure 9, assumes that this pattern is repeated in 2009/10, with two-thirds of the swing against Labour going to the Liberal Democrats and one-third to the Conservatives.<sup>19</sup> In this scenario Labour loses its overall majority with a swing to the other two parties of about 3%, and the Conservatives do not gain an overall majority in the range of values considered. In fact, the shared swing from Labour to the other two parties has to be around 12.5% before the Conservatives get an overall majority. This is because the Liberal Democrats gain disproportionately from Labour's misfortune, thus making it more difficult for the Conservatives to win seats. Again, it is likely that a hung Parliament would emerge from such an election.

(Figure 9 about here)

There is an important qualification to make to this analysis. The 2009/10 general election will be fought on new constituency boundaries in England and Wales. As is well known, the

revisions in the boundaries will work against Labour, since the latter had a big advantage in 2005. Labour-held constituencies had significantly fewer electors than did Conservative or Liberal Democrat held constituencies, making it easier to elect a Labour MP.<sup>20</sup> The boundary revisions will reduce this advantage, making it more difficult for Labour to retain its majority as a consequence. From the viewpoint of the simulations this has the effect of making Labour lose its overall majority with smaller swings than those depicted in Figure 9. This in turn makes a hung Parliament more likely given a small swing against Labour, although at the same time it helps the Conservatives to win an overall majority with a smaller swing in their favour. In effect, the points at which both parties cross the overall majority line in the figures shift to the left. This means that boundary changes are unlikely to alter the fact that a wide range of plausible swings at the next election would produce a hung parliament.

#### **At The Polls?**

Throughout much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, widespread citizen participation was the norm in British general elections. Favourably impressed observers reacted by depicting high turnout as a defining feature of Britain's 'civic culture,' and a key indicator of the robust health of its democracy (e.g., Almond and Verba, 1959). Figures for recent elections paint a much less flattering portrait of public engagement in the electoral process. Although 77.7% voted in 1992, the percentage going to the polls fell to 71.4% in 1997, and then plummeted to 59.4% in 2001. The very substantial decline raised two obvious questions. Would the downward trend continue, making low turnout a staple feature of British elections? And, why were so many citizens choosing not to exercise their democratic voting rights? The modest recovery in turnout in 2005 -- to 61.3% -- indicates that electoral participation in the UK is not necessarily in inexorable decline. Indeed, the analysis of aggregate data for the 1945-2005 elections presented below indicates that an important driver of turnout is the extent of competition between the leading parties -- and the contest in 2005 was certainly closer than had been the case in 2001. First, however, we explore individual-level determinants of turnout. Similar to the party choice analyses, we build on our

work on participation in the 2001 election (Clarke et al., 2004) by developing and testing a composite model of voting/non-voting in 2005. The results suggest that the decision to go to the polls is driven by a combination of rational calculation, normative conviction, contingency and demography.

Our analysis is informed by five broad classes of theoretical models derived from the literature on political participation. The *cognitive engagement* model emphasizes an individual's interest in, knowledge of and engagement with the political process generally. The *civic voluntarism* model stresses politically relevant resources (such as education, time and income) that an individual possesses, together with the mobilizing activities of parties and other political groups. The *social capital* model focuses on inter-personal trust and the density of social networks in which an individual is located as motivating factors underpinning participation. The *equity-fairness* model suggests that a sense of relative deprivation provides a strong impetus to engage in various forms of political action. Finally, the *general incentives* model sees political participation as a combination of rational calculation, normative conviction and response to social norms.

An analysis of turnout in the 2001 general election showed that several of these models derive support from the available empirical evidence (Clarke et al., 2004). Moreover, no single model encompasses the others -- each model is capable of providing a distinctive statistical contribution to explaining turnout. It thus makes sense to develop a composite model, which combines the best explanatory features of the various rival models. In the present analysis, we do not repeat the process of testing each of the five broad models separately. Rather, we draw on the 2001 results to guide the specification of a composite model of why some people, but not others, chose to cast a ballot in 2005.

#### *The Composite Turnout Model*

The first components of the composite model draw on cognitive engagement theory. This perspective makes the straightforward suggestion that people who are more interested in and more

knowledgeable about politics will be more strongly motivated to vote than those who are either uninterested or politically ignorant or both. To measure political interest, we use responses to a question about respondents' interest in the general election.<sup>21</sup> To measure political knowledge, we use respondents' answers to an eight-item political knowledge quiz administered in the post-election wave of the 2005 BES survey.<sup>22</sup> The questions were designed to assess knowledge both of the electoral process generally and of the substantive policy positions taken by the main political parties. The expectation is that higher levels of political interest and knowledge will increase the likelihood of voting.

Civic voluntarism theory informs the second set of explanatory variables in the composite model. In the civic voluntarism account, education and social class position constitute resources that facilitate participation in politics. Education enhances an individual's ability to think about information in order to make an informed political choice. Social class represents a proxy for the higher levels of time-flexibility and income that typically make it easier for middle-class people to act politically. Thus, both a higher level of education and a higher social class grade should increase the probability that an individual will vote. The civic voluntarism account also emphasizes the importance of mobilisation by various social and political actors. This suggests that exposure to in-person campaigning should positively affect the turnout decision.<sup>23</sup>

The central claim of the equity-fairness model is that people are motivated to engage in political activity when they feel a sense of relative deprivation. Relative deprivation is defined formally as the gap between value expectations -- what people think they ought to get out of life -- and perceived value capabilities -- what they think they will get. We measure sense of deprivation on a ten-point scale based on responses to two agree-disagree statements. One of these statements concerns the extent to which government treats the respondent fairly, and the other statement explicitly attempts to measure the value expectations/capabilities gap.<sup>24</sup> The hypothesis is that people who feel a strong sense of relative deprivation will be more strongly motivated to vote, *ceteris paribus*, than those who do not.

The core of the composite model is based on the general incentives model. This model takes as its starting point the rational choice calculation that the decision to vote is a function of the collective benefits of voting, discounted by the probability that the individual's vote affects the outcome, minus the costs of voting. This well-known formulation can be stated as:

$$\text{Pr}(\text{Turnout}) = pB - C \quad (1)$$

where  $p$  is the probability of affecting the election outcome,  $B$  represents the differential policy benefits accruing if one party rather than another wins the election, and  $C$  represents the costs of voting.

Here, we employ pairwise differences on 11-point like-dislike scales for political parties to proxy the differential benefits that an individual perceives will accrue if various parties were to win the election.<sup>25</sup> The hypothesis is that the bigger the average benefits gap, the more likely a person is to vote and *vice versa*. Note, however, that equation (1) also indicates that the benefits term is discounted by people's beliefs about the probability that their vote will affect the election outcome. As a proxy for these beliefs, we use sense of political efficacy, measured on 0-10 scale of perceived personal political influence.<sup>26</sup> The  $pB$  term in (1) is accordingly an interaction term which combines perceived personal political efficacy with differential policy benefits.

Any discussion of the benefits of voting immediately raises the complementary issues of the potential costs involved. The costs of voting are normally regarded as the time, effort and potential inconvenience involved in the act of voting itself, and the hypothesis is that such costs operate to reduce the probability of voting. However, people are often reluctant to admit to survey interviewers that they themselves are affected by what are often considered to be relatively trivial costs. As a result, analysts typically ask indirect measures to tap people's attitudes to the costs of voting. We employ two such measures. BES respondents were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with the statements that 'people are so busy that they don't have time to vote'; and 'political activity involves too much time and effort'. If assessments of costs affect the

probability of voting, then respondents who agree with these statements should be less likely to vote than those who disagree.

The general incentives model is not restricted to a narrow consideration of the costs and (discounted) policy benefits of voting. There are several additional motivating factors that help to explain why some people vote and others do not. The first is the sense of personal satisfaction that some people derive from participating in the political system. We measure this class of benefits with an index derived from responses to three statements concerning the intrinsic satisfaction associated with the act of voting and the benefits that can accrue to the individual from political activity in general.<sup>27</sup> The expectation is that the more people experience these *personal benefits* (as opposed to the collective policy benefits described above), the more likely they are to cast a ballot.

A second possible motivating factor is *alienation* from the political system. People who feel unconnected with, or even excluded from, the political system will feel disinclined to vote. We measure this sense of alienation by considering people's sense of (dis)satisfaction with 'the way that democracy works in this country'.<sup>28</sup> The hypothesis is that the more dissatisfied people are with democracy, the less likely they are to vote.

A third additional factor is social norms operating in the sub-cultural environment in which the individual is located. There are clearly many ways in which this environment could be assessed. We capture it using responses to two statements concerning perceptions of the attitudes of family, friends and neighbours towards electoral participation.<sup>29</sup> Responses to these statements are used to delineate a sub-cultural environment in which social norms are (un)sympathetic to voting -- the more favourable the sub-cultural environment, the more likely people are to vote.

A fourth factor is sense of civic duty. Previous studies have found that this sense of moral obligation is a crucial determinant of turnout (e.g., Clarke et al., 2004; Franklin, 2004). The underlying assumption is that people are not simply egocentric utility-maximizing political actors analogous to the coldly calculating 'agents' favoured by economists. Rather, voters are moral

beings, and what they think is morally right influences their political behaviour. The hypothesis suggested by this assumption is straightforward -- the stronger a person's sense of civic duty,<sup>30</sup> the more likely it is that s/he will vote.

A fifth factor, social trust, derives from the literature on social capital and political behaviour (see Clarke et al., 2004). At a very general level, the idea is that society and polity are closely intertwined networks of interpersonal interaction. The nature of a society has important implications for the functioning of a polity. At the individual level, a high level of social capital, indexed in terms of extent of trust in fellow citizens and involvement in networks of civic engagement, promotes political participation. Here, we focus on the impact of social trust on turnout, and hypothesize that people with high levels of trust in their fellow citizens are more likely to participate in the political process by voting than are those with low levels of social trust.<sup>31</sup>

The final set of variables in the composite model are demographic controls. In addition to education and class (which are included as part of the civic voluntarism component), we control for age, gender, ethnicity, disability status and country.<sup>32</sup> Thus, the full specification of the composite model is:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Pr (Vote)} = & \text{fn}(B_0 + B_1\text{Influence} * \text{Collective Benefits} - B_2\text{Costs} + B_3\text{Personal Benefits} + \\ & B_4\text{Democracy Dissatisfaction} + B_5\text{Social Norms} + B_6\text{Civic Duty} + B_7\text{Interest} + \\ & B_8\text{Knowledge} + B_9\text{Education} + B_{10}\text{Class} + B_{11}\text{Party Mobilisation} + B_{12}\text{Relative} \\ & \text{Deprivation} + B_{13}\text{Social Trust} + B_{14}\text{Age} + B_{15}\text{Gender} + B_{16}\text{Ethnicity} + B_{17}\text{Disabled} + \\ & B_{18}\text{Wales} + B_{19}\text{Scotland}) \end{aligned} \quad (2)$$

where  $B_0$  is a constant and  $B_1$ – $B_{19}$  are parameters associated with various predictor variables. Since the model's dependent variable (voted/did not vote) is binary, logistic regression is used for estimation purposes (e.g., Long, 1997).

Table 3 reports the results of analyzing the turnout model using data from the 2005 BES post-election cross-sectional survey. Overall, the model performs quite well -- over 83% of the cases are correctly classified and the McKelvey  $R^2$  value is .49. All coefficients for variables in the general incentives model are statistically significant and correctly signed. Discounted policy

benefits, personal benefits, social norms and civic duty exert significant positive effects on the probability of voting; costs and democracy dissatisfaction exert significant negative effects. The two cognitive engagement variables also yield correctly signed, significant coefficients; both political knowledge and political interest exert positive effects on the turnout decision. The civic voluntarism model fares slightly less well. Although the party mobilisation term is significant and positive, the education coefficient fails to achieve significance, while the social class term is only just significant at the .05 level. The relative deprivation coefficient, as predicted by the equity-fairness model, is positive and significant. However, the coefficient for social trust, a key variable in the social capital model, is not influential. Regarding the socio-demographics, age, gender, ethnicity and disability all exert significant effects, with younger people, men, ethnic minorities and disabled people all being less likely to vote than their older, female, white, non-disabled counterparts. The insignificant coefficients for Wales and Scotland indicate that, net of the individual-level variables included in the model, turnout did not vary significantly across the three countries of mainland UK in 2005.

(Table 3 about here)

To provide intuition regarding the strength of various predictors, the right-hand column of Table 3 reports the change in the probability of voting associated with each independent variable changing from its minimum to its maximum value while holding all other variables constant at their respective means. A sense of civic duty is the clearly the strongest driver of turnout (change in probability .47), followed by personal benefits (.30), political interest (.27), political knowledge (.23), discounted policy benefits (.21) and social norms (.20). Age is also quite influential, boosting the probability of voting by .21. This is clearly a diverse list. It includes variables rooted in rational calculation (the two benefits terms), in cognitive engagement (interest and knowledge), in normative sensibilities (civic duty and social norms) and demography. The decision to vote is clearly a complex one involving a wide range of considerations that cannot be encapsulated by a single theoretical perspective.

Using the methods that generated the change in probability scores in Table 3, we can simulate the likely behaviour of typical voters in substantively illuminating ways. Consider, for example, hypothetical person A -- a 20-year old member of an ethnic minority who has no interest in politics, feels a strong sense of relative deprivation, is very dissatisfied with democracy in Britain, and who was not contacted by a political party during the election campaign. According to simulations based on the model, A had a very low probability (.05) of voting in the 2005 general election. However, if A were somehow to acquire a strong sense of civic duty, the likelihood of voting increases to .33. Additionally, if A were to become very satisfied with democracy, then the probability of voting rises to .55. And, if A also had been intensively canvassed by a political party during the election campaign, then the likelihood of voting increases to .65. In short, a person who is virtually certain not to vote can be transformed, by changing only three key characteristics, into someone who has almost a two-thirds chance of being a voter. This result underscores the point that several variables, derived from various theoretical traditions, affect people's turnout decisions. These effects can be very powerful, especially in combination.

#### *Modelling Trends in Turnout*

The 2001 and 2005 BES surveys asked large numbers of questions to gather the data needed to test rival models of electoral participation. It would be desirable to use comparable data from earlier BES surveys to investigate the general applicability of various models, and to assess which factors have been most important for generating long-term trends in turnout. Unfortunately, question batteries similar to those used in 2001 and 2005 were not included in any of the earlier surveys. As a substitute, we employ aggregate data gathered since 1945 to operationalise one of the key models of turnout discussed above, the P\*B – C model. We add a 'D' term to the model to capture trends in civic duty and other long-term force affecting turnout over time.

Turnout is measured directly as the percentage voting in one of the 17 general elections held since 1945. Other terms in the model must be proxied. P is measured as the (log) absolute average distance between the leading two parties in public opinion polls conducted over the three

months preceding a general election. The assumption is that voters experience an enhanced sense of being able to influence the election outcome in situations where party competition is close. In contrast, this sense is diminished in situations where one party is seen as a sure bet to win.  $B$ , the differential benefits term, is measured using the (log) sum of pairwise absolute distances on a summary left-right ideology/policy scale between the Conservative, Labour and Liberal (Democrat) parties. The data for this measure are taken from the party manifestos data base assembled by Budge et al. (e.g., Bara and Budge, 2001; Budge et al., 2001).<sup>33</sup>  $C$  is the costs of voting. Since (except for very recent innovations in postal voting) methods of voting are essentially unchanged over time,  $C$  can be assumed to be a constant. Long-term trends in civic duty and other factors affecting turnout are proxied using linear and quadratic time counters. Model parameters are estimated using OLS regression analysis.

The results indicate that each of the predictor variables behaves as hypothesised (see Table 4). Net of long-term trend, close party competition boosts turnout (Models A and D), and ideological proximity inhibits it (Models B and E). As also expected, the interaction between party competition and ideological proximity is statistically significant (Models C and F). Turnout is highest when competition is intense and parties are relatively far apart on the left-right ideological continuum. This result is consonant with the frequently articulated argument that the electorate reacts to a close fight with high stakes. As King (2001) stated after the 2001 election: '[j]ust provide the voters with a closely fought election at which a great deal is at stake and, make no mistake, they will again turn out in their droves.'

(Table 4 about here)

The significant negative linear and quadratic trend terms in all of the models caution that such a strong version of an argument on behalf of the  $pB$  term is unwarranted. Controlling for levels of party competition and ideological proximity among the parties, there clearly are long-term trends working to suppress turnout. Perhaps most important is the relatively weak sense of civic duty among younger groups in the electorate. Replicating a pattern evident in 2001, there are

very strong age-group differences in responses to the civic duty statements in the 2005 BES (see Figure 10). Although data limitations make it difficult to disentangle life-cycle from age-cohort effects, available evidence suggests that the sense of civic duty that does much to propel people to the polls will remain relatively impoverished among presently younger members of the electorate (Clarke et al., 2004). Unless their successors have a significantly stronger sense of civic mindedness, there will be continuing downward pressures on turnout in the years ahead.

(Figure 10 about here)

The aggregate turnout models help one to appreciate how these pressures may operate. First, it is noteworthy that the quadratic trend model (Model F in Table 4) does a good job in anticipating 2005 turnout. If one estimates this model for the 1945-2001 period, and forecasts 2005 turnout, the result is 62.8% -- just 1.5% above the actual figure. Assuming levels of party competition and ideological proximity among the parties remain at 2005 levels, Model F indicates that turnout will be 60.7% in a 2009/10 election. Of course, this forecast is conditional on the perpetuation of political conditions that obtained in 2005, and those conditions may change. In the run-up to the 2005 contest, party competition as measured by opinion polls was quite intense, a condition that works to produce higher turnout by bolstering voters' sense of efficacy. However, the 2005 Manifestos data show that the three major parties remained quite close together on the left-right ideological continuum, a condition that militates against high turnout by minimizing perceptions of differential benefits. Assuming parties remain competitive at the 2005 level and become more ideologically polarized -- say at levels witnessed during the 1992 election -- the forecast turnout in the next general election is 63.7%. Thus, even a combination of close competition and enhanced ideological/policy distance among the parties does not bring turnout back to pre-2001 figures. Given the continuing presence of long-term negative forces, restoring electoral participation to the impressive levels that once characterized Britain's celebrated 'civic culture' will be a daunting task.

### **Conclusion: Valence Politics in 2005 and Beyond**

Speaking in his Sedgefield constituency on the night of the election, Prime Minister Blair reacted to his party's lacklustre performance by remarking that he had heard what the voters were saying. If he did, he must have recognized that voters had acted on a very different issue agenda than had been the case in 2001 -- valence issues including immigration, crime and terrorism had become major items of public concern. Unlike health care, education and various other public services, these newly salient issues were not ones on which Labour held a 'natural' advantage in the public mind. Indeed, as we have seen, public judgements of government performance on some of these issues were decidedly negative. When listening to the electorate, Mr. Blair also must have heard them saying that they were less enthusiastic about him than had been the case four years earlier. Although there were several reasons for their disaffection, an important one was Blair's insistence that Britain join the United States in the what many considered to be an ill-advised war against Iraq. Valence issues and party leader images are key components of our valence politics model of electoral choice, and analyses of the 2005 BES presented above demonstrate that this model contributes strongly to explaining voting behaviour in 2005, just as it did in 2001.

If Blair was indeed paying attention to his constituents on election night, he would have noticed that nearly 40% of them did not bother to vote. In this regard, the electors of Sedgefield were typical of people across the UK. Although turnout was up marginally in 2005, for the second time in a row it had fallen far below what had been the norm for most of the past half-century. Analyses of the 2005 BES data indicate that several theoretically distinct models contribute to understanding why some people, but not others, cast their ballots. However, the strength of the rival models' explanatory contributions vary and, similar to 2001, a person's sense of civic duty was an especially important factor in the skein of forces affecting turnout. Also similar to 2001, younger people had much weaker feelings of civic duty than did older ones. To the extent that this age gradient reflects generational differences, the inference must be that powerful long-term forces

will continue to work to suppress turnout in future elections. Whether short-term forces generated by enhanced party competition and wider ideological/policy divergence in particular elections can restore high levels of turnout remains to be seen. Also, the impact of changes in the method by which ballots are cast is problematic. The mediocre turnout in 2005 suggests that attempts to boost turnout via innovations such as postal voting will not be sufficient, by themselves, to offset the negative long-term trend.

On the day after the election, Tony Blair's political fortunes appeared to be in terminal decline. Labour had won an unprecedented third consecutive victory under his leadership, but the party's (much reduced) parliamentary majority clearly owed much to the biased electoral system. Anti-Blair forces in his party called for Blair to go, and urged him to act 'sooner rather than later'. And, if he would not exit gracefully, the September party conference would be the ideal time to oust him in favour of their hero, Gordon Brown. But, then, the terrorist attack in London on July 7th disrupted the designs of the anti-Blairites and altered the British political landscape.

Much as 9/11 did in the United States, 7/7 sent reverberations through Britain's polity and society that will play out over the months and years ahead. Certainly, 7/7 will reinforce the new valence issue agenda that gives priority to immigration, crime, terrorism and related national security concerns. How this agenda will affect the fortunes of the parties and their leaders in the next general election is presently unknown. In the short run, it is clear that the terrorist attack produced a rally effect that boosted Tony Blair's public standing, and saw off his political enemies within and outside of Labour. But, rallies are temporary and, in any event, it very likely Blair will step down before next general election. If our analysis of forces at work in the 2005 election is any indication, a Labour majority in 2009/10 -- even with Gordon Brown as leader -- is far from a sure thing.

## Endnotes

1. The 2005 BES features pre-campaign (N = 3589) and post-election in-person surveys (N = 4161) of representative national samples of the British electorate. The latter survey includes a panel (N = 2959) of pre-campaign respondents. Fieldwork was conducted by the National Centre for Social Research under the supervision of Project Director Katarina Thomson. A second major survey component is the rolling campaign panel survey (RCPS). The RCPS was conducted with a national sample of the electorate using internet technology. A pre-campaign baseline interview (N = 7793) was conducted in March 2005. Then, daily replicates (N = ~270) of these respondents were contacted every day during the campaign and requested to do a follow-up interview. The campaign wave N = 6068. A third interview with the RCPS panelists (N = 5910) was conducted immediately after the election. Fieldwork was conducted by YouGov, under the supervision of Project Director, Joe Twyman. Major funding for the 2005 BES was provided by the British Economics and Social Research Council (ESRC), with supplementary funding being provided by the Electoral Commission. Questionnaires and data for all components of the 2005 BES are available at the project website: [www.essex.ac.uk/bes](http://www.essex.ac.uk/bes).
2. Poll data show that Labour's vote intention share increased by 4% between February and April 2003. Blair's prime ministerial approval rating increased by fully 16% over this period. Time series analyses of monthly poll data gathered between June 2001 and April 2005 confirm the presence of the large (but temporary) rally effect of the Iraq War on Blair's approval. These analyses also suggest that the smaller effect on Labour vote intentions was indirect, operating via prime ministerial approval. Details are available upon request.
3. The question wording is: 'As far as you're concerned, what is the *single most important issue* facing the country at the present time?' (emphasis in original).
4. The question wording is: 'How well do you think the present government has handled each of the following issues?' The numbers reported in Figure 2 are the percentage of respondents judging that the government has handled a particular issue 'very well' or 'fairly well' minus the percentage judging that the government has handled that issue 'fairly badly' or 'very badly.' The order of presentation of issues was randomized.
5. The question wording is: 'Now, let's think more generally about the party leaders. Using a scale that runs from 0 to 10, where 0 means strongly dislike and 10 means strongly like, how do you feel about [Tony Blair, Michael Howard, Charles Kennedy]. The order of the names of the leaders were randomized.
6. After protracted debate, there is an emerging consensus that campaigns can influence voting behaviour and general election outcomes in Britain. See, e.g., Clarke et al. (2004); Denver and Hands (1997); Norris and Wlezien (2005).
7. BES post-election data suggest that although Brown was more popular than Blair, the differences were not as great as Labour strategists may have thought. In the post-election survey, Brown's average score on the 0-10 feeling thermometer scale was 5.2 compared to Blair's 4.9. Forty-one percent liked Brown more than Blair, 32% like Blair more, and the remainder gave them the same score.
8. Data gathered in monthly YouGov surveys conducted by the authors as part of an NSF-funded study of the dynamics of party support in Britain reveal suggest that opinion on immigration is highly skewed. For example, in the April 2005 survey, fully 78% wanted the number of asylum

seekers reduced, and only 3% wanted it increased. Also, none of the BES respondents citing asylum seekers or immigration as the most important issue, thought that more immigrants should be allowed to enter the country.

9. For example, in the BES post-election face-to-face survey, Blair's mean score on a 0-10 competence scale was 5.8, Howard's score was 4.9, and Kennedy's was 5.3. Blair also consistently ran well ahead of his rivals in responses to a 'best prime minister' question in the authors' monthly YouGov surveys. In the April 2005 survey, 37% selected Blair, 23% chose Howard, and 16%, Kennedy (24% said they 'didn't know').

10. The analyses use data gathered for declared voters in the pre-campaign-post-election face-to-face panel survey (unweighted N = 2184, weighted N = 2109). Parameters are estimated using STATA 9SE's binomial and multinomial logit procedures. Consonant with findings that significant components of the effects of leader images and valence issues occur during election campaigns (Clarke et al., 2004), these variables were measured using variables from the post-election survey. With the exception of two measures of orientations towards the Iraq War (see note 13 below) and the 'crime v. rights of the accused' component of the issue proximity indices (see note 16 below), all other variables were measured using pre-election data. The 'crime v. rights of accused' questions were asked in the post-election survey only.

11. Feelings about the party leaders are measured using the 0-10 thermometer scores described in note 5 above.

12. After asked to designate a 'most important issue,' respondents were asked: 'Which party is best able to handle this issue?' Using responses to this question, 0-1 dummy variables are created for Labour, the Conservatives, the Liberal Democrats, and miscellaneous other parties. Respondents not designating a most important issue, those stating that no party was best able to handle the most important issue, those stating they did not know which party is best, were treated as the reference category.

13. Orientations towards the Iraq War were measured using the results of an exploratory factor analysis of responses to the following questions: (a) 'How well do you think the present government has handled the situation in Iraq?' Responses to (a) were scored 'very well' = 5, 'fairly well' = 4 'neither well nor badly' or 'don't know' = 3, 'fairly badly' = 2, 'very badly' = 1; (b) 'Using a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 means a complete failure and 10 means a complete success, how would you rate the war in Iraq?' (c) Please tell me whether you strongly approve, approve, disapprove, or strongly disapprove of *Britain's involvement* in Iraq?' (emphasis in original). Responses to (c) were scored 'strongly approve' = 5, 'approve' = 4, 'don't know' = 3, 'disapprove' = 2, 'strongly disapprove' = 1. Item (a) is from the pre-election survey, and (b) and (c) are from the post-election survey. The factor analysis yielded one factor with an eigenvalue greater than 1, and a factor score variable was computed.

14. Economic evaluations were measured using the results of an exploratory factor analysis of responses to the following questions: (a) 'How does the financial situation of your household now compare with what it was 12 months ago?' (b) How do you think the general economic situation in this country has changed over the last 12 months?' (c) 'How do you think the financial situation of your household will change over the next 12 months?' (d) 'How do you think the general economic situation in this country will develop over the next 12 months?' Responses were scored: 'lot worse' = -2, 'little worse' = -1, 'don't know' = 0, 'little better' = 1, 'lot better' = 2. The factor analysis yielded one factor with an eigenvalue greater than 1, and a factor score variable was computed.

15. Party identification was measured using responses to the standard BES question: ‘Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat, [Scottish National (Scotland)/Plaid Cymru (Wales)] or what?’ 0-1 dummy variables were created for Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat, and miscellaneous other parties. Respondents stating ‘none,’ ‘no party,’ or ‘don’t know’ were treated as the reference category.

16. Respondents were asked to place themselves and Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties on 0-10 scales for the following dimensions: (a) left-right, (b) tax-spend, (c) EU membership, (d) crime-rights of the accused. The issue-proximity variables were the average absolute distances between the respondent and each of the parties on the four dimensions.

17. Age is age in years; ethnicity is a 0-1 dummy variable with respondents designating themselves as ‘white British’ scored 1, and all others scored 0; gender is scored male = 1, female = 0; region of residence is a series of 0-1 dummy variables with Greater London as the reference category; social class is the six-category Registrar General’s classification. (Whiteley, 2005).

18. Impressive leader effects are not an artifact of using post-election survey measures. Additional analyses show that leader variables from the pre-election survey have smaller, but still sizable, effects on Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat and ‘other party’ voting (details available upon request). Large party leader effects also are reported by Evans and Andersen (2005) in their analysis of vote intentions using the 2005 BES pre-campaign, face-to-face data. An analysis of the 2005 BES RCPS internet survey data provides further evidence that leader images had very substantial effects on party choice in 2005 (Whiteley et al., 2005).

19. The data for the simulations are from the British Parliamentary Constituency Database 1992-2005 ([www.pippanorris.com](http://www.pippanorris.com)).

20. The average electorate in Labour retained seats in 2005 was 66,857, the average electorate for Conservative seats was 72,956 and for Liberal Democrat seats 69,431.

21. The question is: ‘How interested were you in the general election that was held on May 5th this year?’ Responses were scored: ‘very interested’ = 4, ‘somewhat interested’ = 3, ‘not very interested’ = 1, ‘not all interested’ or ‘don’t know’ = 1.

22. Political knowledge was measured as the number of correct answers to the following ‘true-false’ statements: (a) ‘Polling stations close at 10 pm on election day,’ (b) ‘The Liberal Democrats favour a system of proportional representation for Westminster elections,’ (c) ‘The minimum voting age is 16,’ (d) ‘The standard rate of income tax payable is 26 p in the pound,’ (e) ‘The Chancellor of the Exchequer is responsible for setting interest rates in the UK,’ (f) ‘Labour wants university students to pay a fee of up to 3,000 each year for their education,’ (g) ‘The Conservative Party favours imposing strict limits on the number of asylum-seekers who can enter Britain each year,’ (h) ‘Any registered voter can obtain a postal vote if they want one – by ringing their local council and asking for a postal vote.’ The order in which (a) – (f) was asked was randomized.

23. Party mobilization was measured using four dichotomous items (scored 0-1) concerning whether: (a) someone tried to convince the respondent to vote for a party; (b) a party canvasser visited the respondent’s home and talked to him/her; (c) someone from a party telephoned the respondent to ask them how they would vote; (d) someone from a party contacted the respondent

on election day to see if they had voted or intended to vote. The party mobilization variable is sum of (a) – (d).

24. The relative deprivation variable was measured using: (a) ‘The government generally treats people like me fairly,’ (b) ‘There is often a big gap between what people like me expect out of life and what we actually get.’ Responses to (a) are scored: ‘strongly agree’ = 1, ‘agree’ = 2, ‘neither agree nor disagree’ or ‘don’t know’ = 3, ‘disagree’ = 4, ‘strongly disagree’ = 5. Responses to (b) are scored from ‘strongly agree’ = 5 to ‘strongly disagree’ = 1. The relative deprivation variable is the sum of (a) and (b).

25. For example, suppose that person A rates the Conservatives at 9, Labour at 3 and the Liberal Democrats at 5. The absolute gaps between these three numbers are  $9-3 = 6$  for the Conservative/Labour comparison;  $9-5 = 4$  for the Conservative/Liberal Democrat comparison; and  $5-3 = 2$  for the Liberal Democrat/Labour comparison. The average differential benefits gap for person A is  $(6+4+2)/3 = 4$ . Now consider person B, who dislikes all three parties and rates them all the same, at 2. Each pair-wise party comparison is now  $(2-2 = 0)$  and the average differential benefits gap is 0.

26. The question is: ‘On a scale from 0 to 10 where 10 means a great deal of influence and 0 means no influence, how much influence do *you* have on politics and public affairs?’ (emphasis in original). Missing data were coded to the mean of the response distribution.

27. Responses to the following ‘agree-disagree’ statements were used to measure the perceived personal benefits of voting: (a) ‘Being active in politics is a good way to get benefits for me and my family,’ (b) ‘I feel a sense of satisfaction when I vote,’ (c) ‘I would feel very guilty if I didn’t vote in a general election.’ Responses are scored: ‘strongly agree’ = 5, ‘agree’ = 4, ‘neither agree nor disagree’ or ‘don’t know’ = 3, ‘disagree’ = 2, ‘strongly disagree’ = 1.

28. Democracy dissatisfaction was measured using responses to the question: ‘On the whole, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way that democracy works in this country?’ Responses were scored: ‘very dissatisfied’ = 5, ‘a little dissatisfied’ = 4, ‘don’t know’ = 3, ‘fairly satisfied’ = 2, ‘very satisfied’ = 1.

29. The statements are: (a) ‘Most of my family and friends think that voting is a waste of time,’ and (b) ‘Most people around here usually vote in general elections.’ Responses to (a) were scored: ‘strongly agree’ = 1, ‘agree’ = 2, ‘neither agree nor disagree’ or ‘don’t know’ = 3, ‘disagree’ = 4, ‘strongly disagree’ = 5. Responses to (b) are scored: ‘strongly agree’ = 5, ‘agree’ = 4, ‘neither agree nor disagree’ or ‘don’t know’ = 3, ‘disagree’ = 2, ‘strongly disagree’ = 1.

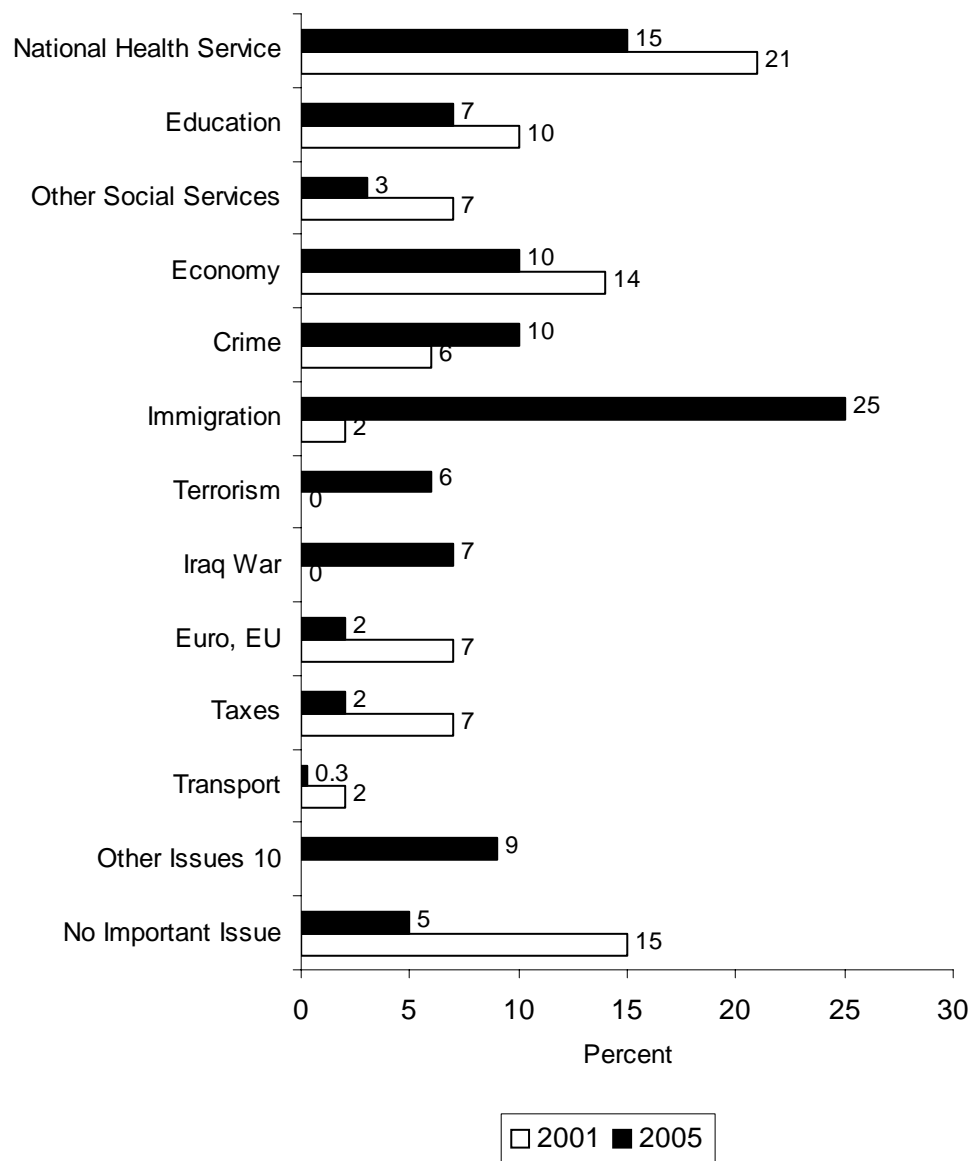
30. The questions are: (a) ‘It is every citizen’s duty to vote in an election,’ (b) I would be *seriously* neglecting my duty as a citizen if I didn’t vote’ (emphasis in original). Responses to (a) and (b) were scored: ‘strongly agree’ = 5, ‘agree’ = 4, ‘neither agree nor disagree’ or ‘don’t know’ = 3, ‘disagree’ = 2, ‘strongly disagree’ = 1.

31. Two questions with 0-10 scales were used: (a) ‘On balance, would you say that most people can’t be trusted or that most people can be trusted?’ End-points on the scale are: 0 ‘most people can’t be trusted’ and 10 ‘most people can be trusted.’ (b) ‘Do you think that most people you come into contact with would try to take advantage of you if they got the chance or would they try to be fair?’ End-points on the scale are: 0 ‘try to take advantage’ and 10 ‘try to be fair’. The social trust variable is the average score on (a) and (b).

32. Disability status was scored: have disability = 1, do not have disability = 0. For country of residence Scotland and Wales are 0-1 dummy variables, with England as the reference category. Measures of other socio-demographics are described in note 17 above.

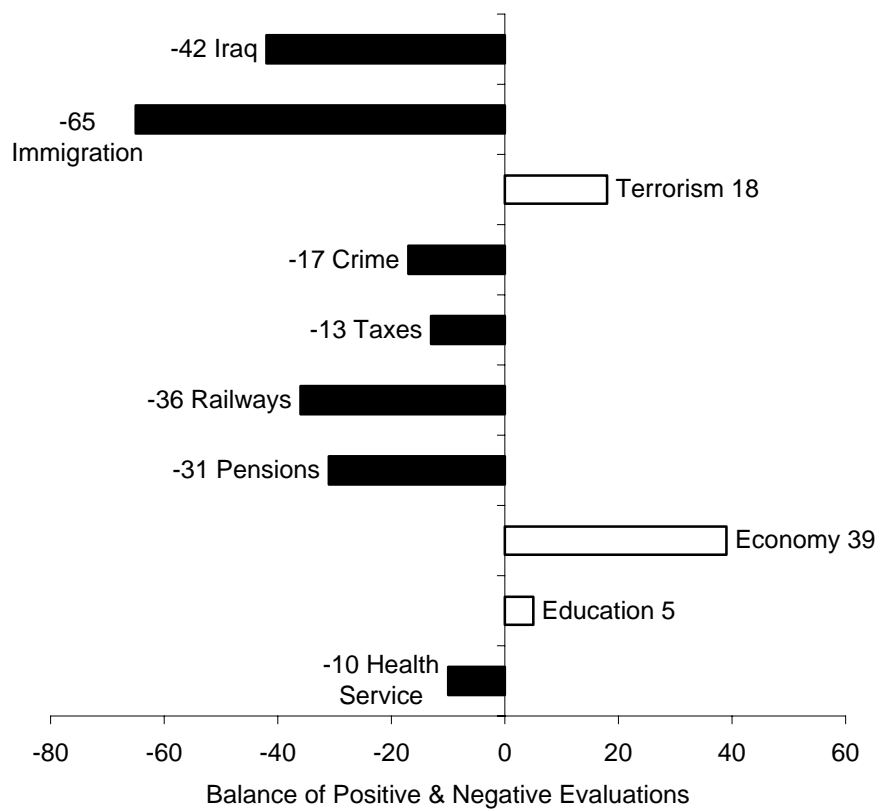
33. The authors thank Judith Bara and Ian Budge for providing the 2005 Manifestos data on parties' positions on the summary left-right dimension.

**Figure 1. Most Important Issues, 2001 and 2005 BES Pre-Election Surveys**



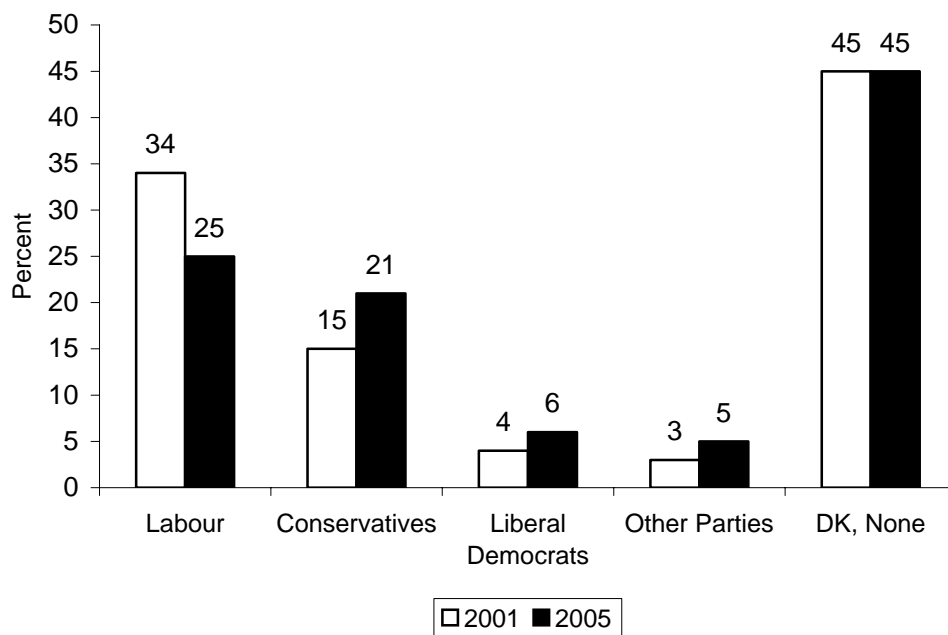
Source: 2001 and 2005 BES pre-election face-to-face surveys.

**Figure 2. Balance of Positive and Negative Evaluations of Government Performance on Various Issues, 2005 BES Pre-Election Survey**



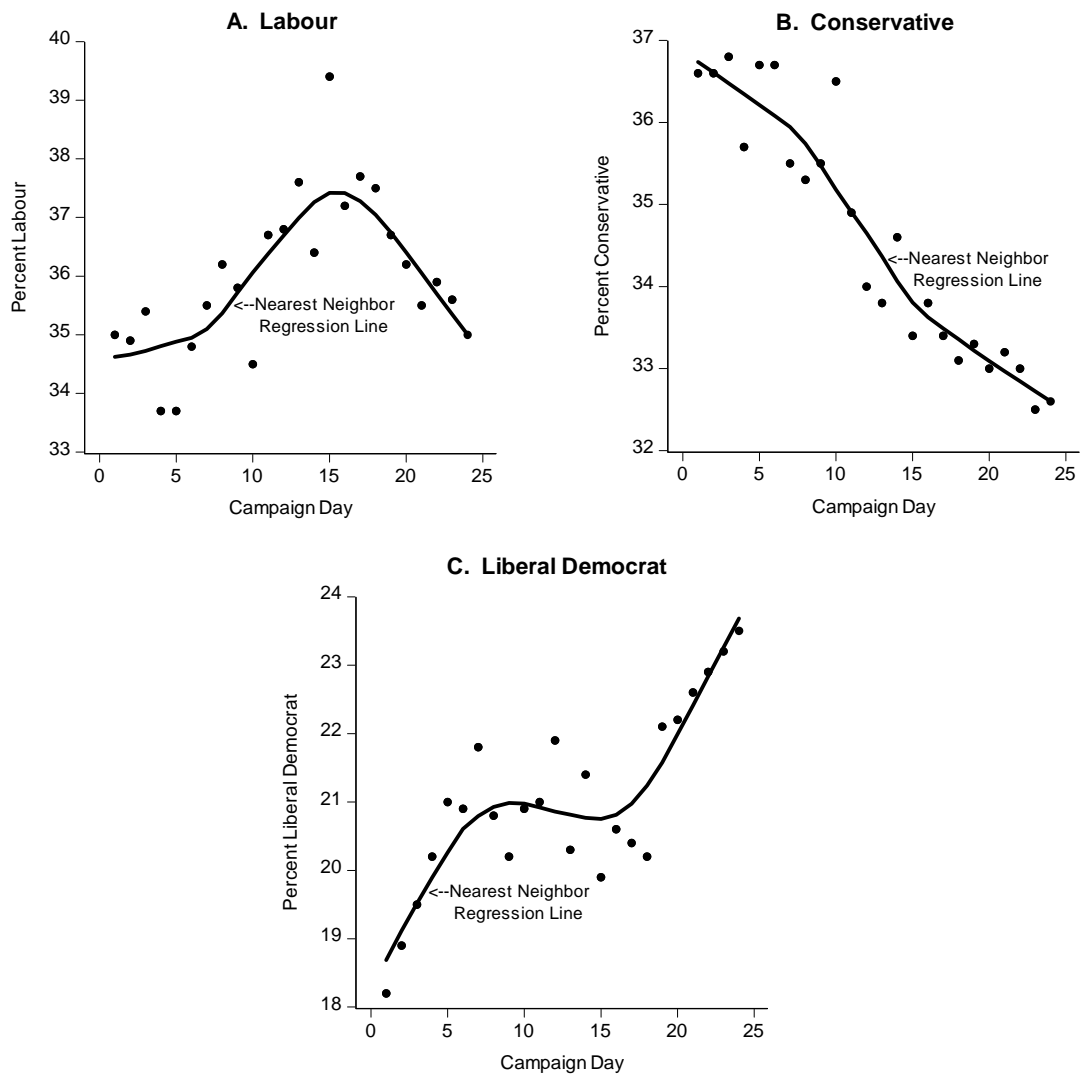
Source: 2005 BES pre-election face-to-face survey.

**Figure 3. Party Best Able to Handle Most Important Issue, 2001 and 2005  
BES Pre-Election Surveys**



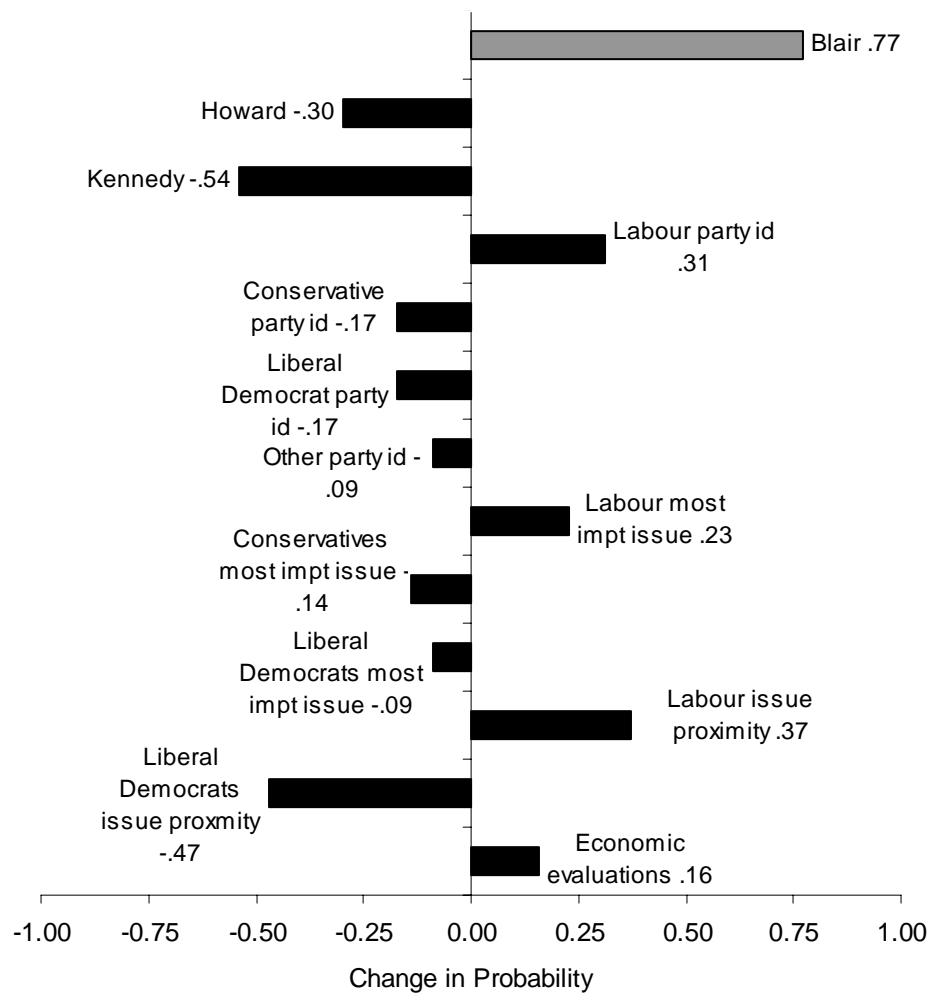
Source: 2001 and 2005 BES face-to-face surveys.

**Figure 4. Trends in Party Support During the 2005 British General Election Campaign**



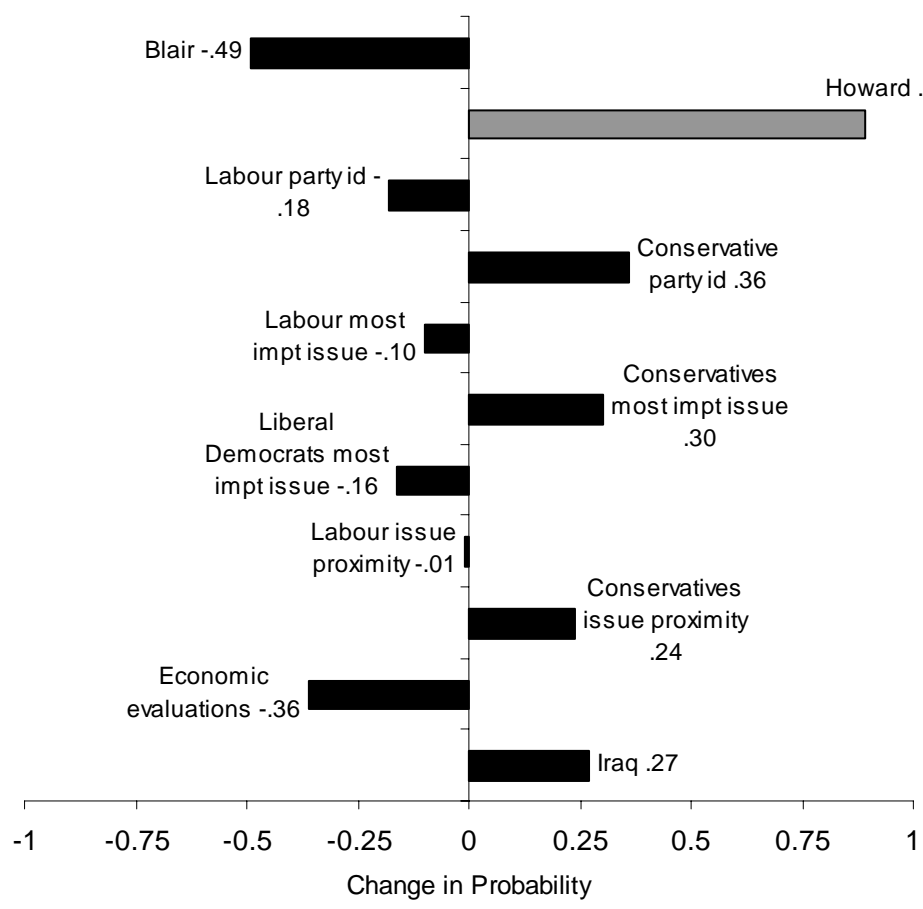
Source: 2005 BES Rolling Campaign Panel Survey.

**Figure 5. Factors Affecting the Probability of Voting Labour in the 2005 General Election**



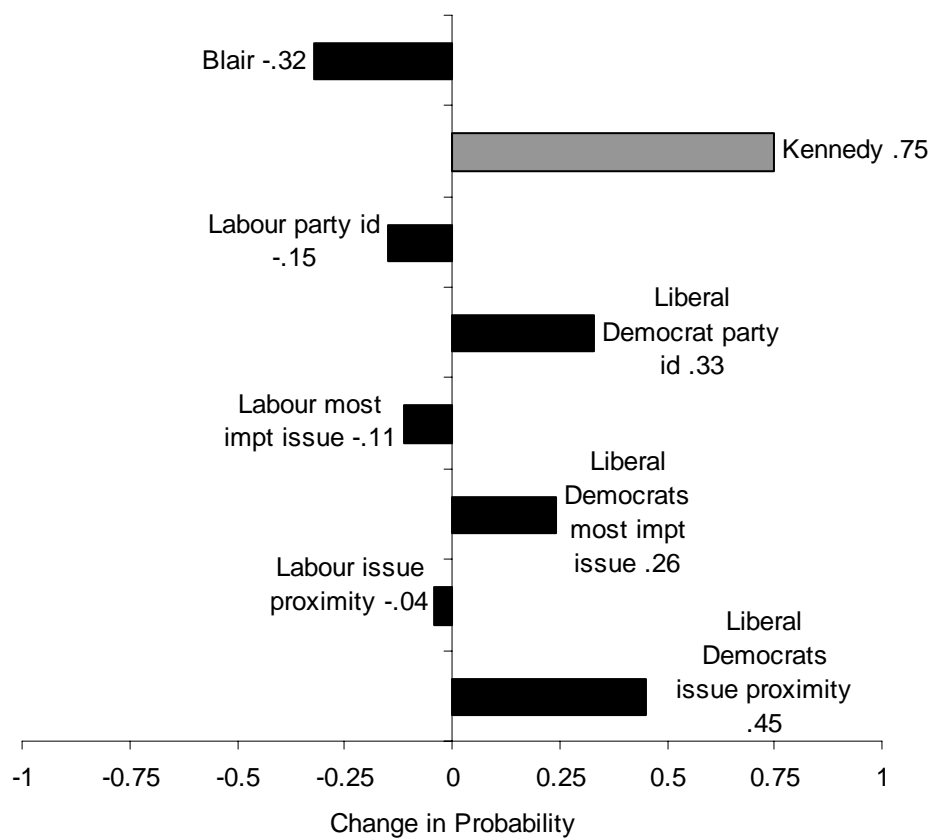
Source: 2005 BES pre-post-election face-to-face panel survey.

**Figure 6. Factors Affecting the Probability of Voting Conservative in the 2005 General Election**



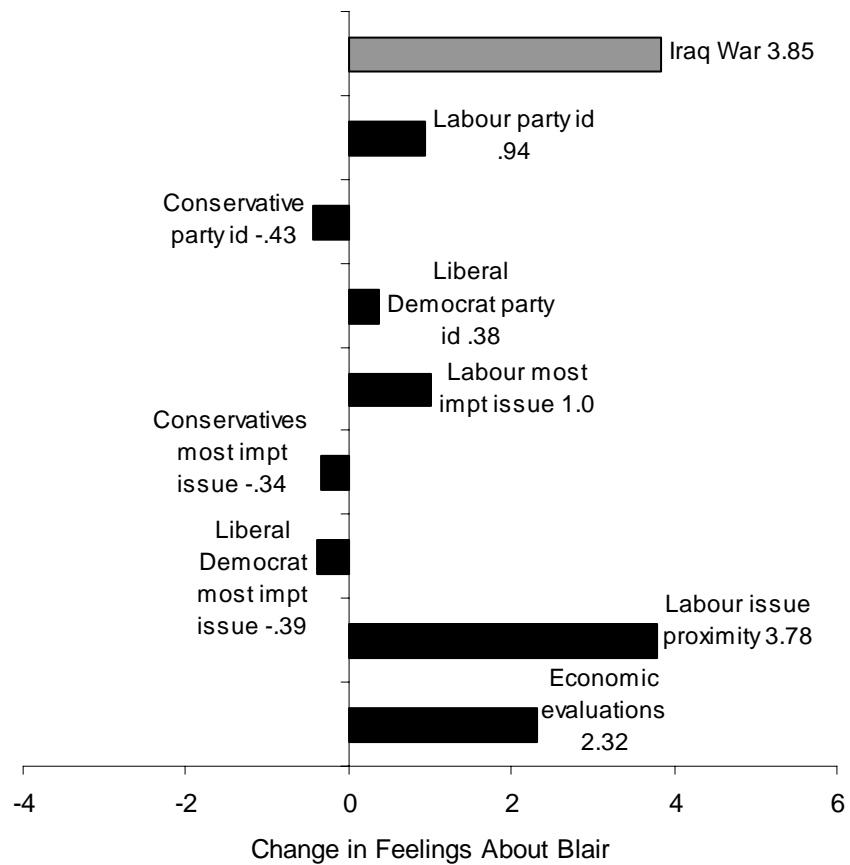
Source: 2005 BES pre-post-election face-to-face panel survey.

**Figure 7. Factors Affecting the Probability of Voting Liberal Democrat in the 2005 General Election**



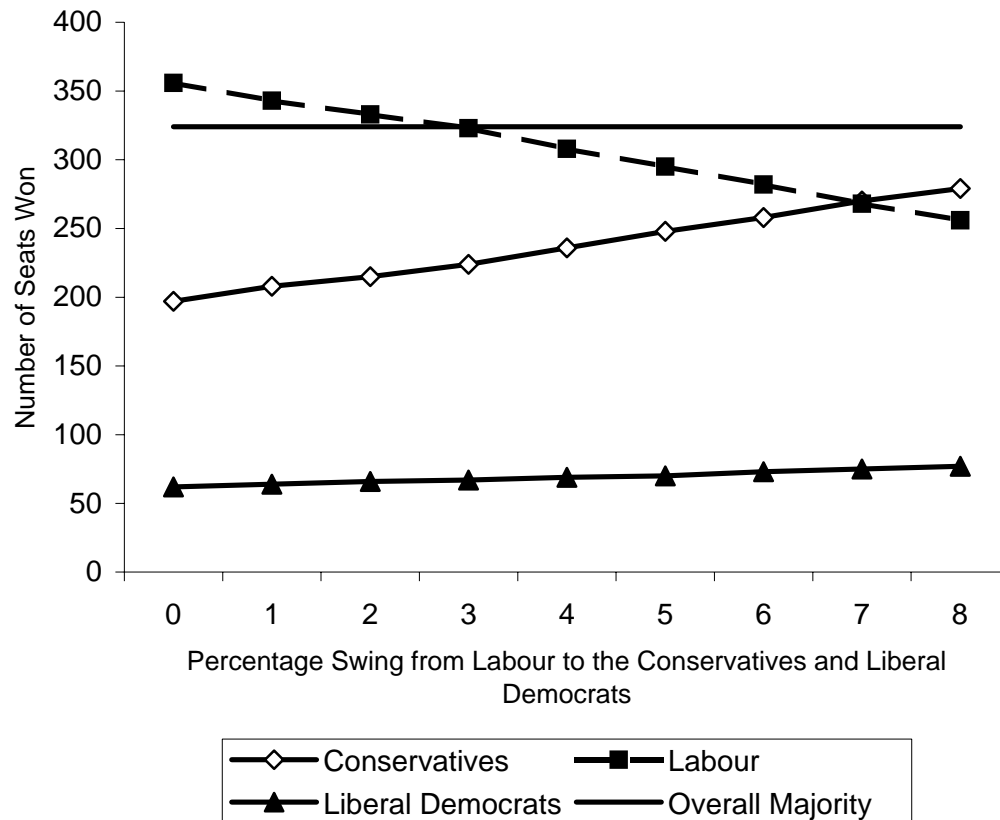
Source: 2005 BES pre-post-election face-to-face panel survey.

**Figure 8. Effects of Significant Predictors on Feelings About Tony Blair**

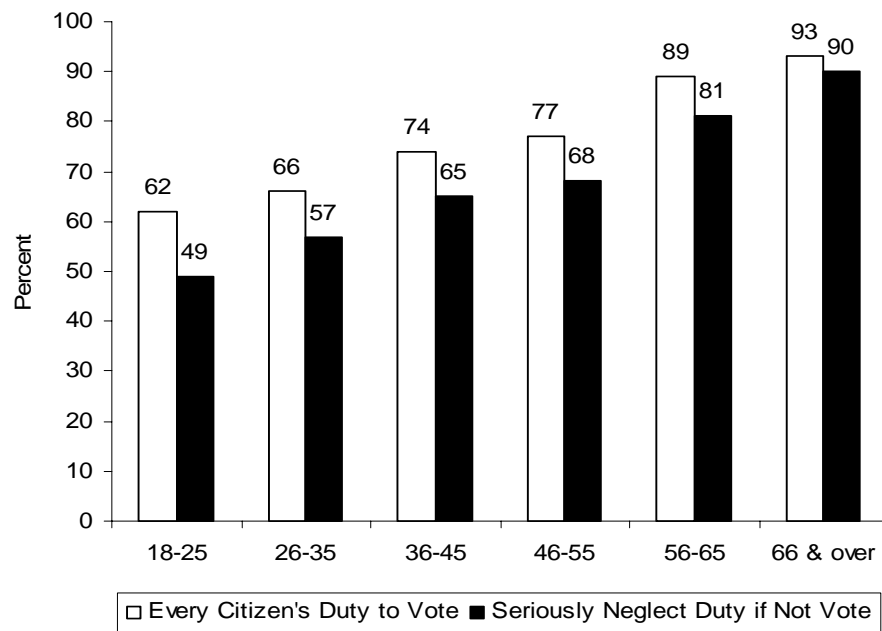


Source: 2005 BES pre-post-election face-to-face panel survey.

**Figure 9. Forecast Number of Seats in 2009/10 with the Same Shares of Swing from Labour to the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats as in 2005**



Source: The British Parliamentary Constituency Database, 1992-2005.

**Figure 10. Civic Duty by Age Group, 2005**

Source: 2005 BES post-election face-to-face survey

Table 1. Binomial and Multinomial Logit Models† of Voting in the 2005 General Election, Composite Specification

Parties	Panel A		Panel B					
	Labour		Conservative		Vote Liberal		Other Democrat	
	B	s.e.	B	s.e.	B	s.e.	B	s.e.
<i>Predictor Variables</i>								
Age	-0.02***	.005	0.02***	.01	0.01**	.00	0.01	.01
Ethnicity	-0.58*	.29	0.04	.42	0.62*	.32	3.20**	1.18
Gender	-0.34*	.15	-0.20	.22	0.34*	.17	0.75**	.26
Region‡:								
South East	0.00	.29	0.54	.45	0.49	.30	-1.10*	.60
South West	0.13	.36	0.28	.55	0.44	.37	-1.53*	.79
Midlands	0.30	.30	0.23	.45	-0.35	.32	0.19	.56
North	0.25	.30	0.55	.47	-0.02	.31	0.08	.54
Wales	-0.21	.41	0.19	.62	0.24	.44	1.22*	.61
Scotland	-0.12	.35	0.29	.56	0.02	.37	1.25*	.55
Social Class	-0.29*	.17	0.46*	.23	0.21	.19	-0.07	.27
Party Identification:								
Conservative	-1.25***	.26	1.74***	.31	0.25	.32	0.55	.44
Labour	1.33***	.21	-2.09***	.36	-1.18***	.23	-0.60	.38
Liberal-Democrat	-1.21***	.26	-0.17	.41	1.46***	.27	0.96*	.48
Other Party	-0.57*	.33	0.22	.50	0.06	.36	2.40***	.44
Party Leader Affect:								
Blair	0.48***	.04	-0.60***	.06	-0.46***	.05	-0.45***	.07
Howard	-0.17***	.04	0.68***	.07	-0.02	.05	0.22***	.07
Kennedy	-0.29***	.05	0.05	.07	0.48***	.05	-0.03	.07
Party Best on Most								
Important Issue:								
Conservative	-1.03***	.27	1.53***	.33	0.13	.34	0.70*	.40
Labour	1.04***	.18	-1.17***	.29	-0.91***	.20	-0.94**	.34
Liberal-Democrat	-0.63*	.33	-1.29*	.55	0.78**	.33	-0.41	.56
Other Party	-0.09	.44	-0.86	.64	-0.18	.49	1.10*	.55
Party-Issue Proximity:								
Conservative	-0.02	.02	0.07**	.03	0.03	.02	0.04	.03
Labour	0.08***	.02	-0.06*	.03	-0.06**	.02	-0.15***	.03
Liberal-Democrat	-0.08***	.02	0.01	.03	0.11***	.03	-0.09*	.04
Economic Evaluations	0.09*	.08	-0.37***	.12	-0.02	.10	0.05	.14
Iraq Evaluations	-0.07	.09	0.35**	.13	-0.02	.10	0.05	.15
Constant	0.60	.49	-2.42***	.72	-0.90	.56	-4.31***	1.38
McKelvey Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> = .76					McKelvey Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> = undefined			
McFadden Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> = .58					McFadden Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> = .58			
% correctly classified = 87.8					% correctly classified = 81.7			
Lambda = .69					Lambda = .70			

\*\*\*-  $p < .001$ ; \*\* -  $p \leq .01$ ; \* -  $p \leq .05$ ; one-tailed test.  
Weighted N = 2109.

Note: - The results of two analyses are presented: Panel A: binomial logit analysis of voting for Labour (the governing party) v. voting for any of the opposition parties; Panel B multinomial logit analysis of Conservative, Liberal Democrat and other party voting, with Labour voting as the voting reference category.

‡ - Greater London is the region reference category.

Source: 2005 BES pre-post-election panel survey.

Table 2. Rival Models of Electoral Choice

*A. Labour v. All Opposition Parties*

<i>Model</i>	<u>McKelvey R<sup>2</sup></u>	<u>McFadden R<sup>2</sup></u>	<u>AIC†</u>
Social Class	.02	.02	2791.16
All Demographics	.06	.04	2753.07
Economic Evaluations	.13	.07	2633.38
Issue Proximities	.39	.24	2271.23
Most Important Issue	.40	.27	2079.75
Party Identification	.48	.39	1794.87
Leader Images	.65	.40	1692.95
Composite Model	.76	.58	1254.51

*B. Conservative, Liberal Democrat and Other Party Voting With Labour Voting as the Reference Category*

<i>Model</i>	<u>McFadden R<sup>2</sup></u>	<u>AIC†</u>
Social Class	.01	5145.26
All Demographics	.06	4920.48
Economic Evaluations	.05	4936.48
Issue Proximities	.22	4062.05
Most Important Issue	.24	3954.96
Party Identification	.36	3361.23
Leader Images	.39	3206.69
Composite Model	.58	2333.19

† - Akaike Information Criterion; smaller values indicate better model performance.

Table 3. Composite Model of Turnout in the 2005 General Election

<i>Predictor Variables</i>	<u>B</u>	<u>s.e.</u>	<u>Range</u>	<u>Change in Probability</u>
<u>General Incentives</u>				
Influence-Discounted Benefits	.03***	.01	0-73	.21
Costs	-.11***	.03	2-10	-.14
Personal Benefits	.14***	.03	3-15	.30
Democracy dissatisfaction	-.10**	.04	1-5	-.07
Social Norms	.14***	.04	2-10	.20
Civic Duty	.30***	.03	2-10	.47
<u>Cognitive Engagement</u>				
Election Interest	.50***	.06	1-4	.27
Political Knowledge	.15***	.03	0-8	.23
<u>Civic Voluntarism</u>				
Education	.04	.03	1-6	.04
Social Class	.08*	.04	1-6	.06
Party Mobilisation	.31***	.08	0-3	.12
<u>Equity-Fairness</u>				
Relative Deprivation	.09**	.03	2-10	.13
<u>Social Capital</u>				
Social Trust	.02	.03	0-10	.04
<u>Socio-Demographics</u>				
Age	.02***	.00	18-95	.27
Disability (Disabled)	-.32**	.12	0-1	-.06
Ethnicity (White British)	.62***	.16	0-1	.11
Gender (Male)	-.22*	.09	0-1	-.03
Region: Scotland	.01	.15	0-1	.00
Wales	.26	.20	0-1	.03
Constant	-7.85***	.57		

McKelvey Pseudo  $R^2 = .49$

McFadden Pseudo  $R^2 = .33$

% correctly classified = 83.1

Lambda = .39

\*\*\* -  $p \leq .001$ ; \*\* -  $p \leq .01$ ; \* -  $p \leq .05$ ; one-tailed test.

N = 4157

Source: 2005 BES post-election cross-sectional survey.

Table 4. Effects of Inter-Party Competition and Ideological Proximity on Turnout in 1945-2005 General Elections

A. Linear Trend Models

<i>Predictor Variables</i>	<u>Model A</u>		<u>Model B</u>		<u>Model C</u>	
	<u>B</u>	<u>s.e.</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>s.e.</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>s.e.</u>
Constant	82.08***	2.20	64.40***	7.72	63.88***	6.88
Party Competition	-0.69*	0.37	x	x	x	x
Ideological Proximity	x	x	2.67**	1.12	x	x
Competition x Proximity Interaction	x	x	x	x	0.030**	0.01
Time (Linear Trend)	-0.80***	0.22	-0.80***	0.20	-0.79***	0.20
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.43		.58		.62	
D.W.	1.35		1.89		1.88	

B. Quadratic Trend Models

<i>Predictor Variables</i>	<u>Model D</u>		<u>Model E</u>		<u>Model F</u>	
	<u>B</u>	<u>s.e.</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>s.e.</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>s.e.</u>
Constant	79.99***	1.39	63.85***	6.95	62.89***	6.03
Party Competition	-0.74**	0.32	x	x	x	x
Ideological Proximity	x	x	2.40**	1.03	x	x
Competition x Proximity Interaction	x	x	x	x	0.028**	0.01
Time (Quadratic Trend)	-0.05***	0.01	-0.05***	0.01	-0.05***	0.01
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.65		.65		.69	
D.W.	1.75		2.14		2.22	

\*\*\* -  $p \leq .001$ ; \*\* -  $p \leq .01$ ; \* -  $p \leq .05$ ;

x - variable not included in model.

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