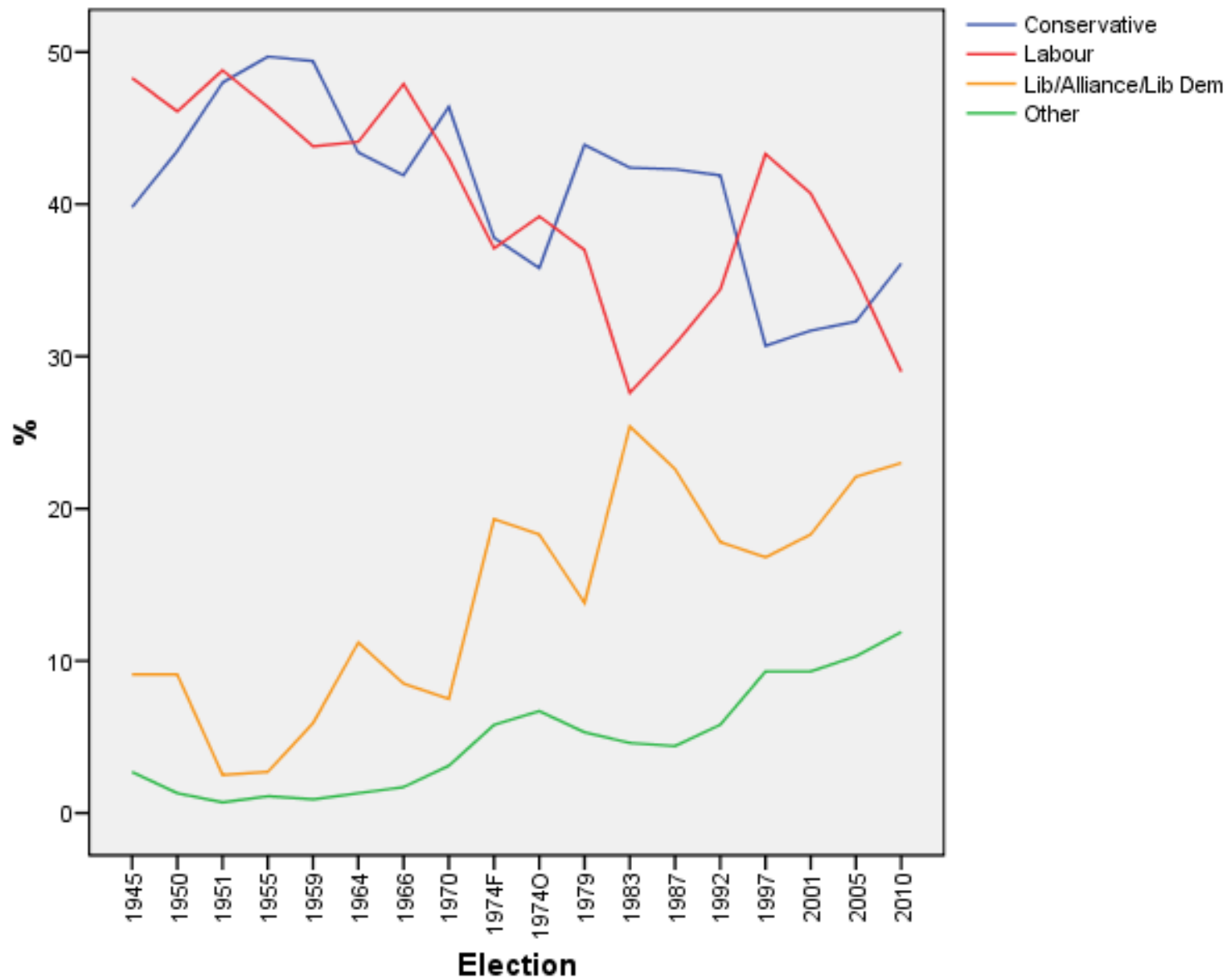


# Party Systems, Voters and Campaigning in Britain

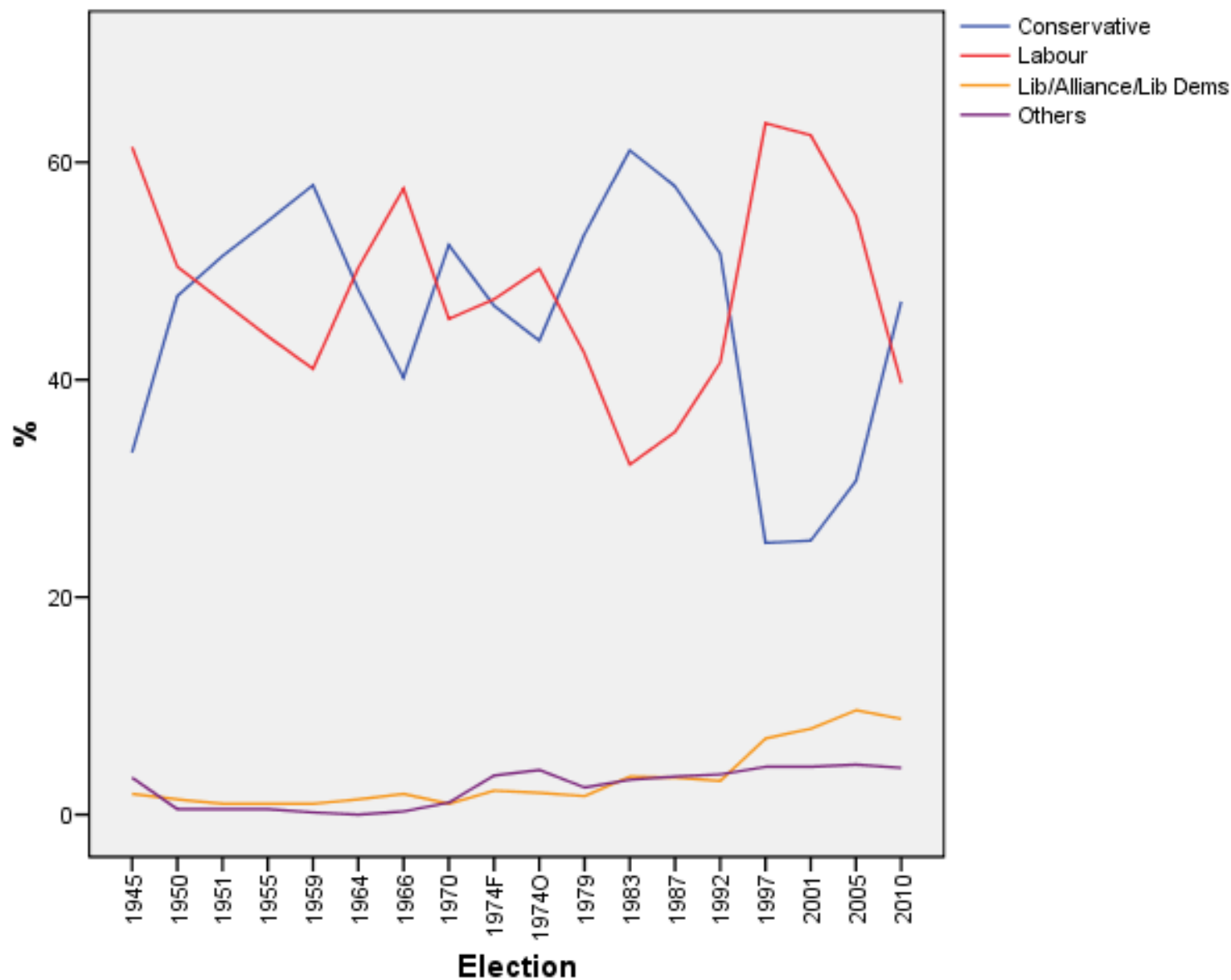
*Justin Fisher (Brunel University)*

# **PARTY SYSTEMS IN THE UK**

# UK Share of the Vote 1945-2010



## UK Share of the Seats 1945-2010



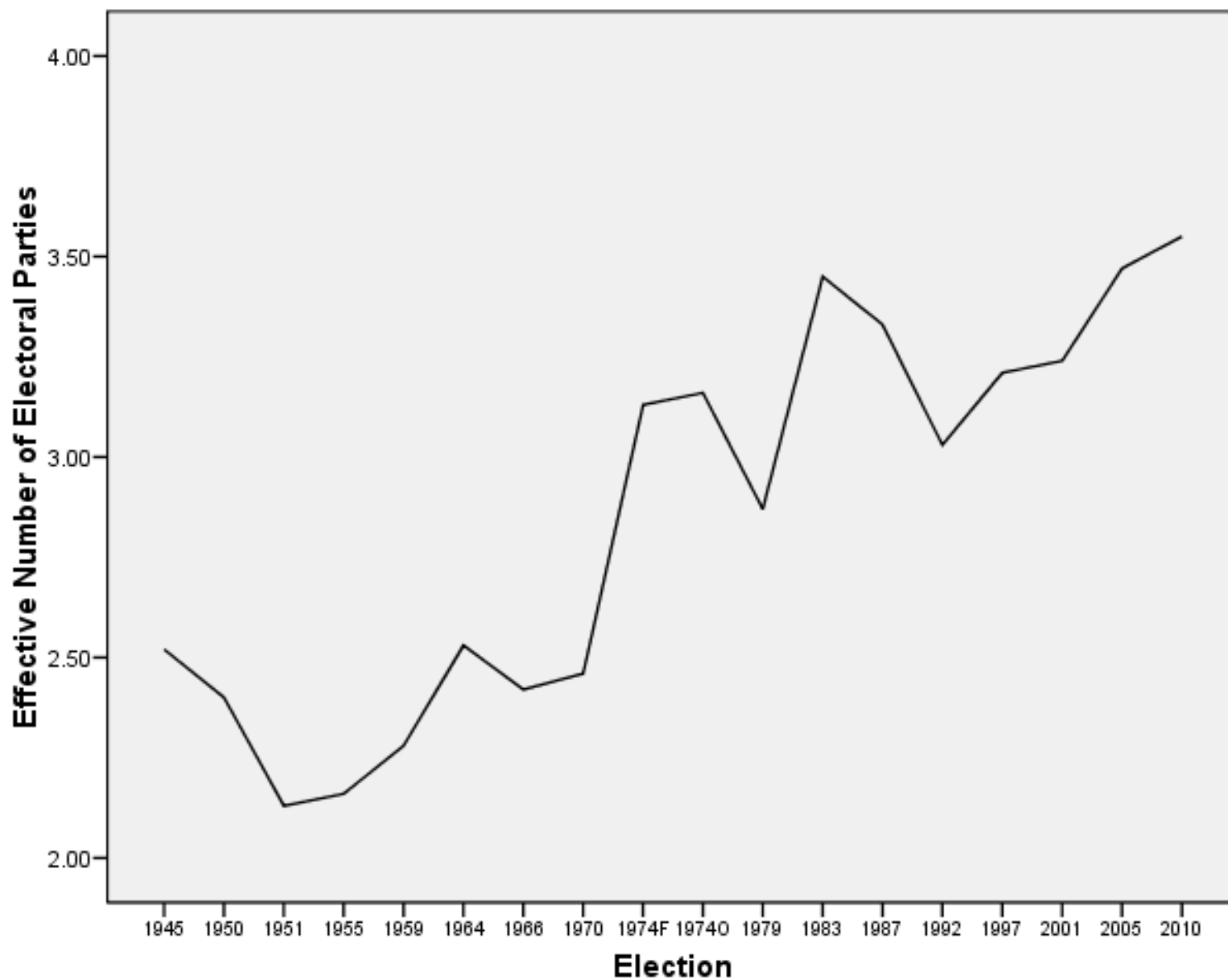
# Calculation of ENEP

$$\frac{1}{\sum p_i^2}$$

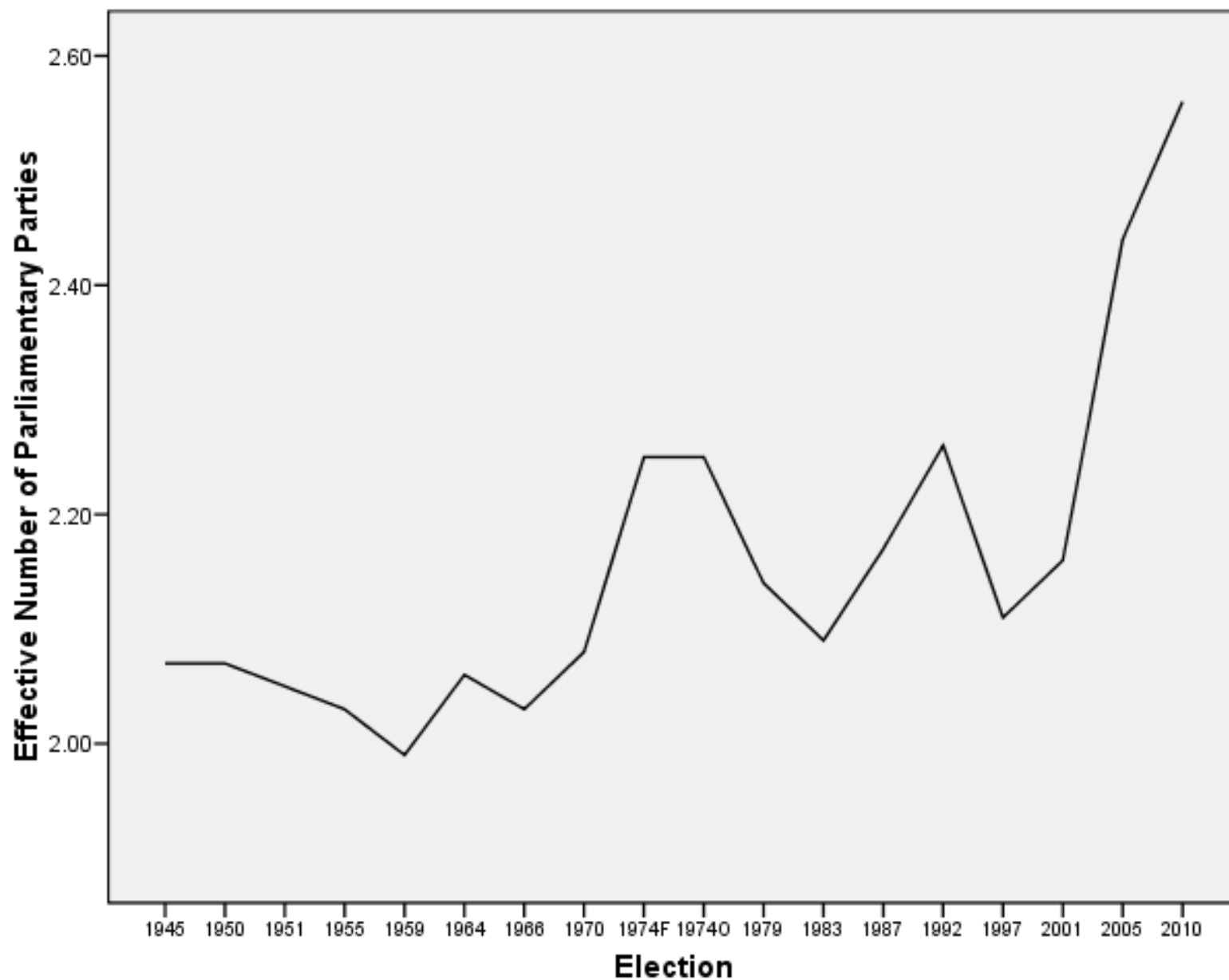
# ENEP 2010

$$\frac{1}{(.36 + .29 + .23 + .12)^2}$$
$$= 3.55$$

**Effective Number of Electoral Parties in the UK 1945-2010**



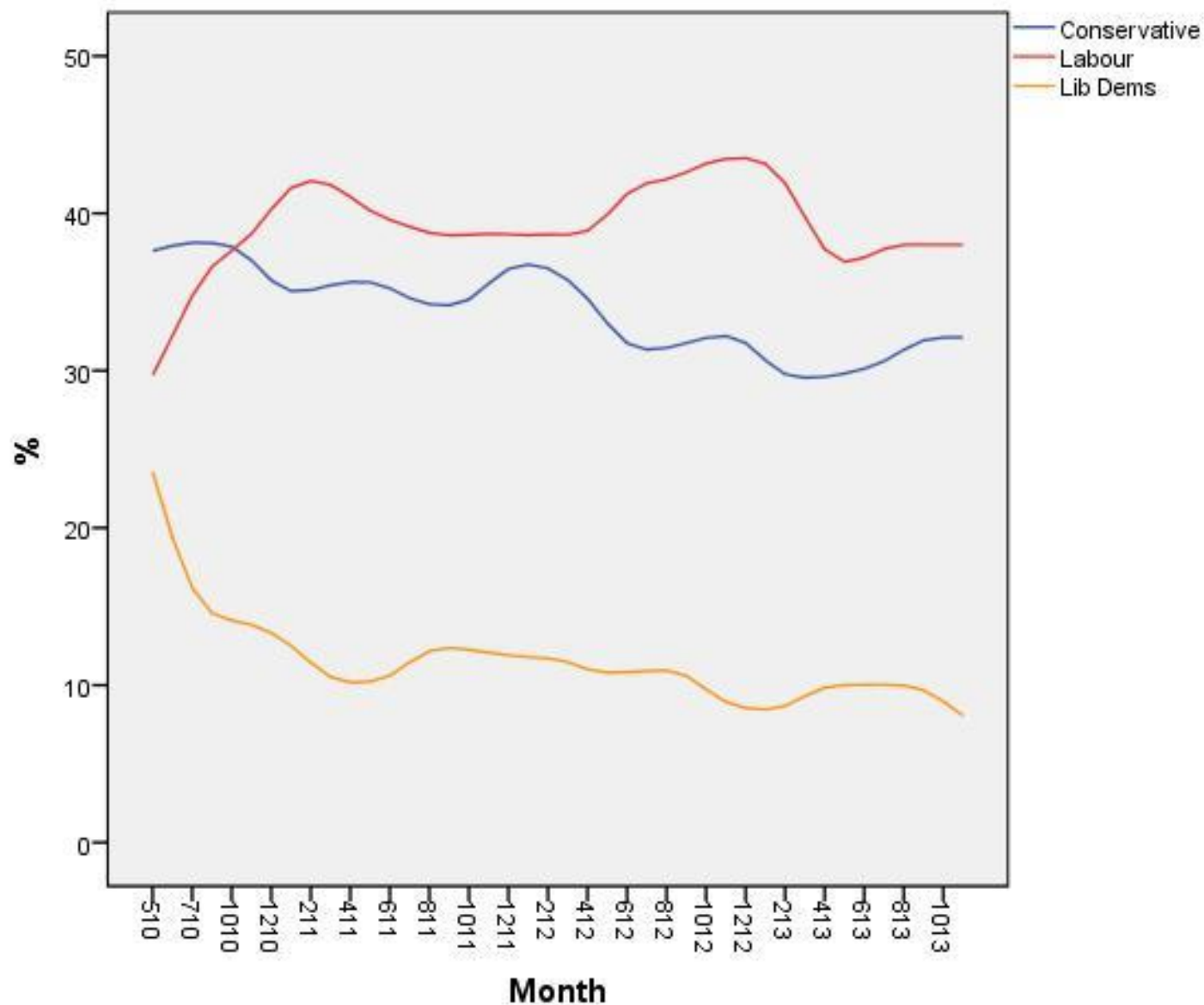
Effective Number of Parliamentary Parties in the UK 1945-2010





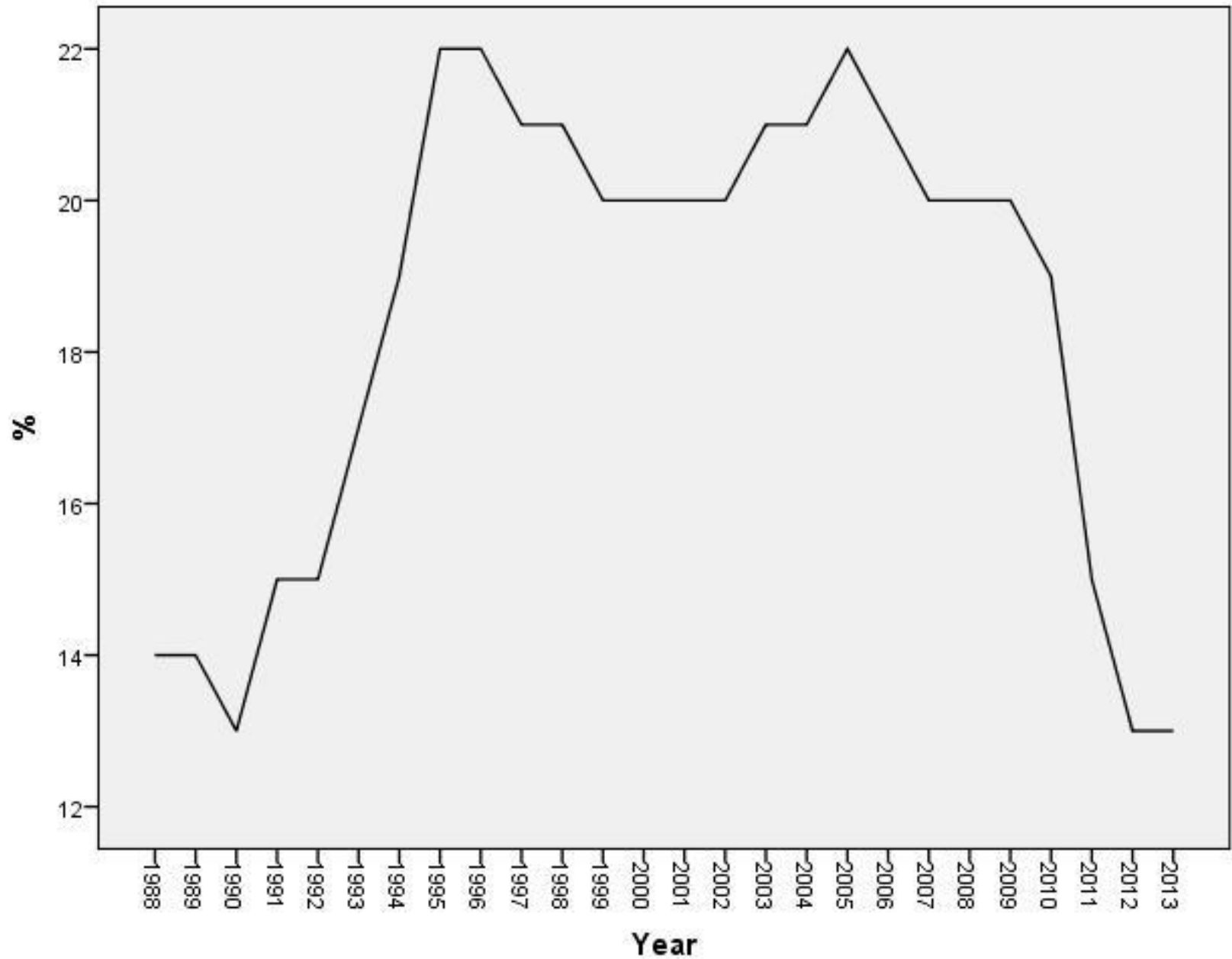
**BACK TO TWO DOMINANT  
PARTIES?**

## Monthly Poll Ratings from General Election 2010 to November 2013 (Smoothed)

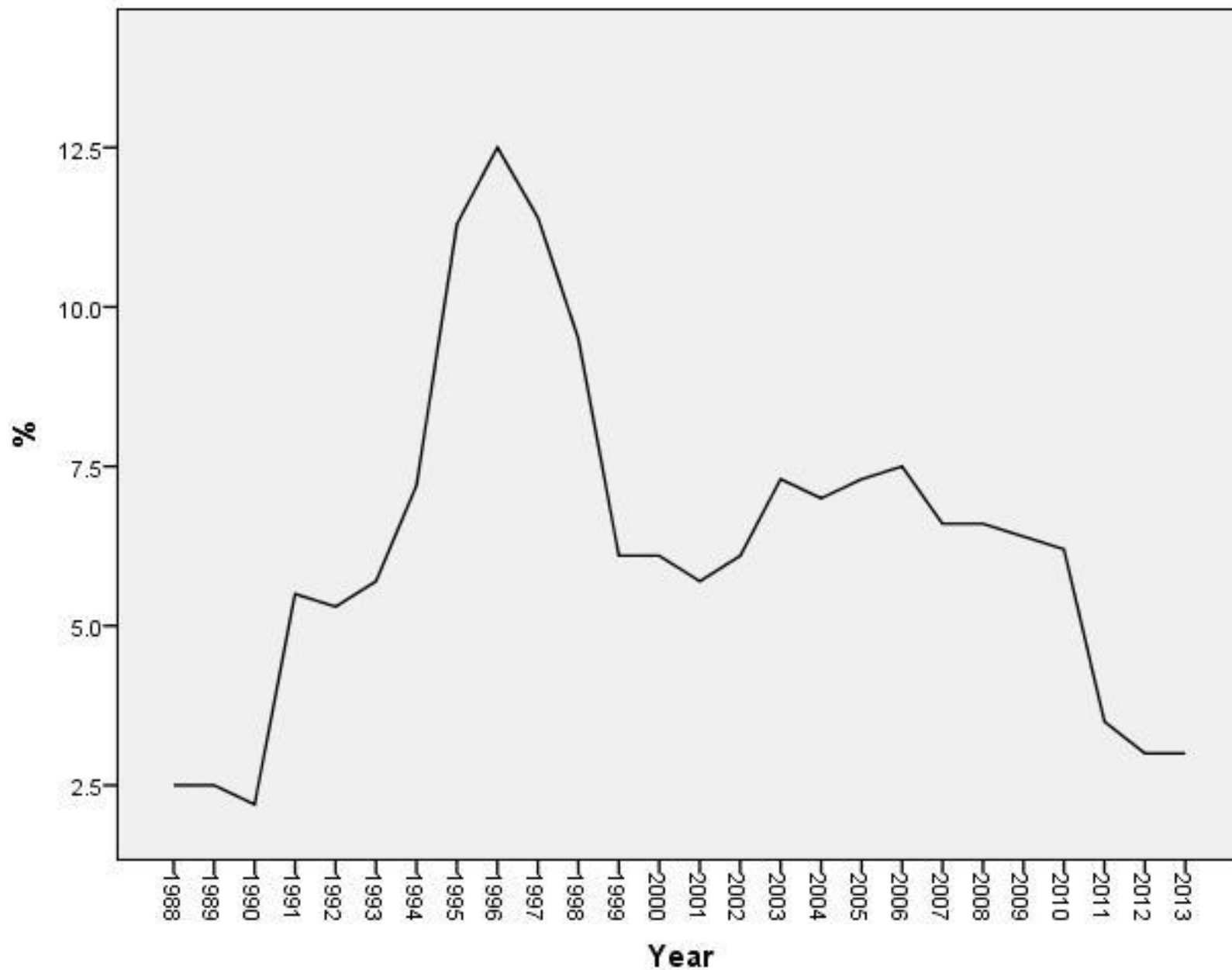


Source: Ipsos MORI

**Lib Dem Share of GB Councillors 1988-2013**

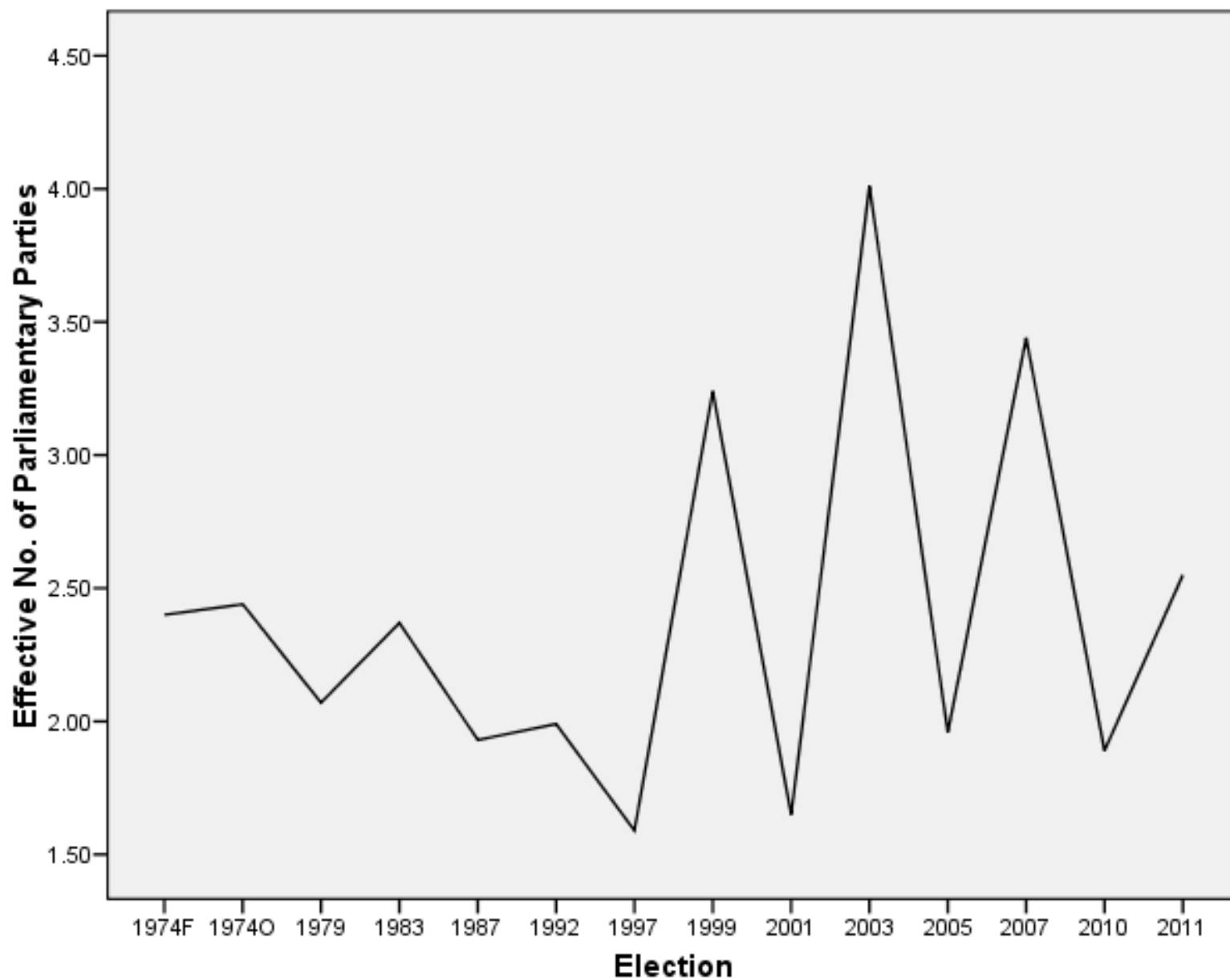


Lib Dem Share of GB Councils 1988-2013

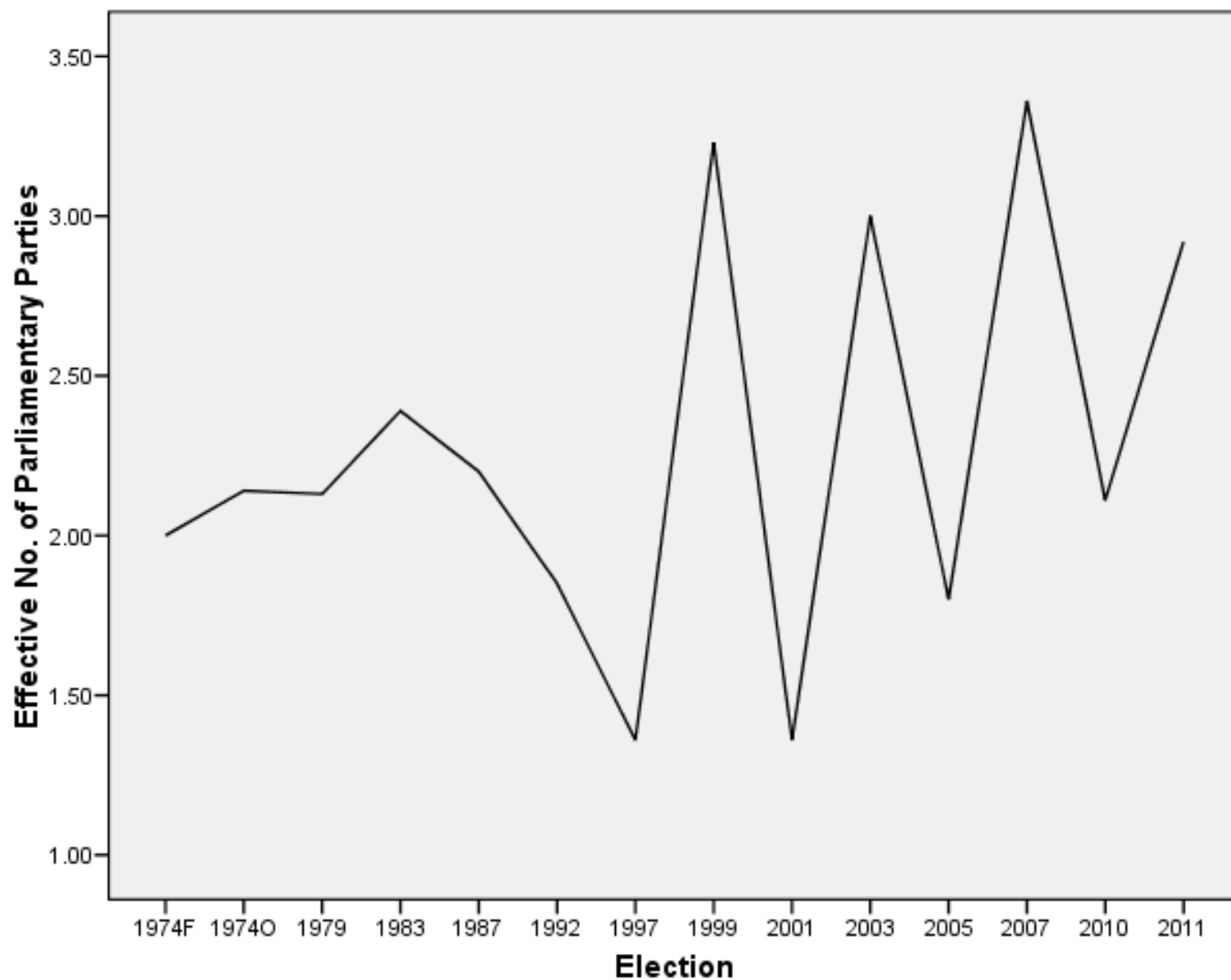


# **IMPACT OF DEVOLUTION**

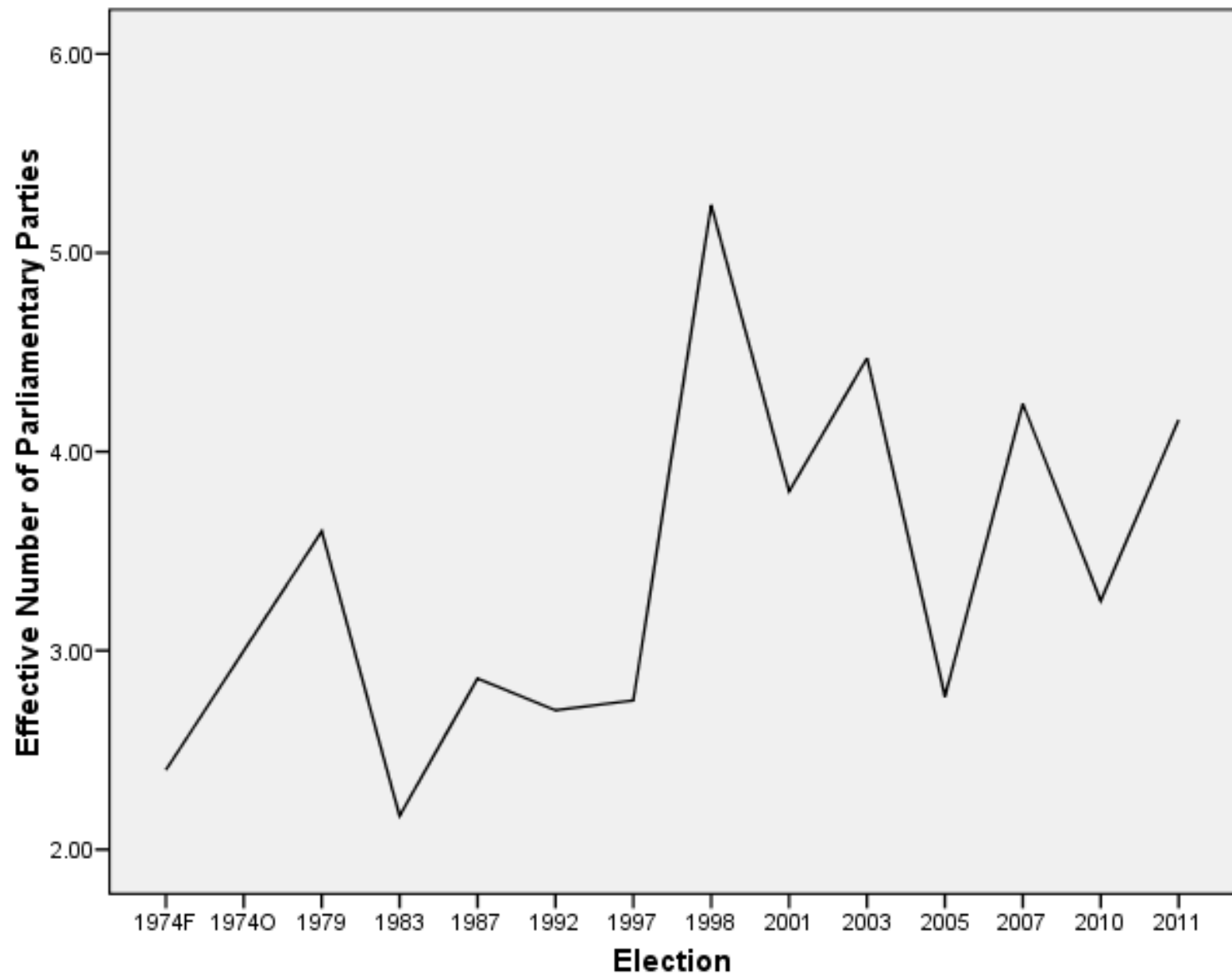
**Effective Number of Parliamentary Parties in Scotland 1974-2011**



**Effective Number of Parliamentary Parties in Wales 1974-2011**



**Effective Number of Parliamentary Parties in Northern Ireland 1974-2010**





# **THE IMPACT OF ELECTORAL SYSTEMS**

# To What Extent Does the Electoral System Shape the Behaviour of Voters?

- It is no use assuming that voters will behave in the same way regardless of the electoral system, especially if some systems require ranked preferences to be made.
- ***Hypothesis:*** Voters' behaviour will change under different electoral systems, since voter choice is constrained or liberated by the electoral system in place.

# Assumptions

- Voter choice is constrained by systems like first past the post since voters consider that the national outcome is likely to be one of two parties governing and that in constituencies, there are generally only two likely victors.
- Whatever voting system is used, voters would not split their vote since the effects of ideological commitment and partisan identification are too strong

# How do we test these assumptions?

- Survey evidence using mock-ballots
- Aggregate evidence from two elections held on the same day
- Aggregate evidence from AMS elections in Britain

# Evidence from 2010 – Vote Same as First Choice in Mock AV Ballot?

Conservative	91%
Labour	90%
Lib Dems	75%

Source: BES 2010 England Only

# Concurrent Elections

- When local and general elections coincide, it is possible to compare at the aggregate level, voting in two elections where voters would have voted at exactly the same time.
- There is some evidence of ticket-splitting - thus undermining arguments about strong identification.

# Example - Local/General Election Vote Comparisons 1997

<b>%</b>	<b>Con</b>	<b>Lab</b>	<b>Lib Dem</b>	<b>Ref</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Turnout</b>
Local	33.0	38.5	23.1	0.0	3.6	70.8
General	34.8	42.3	16.8	3.2	1.5	71.7
Difference	1.8	3.7	-6.3	3.2	-2.2	0.9

Source: Rallings & Thrasher, 1998

# AMS Elections

- Voters cast two votes – one at constituency level, one for the regional list
- If voters use both votes, they can either vote for the same party twice, split their ticket (esp. if a smaller party is only standing in the regional list) or use only one vote.
- The example of the Scottish Parliament election in 2007 suggests that some ticket splitting took place – smaller parties are the beneficiaries.



# Example - Scottish Parliament Elections 2007

<b>% Vote Share</b>	<b>Constit.</b>	<b>List</b>	<b>Diff.</b>
<b>Labour</b>	32.1	29.2	2.9
<b>SNP</b>	32.9	31.0	1.9
<b>Lib Dems</b>	16.2	11.3	4.9
<b>Cons</b>	16.6	13.9	2.7
<b>Others</b>	2.2	14.6	12.4

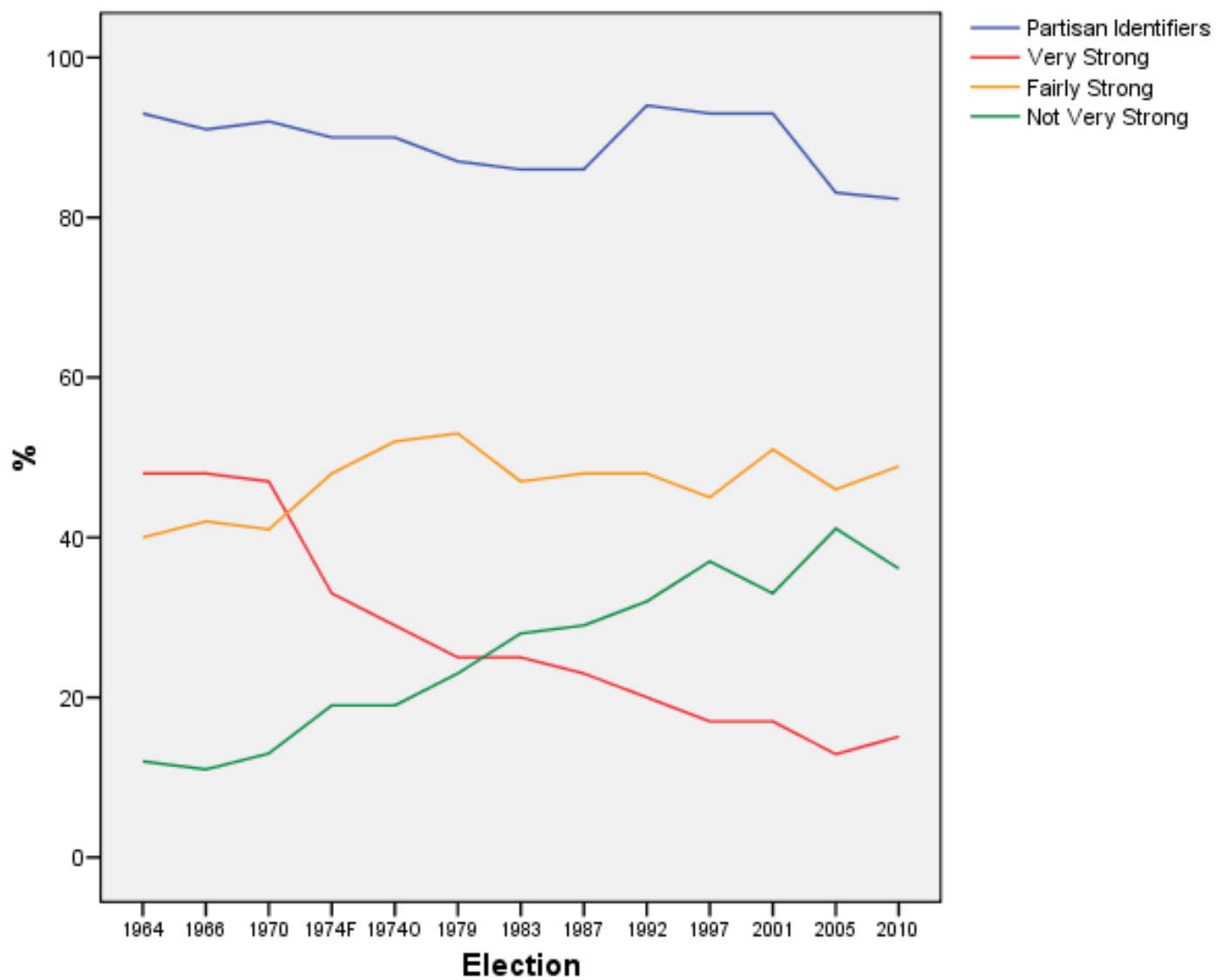
Source: House of Commons Library

# Overall

- The evidence to date does suggest that voters do sometimes behave differently under different systems and at different levels of government.
- But is the difference in behaviour as strong as we might expect?

# **DECLINING LOYALTIES TO PARTIES**

## Partisan Identifiers 1964-2010

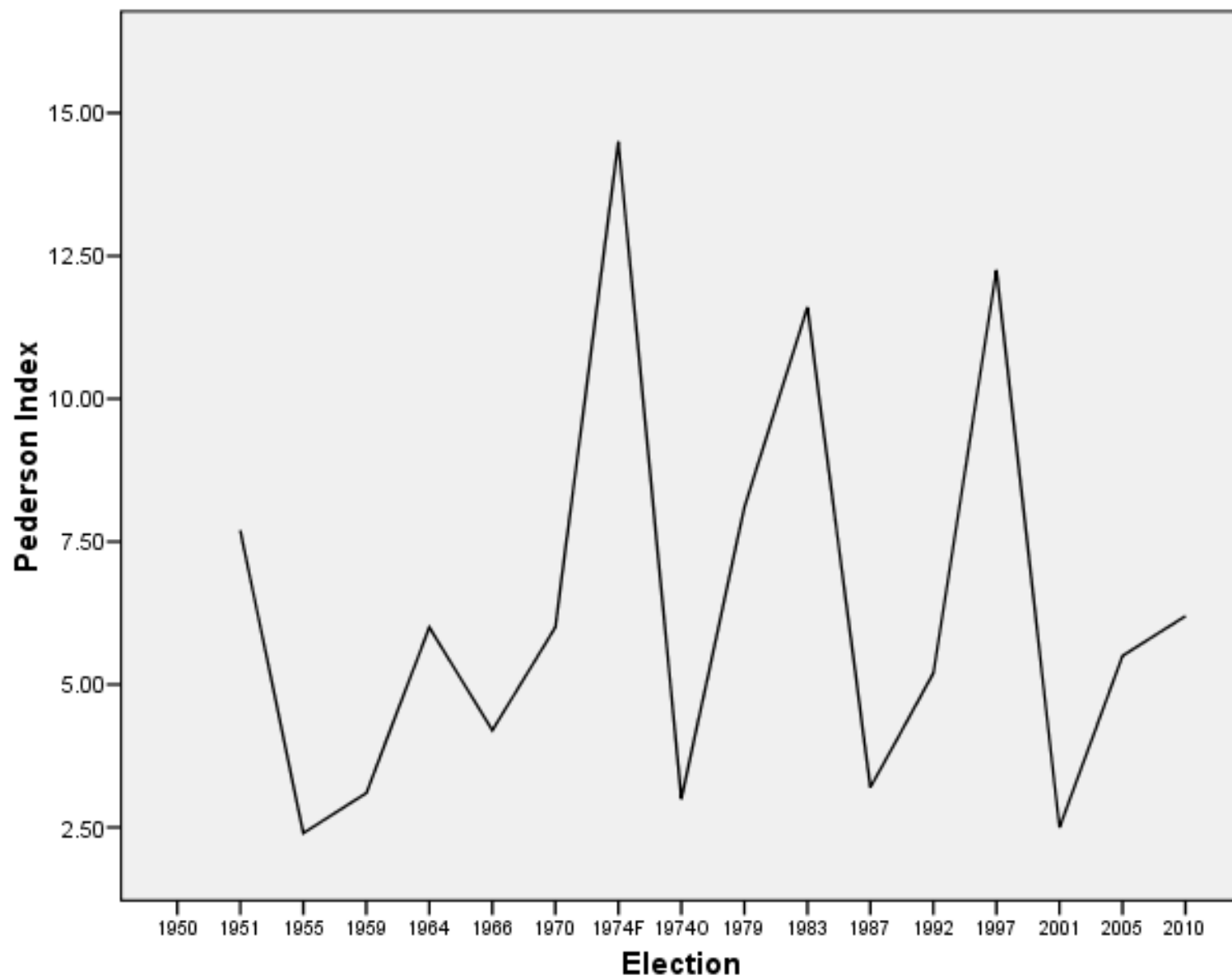


Source: British Election Study

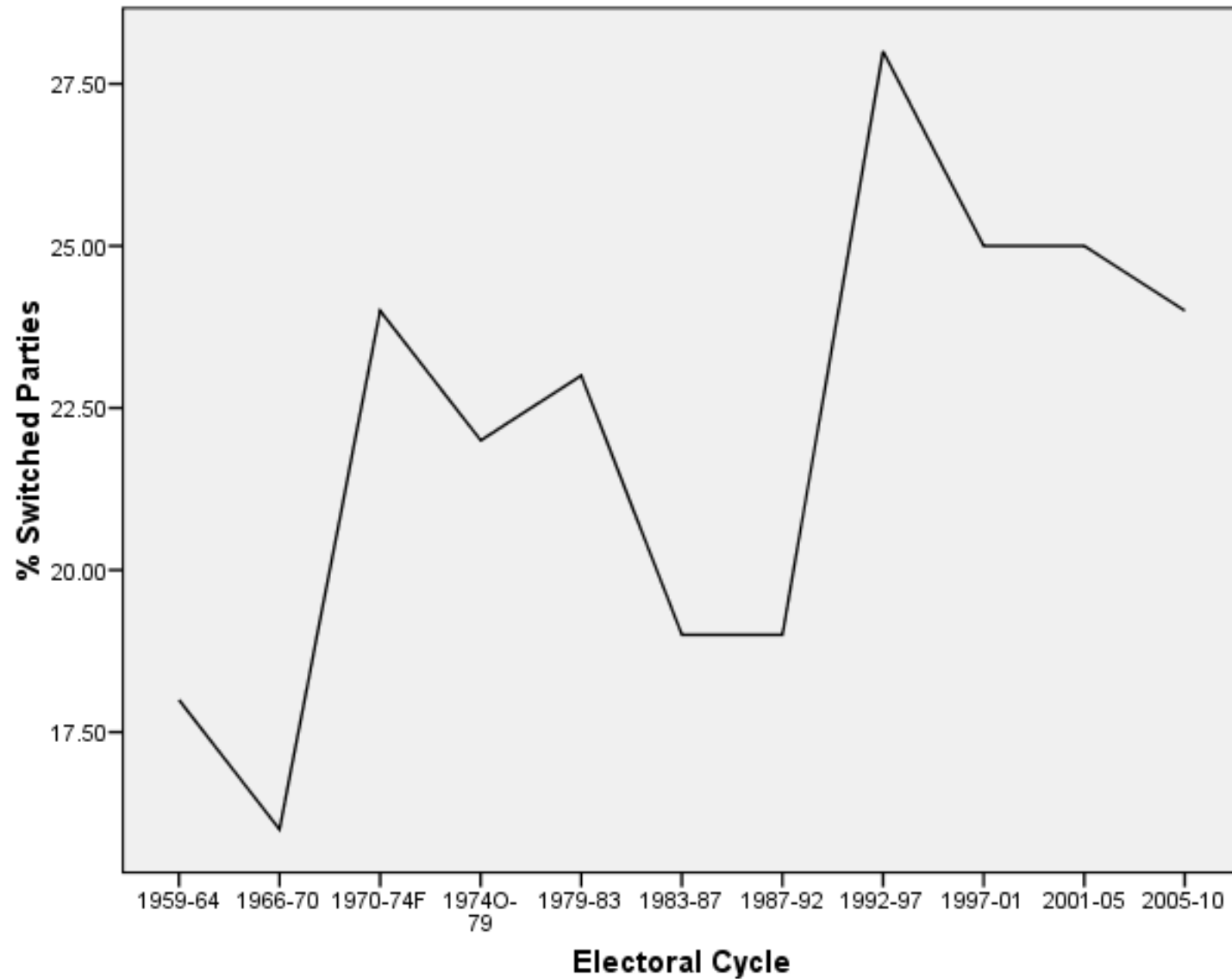
# Two Measures of Volatility

- Net Volatility. Aggregate data – Pederson Index
- Gross Volatility. Individual level data
- Both suggest an increase in voter volatility
- Do levels of volatility reflect declining loyalty?

**Net Volatility 1951-2010**

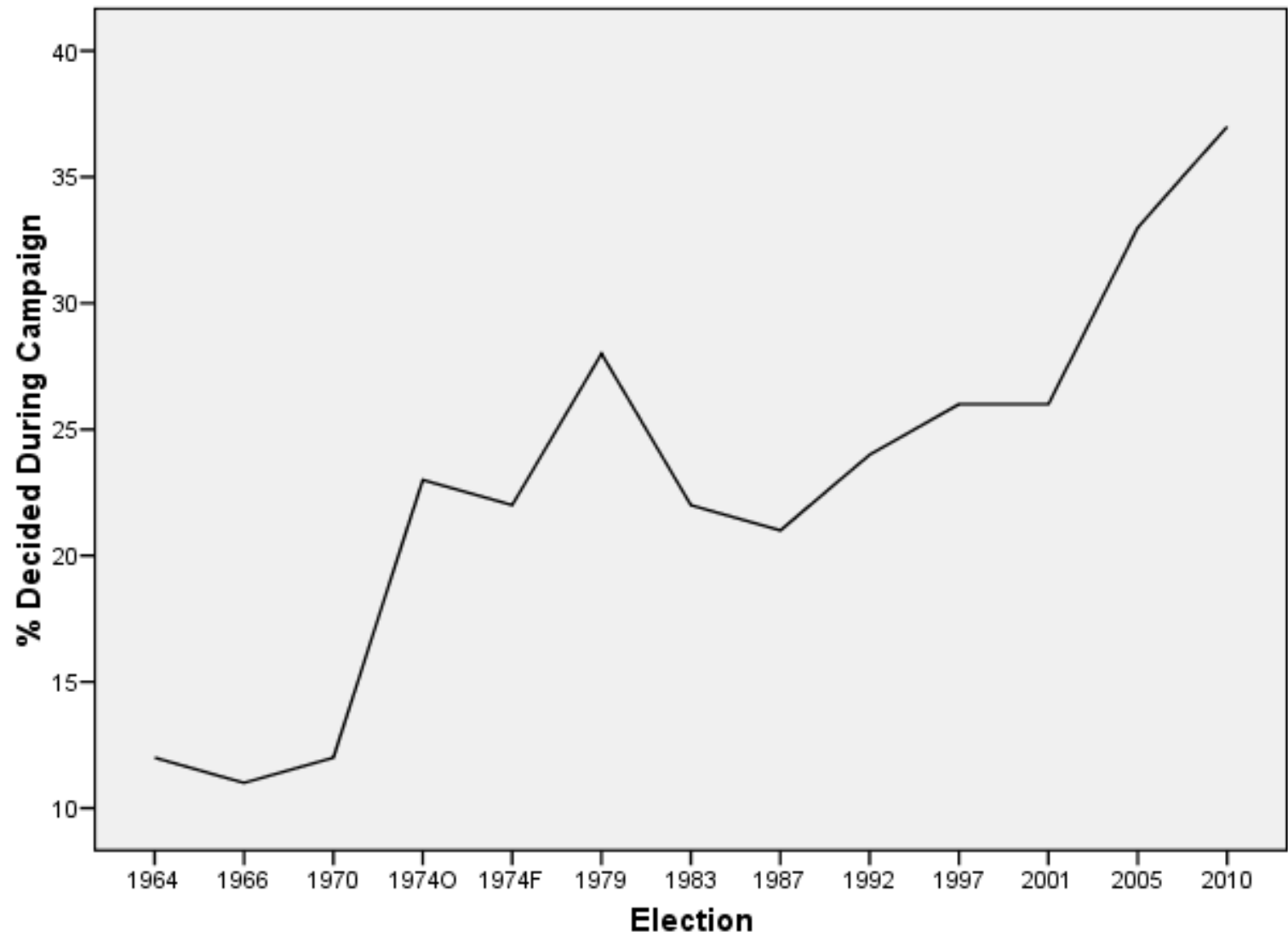


## Overall (Gross) Volatility - Voters Only 1959-2010



Source: British Election Study

## Late Deciders 1964-2010



Source: BES



# **THE IMPACT OF CAMPAIGNS AT DISTRICT LEVEL**

# Conducive Conditions

- Conditions more conducive to campaign effectiveness
- Partisan identification has declined in intensity
- Voter hesitancy has increased
- More waverers to convert or reinforce

# Measuring Campaign Strength

- Surveys of election agents in each constituency which ask them to provide details of their party's level of preparation, organization, the number of party workers, the amounts and different types of campaigning that took place and the extent of activity on polling day.
- A scale of campaign intensity is constructed which allows us to test the distribution of activity by seat status as well as the electoral effects

# Mean Campaign Intensity Scores 1992-2010

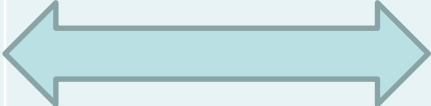
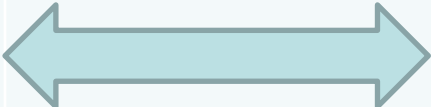
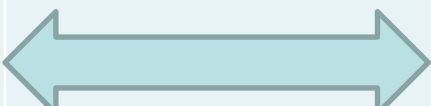
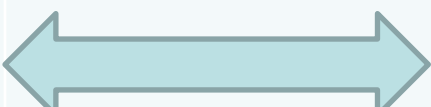
	Conservative					Labour					Lib Dems				
	1992	1997	2001	2005	2010	1992	1997	2001	2005	2010	1992	1997	2001	2005	2010
Held Not Targets	139	126	127	133	118	114	110	106	111	117	*	*	112	126	*
Targets	134	133	134	136	139	143	152	137	135	134	123	140	132	141	143
Not Held Not Targets	94	94	87	117	91	93	105	86	77	76	49	76	71	77	82
All	124	112	113	133	112	112	113	105	102	100	82	81	78	90	90

Scores can be compared across parties for the same year, but not over time

# Electoral Effects

- Campaigning overall boosts turnout
- Liberal Democrat campaigning has consistently boosted vote share
- Labour campaigning boosted vote share except in 2005
- Conservative campaigning generally ineffective except in 2010
- Impact of campaigning varies by election

# Exogenous factors influencing likely effectiveness of constituency campaigns

	More Effective		Less Effective
<b>Closeness of Election</b>	Popularity Equilibrium		Unpopular party(ies)
<b>Significant Change Likely</b>	Challenger(s)		Incumbent
<b>High No's of Target Seats</b>	Unpopular party(ies)		Popularity Equilibrium
<b>Central Management</b>	Clear Objectives		Unclear Objectives

# Concluding Thoughts

- Was 2010 the highpoint for multi-partism at Westminster Level?
- Electoral systems have some impact on voter choices, but maybe not as much as expected
- Declining loyalties to parties means short-term influences may be more influential
- For example, campaigning at constituency level generally yields payoffs