

# Pushed into push-to-web

## Transitioning the British Election Study from face-to-face to push-to-web

Alex Bogdan

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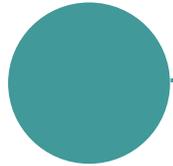
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# Background to BES



After each general election since 1964



Non-partisan, objective independent study providing world-class data and research into British general elections



Address-based random probability clustered sample, face-to-face interviews; **until now**



Managed by a partnership between the University of Manchester and University of Oxford  
Fieldwork in 2019-2020 run by Ipsos MORI in partnership with NatCen



The University of Manchester



# Study design: face-to-face

- ▶ Primary sample units: 2 LSAOs x 400 Parliamentary Constituencies
- ▶ 11 addresses per LSOA / 13 in London
- ▶ One interview per household, Kish selection
- ▶ Eligible to vote in UK General Elections
- ▶ Incentives (£10/£20/£25)
- ▶ Face-to-face, interviewer administered interview
- ▶ 40-50 minute interview

# Timeline

<b>12 December 2019</b>	UK General Election
<b>18 December 2019</b>	Master briefing, launch of face-to-face fieldwork
<b>31 January 2020</b>	First confirmed case of coronavirus in the UK
<b>16 March 2020</b>	UK Government guidance against non-essential travel
<b>17 March 2020</b>	Fieldwork is halted in response to MRS guidance; 2,095 interviews
<b>23 March 2020</b>	Lockdown begins
<b>March-April 2020</b>	Transition to push-to-web design
<b>20 April 2020</b>	Launch of push-to-web fieldwork
<b>10 July 2020</b>	End of fieldwork

# Study design: push-to-web

## Push-to-web with postal follow-up

- ▶ Sample: all non-response up to that point, excluding hard refusals, ineligible, some deadwood
- ▶ Invitation to complete online survey
- ▶ 3 reminders
- ▶ Postal questionnaire made available with mailing 3/reminder 2
- ▶ Unconditional + conditional incentive

# Transitioning to push-to-web: Considerations

## Questionnaire

Adapting questionnaire for self-completion: online and paper

Don't know / Prefer not to say

Impact of fieldwork timings on survey estimates (e.g. most important issue facing the country, economic situation, NHS)

Survey length: 38 min online, but few breakoff's (109 out of 1,449 starts)

# Transitioning to push-to-web: Considerations

## Sampling

Sample selection geared at maximising response i.e. no real opportunity for experiments

5,891 addresses out of 8,992 issued to push-to-web

- not approached face-to-face, 'fresh' sample
- interrupted fieldwork
- 'soft' refusals
- some deadwood: address not found
- non-contacts

# Transitioning to push-to-web: Considerations

## Sampling

Within household respondent selection

- Risk of fraud
- Within household correlation on key BES measures
- Consistency with face-to-face element

Approach:

- Pre-selected respondent where available
- Household selection in p2w: 1 person per household, next birthday

# Transitioning to push-to-web: Considerations

## Communications

Response rate to push-to-web by type of communication

Type of invite letter	Issued to push-to-web	Interviews	% of issued
Fresh sample	1508	503	33%
HH letter, not refusal	2019	619	31%
HH letter, refusal	2151	635	30%
Individual letter, not refusal	138	64	46%
Individual letter, refusal	75	30	40%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5891</b>	<b>1851</b>	<b>31%</b>

# Transitioning to push-to-web: Considerations

## Respondent incentives

From an incentive strategy tailored to the participant in the face-to-face research

Conditional incentives	Aged 18-24	Aged 25+
In London	£25	£20
Outside London	£25	£10

To one aimed at maximising response in push-to-web

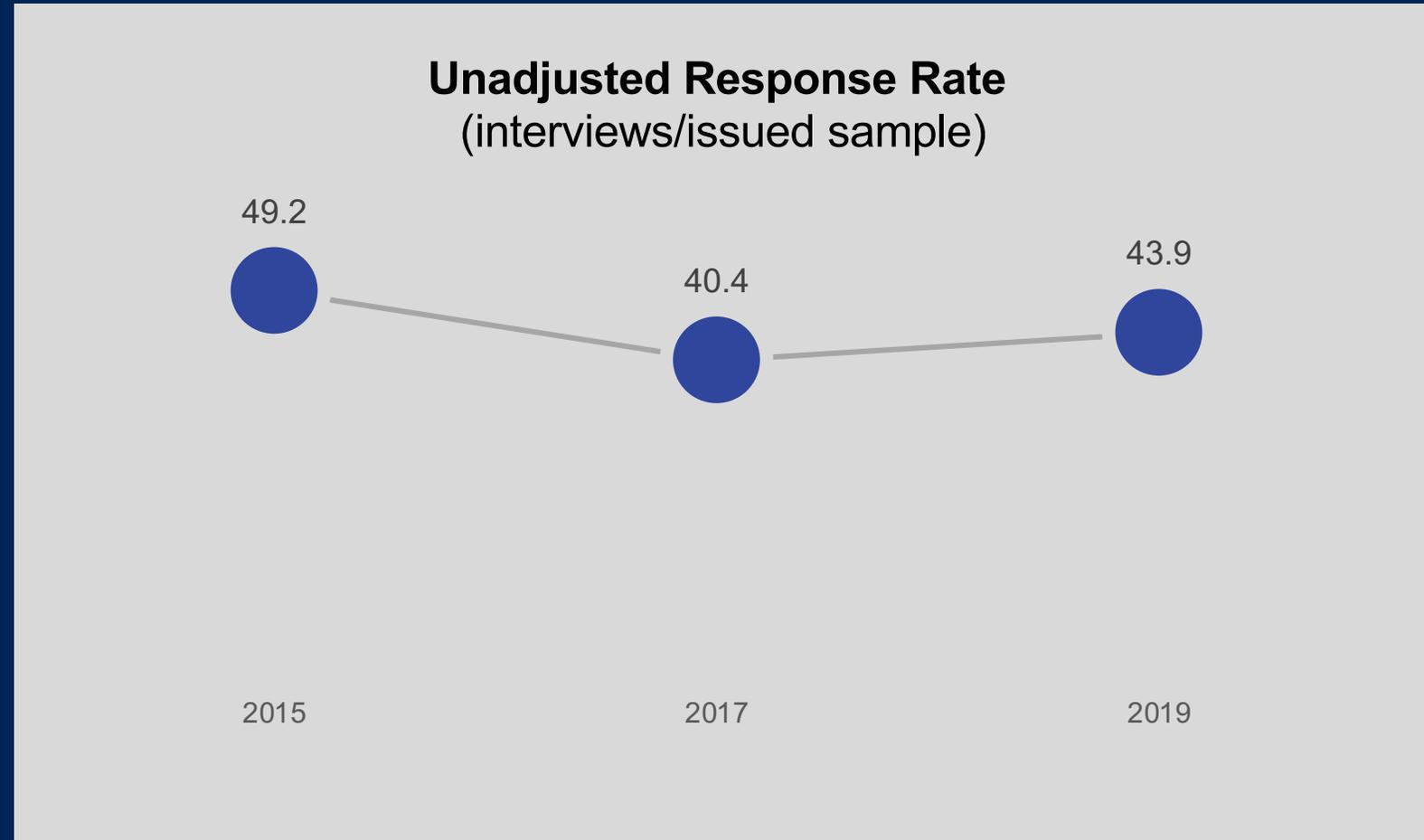
Mailing	Incentive
1	£5 unconditional, £25 conditional
2	£25 conditional
3	£25 conditional
4	£50 conditional

# Response rates

Higher than 2017 (snap election)

Not as high as 2015

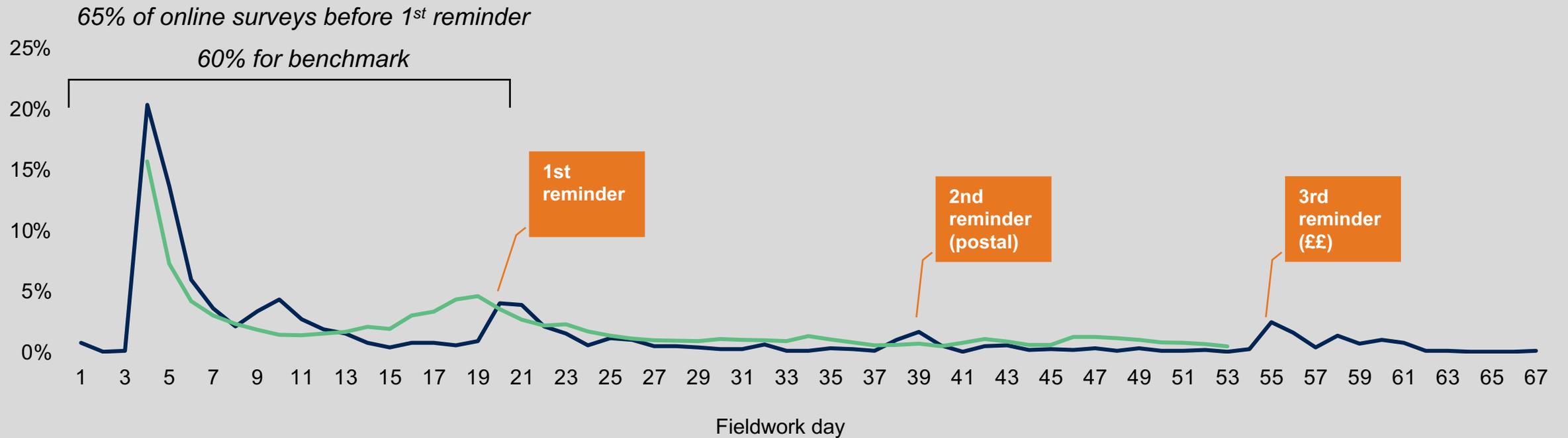
Difficulty of calculating adjusted response rates (AAPOR 1, 3) due to mixed mode approach



# Online response

Distribution of online surveys by day

— BES online surveys — Benchmark



# Sample profile

## Online

Younger, more degree holders, mortgage owners, no religion, working full time, slight skew towards women

## Postal

Older, retirees, below degree level, home owners, Christian, White British, skew towards women

# Survey estimates: GE2019 vote

Reported turnout is similar across modes.

	BES2019	F2F	Online	Postal	GE19 GB vote share
Prefer not to say/Don't know	<b>1%</b>	*	2%	2%	
Yes, voted	<b>81%</b>	82%	79%	81%	
No, did not vote	<b>18%</b>	18%	19%	17%	

Selection weights applied

# Survey estimates: GE2019 vote

Reported turnout is similar across modes.

Vote shares are very close to actual GB-wide results, face-to-face data very close as well.

	BES2019	F2F	Online	Postal	GE19 GB vote share
Prefer not to say/Don't know	1%	0%	2%	2%	
Yes, voted	81%	82%	79%	81%	
No, did not vote	18%	18%	19%	17%	
Prefer not to say/Don't know	6%	4%			
Labour Party	30%	30%			33%
Conservative Party	43%	42%			45%
Liberal Democrats	12%	13%			12%
Scottish National Party	4%	4%			4%
Plaid Cymru	0%	1%			0%
Green Party	3%	3%			3%
Brexit Party	1%	1%			2%
Other/Independent	0%	0%			1%

Selection weights applied

# Survey estimates: GE2019 vote

Reported turnout is similar across modes.

Conservatives underrepresented in online sample, overrepresented in postal sample.

Labour and LibDems are underrepresented in postal sample.

	BES2019	F2F	Online	Postal	GE19 GB vote share
Prefer not to say/Don't know	1%	0%	3%	1%	
Yes, voted	81%	82%	79%	81%	
No, did not vote	18%	18%	19%	17%	
Prefer not to say/Don't know	6%	4%	9%	7%	
Labour Party	30%	30%	30%	23%	33%
Conservative Party	43%	42%	39%	55%	45%
Liberal Democrats	12%	13%	12%	8%	12%
Scottish National Party	4%	4%	4%	3%	4%
Plaid Cymru	0%	1%	0%	-	0%
Green Party	3%	3%	3%	2%	3%
Brexit Party	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%
Other/Independent	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%

Selection weights applied

# Key learnings

- ▶ Give careful consideration to questionnaire: length, non-response
- ▶ Sample approached by interviewers during the face-to-face stage wasn't more engaged than the fresh sample, apart from the few identified that were already keen to take part; but interaction not designed to increase p2w response
- ▶ Samples tend to skew as expected, but final sample profile and estimates look encouraging. More work to be done.
- ▶ Inclusion of postal is essential for a balanced sample
- ▶ It is a good time for push-to-web

# THANK YOU.

**For more information, please contact:**

**Alex Bogdan**

[alex.bogdan@ipsos.com](mailto:alex.bogdan@ipsos.com)

**Keiran Pedley**

**Richard Glendinning**

**Sam Clemens**

**Tania Borges**

**Kevin Pickering**

# Achieved sample profile: region

Regional profiles were fairly balanced, across the three modes, but the online sample was skewed towards London and the South East, in part driven by the profile of the issued sample.

Postal sample was skewed towards South East.

	BES2019	F2F	Online	Postal	Population profile*
East Midlands	7%	7%	7%	8%	7%
Eastern	9%	9%	8%	8%	10%
London	12%	10%	17%	11%	14%
North East	5%	6%	3%	4%	4%
North West	12%	13%	11%	11%	11%
Scotland	9%	11%	8%	7%	9%
South East	14%	11%	17%	17%	14%
South West	8%	7%	10%	10%	9%
Wales	5%	5%	5%	6%	5%
West Midlands	9%	9%	8%	8%	9%
Yorkshire & Humber	10%	12%	6%	10%	8%

\*Source: ONS Mid-year estimates

Selection weights applied

# Achieved sample: age and gender

Online and postal samples underrepresented men.

Higher non-response on age in both online and postal samples. Age profiles are younger online and older in postal sample.

	BES2019	F2F	Online	Postal	Population profile*
Male	<b>47%</b>	48%	45%	43%	49%
Female	<b>52%</b>	51%	52%	56%	51%
In another way	<b>0%</b>	0%	0%	-	
Prefer not to say/no answer	<b>1%</b>	0%	2%	1%	
Refusal/No answer	<b>5%</b>	1%	11%	5%	
18-24	<b>8%</b>	8%	9%	4%	11%
25-34	<b>14%</b>	12%	18%	6%	17%
35-44	<b>14%</b>	13%	16%	9%	16%
45-54	<b>18%</b>	18%	19%	17%	17%
55-64	<b>17%</b>	18%	16%	20%	15%
65-74	<b>15%</b>	17%	9%	23%	13%
75+	<b>10%</b>	12%	3%	18%	11%

\*Source: ONS Mid-year estimates

Selection weights applied

# Sample profile: other key demographics

Higher number of graduates online, higher levels of qualifications below degree level amongst postal respondents.

Higher non-response on household income in face-to-face and online data. Lower reported incomes by postal sample.

	BES2019	F2F	Online	Postal
Prefer not to say/No answer	1%	-	-	7%
With qualifications	83%	80%	88%	81%
Degree	32%	32%	38%	21%
Below degree	49%	49%	46%	60%
Refuse/Don't know	3%	0%	5%	
No qualifications	16%	19%	12%	12%
Don't know/Prefer not to say	20%	19%	26%	4%
Under £5,200	2%	3%	1%	2%
£5,200 - £15,599	11%	12%	6%	20%
£15,600 - £25,999	14%	14%	11%	25%
£26,000 - 36,399	14%	12%	14%	17%
£36,400 - £46,799	11%	11%	10%	12%
£46,800 - £74,999	16%	15%	16%	16%
£75,000 - £149,999	11%	11%	12%	7%
£150,000 or more	3%	3%	4%	4%

# Sample profile: other key demographics

Much higher levels of home owners on mortgage among online respondents.

Online sample includes more respondents reporting no religion.

	BES2019	F2F	Online	Postal
Don't know/No answer	1%	0%	3%	1%
Own home outright	36%	40%	27%	47%
Own home on mortgage	34%	31%	41%	24%
Rented from local authority	7%	8%	6%	10%
Rented from private landlord	13%	12%	15%	11%
It belongs to a Housing Association	6%	7%	5%	5%
Other	3%	3%	3%	2%
Prefer not to say/No answer	1%	0%	1%	4%
No religion	50%	46%	62%	29%
Christian	42%	45%	30%	62%
Non-christian	6%	6%	7%	5%
Other	2%	2%	1%	-

# Sample profile: other key demographics

Higher proportion of ethnic minorities in face-to-face and online samples.

Online sample includes more full time employees, postal sample includes more retirees.

	BES2019	F2F	Online	Postal
White British	85%	85%	81%	90%
BAME	14%	14%	16%	9%
Prefer not to say/No answer	1%	0%	2%	0%
No answer	*	-	-	1%
Working full time - employee	40%	36%	49%	29%
Working full time - self-employed	6%	6%	6%	5%
Working part time - employee	11%	11%	12%	11%
Working part time - self-employed	3%	3%	3%	2%
Unemployed and actively seeking work	2%	2%	2%	2%
On a government sponsored training scheme	-	-	-	-
A full time student or pupil	4%	3%	5%	2%
Looking after the family or home	4%	5%	4%	4%
Not working because temporarily sick or injured	*	0%	1%	0%
Not working because long-term sick or disabled	3%	3%	2%	4%
Retired from paid work	25%	30%	13%	38%
None of these	2%	1%	3%	1%