

A 'WAKE UP!' CALL TO THE PARTIES? THE RESULTS OF THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS 2003

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The second round of elections to the Scottish Parliament took place on May 1st 2003. Over the course of the previous four years the path of the Parliament elected in 1999 had been far from smooth. Initially, there were high hopes – probably unrealistically high – about what the Parliament could and would achieve but a sense of disillusion gradually set in among the electorate. A critical, not to say carping, Scottish press questioned the calibre of the general run of elected members (MSPs); the Parliament was alleged to be devoting far too much attention to issues of peripheral interest to most people, such as breast feeding in public, the smacking of children by parents and fox hunting; the slow progress and spiralling costs of the new Parliament building were widely thought to be a scandal. It did not help matters that over the four years Scotland had three different First Ministers. The widely admired Donald Dewar died in October 2000; his replacement Henry McLeish resigned under cloud in November 2001 and it was Jack McConnell who led Labour into the 2003 election (see Mitchell 2003).

In these circumstances, there were fears that in the election the electors would demonstrate their dissatisfaction by staying at home in droves. Another possibility was that significant numbers would turn to minor parties and protest candidates. Between January and April 2003, the System Three polls in **The Herald** consistently gave the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP), a Trotskyist party led by the outspoken and high-profile MSP Tommy Sheridan, between four and six per cent of the constituency votes and between seven and ten per cent of the list votes. Moreover, the SSP had candidates in all but three of the 73 constituencies as compared with 18 in

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1999. The same polls suggested that the Green Party would improve its position – the party's share of list voting intentions varied between five and seven per cent, as compared with the 3.6 per cent achieved in 1999. Nonetheless, pre-election polls were unanimous in finding that Labour was set to retain its pre-eminent position in Scotland, albeit with a reduced share of the vote. In advance of the election there seemed little doubt that the electoral system would ensure that the Labour-Liberal Democrat coalition that had governed Scotland for the first four years of devolution would be safely returned.

In fact, the election produced a number of surprises and the outcome was closer than expected. Table 1 shows the overall results. Despite winning only just over a third of the constituency votes (34.6 per cent) Labour would have won a first-past-the-post election handsomely, taking 46 of the 73 seats, while the geographically skewed distribution of Liberal Democrat support ensured that the party won a greater proportion of these seats (17.8 per cent) than they did of the votes (15.4 per cent). On the other hand, the other parties suffered badly from the operation of first-past-the-post. Having come fourth in terms of the popular vote in the 2001 UK general election, the Conservatives reclaimed third place, just ahead of the Liberal Democrats. They were, no doubt, very pleased to win three constituencies but this was still a poor return for 16.6 per cent of the vote and the same can be said of the SNP's haul of nine seats for almost a quarter of the vote. As in 1999, the former Labour MP Dennis Canavan easily retained his seat as an Independent and he was joined by Dr Jean Turner who won the Labour-held Strathkelvin and Bearsden constituency campaigning against plans involving the closure of a local hospital.

The additional member voting system is intended to correct the discrepancies between votes and seats won to some extent and it clearly did so. Perhaps the most striking aspect of the list voting was the fact that all of the major parties lost support while the minor parties and others prospered. In this respect, Labour was the biggest loser (-5.3 per cent), followed by the Liberal Democrats (-3.6 per cent), the SNP (-3.0 per cent) and the Conservatives (-1.1 per cent). The biggest gainer was, of course, the Green Party which did not contest any constituencies but won seven top-up seats on the strength of 6.9 per cent of list votes. Perhaps surprisingly, the SSP did not perform significantly more strongly in the list voting than in the constituency contests but even so did enough to win six seats. The most significant 'others' in the list voting were parties representing senior citizens/pensioners, which took

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3.0 per cent of the vote overall and snatched a seat in Central Scotland, and independent individuals who garnered 1.8 per cent of the votes – almost all being won by Margo MacDonald, the renegade former SNP MSP, who stood on her own account in Lothians after being demoted in the SNP list and duly won a seat. None of the other minor parties contesting the lists – the UK Independence Party, Scottish People's Alliance and Socialist Labour Party among others – made very much impact. Even so, an impressive 22.6 per cent of list votes went to minor parties and others, which suggests a considerable degree of discontent with the 'mainstream' parties.

When the list and constituency seats were combined, the effect was to return the ruling Labour-Liberal Democrat coalition to power – but only just. Together they won 67 of the 129 seats in the Parliament and faced a variegated opposition of 62 MSPs.

Table 1
The distribution of votes and seats in Scotland 2003

	Constituencies		Regional Lists		Total Seats
	Share of Votes	Seats Won	Share of Votes	Seats Won	
	%		%		
Conservative	16.6	3	15.5	15	18
Labour	34.6	46	29.3	4	50
Lib Dem	15.4	13	11.8	4	17
SNP	23.9	9	20.9	18	27
SSP	6.2	0	6.7	6	6
Green	-	-	6.9	7	7
Others	3.4	2	9.0	2	4

Table 2 shows the changes in party performances between the 1999 and 2003 elections. The Conservatives increased their constituency vote share by only a modest amount but this must have been a relief after a long period in the electoral doldrums and it was enough to take two seats from Labour – Ayr (which the Conservatives had gained in a by-election in March 2000) and

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Edinburgh Pentlands (won by the party leader in Scotland, David McLetchie) – and one from the SNP – Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (which had been the party's only success in the 2001 UK general election). The Liberal Democrats also improved their position slightly and won Edinburgh South – long a target seat for them – from Labour. The SNP's share of constituency votes clearly declined but such are the vagaries of first-past-the post elections that their loss of Galloway and Upper Nithsdale to the Conservatives was more than balanced by three gains from Labour in Aberdeen North, Dundee East and Ochil. The SSP's overall share of votes increased markedly and, while much of this was due to the jump in the number of candidates fielded, support also rose significantly in the 17 seats that were contested in both 1999 and 2003 - from 4.8 per cent to 11.2 per cent between the two elections. There was nothing to comfort Labour in the constituency results, however. The party's vote share declined by 4.2 percentage points and seven seats were lost.

Table 2
Change in the distribution of votes and seats 1999-2003

	Constituencies		Regional Lists		Total Seats
	Share of Votes %	Seats Won	Share of Votes %	Seats Won	
Conservative	+1.1	+3	+0.1	-3	0
Labour	-4.2	-7	-4.3	+1	-6
Lib Dem	+1.2	+1	-0.6	-1	0
SNP	-4.8	+2	-6.4	-10	-8
SSP	+5.2	0	+4.7	+5	+5
Green	-	-	+3.3	+6	+6
Others	+1.7	+1	+3.3	+2	+3

There was a similar decline in Labour's share of list votes as compared with 1999 but it was the SNP which bore the brunt of the advances made by minor parties. The party's vote share fell by more than six percentage points and the cost in seats lost was heavy. The SNP is always going to find it difficult to

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make very much headway in constituency contests since Labour is so well entrenched in so many. It is important, therefore, that the party scores well in the list voting and the failure to do so in 2003 poses problems for the future. In the past, the SNP has been partly a vehicle for protest voting – an acceptable alternative for voters disappointed or disillusioned by the others. It may be that the effect of four years of devolution has been to persuade some voters that the SNP is now clearly part of the Scottish political establishment so that those seeking to register anti-establishment views now look to other alternatives.

TURNOUT

The turnout in the first Scottish Parliament election in 1999 was 58.8 per cent and at the time this was widely believed to be a disappointing figure, suggesting that the electorate was relatively apathetic about the new Parliament. The figure was put into perspective two years later, however, when turnout in Scotland at the UK general election of 2001 reached only 58.1 per cent. With hindsight, the Scottish Parliament turnout appeared at least respectable. The 2001 election had highlighted a growing problem of public disengagement with politics. Declining turnout in Britain and, indeed, across the Western world became a subject of much speculation and concern in the media and elsewhere. Given that these more general trends were compounded in 2003 by the particular problems of the Scottish Parliament's first term, there were fears that turnout in the second round of elections would be abysmal.

In fact, turnout was 49.4 per cent (49.7 per cent if rejected ballots are included). This is certainly not an impressive rate of participation by the electorate. It represents a decline of 9.4 percentage points since 1999; it is lower than the turnout at Scottish local elections in 1974 when the system of regions and districts was first introduced (51 per cent). On the other hand, in the context of recent elections the figure is certainly not abysmal. It is higher than local election turnouts were after 1974 and the decline from the previous UK general election (-8.7 per cent) is smaller than it was between 1997 and 1999 (-12.6 per cent). It is unrealistic to expect turnout in Scottish Parliament elections to be as high as in a UK general election. In every political system turnout is higher in elections for the national legislature than in those for subordinate institutions and, although the Scottish Parliament has considerable powers, it is certainly subordinate to the UK Parliament. In

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addition, UK-wide elections generate much more campaigning activity both nationally and in the constituencies.

Table 3 shows variations in turnout in different parts of Scotland. Much the worst figure (as in 1999) was recorded in Glasgow (40.6 per cent), with Fife (46.2 per cent) being lowest among the non-city areas. Nine of the latter had turnouts in excess of 50 per cent, the highest being in Dumfries and Galloway (54.6 per cent) and Dunbartonshire (54.0 per cent). In general, as would be expected, turnout levels are higher in more rural than in heavily urban areas. On the other hand turnout declined least in Aberdeen, Dundee and Glasgow, which suggests some 'bottoming out' of the declining trend. These three cases apart, there was not a great deal of variation in turnout change, although the biggest decline was in Central Scotland (-11.3 per cent) which had had the second highest turnout in 1999.

Table 3
Turnout 2003 and Turnout Change in Cities/Regions 1999-2003

	Turnout	Change 97-99
Aberdeen	47.4	-5.6
Dundee	48.7	-5.1
Edinburgh	51.3	-10.7
Glasgow	40.6	-6.9
Highlands & Islands	53.6	-9.1
North East Scotland	47.9	-9.1
Perth & Angus	51.1	-9.1
Fife	46.2	-10.7
Central Scotland	52.8	-11.3
Lothians	51.9	-9.8
Lanarkshire	48.1	-10.7
Renfrewshire	53.4	-8.0
Dunbartonshire	54.0	-10.3
Ayrshire	51.9	-10.1
Borders	51.2	-10.9

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Dumfries & Galloway	54.6	-8.9
Scotland	49.4	-9.4

Note: these 'regions' do not correspond to those used for list voting in the elections. See Appendix for details.

At constituency level variations in turnout were much larger, ranging from 35.4 per cent in Glasgow Shettleston (which once again took the wooden spoon) to 58.4 per cent in Western Isles. It was below 40 per cent in five constituencies – all in Glasgow – and above 55 per cent in ten. There are three main points to be made about the pattern of variation in turnout across constituencies. First, the pattern was similar to that found in all recent elections. The correlation coefficients measuring the association between constituency turnouts in 2003 and in the 1999 and 2001 elections were, respectively, 0.919 and 0.952. The absolute level of turnout was lower in 2003 but the relative positions of constituencies were very similar to those occurring at previous elections. There are constituencies where turnout is always relatively low and others where it is always relatively high. Second, turnout was higher where the Conservatives were stronger and lower where Labour was stronger. Correlating the parties' shares of constituency votes in 1999 with turnout in 2003 yields coefficients of 0.549 for the Conservatives and -0.390 for Labour (the coefficients for the Liberal Democrats and the SNP are not statistically significant). This reflects the fact that turnout is lower in working-class, urban seats and higher in more middle-class, suburban and rural seats. Third, and perhaps surprisingly, turnout levels in 2003 were not significantly related to the marginality of the constituency in 1999 (coefficient = -0.038). On the other hand, there was a strong and significant relationship with constituency marginality in the 2001 UK general election (coefficient = 0.627). These figures suggest that voters, and perhaps parties, are still more focussed on the status of seats in the UK rather than the Scottish context when deciding which seats are vulnerable to or winnable from opponents.

Changes in turnout between 1999 and 2003 were not significantly – indeed not remotely – linked to changes in support for the major parties, so that it is impossible to claim that any of them was particularly advantaged or disadvantaged by differential abstention as compared with 1999. On the other hand, there was a clear negative relationship between turnout in 1999 and change between 1999 and 2003 (coefficient = -0.545). This confirms at

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constituency level the suggestion relating to 'bottoming out' made in relation to regions. The higher the turnout in 1999, the greater tended to be the decline in 2003; the lower the turnout in 1999, the smaller the decline.

PARTY SUPPORT IN CONSTITUENCY CONTESTS

Despite having the reputation of being dominated by Labour – which is certainly true when first-past-the-post seats won is the focus of attention – Scotland is far from being a unity in electoral terms. Party strengths and the pattern of party competition vary markedly in different parts of the country. This is illustrated in Table 4, which shows the shares of votes obtained by the parties in 2003 in the various 'regions' already referred to. Of the four cities, Glasgow is the only one that could be said to be dominated by Labour. In Aberdeen, Labour came second to the Liberal Democrats; in Dundee the party was run close by the SNP; in Edinburgh there was substantial support for all four parties. Of the other areas, Labour is dominant in six (Fife, Lothians, Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, Dunbartonshire and Ayrshire) but the SNP is the clear leader in Perth & Angus and the other five areas display various forms of party competition.

From the perspective of the parties, it is perhaps worth first calling attention to the figure for the SSP in Glasgow, base of the party's leader Tommy Sheridan. Here, the SSP's vote share (15.2 per cent) was almost double that of their next best area (7.7 per cent in Lanarkshire) and the party came third, ahead of both the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats – a remarkable performance for a fringe party to the left of Labour.

Despite their slightly improved performance in the constituencies, the Conservatives remain desperately weak in Glasgow and Dundee and in a parlous position across the populous central belt, from Fife in the east to Ayrshire in the west. They cling on to a more respectable position in Edinburgh and the more peripheral areas, however, especially in Dumfries and Galloway where they came first in terms of the popular vote. The Liberal Democrats are also very weak in some areas – in fact they are almost an irrelevance in Glasgow, Dundee, Central Scotland, Lanarkshire, Ayrshire and Dumfries and Galloway. On the other hand, they also have substantial concentrations of support. They were the most popular party in Aberdeen, Highlands and Islands and the Borders, and in second place in Edinburgh and North East Scotland. This enabled the Liberal Democrats to win 12 constituencies in these five areas (the other victory being in Fife) illustrating

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how effective an uneven geographical distribution of support can be in winning first-past-the-post seats. In contrast, SNP support is relatively evenly distributed across the country and as a consequence they won fewer seats than the Liberal Democrats despite polling many more votes overall (see Table 1). Despite falling back somewhat as compared with 1999, Labour remains, of course, the largest party in most parts of Scotland. Nonetheless, the 2003 election revealed some new cracks in the monolith. In addition to areas of traditional weakness outside the central belt, the fact that Labour failed to achieve a third of the votes in Aberdeen and Edinburgh and gained just over a third in Dundee, Fife, Central Scotland and Dunbartonshire must give some encouragement to their opponents.

Table 4
Party shares of votes in cities/regions 2003 (%)

	Con	Lab	Lib Dem	SNP	SSP
Aberdeen	13.3	27.0	32.0	24.0	3.6
Dundee	8.8	36.2	6.7	34.3	2.9
Edinburgh	21.6	31.5	23.5	17.0	6.2
Glasgow	8.5	45.9	8.1	19.9	15.2
Highlands & Islands	15.3	23.3	30.9	23.6	5.5
North East Scotland	24.3	12.1	27.3	31.9	3.0
Perth & Angus	28.5	14.8	11.1	41.1	3.4
Fife	13.5	34.7	18.1	20.4	5.4
Central Scotland	13.2	35.8	7.3	25.9	3.5
Lothians	12.3	44.0	11.5	26.6	5.3
Lanarkshire	10.5	48.5	7.5	23.1	7.7
Renfrewshire	16.2	39.2	14.4	21.4	6.5
Dunbartonshire	12.1	37.0	13.9	18.1	4.8
Ayrshire	22.2	42.0	5.7	23.1	6.3
Borders	25.4	17.4	33.5	19.3	3.8

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Dumfries & Galloway	37.4	27.7	6.9	24.6	3.1
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Notes: These 'regions' do not correspond to those used for list voting in the elections. See the Appendix for details. Rows may not total 100 because votes for 'others' are not shown.

Table 5 details changes in party support in 2003 as compared with the 1999 election. In Aberdeen and Dundee the tactical situation in the relevant constituencies meant that the Conservative vote was 'squeezed'. In most other areas the party made a modest advance and the untypical decline in Dunbartonshire is explained by the success of the candidate in Strathkelvin and Bearsden opposed to a hospital closure. Labour also experienced an unusually large decline in Dunbartonshire – and also in Fife where there was another strong campaign connected with plans for local hospitals – but these variations were simply a matter of degree as Labour lost ground all around the country. The same is true of the SNP, which appears to have suffered particularly from the improved performance of the SSP in Glasgow. Changes in support for the Liberal Democrats were very variable. Their vote share increased in ten areas and decreased in six. This perhaps reflects the party's commitment to targeted campaigning with limited resources.

Table 5
Changes in party shares of votes in cities/regions 1999-2003

	Con	Lab	Lib Dem	SNP
Aberdeen	-1.8	-6.9	+9.0	-3.2
Dundee	-4.0	-4.3	-1.8	-1.3
Edinburgh	+2.6	-5.8	+4.8	-6.5
Glasgow	+0.8	-3.8	+1.5	-8.8
Highlands & Islands	+3.2	-4.2	-1.2	-2.9
North East Scotland	+1.2	-4.1	+2.4	-1.9
Perth & Angus	+0.1	-4.6	+1.2	-1.1
Fife	+1.3	-8.3	+1.6	-6.3
Central Scotland	+0.1	-0.2	+0.1	-3.2

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Lothians	+1.7	-4.1	+2.2	-4.6
Lanarkshire	+0.2	-1.3	-1.1	-6.4
Renfrewshire	-0.9	-2.2	+2.5	-4.8
Dunbartonshire	-2.1	-9.9	+2.7	-9.3
Ayrshire	+1.7	-2.9	-0.7	-5.1
Borders	+2.3	-1.5	-4.5	-0.7
Dumfries & Galloway	+8.8	-1.2	-6.5	-4.5

Note: These 'regions' do not correspond to those used for list voting in the elections. See the Appendix for details.

The pattern of variation in party support across constituencies – as with variations in turnout – is a familiar one. The correlation coefficients measuring the association between the vote shares received in 1999 and 2003 were 0.946 for the Conservatives, 0.941 for Labour, 0.927 for the Liberal Democrats and 0.881 for the SNP. While the last figure suggests that variations in SNP support are a little less stable than is the case with the other parties, all of these correlations are very strong. They indicate that where a party had a good performance in 1999 it was also relatively strong in 2003; where it was previously weak it again had a poor result. Although the correlation coefficients enable us to be precise about the strength of the association, the message that they convey is not exactly news. Most people will be aware, for example, that the Conservatives always do better in affluent suburbs and rural areas than in inner cities or ex-mining areas. Nonetheless, we can use the regression equations on which the correlation coefficients are based to identify constituencies in which the various parties did particularly well or badly in 2003. Such equations predict what a party's vote share in 2003 'ought' to have been on the basis of its 1999 performance. We can then compare the prediction with the share actually received and the difference is a measure how much better or worse the party did.

In these terms, Table 6 shows the five best and five worst constituency performances by each of the major parties. Space does not permit detailed discussion but it is clear that in many cases there is no difficulty in explaining particularly good or bad results. Thus, the 'squeeze' on the Conservative vote in Aberdeen South and Dundee West has already been mentioned, as has the impact of hospital campaigners on both Labour and the Conservatives in Strathkelvin and Bearsden and Labour in Central Fife. Labour's best result

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was in Motherwell and Wishaw, where the candidate was the incumbent First Minister Jack McConnell, while the Tory leader, David McLetchie, also achieved a very good result. On the other hand, the Liberal Democrat leader, Jim Wallace, turned in his party's worst performance in Orkney – which consequently appears in the lists of best results for both the Conservatives and the SNP – although this is largely because he had an exceptional performance (with two-thirds of the votes) in 1999. Falkirk East appears as unusually good for Labour in 2003 because the party's vote there in 1999 was depressed by publicity attaching to Dennis Canavan; Ross, Skye and Inverness West was good for the Liberal Democrats and bad for Labour probably on account of the popularity of the incumbent Liberal Democrat MSP; Dumfries appears among the best results for both the Conservatives and Labour because Liberal Democrat support collapsed, making it their second worst result. On the other hand, it is not clear why the Conservatives

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Table 6
Best and worst party performances in 2003

<i>Best</i>		<i>Worst</i>	
Conservative			
Dumfries	+7.6	Eastwood	-8.6
Orkney	+7.2	Dundee West	-6.7
Edinburgh Pentlands	+6.3	Strathkelvin and Bearsden	-6.2
Galloway & Upper Nithsdale	+6.0	Moray	-4.8
Shetland	+5.5	Aberdeen South	-4.1
Labour			
Motherwell & Wishaw	+12.1	Strathkelvin & Bearsden	-16.1
Falkirk East	+10.9	Fife Central	-11.9
Glasgow Baillieston	+9.2	Glasgow Anniesland	-9.0
Hamilton North & Bellshill	+8.1	Shetland	-8.7
Glasgow Shettleston	+6.6	Dunfermline West	-6.0
Liberal Democrats			
Aberdeen South	+14.0	Orkney	-18.0
Aberdeenshire W. & Kincardine	+11.0	Dumfries	-9.5
Ross, Skye and Inverness West	+10.9	Banff & Buchan	-8.7
Edinburgh South	+9.6	Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale	-8.0
North East Fife	+9.3	Shetland	-6.0
SNP			
Shetland	+11.7	Glasgow Baillieston	-11.4
Dundee East	+9.7	Glasgow Cathcart	-7.0
Orkney	+9.3	Motherwell & Wishaw	-6.8
Western Isles	+8.4	Glasgow Maryhill	-6.4
Cumbernauld & Kilsyth	+8.0	Dumbarton	-6.1

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Note: the figures indicate by how much each party exceeded (+) or fell short of (-) the share of the vote predicted on the basis of its share in 1999.

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performed so badly in their former stronghold of Eastwood or why Labour had one of their best results in Glasgow Baillieston but one of their worst in Anniesland. Explaining why these and other constituencies had particularly good or bad results would require detailed knowledge of the candidates and the circumstances in the constituencies concerned.

Variations in the changes in party support between 1999 and 2003 were, of course, greater across individual constituencies than across the cities and regions already discussed. The Conservatives gained ground in 46 constituencies, had no change in one and lost ground in 26; Labour's vote share declined in 62 but increased in 11; the Liberal Democrats were up in 41, unchanged in one and fell back in 31; the SNP declined in 61 but improved in 12. Clearly the days of uniform electoral movements across the country have long gone. The reasons for variations in changes in support from constituency to constituency might include differences in the tactical situation, in the popularity or otherwise of local candidates, in the alternatives available to vote for and in campaign effort. The impact of the local tactical situation is illustrated in Table 7, which shows overall changes in party support in constituencies grouped according to which party came first and which second in 1999. The data show, for example, that the Conservatives did rather worse where they were out of contention in Labour-SNP dominated seats than they did in constituencies where they were lying in second place. Labour declined only slightly where the Conservatives were the main challengers but by most in seats held by the Liberal Democrats, while the latter did much better in seats that they held from the Conservatives or Labour than elsewhere. The smallest SNP decline was in constituencies that they held from the Conservatives while their sharpest fall was in Labour/Conservative contests.

The question of how the parties' vote shares changed between 1997 and 1999 relative to one another is addressed by the data in Table 8 which shows correlation coefficients measuring the association between changes in vote share for each pair of parties. What we are looking for in this case are significant negative coefficients since these would indicate that as one party's support went up support for the other went down thus implying that one was gaining at the expense of the other. It might be expected, for example, that the better the Conservatives did, the worse Labour would do. That would certainly have been true in the past but given the complexity of the modern Scottish party system it actually no longer holds – the relevant coefficient is

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not significant, indicating that there was no systematic relationship between changes in the Conservative and Labour vote across constituencies. On the other hand, the Conservatives did better where the the Liberal Democrats did worse (and vice versa) and the same is true of Labour. Unsurprisingly, changes in Labour and SNP support were also linked in the expected way, as were changes involving the Liberal Democrats and the SNP.

Table 7
Changes in Party Shares of Votes According to Tactical Situation in Constituency

	Lab/SNP	Lab/Con	Lib Dem/Con	Lib Dem/Lab	SNP/Con
Change in:					
% Con	+0.3	+3.1	+2.1	+1.5	+2.4
% Lab	-4.0	-1.8	-4.9	-6.6	-4.4
% Lib Dem	+1.2	-1.1	+5.1	+6.0	-1.5
% SNP	-5.9	-6.5	-4.8	-3.5	-0.9
N of constituencies	49	4	5	4	5

Notes: Constituencies are divided according to the parties which were in first and second places in the 1999 election. Two categories are not shown: Lib Dem/SNP (3 cases) and SNP/Lab (2 cases). Falkirk West (won by an Independent in both 1999 and 2003) is also excluded.

Perhaps the most interesting figures in Table 8, however, are those in the SSP row. These show that the SSP advance was not associated with changes in the shares of vote obtained by the Conservatives, Labour or the Liberal Democrats. On the other hand, the better the SSP did the worse was the result for the SNP (and vice versa). On the basis of this evidence, then, there are good grounds for thinking that it was the SNP rather than Labour that suffered from the rise of the SSP.

Finally in this section it is worth considering the possible effect of the sex of candidates on constituency results. At the first elections in 1999 there was some controversy over changes in the candidate selection process introduced by Labour in order to ensure that as many women as men became

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constituency candidates and the evidence suggested that the party paid an electoral penalty for this innovation (see Denver and McAllister 1999). The question of women candidates continues to exercise some people and Table 9 shows some preliminary data on their performance in 2003. Any evidence that women candidates do less well than men is very slight. While Labour and the Liberal Democrats had slightly poorer results where a woman replaced a man as the candidate, the other two parties had their poorest results where a man replaced a women. Moreover any loss of support experienced by women appears to be short-lived as all four parties had their best results in constituencies contested by women in both 1999 and 2003.

Table 8
Correlations Between Changes in Shares of Constituency Votes 1999-2003

	Con	Lab	Lib Dem	SNP
Lab	0.108	-		
Lib Dem	-0.375	-0.287	-	
SNP	0.092	-0.298	-0.245	-
SSP	0.161	0.098	-0.176	-0.361

Note: N=73; statistically significant coefficients are printed in bold (p < .05).

Table 9
Changes in Share of Votes Related to Sex of Candidates

	Male 99/ Male 03	Female 99/ Female 03	Male 99/ Female 03	Female 99/ Male 03
Conservative	+1.2 (52)	+2.3 (5)	+0.4 (8)	-0.1 (8)
Labour	-5.3 (33)	-2.2 (28)	-5.9 (6)	-4.2 (6)
Liberal Democrats	+1.8 (42)	+3.0 (10)	-1.7 (11)	+0.2 (10)
SNP	-4.6 (46)	-3.2 (11)	-5.7 (5)	-7.8 (11)

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Note: Numbers in brackets indicate the number of cases involved.

LIST VOTING

If the constituency contests had their fair share of surprises in 2003, these were dwarfed by the results of the list voting in the eight regions into which Scotland is divided for the purpose of electing additional or 'top up' MSPs. Before considering these results, however, it should be noted that almost all voters made use of their two votes. Across the country, just 1,120 fewer ballots were cast in the list election (out of 1.9 million) than in the constituency contests. The only constituency in which the difference was at all significant was Strathkelvin and Bearsden where 569 more people voted in the constituency contest (presumably motivated by the candidate opposed to plans for the local hospital) than in the list election. At the other extreme, 118 more people voted in the list election in Edinburgh North and Leith than did so in the constituency contest. However, in 67 constituencies (as compared with 63 in 1999) the difference between the number of votes cast in the two contests was less than 100.

The shares of list votes in the different regions and the number of list seats won by the parties in the election are shown in Table 10. The main surprise, of course, was the level of support for minor parties and others, and the number of seats that they won. The SSP did well enough to win one seat in four regions and two in Glasgow; the Greens failed to win a seat in only two regions. Among other notable results, Margo MacDonald polled 10.2 per cent of the votes in Lothian and comfortably took the third list seat, while in Central Scotland the Senior Citizens Party picked up 6.5 per cent of the votes and won the sixth list seat. Indeed, the success of senior citizens' and pensioners' parties in scoring 3.0 per cent of the vote across seven regions was one of the major surprises of the list voting. In contrast, other parties which fought every region made little impact – the Socialist Labour Party managed only 1.1 per cent across Scotland, the UK Independence Party 0.6 per cent and the newly-formed Scottish People's Alliance, which had recruited two former Conservative MSPs, amassed just 0.4 per cent. In individual regions, hospital campaigners scored 3.9 per cent in Mid-Scotland and Fife, while the Fishing Party got 2.3 per cent of the vote in North East Scotland.

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Table 11 shows the changes between 1999 and 2003 in the shares of list votes received in the individual electoral regions. Apart from a clear improvement in South of Scotland, the Conservatives' shares were remarkably stable. This may be because the Conservative supporters that remain are die-hards who will support the party come what may. Liberal Democrat shares also show little change, although tending to drift downwards. With the exception of Central Scotland, where the figures are affected by the fact that Dennis Canavan stood as a list candidate in 1999 but not in 2003, Labour fell back across the board with especially severe declines in Mid-Scotland and Fife (due to unpopular policies affecting local hospitals) and Glasgow. It should be said, however, that the level of list support is not a serious issue for Labour, other than in the Highlands and Islands and North East Scotland. Outside of these regions the party would expect to win the great bulk of constituency contests and, therefore, would not usually be in contention for list seats. The same cannot be said of the SNP, however, and the falls in their support had serious consequences, as noted above. The party's worst result was in Lothians where it would seem that Margo MacDonald siphoned off some of its potential support. The SSP and Green Party contested every electoral region in both 1999 and 2003 and, as the figures show, improved their positions in every case.

Table 10
Party Shares of List Votes and Seats Won 2003

	Con	Lab	Lib Dem	SNP	SSP	Green	Others
Central Scotland	9.2 (1)	40.4 (0)	5.9 (1)	22.5 (3)	7.2 (1)	4.7 (0)	10.1 (1)
Glasgow	7.5 (1)	37.7 (0)	7.3 (1)	17.1 (2)	15.2 (2)	7.1 (1)	8.1 (0)
Highlands & Islands	16.0 (2)	22.3 (2)	18.8 (0)	23.4 (2)	5.3 (0)	8.3 (1)	5.9 (0)
Lothians	15.1 (1)	24.5 (0)	11.0 (0)	16.2 (2)	5.4 (1)	12.0 (2)	15.7 (1)
Mid Scotland & Fife	17.6 (3)	25.3 (0)	12.0 (1)	23.0 (2)	4.6 (0)	6.9 (1)	10.6 (0)
North East Scotland	17.4 (3)	20.2 (2)	18.8 (0)	27.3 (1)	4.2 (0)	5.2 (1)	6.9 (0)

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South of Scotland	24.2 (2)	30.0 (0)	10.3 (0)	18.4 (3)	5.4 (1)	5.7 (1)	6.0 (0)
West of Scotland	15.7 (2)	32.6 (0)	12.3 (1)	19.6 (3)	7.2 (1)	5.7 (0)	7.0 (0)

Note: The number of list seats won is shown in brackets.

Table 11
Changes in Party Shares of List Votes 1999-2003

	Con	Lab	Lib Dem	SNP	SSP	Green	Others
Central Scotland	0	+1.1	-0.3	-5.3	+5.5	+3.0	-4.0
Glasgow	-0.4	-6.2	+0.1	-8.4	+8.0	+3.1	+3.8
Highlands & Islands	+1.1	-3.2	-2.6	-4.3	+4.4	+4.6	+0.1
Lothians	-0.7	-5.7	-3.4	-9.5	+3.8	+5.1	+10.3
Mid Scotland & Fife	-1.0	-8.1	-0.7	-5.7	+3.6	+3.0	+8.8
North East Scotland	-0.9	-5.3	+1.3	-5.0	+3.1	+2.4	+4.4
South of Scotland	+2.6	-1.0	-1.7	-6.7	+4.4	+2.7	-0.2
West of Scotland	0	-5.9	+1.3	-6.3	+5.3	+3.1	+2.7

CONSTITUENCY AND LIST VOTING COMPARED

In their campaign appeals, all four major parties urged people to vote for them in both constituency and list contests. In contrast, the SSP explicitly asked voters for their 'second' vote. The use of the term 'second' (rather than, say, 'list') is clever since it suggests to voters that list votes are for indicating

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their second-choice party. In any event, even a cursory glance at the overall results (Table 1) reveals that many voters must have switched parties in the two votes. Since the Greens did not contest any constituencies, for example, the vast majority of their list votes must have involved switching from other parties in the constituency contest.

There are many possible reasons why voters might switch parties between the constituency and list elections. They might, for example, wish to support a particularly popular candidate in the constituency but not his or her party in the list. Alternatively, a popular candidate on the list (such as Margo MacDonald) might attract voters from other parties. Evidence of these sorts of processes at work is plentiful if we identify the constituencies in which the parties' shares of the list vote increased and declined most as compared with their constituency performance. The biggest decline for the Conservatives was in Edinburgh Pentlands (-9.4 per cent) where David McLetchie was the constituency candidate and the biggest increase (+5.0 per cent) in Strathkelvin and Bearsden, suggesting that some Conservatives voted for the Independent candidate in the constituency contest. Labour's biggest increase was in Falkirk West (as it was for the Liberal Democrats and the SNP) where Dennis Canavan won the constituency handsomely. The biggest falls for Labour, however, were in Edinburgh constituencies – North and Leith (-17.2 per cent), East and Musselburgh (-15.5 per cent) and Central (-13.5 per cent) – where both the Greens and Margo MacDonald had a big impact on the list election. The biggest fall for the Liberal Democrats was in Edinburgh West (-20.1 per cent) suggesting that the incumbent constituency MSP may have benefited from a strong personal vote. It is intriguing also to find that six of the seven biggest declines for the SNP were in seats that they won – Moray (-11.3 per cent), Angus (-10.0 per cent), Ochil (-10.0 per cent), Banff and Buchan (-9.7 per cent), Tayside North (-9.1 per cent) and Perth (-8.9 per cent) – again suggesting that the popularity of the SNP constituency candidates there played a part in their success. The SSP also experienced a sharp decline in Glasgow Pollok (-7.7 per cent), the constituency contested by Tommy Sheridan.

It is, of course, impossible to be precise about the extent and nature of switching between constituency and list votes from the election results alone since they allow us to measure only the net effects of movements between parties. Some switching from Labour to the SNP, for example, may have been cancelled out by switching in the opposite direction. Nonetheless, we can obtain an estimate of the minimum number of voters who must have switched

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parties by summing the changes in each party's votes and dividing by two (to take account of the fact that defectors from one party are also recruits to another). It must be emphasised, however, that this calculation gives a minimum figure only. The true amount of switching would undoubtedly be greater. Using this method in 1999, the average minimum proportion switching was estimated at 11.6 per cent (Denver and MacAllister 1999). Survey evidence published later estimated total switching at 20 per cent (Paterson et al. 2001, p. 78). Nonetheless, the measure based on the election results is useful as it enables comparison across constituencies.

The estimate from the election results in 2003 is that across the constituencies an average minimum of 17.1 per cent of those who voted must have switched parties between the two forms of contest – a sharp increase as compared with 1999. By far the largest figure is for Falkirk West (54.7 per cent – for reasons already mentioned). Strathkelvin and Bearsden (understandably) also had a large figure (30.0 per cent), while all nine constituencies in the Lothians had well above average switching (from 20.6 per cent in Linlithgow to 34.6 per cent in Edinburgh Central) reflecting the strength of the Green Party and the presence of Margo MacDonald. For the record, the smallest minimum amount of switching was in Aberdeen North (8.9 per cent). It seems certain, therefore, that a greater proportion of Scottish voters split their tickets in 2003 than was the case in 1999. This may be a result of greater familiarity with and sophistication about the electoral system. It seems more likely, however, that it simply reflects the range of choices available in both constituencies and lists and a general mood of disaffection from the larger parties.

Finally, how were the changes in the support for the parties between the constituency and list contests related to one another? As in Table 8, we can use correlation analysis to explore this question and the relevant data are given in Table 12. A negative coefficient here indicates that as one party in a constituency improved its position in the list voting as compared to the constituency voting, so the other party's position weakened. A positive coefficient indicates that the two parties in question tended to go up and down together, while a non-significant coefficient means that there was no systematic relationship between changes in support for the parties concerned.

Comparing pairs of major parties, there are only two significant associations and both involve the SNP. To an extent, the Liberal Democrats and SNP were in direct competition for list votes – the better the former did as compared to their constituency performance the worse the latter did (coefficient = -0.275).

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On the other hand, Labour and SNP changes from constituency to lists tended to follow a fairly similar pattern (coefficient = 0.252) implying relatively little switching between the two parties. The Liberal Democrats clearly suffered most from the presence of the Green Party in the lists – the bigger the Green share the worse the Liberal Democrats did relative to their share of votes in the constituency contests (coefficient = -0.472). The striking figures in Table 12, however, concern the change in support for 'others' from constituency to list elections. The more support there was for 'others' in the lists the worse was the performance of every major party (and the SSP); the less well 'others' did the more major party support held up. Independents, hospital campaigners and the rest clearly drew off constituency support from all of the parties, with Labour (coefficient = -0.656) being particularly prone to lose out.

Table 12
Correlations Between Changes in Constituency and List Share of Votes for Parties (Constituencies)

	Con	Lab	Lib Dem	SNP	SSP	Green
Lab	0.148					
Lib Dem	0.145	-0.277				
SNP	0.140	0.252	-0.275			
SSP	0.325	0.181	0.186	0.114		
Green	-0.212	-0.219	-0.472	-0.151	-0.035	
Others	-0.511	-0.656	-0.276	-0.419	-0.580	0.203

Notes: N = 73. Statistically significant coefficients are printed in bold.

CONCLUSION

In one respect the Scottish Parliament elected in 2003 looks very similar to the previous Parliament – there are 51 women MSPs (comprising 4 Conservatives, 28 Labour, 2 Liberal Democrats, 9 SNP, 4 SSP, 2 Greens and 2 others) compared with 49 elected in 1999. In party terms, however, the new Parliament looked rather different with 17 MSPs not associated with mainstream parties on the benches. Although still comprising a relatively small minority, these 'minnows' had succeeded spectacularly in taking on the big party battalions and could be considered the real winners on election

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night. The Conservatives and Liberal Democrats could also take some satisfaction from the election even though they both ended up with the same number of MSPs. Both increased their share of constituency votes as compared with 1999 and both also won more constituency seats, which augurs well for the next UK general election. The SNP and Labour, on the other hand, were the main losers in the election. The SNP vote fell sharply as support leaked to the SSP in the constituencies and to 'others' in the list voting – and they ended up with a loss of ten seats. This disappointing outcome is sure to bring a period of self-examination and perhaps recrimination within the party. This could well include a reconsideration of how the ordering of SNP lists is determined since the demotion of some prominent MSPs certainly caused problems for the party. Despite remaining the largest party, Labour also lost out in the elections. The party's vote share in the constituencies was smaller than any recorded in a general election since the Second World War and the loss of seven constituencies was a bad blow.

The Scottish electorate, it might be suggested, delivered a 'wake-up' call to Labour and the SNP in the 2003 elections. Under a first-past-the-post electoral system the call would have been muffled but the additional member system ensured that it should have been heard loud and clear by anyone prepared to listen. During the next four years the two parties will have to work out their response and it is especially important for Labour, as the leading coalition partner, to ensure that the messages delivered by the Scottish electorate in 2003 are digested and acted upon.

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APPENDIX

In terms of constituencies, the composition of the Scottish 'regions' used in Tables 3-5 in the text is as follows.

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Aberdeen: Aberdeen Central, North and South

Dundee: Dundee East and West

Edinburgh: Edinburgh Central, East & Musselburgh, North & Leith, Pentlands, South, West

Glasgow: Glasgow Anniesland, Baillieston, Cathcart, Govan, Kelvin, Maryhill, Pollok, Shettleston, Springburn

Highlands & Islands: Argyll & Bute, Caithness Sutherland and Easter Ross, Inverness East Nairn and Lochaber, Orkney, Shetland, Ross Skye and Inverness West, Western Isles

North East Scotland: Aberdeenshire West & Kincardine, Banff & Buchan, Gordon, Moray

Perth & Angus: Angus, Perth, Tayside North

Fife: Dunfermline East and West, Fife Central, North East Fife, Kirkcaldy

Central Scotland: Falkirk East and West, Ochil, Stirling

Lothians: East Lothian, Linlithgow, Livingston, Midlothian

Lanarkshire: Airdrie & Shotts, Clydesdale, Coatbridge & Chryston, Cumbernauld & Kilsyth, East Kilbride, Glasgow Rutherglen, Hamilton North & Bellshill, Hamilton South, Motherwell & Wishaw

Renfrewshire: Eastwood, Greenock & Inverclyde, Paisley North and South, Renfrewshire West

Dunbartonshire: Clydebank & Milngavie, Dunbarton, Strathkelvin & Bearsden

Ayrshire: Ayr, Carrick Cumnock and Doon Valley, Cunninghame North and South, Kilmarnock and Loudoun

Borders: Roxburgh and Berwickshire, Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale

Dumfries & Galloway: Dumfries, Galloway & Upper Nithsdale

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