

Local elections in England – What is the message?

Overall project description

On May 2nd, local elections were held in England. The Conservatives fared very badly, but Labour didn't do all that well either. On the other hand, the Liberal Democrats, the Greens and independents did very well. Politicians wonder, and argue about, what the message from voters was. Was the message to the Tories to press ahead with a hard Brexit? Were former Labour votes disappointed by Labour's (lack of) stance on Brexit? Do they want Labour to become more forceful proponents of a second referendum? We cannot fully answer those questions using data, but we can try to relate the changes in voting patterns to the results of the EU referendum in that local authority as well as other administrative data, such as the distribution of social grades.

The data available consist of:

- a data frame containing the proportion of the population for each social grade (AB, C1, C2, DE), the results from the last general election (Westminster) as well as the result from the EU referendum (proportion leave votes).
- a list containing the results from the local election scraped from the BBC website a few days after the election. Additional administrative data is available from the Office of National Statistics

QUESTION(S) OF INTEREST

The main question of interests is:

What are the characteristics of local authorities ...

- where the Conservatives lost a large proportion of the seats up for election?
- where Labour lost a large proportion of the seats up for election?
- in which the Liberal Democrats / Greens / independents made the largest gains?

Relevant courses

- Regression Models
- Generalised Linear Models
- Flexible Regression might be helpful

GETTING STARTED HINTS

This section provides a few brief hints for the student in how to begin thinking about analyzing the data.

- In this project you need first merge the two data sources. You need to decide how to model the results from the local elections. Keep in mind that in some local authorities only some seats were up for election, whereas in others all seats were up for election. Some local authorities did not have an election at all.
- It is easiest if you fit separate models for each (major) party.
- For the advanced chapter you can look at including additional administrative data or data about the voting pattern of the local MP (the conservatives did especially badly in Jacob Rees-Mogg's constituency) and/or try to estimate a spatial effect.