Polling in an age of populism: lessons from the Anglosphere

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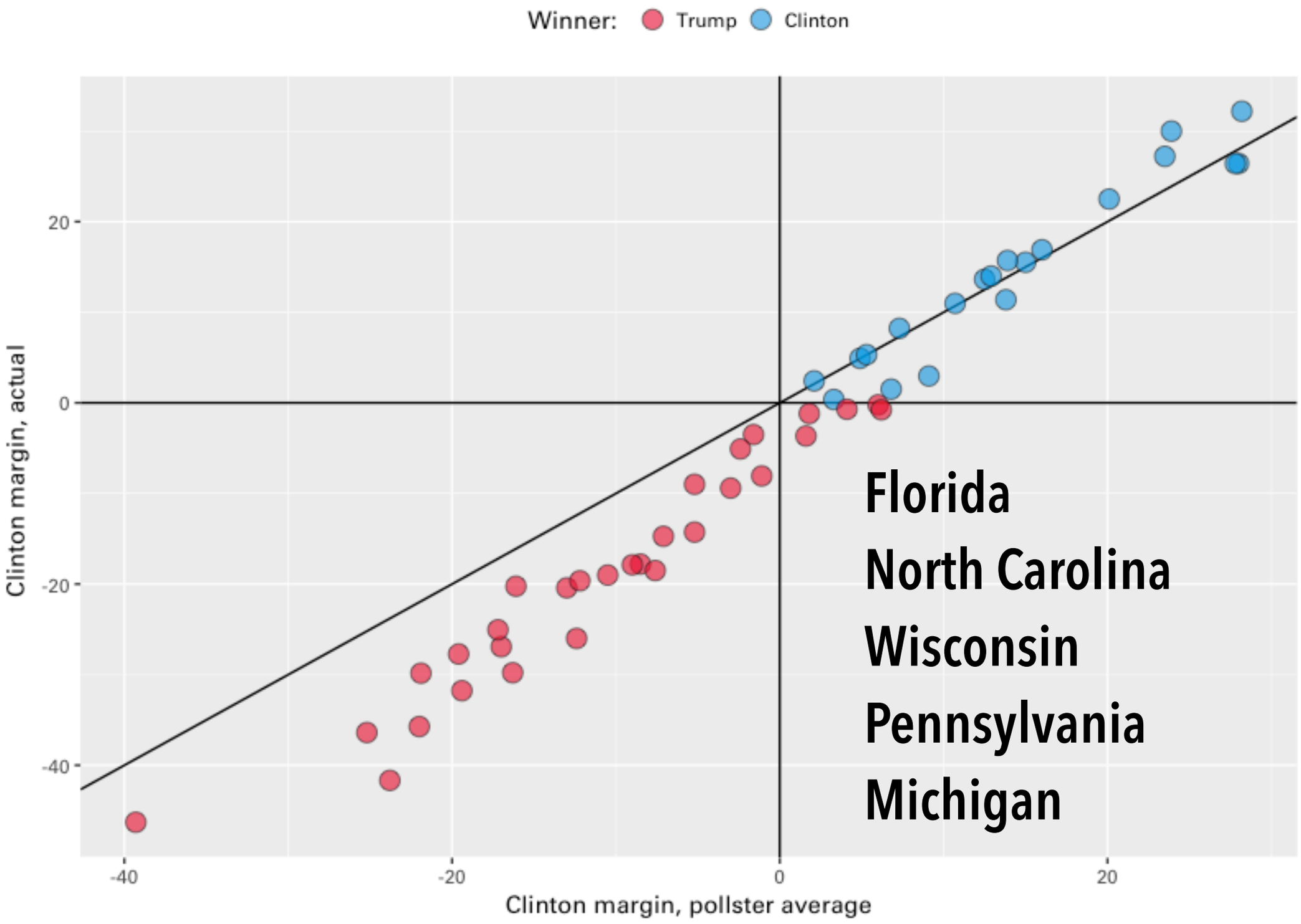
2016 US presidential election

- see excellent AAPOR commissioned report
- national polls tolerable (or at least in line with historical performance)
- state polls poor performance, enough to matter

State level poll averages vs outcomes, 2016 US presidential election



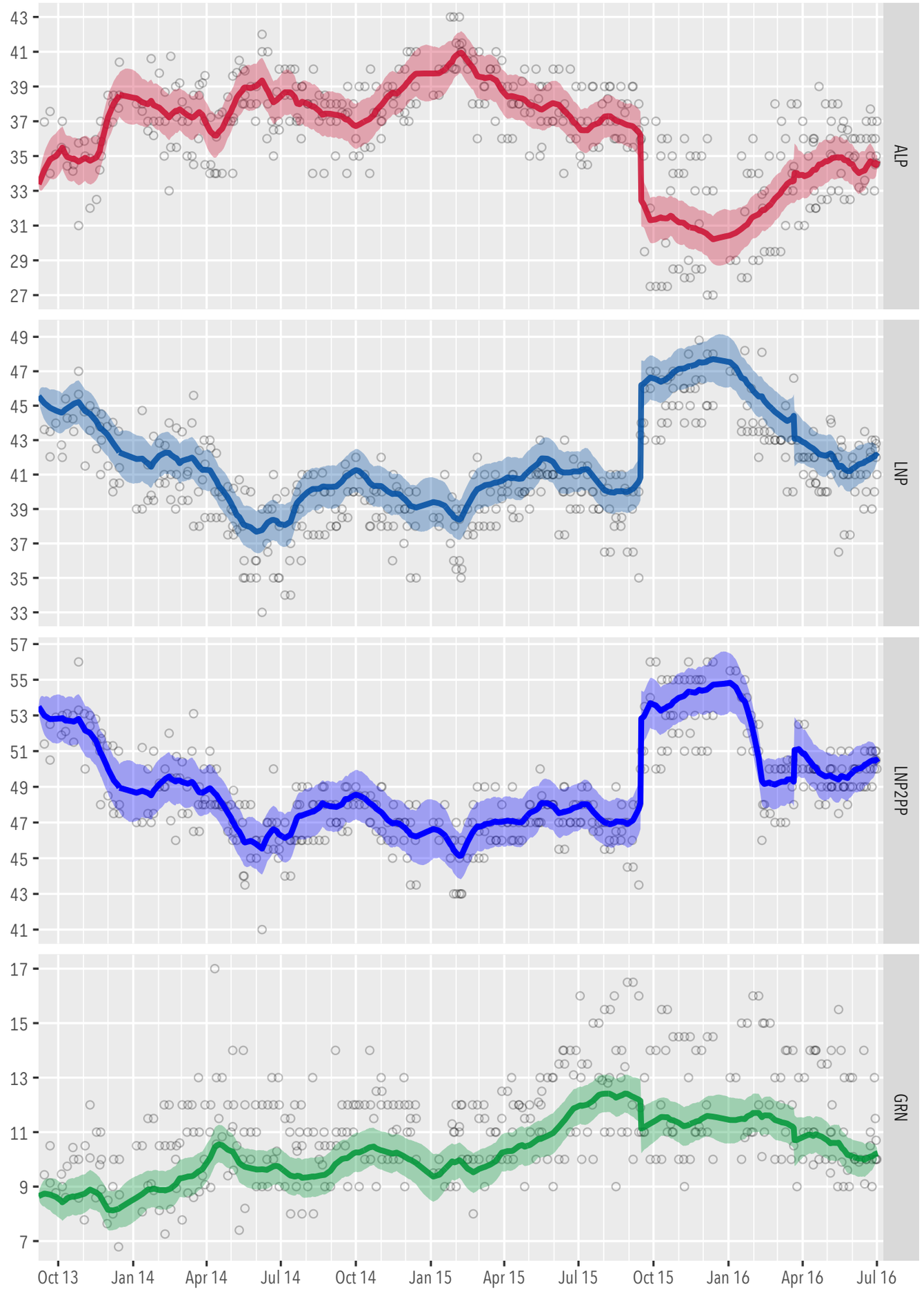
2016 US presidential election

- late deciders: dynamic information environment late in the campaign
- failure to **accurately model turnout**
- 2008 predicted 2012, but 2012 did not predict 2016
- Minorities, younger voters, potentially demobilised by erroneous polls?
- Little evidence of “shy” or “sly” Trump voters

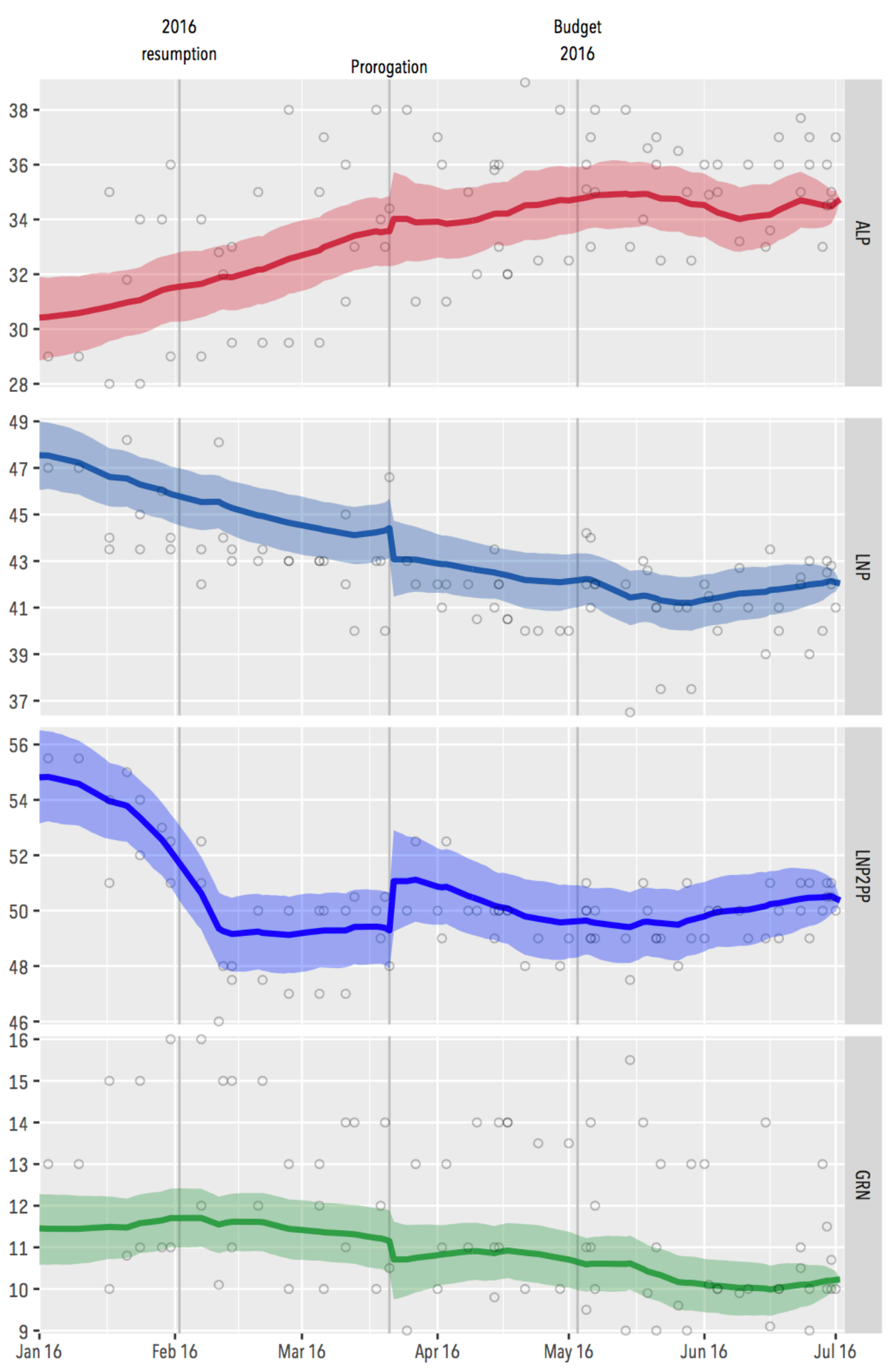
Australia 2016

- joint work with Luke Mansillo
- industry did a good job with national 2PP numbers
- little evidence of large movement in voter sentiment over the campaign
- Green over-estimate
- marginal seat polling not great

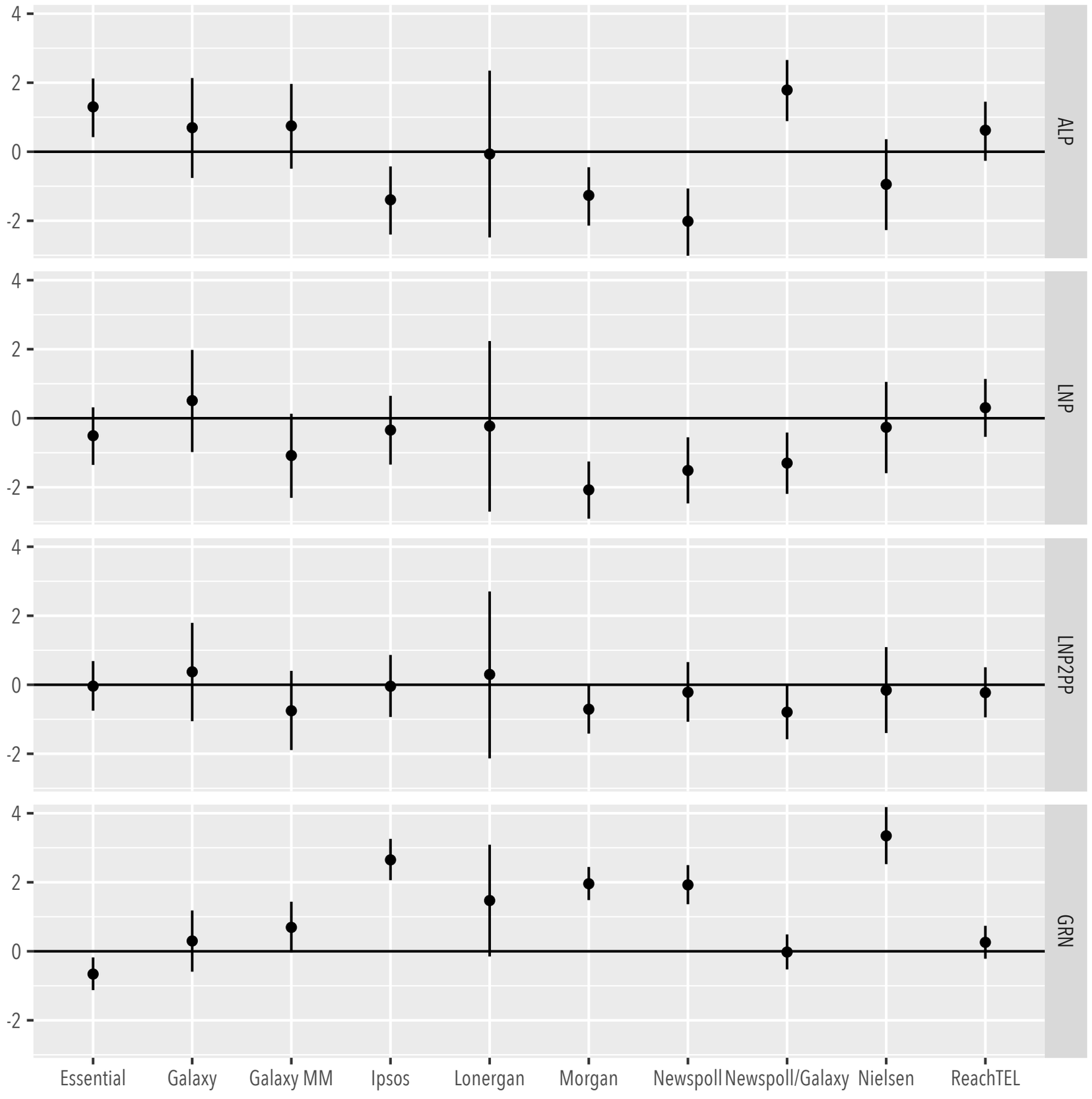
Trajectory of voting intentions over the 43rd parliament



Trajectory of voting intentions 1-1-2016 to Election Day



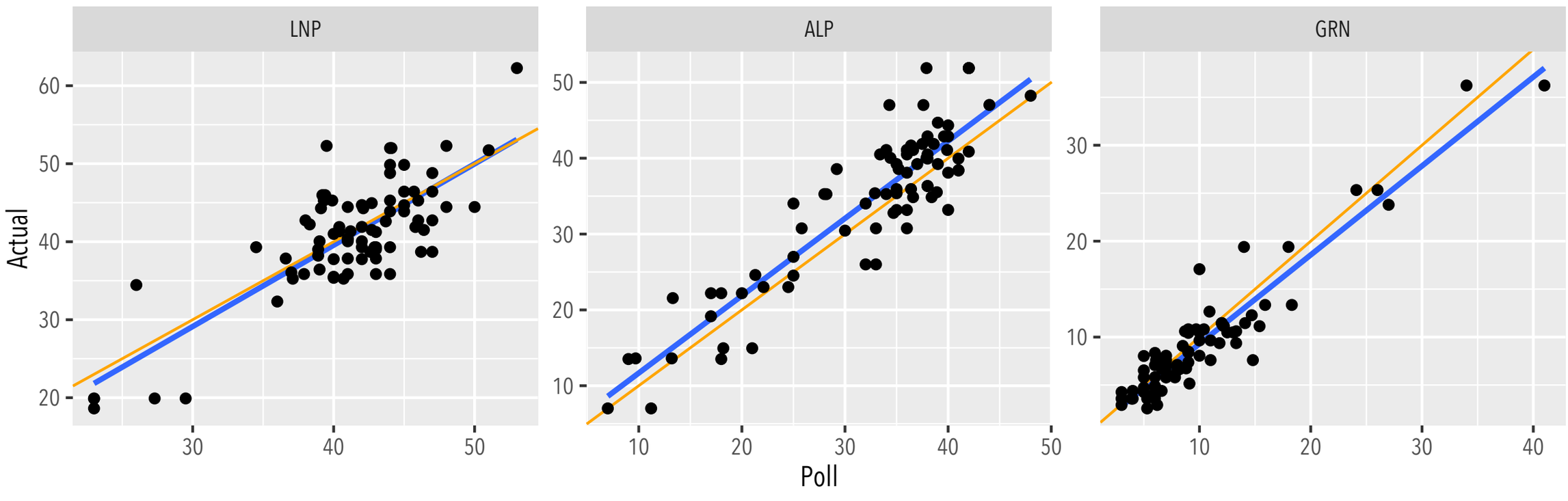
Estimates of polling house bias



Seat-specific polling

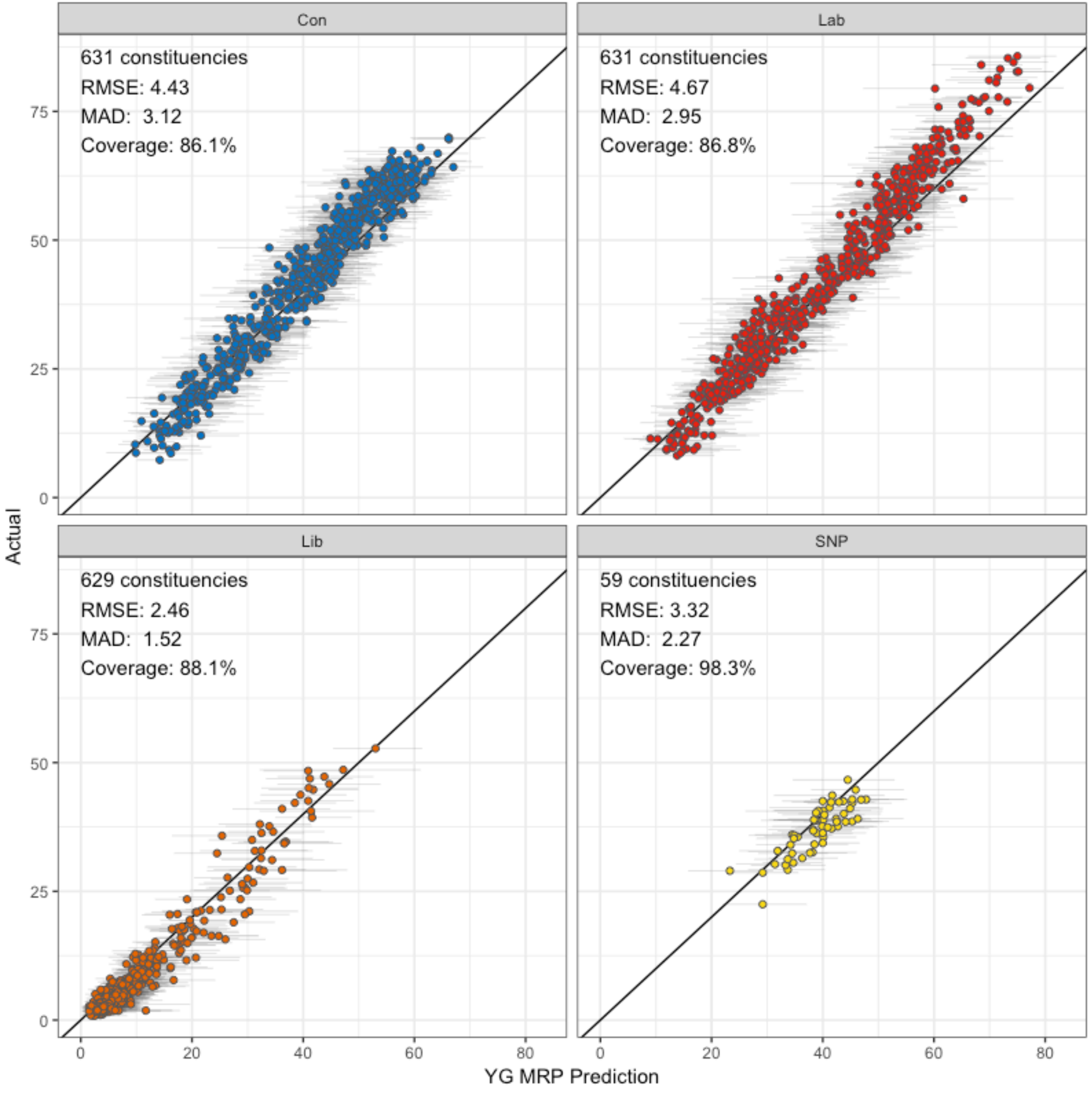
	Coalition	Labor	Greens
Average Error	-0.56	2.19	-0.68
Median Absolute Error	3.50	3.28	1.42
Root Mean Square Error	4.32	4.99	2.27
Effective n	130	92	143
Coverage Rate (%)	57	53	77

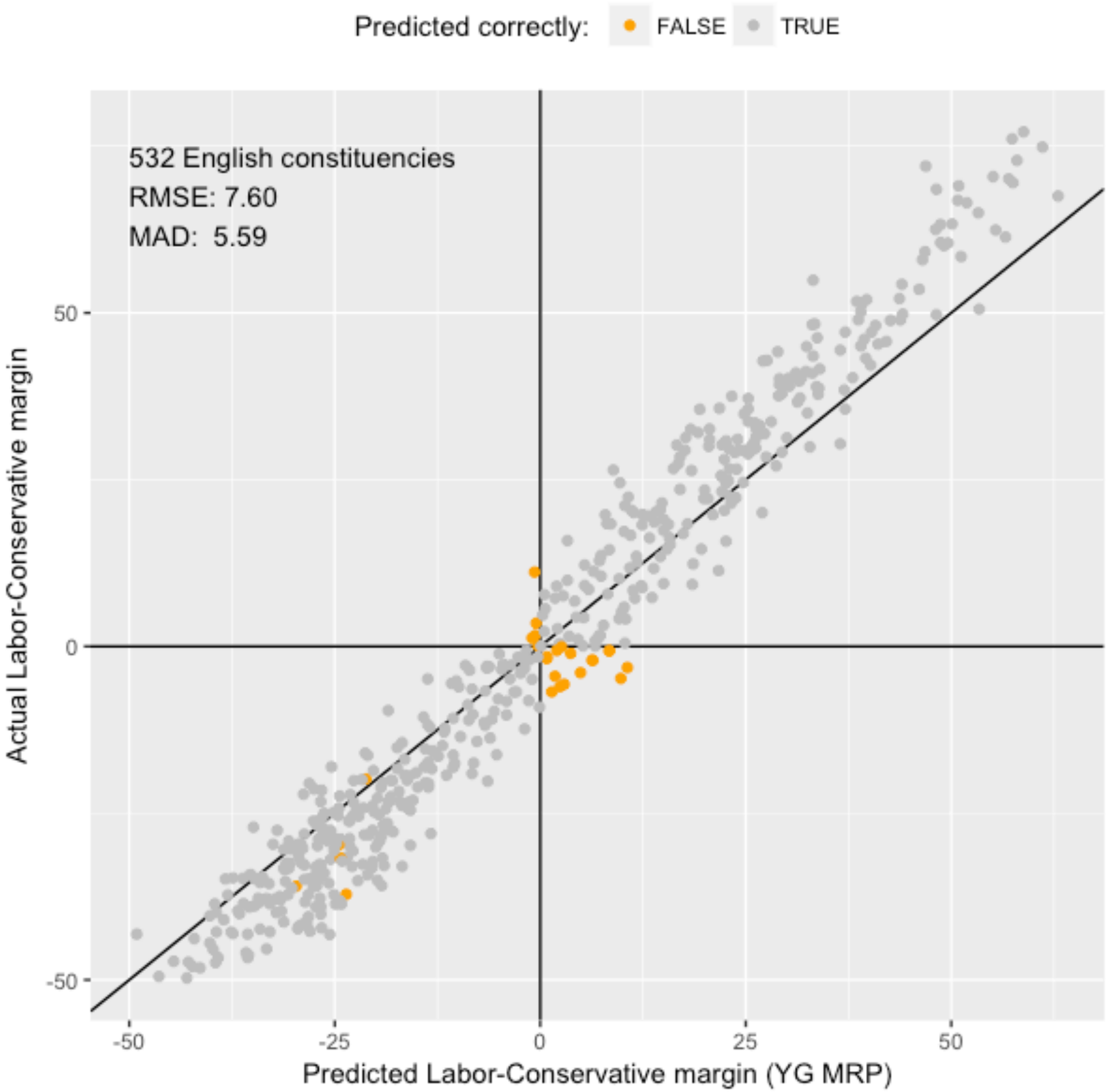
Table 1: Summary of poll errors. Effective n is the sample size of a simple random sample that generates the corresponding level of RMSE. The coverage rate is the percentage of times that a 95% confidence interval for each poll estimate includes the corresponding outcome.



UK 2017

- Excellent performance by You Gov constituency level predictions
- Polls + a lot of modelling to adjust for demographics of particular constituencies
- “MRP”: multi-level regression and post-stratification to yield credible SAEs (small area estimates)
- used by VoxLabs with Vote Compass in Australia etc


Con
631 constituencies
RMSE: 4.43
MAD: 3.12
Coverage: 86.1%
Lab
631 constituencies
RMSE: 4.67
MAD: 2.95
Coverage: 86.8%
Lib
629 constituencies
RMSE: 2.46
MAD: 1.52
Coverage: 88.1%
SNP
59 constituencies
RMSE: 3.32
MAD: 2.27
Coverage: 98.3%
Actual
YG MRP Prediction
0
25
50
75
0
20
40
60
80


Predicted correctly:
FALSE
TRUE
532 English constituencies
RMSE: 7.60
MAD: 5.59
50
0
-50
Actual Labor-Conservative margin
-50
-25
0
25
50
Predicted Labor-Conservative margin (YG MRP)

seats correctly predicted, 589/635

```
, ,  = FALSE
```

actual

predicted

	con	grn	lab	lib	oth	plc	snp
con	0	0	5	4	0	0	1
grn	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
lab	17	0	0	0	0	1	0
lib	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
oth	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
plc	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
snp	6	0	6	1	0	0	0

```
, ,  = TRUE
```

predicted

	con	grn	lab	lib	oth	plc	snp
con	293	0	0	0	0	0	0
grn	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
lab	0	0	251	0	0	0	0
lib	0	0	0	7	0	0	0
oth	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
plc	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
snp	0	0	0	0	0	0	34

Conclusion

- Australia an easy case:
  - compulsory voting (but Greens?)
  - Census
- US hard case:
  - turnout dynamics
  - new candidates top of ticket
- UK: 1st high profile success for polls + models for SAEs