

Title: Exploring the spatial characteristics of recent UK elections

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Abstract:

The previous two UK General Elections produced very different results. In 2019, the Conservatives achieved their largest majority since 1987 while Labour achieved their lowest seat count since 1935. This included a loss of many seats in traditional Labour heartlands which was commonly presented in the media as the collapse of Labour's "red wall". The situation changed drastically in 2024 with Labour winning a 174-seat majority. This election also saw the rise of Reform UK as a significant fourth party in English politics. In the case of both elections, there is an expectation that spatial phenomena are at play. This talk explores methods for exploring the different geographical scales of variation in voting behaviour in the 2019 election. It then uses a novel variation on the established intrinsic conditional autoregressive (ICAR) modelling framework to uncover how different hypothesised spatial processes are more credible than others for modelling vote counts, and how these are not the same for all parties. A package which streamlines the human workload of creating such models is also discussed