ELECTORAL RESEARCH IN BULGARIA

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ELECTIONS AND ELECTORAL RESEARCH – FIRST STEPS

• First parliamentary elections in 1879

• 1944 – all women gaining suffrage rights… and introduction of one-party elections


• 1990 - conducting first opinion polls and establishing first private polling companies; exit polls quick to follow
**ELECTORAL RESEARCH AND ITS EXECUTORS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sociological/polling agencies</th>
<th>Marketing research companies</th>
<th>Research institutes/think tanks</th>
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| First electoral research executors, e.g. NCIOM (1989-2013) - state owned agency under Parliamentary control | International companies (e.g. Gallup (TNS BBSS), GfK)  
Local companies (e.g. Market Links, Market Test) | Local agencies - blurring the boundaries between polling companies, NGOs, think tanks and political affiliations |
# ELECTORAL RESEARCH AND ITS CLIENTS

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Media</th>
<th>Political parties</th>
<th>NGOs</th>
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| Commissioned research, conducted in a hurry  
Interested in simplified questions and numbers that make good headlines  
Just before and/or during elections | Increasing frequency  
For internal use, for party and campaign strategy building (not publicly available) or often to create band-wagon effect (questionable reliability)  
Sometimes regional, sometimes national level | Conducted occasionally  
Focused on topics that are special interest of the NGOs (electoral research is usually marginal) |
### TYPES OF ELECTORAL RESEARCH

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Types of research</th>
<th>Major interest</th>
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<td>If elections were today (monitoring ratings/trust in political parties, politicians, institutions, issues &amp; policies, government performance tracking)</td>
<td>Media content/news and popularity contests for the politicians</td>
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<td>Pre-electoral voting intention and voting advice applications</td>
<td>Probing for changes in the electoral law Profiling voters &amp; creating campaign strategy Creating band wagon effect &amp; media hype</td>
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<td>Election day (exit polls &amp; parallel vote counting)</td>
<td>To guarantee the democratic process and its transparency Creating hot news for the media</td>
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<td>Post-electoral</td>
<td>Scientific interest</td>
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<td><strong>Buying votes</strong></td>
<td><strong>‘Number 15’ phenomenon</strong></td>
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| Introduces a covert element to the electoral dynamics | Introduction of new electoral laws and procedures very shortly before the elections — hard to study and/or predict their impact  
 e.g. introduction of preferential voting without educating the voters led to replicating the number of the party as a preference for a person, i.e. person N15 from party N15 gets almost all preferences | Ignoring party platforms and policy positions during the campaigns makes it hard to match voters and parties |
ELECTORAL RESEARCH THEMES

Minority voting
*International interest:* (reflected in comparative research) representation of minorities within all parties, i.e. internal plurality of representation within each party
*National interest:* abuse of minority voting (forced/command voting, buying votes), interference from abroad

Nationalism and extreme right
*International interest:* (reflected in comparative research) not reflecting specificity, such as appearing later than the other CEE countries and during economic growth (2005)

*National interest:*
**Electoral laws, rules and procedures** (Prediction and analysis of the impact of changes; Voting integrity)

**Media coverage of the campaigns**

**Predictions of post-electoral coalition building**
REPUTATION OF ELECTORAL RESEARCH IN BULGARIA

Then

**Public recognition of the profession**

Polling institutes as household names

Keeping reputation of providing reliable data in a professional manner (for years, but not anymore)

Early 1990s – need for guarantee against electoral fraud of the totalitarian state and therefore, introduction of parallel vote counting on the election day

Late 1990s – introduction of exit polls as a result of increased freedom of speech, trust and decreased polarisation

Now

**Suspicions of political (ab)uses**

Appearance of ‘phantom’ institutes

Reputation of being party arm/part of the political class (political affiliations of pollsters, party commissioned research (openly or not))

Serious discrepancy between predictions and electoral outcome; publishing only results that are favourable to the commissioning party or/and data misinterpretations

Frequency of party commissioned electoral research, e.g. introduction of public registry for elections 2011 revealed that almost all pollsters have been contracted by leading parties
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!