

Preferential Voting in Finland: How Much Do Candidates Matter, and to Whom and Why?

Introduction

'The properties of the electoral system influence the individuals to be nominated as candidates, the candidates who become elected and, ultimately, the policies that will be pursued. Elections are the very epitome of popular sovereignty.'

(Wiberg 2006: 81)

Preferential voting systems present the electorate with a choice both between parties and between individual candidates representing the various parties. In so doing, they furnish the voters with a higher degree of influence than other electoral systems. Not just the party composition of the representative assembly but the choice of the individual representatives as well may be determined by the voters. From the point of view of democratic theory, preferential voting systems are therefore of self-evident interest. The same goes for the empirical study of parties, candidates and voter behavior.

Overall, however, preferential systems have not received due attention in political research. One main reason is, banally enough, that preferential voting is absent in the electoral systems of large Western countries. That the United States and Great Britain do not have preferential voting systems is of particular importance; books and journals published in these countries dominate the market. The fact that other large countries such as Germany and France similarly lack preferential voting systems reinforces this effect. Phenomena that are relevant to publishers and readers in these large markets more or less automatically attract more attention. Countries such as Denmark, Finland, Ireland and Switzerland can perhaps not be called *quantités négligeables*. Nevertheless, the fact that they are small countries largely accounts for the limited interest in the peculiarities of their electoral systems.

Apart from a couple of early analyses (Katz 1980; Marsh 1985), it is only fairly recently that preferential systems have started to attract major interest in cross-national research (Bengtsson et al 2014; Colomer 2011a; Karvonen 2004; Karvonen 2010). Large-scale comparative research has become much easier to conduct thanks to the emergence of readily available data sets. As more countries participate in comparative data efforts, the effects of variation in electoral systems become easier to control for (Klingemann 2009).

The Finnish electoral system

The 200-seat Finnish parliament is elected for a four-year term from 14 multimember constituencies and one single-member district³; the former range from 6 to 34 seats, median district magnitude being 13. The calling of early elections is constitutionally complicated and therefore an unlikely event. The electoral system that has been used in Finnish parliamentary elections since 1954 combines a proportional list system with mandatory candidate voting. Parties and party alliances nominate candidates for lists that are normally ordered alphabetically. Voters simply write the number of their candidate of choice on the ballot paper (Figure 1); there is no possibility to cast a mere party vote.

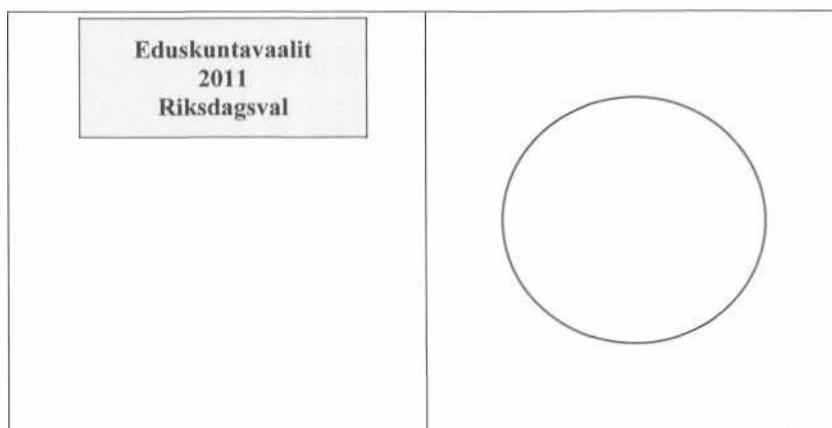


FIGURE 1. *A ballot paper in a Finnish parliamentary election.*

When calculating the results, candidate votes are first summed at the level of the electoral district so as to determine the vote totals of the various lists. The number of seats won by each list is determined on the basis of these list vote totals by using the d'Hondt divisor. The most popular candidate on each list receives a "vote ratio" that equals the total list vote. After that, the list totals are divided by 2 and the result is assigned to the second most popular candidate on each list as his/her vote ratio, whereupon the list totals are divided by three to determine the ratio for the third most popular candidates, and so on. The first seat in an electoral district goes to the candidate whose list has the highest vote total. Thereafter, the vote ratios of all candidates are compared to determine who gets the second seat. Seats are assigned to candidates in the order of their descending vote ratios until all seats in the district have been filled.

The following example from the 2011 election shows how the system works in practice. In South Savo, one of the smallest electoral districts (6 seats) the distribution of votes for the main parties and their top candidates was as follows (Table 1):

³ That of the autonomous province of Åland. As Åland has a provincial political system of its own, including a separate party system, it will be excluded from this study. As of the 2015 election, the number of mainland constituencies will be 12, as South Savo will be amalgamated with Kymi and North Savo with North Karelia.

TABLE 1. *The distribution of the six seats in South Savo in the 2011 election.*

Party (Total party vote)	Candidates	Personal vote	Vote ratio	Result
Center Party (22351)	Jari Leppä	5567	22351	Elected as Nr 1
	Katri Komi	4966	11175.5	Elected as Nr 5
	Seija Korhonen	2556	7450.3	Not elected
Social democrats (19988)	Jouni Backman	5478	19988	Elected as Nr 2
	Pauliina Viitamies	4476	9994	Elected as Nr 6
	Satu Taavitsainen	2921	6662.7	Not elected
True Finns (17107)	Kaj Turunen	2632	17107	Elected as Nr 3
	Jukka Pöyry	2342	8553.5	Not elected
Conservatives (15532)	Lenita Toivakka	5778	15532	Elected as Nr 4
	Olli Neponnen	2910	7766	Not elected

This example shows that candidates with fairly high personal vote totals may fail to be elected; while at the same time others with more limited personal votes do gain seats. The True Finn Turunen had fewer personal votes than both Taavitsainen (social democrat) and Neponnen (conservative). However, the True Finn list in South Savo mustered enough votes for the party's top candidate to become elected despite the fairly limited number of personal votes won by him. In this case, there was a relatively even spread of personal votes across the list. Even more often, however, candidates with limited personal votes become elected thanks to one or several individually popular candidates who secure the party list a high vote total and thus "pull up" one or several weaker candidates. An important feature of the Finnish electoral system is that, unlike several other preferential list systems, it does not stipulate a minimum requirement concerning personal votes (Raunio 2008: 476-82; cf. Müller 2008: 404; Karvonen 2010: 47).

Hypotheses

This chapter looks at preferential voting in Finland from several angles. These are represented by a series of hypotheses that will be specified and examined in the empirical section of this chapter:

H1. *Candidates matter.* If party was the only thing that mattered to voters they might be expected to pick candidates from party lists in random. However, since the system allows for voter influence over the selection of individual representatives voters are likely to make an active choice by considering the qualities of the various candidates. Consequently, the vote distribution on candidates is expected to be significantly different from a random distribution throughout the period.

H2. *Time matters.* Several authors suggest that there has been a general personalization of politics in recent decades (McAllister 2007; Manin 1997: 219-21). As a result,

the importance of candidates is expected to manifest itself more markedly throughout the political spectrum in recent elections. If this is the case, one would expect the distribution of candidate votes today to look different from earlier periods.

H3. *Incumbency matters.* Although considerable variation exists among stable western democracies, incumbent representatives everywhere tend to have an advantage over other candidates (Somit et al. 1993: 12-13). Incumbents are therefore expected to receive significantly more votes than non-incumbents.

H4. *Ideology matters.* Historically, socialist parties are mass parties that stress the interests of the workers as a collective. Socialist voters can be expected to emphasize party over candidate more than bourgeois voters. The distribution of candidate votes is therefore expected to deviate more from a random distribution in the case of bourgeois parties than for socialist parties. On the other hand, most stable democracies have witnessed a decrease in ideological party distances over time (Caul & Grey 2002: 212). One might therefore expect the distribution of candidate votes to be affected less by ideology over time.

H5. *Party identification matters.* Partisan voters are expected to stress candidates less than do voters with weak or nonexistent party identities.

H6. *Strategic voting matters.* District magnitude makes a difference. If there are fewer seats in the district, then the supporters of large as well as small parties may find it more important to make a careful candidate choice than if the number of seats is large. Voters may therefore be more prone to favor some candidates over others in small districts. Party size can also be expected to matter. For supporters of small parties with chances to win at best one seat in a district, the personal characteristics of candidates should make a greater difference than to citizens who vote for large parties with numerous seats in parliament. Moreover, voters frequently engage in conscious coordination to influence the outcome of the election (Cox 1997). One potentially powerful mechanism in Finland is the possibility for party lists to join forces in the form of electoral alliances that present joint lists to the electorate.⁴ For minor parties, electoral alliances often represent the only chance to win a seat in a constituency. This, however, requires that voters concentrate their support on a given candidate of a minor party. Consequently, minor parties in electoral alliances are expected to have candidates that deviate strongly from the random distribution.

The overall aim of the chapter is, thus, to gauge the importance of candidate voting in Finland, to uncover any temporal trends and to inquire into the causal dynamics of candidate voting.

Data and scope

Finnish electoral statistics provide a rich source of information and indeed form a necessary precondition for the present analysis. Ever since 1958, parliamentary election reports issued by Statistics Finland contain exact information on the votes cast for

⁴ This is the device known as *apparentement* in the literature on electoral systems; see Gallagher and Mitchell 2008:589.

each individual candidate on each list in each constituency. To date, these data on candidate votes have not been the object of a comprehensive study. Most of the other data necessary for this study, such as party affiliation, constituency, incumbency and the occurrence of inter-party electoral alliances can also be readily culled from official electoral statistics. For all hypotheses except H5 (party identification), the analysis is based on a longitudinal register data set comprising the 1958, 1966, 1975, 1987, 1995 and 2007 parliamentary elections. H5 requires individual-level data on voters which of course are not available in official electoral statistics. Moreover, for H4 (ideological position), it is also possible to examine how socialist and non-socialist voters view the importance of candidates versus parties. In these cases, the 2003 and 2007 Finnish National Election Studies provide the data source.

Two dependent variables will be used in the analysis of the register data. The first is based on the difference between the candidates' actual shares of their party list vote totals and the share that each candidate would get if the distribution were completely even. If a party in a given election and in a particular district runs 15 candidates, then the vote share of each candidate would be $100/15 = 6.7\%$ if the candidate votes were distributed in a perfectly even manner. The absolute differences between this theoretically expected share and the candidates' actual vote shares will then be calculated. The mean of these differences is the first dependent variable.

The second dependent variable is based on the candidates' shares of their party list totals in each election and each electoral district. It is particularly interesting to examine the standard deviation of these vote shares; if deviations are large, then votes have been concentrated on certain candidates while others receive considerably smaller shares.

For the individual-level analysis, the following survey question included in the Finnish National Election Studies will be used: "In the final analysis, which was more important to you, party or candidate?" The effects of the respondents' ideological position and party identification are particularly interesting as possible explanations in this regard.

The study of register data comprises six elections between 1958 and 2007. All candidates of parties that won at least one seat in one election will be included. The total number of such parties is sixteen, and these ran a total of 8096 candidates in the six elections studied. Five of the parties have won seats at each of the six elections, another five at 2-5 elections and the remaining six at a single election. The number of candidates has grown over the years. At the beginning of the period around 1000 candidates ran for the parties included; in the 2000s, the number of candidates was already over 1500.

The individual-level data from the 2003 and 2007 Finnish National Election Studies stem from post-election face-to-face surveys. The number of respondents who replied to the question about the relative importance of candidate versus party was about a thousand in both surveys.

The analysis will be structured according to the hypotheses presented above. First, descriptive accounts and bivariate analyses will be presented for each of them. Finally, the dynamics of candidate voting will be examined in a multivariate analysis to get a better idea of overall patterns.

Analysis

Hypothesis 1 about the general importance of candidates is readily confirmed when the entire dataset is surveyed. As expected, the vote shares of individual candidates vary a great deal. This is the case irrespective of whether we measure the distribution of candidate votes against the theoretically expected even distribution or with the variation of actual candidate vote shares. The standard deviation of the mean values of these variables is higher than the mean values themselves. Concerning the difference between the expected and actual vote shares of candidates, the mean value is 6.12 and the standard deviation 8.27. For the "candidate share of total party vote in district", the mean is 8.70 and the standard deviation 14.54. Clearly, "candidates matter".

What about trends over time? Has there been a personalization of the vote so that votes are increasingly concentrated on a few popular candidates while other candidates receive decreasing vote shares? This can be studied by looking at the mean differences between expected and actual vote shares at each election separately. Clearly, these differences have varied to a certain extent from election to election. However, the data do not point towards a clear trend over time; the mean difference has fluctuated between elections without a clear pattern. The highest figure (mean: 8.01) was reached at the 1975 election, whereafter it declined and has continued to fluctuate between elections. Irrespective of how one might interpret the concentration/dispersion of candidate votes, the empirical evidence at hand does not lend support to a hypothesis about a general personalization of politics over time.

Incumbent representatives almost universally have an advantage over other candidates. They can claim relevant experience and point to a confidence that they have already earned among the voters. In many systems, such as the US senate, replacing an incumbent in fact may mean a loss of influence for the constituency, as seniority is an important criterion for the assignment of important committee chairmanships and other positions.

A sizable portion of parliamentary candidates in Finland have been incumbents. In the six elections 1958-2007, 12.7 % of the candidates were already MPs when they entered the race. With the rising total number of candidates, the share of incumbents has declined somewhat. Thus, while the share of incumbents in 1958 was 19.5 % and in 1966 17 %, the corresponding figure for the 1993 and 2007 elections was 10.7.

As is evident from Table 2, incumbency strongly influences the chances of a candidate to win votes. As was expected incumbent representatives muster considerably larger vote shares than other candidates.

TABLE 2. *The vote shares of incumbents and non-incumbents.*

Is candidate incumbent?	Difference between expected and actual vote share	Candidate share of total party vote in district
No		
Mean	5.34	7.16
N	7066	7066
Std. dev.	7.08	13.63
Yes		
Mean	11.45	19.21
N	1030	1030
Std. dev.	12.69	16.13
	F=522.63 Sig=.000	F=668.21 Sig=.000

A similar analysis was also carried out separately for each of the six elections. The overall pattern repeated itself when the figures for the individual elections were surveyed; the annual values were significant at the .000-level in each case. All in all, incumbency stands out as an important determinant behind the distribution of candidate votes. This is in accordance with general patterns familiar from a wide range of other contexts and therefore not a particularly surprising finding. Still, the consistency with which the pattern repeats itself from election to election is noteworthy.

Ideology and organization form the second focus of the analysis. In a classical formulation about the origin and organization of political parties, Maurice Duverger distinguished between mass parties and cadre parties (1951: 84-95). For the former, the members constituted their very essence. It was by educating the mass of their members that these parties created an elite capable of shouldering political responsibilities. Without a mass membership, these parties were like "teachers without students" (Duverger 1951: 84). Socialist parties were the prime example of mass parties.

Cadre parties, by contrast, were assemblies of notables who joined forces in order to contest, finance and win elections. Their personal influence and skills were the core resource. Membership and organization were secondary, the gaining of power by winning elections the overarching goal. Moderate and conservative parties were prime examples (Duverger 1951: 85).

H4 is based on an expectation that these historical differences continue to be reflected in the vote distribution of parties. The way personal votes are distributed on socialist candidates is expected to differ from the pattern for non-socialist parties. Moreover, we expect these differences to diminish over time. For one, there has been an ongoing process of ideological convergence in Finland as well as in most other Western countries whereby the parties of the right and left have moved closer to each other (Karvonen & Rappe 1991; Pesonen & Riihinen 2002: 147-148). In addition, the internal organization of political parties has become fairly uniform since the introduction of public party subsidies in 1966. This decision was followed by the introduction of a Party Law in 1969 whereby parties were obliged to establish a democratic internal organization (Sundberg 1996: 13-40).

In the following, these questions are examined with the aid of both register data and individual-level data. Basically, these analyses involve a comparison of the two traditional left wing parties with all other parties. Ever since 1922, the left of the Finnish party spectrum has contained two parties, a moderate and a more radical socialist party. The former is the Social Democratic Party (SDP) that dates back to 1899. The latter is today the Left Alliance; historically, it is the heir of the communist-dominated party that appeared in 1922 as a result of a split in the SDP. Apart from these two main parties, the register data contain candidates for a couple of smaller splinter groups that contested elections and won seats during the period studied.

TABLE 3. *The vote shares of socialist and non-socialist candidates, 1958-2007.*

Candidate's party	Difference between expected and actual vote share	Candidate share of total party vote in district
Socialist		
Mean	5.14	7.04
N	2869	2869
Std. dev.	6.09	9.91
Non-socialist		
Mean	6.65	9.60
N	5227	5227
Std. dev.	9.21	16.47
	F=62.18 Sig=.000	F=57.99 Sig=.000

Table 3 supports the hypothesis about the effect of ideology on the distribution of candidate votes. The votes for socialist candidates deviate less from the theoretically expected vote shares than is the case with non-socialist candidates. The actual vote shares of the latter display a much higher standard deviation than the vote shares of socialist candidates. This would seem to indicate that the qualities of individual candidates weigh more heavily for bourgeois voters than for the socialist electorate.

As for temporal trends, the data do not lend the hypothesis about a convergence between the ideological blocs unequivocal support. To be sure, four of the six elections clearly repeat the pattern found in Table 3. However, the two elections that do not fit this pattern fail to point to a linear change over time. The two elections at which the distribution of candidate votes between the blocs was roughly similar were those of 1966 and 2007. The 1966 election was exceptional. For the only time during Finland's independence, the left wing won a majority of both the popular vote (51 %) and the seats in Parliament (103 out of 200). It is possible that this electoral success temporarily swelled the ranks of the socialist parties with citizens that behaved differently from normal socialist voters. It might therefore be argued that this election can be disregarded when considering temporal patterns. As this would leave the 2007 election as the sole confirmation of a convergence between the blocs, the evidence must nevertheless be considered too feeble.

An analysis of individual-level data from the 2003 and 2007 Finnish National Election Surveys⁵ revealed no significant differences between socialist and non-socialist voters. When asked the question "In the final analysis, which was more important to you, party or candidate?", they responded in a roughly similar manner.⁶ This might be taken as an indication that the impact of ideology has indeed declined in the 2000s.

Party identification is a standard factor utilized in studies of voter behavior. Some citizens feel close to a particular political party while others find it difficult to identify with any of them. It does not seem far-fetched to expect the latter to emphasize the importance of candidates more than the former who are expected to stress party over candidate. The 2003 and 2007 Finnish National Election Surveys contained the following question⁷: "Do you usually think of yourself as close to any particular party?" Table 4 shows how answers to this question combined with the respondents' view of the importance of party versus candidate for their vote choice.

TABLE 4. *Party identification and the importance of party versus candidate.*

Year	In the final analysis, which was more important to you, party or candidate?	Party more important Count Expected count	Do you usually think of yourself as close to any particular party?		Chi square Sig N
			Yes	No	
2003	In the final analysis, which was more important to you, party or candidate?	Party more important Count Expected count	325 251.1	156 229.9	92.09 .000 950
		Candidate more important Count Expected count	171 244.9	298 224.1	
2007	In the final analysis, which was more important to you, party or candidate?	Party more important Count Expected count	402 332.2	144 213.8	73.06 .000 1121
		Candidate more important Count Expected count	280 349.8	295 225.2	

⁵ The data can be acquired from the Finnish Social Science Data Archive at www.fsd.uta.fi. The archival numbers of the datasets are FSD1260 (2003) and FSD2269 (2007).

⁶ In 2003, 49 % said party was more important, 47 % that candidate was more important, while 4 % could not say. In 2007 the corresponding figures were 48, 51 and 1.

⁷ The item originates from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems, see <http://cses.org/>

The data clearly confirm the hypothesis about the effects of party identification. Both 2003 and 2007, party identifiers emphasized the importance of party over candidate significantly more than non-identifiers.

As to strategic aspects related to elections, the present analysis focuses on size and electoral alliances. The size of social units has powerful effects on behavior within them (Colomer 2011b: 25-31, 214-235). This is particularly true about elections and parties. If the size of electoral districts is large the representation of that district will be in the hands of numerous individuals; the relative importance of the individual qualities of each representative is limited. If the constituency sends but a small handful of representatives to parliament, it becomes much more important to get the "right" persons elected. A similar reasoning can be applied to party size as well. If the voters of a party can be sure about the party's winning several candidates, the importance of the qualities of individual candidates should be smaller than for parties that can at best win one or two seats in the constituency.

Tables 5 and 6 show how district magnitude and party size affect the distribution of candidate votes. In both cases, size is classified as "small", "medium" or "large". The former is constructed so that each of the classes comprises roughly a third of the units of analysis. Party size is classified so that small parties are those that receive less than ten percent of the total vote in the district, medium parties 10-18 %, and large parties 18 % or more. Small parties run a risk of not winning a seat especially if the district is small, medium-sized parties normally win at least one seat (several if the district is large), while large parties normally win several seats irrespective of district size.

TABLE 5. *The effect of district magnitude.*

District size	Difference between expected and actual vote share	Candidate share of total party vote in district
<i>Small</i>		
Mean	7.37	10.98
N	2606	2606
Std. dev.	9.19	16.86
<i>Medium</i>		
Mean	6.46	9.12
N	2478	2478
Std. dev.	8.67	14.84
<i>Large</i>		
Mean	4.75	6.38
N	3012	3012
Std. dev.	6.75	11.45
	F=74.31 Sig=.000	F=72.74 Sig=.000

District size: Small = fewer than 13 seats; medium = 13-17; large = 18 or more

In addition to these analyses, size was also measured in terms of the number of candidates for each party in each district. The expectation was as follows: if there are more candidates to choose from then the likelihood is greater that voters will spread their votes more evenly across the slate of candidates. In order to check this, a correlation analysis was carried out. The Pearson correlation coefficient between the number of candidates and the difference between actual and expected vote shares was -.347, a clearly significant figure ($p=.000$).

The effect of size seems clear irrespective of whether it is measured in terms of district magnitude, party vote shares in the electoral district or the number of candidates run by the parties. With increasing size the discrepancy between the theoretically expected even distribution of candidate votes and candidates' actual vote shares decreases. When district magnitude and party size increase, the standard deviation of candidate vote shares declines.

TABLE 6. *The effect of party size.*

Party size	Difference between expected and actual vote share	Candidate share of total party vote in district
<i>Small</i>		
Mean	7.64	11.13
N	3485	3485
Std. dev.	11.11	20.29
<i>Medium</i>		
Mean	5.73	6.84
N	1696	1696
Std. dev.	6.13	8.62
<i>Large</i>		
Mean	4.52	6.86
N	2915	2915
Std. dev.	3.90	6.26

F=118.90 Sig=.000

F=87.88 Sig=.000

Electoral alliances in Finnish elections function as follows. If parties A and B form an electoral alliance they will run separate party campaigns, but when the votes are counted they are treated as a single list. Before entering into an alliance parties therefore make careful calculations as to how their electoral success may be affected; if the participating parties expect to gain from an alliance they will form one, otherwise they will abstain. Once an alliance has been formed, it becomes important for the parties to ensure an optimal distribution of candidate votes. If candidate votes for one's own party are widely dispersed while the votes for the candidates of other parties in the alliance are concentrated optimally, then one's party risks helping the other parties to win without a similar advantage of its own. This affects small parties in particular. For them, the electoral alliance usually presents a chance to win a single seat in the district, but this requires a rigorous coordination of candidate votes.

Tables 7 and 8 show how the distribution of candidate votes is affected by electoral alliances. The first table shows the effect of the occurrence of electoral alliances, the second the effect of electoral alliance in combination with party size. For the latter analysis party size is dichotomized so that parties with less than 10 % of the district vote are classified as small while parties with 10 % or more are classified as "larger".

TABLE 7. *The effect of electoral alliances.*

Is party in list alliance?	Difference between expected and actual vote share	Candidate share of total party vote in district
No		
Mean	5.00	6.67
N	5925	5925
Std. dev.	6.10	8.69
Yes		
Mean	9.15	14.23
N	2171	2171
Std. dev.	11.87	23.24
$F=421.24$ Sig=.000		$F=454.64$ Sig=.000

TABLE 8. *The combined effect of party size and electoral alliance.*

Party size and alliance	Difference between expected and actual vote share	Candidate share of total party vote in district
<i>Larger party, no alliance</i>		
Mean	4.71	6.51
N	3393	3393
Std. dev.	4.86	6.98
<i>Small party, no alliance</i>		
Mean	5.39	6.87
N	2532	2532
Std. dev.	7.43	10.55
<i>Larger party, alliance</i>		
Mean	5.66	7.80
N	1218	1218
Std. dev.	4.88	7.75
<i>Small party, alliance</i>		
Mean	13.62	22.457
N	953	953
Std. dev.	15.98	32.15
$F=339.63$ Sig=.000		$F=369.33$ Sig=.000

Electoral alliances clearly make a difference both as such and in combination with party size. When parties are in electoral alliance the votes for their candidates tend to be more unevenly distributed than when there is no list alliance. Over and above this, party size has an independent effect. The candidates of larger parties display more even vote distributions than those of small parties even if there is an electoral alliance.

Overall, the effects of strategic factors were as expected.⁸ Limited district magnitude as well as small party size seems to lead to an uneven distribution of candidate votes. Electoral alliances have a similar effect.

The bivariate analyses above point to several factors of importance for the distribution of candidate votes. The relative explanatory power of the factors based on register data was also tested with the aid of a multivariate analysis. The dependent variable is the difference between the expected and actual vote shares of candidates. The independent variables are grouped as follows: a) party-related variables (ideology, party size, number of candidates, electoral alliance), b) candidate-related variables (incumbency) and c) variables related to electoral district (district magnitude). The analysis starts with the party-related factors, and then adds the effect of incumbency followed by district magnitude.

TABLE 9. *The determinants of candidate voting: three models.*

	Party-related factors	Candidate-related factors	District-related factors
Ideology (socialist = 1)	.12	.25	.39*
Party vote share in district	-.13***	-.19***	-.17***
No. of candidates on party list	-.39***	-.39***	-.60***
List alliance (yes = 1)	1.96***	1.81***	.96***
Incumbency (yes = 1)		7.58***	7.38***
District magnitude			.24***
Constant	13.55***	13.45***	12.87***
F-value	376.54	520.28	457.20
R2	.16	.24	.25
Adj. R2	.16	.24	.25
N	8095	8095	8095

Dependent variable: Difference between expected and actual vote share for candidates

Coefficients are unstandardized B coefficients

Significance: *) p<.05 ***) p<.001

All variables except ideology possess statistically significant explanatory power in the multivariate analysis. The bivariate analysis indicated that the votes for socialist candidates were more evenly distributed than those for non-socialist candidates. This association was not upheld in the regression analysis. It was in fact reversed, although the association was not statistically significant except in the final model. This seems to corroborate the finding from the individual level analysis where no statistically significant effect of ideology was observed. The statistically significant result in the bivariate analysis of register data was therefore apparently a product of other factors.

⁸ For each of the independent variables in this section, separate annual analyses were undertaken. These repeated the patterns found for the data at large.

Notably, there was a difference in the incidence of electoral alliances; especially the social democrats had few alliances, whereas these were much more common among non-socialist parties.

For the remaining variables, the regression models confirm the associations found in the bivariate analyses. Party and district size as well as electoral alliances and incumbency possess significant explanatory power vis-à-vis the distribution of candidate votes.

Conclusion

All in all, the empirical analysis provides reasonably clear-cut answers to the questions posed at the outset of this study:

- Candidates matter. Throughout the period examined candidate votes have deviated significantly from a random distribution. Finnish voters make an active choice among the candidates offered; some candidates are favored, others receive considerably fewer votes. The electoral system compels voters to pick a candidate, and a substantial portion of the electorate apparently do not do this in random.
- There is no clear temporal pattern. The concentration/dispersion of candidate votes has varied somewhat from election to election, but there is no linear pattern over time. This seems to go hand in hand with a growing research literature that calls the notion of a pervasive personalization of politics into question⁹ (Karvonen 2010; Curtice & Holmberg 2005).
- Inc incumbency makes a difference. As expected, the vote shares of incumbent representatives were consistently and significantly higher than those of other candidates.
- The distinction between socialists and non-socialists was not of major importance. The bivariate correlation was not upheld in the multivariate analysis, and neither was there a clear difference between socialist and non-socialist voters in the survey data. Moreover, no temporal pattern was found.
- Party identification makes a difference. Party-identifiers stressed the importance of candidates less than did respondents that did not feel close to a particular party.
- Much of the explanation behind the distribution of candidate votes can be attributed to factors that condition the strategic position of parties and candidates: district magnitude, party size and the incidence of electoral alliances.

The present study has not dealt with a host of factors that pertain to the individual features and qualities of candidates: age, gender, socio-economic background, residence, and so on. This does not mean that these factors are not considered unimportant – far from it. However, since this is the first extensive study of candidate voting in Finland, it seemed important to gauge the importance of factors of strategic and structural nature. The results indicate that anyone interested in the fortunes of individual candidates would be well-advised to pay such factors considerable attention.

⁹ In order to rescue the personalization thesis a final analysis was undertaken. It excluded small parties, small electoral districts and all cases where there was an electoral alliance between parties. No clear temporal pattern was discovered.

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