**The 2007 council elections were a total disaster for the Labour Party. The election saw the SNP replace Labour as the dominant party in Scottish local government. The introduction of the new STV voting system saw both much greater participation all round as well as fairer representation compared to previous elections. However, the 2012 election was disappointing as there was a deterioration in both these areas.**

**To what extent does the information in these sources support the viewpoint above?**

First part of viewpoint: The 2007 council elections were a **total disaster** for the Labour Party. The election saw the SNP replace Labour as the **dominant party** in Scottish **local** government.

Second part of viewpoint:The introduction of the new STV voting system saw both much **greater participation all round** as well as **fairer representation** compared to previous elections. However, the 2012 election was **disappointing** as there was a **deterioration in both these areas.**

**Response:**

The first component of the first viewpoint states that “The 2007 council elections were a total disaster for the Labour Party”. The evidence supplied in Source A provides us with information relating to the control of councils by party from the elections between 1999-2007. It shows that in 2007 the Labour Party only achieved control of 2 council areas, a sharp decline from the 15 they had control of in 1999 and indeed the 13 they had control over in 2003. Evidence from Source B can be linked to this. The Source provides information which relates to the percentage of votes and tells us that the percentage of votes that Labour won in 2007 was 28.1%, dropping 4.8% from 32.9% in 2003. This Source also highlights data from the local council elections with regard to the number of seats each party won. We can see from this that Labour won 551 and 509 seats respectively at both the 1999 and 2003 elections but in 2007 this dropped significantly to 348. Lastly, we can also see statistics regarding the percentage of seats won which shows that, yet again, Labour has lost ground. We can see that in 2003, they won 41.7% of the seats however in 2007 they won only 28.5%. However, overall, despite suffering serious losses in all areas, especially in the number and percentage of seats won, it would be inadequate to suggest that this election was a total disaster. They were the only party to gain full control of any council area and, even though they had lost ground on previous elections, this can still be seen as a positive. They also had the second highest amount of seats and while the statistics from this election do not make for good reading, it would be unfair to categorise this as a total disaster.

The second component of this viewpoint tells us that “The election saw the SNP replace Labour as the dominant party in Scottish local government”. The data in Source A relating to the control of councils shows that, just like The Conservatives and The Liberal Democrats, the SNP failed to win full control over any councils, while Labour won full control over 2. This can be linked to Source B where the source shows data about the percentage of votes. We can see from this table that Labour actually won a higher percentage of the votes, with 27.9% compared to Labour’s 28.1%. However, when we consider the number of seats won, we can see that The SNP won 363 seats whereas Labour only won 348. Overall, it can be said that the viewpoint is accurate in saying that the SNP replaced Labour as the dominant party in local elections. This is because, despite Labour having full control over two councils and winning more of the overall vote, the SNP has the highest number of seats across all parties including Labour which is arguably more valuable than winning full control over the councils or winning more of the vote. Therefore, it can be said that, due to this, they did in fact replace Labour as the dominant party in Scottish local government.

Without doubt The Labour Party did suffer major losses during the 2007 election and their decline from 1999 until then became evident. However, to call this defeat disastrous would be unfair and perhaps even an exaggeration as while they did register losses across the board, they were still the only party to retain full control of any council and did also achieve the highest percentage of votes; so, although minor, there were still positives and these show how the election was not a “total disaster”. Secondly, even though the SNP did not win in *all* areas of the election, they did replace Labour as the dominant political party as they won what is arguably the most important aspect of the election-the seats therefore the viewpoint would be accurate to say the SNP replaced Labour as the dominant party.

The first component of the second viewpoint explains that the introduction of the Single Transferable Vote (STV) saw “greater participation all round”. Source C shows that the overall election turnout in 2007 was 53.8%, up from 49.6% in 2003. However, the number of spoilt ballots increased from 14,597 in 2003, to 38,351 in 2007 and this also can be linked to Source D which highlights to us that the number of candidates choosing to participate by running as a candidate decreased from 4,195 to 2,607. Therefore, it can be said that although the introduction of the STV system did increase overall turnout in the 2007 election compared to 2003, this was actually less than it was in 1999. It would be incorrect to state that it increased participation all around for other reasons because of the increased amount of spoilt ballots and less people stood for the election which shows that when you consider participation on the whole, the introduction of the STV system did not make for greater participation all round.

The second component of this viewpoint says that the STV system also led to “fairer representation compared to previous elections.” We can see that percentage of female candidates and councillors in the 2007 election, as shown in Source E, was 22.5% and 21.8% respectively. Both of these statistics are lower than the two previous elections. This can be linked to information in Source D which tells us that in each election the number of seats available was 1,222. This shows that in fact the introduction of the Single Transferable Vote did not make for fairer representation because despite the number of seats available remaining the same during each election, the number of women both standing for the position and then being elected fell in the 2007. Even though it was by fairly small margins (-5% for the candidates and -0.1% for elected councillors) it would be incorrect to state that the STV system led to fairer representation because it ended up having a negative impact on the representation of women within council areas.

Lastly, the third component of this viewpoint tells us that “the 2012 election was disappointing as there was a deterioration in both of these areas”. If we look back at Source C we can see that the turnout for the 2007 election was 53.8% and this can be linked to Source F which tells us that 39.1% of the electorate turned out on election day in 2012. Additionally, evidence from Source D highlights that 2,607 candidates stood for the 2007 and once again if we look at Source F we can see that this number also decreased as only 2,496 candidates stood in this election. However, further information from Source F shows that in the 2012 election 23.4% of the candidates that stood were women and they ended up making up 24.3% of the elected councillors. When we compare this to the information in Source E we can see that the number of female candidates in 2007 was 22.5% and female councillors represented 21.8% of the total. When analysing this component of the view point it is clear that participation did worsen from the 2007 election in both the turnout and the number of candidates standing for election and it would be accurate to state there was a deterioration on this front. Conversely, the representation of women was up on 2007 and seeing as the viewpoint states that there was a deterioration in ‘both’ of these areas, the viewpoint can be proven incorrect; there was only a deterioration in one of these areas.

When evaluating the viewpoint as a whole, we can get an insight into the impact of the STV system in council elections. The viewpoint claims that there was an all-round increase in participation and while there was an increase in 2007 on the previous election (+4.2%) which does add to the veracity of the statement. However, to state that there was an increase “all round” would be inaccurate as the number of spoil ballots increased and even though many would consider this ‘participation’ it leads to the overall result being not fully representative as these people have not actually chosen a candidate. The number of candidates standing in this election was also the lowest it had been since 1999, thus disproving the viewpoint as this is clearly not “greater participation all around”. Finally, when evaluating the information in relation to the 2012 election it is clear that there most certainly was a deterioration in participation, exemplified by the extremely poor turnout and decline in number of candidates running. However, the increase in females running in the elections and also being elected lends itself to proving the statement incorrect as this deterioration was only in terms of participation, not representation.