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HOUSE OF COMMONS  
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE  
FACTSHEET

No 16

STATISTICAL DIGEST OF BY-ELECTION RESULTS  
IN THE 1979 - 1983 PARLIAMENT

Rev ed Nov 1983

Each issue of the House of Commons Weekly Information Bulletin includes a table of by-elections held and pending. This ***Factsheet*** was intended to furnish statistical information supplementary to the basic details contained in the Bulletin. It was reissued from time to time as by-elections occurred in the 1979-83 Parliament and is now being kept in print as a permanent record of those events.

This ***Factsheet*** was a version of *House of Commons Library Research Note No 79*, which was compiled for the use of Members by the Research Division's Statistical Section. The Public Information Office would like to thank the Statisticians for so readily agreeing to the promulgation of their work as a ***Factsheet***.

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### **A NOTE ON SWING**

It has been traditional when commenting on by-elections to refer to percentage *swing* compared with the previous General Election.

The traditional calculation of swing measured the average of the Conservative percentage gain (or loss) of the vote and the Labour percentage loss (or gain) between two elections. Where a candidate from a third party takes a substantial share of the vote at one or both elections the calculation of swing becomes meaningless. The simplest alternative method of looking at changes in party support is to look at the changes in the share of total votes cast for each party between one election and another, which in the broadest sense measures swing between one party and all other parties. Table 3 show changes in the share of the vote at each of the by-elections.

By-elections pending at the Dissolution of Parliament on 13 May 1983

1. Cardiff North West
2. Rhondda

Jennifer TANFIELD  
Robert CLEMENTS  
Nov 1983

TABLE I: VOTES CAST IN BY-ELECTIONS SINCE THE GENERAL ELECTION ON 3 MAY 1979

	Conservative	Labour	Liberal (L) or SDP (a)	Others (b)	Majority of winning candidate	Total Poll	Electorate	Poll as % of Electorate (Turnout)
<u>1. Manchester: Central</u>								
Votes: General Election	4,413	14,117	1,052 (L)	365 (1)	9,704 (Lab)	19,947	31,312	63.7
27 September 1979 By-election	1,275	7,494	1,502 (L)	328 (3)	5,992 (Lab)	10,599	31,558	33.6
% of poll: General Election	22.1	70.8	5.3 (L)	1.8				
By-election	12.0	70.7	14.2 (L)	3.1				
<u>2. Hertfordshire: South-West</u>								
Votes: General Election	33,112	16,784	9,808 (L)	839 (1)	16,328 (Con)	60,543	75,930	79.7
13 December 1979 By-election	17,031	10,259	8,752 (L)	10,333 (3)	6,772 (Con)	37,075	76,776	48.3
% of poll: General Election	54.7	27.7	16.2 (L)	1.4				
By-election	45.9	27.7	23.6 (L)	2.8				
<u>3. Southend: East</u>								
Votes: General Election	22,413	11,639	5,244 (L)	676 (1)	10,774 (Con)	39,972	57,037	70.1
13 March 1980 By-election	13,117	12,687	8,939 (L)	894 (4)	430 (Con)	35,637	57,016	62.5
% of poll: General Election	56.1	29.1	13.1 (L)	1.7				
By-election	36.8	35.6	25.1 (L)	2.5				
<u>4. Glasgow: Central</u>								
Votes: General Election	1,937	8,542	-	1,308	6,605 (Lab)	11,787	19,826	59.5
26 June 1980 By-election	707	4,902	-	2,780	2,780 (Lab)	8,068	18,854	42.8
% of poll: General Election	16.4	72.5	-	11.1				
By-Election	8.8	60.8	-	30.4				

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	Conservative	Labour	Liberal (L) or SDP (a)	Others (b)	Majority of winning candidate	Total Poll	Electorate	Poll as % of Electorate (Turnout)
<u>5. Fermanagh and South Tyrone</u>								
Votes: General Election		see footnotes			4,987 (Ind R)	62,234	71,481	87.1
9 April 1981 By-election		see footnotes			1,446 (AH-B)	59,538	72,349	82.3
<u>6. Warrington</u>								
Votes: General Election	9,032	19,306	2,833 (L)	144 (1)	10,274 (Lab)	31,315	43,921	71.3
16 July 1981 By Election	2,102	14,280	12,521 (SDI)	605 (8)	1,759 (Lab)	29,508	44,077	66.9
% of poll: General Election	28.8	61.6	9.1 (L)	0.5				
By-election	7.1	48.4	42.4 (SDI)	2.0				
<u>7. Fermanagh and South Tyrone</u>								
Votes: General Election		see footnotes			4,987 (Ind R)	62,234	71,481	87.1
20 Aug 1981 By-election		see footnotes			2,230 (A.H-B)	63,727	73,161	87.1
<u>8. Croydon: North West</u>								
Votes: General Election	19,928	16,159	4,239 (L)	..	3,769 (Con)	40,326	55,608	72.5
22 October 1981 By-election	10,546	8,967	13,800 (L)	1,229	3,254 (L)	34,542	55,259	62.5
% of poll: General Election	49.4	40.1	10.5 (L)	..				
By-election	30.5	26.0	40.0 (L)	3.6				
<u>9. Crosby</u>								
Votes: General Election	34,768	15,496	9302 (L)	1,489	19,272 (Con)	61,055	81,208	75.2
26 November 1981 By-election	22,829	5,450	28118 (SDI)	900	5,289 (SDP)	57,297	83,078	69.0
of poll: General Election	57.0	25.4	15.2 (L)	2.4				
By-election	39.8	9.5	49.1 (SDI)	1.6				

TABLE I: VOTES CAST IN BY-ELECTIONS SINCE THE GENERAL ELECTION ON 3 MAY 1979

	Conservative	Labour	Liberal (L) or SDP (a)	Others (b)	Majority of winning candidate	Total Poll	Electorate	Poll as % of Electorate (Turnout)
<u>10. Belfast: South</u>								
Votes: General Election		see footnotes			17,130 (Off U)	46,790	68,920	67.9
4 March 1982 By-election		see footnotes			5,397 (Off U)	43,534	66,219	65.7
<u>11. Glasgow: Hillhead</u>								
Votes: General Election	12,368	10,366	4,349 (L)	3,050 (1)	2,002 (Con)	30,133	39,793	75.7
25 March 1982 By-election	8,068	7,846	10,106 (SDI)	4,269 (5)	2,038 (SDP)	30,289	39,685	76.3
% of poll: General Election	41.1	34.4	14.4 (L)	10.1				
By-election	26.6	25.9	33.4 (SDI)	14.1				
<u>12. Beaconsfield</u>								
Votes General Election	31,938	10,433	8,853 (L)	548 (1)	21,505 (Con)	51,772	67,961	76.2
27 May 1982 By-election	23,049	3,886	9,996 (L)	375 (3)	13,505 (Con)	37,306	69,382	53.8
% of poll: General Election	61.7	20.1	17.1 (L)	1.1				
By-election	61.8	10.4	26.8 (L)	1.0				
<u>13. Merton: Mitcham and Morden</u>								
Votes: General Election	21,050	21,668	4,258 (L)	966 (1)	618 (Lab)	47,942	62,365	76.9
3 June 1982 By-election	13,306	7,475	9,032 (SDI)	860 (6)	4,274 (Con)	30,673	63,259	48.5
% of poll: General Election	43.9	45.2	8.9 (L)	2.0				
By-election	43.4	24.4	29.4 (SDI)	2.8				
<u>14. Coatbridge and Airdrie</u>								
Votes: General Election	12,442	27,598	..	5,260 (1)	15,156 (Lab)	45,300	60,133	75.3
24 June 1982 By-election	9,118	19,208	2873 (L)	3,652 (1)	10,090 (Lab)	34,851	61,930	56.3
% of poll: General Election	27.5	60.9	..	11.6				
By-election	26.2	55.1	8.2 (L)	10.5				

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	Conservative	Labour	Liberal (L) or SDP (a)	Others (b)	Majority of winning candidate	Total Poll	Electorate	Poll as % of Electorate (Turnout)
<u>15. Gower</u>								
Votes: General Election	14,322	24,963	4,245 (L)	3,357 (1)	10,641 (Lab)	46,887	58,023	80.8
16 September 1982 By-election	8,690	17,095	9,875 (SDI)	3,659 (3)	7,220 (Lab)	39,319	60,123	65.4
% of poll: General Election	30.5	53.2	9.1 (L)	7.2				
By-election	22.1	43.5	25.1 (SDI)	9.3				
<u>16. Southwark: Peckham</u>								
Votes: General Election	9,553	20,364	2,607 (L)	1,503 (1)	10,811 (Lab)	34,027	59,015	57.7
28 October 1982 By-election	2,800	11,349	7,418 (SDI)	976 (2)	3,931 (Lab)	22,543	59,376	38.0
% of poll: General Election	28.1	59.8	7.7 (L)	4.4				
By-election	12.4	50.3	32.9 (SDI)	4.3				
<u>17. Birmingham: Northfield</u>								
Votes: General Election	25,304	25,100	4,538 (L)	758 (2)	204 (Con)	55,700	78,873	70.6
28 October 1982 By-election	15,615	15,904	11,453 (L)	883 (4)	289 (Lab)	43,855	79,757	55.0
% of poll: General Election	45.4	45.1	8.1 (L)	1.4				
By-election	35.6	36.3	26.1 (L)	2.0				
<u>18. Glasgow: Queen's Park</u>								
Votes: General Election	5,642	15,120	..	2,730 (4)	9,478 (Lab)	23,492	34,332	68.4
2 December 1982 By-election	1,888	8,851	1,487 (L)	3,575 (4)	5,694 (Lab)	15,801	33,769	46.8
% of poll: General Election	24.0	64.4	..	11.6				
By-election	11.9	56.0	9.4 (L)	22.6				
<u>19. Southwark: Bermondsey</u>								
Votes: General Election	7,582	19,338	2,072 (L)	1,414 (2)	11,756 (Lab)	30,406	51,246	59.3
24 February 1983 By-election	1,631	7,698	17,017 (L)	3,143 (13)	9,319 (L)	29,489	51,094	57.7
% of poll: General Election	24.9	63.6	6.8 (L)	4.7				
By-election	5.5	26.1	57.7 (L)	10.7				

TABLE I: VOTES CAST IN BY-ELECTIONS SINCE THE GENERAL ELECTION ON 3 MAY 1979

	Conservative	Labour	Liberal (L) or SDP (a)	Others (b)	Majority of winning candidate	Total Poll	Electorate	Poll as % of Electorate (Turnout)
<u>20. Darlington</u>								
Votes: General Election	21,513	22,565	5,054 (L)	444 (1)	1,052 (Lab)	49,576	63,218	78.4
24 March 1983 By-election	18,132	20,544	12,735 (SDI)	590 (5)	2,412 (Lab)	52,001	64,982	80.0
% of poll: General election	43.4	45.5	10.2 (L)	0.9				
By-election	34.9	39.5	24.5 (SDI)	1.1				

Notes: Parties in Northern Ireland do not correspond to the table headings. The results of the Northern Ireland by-elections were: -

Fermanagh and South Tyrone:

<u>General Election May 1979</u>			<u>By-election April 1981</u>			<u>By-election August 1981</u>		
	<u>Vo tes</u>	<u>%</u>		<u>Vo tes</u>	<u>%</u>		<u>Vo tes</u>	<u>%</u>
Ind Rep	22,398	36.0	Anti H-Block	30,492	51.2	Anti H-Block	31,278	49.1
Off Unionist	17,411	28.0	Off Unionist	29,046	48.8	Off Unionist	29,048	45.6
Ind SOLP	10,785	17.3				Alliance	1,930	3.0
UUUP	10,607	17.0				Worker's Party	1,132	1.8
APNI	1,070	1.7				Peace Lover	249	0.4
						Amnesty	90	0.1

Belfast. South

<u>General Election May 1979</u>			<u>By-election March 1982</u>		
	<u>Vo tes</u>	<u>%</u>		<u>Vo tes</u>	<u>%</u>
Off Unionist	28,875	61.7	Off Unionist	17,123	39.3
APM	11,745	25.1	Alliance	11,726	26.9
SM	3,694	7.9	Dem Un	9,818	22.6
UPNI	1,784	3.8	SM	3,839	8.8
Ind Lab	692	1.5	UL Loy Dem	576	1.3
			United lab	303	0.7
			One Hum Fam	137	0.3
			Peace State	12	n s

- (a) From the Warrington by-election onwards the Liberal and SDP have fought each Great Britain by-election as an alliance. The alliance candidates are shown according to the party within alliance to which they belong.

- (b) This column shows the total of votes cast for "other candidates". The number of such candidates is given in brackets. For the separate percentage of the votes cast for each of these candidates at the by-elections, see Table 2. "Other parties" at the General Election received the following percentage of votes cast:

Manchester, Central:	National Front	1.8
Hertfordshire, South west:	National Front	1.4
Southend, East:	National Front	1.7
Glasgow, Central:	SNP	11.1
Fermanagh and South Tyrone:	(see Notes above)	
Warrington:	Independent	0.5
Crosby:	Ecology Party	2.4
Belfast South:	(see Notes above)	
Glasgow, Hillhead:	SNP	10.1
Beaconsfield:	National Front	1.1
Merton, Mitcham and Morden:	National Front	2.0
Coatbridge and Airdrie:	SNP	11.6
Gower:	Plaid Cymru	7.2
Southwark, Peckham:	National Front	4.4
Birmingham, Northfield:	National Front	1.1
	Workers Revolutionary Party	0.3
Glasgow, Queen's Park:	SNP	9.7
	Communist	1.1
	Workers Revolutionary Party	0.4
	Socialist Unity	0.4
Southwark, Bermondsey:	National Front	3.9
	Workers Revolutionary Party	0.8
Darlington:	National Front	0.9

Sources: Britain Votes 2 by F.W.S Craig  
 The Times: 11 April 1981; 17 July 1981; 22 August 1981; 24 October 1981; 28 November 1981;  
 6 March 1982; 27 March 1982; 28 May 1982; 5 June 1982; 28 June 1982;  
 18 September 1982; 30 October 1982; 4 December 1982; 26 February 1983;  
 26 March 1983  
 Daily Telegraph 11 April

**TABLE 2: PERCENTAGE OF THE TOTAL POLL AT EACH BY-ELECTION CAST FOR CANDIDATES OTHER THAN CONSERVATIVE, LABOUR AND LIBERAL (OR SDP/LIBERAL ALLIANCE)**

Designation of candidates (a)	By-election number: (see key below)																			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
<b>* Northern Ireland</b>																				
<b>Parties</b>																				
Anti H-Block				51.2		49.1														
Official Unionist				48.8		45.6				39.3										
Alliance Party						3.0				26.9										
Democratic Unionist										22.6										
Social Democratic and Labour Party										8.8										
Worker's Party							1.8													
Republican Clubs																				
Ulster Loyalist Democratic Party										1.3										
United Labour Party										0.7										
Peace Lover							0.4													
One Human Family										0.3										
General Amnesty							0.1													
Peace State										ns										
Plaid Cymru															8.7					
Scottish National Party				26.3							11.3			10.5				20.0		
National Front				1.8				1.2					1.8		3.9	0.9			1.4	







NOTES:

n.s = not significant

\* Apart from the Northern Ireland Parties and Plaid Cymru, the Scottish Nationalist Party and National Front, parties are listed in alphabetical order.

(a) Full title, Campaign Opposed to Police State, not given on nomination papers.

KEY

1 = Manchester, Central; 2 = Hertfordshire, South West;  
3 = Southend, East; 4 = Glasgow, Central; 5 = Fermanagh  
and South Tyrone; 6 = Warrington; 7 = Fermanagh and  
South Tyrone; 8 = Croydon, North West; 9 = Crosby;  
10 = Belfast, South; 11 = Glasgow, Hillhead;  
12 = Beaconsfield; 13 = Merton, Mitcham and Morden;  
14 = Coatbridge and Airdrie; 15 = Gower; 16 = Southwark,  
Peckham; 17 = Birmingham, Northfield; 18 = Glasgow,  
Queen's Park; 19 = Southwark, Bermondsey;  
20 = Darlington

TABLE 3. CHANGES IN SHARE OF VOTE BETWEEN  
GENERAL ELECTION OF MAY 1979 AND BY-ELECTION

	Conservative	Labour	Liberal/SDP
Manchester, Central	-10.1	-0.1	+8.9
Hertfordshire, South \	-8.8	0	+7.4
Southend, East	-19.3	+6.5	+12.0
Glasgow, Central	7.6	-11.7	-
Fermanagh & South Tyrone (9.4.81)		does not apply	
Warrington	-21.7	-13.2	+33.3
Fermanagh & South Tyrone (9.4.81)		does not apply	
Croydon, North West	-18.9	-14.1	+29.5
Crosby	-17.2	-15.9	+33.9
Belfast, South		does not apply	
Glasgow, Hillhead	-14.5	-8.5	+19.0
Beaconsfield	+0.1	-9.7	+9.7
Merton, Mitcham and	-0.5	-20.8	+20.5
Coatbridge & Airdrie	-1.3	-5.8	-
Gower	-8.4	-9.7	+16.0
Southwark, Peckham	-15.7	-9.5	+25.2
Birmingham, Northfiel	-9.8	-8.8	+18.0
Glasgow, Queen's Pa	-12.1	-8.4	-
Southwark, Bermondk	-19.4	-37.5	+50.9
Darlington	-8.5	-6	+14.3

- indicates no candidate stood at one of the elections.

Percentages may not sum to zero because of candidates from other parties.