



***The link between Canvassing and vote switching***

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## **Abstract**

Voting is a cornerstone of democratic government and the study of it is a fundamental aspect of social science. One influential area of this is the study of local campaigning and canvassing. However, the impact of canvassing has not been widely studied within the context of British general elections outside its impact on getting out people to vote meaning that to the influence it has on voter behaviour on floating (or volatile) voters has been rarely considered. Despite this lack of research, this area matters. Voter psychology within the UK is changing, moving away from lifetime party loyalty caused in part to continued class dealignment and the Brexit referendum in 2016. This change has caused more volatile voters who are more likely to change votes between elections, especially in marginal seats. The impact of the national campaign on these voters has been studied in great depth, however the impact of local campaigns most notably canvassing that this paper will concentrate on. This is despite the rise in literature done on the impact on personal conversations in altering people's perceptions on cultural issues. To address this gap in the literature, we use the British Electoral Study to study the impact of local canvassing on floating voters' electoral choices. We find that local canvassing did have an impact on voter choice, with voters more likely to vote for a different party than they previously had. This suggests that canvassing does have an impact on vote choice.

## **Introduction**

Voting is undeniably the cornerstone of our democracy. Not only does it provide practical changes to a country, guiding policy and ideology the country is governed by until the next election, it also provides an insight into the values and concerns of its voting citizens. However, how do political parties attempt to influence these votes to support their party? And how do parties ensure votes in a society where people are increasingly changing their vote? Though this is a complex question, with many different factors involved, local campaigning and canvassing is one such factor. While most literature regards canvassing specifically its ability to convince voters to vote (Green and Gerber, 2015; Pattie and Johnston, 2009; Bochel and Denver, 2007; Barton, Castillo and Petrie, 2016) there is a growing school of thought that canvassing can also impact vote choice (Broockman and Kalla,

2016; Johann et al, 2018; Pattie and Johnston, 2009; Stiers and Dassonneville, 2019). However this is disputed by recent work in the political economy literature which has pointed to the limited effects of canvassing in modern elections. However most of this work has been conducted in a highly polarised and partisan context and therefore these results may be conditional on the electrical context of this country. In this paper we argue that in cases where partisanship is lower canvassing is more likely to impact vote choice by convincing voters to change their votes.

To test my theory, I will examine responses to the British Election Study (BES), and study the occurrence of vote switching (people who voted for one party in the 2017 general election who voted for a different party in 2019) among those who were canvassed by a political party. The BES provides the ideal context as it provides an insight to the British Election in 2019, an election where traditionally Labour seats were won by the Conservative Party for the first time in their history. We combine this data with data held by the Government on the turnout in each seat to present three conclusions from this data. First, I will use the data to demonstrate a link between canvassing and vote switching and how being canvassed encourages people to switch votes. Secondly, I will examine how elements like income and gender can have an impact on if a person switches vote when canvassed and the interaction that has with our assumptions of a population. Finally, I will highlight the link between marginal seats, canvassing and vote switching, showing the positive relationship that exists as presented by Pattie and Johnson (2009).

This article provides contributions to the insight into canvassing. While the impact of canvassing on turnout has been widely considered in multiple political systems, its impact on vote switching has rarely been considered by itself. Furthermore, it furthers research into the impact of vote switching in elections with multiple parties running, along with considering the impact of all these parties within the election, something that is rarely considered in research done on this topic which often concentrate solely on the Labour Party, the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats. Finally, the paper will provide comments on the impact of local campaigning in General Elections and the impact this has on the actions of floating voters who are becoming more important to British elections.

## Theory

The Importance of canvassing, and by extension local campaigning, in general elections has often been debated. While more emphasis has been put on national campaigning and the “third force” of television news (Semetko, 1989, p.453) it has often been presumed that canvassing and local campaigning has become less important. This was thought to be because local campaigning often relied on the energy and enthusiasm of local campaigners, something that varied between areas.

Despite this argument there is growing theory to suggest an election is fought both nationally and locally. While undeniably the national campaign plays a role in the election, in some studies it was found that local campaigns were more influential in vote switching (Johann et al, 2018) and in the 2005 election for 12% of voters local canvassing was the main influence in deciding how they voted (Baines,2011). This therefore shows the influence that canvassing can have on an election.

Canvassing as an important element of the local campaign is undeniable. Canvassing is known to have an impact on those who experience it and is often seen as more influential than other in person contact like telephone banks (Arceneaux and Kolodny, 2009). A large body of work already has studied and proven that canvassing has a direct impact on people turning out to vote (Green and Gerber, 2015; Denver,2019). This has led to local campaigning often leading to electoral success, especially in significant marginal seats (Denver and Garnett,2021)

However, what has been less explicitly studied is the impact of canvassing on vote switching. A growing body of literature into this area has argued that canvassing does have an impact compared to other elements of a campaign such as media appearances and other elements of the local campaign, like telephone banks (Johann et al, 2018; Bochel and David, 1971; Pattie and Johnston, 2009; Stiers and Dassoneville, 2019).

This argument though is disputed. One of the main foundations of this argument comes from Kalla and Broockman in their article, *The Minimal Persuasive Effects of Campaign Contact in General*

*Elections*. In the paper they directly contradict the idea that vote switching can have an impact. They argue that the field experiments they conducted showed that any early persuasion on voters to switch who they are voting for rarely lasted until an election or had very minimal effect. This idea is supported by Smidt (2017) who also reported that voters are less likely to respond to short term influences such as canvassing. Even when an impact could be seen, such as in the case of Arceneaux (2007) it did not seem to have an impact on people's views on candidates themselves, only policies, and the majority of people studied seemed to stay with the party they originally supported.

Part of the reason this argument holds weight is the increased polarisation that prevents vote switching. This can be seen through the impact of social media, something that was not a consideration in older papers studying the impact of canvassing. 93.33% of internet users are on social media (Dean,2021)therefore, it is something that must be considered when studying more recent elections. Social media is a very polarising medium. Not only does it represent more extreme views than are in other public spheres (Conover et al, 2011),but the algorithms used by social media companies often work as a confirmation bias for users (Bessi et al, 2016). This means social media users become entrenched in the belief they interact with (Bessi et al, 2014), promoting bias towards that view (Ferraz de Arruda, 2022).

Even interaction with an opposing view proves to simply polarise a voter more, as people who interact with views opposite to their own simply become more entrenched in their own views (Bail et al, 2018). Or in apps like twitter which allows discourse between people, and therefore a chance for discussion, voters are not convinced and often do not change their views over highly polarised discourse and make no attempt to communicate the views of others to those around them (Conover et al, 2011).

Social media also has a polarising effect on groups not traditionally polarised , most notably independents who are becoming polarised by social media (Bryson,2020). These groups, who are often the voters who will switch their votes, are becoming part of a more polarised political discourse, despite not even being registered for a party (Smidt, 2017).

Therefore, an argument can be made to support the idea of voting being highly polarised, confirming Kalla and Broockamn's argument that canvassing has limited impact on voter choice. This can be seen especially since partisanship is proven to weaken the association between campaign effect and voting choice (Liang,2018). Therefore seemingly rendering campaigning, not just canvassing, useless.

Despite the strengths of the argument that canvassing does not have an impact, it should be noted that most of this research comes from American academics studying American politics. Therefore, it should be recognised that western democracies outside the USA are not experiencing the same changes to voter behaviour as the studies mentioned above would suggest. Cultural impacts like the decline of class voting, change in how voter's view their vote and issue dealignment has changed voter psychology differently, prompting a different theory for this paper to explore.

One of the biggest impacts on voter psychology currently is changing cultural context as highlighted through class dealignment. Class was, until the 20th Century, one of the most significant indicators of vote choice, something that led to the Labour "red wall" forming in industrial, working-class areas. However as argued by Denver and Garnett (2021) changing social contexts within the UK and western democracies has meant that class has become less important in how a voter decides to cast their vote. This argument is supported by others who argue that the move of left leaning parties to a more central position has meant many of their typical supporters feel unrepresented resulting in increasing apathy towards these parties (Evans and Tilley, 2012;Cutts et al, 2020). Instead, a growing number of the population are becoming issue based voters as no party solely represents all that is important to them. This is argued by Angelucci and Vittori (2021), Denver and Garnett (2021) and Mellon (2022), who believe that issue voting has become more influential in elections than traditional party allegiance. This therefore contradicts the idea of party polarisation as people are often choosing parties which represent their view.

With cultural context like class dealignment shifting voter psychology, it should also be noted the impact of issue dealignment and the impact of political events like Brexit on voter psychology. There has long been an idea that shock events that create a strong emotional response, like terrorist attacks,

natural disasters and referendums, have an impact on vote choice. Voters make a connection with parties, which often influence their likelihood to vote for a party. However, if this is broken through shock events, which makes a voter question this support, it increases the likelihood of vote switching (Vasilopoulou and Wagner, 2022) as people's perception of government changes (Maestas, Atkinson, 2012). This idea is supported by Carmines and Stimson arguing that realignment comes from an "emergence of new issues about which the electorate has intense feeling that cut across rather than reinforce existing bases of support for political parties" (1981, p.107), supporting the idea of shock changes influencing vote choice.

In the case of the 2019 election, which this article uses as its research data, this can be seen with the Brexit Referendum in 2016. Considered by some to be a "realignment election" (Cutts et al, 2020, p.7), the 2019 election was the culmination of the impact of Brexit on voter behaviour. The referendum caused a shift in voter identities, with voters aligning more with their Brexit vote than they did a specific party (Hobolt and Tilly, 2019). This identity is so strong that Hobolt, Leeper and Tilly argue that they are "felt to be personally important" (2020, p1). This is supported by Evans and Schaffner (2019), whose research highlighted the importance of these identities. Their research identified that only one in 16 people surveyed did not have a Brexit identity compared to the one in five who did not have a party identity, showing the strength of these new ideas. It was this strong identity that causes Vasilopoulou and Wagner (2022) to argue that there was defection and change in vote choice from both people who voted remain and people who voted to leave. Therefore, unlike in cases of social media and in political systems where strong partisan divide means canvassing is less likely to be successful, in the case of systems which have been through strong political shock partisanship does not fall to party lines and therefore means issue voting, which canvassing can affect is more prominent.

Differences between single party systems and multi-party systems should also be considered. In the USA where floating voting has declined, even independent voters have become reliable voters to one party meaning though party identification has declined, partisanship remains high (Smidt,2017). This means many people will not change their vote, with instead turnout influencing results. However, in

multi-party democracies where positions and ideological divides are less drastic, issues and issue ownership becomes more important (Mellon, 2022) allowing canvassing to be more effective.

It is this massive shift in voter psychology which leads to the theory of the paper that canvassing can cause votes switching by considering the psychological impact a one-on-one conversation, that canvassing allows, on voice choice. This can be seen through studies on the impact of one-on-one conversation on how people perceive an issue. In a study done by Kalla and Broockman (2016) on the impact of personal communication and transphobia found that a 10-minute phone call decreased transphobia for up to three months, showing the impact of personal communication on participants' perception. Though the study does not concentrate on voting choice, Kalla and Broockman to suggest the impact that canvassing could have on vote switching “these findings suggest that it may be in campaigns’ own best interest to place renewed emphasis on personal exchange of initially opposing views even regarding controversial issues and across partisan lines” (p,224).

This impact of canvassing has been studied before, with a positive link being found in cases between canvassing and voters changing their vote (Stiers and Dassonville, 2019; Johann, 2018; Pattie and Johnston, 2009; Denver, 2019) giving the theory some grounding. However, these papers either do not consider more recent elections, or do not concentrate solely on the impact of canvassing, allowing for this paper to contribute to this area of research by forwarding the research that has taken place.

## **Background**

### *British general elections and local canvassing*

The United Kingdom is divided into 650 constituencies, with 533 in England, 59 in Scotland, 40 in Wales and 18 in Northern Ireland. Each of these constituencies elect one member of Parliament to the British House of Commons, where they are meant to represent the concerns of their constituents.

While 18 seats are elected from Northern Ireland, Northern Ireland is not considered in this paper. This is due to two main reasons. The first is that the BES does not consider Northern Ireland in its research and therefore the data set used does not cover Northern Ireland. Further no parties which canvass in the other three nations stand candidates in the Northern Ireland elections making the comparison harder. Therefore, Northern Ireland will not be considered.

### *Marginal Seats*

Marginal seats are defined within this paper as seats where the elected MP won by less than 10% of the vote. Ultra-marginal seats are defined as seats where the elected MP won by less than 5% of the vote. These are the seats where someone other than the incumbent will be elected. This has meant that these seats often receive additional funding both in and out of election periods; donations to political parties have often concentrated on these marginal seats (Johnson and Pattie, 2007) and funding outside of election periods often are used to influence the votes within these seats. This was evident in the 2019 budget where marginal seats where the Conservative Party were the second biggest party were over-represented in government funding (Chu and Barnes, 2019). It is also where more local campaigning takes place due to the impact winning these seats can have for a government.

## **Research design**

### *Data*

The paper uses data from the British Election Study (BES) 2019 Post election Random Probability Survey (Fieldhouse et al, 2021a). The survey is an “address-based random probability sample of eligible voters”, which corresponds to the 2019 UK general election (Fieldhouse et al, 2021b, p.3) which took place in December 2019.

However, criticism of the BES should be noted. The BES relies on recollection of voters who may not recall if they were canvassed (Pattie, 2003) or will report a vote for a winning candidate, something that increases “the further the interview is from the election” (Alvarez and Nagler, 2000, p.61). This can be seen as an issue exacerbated by the collection of data for the 2019 BES which, unlike previous

surveys, was not done fully in person and up to 7 months after the election due to the Covid-19 Pandemic (Fieldhouse et al, 2019).

Despite this the BES provides a strong data source. Not only does it provide a randomised study that represents a random probability of the British population, allowing for my research to consider the entire British population, it also is from an internationally renowned data set giving more accuracy to my results.

Using BES also helps alleviate some of the limitations on this research, namely time and money, with the BES giving a level of confidence in the research that I arguably could not have reached without using this data set.

The data to calculate the marginality of a seat comes from the House of Commons library, which gave the total majority for all constituencies in the 2019 election. This allowed for the calculation of the marginality of seats which was combined with BES data to give more information to the constituent element of my research.

### *Coding*

The BES does not currently measure if a respondent has changed the party they voted for between elections, therefore a measure had to be created for this research. The measure was created by comparing the respondents' 2017 and 2019 vote, with the results of this being given either a 0 or a 1 to indicate if the vote had changed or not.

The BES also did not measure if the constituency could be considered to be a marginal seat or not, with the House of Commons data also not measuring it. Therefore, a measure was created from the House of Commons Constituency data to measure if a seat was marginal (the majority of the winning candidate was less than 10% of votes cast) or ultra-marginal (the majority of the winning candidate was less than 5% of votes cast).

### *Tests*

I ran three tests on the data using linear regression to test my theory, using the control variables in each regression.

The first test ran was to see if canvassing alone had an impact on voting choice. This test included not only considering the impact of canvassing but also the impact of party canvassing on the likelihood of people to switch their vote.

The second test was to see if other factors influence the likelihood of someone to switch votes.

I included control variables within the research. These were age, education, income and gender, which though initially were added in solely as control variables did have some significant and interesting interaction with both canvassing and vote switching and therefore were considered as factors which influenced people's vote. This was also based on the research of Bochel and Denver (1971) which suggested that variables like gender had an impact on vote. Another factor which was considered within this category is if voters were canvassed by more than one party, to see if the influence of one party is larger over another. The final factor considered is if the person received any form of other contact from political parties other than being canvassed. This included telephone canvassing, in person canvassing on the street and leafleting.

The third test I ran was to see if the impact of canvassing changed depending on whether the seat was marginal or not. This test is based on the hypothesis that a high intensity of canvassing takes place in those seats, along with the extra attention these seats receive. I also ran the test due to the importance of voters who change their votes in these seats in elections, something highlighted in the 2019 election where 29 seats within the United Kingdom now have a majority of less than 1000 votes (Sharma, 2019).

## **Results**

The first test I ran was to look at the significance between if an individual was canvassed and if this prompted them to switch vote. While a positive relationship was found between some political parties, overall, the relationship between canvassing and vote switching was not statistically significant enough to reject the null as can be seen in the table below.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
(Intercept)	0.000*** (0.016)	0.000*** (0.021)	0.000*** (0.030)	0.000*** (0.031)	0.000*** (0.035)	0.000*** (0.035)
Canvassed	0.296 (0.009)	0.500 (0.009)	0.510 (0.009)	0.606 (0.009)	0.877 (0.009)	0.877 (0.009)
Age		0.008** (0.000)	0.009** (0.000)	0.004** (0.000)	0.025* (0.000)	0.025* (0.000)
gender			0.751 (0.012)	0.922 (0.012)	0.445 (0.012)	0.445 (0.012)
y01_Annual				0.000*** (0.002)	0.000*** (0.002)	0.000*** (0.002)
education level					0.497 (0.004)	0.497 (0.004)

However, this was not the case for those canvassed by the

Conservative party. Results from the linear regression run on Conservative canvassing showed that there was a positive relationship between those canvassed by the Conservative Party and people who switched their votes, showing that the Conservative Party did have a significant impact on vote switching through canvassing on local people.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
(Intercept)	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***
	(0.017)	(0.036)	(0.059)	(0.062)	(0.071)	(0.071)
Canvassed by the Conservative Party	0.068+	0.049*	0.046*	0.034*	0.022*	0.022*
	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.027)	(0.027)
Age		0.033*	0.020*	0.008**	0.032*	0.032*
		(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
gender			0.280	0.133	0.140	0.140
			(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.025)
y01_Annual				0.000***	0.000***	0.000***
				(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.005)
education level					0.477	0.477
					(0.009)	(0.009)

This shows while most parties did not have an impact on vote switching through canvassing directly, the Conservative Party did.

However, as further tests proves this did not mean canvassing did not have an impact in regards to seats which were marginal. This is especially seen for the Labour Party. As seen in the table below, if Labour canvassed within ultra-marginal seats a positive relationship can be seen for vote switching. While vote switching is expected in these seats, vote switching took place less often in cases where labour did not canvas compared to cases where they did. Therefore, Labour canvassing while not having an impact in all seats has a bigger influence in highly contested seats.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
(Intercept)	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***
	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.043)	(0.066)	(0.070)	(0.079)
Labour party canvassing	0.031*	0.031*	0.048*	0.051+	0.078+	0.129
	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.032)
marginal seat	0.900	0.900	0.863	0.861	0.771	0.474
	(0.063)	(0.063)	(0.063)	(0.063)	(0.062)	(0.063)
ultra marginal	0.054+	0.054+	0.047*	0.044*	0.074+	0.082+
	(0.080)	(0.080)	(0.080)	(0.080)	(0.079)	(0.079)
Labour party canvassing:marginal seat	0.978	0.978	0.897	0.892	0.804	0.479
	(0.084)	(0.084)	(0.084)	(0.084)	(0.083)	(0.084)
Labour party canvassing: ultra marginal seat	0.022*	0.022*	0.021*	0.021*	0.036*	0.049*
	(0.092)	(0.092)	(0.092)	(0.092)	(0.092)	(0.092)
Age			0.115	0.078+	0.036*	0.096+
			(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
gender				0.343	0.187	0.175
				(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.026)
y01_Annual					0.002**	0.003**
					(0.005)	(0.005)
education level						0.531
						(0.009)

Similar patterns can be seen with canvassing carried out by the Scottish National Party (SNP). As seen in the table below the SNP also saw an increase in vote switching in ultra marginal seats, which compared to the impact of Labour was arguably more successful, with more people vote switching. A difference seen in the canvassing efforts of the Labour party can also be seen between the average vote switching within a marginal seat and an increased amount of vote switching if contacted by the SNP.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
(Intercept)	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.001***
	(0.013)	(0.063)	(0.075)	(0.127)	(0.166)	(0.200)	(0.237)
Canvassed by the Scottish National Party	0.208	0.918	0.517	0.528	0.687	0.632	0.832
	(0.059)	(0.076)	(0.096)	(0.097)	(0.098)	(0.101)	(0.095)
No other contact by the SNP		0.793	1.000	0.946	0.906	0.967	0.569
		(0.253)	(0.249)	(0.258)	(0.261)	(0.278)	(0.260)
marginal seat			1.000	0.974	0.950	0.927	0.947
			(0.156)	(0.159)	(0.158)	(0.160)	(0.147)
ultra marginal			0.009**	0.010**	0.007**	0.007**	0.000***
			(0.184)	(0.187)	(0.188)	(0.194)	(0.234)
canvassed by the Scottish National Party:marginal seat			0.936	0.934	0.939	0.935	0.932
			(0.179)	(0.181)	(0.181)	(0.183)	(0.168)
canvassed by the Scottish National Party: ultra marginal seat			0.017*	0.018*	0.014*	0.014*	0.000***
			(0.226)	(0.229)	(0.230)	(0.235)	(0.270)
Age				0.765	0.669	0.621	0.655
				(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
gender					0.282	0.256	0.403
					(0.073)	(0.075)	(0.070)
y01_Annual						0.633	0.442
						(0.016)	(0.017)
education level							0.490

Marginality also was an important factor when considering the impact of canvassing as part of a local campaign, therefore considering other elements of the campaign in my regression.

This impact can be seen especially in the Labour Party.

As the table below highlights both canvassing and leafleting in ultra-marginal seats have an impact which sees more voters vote switching than normally would in an ultra-marginal seat. However as also highlighted in the table canvassing has more of a positive impact than if not canvassed at all.

Despite this, if a voter is contacted by both canvassing and leafleted, they are more likely to vote switch, which seems to suggest that multiple forms of contact by a party is more effective.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
(Intercept)	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***
	(0.020)	(0.040)	(0.045)	(0.058)	(0.078)	(0.082)	(0.091)
Canvassed by the Labour Party	0.114	0.468	0.101	0.094+	0.100+	0.077+	0.242
	(0.026)	(0.074)	(0.088)	(0.088)	(0.088)	(0.088)	(0.090)
Contacted by the Labour Party through leaflets		0.208	0.846	0.910	0.907	0.907	0.790
		(0.047)	(0.053)	(0.054)	(0.054)	(0.053)	(0.054)
Canvassed by the Labour Party: Contacted by the Labour Party through leaflets		0.954	0.393	0.344	0.351	0.269	0.543
		(0.081)	(0.096)	(0.096)	(0.096)	(0.095)	(0.097)
marginal seat			0.061+	0.080+	0.082+	0.146	0.447
			(0.122)	(0.122)	(0.122)	(0.122)	(0.129)
ultra marginal			0.005**	0.005**	0.005**	0.003**	0.004**
			(0.201)	(0.201)	(0.201)	(0.200)	(0.199)
Canvassed by the Labour Party:marginal seat			0.088+	0.104	0.100+	0.163	0.346
			(0.279)	(0.280)	(0.280)	(0.279)	(0.282)
Canvassed by the Labour Party: ultra marginal seat			0.008**	0.007**	0.008**	0.005**	0.008**
			(0.250)	(0.250)	(0.251)	(0.249)	(0.249)
marginal seat: Contacted by the Labour Party through leaflets			0.026*	0.035*	0.035*	0.063+	0.202
			(0.144)	(0.145)	(0.145)	(0.144)	(0.150)
ultra marginal seat: Contacted by the Labour Party through leaflets			0.029*	0.029*	0.031*	0.014*	0.016*
			(0.219)	(0.219)	(0.219)	(0.218)	(0.218)

Canvassed by the Labour Party:marginal seat>Contacted by the Labour Party through leaflets	0.057+	0.066+	0.063+	0.105	0.219
	(0.296)	(0.296)	(0.297)	(0.295)	(0.298)
Canvassed by the Labour Party:Ultra marginal seat>Contacted by the Labour Party through leaflets	0.047*	0.044*	0.048*	0.024*	0.034*
	(0.270)	(0.270)	(0.270)	(0.269)	(0.269)
Age		0.247	0.196	0.108	0.206
		(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
gender			0.498	0.277	0.254
			(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.027)
y01_Annual				0.001**	0.002**
				(0.005)	(0.005)
education level					0.587
					(0.010)

This is something that can also be highlighted in other forms of communication in the form of telephone conversations, which as seen in the table below also had a positive impact.

Further when this impact is compared to that of leafleting the impact of telephone contacts is larger, therefore highlighting the effectiveness of telephone communication over leafleting.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
(Intercept)	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***
	(0.020)	(0.021)	(0.025)	(0.046)	(0.070)	(0.074)	(0.084)
Canvassed by the Labour Party	0.114	0.180	0.028*	0.046*	0.052+	0.064+	0.124
	(0.026)	(0.028)	(0.034)	(0.034)	(0.034)	(0.034)	(0.034)
Contacted by the Labour Party through phone calls		0.463	0.561	0.496	0.480	0.537	0.507
		(0.153)	(0.172)	(0.172)	(0.172)	(0.171)	(0.170)
Canvassed by the Labour Party: Contacted by the Labour Party through phone calls		0.698	0.712	0.808	0.831	0.682	0.728
		(0.173)	(0.201)	(0.202)	(0.202)	(0.200)	(0.202)
marginal seat			1.000	0.963	0.967	0.837	0.503
			(0.067)	(0.067)	(0.067)	(0.066)	(0.067)
ultra marginal			0.061+	0.054+	0.052+	0.090+	0.103
			(0.080)	(0.080)	(0.080)	(0.079)	(0.079)
Canvassed by the Labour Party:marginal seat			0.554	0.626	0.624	0.697	0.920
			(0.088)	(0.088)	(0.089)	(0.088)	(0.089)
Canvassed by the Labour Party: ultra marginal seat			0.022*	0.022*	0.022*	0.038*	0.057+
			(0.095)	(0.095)	(0.095)	(0.094)	(0.094)
marginal seat: Contacted by the Labour Party through phone calls			1.000	0.998	0.971	0.954	0.864
			(0.386)	(0.385)	(0.386)	(0.382)	(0.382)
ultra marginal seat: Contacted by the Labour Party through phone calls			0.194	0.207	0.217	0.147	0.173
			(0.180)	(0.180)	(0.180)	(0.179)	(0.181)
Canvassed by the Labour Party:marginal seat:Contacted by the Labour Party through phone calls			0.047*	0.047*	0.043*	0.033*	0.043*
			(0.528)	(0.527)	(0.528)	(0.523)	(0.523)
Age				0.149	0.104	0.058+	0.127
				(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
gender					0.369	0.180	0.173
					(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.027)
y01_Annual						0.001***	0.001**
						(0.005)	(0.005)
education level							0.674
							(0.010)

There was a clear relationship between what canvassing and other factors.

While marginality had a clear impact on forms of canvassing, other factors also had an impact on the success of canvassing. As seen in the table below a person's personal income did have an impact on

how likely they were to switch votes if contacted by Labour this suggests that a voter’s personal situation could impact how likely they were to switch votes if canvassed, though the impact is small.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
(Intercept)	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***
	(0.020)	(0.032)	(0.047)	(0.069)	(0.077)	(0.077)
Canvassed by the Labour Party	0.114	0.474	0.393	0.332	0.282	0.282
	(0.026)	(0.040)	(0.040)	(0.040)	(0.042)	(0.042)
y01_Annual		0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***
		(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Canvassed by the Labour Party: Annual Income		0.028*	0.028*	0.022*	0.020*	0.020*
		(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)
Age			0.037*	0.017*	0.063+	0.063+
			(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
gender				0.128	0.131	0.131
				(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.025)
education level					0.463	0.463
					(0.009)	(0.009)

## Discussion

So how do the results interact with existing scholarship on the relationship between canvassing and voters changing their vote? And how does it allow us to further the field of study?

In the results an emphasis can be seen on the positive relationship between vote switching and canvassing therefore proving the theory that canvassing does increase vote switching in political landscapes similar to that of the British General Election in 2019. Though a direct relationship between canvassing and turnout could not be found through linear regression with the method I chose, all other tests applied to canvassing show that vote switching was found to have a positive relationship.

The individual success of Conservative canvassing should be considered. Historically the Conservative Party was known for concentrating canvassing on secure seats to guarantee victory. However, this research supports the idea of a changing Conservative campaign, concentrating on other seats (Cooper and Cooper, 2020) and on changing votes instead of maintaining them. This change in the success of canvassing can be seen as an indicator of dealignment within the UK, and the changing face of the Conservative party, especially their success in new seats. The success of canvassing therefore can be seen as part of the Conservative strategy of 2019 that was tailored on taking advantage of the changing political landscape (Cooper and Cooper, 2020) and their change in campaign strategy.

However, while the Conservative Party seemingly is having more of an impact in more seats nationally, Labour continues to have an impact in marginal seats, with canvassing having a clear impact on vote switching in these seats. The concentration of Labour on these seats has been evident before and therefore highlights a continuation of Labour's election strategy relying on canvassing marginal seats. This can arguably be used to explain their loss of seats in 2019 in traditional red wall seats, though more study on this area would be needed.

This impact can also be seen also in the SNP who also showed a link between canvassing and ultra-marginal seats, showing the impact of local canvassing on these critical seats. Therefore, the paper reinforces the idea on the importance of canvassing on marginal seats, especially those which can be considered ultra-marginal.

However, the paper disputes claims made by previous papers the impact of gender on the impact on canvassing (1978), which was arguably based on outdated gender roles no longer applicable to the modern political elections. Instead this article suggests new relationships which impact people's beliefs on canvassing. This is seen in the impact of annual income on how likely people are to vote switch when canvassed. This relationship, which is not identified in any literature, is one that prompts further study

These results again emphasise the importance of local campaigning within elections. While canvassing is still shown to be a significant way of increasing vote switching, this positive relationship increased when other forms of local campaigning were involved. Though it does not directly prove the importance of local campaigning in the election, it does suggest that local campaigning has an important impact on voter choice, as suggested by some literature (Denver and Garnett, 2021; Arceneaux and Kolodny, 2009).

My research also highlights the importance of face-to-face interaction between political parties, local activists and voters through the increased effectiveness of telephone calls over leafleting in promoting vote switching. This is in line with the argument made by Kalla and Broockman (2016) on the importance of face-to-face interactions in changing people's perceptions on the issue, therefore giving empirical backing to the claims made in their article.

My results also deal with criticisms of the impact of canvassing. As evidenced by the results in the paper, canvassing has a positive impact on vote switching shows that canvassing can have an impact on vote switching, therefore directly contradicting the idea that there is no relationship between canvassing and vote switching.

While the paper cannot make comment on the impact of canvassing in a social media age, which would provide an interesting point for further research, the article does again demonstrate that a relationship still remains between canvassing and vote change.

But what contributions does my research bring to this area of expertise? My research contributes both a forwarding of pre-existing theories, along with the introduction of new ideas. It questions the pre-existing idea, and common belief, that canvassing is most successful in keeping people to vote for one particular party. As the positive relationship exists between canvassing and vote switching, voters are now more likely to vote for a different party than remain with a party if canvassed. This challenges the American centric literature surrounding canvassing that considers a system unlike others within global democracy.

It also introduces the idea that income has replaced other socio-economic factors in importance in influencing if people change votes or not, though this is something that will need further study.

## **Conclusion**

In this article I have presented evidence that canvassing has a positive impact on vote switching. I have built on pre-existing literature and shown in greater detail the importance of canvassing in convincing people to vote switch, along with putting further comments on the campaigning of both the Labour and Conservative Party. This paper puts forward contributions towards this field, by suggesting that previous academic thought on voter canvassing is too focused on the American political system and on systems which no longer exist in multi-party democracies.

However while this paper certainly has strengths, the weaknesses of the paper must also be addressed, as well as ways to develop this theory. A step to be taken to develop this theory is to consider vote switching among multiple elections, which would allow further research into the impact of shock political events and the rising influence of issue voting on the impact of canvassing.

A further step to develop this theory is to consider the impact of canvassing on tactical (swing) voting. While some academics theorise that tactical voting was only slightly more prevalent in the 2019 General Election (Mellon, 2021), the data did highlight the impact of marginality for some parties. The article did not fully consider the line of academic argument which suggests that voter mentality is shifting, with an increased focus on preventing certain candidates to gain power, over voting for a party gaining power. This would therefore be an interesting angle to take this research.

Another development is to consider more fully the messages and contact behaviour which makes face-to-face canvassing successful, building on the psychological aspect of this study as seen in the work of Kalla and Broockman (2016) and the way a message can be created.

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