The British Election Study

Professor Ed Fieldhouse (Manchester)
Professor Jane Green (Manchester)
Professor Geoffrey Evans (Oxford)
Professor Hermann Schmitt (Manchester)
Professor Cees van der Eijk (Nottingham)
Dr Jon Mellon (Manchester)
Dr Chris Prosser (Manchester)

www.britishelectionstudy.com
The British Election Study

• Running since 1963
• Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council
• 2015 and 2017 BES at University of Manchester in partnership with Oxford and Nottingham
• Important source of data for academics, pollsters, the media, and the public
• Understanding British politics in an unstable and unpredictable time
• *The Volatile Voter*, Oxford University Press, 2018.
• Key role in the British Polling Council Polling Inquiry into 2015 polls
• Shortlisted for a 2017 ESRC Celebrating Impact prize
The British Election Study Series

• 1963-1970 – Butler & Stokes, Political Change in Britain

• 1969-1979 – Crew, Roberton, & Sarlvik, British Election Study

• 1983-2001 Heath, Jowell & Curtice, British General Election Study

• 2001-2010 Clarke, Sanders, Stewart & Whiteley, British Election Study

• 2014-Now Fieldhouse, Green, Evans, Schmitt, van der Eijk, Mellon & Prosser, British Election Study
  • 2015, 2017 cross sections, 2014-2018 internet panel (+ linking variables to 2005-2010 panel)
2015 Study: Timeline

- **January 2014**: Wave 1
  - 2010 election sample
  - 2005 election sample

- **May 2014**: Wave 2: European and local elections
  - Voter registration data matching

- **September 2014**: Wave 3. Independence referendum

- **2015 General Election**:
  - Wave 4 Pre
  - Wave 5 Daily rolling thunder
  - Twitter data harvest

- **Post-election face-to-face probability sample + mailback inc. CSES module**
  - N = 3,000

- **May 2016**: Wave 7 Scottish, Welsh & locals

- **May 2017**: Wave 8 Local elections

Other key dates:
- January 2014 to January 2016: Voter registration data matching
- May 2014 to September 2014: Independence referendum data
- May 2017 to May 2018: Post-election face-to-face probability sample
Additional components

April-May 2016
Wave 7. Pre Referendum + pre-local election

EU Referendum
Wave 8. Referendum daily campaign + post locals

June-July 2016
Wave 9. Post Referendum

Nov – Dec 2016
Wave 10. Brexit follow up

General Election 2017
June 2017
Wave 13. Post-election

April May 2017
Wave 11. Pre-election

May-June 2017
Wave 11. Daily Campaign

Post-election face-to-face probability sample
+ self-complete CSES module

Vote validation
Recent data releases (2017)

• Panel waves
  • Wave 13 June 2017 - June 2017 N = 31,196
  • Wave 12 May 2017 - June 2017 N = 34,464
  • Wave 11 April 2017 - May 2017 N = 31,014
  • Wave 10 November 2016 - December 2016 N = 30,319

• Cumulative files
  • Combined Wave 1-13
  • Combined Wave 1-10

• 2017 General Election results file

• UKDS Deposits
  • British Election Study, 2015: Face-to-Face Post-Election Survey with LSOA+NS-SEC
  • British Election Study, 2015: Internet Panel, Waves 1-6 with MSOA and occupation, SOC 2010, links to 2005 and 2010
Understanding the 2017 Election

• Commissioned by BBC News website
• Using BES Panel data, which covers key events since 2014, including:
  • Scottish Independence Referendum
  • 2015 Election
  • EU Referendum
  • 2017 Election
• Key factors in 2017 election
  • Brexit & the realignment on the liberal-authoritarian dimension
  • Leadership and the campaign
  • Scotland
Research Examples using the post-election cross-section series
Mean strength of partisan identity 1964-2015
Perceived difference between Con and Lab, 1964-2015
Reported turnout by age group, 1964-2015
Generational differences in vote choice, 1964-2015
Research Examples using panel data
Voter volatility, 1964-2017 (inter-election panels)
Changing effect of EU attitudes on vote choice
Research Examples using linked survey and contextual data
Support for redistribution by household income and constituency deprivation (Wave 6, multilevel model)
Support for Proportional Representation by party voted for’s majority size (Regression Discontinuity)

\[
\text{LATE} = -0.11, \quad 95\% \text{ CI} = -0.19, \ -0.02
\]
2017 General Election

Some examples using with the BES Panel Study
May 5 – June 7
Leavers
Remainers
Soft vs hard Brexit
What changed (and what didn’t) over the 2017 campaign?

Example using the daily panel data during the campaign
Leader ratings over the campaign

Like Leader

Best PM

Campaign Day

Proportion Saying Best PM

Like Leader

Proportion Saying Best PM

May  Corbyn

May  Corbyn
Party positions over the campaign

Redistribution

EU

Conservatives
Labour
Handle most important issue over the campaign