



## Election 2010: The Rural and Urban Dimension

### Demography: Resurgent Liberal Democrats and the Younger Vote

#### Introduction

We had intended to move on to a rural\_urban analysis of policy issues of concern to rural voters but the rise of the Liberal Democrats in the opinion polls following the part leaders' debates has led us, for this issue, down another track. Here we look at some demographic implications for potential voting intentions.

#### A Demographic of Potential Liberal Democrat Support?

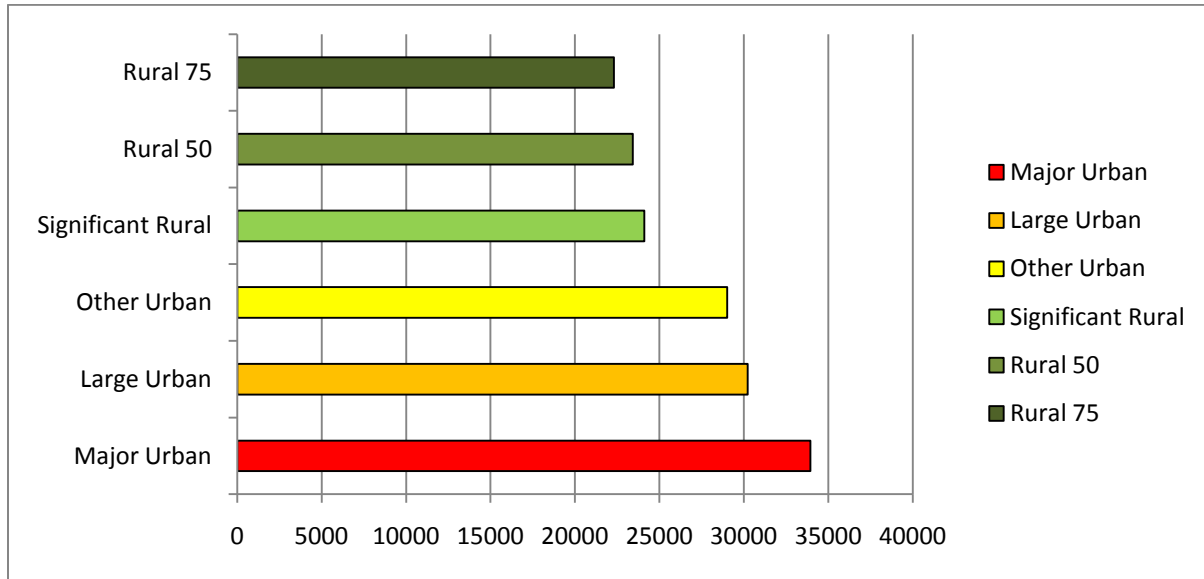
A *Populus* poll taken on the 20 April for *The Times* suggests that the biggest switchers to the Liberal Democrats have been younger people. There has been with an 18-point rise to 40 per cent in support for the party among 25 to 34-year-olds. This age group has also seen something of a surge in late voter registration although, against this, it has a tendency towards lower turnout compared with other demographic groups. Switches in votes between the three main parties have potential for a major effect on the outcome of the election

Chart 1 shows the average number of voters per constituency by constituency type in the age group 25 – 34.<sup>1</sup> There is a distinct rural-urban difference in the average numbers of younger voters with the 'stand out' figure being that for the Major Urban constituencies (average nearly 34,000) whilst the three rural type averages are fairly similar (around 23,000).

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<sup>1</sup> Data are from the latest Small Area Population estimates issued by the Office for National Statistics

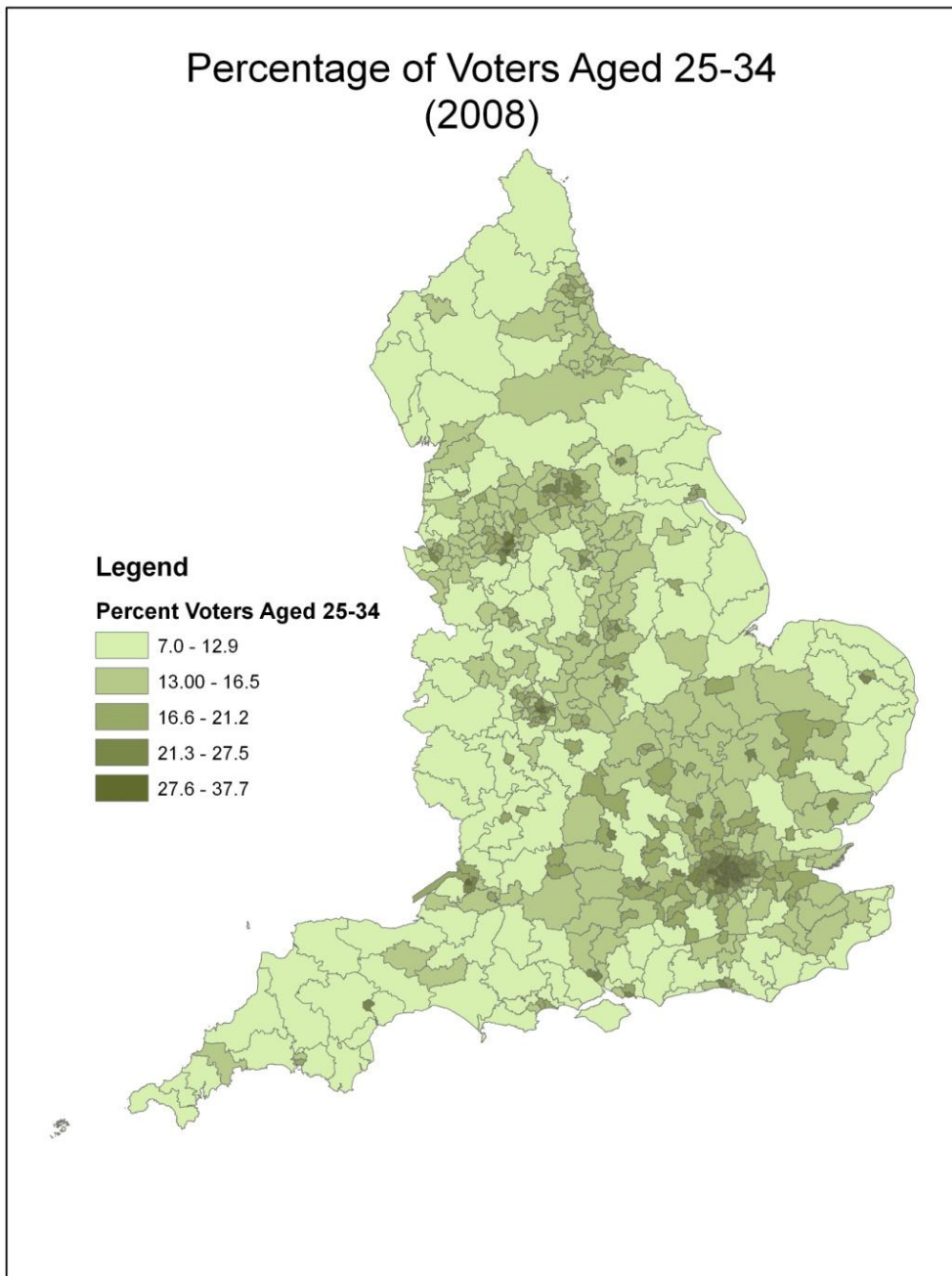
**Chart 1 Average Number of Voters Aged 25 – 34 and Parliamentary Constituency Type , England 2008**



Map 1 shows the percentage of voters in each constituency in England aged 25 to 34. The 'cores' and, in places, the 'peripheries' of most of the larger towns and cities are apparent have high percentages of younger voters and there is a broad contrast between the 'rural periphery' of the country with low percentages of younger people and a general North West – South East trend across the metropolitan 'core' of the country with higher percentages.

Also striking is the broad ring of constituencies with 16 percent or more of younger voters around London, though with breaks here and there consisting of some very affluent Rural 50 constituencies such as Mole Valley (Co), Henley (Co), Buckingham (Co), Maldon (Co) and Saffron Waldon (Co). This is the outer commuting ring of London where population growth has been high as younger families have moved in over the last decade or so. Constituencies with relatively fewer younger people/families have also generally had lower population growth.

**Map 1 Percentage of Voters Aged 25 – 34 2008**

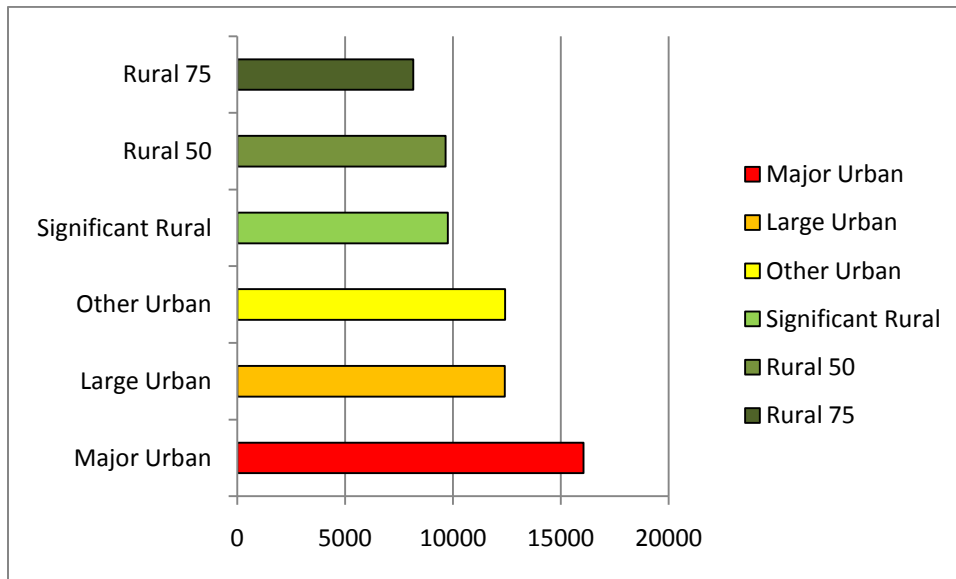


**The Battleground Seats and Younger Voters.**

The average number of younger voters in the 143 'battleground' seats of England shows a similar overall pattern in terms of an overall rural-urban contrast though with much lower average numbers involved (Chart 2). The Major Urban battleground constituencies have an average number of younger voters just

less than half (47 percent) that for all Major Urban Constituencies, whilst the Rural 75 constituencies have an average just over one third that of all such constituencies. The others have an average around 40 percent less.

**Chart 2 The Battleground Constituencies: Average Number of Voters Aged 25 – 34 and Parliamentary Constituency Type , England 2008**



However, within the different constituency types in the ‘battleground’ group, the range in the number of younger voters is large as the following table and examples show. It will also be noted that the constituencies involved are very different in their social and economic make-up.

Table

Type	Minimum	Maximum
Major Urban	8283 Cheadle Boro	32480 Westminster North Boro
Large Urban	6605 Wirral South Co	17300 Brighton, Pavilion Boro
Other Urban	8152 Winchester Co	18839 Colchester Boro
Significant Rural	6414 Sefton Central Co	13423 Eastleigh Boro
Rural 50	8075 Camborne and Redruth Co	11911 Elmet and Rothwell Co
Rural 75	6840 Stone Co	9747 St. Austell and Newquay Co