

The 2016 Welsh Election Study

Public Consultation Seminar
11 December 2015
Cardiff



Outline of Today

1. The Purpose of Today's Seminar
2. WES 2016:
 - The Research Team
 - The project timetable
 - The main elements of the project explained

TEA BREAK (2.30-2.45)

4. Discussion Groups on Survey Conduct and Content
5. Feedback from Groups

FINISH 4PM

The Purpose of Today

- Raising the general profile and impact of WES
- Draw on your expertise to improve WES

and thereby...

- Maximise value of WES for academic research community
- Maximise value of WES for non-academic users

The 2016 Welsh Election Study

Funded by the *Economic and Social Research Council* (Grant: ES/M011127/1)

Three main elements to the study:

- **Study of Voters**
- **Study of Local Campaigning**
- **Study of Social Media Activity**

WES 2016: Project Team

Core Research Team

- **Prof Roger Scully** (Cardiff; Principal Investigator)
- **Dr David Cutts** (Bath; lead on Local Campaigning component)
- **Dr Luke Sloan** (Cardiff; lead on Social Media component)
- **Prof Richard Wyn Jones** (Cardiff)
- **Dr Matthew Williams** (Cardiff)
- **Dr Peter Burnap** (Cardiff)

Advisory Board

- **Prof Ed Fieldhouse** (Manchester, and PI for British Election Study)
- **Prof Rachel Gibson** (Manchester)
- **Prof Ailsa Henderson** (Edinburgh)
- **Prof Ron Johnston** (Bristol)
- **Hugh Rawlings** (Welsh Government)

Voter Study, 1: Purposes

1. Understanding Voting Behaviour

- Individual decisions on whether to vote, and for whom to vote
- Why voting differs from UK general elections
- Why election produced outcome it did

2. Public Attitudes to Devolution and Constitutional Change

- Attitudes to performance of devolved government in Wales, esp. since increased powers after March 2011 referendum
- Views on further constitutional change, including tax
- Aftermath of the Scottish Indyref and constitutional issues across the UK

3. Links to Other Studies

- Series of election and referendum voter studies in Wales since 1997
- British Election Study 2015 (particularly on-going panel study)
- Scottish Election Study 2016

Voter Study, 2: Method

- Internet-based sample, fieldwork by YouGov
- Three Survey Waves:
 - *Pre-Election Wave*: shortly before start of official campaign
 - *Campaign Wave*: During last four weeks of campaign
 - *Post-Election Wave*: Immediately after conclusion of election
- N=3000 for each survey wave; substantial 'Panel' data, plus some new respondents in waves 2 and 3

Voter Study, 3: Content

- Electoral Participation
- Party Choice
- Perceptions of the election campaign
- Attitudes to the parties and their leaders (UK and Welsh levels)
- Attitudes to devolution and the constitution
- Judgements of the policy record of devolved government
- Respondents' individual characteristics, identifications, broad political attitudes, media usage (including social media)

Local Campaigning Study, 1: Purposes

Building on previous studies of local campaigning in UK general elections. Seeking to understand...

- Does intensity of local campaigning, or types of campaign activity, differ from general elections? If so, for all parties, or only some?
- Campaigning under AMS: how do parties adjust to campaigning under different electoral system, including regional lists? How do minor parties that only stand on the list campaign locally?
- Does lower-key nature of devolved elections make local campaigning more or less important? Does less media coverage of 'air war' = local 'ground war' having more impact?
- How are social media used as a local campaigning tool?

Local Campaigning Study, 2: Method

Gather information via several methods:

- *Survey of party agents* (in individual constituencies and electoral regions)
 - Electoral agents from the four Assembly parties, UKIP and Greens
 - 40 constituencies, and 5 regions
 - Survey available by post or onlineData should be directly comparable to agent survey data in general elections in Wales from 1992-2015
- *Party Account and Party Spending Data:*
 - Information from reports and audited accounts of local parties prior to 2016 NAW election
 - Party campaigning spending at constituency (and regional) level
- *Interviews:* Small number of interviews with key strategists in each party

Local Campaigning Study, 3: Agent Survey Content

Survey will follow closely format of general election agent surveys. Will explore:

- Preparations for the campaign
- Organisation and strategy
- Offline and e-campaigning
- Targeting and tactics
- Central party involvement in local campaigns
- Local membership and activism levels
- Campaign period and polling day activities

Social Media Study, 1: Purposes

Interested in how social media are used (and with what effects), and social media as new tools for social research. First-ever systematic data collection and analysis of social media use in a devolved election, to explore:

- How parties/candidates project themselves through social media
- Whether parties can shape the terms in which they and their opponents are viewed
- Changes in levels of social media interest as the NAW election approaches
- Use real-time nature of social media (with messages identifiable to specific seconds) to examine social media responses to major campaign events

Also explore potential contribution of social media analysis as research tool for electoral studies. Use info. on geographical location of social media messages to assess:

- Can we assess intensity or substantive focus of *local campaigning activity* from social media messages? How do social media measure compare to agent surveys or campaign spending data?
- How do geographically-located social media messages relate to opinion polling data and, subsequently, to election results? Can social media help us gauge *local levels of party support*?

Social Media Study, 2: Method

- Data to be gathered from Twitter using the Collaborative Online Social Media ObServatory (COSMOS)
- Relevant content will be identified in three ways:
 - Capture tweets located as originating in Wales
 - Capture Tweets from accounts of key actors and content producers (such as political parties and candidates)
 - Identify list of key terms and hashtags related to election and campaigning activity

Timetable: WES

DATE	ACTIVITIES
Oct 2015	Social media data gathering starts
Dec 2015	Public Consultation Seminar
End-Mar 2016	Pre-election Wave Voter Survey
April–4 May 2016	Campaign Wave Voter Survey
5 May 2016	National Assembly for Wales Election
6 May	Post-election Wave Voter Survey starts
6 May 2016	Local Campaign Agent Survey starts
June 2016	Web publication of initial voter survey data
June 2016→	Public Dissemination Activities
November 2016	Publication of final voter/campaign/social media data-sets on web, and deposit with UK Data Archive

Dissemination Plan

Academic

- Data-sets from all components of study, for use by other researchers
- Academic papers and other outputs

Non-Academic

- Public Dissemination Events
 - Cardiff and London Seminars, summer-autumn 2016
 - Eisteddfod Genedlaethol 2016
- Briefings to the Political Parties
- On-Line Dissemination
 - *Elections in Wales* articles
 - Pieces for other web-sites (Click on Wales, British Election Study Website etc)

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Questions for Group Discussion

- **Voter Study:**
 - Major subjects/areas not covered?
 - Specific suggestions for topics/questions?
- **Social Media and Local Campaigning Studies:**
 - Types of data we should be looking for?
 - Specific questions we should be asking?
- **Dissemination Activities**
 - Any of the planned activities that we *shouldn't* do?
 - Anything not currently planned that we *should* do?