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Election behaviour of Polish people according to settlement units

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ELECTION BEHAVIOUR OF POLISH PEOPLE ACCORDING TO SETTLEMENT UNITS

ABSTRACT. In this paper we considered the question of the influence of settlement system character to the election behaviour of the population on the basis of official statistical results of voting on district-level. A statistically significant difference was stated in the election behaviour between the urban and rural population on national level as well as on regional one. It was stated that the political position of the inhabitants of towns with different sizes is considerably differentiated and a general dependency was shown between the rank of town in the settlement system of the country and the behaviour character of the electors.

KEY WORDS: election behaviour, election frequency, political preferences, settlement system.

INTRODUCTION

Among the several factors that distinct the election behaviour of the population the place of residence has an undoubtedly important role. Differences occurring between the urban and rural electorate concerning the frequency level as well as the character of political preferences were several times emphasised in different research works, also in geographical ones, about the contemporary Polish elections (among others Zarycki, 1997; Raciborski, 1997; Kowalski, 2000). They refer first of all to one of the basic character of the political space of the country, namely the opposition of liberal towns to the etatistically orientated village or of elite urban population to the traditional rural population. So at the fundaments of this conflict we can notice the different social-professional structure or economic interests of the urban and rural population as well as some value systems diversifying urban and rustic culture. The aim of this paper is to deepen the

considerations made up to now on the theme of the influence of living place, wider the character of the settlement system of the country, to the behaviour of electors. Therefore the most important research tasks are the following: to confirm or deny the existence of differences in the election behaviour of urban and rural population and in the case of towns to study the character of influence of their size to the participation and election preferences of the population.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The source material consists of the data concerning election frequencies and voting results to the particular lists in the elections to the Polish Parliament (Sejm Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej) on 23 September 2001 that was made available by the National Election Office. For practical sake we took under consideration only those aggregations taking part in the elections that reached at least 2% support on national scale. These are the following: Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej i Unia Pracy (Alliance of the Democratic Left and Labour Union – SLD-UP), Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność Prawicy (Election Action Solidarity the Right – AWSP), Unia Wolności (Liberty Union – UW), Samoobrona Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej (Self-Defence of Polish Republic – SRP), Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (Law and Justice – PiS), Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe (PSL), Platforma Obywatelska (Citizenship Platform – PO) and Liga Polskich Rodzin (League of Polish Families – LPR). The adequate data are segregated on the level of election districts that are identified as urban and rural. A few districts connecting urban and rural areas within their precincts were classified to the adequate groups on the basis of the district commission seat. Special districts established in health care or justice administration institutions due to their specific character were not taken into account in the analysis. At the end 11,395 urban and 11,773 rural districts were recognised (Table 1).

Table 1. Size classes of towns

SIZE CLASSES OF TOWNS	NUMBER OF TOWNS		NUMBER OF DISTRICTS	
	UNITS	%	UNITS	%
Below 2 thous.	43	4.9	64	0.6
2–5	248	28.1	547	4.8
5–10	181	20.5	709	6.2
10–20	183	20.7	1,348	11.8
20–50	137	15.5	1,989	17.5
50–100	50	5.7	1,529	13.4
100–200	23	2.6	1,365	12.0
200 thous. and more	19	2.1	3,844	33.7
Total	884	100.0	11,395	100.0

To compare the election behaviour in the town group all of the 884 towns existing at the time of elections were classified into one of the eight size classes, of which each was represented by a given number of election districts (Table 1).

All of the studies were carried out on national as well as on provincial level. The research hypothesis was verified using known significance tests of differences.

RESULTS

The comparisons made on the town – village dimension confirmed a quite considerable impact of the electors' living place to the character of their behaviour. The results of the t-Student test show that the observed differences are strongly significant statistically ($p \leq 0.00001$).

The main discriminants of the electoral positions of towns are the considerable higher share of UW, PiS and PO, i.e. liberal groups (Table 2). On the other hand, rural districts are characterised by a much higher support for PSL and SRP, i.e. principally peasant parties. Towns are distinguished by somewhat higher frequency and a raised support level for SLD-UP. At the end, rural areas are more positively oriented to LPR, while towns prefer AWSP.

The presented regularity concerns whole Poland as well as particular regions of the country. They were not confirmed to the end only in the case of AWSP and LPR. In four voivodeships (administrative regions of the 1st order) (Małopolskie, Podkarpackie, Pomorskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie) AWSP had better results in rural areas while LPR in all of the regions, except Mazowieckie, Małopolskie, Podkarpackie and Śląskie, obtained relatively higher support in urban districts. The differences were not significant statistically only in the Pomorskie, Warmińsko-Mazurskie i Podkarpackie voivodeships in the case of AWSP and in the Małopolskie, Podkarpackie i Mazowieckie voivodeships in the case of LPR.

The observed urban-rural differences do not exhaust the problem of influence of the settlement system character to the election behaviour of the population. Political positions of people living in towns of different size categories occurred to be strongly inhomogeneous. It seem that the behaviour of the inhabitants of small, medium and large villages are also differentiated, but the data available at present do not permit to confirm or deny this hypothesis.

One-way ANOVA analysis revealed in most cases statistically significant differences between the election behaviour indices of population from towns with different size classes. The only "disturbances" concerned the cases of AWS, and especially LPR for what significance was rather exceptional. Some inaccuracies were connected also with the index of frequency.

Table 2. Election behaviour indices in towns and villages*

VOIVODESHIP	FREQUENCY		ELECTION SUPPORT (%)						
	(%)	SLD-UP	AWSP	UW	SRP	PIS	PSL	PO	LPR
Poland	48.0	45.2	5.7	3.7	7.3	10.9	4.5	14.4	7.9
	42.7	32.5	5.3	1.6	18.2	5.2	19.8	7.5	8.1
Dolnośląskie	46.2	49.3	4.8	4.2	7.7	8.3	3.5	14.7	6.9
	40.5	43.8	3.8	2.1	18.6	4.2	11.7	9.0	6.2
Kujawsko-Pomorskie	46.4	52.0	5.1	2.9	7.6	8.3	4.5	10.7	8.4
	40.4	40.1	3.4	1.3	20.2	4.0	18.5	5.3	6.4
Lubelskie	49.4	41.4	5.3	2.6	9.0	10.5	9.0	10.7	11.1
	45.3	26.7	3.2	1.2	21.1	3.9	30.5	3.4	9.4
Lubuskie	44.8	53.1	6.1	3.8	8.1	6.2	5.5	10.7	5.5
	37.4	46.5	5.5	2.1	15.1	3.7	13.3	7.0	5.2
Łódzkie	47.5	50.5	5.3	2.6	8.6	8.8	4.2	11.5	7.7
	44.0	30.0	3.5	1.0	25.5	3.6	24.2	4.5	6.8
Małopolskie	51.7	34.7	6.2	5.1	5.2	15.4	4.1	18.5	10.5
	45.2	23.2	9.6	1.7	12.8	8.7	17.9	13.9	11.6
Mazowieckie	51.2	38.5	4.8	4.4	5.6	17.6	5.0	16.1	7.5
	41.4	25.6	4.5	1.2	18.4	6.3	29.1	6.0	8.2
Opolskie	43.0	43.7	4.1	3.9	8.1	6.5	3.3	14.1	7.2
	37.2	28.4	3.0	1.6	16.0	3.0	8.4	7.7	5.6
Podkarpackie	50.8	39.1	9.4	2.1	7.3	10.5	7.9	10.1	13.1
	46.1	25.2	10.1	1.0	15.3	6.2	21.8	6.0	13.8
Podlaskie	46.2	41.9	4.5	2.3	8.1	13.5	5.9	10.8	12.3
	42.8	30.7	4.5	1.1	20.0	7.4	20.9	4.4	10.4
Pomorskie	49.5	36.6	4.6	2.9	5.6	14.0	2.5	26.7	6.8
	41.7	35.2	4.6	2.4	16.6	6.2	11.0	16.9	6.7
Śląskie	45.4	48.1	8.9	4.1	6.3	9.9	2.8	14.1	5.8
	44.8	36.8	8.4	2.6	12.6	6.6	10.6	12.3	6.6
Świętokrzyskie	47.3	51.6	4.0	2.3	8.6	8.8	6.7	9.9	6.7
	40.8	37.2	3.4	1.2	18.5	3.8	25.3	3.8	5.5
Warmińsko-Mazurskie	44.1	49.3	3.4	3.9	8.4	8.3	5.5	12.5	8.2
	34.4	42.1	3.6	2.7	18.8	4.2	14.2	7.2	6.5
Wielkopolskie	51.6	48.6	4.7	3.4	7.3	8.1	5.3	14.9	7.1
	46.8	40.5	3.6	1.6	19.0	3.5	17.7	7.4	6.3
Zachodniopomorskie	45.5	49.7	4.4	4.0	12.8	7.2	3.1	12.7	5.7
	36.8	46.5	3.2	2.3	26.4	2.7	8.0	6.6	3.7

* In each line the upper values concern towns, the bottom one rural areas

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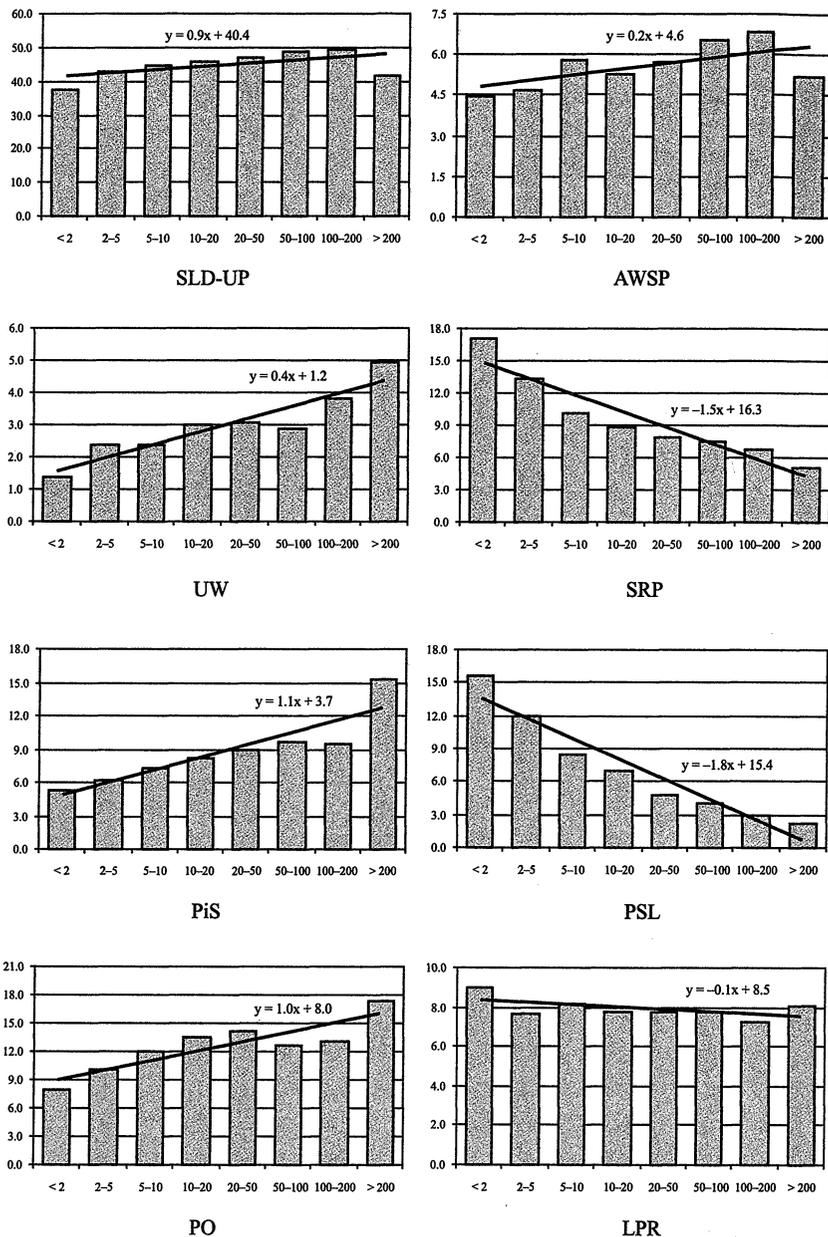


Fig. 1. Election support of the more important political groups in towns with different size: SLD-UP, AWSP, UW, SRP, PiS, PSL, PO, LPR

It is obvious that the values obtained for each size class were significantly different from the values observed in rural districts. However, in the case of towns with less than 2 thousand inhabitants practically for all of the stu-

died characteristics the differences of values were insignificant. So it seems that the border between urban and rural areas concerning election behaviour is somewhat shifted in comparison to the real administrative status of this settlements.

Moreover, the studies showed that with the increasing rank of towns in the settlement system those characteristics of the election behaviour become more and more intensive what were earlier defined as urban, and inversely, behaviour patterns appropriate rather for rural electorate gradually decay. These dependences are not unequivocally linear but general trends are sufficiently distinct (Fig. 1). Towns above 200 thousand inhabitants deserve special attention. They modify most strongly the above mentioned tendency. They are distinguished in comparison to the former size classes by the more vehement growth of the election frequency level and support for UW, PO and PiS, on the other hand a visible decrease of interest in political programs of SLD-UP and AWSP. Towns in the classes 50–100 and 100–200 thousand inhabitants also have specific characteristics. In the case of frequency and support for PO, PiS and UW we can observe here some break down in the general tendency.

Analysis carried out on provincial level did not show considerably differences from the nationwide regularity. Only LPR differentiated strongly the regional trends. These tendencies were increasing in nine provinces and decreasing in the remaining ones. The dependencies were not linear.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The election behaviour is strictly connected with the living place of the electors, or more widely, with the settlement system character of the country.

2. Election positions of urban centres is essentially distinguished by much higher support for political groups with liberal character and by relatively higher level of election frequency. Support of peasant parties and relatively low election frequency is characteristic for rural areas.

3. The size of towns is a significant factor that modify the election behaviour. With the increasing rank of the town in the settlement system of the country typical: urban” characteristics of the election behaviour get stronger and “rural” behaviour patterns gradually decay.

4. The border between towns and villages concerning election behaviour is somewhat shifted in relation to the real administrative status of the settlement leaving small town society on the side of villages.

5. The show regularities concerns whole Poland as well as the particular regions in the country. Regional specifics are seen on different intensity level of the observed behaviours.

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