The purpose of this research note is to outline an approach to Election Day polling, which has qualities that may make it an attractive alternative to the exit poll under certain circumstances. An Election Day poll is here understood as a poll where the respondents are asked about their vote in the election on Election Day, and a prognosis of the outcome is presented before the actual result of the election is known. This means that interviewing, processing, analysis and presentation of results all take place on Election Day. It also means that there is an immediate test of the quality of the poll, in its ability to predict the election returns. In contrast to the situation for regular pre-election polls of party preference, deviations between prognosis and election outcome cannot be explained away as a result of changes in voter opinion. In consequence, Election Day polls represent a real challenge to the institutes making them.

The situation is different when election fraud cannot be ruled out. In this case discrepancies between poll results and the official election outcome may be interpreted as an indication that the election has been rigged, as the first Ukrainian Presidential Election in 2004 exemplifies. In such a case, the poll serves as a check on the quality of the election procedures, rather than the other way round as in established democracies.

Most Election Day polls have been exit polls, where voters are interviewed as they leave the polling station (Levy, 1983; Mitofsky, 1991; Frankovic, 1992). The article presents an alternative method, in the form of a panel recruited and interviewed by telephone a short time ahead of the election, and then re-interviewed on Election Day. This approach has been used with success in several election/referendum day polls in Norway since 1993.

ELECTION DAY POLLING IN NORWAY

Although party preference has been regularly polled in Norway for several decades, Election Day polls are a recent addition to the Norwegian political scene. The first two
were done in 1993, and used by the two major Norwegian television channels and a newspaper in their reporting on the night of the elections to parliament.

One of the polls was an ordinary exit poll with 15,000 interviews, carried out by the polling institute MMI for the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (public radio and television) and the newspaper Dagbladet.¹ The prognosis presented at 9 p.m. when the voting ended had an average error of 0.8 percentage points for nine party alternatives (one being a residual category for several minor parties). The largest error was of the magnitude of 1.9 percentage points. The result may be judged as satisfactory, especially for a first try. But considering the sample size, the deviations are large enough to indicate the presence of systematic errors of some kind.

At the same time, Feedback Research used a different approach to make a prognosis for TV2, the major Norwegian private television company.² We may call the new design an Election Day telephone panel (telepanel in short), since the interviews were made by telephone, and a panel was used. The first interview took place within the period of September 9 to 11, the second on Election Day, September 13. The panel had 3,000 respondents, of which Feedback managed to re-interview 2,100. In the prognosis the vote intention in the pre-election interview was included for the 900 not reached on Election Day. The accuracy of the prognosis was impressive, the average error was 0.6 percentage points and the largest deviation 1.7.

In the opinion of those in charge of the poll and the rest of the Norwegian polling milieu, the telepanel was a novel design for an Election Day poll. A survey made by means of an e-mail query through WAPORNET³ seems to confirm the originality of the design.⁴

TV2 decided to report results from its poll at 8 p.m. even though voting was still in progress until 9 p.m. This provoked a reaction from politicians and the general public, and probably contributed to a change in electoral law, prohibiting interviewing closer than 200 metres to the polling stations. Thus exit polls were ruled out as a practical option in Norwegian elections. Election Day polls were still carried out, however, using the telepanel approach pioneered by Feedback Research. In 1994 two Election Day telephone panels were done to predict the outcome of the EU referendum. In 1995 another one was conducted for the local elections, and in 1997 two more for the national

¹ A three-stage sample was used. First one municipality from each of 84 strata was randomly drawn, and then between 1 and 10 polling stations within each selected municipality depending on its size. Finally the interviewers, positioned outside the 116 selected polling stations, were instructed to make a random sample of voters. The respondents completed a one-page self-administered questionnaire, and the answers were telephoned to MMI by the interviewers at regular intervals. The interviewing stopped a little over one hour before the polls closed. In addition to the 15,000 interviews, completed information on the age and sex of close to 6,000 refusals was used to weight the sample. The total refusal rate was 28 percent. It was higher for women than for men (31–25 percent), and increased sharply with age (from 12 percent for voters 18–24 years of age, to 54 percent for those 70 years and above). The social variations in party preference meant that the weighting contributed to improving the prognosis.

² At Feedback Pål Borresen and Bjørn Petter Ulvær were in charge, with Frank Aarebrot from the University of Bergen as a scientific consultant.

³ WAPORNET is the email network for members of WAPOR (World Association of Public Opinion Research).

⁴ Only one instance of a partly similar approach used at a later point in time was reported. In Ireland, as a result of a ban on interviewing closer than 100 metres to the polling station from 1992, personal interviews at home were carried out on Election Day in 1995 and 1997, and reported in a newspaper the following day (Jack Jones, personal communication, July 15, 1999).
election. Since then one institute has switched to regular telephone polls on Election Day, while MMI used a telepanel in 2001 and Research International in 2003. Table 1 gives a summary of some vital facts for these polls.

The deviations reported for the various Election Day telephone polls indicate that the panel may be somewhat more accurate than the poll, at least when we look at the maximum deviation.\(^5\) This may be due to the weighting according to the respondents’ pre-election voting intention (see below). When all interviewing must take place during a single evening, experience reveals that the risk of producing a biased sample increases compared to studies that have a longer period for recruiting the sample.

Even without the new restrictive legislation, it is likely that the Norwegian polling institutes would have preferred telephone interviewing to a traditional exit poll, for reasons to be discussed, after a more detailed presentation of the telephone panel technique.

### THE TELEPHONE PANEL APPROACH

There are variations between the procedures used by the institutes doing Election Day telephone panels in Norway. We shall present the design used by MMI, which, as can be seen from Table 1, has produced the most accurate prognoses. In the pioneering Feedback poll of 1993 respondents who were not re-interviewed were included in the sample with their pre-election vote intention. In the MMI poll they are not part of the Election Day (net) sample of voters. But as members of the pre-election (gross) sample, they are part of the basis for calculating sample weights (explained below). The weighting ensures that the pre-election party preferences of those interviewed on Election Day mirrors those of the complete pre-election sample.

#### SAMPLING

As in other telephone surveys, a simple random sample of household phone numbers is drawn. More effort than usual was invested in trying to reach the household members to be interviewed (several calls made until the person was reached), in order to get the highest possible quality for the sample.

#### RECRUITMENT AND INTERVIEWING

For reasons of economy, the first interviews served the dual purpose of recruiting the panel and producing pre-election polls for the newspaper client. In the 1994 EU referendum campaign, such polls were published daily during the final two weeks. Thus it was possible

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\(^5\) The number of comparisons is of course too small to draw any definite conclusions. One must also take into consideration that the panels in most cases have had larger samples than the polls. In 1997 the ratio of sample sizes was 1.8, which means that the random deviations from the election outcome can be expected to be 1.3 (the square root of 1.8) times larger for the poll than the panel. The actual ratio for the mean deviation was 2, indicating a higher accuracy for the panel after correction for sample size. In the last two elections, however, there seems to be no difference in average accuracy. In 2001 the difference in mean deviation corresponds to the difference in sample size. In 2003 sample size as well as average deviation are quite similar for the two designs.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Occasion</th>
<th>Method&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Institute</th>
<th>Client&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>Deviation from election result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>National election</td>
<td>Exit poll</td>
<td>MMI</td>
<td>NRK / Dagbladet</td>
<td>15,000 (20,000)</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Telepanel</td>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>TV2</td>
<td>2,000 (3,000)</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Referendum on EU</td>
<td>Telepanel</td>
<td>MMI</td>
<td>NRK / Dagbladet</td>
<td>5,500</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TP + EDP</td>
<td>Gallup</td>
<td>TV2</td>
<td>4,500 + 1,000</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Local elections</td>
<td>Telepanel</td>
<td>Gallup</td>
<td>TV2</td>
<td>1,400</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>National election</td>
<td>Telepanel</td>
<td>MMI</td>
<td>NRK / Dagbladet</td>
<td>5,000 (7,000)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TP+ EDP</td>
<td>Gallup</td>
<td>TV2</td>
<td>900 + 1,900</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Local elections</td>
<td>Election Day Poll</td>
<td>Gallup</td>
<td>TV2</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>National election</td>
<td>Telepanel</td>
<td>MMI</td>
<td>NRK / Dagbladet</td>
<td>5,000 (6,000)</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Election Day Poll</td>
<td>Gallup</td>
<td>TV2</td>
<td>2200</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Regional elections</td>
<td>Telepanel</td>
<td>RI&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>NRK</td>
<td>3,000 (3,700)</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local elections</td>
<td>Telepanel</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Election Day Poll</td>
<td>TNS-Gallup</td>
<td>TV2</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>TP + EDP: Prognosis based on combined sample of telephone panel and Election Day telephone poll.

<sup>b</sup>NRK: Norwegian Public Television (largest audience); Dagbladet: major newspaper; TV2: Private television company (second largest audience).

<sup>c</sup>Rounded figures. Figures in parenthesis include respondents who refused to participate (exit poll) or who were not reinterviewed (telepanel) when this information was used in making the prognosis, e.g. in calculating sample weights. + means: First figure gives size of panel, second of election day survey.

<sup>d</sup>Research International (which has taken over Feedback). The same sample used for both elections.
for MMI to recruit a large enough sample during the last week of the campaign. In the parliamentary elections in 1997 and 2001, polls were published on a weekly basis. This meant a longer time span between the first and second interview for most respondents. The recruitment period for the panel stretched over the last five weeks of the campaign.

The first interview was a short CATI interview, including questions on vote intention and certainty, vote in the prior national election, issues of special importance for the choice of party (open answer immediately coded by the interviewer using a classification scheme that had been developed on the basis of previous studies of issues felt to be important in the election campaign), and preferences for various candidates for the position of prime minister.

The second interview on Election Day was kept as short as possible, with just three questions: Did you vote / For what party / When did you decide how to vote? The timing of the interview was based on information from the first wave on when the respondent was likely to vote. For respondents who had not yet voted when phoned on Election Day, but who said they were absolutely sure about voting and the choice of party, this choice was registered as their vote in the election.

WEIGHTING PROCEDURE

The original sample was weighted with regard to demographics (matrix of sex by age by region) and vote in the previous election for Parliament (recall question, with a correction procedure for apparent errors in recollection, developed by MMI for the regular party preference polls; see Hellevik, 1989). Finally the interviews on election night (second wave) were weighted according to a matrix defined by vote intention (party) and certainty of voting as indicated for the complete sample of respondents interviewed prior to the election (first wave). The procedure used was iterative weighting by these marginal distributions (rim weighting). This means that if the respondents reached on Election Day do not reflect accurately the pre-election voting intentions of the original sample, this is corrected by the weighting. Since the correlation between voting intention and actual vote is quite high, the weighting contributes to the accuracy of the election prognosis.

ANALYSIS

The prognosis was presented on radio and television immediately after the polling stations closed. Otherwise little use was made of the possibilities for analyzing the election outcome. In the newspaper Dagbladet, however, extensive analyses of the flow of voters between parties, variations according to demographics and the importance of issues were presented the following day. Subsequently, the panel data have been used for in-depth analyses of the changes in party preference during the last week of the campaign (Hellevik, 1997; Bjørklund, 2001).

ADVANTAGES OF THE TELEPHONE PANEL

As is the case in Norway, a choice between all the various alternatives of Election Day polling does not always exist. Circumstances may render the exit poll impossible or
impractical to use. The ban on interviewing in the immediate vicinity of polling stations makes it very difficult, if not impossible, to obtain a good sample of the voters exiting. The large volume of advance voting would make it necessary to supplement an exit poll with in home or telephone interviews in order to make a reasonable prognosis of the election outcome. In other countries telephone panels or polls may be out of the question due to low ownership of telephones.

When deciding whether or not to use the telephone panel approach to Election Day polling, the following list of advantages (in this section) and disadvantages (in the next) should be considered.

**Accuracy of Prognosis**

A basic concern, of course, is the ability to predict the outcome of the election accurately. The results of the Norwegian Election Day telephone panels (Table 1) range from satisfactory to remarkable, as in the case of the 1994 and 1997 MMI polls and the 1995 Gallup poll. The close correspondence between poll and election result for the MMI telepanel from 1997 is shown in Figure 1.

As would be expected, the difference was much greater when we look at the percentage not voting, an aspect of voter behavior not covered at all in the exit poll, and not reported in the Election Day prognosis. In the panel, just 7 percent abstained, as compared to 22 percent in the election in 1997. The corresponding figures are 14 and 26 percent in 2001. This does not seem to be a panel effect as much as one might have suspected, since large Norwegian post-election surveys have similar or even lower rates

![Figure 1](image-url)  
**Figure 1** Correspondence between election results and prognosis in MMI telephone panel poll for national election of September 1997 (percentages)
of reported non-voting (9 percent in 1997 and 8 percent in 2001). This may be a social desirability bias (DeLamater, 1982). Since many consider voting a civic duty, some respondents may not want to admit failing to do so. Sample bias is another possible cause. It seems reasonable to assume that persons who are unwilling to participate in elections may also be difficult to recruit to surveys.

Fortunately, the inflated voting rate does not seem to affect the party distribution in the sample to a great extent, judging from the close correspondence between prognosis and election results. For later analyses, however, the election result including non-voting may also be added to the weighting procedure, so as to obtain a more accurate total picture of the movements of voters in the final stage of the campaign that also includes abstentions (Hellevik, 1997).

**Cost Efficiency**

The total field costs (interviewing and processing of data) of the 1997 MMI telepanel was a little less than US$40,000, approximately half the corresponding figure for the 1993 exit poll (corrected for cost increases). In other words, higher accuracy is obtained at a lower price. Election Day polls are even cheaper than a panel, but judging from the results in Norway not quite as accurate.

With a panel approach, results from the pre-election recruitment waves may be published, thus increasing the value of the panel for the media clients. The panel approach also has the advantage of a richer database, since the pre-election survey may include more questions than would be feasible in a poll on Election Day. Another bonus is that data on individual changes in party preferences between the two interviews are generated, permitting analyses of what happened in the final stage of the campaign.

**Familiar Procedures**

One valuable aspect of the Election Day panel or poll is that they do not differ greatly from other surveys, except for the extreme pressure with regard to time. One, thus, may rely on methods with which staff members of polling institutes are familiar and experienced. In contrast, the exit poll is different from anything else done at an institute. It confronts the staff with all kinds of novel practical problems, where the solutions are much more dependent on the attitudes and behavior of public authorities and other actors than is the case for ordinary polls. Even bad weather may complicate the interviewing. The exit poll operation is thus much more prone to unpleasant surprises than the telephone panel or poll.

**Quality of Sample**

Simple random sampling as compared to cluster sampling means a reduction in random variation (error margins) for the telephone panel or poll. With only a limited
number of polling stations drawn, the risk of an unrepresentative result is substantial in the exit poll. In addition, the selection of individual voters may be difficult to administer for the interviewers. They are supposed to interview voters at fixed intervals (every nth person exiting), but in practice this may be hard to accomplish. At times the outflow of voters is too great, resulting in an uneven representation of voters over the day. There is also a danger that the interviewer is unable to prevent some voters from ‘volunteering’ to be interviewed. Both problems may be reduced by increasing the number of interviewers working together outside each polling station, but this of course will raise costs.

We have already mentioned the problems of representativity encountered for an exit poll when there is advance voting of some magnitude, since the party distribution may differ from the vote on Election Day.

**Pre-Election Vote Intention Weighting**

In an exit poll, the probability for being selected to participate may fluctuate during the day, because of variations in the outflow of voters. There will be no interviews from the final hour or two before closing time, due to processing requirements for the prognosis. If supporters of the various parties differ with regard to when they vote, as is the case in Norway where party choice is correlated with age, varying selection probabilities will affect the prognosis. In the MMI telepanel any such tendency is effectively counteracted by weighting the answers obtained on Election Day according to vote intention (party preference and certainty of vote) in the first interview.

The weighting ensures that it will not matter for the prognosis if some cells in the pre-election vote intention matrix are under- or overrepresented in the sample interviewed on Election Day. What the weighting may fail to correct, however, is a shift during Election Day in the tendency to change party preference within cells in the weighting matrix.

**Early Prognosis**

One benefit of weighting by pre-election vote intention is that a prognosis calculated at an early stage when just a fraction of the interviews have been completed will come close to the final result (Figure 2). The curves for all parties are nearly horizontal, i.e. stable over time. The mean deviation for all parties from the election outcome was only 0.4 percentage points for the first prognosis, made four hours before closing time on the basis of

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7 In 1993 MMI overestimated the strength of RV (Communist left) in Oslo, due to the fact that the random selection of 10 polling stations included their two strongest showings. They got a seat in Parliament for the first time ever, which was quite a surprise, but the exit poll overdid it by predicting two seats. An unrepresentative sample of polling stations was probably the main explanation for the poor performance of the Swedish Television exit poll in the EU referendum, which erred by five percentage points (as compared to 0.4 points in the MMI referendum telepanel).

8 This problem also manifested itself in the exit poll in Oslo, as indicated by an overrepresentation of RV voters compared to the result obtained by the party at some polling stations.
just 1,506 interviews, the exact same mean deviation as for the last and final prognosis, based on 5,034 interviews.

Such an ‘early warning system’ for the expected outcome of the election is of course valuable for media clients, providing them with a basis for planning how the outcome is to be reported, which stories to pursue, etc.

**ANALYSIS OF NON-VOTING**

An advantage of a regular panel or poll over the exit poll is the information obtained on non-voters. Even if this category is underrepresented, one will get an idea of which parties are affected by last minute withdrawals and what the possible causes might be. Analysis of data from the 1997 MMI telephone panel shows that the Labor Party lost heavily during the final phase of the campaign because of abstentions among respondents who had intended to vote for the party a week earlier. An important reason for the withdrawal seems to have been dissatisfaction with the party’s candidate for prime minister (Hellevik, 1997).
Methodological Tests

It is a well-established practice to regard the correspondence between pre-election polls and the outcome of the election as a test of the accuracy of polling techniques. This is not very satisfactory, however, considering the high rate of changes in vote intention during the final days of a campaign. In the 2001 election 22 percent of the panel members who voted said that they had made their final decision on Election Day or the day before (20 percent in 1997), while an additional 17 (13) percent decided earlier during the last week. Between one-fourth and one-fifth of them decided to vote as they had indicated in the pre-election interview, the rest changed their vote intention, mostly from undecided to a party vote.

The election result thus cannot serve as a test of the accuracy of pre-election polls. When voter opinion changes, such a test may pick the wrong winner. An example is the election of 1997 in Norway, where MMI had the Labor Party at 39 percent of the vote one week before the election. Other pollsters had the party around 35 percent. The difference can be attributed to differences in weighting procedures. When the outcome of the election was 35.0 percent for Labor, a test by means of the pre-election results suggests that the method used by MMI was inferior. But the result of 39 percent was from the panel, where support for Labor dropped nearly 5 percent during the final week of the campaign. Thus the result from the panel (34.4 percent) was right on target on election night (shown in Figure 1). It seems reasonable to assume that the pre-election figure of 39 percent from the same panel of respondents was also closer to the truth than 35 percent.

Disadvantages of the Telephone Panel

Telephone Coverage

The level of telephone ownership will, of course, affect the quality of a telephone panel poll. In many countries the approach will not be feasible as of today. Increasing use of cellular phones complicates interviewing, but when these problems are solved, may improve access to younger age groups.

Panel Conditioning

One also has to worry about the effect of the first interview on the subsequent voting behavior. The inflated percentage for participation in the election appears, as mentioned earlier, only to a limited degree to be a panel effect. And such an effect, when it occurs, does not seem to influence the distribution of votes. Those stimulated to vote who would otherwise have abstained, do not differ systematically in their choice of party from the ‘regular’ voters, judging from the close fit between prognosis and election result.

More problematic is the possibility of a ‘freezing’ of a respondent’s pre-election vote intention, caused by having told the interviewer in the first wave which party he or she were going to vote for in the election.9 This would lead to underestimating the extent of

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9 ‘This freezing may occur when the respondent perceives the interview response to be a sort of public commitment to a position, or when the respondent in a panel survey feels some pressure to be consistent across interviews’ (Bridge et al., 1977, p. 57, cited in Waterton & Lievesley, 1986, p. 328).
last minute swings in voter support for a party. There are some indications of such a tendency in the 1997 telepanel, when we look at respondents whose first interview took place at different points in time, and compare their vote in the election, for parties with significant changes in support during those weeks. But the pattern is not consistent, and none of the differences between various parts of the sample are statistically significant.

In the 1994 EU referendum telephone panel, however, there are differences between segments within the panel, which are consistent with a freezing of vote intention (Figure 3). The mood shifted towards acceptance of membership during the last week of the campaign according to all polls carried out in this period by different institutes, some of them on a daily basis. If the vote in the election was not influenced by the first interview, the three segments of the sample recruited in different time intervals prior to the referendum should have had the same distribution of votes in the referendum. Instead we see that the first segment has the highest percentage of ‘No’ votes, and the last one the lowest, reflecting the differences in public opinion between the time intervals for the first interview.\(^{10}\)

The tendency is not strong, and may have other causes. Although freezing is often mentioned as a disadvantage of panels, there is little evidence of such an effect according to Waterton and Lievesley (1986). When the time between the interviews is not years or months but weeks or days, the effect may be stronger (Holt, 1986). So when the panel approach to Election Day polling is used and there are significant shifts in voter opinion between the time of the first interview and the election, precautions for detecting and, if necessary, correcting panel effects should be taken.

**Figure 3** Vote intention and actual vote in the EU referendum, depending on the time of first interview

![Figure 3](image)

*Note*: Percentage against membership is shown, with DK/Nonvoters excluded.


\(^{10}\) The outcome of the referendum was 52.2 percent ‘No’ to membership, the result of the telepanel 52.6 percent.
Sample Size

Technical capacity for telephone interviewing limits the number of respondents one may reach on Election Day. In contrast, in an exit poll the need to have a reasonably large number of polling stations and to interview over the entire period the stations are open often results in a large number of interviews. As pointed out earlier, this does not necessarily contribute to a more accurate prognosis, but it provides interesting opportunities for analysis that is lacking with a smaller sample.

Figure 4 gives an example of the interesting results that may be obtained with a huge sample, from MMI’s 1993 exit poll. An analysis of this material concluded that the outcome of the election was heavily influenced by the controversy over whether or not Norway should join the EU (Bjørklund & Hellevik, 1993). The two parties increasing their share of the vote from the previous election were the pro-EU Labor Party and the anti-EU Center Party. Labor did extremely well in holding on to its ‘old’ voters among those in favor of joining, among the undecided and among those against membership who did not regard the issue as one of the two most important in the campaign.

**Figure 4** Vote in the 1993 election for Labor voters from the 1989 election, depending on EU opinion and importance of the EU issue for the vote decision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EU Opinion &amp; Importance</th>
<th>Stable Labor</th>
<th>Shift to other parties</th>
<th>Shift to Center Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pro EU</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti EU, issue unimportant</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti EU, issue second in importance</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti EU, issue first in importance</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(N =)    (1099)                   (1920)                     (882)                      (208)                         (470)

*Note:* Percent, for voters participating in both elections.

*Source:* MMI exit poll.
Even among those who were opposed to membership and ranked the EU issue as second in importance the Labor Party did fairly well. But for the group of really concerned anti-EU voters the result was disastrous. Only 22 percent remained loyal while 55 percent shifted to the Center Party. A similar pattern of differences according to EU opinion is found when we look at Labor's ability to recruit new voters from the other parties.

The above analysis would not have been possible without the large number of interviews provided by the exit poll. It suggests that if the EU issue had not been salient in this campaign, the Labor Party, instead of a modest gain, would have accomplished a landslide victory in 1993.

CONCLUSION

Among the advantages of the Election Day telephone panel as compared to the exit poll are the following: It seems to be more efficient in terms of accuracy in relation to costs. The application of regular survey procedures provides opportunities for methodological tests. Here the Election Day panel or poll has an advantage over pre-election polls, where the possibility of real change in voter opinion between polling and voting cannot be ruled out.

The telephone panel approach has a strong side with regard to the quality of the sample. Cluster effects and the danger of unrepresentative selection of polling stations that may plague exit polls are avoided. Also advance voters and non-voters are included in the sample. Weighting based on pre-election vote intention helps to prevent biased results due to late voting for particular parties. The weighting permits an accurate early prognosis of the election outcome, which may be useful for the media when planning election night reporting.

Analysis of election results is made more interesting by information on non-voting and changes in party preference during the final stage of the election campaign. The panel data maps the flow of voters between the parties, and information from the first, longer survey may indicate what factors influenced the movements.

Among the possible disadvantages of the telephone panel approach to Election Day polling are the following: Telephone coverage may be too low to give a satisfactory sample. Panel effects, in the form of a ‘freezing’ of party preference, may prevent the panel from reflecting the full effect of last minute swings.

REFERENCES


**BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**

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