
The 2015 British Election Study: Voters in Context



BRITISH ELECTION STUDY

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The 2015 British Election Study: Voters in Context

History of British Election Studies

- Started in 1964 by Butler and Stokes. 11 studies conducted in the past (counting all individual studies in an election year as one), with increasing complexity of study design and instrumentation.

Funding Arrangements, Homes and Support Structure

- BES are funded on a case by case basis, no infrastructural arrangement in a strict sense (but ...). There is a clear expectation both in the ESRC and the profession for competitive bidding of alternative teams.
- In the past, different rounds of the BES were housed at Oxford and Essex. It is a novelty that the 2015 study is centred at Manchester, as is the teaming up of three British universities for the successful bid.
- The intellectual home of the BES is EPOP, a strong professional organisation focussing on the study of elections, public opinion and parties with ≈ 250 members in Britain and abroad.

The 2015 British Election Study: Voters in Context

- **The 2015 British Election Study: Voters in Context**
 - Data collection to enable understanding of the 2015 British election, continuing the series of British Election Studies since 1964. The core operation of voter surveys combines a classical post-electoral cross-sectional survey with an online panel survey.

- **The Scottish Independence Referendum and the British Voter: an enhancement to the British Election Study Internet Panel**
 - Funded under the Future of UK and Scotland initiative
 - Significant enhancement to the BES online panel study; additional waves in January and September 2014; enlarged samples in all waves up to Summer 2016 (Scottish, Welsh and English), sample of 16-17 year olds.
 - 55,000 additional target interviews in total.

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Themes, Study Design, Priorities

Themes: Disengagement, Accountability and Representation

- Informs the prioritisation of items e.g. trust, turnout, registration, policy responsibility and delivery; issue-scales for longer term comparability

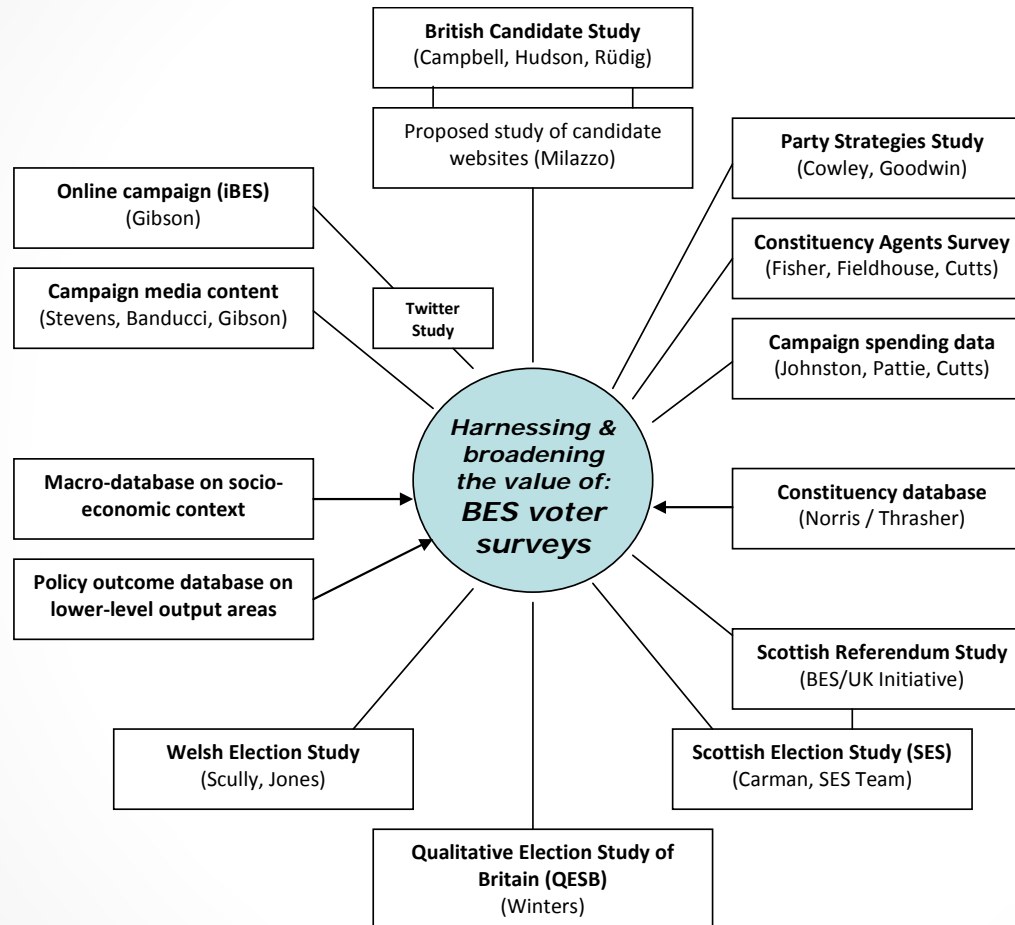
Study Design: Sampling, Data Linking and Multiple Votes

- Sampling design and stratification; minimal clustering, response rates for hard-to-reach groups; constituency and campaign characteristics, and socio-economic context.
- Linking of data, to candidate and campaign characteristics, among others
- Data about the Scottish Referendum, and other elections like the EP election of May 2014 and the Scottish and local election in 2016 and 2017.

Priorities: Understanding the vote choice in context

- Spatial context; socio-economic, political and inter-personal context
- Political and institutional context; sub-national and cross-national elections
- Temporal context; the need for panel data and long-term comparability
- The context of survey measurement; within-survey effects and mode effects

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Data gathering with:

Comparative Study of Electoral Systems / World Values Survey / ESRC's Understanding Society

Liaison/best practice:

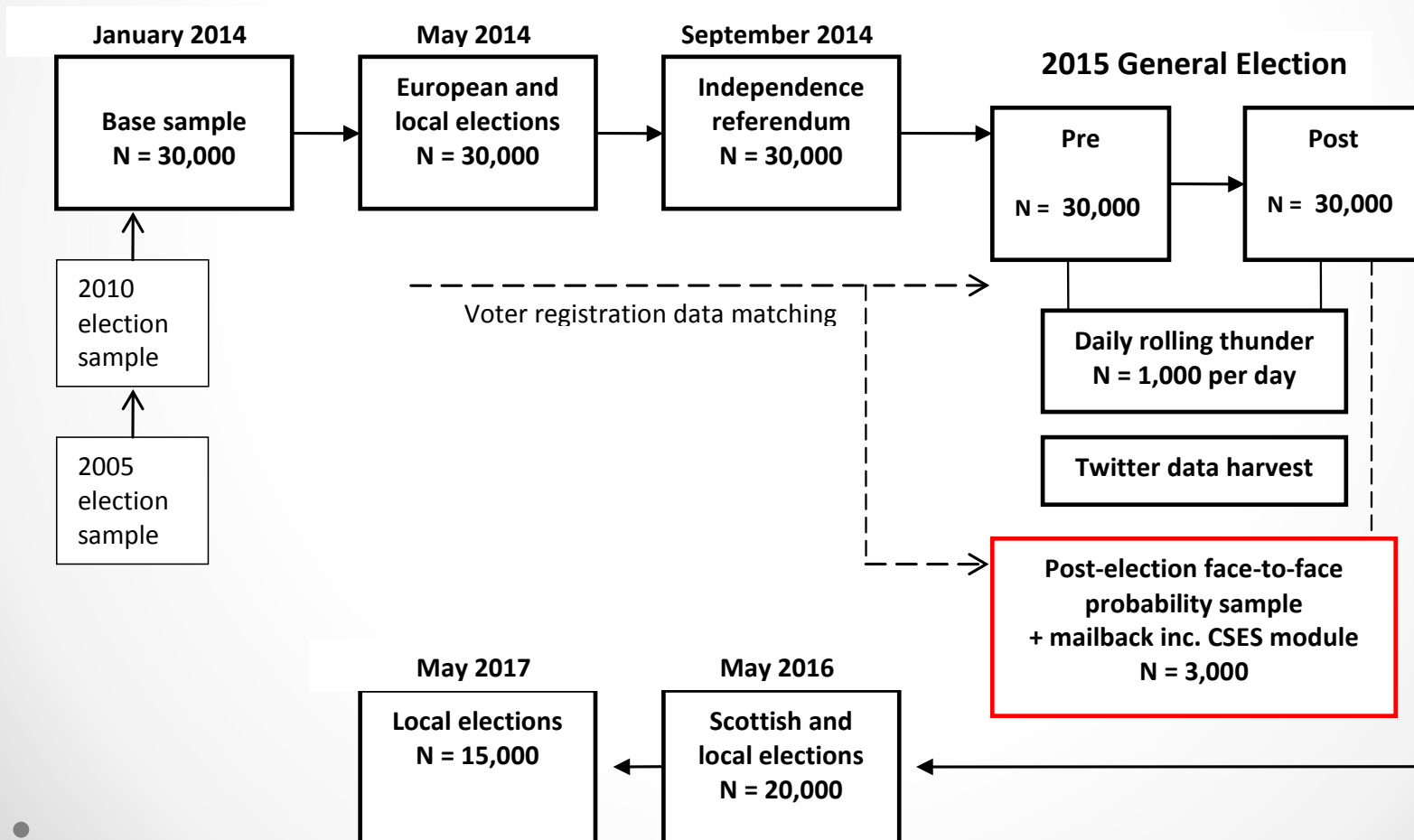
US National Election Studies, Annenberg Campaign Studies, European Election Studies, etc..

Insights from:

Manifesto Research on Political Representation (MARPOR/CMP) (Budge, Regal)

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The BES voter study instruments



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BES2015: User Involvement, Impact and Output

User Involvement and “Impact”

- Continuous call for proposals of user defined content for the panel surveys
- Recurring dissemination events for political elites and the mass media on selected themes in different places of the country (e.g. the Scottish event in Edinburgh ahead of the referendum)
- User involvement through the BES website (britishelectionstudy.com)
 - Tweets
 - Blogs
 - Working papers
 - Data playground
 - Data downloads

Output

- A co-authored book on the main findings of the 2015 study (=a “must” delivery for the PIs)
- Scholarly articles in high ranking journals, working papers, conference presentations etc. (both PIs and members of the community)

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BES2015 and the CSES

History

- Great Britain has been a founding and very active member of the CSES early on. Modules 1 and 2 two have been deposited during these years.
- For the 2005 and 2010 election only online-survey based data are available.

The Plan for the May 2015 study

- Drop off a special CSES questionnaire after main BES interview with 3000 respondents
- Ask for email address of respondents and if available, offer them the possibility of online completion of the questionnaire
- Send up to three online reminders to complete the drop-off questionnaire to those email addresses who at the time have not responded yet
- Send another hard-copy questionnaire to all who have not yet responded.

Question

- Weighting factors to adjust the CSES sample to the parent sample ?
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BES Website

www.britishelectionstudy.com

- **Data:**

- BES Data Playground
- A one-stop-shop for all historical BES data – cross sections and panels
- 2015 BESIP data and all additional project data
- Pulls out all variables in each uploaded data set with search function straight to data
- Linked data from any affiliated project to BES for maximizing use/dissemination

- **News:**

- Opportunities to guest blog if you are using BES data and doing something interesting.
- Share and promote straight from the BES website
- We will retweet, disseminate, provide one-to-one media support to work into press release/interviews etc to publicize your research using the BES

- **Other things:**

- BES Working Paper Series for citations, with accompanying blog post
- BES Community: sign up so that we know who wants to find out first hand
- BES Resources - more to follow: using the data, transforming, stata code, podcasts..

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BES 2015 in-person survey sample design

Primary Sampling Units

- Survey based in 300 Parliamentary constituencies, sampled from whole of Great Britain
- Selection of constituencies - probability proportional to size.
- Stratification variables: region, party competition, marginality

Secondary Sampling Units

- Census Lower-level Super Output Areas (LSOAs) used
- Treat all LSOAs as being part of constituency in which majority of population live
- Selection of wards - probability proportional to size
- 2 LSOAs per constituency
- Stratification by index of multiple deprivation and population density