

Do Mayoral Elections Work? Evidence from London

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The introduction of directly elected mayors potentially represents a major reform of the operation of local government in Britain. Drawing upon survey data collected at the time of the first two London mayoral elections, this article considers whether such elections necessarily deliver the advantages claimed for them by their advocates. It addresses three questions: (1) What was the basis of public support for the new institutions; (2) who participated in the London elections, and why; and (3) what accounts for voting behaviour in the London elections? In particular we examine how far the election of a single-person executive helps provide people with a clear choice, encourages citizens to vote on the qualities of individual candidates rather than on their party affiliation and motivates people to vote on distinctively local issues as opposed to national ones. Our results suggest that while mayoral elections deliver some of the advantages claimed for them, they may be less successful on others. The extent to which directly elected mayors enhance the local electoral process is thus doubtful.

One of the most noteworthy features of the current Labour government has been its programme of constitutional reform. Few core political institutions have gone untouched since 1997: the government of Scotland and Wales, the judiciary, the second chamber, electoral systems and the law relating to political parties have all been reformed. Local government in England, too, has undergone change. In particular, the long-established corporate model of decision-making has been supplanted by a more explicit separation of powers, comprising distinct 'executive' and 'overview' functions. The most radical form of this separation is the directly elected mayor model, in which executive authority is invested in a single figure, selected by local voters, while councillors take responsibility for scrutinising and checking the mayor's work. This model is regarded by its supporters as the most effective means of overcoming some of the shortcomings of the previous, committee-based system. In particular, mayors are believed to provide stronger political leadership for their localities, to improve the accountability of decision-making, to reduce the degree of partisan domination of council business and to increase levels of popular engagement (Blair, 1998; Commission for Local Democracy, 1995; Hodge *et al.*, 1997; Stoker, 1996).

In spite of these perceived benefits, elected mayors have so far been introduced in just thirteen places including London, representing just 3 per cent of all local authorities in England (Stoker, 2004, p. 127). On no less than 22 occasions, a proposal to create a directly elected mayor has been rejected by local voters in a referendum. This record suggests that the idea of a directly elected mayor model

1 has yet to achieve much popular appeal. Since 2002, only five mayoral referenda
2 have been held (including one in Wales), in just one of which local voters
3 supported the proposal. More recently, however, the mayoral model has once
4 again found favour within UK central government. A White Paper in 2006 argued
5 that there needed to be greater concentration of executive power in local
6 government, with directly elected mayors being one way of achieving this. The
7 requirement to hold a local referendum before introducing such a change
8 is, however, to be dispensed with (Department for Communities and Local
9 Government, 2006).

10 It is thus timely to examine whether the introduction of directly elected mayors
11 yields the kind of benefits envisaged by their supporters. There are several existing
12 studies that have evaluated the impact of directly elected mayors, focusing on such
13 features as decision-making processes, relations within the local council and links
14 with local stakeholders (Copus, 2004; Leach and Wilson, 2004; Lowndes and
15 Leach, 2004; Randle, 2004; Stoker, 2004). In this article, we consider what is
16 arguably the key aspect of the directly elected mayoral model: the impact on the
17 relationship between local government and local citizens. We do so by reference
18 to the most significant example, London, where a directly elected mayor was
19 introduced in 2000 alongside an elected assembly. We look in particular at the
20 popularity of the new institutional arrangements in the capital, the determinants
21 of turnout in its mayoral elections and what influenced the voting choice of those
22 who participated in the mayoral contests.

23 The introduction of the mayor and assembly in London is, however, unique in
24 one respect. Rather than representing a change to an existing local government
25 institution, the new institutions provided the capital with a city-wide tier of
26 government for the first time since the abolition of the Greater London Council
27 in 1986. In this, the creation of the mayor and assembly is more akin to the
28 establishment of new devolved institutions in Scotland and Wales. The Greater
29 London Authority (GLA), comprising the elected mayor and assembly, represents
30 a hybrid arrangement, in part a 'super' tier of local government, in part a regional
31 tier of decision-making (Bogdanor, 2001, pp. 274–5; Pimlott and Rao, 2002;
32 Travers, 2004, pp. 8–9). Our analysis will therefore on occasion also be informed
33 by insights from the experience of the introduction of devolution in Scotland and
34 Wales.

35 36 **Research Questions**

37 We address three key questions about London's directly elected mayor. First, what
38 was the level and basis of popular support for the new institutional arrangements?
39 Did Londoners favour both the mayor and assembly, or was one institution more
40 popular than the other? How far did people respond to concerns that the London
41 mayor would wield too much power, subject only to weak checks and balances?
42 And how far was support for the new institutions evenly spread across the

1 population, or was it concentrated among particular groups? Are the new insti-
2 tutions, in fact, a source of social and political division?

3 The second question we ask focuses on the level of abstention in the London
4 mayoral elections. The proponents of the mayoral model claimed that a directly
5 elected local executive figure would, in the words of the London White Paper,
6 'engender enthusiasm' (Department of the Environment, Transport and the
7 Regions, 1998). By giving voters a choice between named individual candidates,
8 rather than between political parties whose local leaders are usually largely
9 unknown, local issues and politics would be made more interesting and exciting.
10 Personality politics would bring 'an element of fun, excitement and spirit ... to
11 local politics' (Stoker, 1996, p. 12), all of which would help bring voters to the
12 ballot box. In practice, however, only 34 per cent of Londoners voted in their first
13 mayoral election in 2000, and just 37 per cent in the second (which was held in
14 June 2004 on the same day as European Parliament elections), little different from
15 the 33 per cent who voted in the 2002 London borough elections, and below the
16 38 per cent who voted in the 2006 borough elections. We thus attempt to unravel
17 why, contrary to the expectations of the mayoral advocates, the London mayoral
18 elections failed to attract many more people to the polls than already participate
19 in other local elections.

20 Our third and final question is what influences the electoral choices of those who
21 do vote. Here we address two interrelated issues. First, do voters' choices primarily
22 reflect evaluations of individual mayoral candidates, or of the parties for which the
23 candidates are standing? Because mayoral elections are a choice between indi-
24 vidual candidates, it is argued that they loosen the parties' hold on citizens'
25 electoral calculations. For example, Stoker (1996, p. 14) argues that elected mayors [1]
26 'imply a down-grading of party politics and a challenge to the process of
27 "politicisation" in local politics'. Second, it is suggested that elections based on
28 individuals are more likely than those dominated by national political parties to
29 focus voters' attention on local issues. At the same time, they also make it easier
30 for voters to identify who is responsible for policy decisions, and thus whom to
31 hold to account (Hodge *et al.*, 1997; Stoker, 2004, pp. 136–9). Together, these
32 attributes help ensure that mayoral elections are 'first-order' affairs, where citizens
33 vote on the basis of local issues. By contrast, many local elections have been
34 labelled 'second-order' events, where voting is motivated as much by national
35 considerations as by local ones (Miller, 1988; but see Heath *et al.*, 1999; Rallings
36 and Thrasher, 1997). We thus examine how far voting behaviour in London
37 mayoral elections reflects the characteristics and appeal of individual candidates
38 rather than of parties, and how far voting choices reflect the key local issues facing
39 the electorate in London.

40 Data

41
42 Our evidence comes primarily from a survey of the London population con-
43 ducted immediately after the first London election in 2000. The *London Mayoral*

1 *Election Survey* interviewed a random sample of 1,548 London residents aged
2 eighteen and over by telephone between early May and early July 2000.¹ The
3 sample was obtained through random digit dialling, and yielded an estimated
4 response rate of 36 per cent.² The data have been weighted to reflect the lower
5 probability of individuals living in large households being selected for interview.³
6 In order to minimise the burden on respondents and thus maximise the response
7 rate, the length of the survey was reduced by splitting the sample into two. While
8 most of the survey questions were administered to the whole sample, some were
9 only asked of (different) random halves of the sample. Thus the number of
10 respondents on which our analyses are based varies according to whether the
11 question was asked of the whole sample or only one half. The base for the full
12 sample is 1,548, while those for the half samples are 781 and 767. While
13 methodologically necessary, the split sample means that we cannot analyse
14 responses to questions asked of one half sample by those asked of the other.

15
16 In addition we also draw on a second survey of public attitudes among Londoners
17 conducted immediately after the second London election in 2004. The *Greater*
18 *London Assembly Election Study* interviewed a quota sample of 1,474 people in
19 London aged eighteen and over between 11 and 14 June 2004.⁴ Quotas were set
20 on the age, sex, ethnicity, social class and working status of the respondent. The
21 data were weighted to reflect the known demographic profile of the population.⁵

22
23 Unfortunately only a few of the questions asked on the 2000 survey were
24 repeated on the 2004 survey. This makes it impossible to address with the 2004
25 data most of the research questions addressed in this article. However, the 2004
26 survey did include questions that enable us to analyse the relative impact of party
27 and candidate evaluations on electoral choice in the second mayoral election.
28 These data are invaluable. The first mayoral election in 2000 was dominated, and
29 eventually won, by an independent candidate, Ken Livingstone. However, the
30 relative importance of party and candidate evaluations can only properly be
31 gauged in a contest in which all the main candidates stand on a party affiliation.
32 Fortunately, the second election in 2004, at which Livingstone stood as the
33 Labour candidate, provided just such conditions.

34 35 **Attitudes towards the New Institutions**

36 We begin by examining the basis of support for the mayor and assembly. How
37 popular were the new institutions? Did Londoners share the concern expressed
38 by critics of the mayoral model, that the mayor would overshadow the assembly?
39 And how far was support for the creation of the GLA spread across the popu-
40 lation, or concentrated among particular social groups? We also examine how far
41 having a directly elected mayor (and assembly) was regarded as a means of
42 symbolically representing Londoners' distinct sense of identity, in much the same
43 way that the devolved institutions were seen as expressing the distinct national

1 identities of people in Scotland and Wales. If this were the case, it might help
2 explain the popularity of the mayoral model in London as compared with much
3 of the rest of England.

4 The principle of creating a 'regional' form of government for London was
5 evidently widely accepted by the capital's residents. When put to Londoners in a
6 referendum in 1998, the proposal to create a mayor and assembly passed easily; 72
7 per cent voted in favour of the creation of the GLA while only 28 per cent voted
8 against, although only just over one in three (34 per cent) bothered to vote at all.⁶
9 By the time of the first mayoral election in 2000, support for the GLA was still
10 running high. We can see from Table 1 that around three-quarters of respondents
11 expressed support for the creation of the mayor and the assembly, although more
12 were only 'a bit' in favour rather than 'very much' in favour.⁷ In addition, when
13 asked whether 'having a Greater London Assembly simply adds one more unneces-
14 sary level of government', only 34 per cent agreed, while 49 per cent disagreed.

15 The data in Table 1 also show that, in 2000 at least, rather more people supported
16 the idea of creating a mayor than that of an assembly.⁸ Relative support for the
17 mayor and assembly was probed further in the survey by asking respondents
18 whether, given the choice, they would prefer only a mayor, only an assembly or
19 both together. Just 8 per cent indicated they would prefer just the assembly, while
20 double that proportion, 15 per cent, said that they would prefer just the mayor.
21 As many as six in ten backed the combination of the two (the rest either rejected
22 both models or did not know which option they preferred). Faced with the
23 survey statement that 'It is important to have a Greater London Assembly to keep
24 a check on what the London mayor does', no less than 83 per cent agreed.
25 However, only a minority, albeit a not inconsiderable one (34 per cent), were
26 concerned about the amount of power given to the mayor, agreeing with our
27

28
29 **Table 1: Attitudes to the New Institutions in London, 2000**

30
31 *How much are you in favour or against having a London mayor/a Greater London
32 assembly?*

33 %	Mayor	Assembly
34 Very much in favour	36	31
35 A bit in favour	42	41
36 A bit against	9	10
37 Very much against	8	7
38 Don't know/not answered	6	11
39 N	781	781

40
41 *Note: Responses based on half sample only.*

42 *Source: London Mayoral Election Survey 2000.*

1 survey statement that 'having an elected London mayor will give too much power
2 to one person'.

3
4 Thus, immediately after the first London election, it appears as though the new
5 institutions commanded substantial popular support. But how widespread was
6 this support? Was it dispersed generally across the population or was it concentrated
7 among particular social groups? Previous analyses of support for constitutional
8 change in Britain have found that support tends to be dispersed rather than
9 concentrated; thus, for example, levels of support for various reform options do
10 not co-vary by social groupings such as age or social class (Curtice and Jowell,
11 1998; Wenzel *et al.*, 2000). However, analysis by Curtice and Jowell (1998)
12 has shown that popular support for some constitutional reforms is markedly
13 higher among those educated to degree level than among those with no formal
14 qualifications.

15
16 Another potentially significant source of variation in analysing who supported
17 the new institutions is territorial identity. Some have argued that support for
18 devolution in Scotland and Wales is at best weakly related to feelings of national
19 identity (for Scotland, see Brown *et al.*, 1999, pp. 124–8). However, others have
20 suggested that national identity does make an important difference (for Scotland,
21 see Curtice, 1999; 2005; for Wales, see Wyn Jones and Trystan, 1999). While
22 London may be a highly 'metropolitan' area, comprising an extremely diverse
23 population (Pimlott and Rao, 2002, pp. 5–9; Travers, 2004, pp. 155–8), this does
24 not appear to preclude the existence of a strong sense of identity within the
25 capital. Over three-quarters of our sample (77 per cent) indicated that they felt
26 themselves to be a Londoner, with one-half (50 per cent) declaring themselves to
27 be 'very proud' of this identity. Moreover, on the face of it, identity does appear
28 related to support for the new institutions. Among those who felt 'very proud' to
29 be a Londoner, almost one-half (48 per cent) said they were 'very much' in favour
30 of the London mayor, compared with just one-third (33 per cent) of those who
31 did not think of themselves as Londoners at all. Thus one potential reason why
32 the directly elected mayor has gained more support in London than in many
33 other English towns and cities is that the position is widely seen to represent
34 symbolically a keen sense of identity.

35
36 One final factor that might have served to delineate attitudes to the GLA is
37 partisanship. Labour was the only party to support the creation of both a mayor
38 and an assembly. The Conservatives favoured the mayor but not the assembly,
39 while the Liberal Democrats favoured the assembly but not the mayor (Pimlott
40 and Rao, 2002, pp. 68–9; Travers, 2004, p. 64). We might anticipate that party
41 supporters followed their party's official stance on the new institutions.

42
43 To ascertain the impact of social groups, territorial identity and partisanship on
44 support for the new institutions, we constructed two multivariate regression
45 models, one examining support for the creation of a mayor, the other for the
46 assembly. This approach enables us to assess the possible role of each of our

1 hypothesised influences, while controlling for the impact of the others. Our
2 dependent variables are the questions detailed in Table 1. Since the responses to
3 the dependent variables were recorded on an ordinal scale from 1 to 4 (where
4 1 = very much against and 4 = very much in favour of the new bodies), we
5 estimate our models using ordinal logistic regression.⁹ We include among our
6 independent variables those demographics that earlier studies of attitudes to
7 constitutional reform have suggested might play a delineating role: age, education,
8 social class, race and gender. We also include terms for whether the respondent
9 was born in London, whether they identify with London and party identification.
10 The results are shown in Table 2.

11 Neither in the case of the mayor nor the assembly do attitudes vary significantly
12 by age, race, gender or social class. The one demographic group that does show
13 significantly higher support for both the mayor and the assembly comprises those
14 holding a degree. In these respects our results are in line with previous research
15 on attitudes towards constitutional reform. Interestingly, however, having a strong
16 London identity is associated with a higher level of support for the mayor, while
17 it is not for the assembly. It appears as though the mayor has come to be regarded
18 by some Londoners as a symbolic expression of their identity whereas the
19 assembly has not.¹⁰ Finally, as anticipated, attitudes are delineated by partisanship.
20 Conservative and Liberal Democrat supporters feel less favourably towards the
21 new institutions than Labour supporters. But while the official support of the
22 Liberal Democrats for the assembly at least finds some echo among their sup-
23 porters, that of the Conservative party for the mayor does not. This may, of
24 course, reflect Conservative hostility towards the figure who won the first mayoral
25 election, Ken Livingstone, whose controversial role as leader of the former
26 Greater London Council brought him into sharp conflict with the then
27 Conservative prime minister, Mrs Thatcher.

28 The idea of having a directly elected mayor thus achieved widespread popularity
29 in London. There was little public support for some of the main objections to the
30 model put forward by its critics. The popularity of the mayoral model appears to
31 have reflected, in part at least, Londoners' association of the office with the strong
32 territorial identity that many felt, a process assisted perhaps by the profile of the
33 first office holder, Ken Livingstone. We cannot tell whether the limited public
34 acceptance of directly elected mayors elsewhere in England and Wales to date
35 either reflects a weaker sense of 'civic identity' than exists in London, or a failure
36 to mobilise local identity in support of having a directly elected mayor. However,
37 those areas currently toying with the mayoral model may wish to note the
38 association in London between support for a directly elected mayor and people's
39 sense of identity.

40 41 **Electoral Engagement**

42 The first London mayoral election in 2000 was marked by turnout of just 34 per
43 cent, despite intense media coverage of the contest (Travers, 2004, p. 74). Few

Table 2: Model of Attitudes towards the London Mayor and Assembly, 2000

	<i>Mayor</i>		<i>Assembly</i>	
	<i>B</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>se</i>
Age (60 and above)				
18–24	0.02	0.33	–0.61	0.33
25–44	–0.13	0.25	–0.39	0.25
45–59	0.05	0.27	0.27	0.28
Education (no qualifications)				
0 level/foreign	0.18	0.23	0.29	0.23
A level	0.06	0.25	0.48	0.26
Degree	0.78	0.26**	0.93	0.26**
Social class: Registrar-General (V Unskilled)				
IV Partly skilled	0.38	0.40	0.62	0.43
III Skilled: manual	0.61	0.40	0.46	0.42
III Skilled: non-manual	–0.30	0.38	–0.38	0.40
II Managerial/technical	0.39	0.39	0.15	0.41
I Professional	0.70	0.47	0.28	0.48
Race (white)				
Non-white	0.18	0.20	0.10	0.25
Gender (female)				
Male	0.28	0.16	0.08	0.16
Born in London	–0.31	0.17	–0.02	0.18
London identity (not a Londoner)				
Very proud Londoner	0.75	0.22**	0.19	0.22
Somewhat proud Londoner	0.28	0.22	0.32	0.22
Not very proud	0.25	0.32	–0.15	0.23
Party identification (Labour)				
Conservative	–1.17	0.20**	–1.06	0.20**
Liberal Democrat	–0.89	0.25**	–0.47	0.26
Other/none	–0.82	0.25**	–0.92	0.26**
Likelihood ratio χ^2 (<i>df</i>)	123.120 (20)**		97.964 (20)**	
Nagelkerke pseudo R ²	0.20		0.17	
<i>N</i>	634		605	

Notes: Ordinal logistic regression model, showing parameter estimates and associated standard errors. Categorical independent variables show reference category in parentheses.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

Source: London Mayoral Election Survey 2000.

16

Londoners can have been unaware of the mayoral contest, even if some might have failed to register the simultaneous contest to the London assembly.¹¹ Thus, the low turnout cannot plausibly be attributed to voter ignorance of the existence of the contest. So what might explain the public's limited engagement with their new institutions?

1 One possibility is that people in London failed to participate because they felt too
 2 little was at stake to outweigh the 'cost' of voting. There are two reasons why this
 3 might be so. The first is that people felt the new institutions had too little power
 4 to achieve very much, reducing the incentive to participate in the election. The
 5 second possibility is that voters thought there was little difference between the
 6 candidates and parties, and thus no effective choice. Such a perception would
 7 again lower the marginal utility of registering a preference (Bromley and Curtice,
 8 2002; Heath and Taylor, 1999).¹²

9 Indeed, in practice, the first London election does not appear to have provided
 10 those registered to vote with much incentive to participate. Take perceptions of
 11 the likely impact of the new institutions on various policy and governance
 12 outcomes. The *London Mayoral Election Survey* in 2000 asked respondents what
 13 impact they thought the mayor and assembly would have on transport, employ-
 14 ment, policing and people's say in how they are governed. While very few
 15 thought the GLA would have a negative impact, more people thought the new
 16 bodies would not make any difference than believed they would have a positive
 17 impact (Table 3). Only in the case of public transport did a majority believe the
 18 creation of the mayor and assembly would yield a positive dividend. Perhaps most
 19 surprising is that just 45 per cent of respondents thought London's new institu-
 20 tions would give them more say in the way the capital was governed. This is
 21 markedly lower than the proportion of people in Scotland (65 per cent) and Wales
 22 (54 per cent) who, in 1999, believed that their new institutions would accord
 23 them greater say in the way their country was governed (Curtice, 2005).

24 The choices offered by the competing parties and candidates also appear to have
 25 provided rather little incentive to vote. To test the distinctiveness of these choices,
 26

27
 28 **Table 3: Expectations of the London Mayor and Assembly, 2000**

29
 30 *What do you think the London mayor and the Greater London Assembly will actually*
 31 *achieve for London?*

32 %	33 <i>Positive outcome</i>	<i>No difference</i>	<i>Negative outcome</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
34 Traffic congestion	38	52	3	8
35 Public transport	55	38	2	5
36 Employment opportunities	33	57	3	7
37 Quality of policing	42	49	3	6
38 Ordinary people's say in how 39 London is governed	45	45	6	3

40
 41 *Note: Row N in each case = 767.*

42 *Source: London Mayoral Election Survey 2000.*

1 the 2000 survey asked respondents to rate each of the main mayoral candidates –
2 Frank Dobson (Labour), Susan Kramer (Liberal Democrat), Ken Livingstone
3 (Independent) and Steve Norris (Conservative) – together with their parties on
4 a five-point scale that ranged from ‘strongly in favour’ to ‘strongly against’. If
5 Londoners thought that there were major differences between the candidates and
6 between their parties, we would expect them to indicate they were strongly in
7 favour of one and strongly against the rest. Yet such divergent judgements were
8 rare. Around a quarter of respondents gave exactly the same response about the
9 Conservatives as they did Labour, about Ken Livingstone as Frank Dobson and
10 about Ken Livingstone as Steve Norris. In each case, a further one-quarter gave
11 responses that only differed by one point. In contrast, when exactly the same
12 evaluative scale was included in the 1997 *British Election Study*, just 16 per cent of
13 the British electorate gave the same response to the Conservatives and Labour.¹³
14 It appears, then, that the first London election failed to provide voters with clear
15 choices between the competing candidates and parties.¹⁴

16 Another possible reason why some people did not vote is because they were
17 opposed to the creation of the new institutions. As we noted in Table 1, less than
18 one in five people indicated they were against the mayor and assembly, so
19 opposition to the new institutions cannot have been the primary cause of the low
20 turnout at the first London election. But it might perhaps have been a contribu-
21 tory factor. Certainly, participation in Welsh Assembly elections (Scully *et al.*,
22 2004) – although not in Scottish Parliament contests (Boon and Curtice, 2003)
23 – has been found to reflect attitudes towards the existence of new devolved
24 institutions.

25 To establish what impact these various perceptions had on turnout, we examine
26 participation in the 2000 London election among those who said they had voted
27 in the 1997 general election. Doing so means we largely remove from our analysis
28 those whose motivation to vote is relatively low in any election.¹⁵ Low turnout
29 in 2000 among those who voted in 1997 certainly seems to be linked to a
30 perceived lack of difference between the candidates. For example, among those
31 who did not see any difference between Livingstone and Norris, just 39 per cent
32 participated in the London election.¹⁶ In contrast, among those who perceived a
33 large difference between the two main candidates,¹⁷ turnout was twice as large, at
34 80 per cent. The picture is not dissimilar, albeit not quite as stark, in relation to
35 evaluations of Livingstone and Dobson, and Labour and the Conservatives.¹⁸ In
36 contrast, low expectations of the new institutions are not generally associated with
37 non-participation. The one exception is expectations about one of the GLA’s
38 most important responsibilities, public transport. Among those who believed the
39 GLA would improve public transport, 66 per cent of those who voted in 1997
40 also turned out at the London contest, while among those whose expectations
41 were more limited, just 48 per cent voted.

42 Thus, turnout seems to have been depressed at the first London election by the
43 perception that the choices on offer were limited, though rather less so by low

1 expectations of what the new institutions could achieve. Popular opposition to
2 the creation of the mayor and assembly seems to have played some role, too.
3 Among those who strongly favoured a mayor, 69 per cent participated in the
4 election, compared with just 40 per cent among those who were 'a bit' or 'very
5 much' against a mayor. Equally, turnout was 72 per cent among those who
6 strongly favoured an assembly, but was just 41 per cent among those opposed
7 to it.

8 If we proceed to estimate the effects of these factors simultaneously in a multi-
9 variate regression model, we find broad confirmation of the picture we have
10 painted so far. As our dependent variable is dichotomous (did not vote in London
11 election = 0, did vote in London election = 1), we employ binary logistic regres-
12 sion. The modelling proceeds in three stages. In the first model (based on the
13 whole sample), we consider whether demographic position, identity and parti-
14 sanship shaped participation. The demographic variables we include reflect those
15 factors – such as age, housing tenure, education and ethnic origin – that are often
16 found to affect turnout and/or political participation (Pattie *et al.*, 2004; Saggar,
17 2001; Swaddle and Heath, 1989). Given that we are looking only at those who
18 said they voted in the 1997 general election, this means that our model ascertains
19 whether any of these variables were more strongly associated with turnout in the
20 2000 GLA election than they are with turnout in a general election. In the second
21 model, we add the role of attitudes towards the creation of the mayor and
22 assembly. In the third model, we introduce variables measuring candidate and
23 party evaluations, and expectations of what the new institutions would achieve.
24 Note, however, that the survey questions added in our second model were
25 administered to a different half of the sample than those added in the third model.
26 This means that the variables added in the second model cannot be included in
27 the third model. Thus, the three models are based on different selections of cases
28 (Table 4). 2

29 The first of our models shows that some characteristics commonly associated
30 with non-voting in general elections, such as youth and being a member of an
31 ethnic minority, were yet further associated with non-voting in the first London
32 election. However, model I also shows that, while social identity might have been
33 associated with support for the London mayor (see Table 2), it is not a significant
34 predictor of participation in the mayoral election (for a similar result in respect of
35 Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly elections, see Boon and Curtice, 2003;
36 Scully *et al.*, 2004).

37 In our second model, the coefficients for favouring the mayor and assembly are
38 correctly signed, suggesting that opponents of the mayor and assembly were less
39 likely to vote. True, neither achieves statistical significance at the 5 per cent level,
40 but attitudes to the mayor at least are significant at the 10 per cent level, and it
41 should be borne in mind that this analysis is only based on a half sample, making
42 it less likely that statistical significance will be achieved. Finally, in our third
43 model, we see that the greater the perceived difference between Ken Livingstone

Table 4: Models of Turnout at the London Election, 2000

	<i>Model I</i>		<i>Model II</i>		<i>Model III</i>	
	<i>B</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>se</i>
Age (60 and above)						
18–24	–1.96	0.38**	–2.65	0.81**	–1.74	0.64**
25–44	–0.98	0.22**	–1.07	0.35**	–1.06	0.39**
45–59	–0.39	0.22	–0.29	0.36	–0.77	0.38*
Education (no qualifications)						
O level/foreign	0.18	0.20	0.32	0.33	–0.29	0.32
A level	0.52	0.24*	0.56	0.38	0.19	0.39
Degree	0.78	0.21**	0.36	0.32	0.59	0.34
Race (white)						
Non-white	–0.37	0.19*	–0.76	0.29**	–0.10	0.32
Tenure (home owner)						
Non-home owner	–0.41	0.16**	–0.95	0.28**	0.06	0.26
London identity (not a Londoner)						
Very proud Londoner	–0.13	0.20	–0.45	0.31	–0.08	0.33
Somewhat proud Londoner	0.18	0.21	–0.04	0.33	0.50	0.34
Not very proud	0.09	0.30	0.35	0.48	0.05	0.52
Party identification (Labour)						
Conservative	–0.57	0.17**	–0.62	0.30*	–0.11	0.29
Liberal Democrat	–0.53	0.25*	–1.15	0.39**	0.44	0.42
Other/none	–0.53	0.28	–0.65	0.45	0.39	0.49
Favour London mayor			0.31	0.18		
Favour London Assembly			0.29	0.19		
Performance expectations (no difference/worsen performance)						
Reduce traffic congestion					–0.11	0.29
Improve public transport					0.93	0.30**
Improve employment					0.12	0.27
Improve quality of policing					–0.28	0.27
Give people more say in London					–0.24	0.27
Difference in evaluations						
Livingstone–Norris					0.35	0.11**
Livingstone–Dobson					0.04	0.10
Conservative–Labour					0.03	0.09
Constant	0.13	0.14	–1.63	0.53**	–0.58	0.34
Model χ^2 (df)	80.649	(14)**	88.228	(16)**	52.106	(22)**
Nagelkerke pseudo R ²	0.12		0.26		0.18	
N	888		416		367	

Notes: Binary logistic regression model, showing parameter estimates and associated standard errors. Categorical independent variables show reference category in parentheses. Sample confined to those who said they voted in the 1997 general election.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

Source: London Mayoral Election Survey 2000.

1 and Steve Norris, the more likely someone was to vote, though once this has been
2 taken into account perceived differences between other pairs of candidates or
3 parties do not make a difference. At the same time, expectations of the likely
4 impact of the new institutions on public transport also seem to have influenced
5 turnout, while other performance expectations did not do so.¹⁹

6
7 Thus, it appears that the limited turnout at the first London election primarily
8 reflected the limited incentives on offer to citizens. Those who doubted the
9 capacity of the GLA to have much impact on the key issue of public transport
10 were inclined to stay at home. So too were those voters, relatively large in
11 number, who felt that there was little difference between the candidates or the
12 parties. In this election at least, the contest failed to stimulate the enthusiasm, and
13 thus the level of participation, that the mayoral model's advocates anticipated. Our
14 findings indicate that low turnout may not be a necessary feature of mayoral
15 elections. But if people are to participate, they need to be offered clear electoral
16 choices and powerful elected institutions.

17 18 **Voting Behaviour**

19 In the final section of our analysis, we focus on the behaviour of the minority of
20 the electorate who did participate in the London elections in 2000 and 2004. In
21 particular we examine two issues. First, did the direct election of a single-person
22 executive (i.e. the mayor) encourage people to vote on the basis of candidate
23 evaluations rather than on the basis of party labels? Second, to what degree did
24 people vote on the basis of their attitudes towards policy issues over which the
25 mayor and assembly had some influence?

26
27 We can address the first issue by comparing the relationship between vote choice
28 and both candidate and party evaluations in the mayoral election with the same
29 relationship in the assembly election. If candidate evaluations are a particularly
30 strong determinant of mayoral voting behaviour, we should find a closer rela-
31 tionship between candidate evaluations and vote choice in the mayoral election
32 than in the assembly election. In contrast, party evaluations should be more
33 closely related to vote choice in the assembly election than in the mayoral contest.

34
35 There is, however, an obvious limitation on how far this approach can be taken
36 in 2000. Ken Livingstone, the winner of the mayoral election, stood as an
37 Independent, having been expelled from the Labour party. Of course, his success
38 can itself be regarded as testimony to the degree to which having a directly
39 elected mayor increases the importance of individual candidates as opposed to
40 parties.²⁰ However, Livingstone's status as an Independent means we have to
41 exclude from our analysis those who supported him in 2000, since there is no
42 party evaluation whose impact can be compared with that arising from evalua-
43 tions of Livingstone himself.²¹ In contrast, this problem does not arise in 2004,
44 since by this point Livingstone had been re-admitted into the Labour party and

1 stood as its official candidate. As noted earlier, we have data from the 2004 *Greater*
2 *London Assembly Election Study* to assess the relative impact of candidate and party
3 evaluations in the second mayoral and assembly election.

4 How people vote can, of course, be influenced by the structure of the ballot. The
5 assembly elections in 2000 and 2004 took place under the Additional Member
6 System, whereby voters had two votes, one for a member for their assembly
7 constituency, the other for a London-wide party list. We use reported list vote in
8 our analysis because this is less likely to be influenced by strategic considerations
9 or the popularity of a particular candidate; it is thus arguably the better gauge of
10 party preference. The mayoral elections in 2000 and 2004 were run using the
11 Supplementary Vote System, under which voters are invited to express a first and
12 second preference, the latter coming into play should no candidate secure a
13 majority of first-preference votes. Under this system, a voter's first-preference
14 vote is unlikely to be affected by strategic considerations; a voter concerned about
15 wasting their vote or wishing to deny electoral victory to a particular candidate
16 can still opt to back a more popular candidate with their second preference.²²
17 We thus measure vote choice in the mayoral election by reference to reported
18 first-preference vote. Evaluations of candidates and parties are measured in 2000
19 using the same five-point scale ('strongly in favour' to 'strongly against') we
20 introduced in the previous section. On the 2004 survey, they are measured by a
21 similar scale, albeit a seven-point one that ranged from 'like a lot' to 'dislike a lot'.

22 Simple bivariate statistics provide some support for the view that candidate
23 evaluations matter more in the mayoral contest than in the assembly election.
24 Thus, in 2000, 80 per cent of those who favoured Steve Norris voted for him in
25 the mayoral contest,²³ whereas only 56 per cent of this group also voted for
26 Norris's party, the Conservatives, in the assembly contest (Table 5). Granted, those
27 who favoured the Conservatives were also more likely to have voted for Norris
28 (82 per cent) than for his party (67 per cent), but the gap between the two
29 statistics is smaller. The position is even clearer in respect of voting for Frank
30 Dobson and Labour. Thus, far more people who favoured Dobson voted for him
31 (81 per cent) than went on to support his party (63 per cent). But there was no
32 premium for the candidate among those who favoured the party, 61 per cent of
33 whom voted for Dobson against 60 per cent who voted Labour. At the second
34 GLA elections in 2004, far more of those who favoured Labour's mayoral
35 candidate, Ken Livingstone, voted for him than voted for the Labour party (85 per
36 cent to 66 per cent), while the equivalent gap among those who favoured Labour
37 is rather smaller. There is no discernible 'candidate' or 'party' effect in 2004 for the
38 Conservatives and their mayoral candidate, Steve Norris.

39 We can evaluate more rigorously the relative importance of candidate and party
40 evaluations in the mayoral and assembly elections by modelling vote choice in the
41 two sets of elections against these evaluations. This requires us to construct two
42 models for each election. In the first model the dependent variable is whether or
43 not the respondent voted (on the first-preference mayoral vote) for the mayoral

Table 5: Party/Candidate Evaluations and Vote Choice in London, 2000 and 2004

	<i>Favour Norris</i>	<i>Favour Conservative</i>	<i>Favour Dobson/ Livingstone</i>	<i>Favour Labour</i>
2000				
Voted Norris	80 (110)	82 (89)		
Voted Conservative	56 (84)	67 (75)		
Voted Dobson			81 (75)	61 (77)
Voted Labour			63 (74)	60 (157)
2004				
Voted Norris	82 (133)	87 (133)		
Voted Conservative	80 (98)	87 (104)		
Voted Livingstone			85 (220)	86 (166)
Voted Labour			66 (136)	74 (120)

Notes: Favour = 'Strongly favour' and 'favour' a candidate/party on a 5-point scale (2000) and points 6–7 on a 7-point scale (1 = dislike a lot, 7 = like a lot) (2004). Figures are column percentages, with the base N in parentheses.

Sources: London Mayoral Election Study 2000; Greater London Assembly Election Survey 2004.

candidate of one of the three main parties – in 2000, Frank Dobson (Labour), Susan Kramer (Liberal Democrat) and Steve Norris (Conservative); in 2004, Simon Hughes (Liberal Democrat), Ken Livingstone (Labour) and Steve Norris (Conservative). In the second model the dependent variable is whether the respondent voted for the Conservatives, Labour or the Liberal Democrats on the assembly (list) vote.²⁴ Since the dependent variable in both models represents a choice between three options, we estimate the parameters using multinomial logistic regression. The results show the effects of candidate and party evaluations on the (log) odds of voting for the Conservatives or Labour, and for their respective mayoral candidates, as compared with the (log) odds of voting for the Liberal Democrats, and for their mayoral candidate.

The results, in Table 6, confirm those of our bivariate analysis. Note first that the odds of voting for a party or candidate are predominantly related to evaluations of that party and candidate, rather than to those of another candidate or party. We have therefore highlighted these results in the table. Examination of the results reveals that, in general, candidate evaluations are stronger predictors than party evaluations of vote choice in the mayoral election, while party evaluations matter more when it comes to the assembly vote. Because candidate and party evaluations are measured on the same scale in the mayoral and assembly vote models (five-point in 2000, seven-point in 2004), their relative effects on voting behaviour can be gauged by comparing the size of their coefficients. So, if we take as an example voting for Frank Dobson in 2000, we see that evaluations of the candidate are a more powerful predictor of voting than evaluations of his party

Table 6: Models of Party/Candidate Evaluations and Vote Choice in London, 2000 and 2004

	<i>Voted Norris</i>	<i>Voted Conservative</i>	<i>Voted Dobson/ Livingstone</i>	<i>Voted Labour</i>
2000				
Favour Norris	1.80 (0.31)**	1.11 (0.23)**	0.10 (0.30)	0.04 (0.17)
Favour Con	0.98 (0.28)**	0.85 (0.23)**	0.58 (0.33)	-0.48 (0.18)**
Favour Dobson	0.00 (0.25)	0.03 (0.21)	1.69 (0.30)**	0.43 (0.16)**
Favour Labour	0.25 (0.27)	-0.60 (0.22)**	1.24 (0.34)**	0.74 (0.20)**
2004				
Favour Norris	1.03 (0.17)**	0.14 (0.16)	0.04 (0.12)	-0.02 (0.12)
Favour Con	0.61 (0.13)**	1.03 (0.16)**	-0.02 (0.12)	0.14 (0.13)
Favour Liv'stone	-0.06 (0.12)	-0.08 (0.13)	0.74 (0.10)**	0.31 (0.12)**
Favour Labour	-0.15 (0.13)	-0.10 (0.13)	0.24 (0.09)**	0.62 (0.11)**

Notes: Multinomial logit models showing parameter estimates and standard errors in parentheses. The reference category is voted Kramer/Hughes (mayoral model) and voted Liberal Democrat (assembly model).

Model summaries:

2000

Mayoral model: likelihood ratio test (χ^2) of 343.151 with 8df, significant at the 0.001 level. N = 266.

Assembly model: likelihood ratio test (χ^2) of 319.249 with 8df, significant at the 0.001 level. N = 350.

2004

Mayoral model: likelihood ratio test (χ^2) of 590.178 with 8df, significant at the 0.001 level. N = 521.

Assembly model: likelihood ratio test (χ^2) of 419.305 with 8df, significant at the 0.001 level. N = 405.

** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

17

Sources: London Mayoral Election Study 2000; Greater London Assembly Election Study 2004.

(the coefficients being 1.69 and 1.24, respectively). When it comes to voting for the Labour party, however, evaluations of the party are a stronger predictor than evaluations of the candidate (the respective coefficients being 0.74 and 0.43). Comparison of the results in 2004 for Norris and the Conservatives and for Livingstone and Labour reveals a similar pattern. The one exception is for Norris and the Conservatives in 2000, when evaluations of Norris were a stronger predictor of voting for the Conservative party on the assembly list vote than were evaluations of the party itself (albeit that candidate evaluations were somewhat weaker in the case of the assembly vote than for the mayoral vote).²⁵

It could, of course, be argued that the circumstances of the first two London elections, and in particular the undoubted personal popularity of Ken Livingstone, meant that candidate evaluations played a greater role in 2000 and 2004 than is likely in future contests. But equally, Livingstone's success could be regarded as clear affirmation that mayoral elections have the potential to focus voters' minds on whom they judge would make the best chief executive of their local council, rather than on their party label. Certainly our analysis of the first

1 two London contests substantiates the mayoral model's advocates in their claim
2 that such contests encourage voters to focus on personal qualities more than on
3 partisan ones.

4
5 But this still leaves an important question. Do mayoral contests also encourage
6 people to vote on the issues confronting the mayor and the assembly, rather than
7 treating the London election as a chance to register their dissatisfaction with the
8 national government at Westminster? After all, the low turnout and poor per-
9 formance by the incumbent party at Westminster (Labour) meant that the 2000
10 election bore many of the hallmarks of a 'second-order' contest, where the
11 election is used by voters to protest against the policy and performance of the
12 national government (Reif and Schmitt, 1980). Clearly, if mayoral elections are
13 used by voters to express a judgement on the national government, as often
14 appears to be the case in local council elections (Heath *et al.*, 1999; Miller, 1988),
15 then their introduction will do little to enhance the accountability or respon-
16 siveness of local government.

17
18 To help establish the 'first-order' or 'second-order' status of the London election
19 in 2000, the *London Mayoral Election Survey* asked its respondents how they
20 would have voted if a Westminster election had been held on the day of the
21 mayoral election. The results suggest that Labour's share of the vote would
22 have been ten points higher in such a contest than it actually was on the
23 assembly list vote. Similar findings have also been found in respect of devolved
24 elections in Scotland and Wales (Curtice, 2003) and are, of course, precisely
25 what we would anticipate if voters were using the London election to send the
26 government a protest note.

27
28 But if Labour's performance in the London election is to be explained by
29 widespread protest at the national party, then we should find that Labour sym-
30 pathisers' failure to vote for the party is associated with negative evaluations of
31 government performance. This, however, does not seem to be the case. Granted,
32 those who said they would have voted Labour in a general election and who
33 thought that the standard of the National Health Service (NHS) had fallen since
34 1997 were only half as likely to vote for Frank Dobson, Labour's mayoral
35 candidate, as those who thought the standard of the health service had improved
36 (8 per cent as compared with 16 per cent). A similar picture also emerges in
37 relation to evaluations of the general standard of living. However, those who
38 perceived a decline in performance on health care or the standard of living were
39 no more likely to vote for Ken Livingstone than were those who thought
40 performance had improved. Thus, it does not appear that the key to Livingstone's
41 success in the 2000 election was disaffection with the government's performance
42 among Labour supporters. Rather, Labour supporters who were unhappy with
43 their party's record in office (who, in the case of the NHS, only constituted one
44 in four Labour supporters anyway) seem to have been more inclined to stay at
45 home.²⁶

1 So if people did not turn against Labour in the 2000 London election in order to
2 signal dissatisfaction with the national government, did they decide how to vote
3 on the basis of the issues facing the capital? The most high-profile issue in the
4 election campaign was the funding of the London Underground (Rallings and
5 Thrasher, 2000). While Frank Dobson backed the government's proposals for a
6 private–public partnership, Ken Livingstone favoured retaining public control of
7 the Underground. There is some evidence that these differences of approach
8 were reflected in the voting behaviour of those who said they would have voted
9 Labour in a general election. Thus, among those Labour general election sup-
10 porters who believed that the London Underground should remain wholly
11 within the public sector, 38 per cent voted for Livingstone. In contrast, among
12 those who believed that the private sector should play some role, only 26 per cent
13 turned out for Livingstone. The equivalent figures for Dobson are 10 per cent
14 and 13 per cent. Even here, however, we should note that, among Labour
15 supporters who favoured the private–public option, twice as many backed
16 Livingstone as Dobson. Thus Livingstone's victory in the mayoral election does
17 not appear to be a reflection of popular support for his position on what at the
18 time was the key issue facing the capital.²⁷

19
20 There is also little evidence that the issue which subsequently became the most
21 distinctive policy pursued by Livingstone as mayor, the introduction of a con-
22 gestion charge (a policy opposed by Dobson), had much influence on the way
23 Labour general election supporters voted in 2000. Those in favour of the
24 congestion charge were only slightly more likely to vote for Livingstone (31 per
25 cent) than were opponents of the charge (28 per cent). Moreover, opponents of
26 congestion charging were actually less likely to turn out for Dobson (11 per cent)
27 than those who strongly favoured this policy (20 per cent).²⁸

28
29 Yet if Livingstone's electoral success cannot be attributed to his stance on the key
30 policy issues facing London, this does not mean that local concerns were wholly
31 absent. The 2000 survey shows that Livingstone was trusted more than Dobson to
32 represent London's interests, and that this perception significantly shaped Living-
33 stone's electoral success. Among Labour general election supporters, two in three
34 trusted Livingstone to work in London's interests, while only one-half said the
35 same about Dobson (among Londoners as a whole, Livingstone's lead in this
36 respect was even greater: 56 per cent to 33 per cent). Moreover, 54 per cent of
37 Labour supporters who said they 'just about always' trusted Livingstone to work in
38 London's interests turned out to vote for him, compared with just 10 per cent of
39 those who trusted him 'only some or the time' or 'almost never'. Among those who
40 trusted Dobson to work in London's interests, 27 per cent turned out to vote for
41 him, compared with just 3 per cent of those who did not trust him. Thus, what
42 appears to have mattered to voters were not the particular policies promoted by
43 the candidates, but a more synoptic view of which candidate would best stand up
44 for the capital's interests. In this, there are echoes of what happened in the devolved
45 elections in Scotland and Wales (Curtice, 2001; Paterson *et al.*, 2001, pp. 30–44).

1 In order to identify what effects these various factors had when considered
2 simultaneously, we constructed a multivariate regression model of voting at the
3 2000 London election. Specifically, we examined which factors explained
4 voting for either Frank Dobson or Ken Livingstone among people who indi-
5 cated they would have voted Labour if a general election had been held simul-
6 taneously. We modelled voting behaviour as a three-way choice: voting either
7 for Dobson or for Livingstone or for neither (that is for another candidate or
8 not voting in the mayoral contest at all). Given this three-way electoral choice,
9 we estimate parameters using a multinomial logistic regression. Table 7 reports
10 the parameters for those who voted for either Dobson or Livingstone, with
11 those voting for neither candidate as the reference category. Our independent
12 variables tap potential discontent with the national government (as measured by
13 retrospective evaluations of the health service and standard of living), attitudes
14 towards local issues (namely the funding of the Underground, congestion
15 charging and the extent to which the capital gains its 'fair share' of government
16 spending) and evaluations of how far each candidate could be trusted to rep-
17 resent London's interests. Full details of these variables and their coding are
18 given in Appendix 1.

19 The results confirm our earlier analysis that Livingstone's electoral success did not
20 derive from discontent with the Labour government. Voting for Livingstone was
21 not significantly affected by judgements about policy performance on such
22 national issues as the NHS and living standards. But nor did Livingstone benefit
23 from the electorate's views on local issues. Only on the issue of public transport
24 did he derive support on a distinctively London issue. Instead, Livingstone drew
25 electoral support most strongly – as did Dobson – from those who trusted him
26 to represent London's interests.

27 So while the first London election was clearly not a 'second-order' contest
28 (decided primarily by views about the performance of the government at West-
29 minster), neither was it wholly a 'first-order' contest (decided primarily by specific
30 local issues).²⁹ Instead, the result of the mayoral election reflected voters' assess-
31 ment of who would best represent the capital's interests more generally. Mayoral
32 elections may be an effective means of securing a champion for a local area, but
33 they are not necessarily an effective means of ensuring that voters focus on the
34 key issues facing their locality.

36 Conclusion

37 The establishment of a directly elected mayor in London is the most prominent
38 example of the government's reform of executive arrangements at the local level.
39 Even though London's citizens expressed some doubts over how much impact
40 their new institutions would have, the move was clearly a popular one, contrasting
41 with the position in two-thirds of the places elsewhere in England to have
42 held referenda on directly elected mayors. This popularity seems to have been

Table 7: Models of Vote Choice at the London Mayoral Election, 2000 among Labour Supporters

	<i>Voted Dobson</i>		<i>Voted Livingstone</i>	
	<i>B</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>se</i>
Retrospective evaluations				
Standard of the NHS since 1997				
Fallen	-0.86	0.51	-0.34	0.36
Stayed same (Increased)	-0.50	0.39	-0.25	0.29
Standard of living since 1997				
Fallen	-0.15	0.58	0.15	0.38
Stayed same (Increased)	-0.57	0.37	0.15	0.25
London issues				
How much agree that motorists should pay for driving into London	0.08	0.11	0.06	0.07
Public sector is best for London Underground (private or public/private sector is best)	0.06	0.34	0.67	0.23**
London gets less than its fair share of government spending (London gets fair share or more than fair share)	-0.12	0.35	0.03	0.25
London leadership				
Trust Dobson to work in London's interests				
Always	2.41	0.54**	-0.43	0.40
Most of the time (only some of the time/never)	1.80	0.46**	-0.29	0.24
Trust Livingstone to work in London's interests				
Always	-1.28	0.50*	2.28	0.37**
Most of the time (only some of the time/never)	-0.50	0.38	1.46	0.35**
Constant	-1.92	0.63**	-2.08	0.47**
Model χ^2 (df)	116.26 (22)**			
Nagelkerke pseudo R^2	0.27			
<i>N</i>	436			

Notes: Multinomial logistic regression model, showing parameter estimates and associated standard errors. Categorical independent variables show reference category in parentheses. Table is confined to those who said they would have voted Labour in a Westminster general election.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

Source: London Mayoral Election Survey 2000.

1 generated because the London mayor became linked to people's feelings of
2 territorial identity, thereby providing an important 'reservoir' of diffuse support
3 for the institution.³⁰ However, repeating that link in other towns and cities may
4 be more difficult. Here, elected mayors will sit alongside an existing council with
5 strong prior claims to represent an area. In London, by contrast, the elected mayor
6 was part of a new set of institutions with unique claims to represent and symbolise
7 the whole of the city. If so, this rationale might help explain why much of the rest
8 of the country has been reluctant to follow London's example in introducing
9 directly elected mayors.

11 Our analysis of London's experience of mayoral elections to date provides only
12 limited evidence that they work in the manner claimed by their advocates. These
13 elections failed to generate sufficient enthusiasm to yield a turnout higher than in
14 other local elections.³¹ We have shown that there were widespread doubts among
15 London's citizens in 2000 about whether the new institutions would make much
16 difference to policy and governance outcomes. An element of excitement was
17 therefore required for Londoners to be persuaded to participate in the mayoral
18 contest. In the event, however, such excitement appears to have been lacking,
19 with many people perceiving little difference between the candidates. Evidently,
20 mayoral elections in themselves do not guarantee voters the kind of incentives
21 and choices that encourage participation.

23 The evidence from London also casts doubt on the role of mayoral elections as
24 a means of addressing local policy issues. Granted, the experience of London
25 suggests that mayoral elections can help focus the public's attention on who is
26 best suited to provide local leadership. In doing so, mayoral elections also seem to
27 encourage a focus on the qualities of the candidates on offer, and not simply on
28 their party labels. Equally, mayoral elections are not clearly 'second-order' con-
29 tests, in which the outcome is determined by the popularity of the incumbent
30 national government. Yet, with the partial exception of attitudes towards the
31 London Underground, we have uncovered little evidence that the first London
32 election was decided on the key local issues facing the capital. In this, mayoral
33 elections may be little different from other local elections. Certainly, our evidence
34 suggests that mayoral elections – supposedly high-profile and candidate-oriented
35 contests – are not necessarily more effective than other forms of election in
36 ensuring that local votes are based on local issues.

38 Of course, the Labour government's recent proposal to extend directly elected
39 mayors more widely across England reflects more than just the perceived effec-
40 tiveness of mayoral elections. In other respects, directly elected mayors may be
41 regarded as a success and provide sufficient justification for their adoption. But
42 our analysis of the experience of mayoral elections in London – so far at least –
43 lends little weight to the case for change. The claim that mayoral elections can
44 strengthen the electoral link between local government and local citizens remains
45 to be proven.

Appendix 1: Details of Variables and Coding for Table 7

Retrospective Evaluations

Thinking back to the last general election in 1997, would you say that since then the standard of the health service/general standard of living has:

Fallen a little/Fallen a lot (coded 1)

Stayed the same (coded 2)

Increased a lot/Increased a little (coded 3)

London Issues

Do you agree or disagree that motorists who want to drive into central London should have to buy a permit?

Five point scale, from strongly disagree (coded 1) to strongly agree (coded 5)

Which of these options would be best for the future of the London Underground?

It should be run by the public sector alone (coded 1)

It should be run by the private sector alone/By the public and private sector in partnership (coded 2)

Would you say that compared with the rest of Britain London gets more than its fair share of government spending, less than its fair share or is London's share of government spending about right?

Less than its fair share (coded 1)

More than its fair share/About right (coded 2)

London Leadership

How much would you trust Frank Dobson/Ken Livingstone to work in London's interests?

Trust always (coded 1)

Trust most of the time (coded 2)

Trust only some of the time/almost never (coded 3)

(Accepted: •• Month ••)

3

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Notes

- 1 The *London Mayoral Election Survey 2000* was funded by the Leverhulme Trust, under its 'Nations and Regions' programme, based at Edinburgh University and University College London. Data are deposited at the UK Data Archive at Essex, study number 4,443. For technical details of the survey, see Thomson *et al.* (2001).
- 2 The response rate is calculated as the proportion of eligible telephone numbers (i.e. those relating to private individuals, not businesses) generating a response to the survey. The response rate can only be estimated since it is not always possible to ascertain whether a phone number is a private telephone number or not. The sampling for the survey is discussed in more detail in Thomson *et al.* (2001).
- 3 Details of the weighting scheme can be found in Thomson *et al.* (2001).
- 4 The *Greater London Assembly Election Study 2004* was funded by the ESRC, under its 'Devolution and Constitutional Change' programme. Data are deposited at the UK Data Archive at Essex, study number 5,277.
- 5 Details of the 2004 survey are available in Margetts (2006). As quota samples do not have a sampling frame it is impossible to cite a response rate for this survey.
- 6 The low turnout may have reflected a perception that the result was a foregone conclusion. Yet a positive response to the government's devolution proposal was also forecast in the Scottish referendum held a year earlier, yet this still attracted a far higher turnout of 60 per cent.
- 7 The *London Mayoral Election Study* fielded questions on attitudes to the GLA to a half sample only. Therefore, the base for all these attitudinal measures is 781.
- 8 The difference in proportions favouring the mayor and assembly is statistically significant.
- 9 Those who said 'Don't Know' or did not answer the question are excluded from the analysis. Given the distribution of the dependent variable (Table 1), we also conducted two binary logistic regression models (using as the categories of interest either favouring the mayor or assembly 'very much' and 'a bit', or just 'very much'). The substantive results were similar to the ordinal logistic model.
- 10 Some analyses of support for devolution in Scotland have found that national identity becomes a weak predictor of attitudes once people's expectations of the likely performance of the Scottish Parliament are taken into account (Brown *et al.*, 1999, pp. 124–8; Paterson *et al.*, 2001, pp. 112–5). Unfortunately, we cannot test this possibility in London because of the split nature of our sample. Those questions that measured attitudes to the mayor and assembly, and those that tapped expectations of mayoral and assembly performance were administered to different halves of the sample.
- 11 Polls conducted prior to the 2000 election found that a large number of people did not know that an assembly was to be elected alongside the mayor (Electoral Commission, 2003, p. 57).
- 12 The marginal utility of participating would also be lessened if people felt that the outcome of the election was a foregone conclusion. Indeed in 2000, opinion polls put the lead of the front-runner, Ken Livingstone, at up to 50 points over the second-placed candidate just a month before polling day. However, this lead had fallen to 15 points by the time that polling day came around (Rallings and Thrasher, 2000, p. 755). Moreover, we should bear in mind that the race for the simultaneous assembly election was predicted to be much closer. In any event the survey on which we draw did not contain any measures that tapped people's perceptions of how close the election would be, perceptions that would, in any case, be contaminated in a post-election survey by knowledge of the actual result. We thus cannot formally test this rationale for the low turnout.
- 13 Unfortunately the same question was not included in the 2001 *British Election Study*.
- 14 Given the low expectations of what the institutions could achieve, and the limited electoral choices thought to be on offer, it is maybe not surprising that, when asked how much they cared who won the mayoral contest, almost as many (47 per cent) said they did not care very much as said they cared a good deal (51 per cent). This 51 per cent figure compares unfavourably with the 64 per cent of people in Scotland who said they cared a good deal about the outcome of the 1999 Scottish Parliament election, although it is slightly higher than the proportion of Welsh respondents – 49 per cent – who said they cared about the outcome of the first Welsh Assembly election. This variable is not included in our models of voting turnout below, because it does not take us very far in explaining *why* people did not participate.
- 15 This step reduces our base N to 970 respondents. While some respondents are likely to have mis-recalled whether or not they voted in 1997, our – not unreasonable – assumption is that there is no association between mis-recall and the relationship between the dependent and independent variables in the model such that our results might be seriously biased. In any event, it should be noted that the proportion in our sample who claimed to have voted in 1997, 71 per cent, is only slightly higher than the official turnout in London in 1997, at 68 per cent.
- 16 It is possible that people who are politically aware and engaged are more likely both to have perceived differences between the parties and the candidates, and to have participated in the London election. As a result the relationship between perceived party/candidate differences and turnout could be an artefact. The London Mayoral Election Survey did not include any measures of political engagement or interest, so we cannot test this possibility directly. Note, however, that because our analysis is confined to those who claimed to have voted in 1997, the least politically

- interested have already been disproportionately excluded from our analysis. In addition, the survey did carry one measure of political knowledge, in the form of a four-item 'quiz' that tested knowledge of the GLA, a measure that we can anticipate being related to political interest. The relationship between this knowledge score and perceived party/candidate difference proves to be a minor one. For example, among those who said they voted in 1997, there was only a weak relationship between the perceived difference between Steve Norris and Ken Livingstone and the score on our GLA knowledge quiz (Cramer's $V = 0.09$, significant only at the 10 per cent level).
- 17 Defined as being strongly in favour of one candidate/party while being strongly against another.
- 18 Of those who felt the same about Dobson and Livingstone, just 49 per cent made it to the polls compared with 72 per cent among those who felt very differently about them. Equally, just 49 per cent who felt the same about Labour and the Conservatives participated, against 66 per cent who felt very differently about the two parties.
- 19 However, evaluations of the difference between Livingstone and Norris were marginally more important for turnout than expectations about public transport. The Wald score for perceived difference between Livingstone and Norris (10.591) is slightly greater than that for expectations about public transport (9.744). Readers will note that the R^2 of model III is, at 18 per cent, surprisingly lower than that of model II (26 per cent). This arises because the R^2 for model I for the half sample on which model III is based is far lower (7 per cent) than it is for the half sample on which model II is based (23 per cent). Thus, the addition to R^2 provided by model III is, at 11 per cent, in fact much greater than that delivered by model II (3 per cent).
- 20 Indeed, we should note that, outside London, Independents have secured election as directly elected mayors on no less than five occasions. Only twice did this occur on a council with a substantial representation of Independent councillors.
- 21 Thus, in the analysis that follows, and in Tables 5 and 6, those among our sample who voted for Livingstone in 2000 are wholly excluded from the calculations.
- 22 True, if a voter is confident that their preferred candidate will be one of the top two candidates, they could decide to cast their first vote for another candidate who they think might fill the other top two position but who is unlikely to attract many second-preference votes. Such behaviour might increase the chances of their preferred candidate being elected. But the sophistication required to engage in such behaviour is considerable, and we would suggest that few Londoners behaved in this way.
- 23 Favouring a candidate or party is defined as giving them a rating of 5 ('strongly favour') or 4 ('favour') on the 5-point scale in 2000, and as giving them a rating of 6 or 7 on the 7-point scale (1 = dislike a lot, 7 = like a lot) in 2004.
- 24 We exclude from the analysis all those who voted for a party other than Labour, the Conservatives or the Liberal Democrats, or for a mayoral candidate not standing for one of these parties.
- 25 There were two instances where evaluations of a party or candidate other than the one the respondent voted for appear to have mattered. Both these cases support our general argument. They show that evaluations of a party are significantly associated with voting in the assembly contest, while evaluations of the party's mayoral candidate have no such effect. Thus, in 2000, the odds of voting Conservative on the assembly list vote were significantly (negatively) affected by evaluations of Labour, while at the same election the odds of voting Labour were significantly (negatively) affected by evaluations of the Conservatives. In neither case did evaluations of the opposition party's mayoral candidate have any significant effect.
- 26 Abstention in the London election in 2000 among Labour supporters unhappy with the government's performance on the NHS was 55 per cent, as against 40 per cent among those happy with NHS performance. In the case of the standard of living the equivalent figures were 54 per cent and 43 per cent.
- 27 Indeed, just 40 per cent of Londoners backed Livingstone's policy of a publicly owned and operated Underground, while slightly more – 45 per cent – backed the public-private partnership. Even among people who indicated they would have voted Labour at a general election, as many backed the public-private partnership as did the public sector solution.
- 28 Indeed, Livingstone's position on congestion charging commanded the support of less than half of Londoners in 2000 (43 per cent).
- 29 Although we have less data by which to gauge the 'first-order'/'second-order' status of the second London election in 2004, there are some indications that this contest, too, hardly revolved on national-level issues. Thus, asked which factors were important to them in voting in 2004, twice as many respondents answered 'choosing the best people to run London' (51 per cent) as answered 'letting the national government know what you think about national issues' (24 per cent).
- 30 For the importance of such 'diffuse' support in the context of devolution to Scotland, see Curtice (2005).
- 31 The same is also true of mayoral elections elsewhere (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006).

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