

Effective Number of Parties in Nova Scotia

GRIFFYN G. CHEZENKO¹, *Memorial University of Newfoundland*

Abstract. For nearly two decades, provincial general elections in Nova Scotia have been exciting contests among three parties. While no substantial changes have been made to the province's electoral process in that time, multiparty competition has been sustained; moreover, said competition has been unhindered by the apparent constraints of the single member plurality voting system. One means of determining the strength of party competition is to measure the effective number of parties. Drawing on previous party systems literature, I apply these measures to Nova Scotia provincial general election results from the last eight decades. What emerges is a picture of the state of partisan competition in Nova Scotia, one where competition has been gradually increasing, albeit in several distinct stages. In particular, elections in Nova Scotia over the last twenty years have been very competitive with a higher than normal effective number of parties.

Introduction

In the last two decades, provincial general elections in Nova Scotia have become exciting contests among three political parties. This is noteworthy because, prior to 1998, the province had largely been identified with traditional, two-party voting patterns, as is commonly expected in polities with single-member plurality (SMP) electoral systems. In the last eight decades, no substantial changes have been made to the province's electoral system; however, multiparty competition has emerged and has been sustained, unhindered by the apparent constraints of the voting system. There ought to be an explanation for the exceptional case of Nova Scotia provincial politics, and it is the aim of this paper to provide guidance as to how this puzzle could be solved.

It follows from Duverger (1955) that an electoral system such as that in Nova Scotia would lead to a two-party system, so why, then, have three parties thrived in competition with each other in recent elections? Is there an indicator of the strength of party competition and the viability of political parties? Following from the groundbreaking work of Laakso and Taagepera (1979), it is possible for us to measure the “effective” number of parties in a party system. Put another way, we are able to indicate the strength of political parties as operating entities and the intensity of electoral competition within polities. With these works in mind, the central research question is how many parties are there in Nova Scotia's party constellation, and does this figure show the presence of a multiparty system at any point in time?

To focus the scope of this paper, I measure the effective number of parties (ENP) in Nova Scotia between 1933 and 2017, and it is my expectation that the data will show the presence of a three-party system after 1998. Additionally, I measure the effective number of parties at the county level. This allows us to see if Nova Scotia's multipartism is manifesting province-wide or if it is

1

Griffyn G. Chezenko is a Master's candidate in political science, interested in elections, voting, political parties, and party systems. Griffyn is particularly drawn to the study of Canadian provincial politics.

isolated to particular regions. Moreover, we will be able to compare local-level data with that from the province as a whole.

This study begins with a brief review of previous party systems literature, particularly the work of Duverger and the development of ENP measures. Second, I provide an explanation of the methods used in my analysis of the provincial party system, including a review of the indices and an explanation of my calculations. In the third and fourth sections, I analyze and discuss the data at the provincial and county levels, respectively. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of the outcome of my calculations, and what the data tell us about Nova Scotia's party systems.

Background

Nova Scotia has a single-member plurality electoral system whereby the province is organized into separate geographic constituencies, also referred to as ridings, and voters residing within those areas elect a single legislative representative by plurality vote. This has been the case in Nova Scotia provincial general elections since 1933², with exceptions only for those areas of the province covered by dual-member districts—single constituencies for which two legislators are elected. The last dual-member ridings were abolished ahead of the 1978 general election. Prior to 1933, Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) represented single- and multi-member at-large districts within each of Nova Scotia's 18 counties. From 1933 through 1993, those county divisions served as the foundation for the province's electoral map. Even now, county lines influence the drawing of electoral boundaries in many parts of the province. In sum, the electoral system of Nova Scotia has changed little in the last eight decades, and this systemic stability coupled with reliable election returns have facilitated this research.

A logical starting place for my analysis is the proposition known as Duverger's Law. Argued famously in the mid-1950s by Maurice Duverger, the primary claim is that “the simple-majority single-ballot system favours the two-party system,” with Duverger adding that his contention “approaches the most nearly perhaps to a true sociological law” (1955: 217). With regard to proportional and runoff voting systems, Duverger hypothesized that polities with such systems would be more conducive to multipartism (*Ibid.*: 239; see also Riker, 1982; Benoit, 2006). Published together in the seminal work *Political Parties*, both Duverger's Law and his hypothesis have led to the development of a large body of work in the area of electoral studies, political parties, and party systems, even as Riker (1982) points out that similar arguments had been posited long before Duverger's iteration.

Later scholars have sought to specify the number of parties within a system as a means of determining the strength of electoral competition and political organizations. Laakso and Taagepera's “Effective” number of parties (1979) is the most prominent and durable of these quantitative efforts. Their measure is expressed as $N = 1/\sum p_i^2$, where p_i is the fractional share of the i th component (1979: 24). Generally speaking, this measure generates an ENP that is smaller than the whole number of parties in competition, as it is an indicator of the relative strength of parties in competition. Laakso and Taagepera initially applied their ENP measure to 15 Western European cases with varying electoral systems, and they found a correlation between a low ENP and party system instability. However, while an ENP of three or greater usually indicates a higher probability of party system instability, greater still is the likelihood of systemic stability, for instance with the electoral system, public institutions, and multipartism (*Ibid.*: 24). Subsequently, Taagepera offered comments on the use of the measure if one encounters incomplete data or when analyzing single-party dominant systems (1997; 1999). To date, Laakso and Taagepera's ENP

remains an important indicator of relative party strength, and it will be an important component of my analysis of the party system in Nova Scotia.

Another ENP indicator was proffered by Golosov (2010), who challenged the tendency of Laakso and Taagepera's measure to produce unrealistically high ENP figures (187-8). The

Golosov index is expressed as $N = \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{1}{1 + (p_i^2/p_1) - p_i}$ where n is the number of parties, p_i is the fractional share of the i -th component, p_i^2 is the square of each party's proportion of votes or seats, and p_1^2 is the square of the largest party's proportion of votes or seats. The observed tendency is for the Golosov index to produce more conservative results relative to Laakso-Taagepera, with the two indices reporting similar figures at critical junctures and during times of electoral upheaval. As well, Golosov claims that his index is more sensitive to the relative weight of political parties in a given system, producing higher figures when competition is greater and smaller figures when there are fewer important parties. Here, I will employ the Golosov index in tandem with Laakso and Taagepera's ENP to produce a picture of party competition in Nova Scotia that will be more robust and measured, but also to compare the two indices to see how they function in practice.

Looking at Nova Scotia, it follows from Duverger that, with the SMP electoral system in place, the provincial party system is likely to be composed of two parties. Indeed, the Atlantic Provinces have been recognized for the durability of the two-party system and “traditional” voting for the two oldest parties (O'Neill and Erickson, 2003). Beck notes the strength of the two-party system in Nova Scotia lies particularly in those areas where the population has “long been established,” which in the period he analyzes, between the 1830s and the 1950s, was essentially all of Nova Scotia, with the exception of Cape Breton County, and those localities with a strong trade unionist vote and “considerable foreign-born element” (1954: 528-9). Recurrent themes in the literature on Nova Scotia party systems are the traditionalism and conservatism of the electorate and the party system (Aucoin, 1970; Beck, 1972; Bellamy, 1976; Hyson, 1973; Jenson, 1976). These works, however, were published at a time when the long-enduring two-party system was on the verge of change, and just as newer voters began to explore alternative ballot options.

Recent provincial general elections in Nova Scotia appear to have bucked the Duvergerian norm of two-party competition, particularly those elections held between 1998 and 2017. The New Democratic Party, presently and historically the third party of provincial politics, has emerged as a more legitimate contender for power in the eyes of the electorate. In in last 20 years, the New Democrats have formed a majority government and the Official Opposition, holding the latter title for a decade, and the party has attracted between one- and two-fifths of the electorate at election time³. In the same period, the Liberals and Progressive Conservatives each have formed majority governments, served as Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, and sat as a third-party caucus, in addition to attracting around one- to two-fifths of the popular vote at each election. This tumultuous and competitive period in provincial politics has been exciting to observe, though precious little is published in terms of literature explaining the emergence of this phenomenon in Nova Scotia's party system, particularly because the electoral system has remained unchanged for so long. Sustained three-party competition thus runs counter to the logic behind Duverger's Law, and without recent literature to guide us with some explanation, the intention here is to apply ENP measures to examine and analyze the state of partisan competition in Nova Scotia between 1933 and 2017.

Methods

We now examine in further detail the ENP measures employed in this party systems analysis, as well as explore what these measures were used to find, where they were used, and how data was attained. This section concludes with comments on my expectations from the data, principally that party competition was greatest in elections held between 1998 and 2017, and that the provincial ENP should be at or near three during that time period.

The index devised by Laakso and Taagepera, expressed as $N = 1/\sum p_i^2$, is the most widely cited indicator that characterizes a party system by providing a numerical figure that approximates the sum of each party's size relative to the leading party. The figure N approximates the effective number of political parties. The term effective alludes to parties that have strong organization and structure, affiliated personnel, publicized issue positions, and a notable electoral and legislative presence. Fringe parties and ephemeral candidates do not impact significantly on calculations of ENP, thus the mere existence of a party does not mean it is an effective component of the party system. Applying ENP measures to popular vote totals gives us a good idea of how fractured the electorate is among a number of different parties. It must be said that the ENP calculated using the sum of the popular vote tends to be greater than the ENP at the level of legislative seats. Popular-vote ENP shows us how many parties the electorate will support at a given time; whereas constituency ENP skews lower because of the SMP electoral system's tendency to overreward winners and penalize losers in terms of seats won in the Legislative Assembly. In this analysis of Nova Scotia's ENP, I have applied Laakso and Taagepera's indicator only to the popular vote totals of provincial general elections because of the small number of seats in the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly and the skewed nature of seat allocation in SMP elections.

Golosov's index, expressed as $N = \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{1}{1 + (p_i^2/p_i) - p_i}$, is a more recent contribution to party system literature with the provision of an alternative means of calculating the effective number of parties. More than rehashing an old formula, Golosov attempts to address the shortcomings he sees in other attempts to count the effective number of parties, namely that his index “produces small scores for party constellations that appear to have few important parties” and “registers many parties in those constellations where there seems to be many parties” (2010: 188). The effect of applying the Golosov index to the popular vote and seat totals is similar to that noted above with Laakso and Taagepera, and, likewise, the Golosov index is applied here only to popular vote totals.

There are several important reasons why Golosov's index is employed beside that of Laakso and Taagepera. First, it provides a point of analytical comparison, as both are indicators of the same phenomenon with figures derived from different calculations. Second, Golosov's index provides a contemporary version of a framework initially developed four decades ago. Third, if Golosov's contention as to the accuracy of his index is correct, then a more definitive portrait of Nova Scotia's ENP can be developed by using his indicator alongside others and analyzing the results. And fourth, ENP calculations were made easier as both Golosov, and Laakso and Taagepera's indices had been published previously as formulae for spreadsheet programs like Microsoft Excel.

Analyzing provincial-level ENP in Nova Scotia requires an examination of overall vote totals for all political parties in general elections, then the calculation of ENP using each party's fractional share of the popular vote. The resulting figure is an indicator of electoral competitiveness and party strength across the province. To see whether a multiparty system has taken root, however, our study must be more specific and delve to a lower level of analysis. As exceptional a case as Canada presents with regard to Duverger's Law, something he himself

acknowledged, that assumed exceptionalism loses some of its credibility upon investigation at lower levels of analysis. Duverger notes that competition in the ridings remains between two primary opponents, which proves that Canadian party systems “conform to the general rule” (1955: 218) even if, at higher levels, a multiparty system seems apparent. As much as calculating provincial ENP provides insight and guidance for my analysis, alas it is just an initial step in understanding the true nature of the provincial party system.

In the spirit of curiosity, our next level of analysis is the county level, for several reasons. First, for many years, electoral boundaries in Nova Scotia were either coterminous with county boundaries or were contained entirely within them; the majority of counties had fewer than three seats. Second, county boundaries have remained virtually unchanged since 1879, which predates the time period under examination here by several decades, thus there is no need to account for shifts in geographic boundaries. Third, it is possible to organize provincial election results by county, as electoral district and, later, polling district boundaries have virtually always respected and followed county lines. Finally, county-level analysis provides an indication of party competition and strength at a regional level within the province, facilitating the search for areas of multiparty competition while concurrently saving the time and effort required for an extensive analysis of ENP at the constituency level.

To calculate Laakso and Taagepera's ENP, I adapted an Excel formula published online by Michael Gallagher⁴. The ENP is calculated by inputting each party's vote total into the first cell of the designated row on the spreadsheet and dividing that number by the overall total of votes, which is pasted in the second cell. Each party's share of the vote, calculated in the third cell, is expressed as a whole number; for example, 75 per cent of the vote is expressed as 75 as opposed to the more appropriate 0.75. In the fourth cell, the party's share of the vote is first multiplied by itself, then is divided by 10,000. The quotient for all parties is then added together, and that sum becomes the denominator in Laakso and Taagepera's ENP equation, which is automatically calculated in the final cell. Grigorii Golosov has published⁵ his own Excel formula for his ENP calculation, and he explains online each step in the calculation process, which is effectively similar to Gallagher's process noted above. Here I adapted both Gallagher's and Golosov's formulae to calculate provincial and county-level ENP, and to do so simultaneously to simplify comparison and analysis.

I expect these calculations, once executed, to show a provincial-level ENP at or near three in elections held during and after 1998, and that provincial-level ENP in elections held prior to 1998 will be closer to the Duvergerian norm of two-party competition, with a significant but less competitive third-party presence. At the county level, I expect to see some variation in ENP, particularly between the two largest counties, Halifax and Cape Breton respectively, and the remaining sixteen. Expectations are that the more populous counties among them have a higher ENP and more competitive political climate than the smaller counties in the hinterland, which I expect to hew closer to a traditional voting pattern.

Data Analysis – Provincial Level

After running election returns through the ENP formulae, several trends became apparent. First, in corroboration with the arguments of previous writers on Nova Scotia politics, provincial vote totals from 1933 to 1970 produce an average Golosov ENP of 2.04, and an average Laakso-Taagepera ENP of 2.25. The “traditional” voting habits of Nova Scotians at that time are supported by ENP scores that suggest the domination of two parties over provincial political competition,

inferring that third parties were weak and lacked significant power or representation. Drawing upon the data and the previous literature, the period between 1933 and 1970 in Nova Scotia was marked by a two-party system dominated by the traditional options, the Liberal and Progressive Conservative parties.

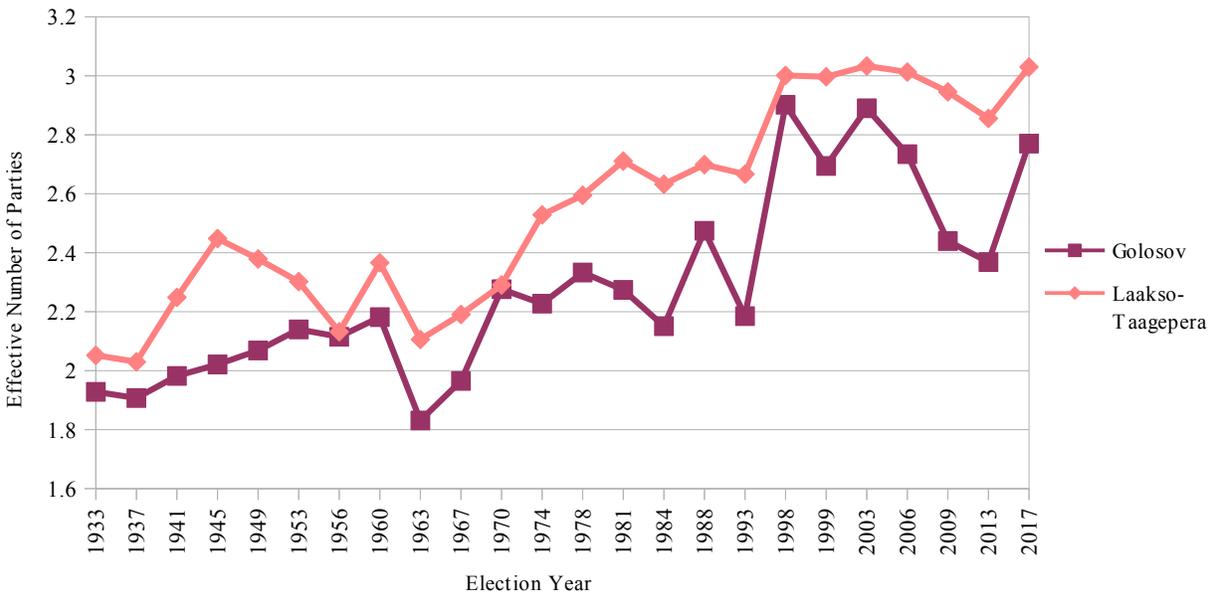
Election Date	Golosov Index	Laakso-Taagepera Index
22 August 1933	1.93	2.05
29 June 1937	1.91	2.03
28 October 1941	1.98	2.25
23 October 1945	2.02	2.45
9 June 1949	2.07	2.38
26 May 1953	2.14	2.3
30 October 1956	2.12	2.13
7 June 1960	2.18	2.37
8 October 1963	1.83	2.11
30 May 1967	1.97	2.19
13 October 1970	2.28	2.29
2 April 1974	2.23	2.53
19 September 1978	2.33	2.59
6 October 1981	2.27	2.71
6 November 1984	2.15	2.63
6 September 1988	2.47	2.7
25 May 1993	2.18	2.67
24 March 1998	2.9	3
27 July 1999	2.69	3
5 August 2003	2.89	3.03
13 June 2006	2.73	3.01
9 June 2009	2.44	2.95
8 October 2013	2.37	2.86
30 May 2017	2.77	3.03

The second apparent trend is the emergence of a two-party-plus system in general elections between 1974 and 1993. Provincial ENP data is shown in Table 1, and the average provincial ENP figures for the period from 1974 to 1993 are 2.27 and 2.64, for the Golosov and Laakso-Taagepera indices respectively. Here, the data is showing the growth in support for a third party, up to a point where a sizable portion of the electorate routinely votes for them and, in some instances, is able to elect third-party MLAs. This is borne out in provincial election returns, which show a doubling in support for the third party between the elections of 1970 and 1974. Moreover, that growth in support was consolidated and maintained by the third party through the five subsequent general elections, with the third party averaging just under 16 per cent support in elections between 1974 and 1993, and electing between one and four MLAs each time. Although the third party never

seriously challenged for power, they did emerge as a persistent political force during these two decades, which explains why we see rising average ENP scores for this period.

Thirdly, and most importantly, a spike in provincial ENP is observed as expected beginning in 1998. For the general election held that year, the Golosov ENP was 2.9, and the Laakso-Taagepera ENP was 3.001. Although there is a greater variation in Golosov figures observed during the period between 1998 and 2017, both indices show significant growth in third-party support. Average provincial ENP for the most recent period is 2.69 and 2.98, respectively. Only the Laakso-Taagepera index produced scores at or slightly above three, and it did so over four consecutive elections, only dipping below that threshold in recent years because of the election of robust majority governments. Our ENP scores are substantiated by the state of recent political competition in Nova Scotia: between 1998 and 2013, the three main parties each won at least one election, formed the Official Opposition, and sat as the third party in the Legislature. In other words, provincial politics in Nova Scotia has become rather volatile and highly competitive among three parties.

CHART 1
Effective Number of Parties in Nova Scotia



Data Analysis – County Level

County-level data⁶ shows similar overall trends as the provincial ENP data, however, there are some significant variances among the counties themselves. As seen in Charts 2 and 3, three distinct periods, or party systems, appear to occur, and many counties slowly evolve from a two-party system to a more competitive system with a higher ENP in more recent elections. I have explained these different time periods in the provincial results section above, but suffice it to say that similar trends are observable at the county level.

CHART 2
Effective Number of Parties (Goloso) by County

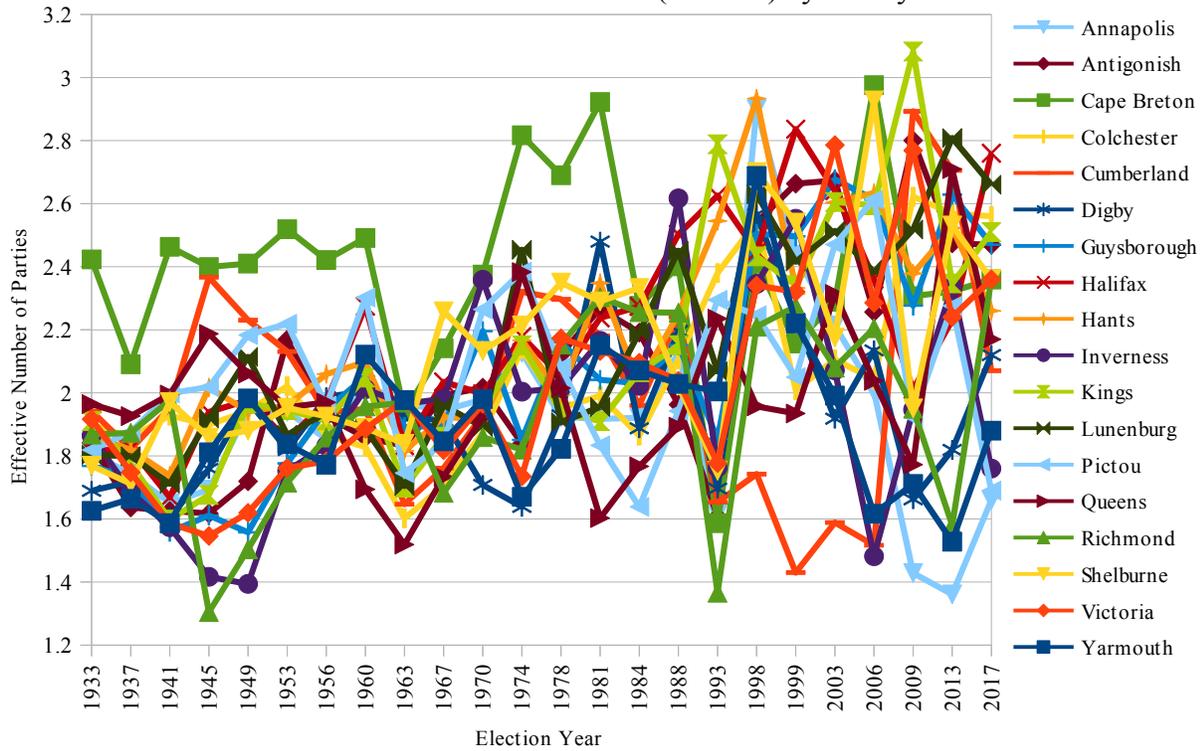
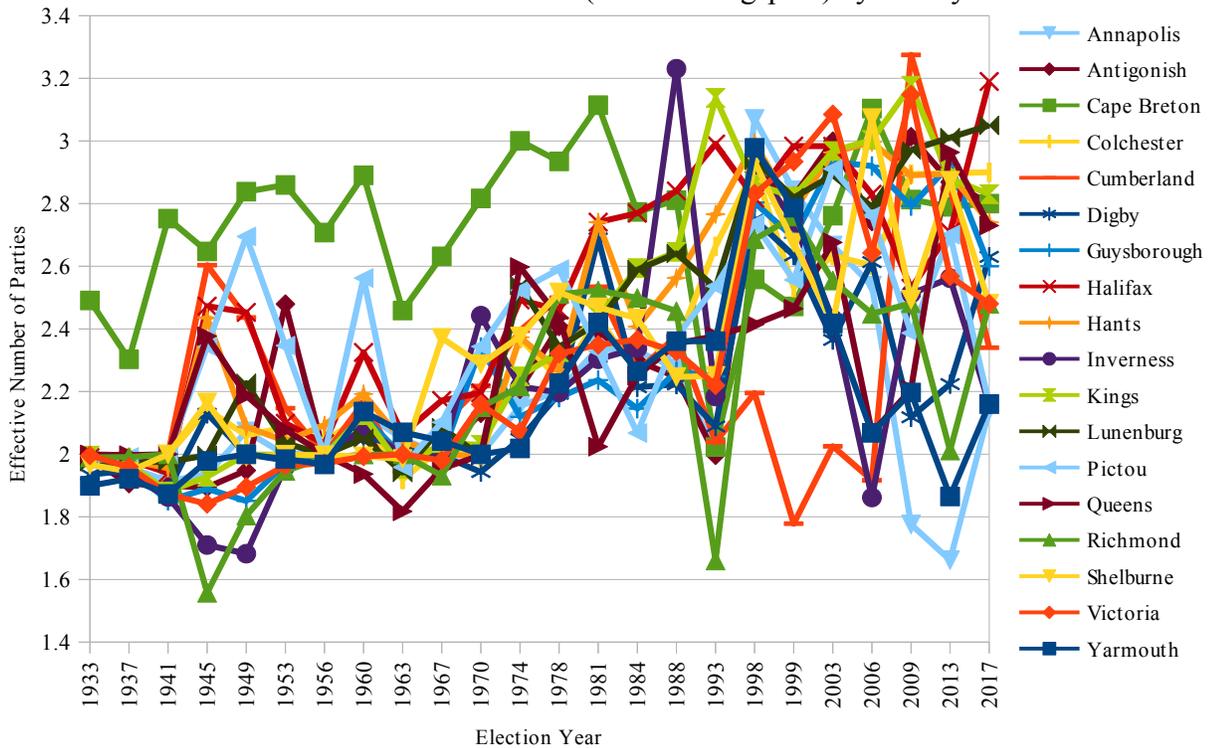
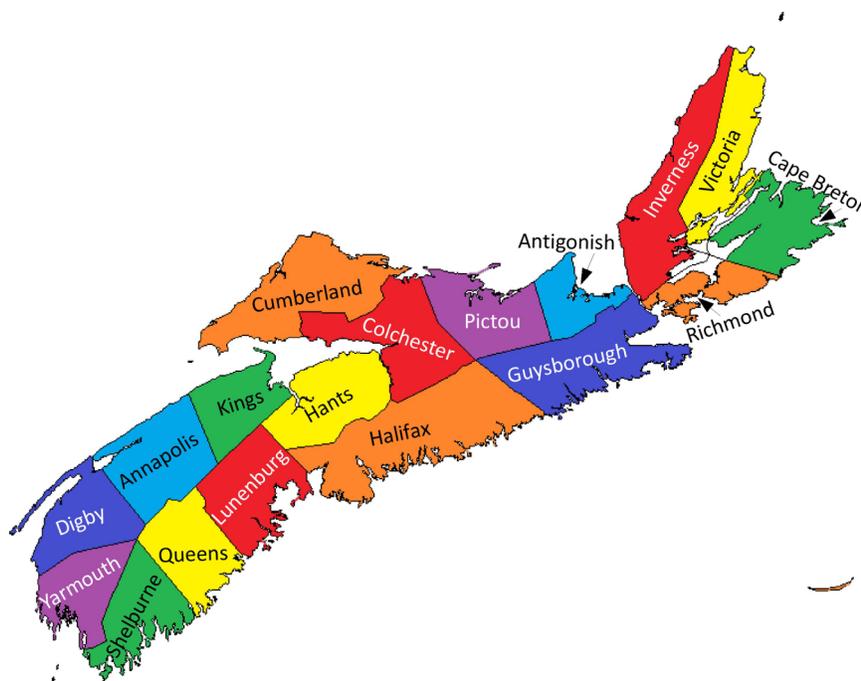


CHART 3
Effective Number of Parties (Laakso-Taagepera) by County



Several aberrant trends emerge in the data that differ from expectations or that need further exploration. First, Cape Breton County appears as an obvious outlier, with the highest average ENP score of any county; the consistently highest ENP score of any county over the six decades between 1933 and 1993; and, a persistently competitive party system. Cape Breton County was the first to return an ENP score of three—in the general election of 1974—and had been recording ENP scores greater than 2.75 as early as 1941. Support for the third party—the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation from 1933 through 1961, and the New Democratic Party thereafter—was concentrated in the eastern areas of the county, and third-party MLAs were routinely elected to represent these areas. In northern and western sections of Cape Breton County, third-party candidates were less of a factor, and the two old-line parties were the primary competitors. For decades, the bulk of third-party support across Nova Scotia was concentrated in Cape Breton County, which is why we observe such high electoral volatility and high ENP scores in this one county.



Counties of Nova Scotia

Secondly, the importance of Halifax County within Nova Scotia has massively expanded over the last eight decades, and its electoral weight has grown just as large. In the first election under examination here, which was held in 1933, both Cape Breton and Halifax counties had electorates of similar size—50,257 in the former, 56,458 in the latter, and both counties each had five seats. By the 2013 general election, Cape Breton County had just over 82,000 electors; however, Halifax County's electorate had swelled in size to over 302,000 voters. The remaining 16 counties each had electorates smaller than 50,000 throughout the last eight decades.

There are multiple implications of Halifax's expansion. For one, there is the perception that elections in Nova Scotia have increasingly centered on the concerns and issues of voters in Halifax County. This is borne out by a look at the change in number of legislative seats over time.

Between 1933 and 2013, the number of seats in Cape Breton County fluctuated between five and seven; whereas in Halifax County, the number of seats steadily grew from five to more than 20. All other counties had three or fewer seats each over the same period. Presently, Halifax County is home to more than two-fifths of the provincial electorate, so while the additional attention its voters receive from political leaders is not unwarranted, it may be leading to the creation of a division between Haligonians and the rest of Nova Scotia. Moreover, Halifax's growth relative to the rest of the province continues unabated, and it will soon be home to fully half of Nova Scotia's electorate. As a result, the political clout of areas beyond Halifax County continues to wane.

Spikes in county ENP are not an indicator to future multiparty competition and, most often, are caused by the appearance of a strong independent candidate on the ballot. Such is the case for Inverness County, which reached a peak Laakso-Taagepera ENP of 3.23 in 1988; for Victoria County, which recorded ENP scores around 3.1 in both 2003 and 2009; and, for Cumberland County, which registered a peak ENP of 3.27 in 2009. In most of the remaining counties, either the increase in ENP reflected the provincial trend, or the ENP remained stable—there was no discernible change in those counties' party systems.

Several counties—namely Annapolis, Digby, Richmond, and Yarmouth—have regularly reported ENP scores on the lower end of both indices, yet most counties are now consistently reporting Golosov ENP scores greater than 2.2, and Laakso-Taagepera scores greater than 2.4. In some years, county-level ENP scores have peaked above three, but on average, both indices show an ENP in the counties between 2.3 and 2.8 in elections since 1998. Broadly speaking, this indicates the existence of two-party-plus systems at the county level, with a three-party system at the provincial level. Duverger's contention, then, that multiparty systems at higher levels are underpinned by two-party competition at lower levels may still hold. Across Nova Scotia, the two primary competitors vary. This could mean that a realignment has taken place in some counties, elevating a former third party to the status of primary competitor, and demoting one of the old-line parties to the position of an also-ran. Determining whether or not a political realignment has taken hold requires further observation. It could also be the case that three parties are now considered viable by the electorate, and that a party's place within the party system is more often influenced by temporal and ephemeral factors.

One final note on conducting ENP analyses at the county level in Nova Scotia. Since the electoral boundary redistribution in 2012, seven provincial ridings⁷ are comprised of parts of multiple counties. For example, the riding of Cape Breton—Richmond covers the entirety of Richmond County; a smattering of rural communities in western Cape Breton County; and, the Town of Port Hawkesbury, which is situated in southern Inverness County. In many cases, it is relatively easy to account for each county's votes: simply look at a map of polling areas, compare it to the election returns, then add up the corresponding polls for each county. From 1993 to 2009, all multi-county ridings had polling areas that respected county lines, and many had separate advance and special⁸ polls for different counties. This facilitated the process of collecting the correct data to conduct county-level analyses.

With the creation of the new electoral map, which was used for the general elections in 2013 and 2017, exact figures for some counties are elusive because certain polling areas now cross county boundaries. Take the aforementioned riding of Cape Breton—Richmond, which includes electors spread across parts of three counties. Since 2013, electors in the east of the riding, whose residences straddle the county line, have voted in polling areas that include electors in communities on both sides of the line. In such an event, it is essentially impossible to know exactly how many votes cast in just such a polling area came from one county or the other.

Such a scenario leads to some ambiguity in the county-level data that I have compiled for the 2013 and 2017 provincial general elections. Because of my knowledge of the area in this particular case, I assigned the votes cast in that polling area to Cape Breton County because I know the Richmond County side of the poll is more sparsely populated. Still, it will remain a mystery as to the exact allotment of votes cast in said poll to a particular county. In other, less familiar ridings, I resorted to census data, past election returns, and Google Maps satellite imagery to aid in the task. Moreover, as advance polls become a more popular alternative to voting on election day, and as advance and special polls are consolidated, it has become that much more challenging to derive county-level vote totals in multi-county ridings. One is obligated to decide the optimal means of assigning the votes cast, either by allotting the entirety of a poll to a particular county or by somehow dividing the votes cast in such a poll. In the instance of regular polling areas, I chose to assign those votes to a particular county; whereas special poll votes I opted to divvy up among the counties based on each county's share of the electorate, voter turnout notwithstanding. As a consequence, unless future electoral maps are drawn with county boundaries in mind, the county-level results will be, at most, a good estimate of the actual outcome.

Discussion and Conclusion

At the provincial level, Nova Scotia has had a multiparty system since the general election of 1998. Aside from election returns, the ENP indices bare out this reality: between 1998 and 2017, the average Golosov and Laakso-Taagepera ENP scores at the provincial level were 2.69 and 2.98, respectively. While the Golosov index is the more conservative of the two, both indices show similar patterns of increasing competition within the party system and the electorate. In practice, data derived from the two indices do not deviate widely from each other, and the use of both has provided useful quantitative insights into provincial electoral competition in Nova Scotia.

While three parties contend for power provincially, at the county level, there appears to be something closer in appearance to a two-party-plus system. The primary contenders differ by county and each party appears to have a regional support base, though each of the three main parties remain generally competitive across the province. Before making any claims about realignment, however, an analysis of ENP at the riding level should be conducted. Such an undertaking would refine the analysis here and could potentially lead to some answers with regard to the specific cause and location of changes in ENP over time. It remains to be seen whether riding-level ENP scores would indicate something closer to a two-party system, as per Duverger, with differing contenders in each riding. Nonetheless, at the county level, ENP scores indicate the presence of something akin to a two-party-plus system, whereas provincial ENP scores show that a three-party system has been in place for two decades.

Although more research is required, one thing that seems to jump out from provincial ENP data is the appearance of three distinct party systems in the eight decades considered here. The first, observed in the literature and confirmed with ENP data, appears between the elections of 1933 and 1970, and was characterized by traditional voting and a two-party system. In the time between the 1974 and 1993 elections, a two-party-plus system emerges with the two old-line parties contending with each other while fending off a smaller though not insignificant third party. Lastly, a three-party system has been in place since 1998, and elections occurring since then have been memorable ones because of the significant electoral support and legislative presence garnered by three parties operating within the confines of a single-member plurality electoral system. The

provincial ENP data seem to be telling us, at least superficially, that these three party systems have existed in Nova Scotia's recent history.

I cannot say that traditionalism, as Bellamy, Hyson, or O'Neill and Erickson define it, has entirely disappeared from Nova Scotia's political culture. While a third party has emerged as an equal competitor, the two old parties continue to thrive. When the New Democratic Party lost the 2013 election, support for the two older parties rebounded to a combined 72 percent of the vote. Since 1998, in those counties with ENP scores toward the lowest end of the spectrum, the primary opponents were the Liberals and Progressive Conservatives. Among a majority of the electorate and in particular areas of Nova Scotia, voters still welcome the traditional ballot options, and neither of the two old parties appears to be imperiled. Indeed, it may be more interesting to observe the performance of the New Democratic Party in coming elections to see whether they remain a political force or revert to their habitual status as the province's third party. The NDP's fate could have more of an impact on future provincial ENP scores than anything else.

2

N.A. 2016. "Summary Election Results, 1867 – 2016." *Elections Nova Scotia*.
<http://electionsnovascotia.ca/sites/default/files/Elections%20from%201867-2016.pdf>. (11 August 2017).

3

N.A. 2016. "Summary Election Results, 1867 – 2016." *Elections Nova Scotia*.
<http://electionsnovascotia.ca/sites/default/files/Elections%20from%201867-2016.pdf>. (11 August 2017).

4

Gallagher's website is http://www.tcd.ie/Political_Science/staff/michael_gallagher/ElSystems/index.php

5

Golosov's website is
http://golosovpubs.ucoz.com/index/indices_of_the_effective_number_of_parties_and_party_system_nationalization_in_excel/0-13.

6

County-level ENP data is available upon request by email to griffyn.chezenko@mun.ca.

7

The seven ridings are Argyle—Barrington, Cape Breton—Richmond, Chester—St. Margaret's, Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, Guysborough—Eastern Shore—Tracadie, Queens—Shelburne, and Victoria—The Lakes.

8

In Nova Scotia, there are no special polls *per se*; "special" polls, in this instance, refer to the continuous polls at riding Returning Offices; mobile polls that visit hospitals and residential long-term care facilities; and, write-in polls for residents who are out of their district during the election period.

References

- Aucoin, Peter. 1972. "The 1970 Nova Scotia provincial election: some observations on recent party performance and electoral support." *Journal of Canadian Studies* 7(3): 25-35.
- Beck, J. Murray. 1954. "The Party System in Nova Scotia." *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 20(4): 514-30.
- Bellamy, David J. 1976. "The Atlantic Provinces." In *The Provincial Political Systems*, eds. David J. Bellamy, Jon H. Pammett, and Donald C. Rowat. Agincourt, ON: Methuen Publications.
- Benoit, Kenneth. 2006. "Duverger's Law and the Study of Electoral Systems." *French Politics* 4: 69-83.
- Duverger, Maurice. 1955. *Political Parties*. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd.
- Dunn, Christopher, ed., *Provinces, 3rd Edition*. 2016. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.
- Gaines, Brian J. 1997. "Where to Count Parties." *Electoral Studies* 16(1): 49-58.
- Gaines, Brian J. 1999. "Duverger's Law and the Meaning of Canadian Exceptionalism." *Comparative Political Studies* 32(7): 835-61.
- Golosov, Grigorii V. 2010. "The Effective Number of Parties: A New Approach." *Party Politics* 16(2): 171-92.
- Hyson, Stewart. 1973. "An Analysis of Party Systems." In *Provincial Government and Politics*, ed. Donald C. Rowat. Ottawa, ON: Dept. of Political Science, Carleton University.
- Jenson, Jane. 1976. "Party Systems." In *The Provincial Political Systems*, eds. David J. Bellamy, Jon H. Pammett, and Donald C. Rowat. Agincourt, ON: Methuen Publications.
- Johnston, Richard, and Fred Cutler. 2009. "Canada: The Puzzle of Local Three-Party Competition*." In *Duverger's Law of Plurality Voting*, eds. Bernard Grofman, André Blais, and Shaun Bowler. New York, NY: Springer Science+Business Media.
- Laakso, Markku, and Rein Taagepera. 1979. "'Effective' Number of Parties: A Measure with Application to West Europe." *Comparative Political Studies* 12(1): 3-27.
- O'Neill, Brenda, and Lynda Erickson. 2003. "Evaluating Traditionalism in the Atlantic Provinces: Voting, Public Opinion and the Electoral Project." *Atlantis* 27(2): 113-22.
- Riker, William H. 1982. "The Two-Party System and Duverger's Law: An Essay on the History of Political Science." *American Political Science Review* 76(4): 753-66.
- Robin, Martin, ed., *Canadian Provincial Politics*. 1972. Scarborough, ON: Prentice-Hall.
- Taagepera, Rein. 1997. "Effective Number of Parties for Incomplete Data." *Electoral Studies* 16(2): 145-51.
- Taagepera, Rein. 1999. "Supplementing the effective number of parties." *Electoral Studies* 18: 497-504.
- Wesley, Jared J. 2015. "The Once-Forgotten Battlegrounds: Studying Provincial Elections in Canada." *Canadian Political Science Review* 9(1): 1-13.