

SCOTTISH ELECTIONS 3 MAY 2007 REJECTED BALLOT PAPER ANALYSIS

Glasgow Scottish Parliamentary Constituencies and Glasgow City Council Wards

There are ten constituencies in the Glasgow Electoral Region. This analysis uses data for the nine constituencies that cover almost the same electorate as the 21 wards of the Glasgow Local Government Area, i.e. excluding the Rutherglen constituency.

SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS

The table below shows the numbers of valid votes, rejected ballot papers, total ballot papers and percentage rejected ballot papers for the regional votes and the constituency votes, with the constituencies sorted in ascending order of percentage rejected regional ballot papers.

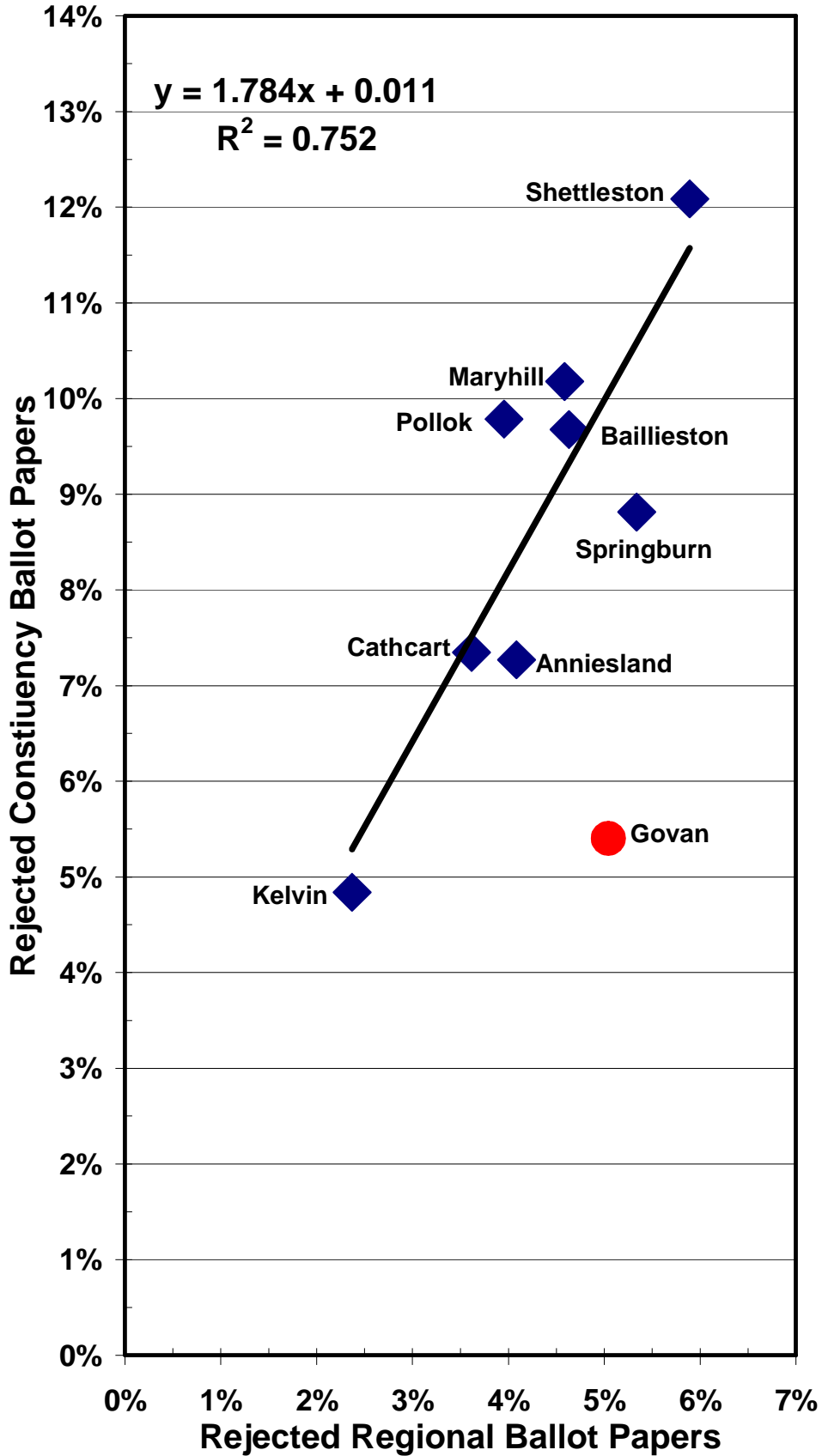
Glasgow Constituency	Regional Votes				Constituency Votes			
	Valid votes	Rejected papers	Total	Percentage Rejected	Valid votes	Rejected papers	Total	Percentage Rejected
Kelvin	24,110	585	24,695	2.4%	23,500	1,195	24,695	4.8%
Cathcart	22,529	845	23,374	3.6%	21,657	1,717	23,374	7.3%
Pollok	20,671	851	21,522	4.0%	19,416	2,106	21,522	9.8%
Anniesland	22,900	975	23,875	4.1%	22,139	1,736	23,875	7.3%
Maryhill	17,595	846	18,441	4.6%	16,564	1,877	18,441	10.2%
Baillieston	18,236	886	19,122	4.6%	17,272	1,850	19,122	9.7%
Govan	21,554	1,187	22,741	5.2%	21,521	1,220	22,741	5.4%
Springburn	18,283	1,031	19,314	5.3%	17,612	1,702	19,314	8.8%
Shettleston	15,844	992	16,836	5.9%	14,801	2,035	16,836	12.1%
Total or Average	181,722	8,198	189,920	4.3%	174,482	15,438	189,920	8.1%

There is a strong association between the percentage constituency ballot papers rejected and the percentage regional ballot papers rejected, as may be seen from the chart on the next page. The simple linear regression shown on the chart has been fitted excluding the data for the Govan constituency. The Govan constituency is very clearly an 'outlier' from the relationship for the other eight constituencies. Similar 'outliers' occurred in four of the other Electoral Regions.

The regression on percentages of rejected regional ballot papers accounts for 75% of the variation observed in the percentages of rejected constituency ballot papers. The regression value of 1.784 means that there were, on average in the eight constituencies, 1.78% rejected constituency ballot papers for every 1% rejected regional ballot papers.

Four of the other Electoral Regions showed similar strong positive relationships between the percentage of rejected constituency ballot papers and the percentage rejected regional ballot papers, with regression coefficients of 1.42, 1.68, 1.78 and 2.76. In one Electoral Region the regression coefficient was 0.92, near to 1 : 1. In the other two Electoral Regions the regression coefficients were negative (-0.23 and -0.40), indicating that the predicted percentage of rejected constituency ballot papers fell as the percentage of rejected regional ballot papers rose across the constituencies within those regions.

Glasgow SP Constituencies 2007 Percentage Rejected Ballot Papers



The most common single cause of rejection of the Scottish Parliament ballot papers seen at the Glasgow Counting Centre was two Xs in the regional vote column and no mark at all in the constituency vote column (personal communication from an Accredited Observer). Such markings would cause both ballot papers on the combined ballot sheet to be rejected, giving rise to a 1 : 1 ratio for the percentages of rejected regional and constituency ballot papers. But the observed ratio for eight of the nine constituencies was 1 : 1.78, indicating that more constituency ballot papers were rejected than regional ballot papers.

Unfortunately the official returns on rejected ballot papers do not provide the information that would be needed to explore these patterns fully. The official returns do not distinguish between ballot papers that were “unmarked” and those that were “void for uncertainty”. Nor do they provide any information to distinguish between ballot sheets on which both ballot papers were rejected and those ballot sheets on which only one ballot paper was rejected. It is also possible that there may be some inconsistencies in the classification of reasons for rejection by different Returning Officers adjudicating on different constituencies.

It is important to recognise that by no means all of the papers rejected because they were “unmarked” indicate mistakes made by voters. In these elections, as in previous Scottish Parliament elections, a small but significant number of voters deliberately did not mark either the regional vote or the constituency vote. This is most likely to have been done when the voter’s favoured party contested the region but not the constituency.

The following brief analysis is based on the data in the return of Rejected Ballot Papers prepared by the Glasgow Regional Returning Officer. In the eight constituencies included in the regression calculation, 30% of the rejected regional ballot papers were rejected as “voting for more than one candidate” (range 26% to 43%), while nearly 70% were rejected as “unmarked or void for uncertainty” (range 57% to 74%), with only fractions of a percent rejected for other reasons. For the constituency ballot papers, only 2% were rejected as “voting for more than one candidate” (range 1.1% to 3.2%), while nearly 98% were rejected as “unmarked or void for uncertainty” (range 97% to 99%), again with only fractions of a percent rejected for other reasons.

Govan Constituency

If the relationship between percentage constituency ballot papers rejected and percentage regional ballot papers rejected for the Govan constituency had been the same as for the other eight constituencies, the percentage of constituency ballot papers rejected would have been 10.9% and not the 5.4% recorded. Several factors appear to have been involved in contributing to the different relationship between the percentage of rejected regional ballot papers and the percentage of rejected constituency ballot papers in the Govan constituency and in the other eight constituencies.

The percentage of rejected regional ballot papers in the Govan constituency was the third highest of the nine constituencies. However, the percentage of the rejected regional ballot papers rejected as “voting for more than one candidate” was the lowest at 20% (8-constituency average = 32%), while the percentage of the rejected regional ballot papers rejected as “unmarked or void for uncertainty” was the highest at 80% (8-constituency average = 68%). For the constituency ballot papers the reverse was observed.

The percentage of rejected constituency ballot papers in the Govan constituency was the second lowest of the nine constituencies. The percentage of the rejected constituency ballot papers rejected as “voting for more than one candidate” was the highest at 4.4% (8-constituency average = 2.0%), while the percentage of the rejected constituency ballot papers rejected as “unmarked or void for uncertainty” was the lowest at 95% (8-constituency average = 98%).

It seems likely that a political party factor also contributed to the different pattern observed in the Govan constituency. The turnout in the Govan constituency was unexceptional at 48.0%, compared to the nine-constituency average of 44.4% (range 38.0% to 49.4%). The percentage of regional votes for parties that were not contesting the constituency was the highest of the nine constituencies, at 22.9%, but very similar to the percentages in three of the other constituencies (22.7%, 22.2%, 22.0%).

However, the percentage of the regional votes cast for the Scottish National Party (SNP) at 31.3% was notably higher than for any other constituency (8-constituency average 26.9%). Also, the constituency vote for the SNP as a percentage of the regional vote for the SNP was very much higher in the Govan constituency than in any other constituency: 134% compared with the 8-constituency average of 106% (range 99% to 113%).

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

The average percentage of rejected ballot papers for the elections in the 21 wards within the Glasgow LGA was 2.3%, ranging from 1.5% to 4.2%. In seven wards the percentage of rejected ballot papers was less than 2.0%; above 2.0% but less than 3.0% in ten wards; above 3.0% but less than 4.0% in two wards; and over 4.0% in two wards.

The results for the Local Government wards have been compared with those for the corresponding Scottish Parliament constituencies in two ways. The following table shows the nine Glasgow constituencies and the wards that lie half or more within each. NB No attempt should be made to sum or average the ward data in this table.

Scottish Parliament Elections			Glasgow City Council Elections	
Glasgow Constituency	Rejected ballot papers Regional votes	Rejected ballot papers Constituency votes	Ward	Rejected ballot papers
Anniesland	4.1%	7.3%	Garscadden/Scotstounhill	2.1%
			Drumchapel/Anniesland	2.4%
Baillieston	4.6%	9.7%	Shettleston	2.1%
			Baillieston	2.7%
			North East	3.3%
Cathcart	3.6%	7.3%	Langside	1.6%
			Newlands/Aldburn	1.9%
			Linn	2.2%
Govan	5.2%	5.4%	Pollokshields	1.5%
			Govan	2.6%
Kelvin	2.4%	4.8%	Partick West	1.5%
			Hillhead	1.6%
			Anderston/City	1.8%
Maryhill	4.6%	10.2%	Maryhill/Kelvin	1.8%
			Canal	3.0%
Pollok	4.0%	9.8%	Craigton	2.2%
			Greater Pollok	2.7%
Shettleston	5.9%	12.1%	Shettleston	2.1%
			Southside Central	2.6%
			Calton	4.0%
Springburn	5.3%	8.8%	East Centre	3.1%
			Springburn	4.2%

The data for the Local Government ballot papers and votes have been re-allocated to Scottish Parliament constituencies in proportion to the geographical area of each ward lying within each constituency (assessed by eye on a map overlay to the nearest one-tenth of the ward area). This must be an approximation because the electorate is not uniformly distributed across any ward, but concentrated in areas of housing. A more robust analysis would require access to data at Polling Station level, which would also allow for differential turnout. In the following table the constituencies are listed in ascending order of percentage rejected regional ballot papers.

The Shettleston constituency had both the highest percentage of rejected regional ballot papers (5.9%) and the highest percentage of rejected constituency ballot papers (12.1%). The corresponding percentage of rejected local government ballot papers was only 2.9%, which was not the highest among the nine constituency areas.

In the Maryhill constituency the percentage of rejected constituency ballot papers was the second highest at 10.2%, but the corresponding percentage of rejected local government ballot papers was only 2.2%, below the average for the whole LGA.

Glasgow Constituency	Total Ballot Papers		Regional vote	Valid Votes		Rejected Ballot Papers			Percentage Rejected Ballot Papers		
	SP Election	LG Election		Constituency vote	LG vote	Regional vote	Constituency vote	LG vote	Regional vote	Constituency vote	LG vote
Kelvin	24,695	23,384	24,110	23,500	22,985	585	1,195	399	2.4%	4.8%	1.7%
Cathcart	23,374	19,886	22,529	21,657	19,494	845	1,717	391	3.6%	7.3%	2.0%
Pollok	21,522	22,967	20,671	19,416	22,421	851	2,106	547	4.0%	9.8%	2.4%
Annie'sland	23,875	23,349	22,900	22,139	22,870	975	1,736	479	4.1%	7.3%	2.1%
Maryhill	18,441	20,602	17,595	16,564	20,138	846	1,877	463	4.6%	10.2%	2.2%
Baillieston	19,122	22,222	18,236	17,272	21,611	886	1,850	611	4.6%	9.7%	2.7%
Govan	22,741	23,991	21,554	21,521	23,508	1,187	1,220	483	5.2%	5.4%	2.0%
Springburn	19,314	16,598	18,283	17,612	16,018	1,031	1,702	580	5.3%	8.8%	3.5%
Shettleston	16,836	16,192	15,844	14,801	15,717	992	2,035	475	5.9%	12.1%	2.9%
Total or Average	189,920	189,191	181,722	174,482	184,762	8,198	15,438	4,428	4.3%	8.1%	2.3%

The data were kindly provided by the Glasgow Elections Office but the author is solely responsible for the analyses and comments.