

British Election Study Data

Dr Jonathan Mellon

Co-Director of the British Election Study

University of Manchester

What is the British Election Study (BES)?

- Series of election studies running at every British election since 1964
 - Covers Great Britain (not Northern Ireland)
- Our team has run the BES since 2014
 - The 2019-2023 BES Study: Voters and the British Political System in the Context of Brexit
 - Funded by ESRC, Universities of Manchester and Nuffield College, Oxford
 - Data collection to enable understanding of British politics during 2019-2023, continuing series of British Election Studies since 1963

Outline

- British Election Study face-to-face probability surveys
 - 2015 face-to-face probability survey (n=2987)
 - 2017 face-to-face probability survey (n=2194)
 - 2019 face-to-face probability survey (ongoing)
- British Election Study Internet Panel (BESIP) 2014-present
 - 19 wave Internet panel (n=~30,000 respondents per wave)
- Long-term BES data 1963-present
 - Post-election probability survey in every election from 1964-2019
 - Many inter-election panels

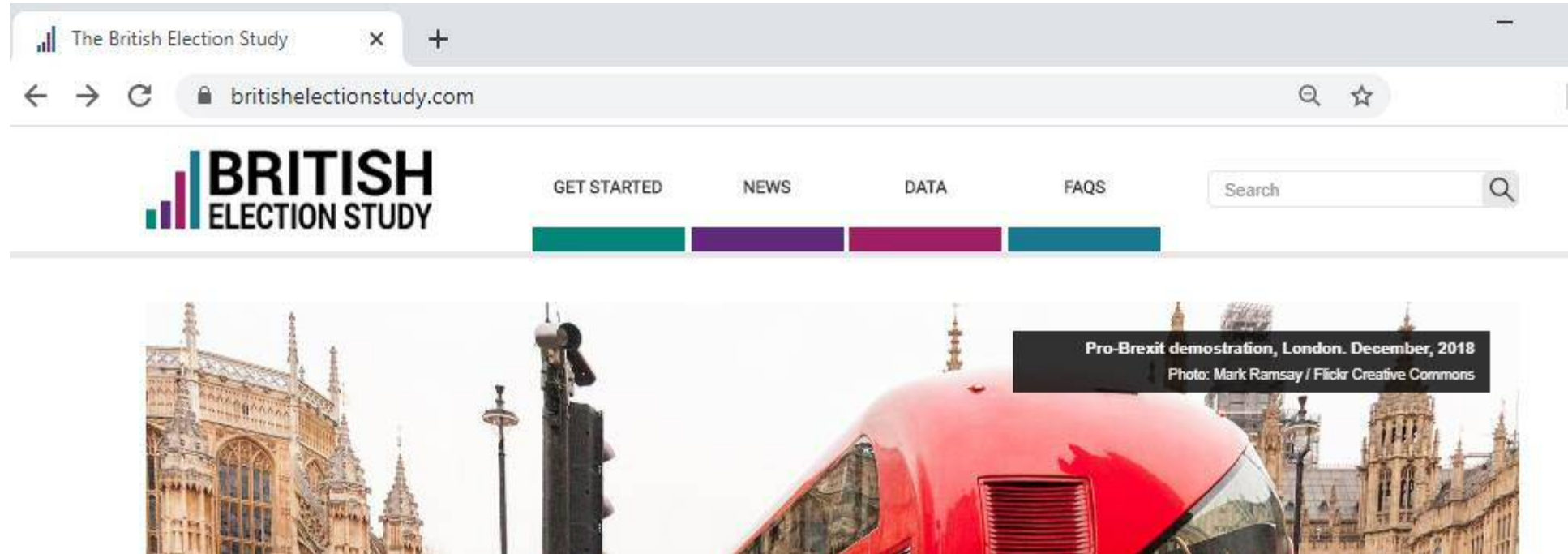
BES Data for users

- New and historical data at <https://www.britishelectionstudy.com/>
- Data download for all panel and post-election surveys
- Free data download requires simple sign-in
- Online data analysis tool (data playground)
- Final versions available through UK Data Service
 - End User License

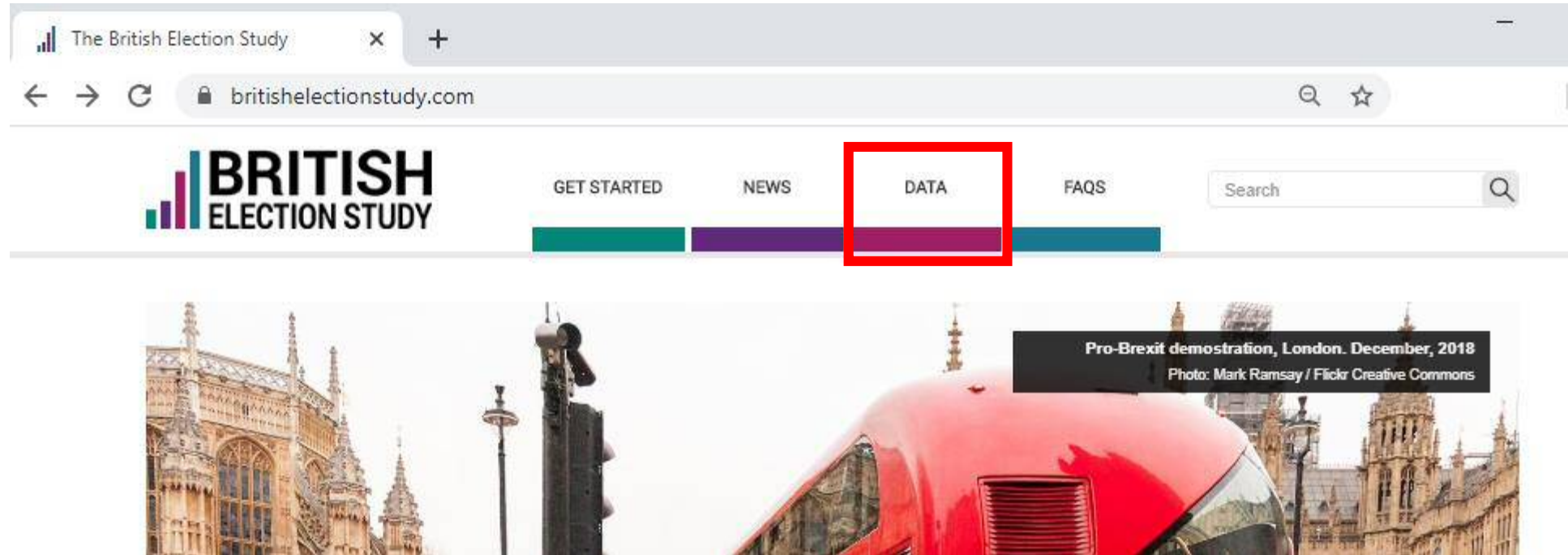
BES 2019-2023: general content

- Vote choice and party preferences
- Party and leader evaluations
- Political attitudes and preferences relating to Brexit
- Social and political identities
- Social and political values
- Evaluation of government policies and performance
- Support and trust of democratic government

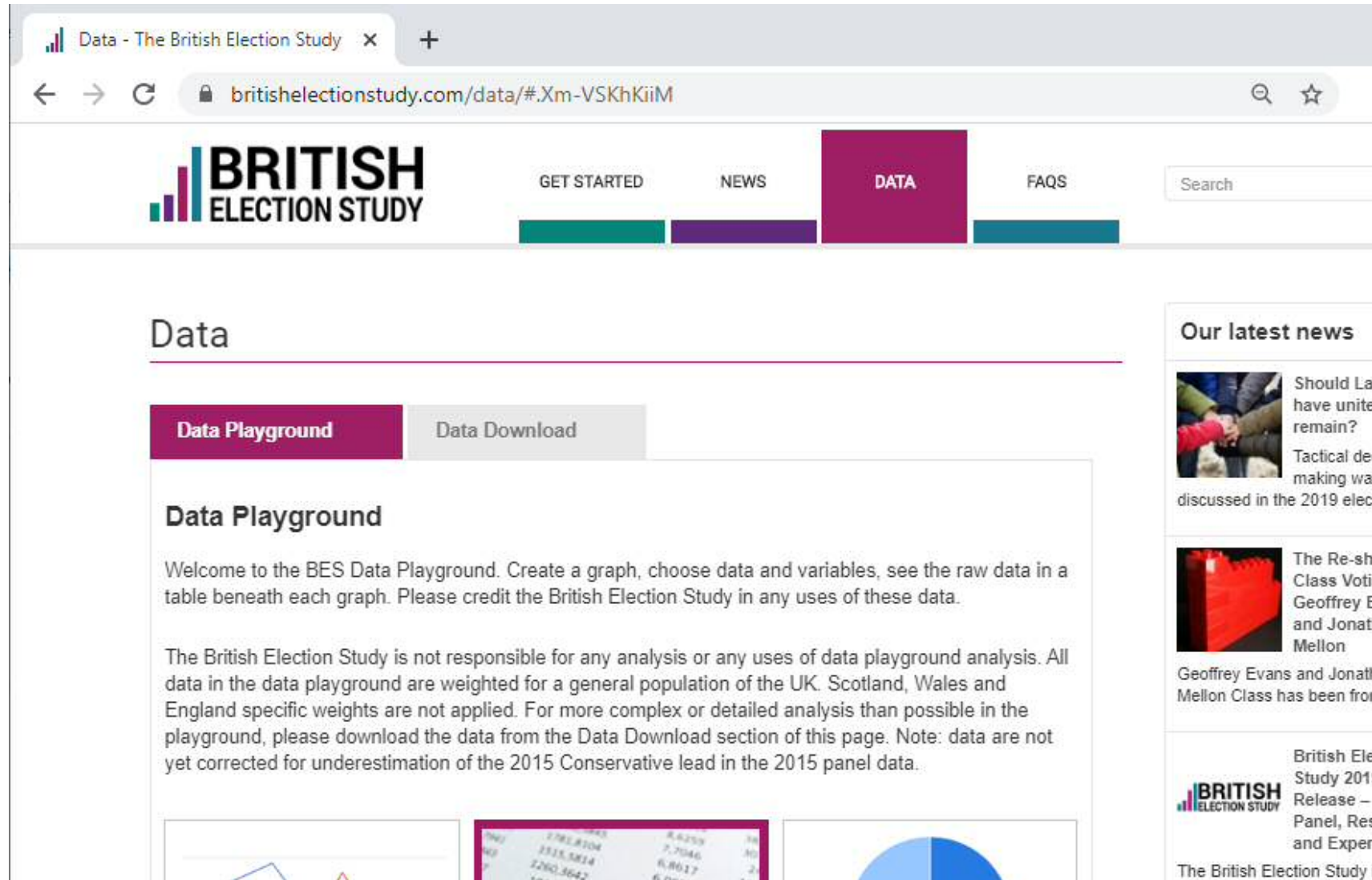
Downloading BES data



Downloading BES data



Downloading BES data



The screenshot shows the 'Data' section of the British Election Study website. The browser address bar shows the URL `britishelectionstudy.com/data/#.Xm-VSKhKiiM`. The navigation menu includes 'GET STARTED', 'NEWS', 'DATA' (highlighted), and 'FAQS'. A search bar is located to the right of the menu. The main heading is 'Data'. Below it, there are two tabs: 'Data Playground' (active) and 'Data Download'. The 'Data Playground' section contains a welcome message and a disclaimer. The 'Data Download' section is currently inactive. On the right side, there is a 'Our latest news' section with three articles. At the bottom, there are three small visual elements: a line graph, a table of data, and a pie chart.

Data - The British Election Study

← → ↻ 🔒 `britishelectionstudy.com/data/#.Xm-VSKhKiiM` 🔍 ☆

BRITISH ELECTION STUDY

GET STARTED NEWS **DATA** FAQS Search

Data


Data Playground Data Download


Data Playground


Welcome to the BES Data Playground. Create a graph, choose data and variables, see the raw data in a table beneath each graph. Please credit the British Election Study in any uses of these data.

The British Election Study is not responsible for any analysis or any uses of data playground analysis. All data in the data playground are weighted for a general population of the UK. Scotland, Wales and England specific weights are not applied. For more complex or detailed analysis than possible in the playground, please download the data from the Data Download section of this page. Note: data are not yet corrected for underestimation of the 2015 Conservative lead in the 2015 panel data.

Our latest news

 Should Labour have united to remain? Tactical decisions making was discussed in the 2019 election

 The Re-shaping Class Vote: Geoffrey Evans and Jonathan Mellon
Geoffrey Evans and Jonathan Mellon Class has been from

 British Election Study 2015: Release – Panel, Residual and Expert
The British Election Study

| Variable | Value |
|-----------|--------|
| 1781.8104 | 8.4259 |
| 2315.8814 | 7.7046 |
| 1260.3642 | 6.8017 |

Downloading BES data

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL `britishelectionstudy.com/data/#.Xm-VSKhKiiM`. The page features a navigation bar with the logo and links for GET STARTED, NEWS, DATA (highlighted), and FAQs, along with a search bar. The main content area is titled 'Data' and contains two buttons: 'Data Playground' and 'Data Download', with the latter highlighted by a red rectangle. Below these buttons, the 'Data Playground' section provides a welcome message and a disclaimer. The right sidebar, titled 'Our latest news', contains three news items with accompanying images and text.

BRITISH ELECTION STUDY

GET STARTED NEWS **DATA** FAQs

Search

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Data Playground **Data Download**


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The British Election Study i

Downloading BES data

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Data download

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All data listed here can be freely downloaded. By downloading the data you agree to the [terms and conditions of use](#).

Please cite the relevant information in all uses and publications.

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BES face-to-face probability surveys

- Approx. 3,000 respondents sampled randomly by address across 300 constituencies
- 2019 survey currently underway
- Validated vote
- Includes many items asked since 1964
- Includes CSES module (for comparative election analysis)

Registration



You need to [log in](#) to [download](#) certain BES files.

Register a free account below or [sign in](#).

Username

Email

First Name

Last Name

Main reason for using BES data

☐

I have [read](#) and accept the BES [terms and conditions of data use](#).

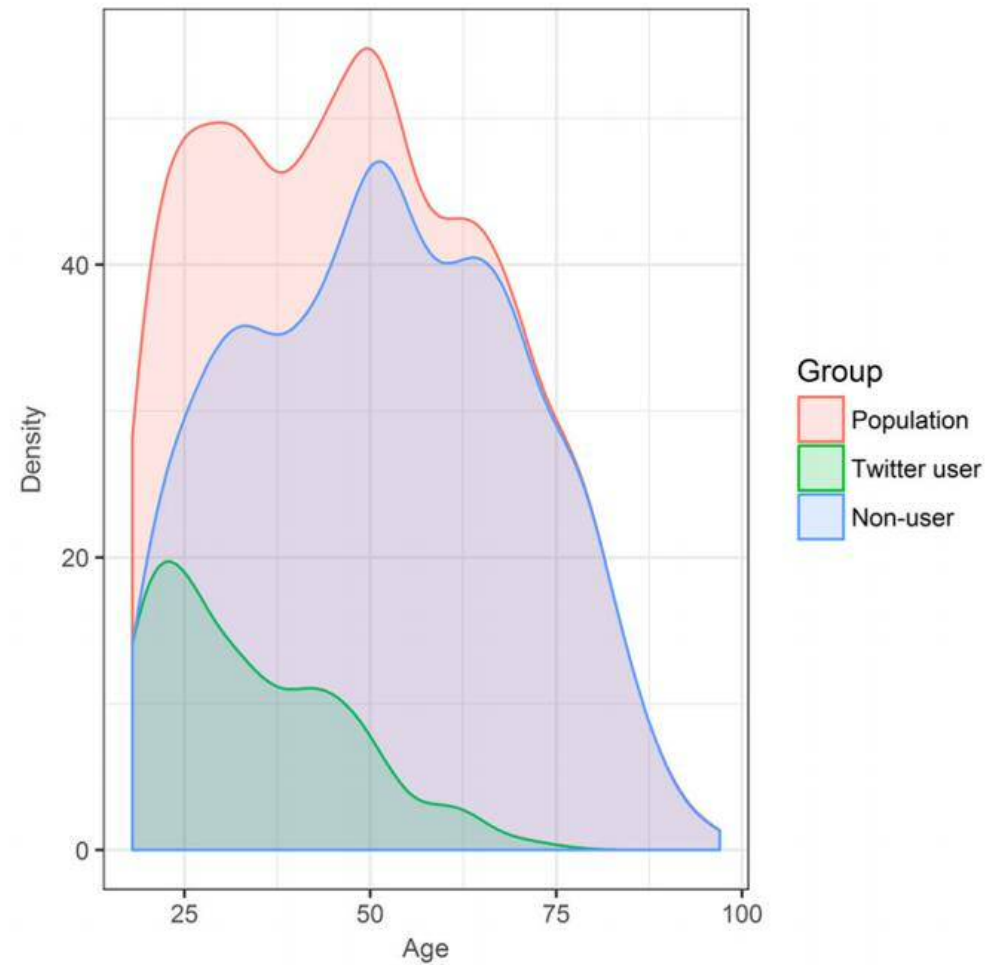
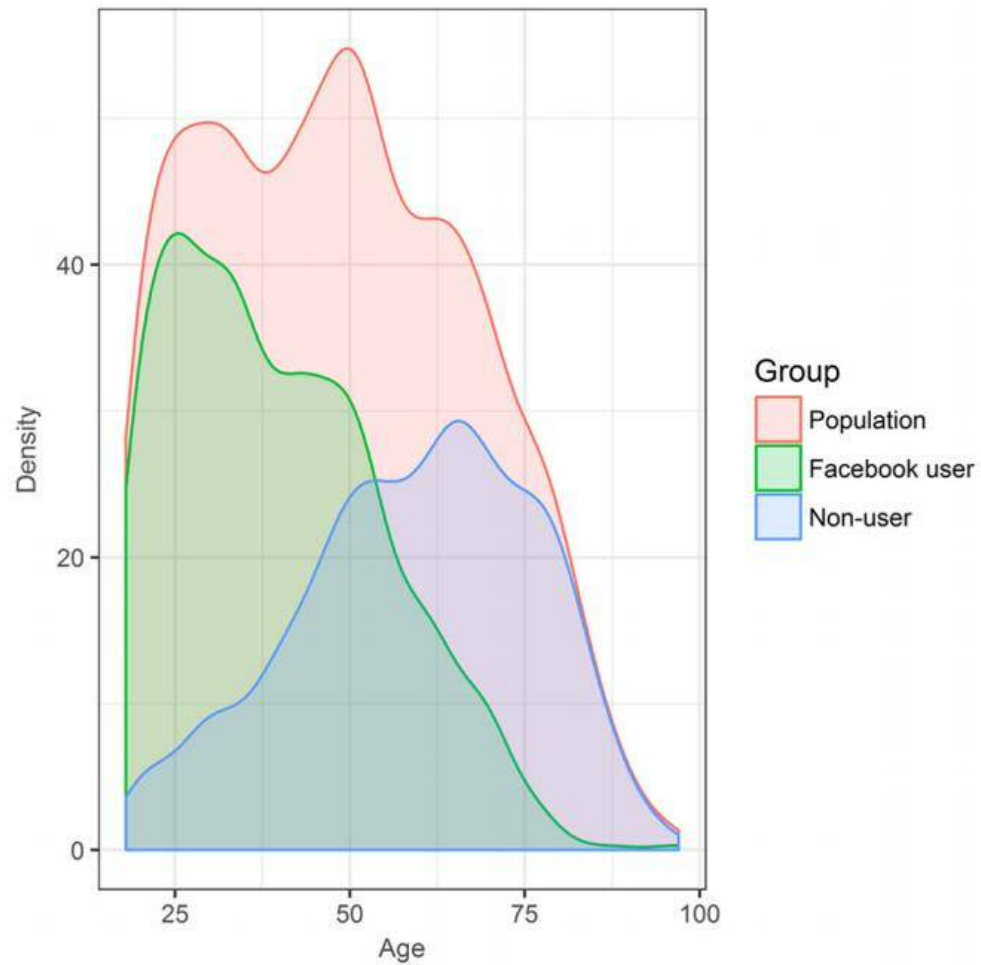
Registration confirmation will be emailed to you.

Register

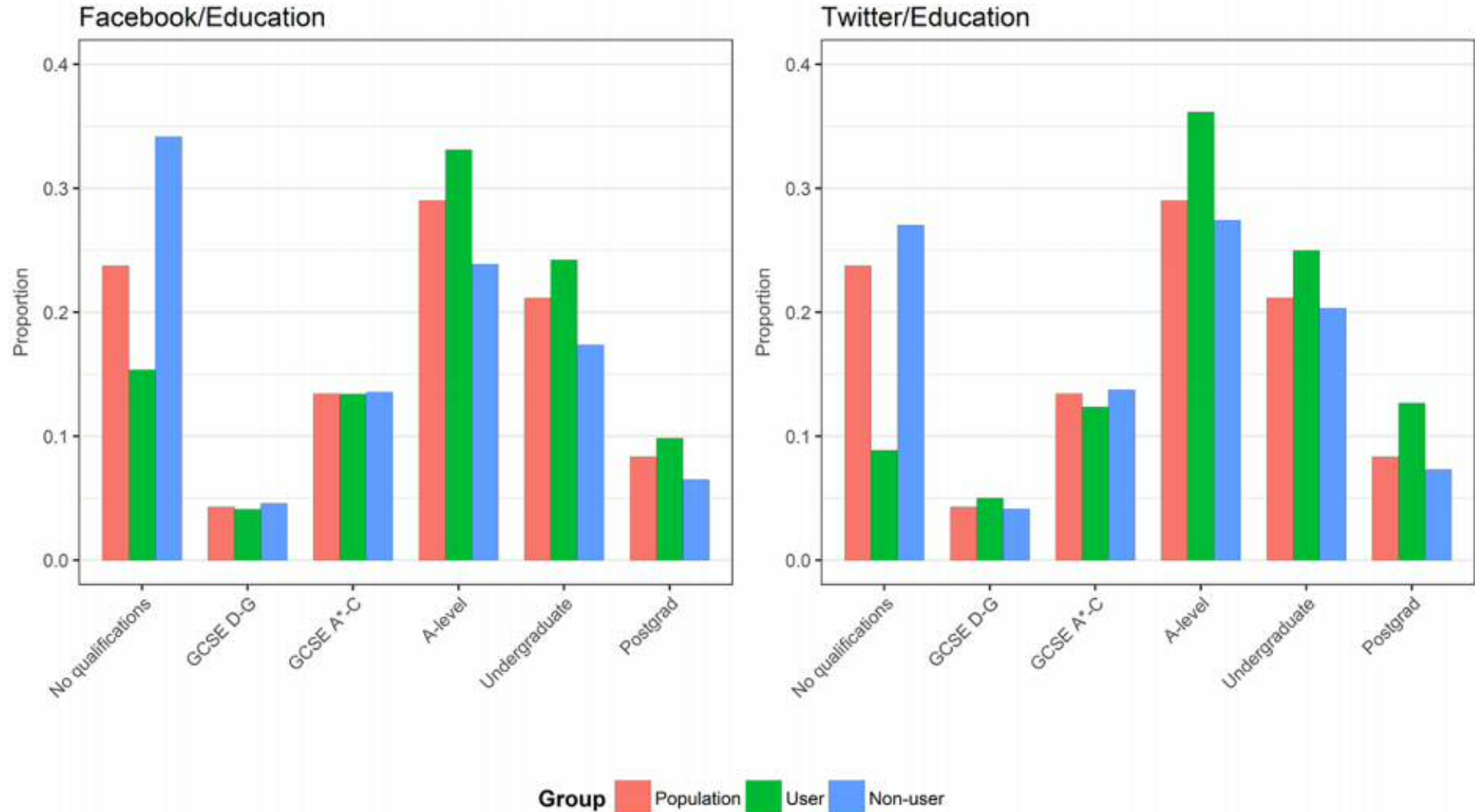
Example: Is social media representative of real life?

- Increasing numbers of social science papers used Twitter and Facebook data to study political and social phenomena
- But are findings from these data likely to be representative?
- We can use the BES face-to-face data to examine this question
- Mellon and Prosser, 2017, “Twitter and Facebook are not representative of the general population: Political attitudes and demographics of British social media users” *Research & Politics*

Answer: Not in terms of age



Answer: Not in terms of education



Conclusions about social media

- Twitter and Facebook data are not at all representative of the British public
- But, surprisingly, once you correct for the age, gender and education imbalance, they are reasonably representative in terms of party choice and ideology.

BES Internet Panel (BESIP)

- Current panel has 19 waves (since 2014)
- ~30,000 respondents per wave
- Funding for 3 more waves
- Innovation module: experimental content & user proposals
 - Users can apply to field questions at britishelectionstudy.com
- Future potential data linkage:
 - Facebook data (through Social Science One)
 - Twitter data (twitter API)
 - TV and newspaper content (using linked BBC balance tracking data and factiva)

BES Internet Panel (BESIP)

- Advantages:
 - Long-running panel with respondents re-interviewed at politically relevant times
 - Large samples for each wave
 - Includes pre-election, rolling campaign and post-election waves around each election
 - Limited recall bias
 - Very wide range of questions asked
- Disadvantages:
 - Not a probability sample. Weighting helps to correct for this, but is not a panacea.

Downloading BESIP

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Downloading BESIP

Wave 19 of the 2014-2023 British Election Study Internet Panel

December 2019 - December 2019 N = 32,177 Mode: Online survey

December 2019 (post-2019 election) wave of the 2014-2023 British Election Study Internet Panel.

Fieldhouse, E., J. Green, G. Evans, J. Mellon & C. Prosser (2020) British Election Study Internet Panel Wave 19.

 [DOWNLOAD](#)

British Election Study Combined Wave 1-19 Internet Panel

February 2014 - December 2019 N = 97,158 Mode: Online survey

A panel dataset including waves 1-19 of the BES Internet Panel.

Fieldhouse, E., J. Green, G. Evans, J. Mellon & C. Prosser (2020) British Election Study Internet Panel Waves 1-19.

 [DOWNLOAD](#)

British Election Study Combined Wave 1-19 Internet Panel open ended response data

February 2014 - December 2019 N = 97,158 Mode: Online survey

A dataset containing the data from open ended response questions in waves 1-19 of the BES Internet Panel.

Fieldhouse, E., J. Green, G. Evans, J. Mellon & C. Prosser (2020) British Election Study Internet Panel Waves 1-19.

 [DOWNLOAD](#)

BESIP election waves

- Elections are covered by a pre, campaign and post-election wave of the Internet panel
- Pre-election wave:
 - Baseline attitudes
 - Measuring characteristics that do not change in short term
- Rolling thunder campaign wave design:
 - Around 1,000 randomly-selected respondents interviewed per day. Allows tracking of attitudes over campaign
 - Focus on variables we expect to be affected by the campaign
- Post-election wave:
 - Measuring dependent variables

Wave numbers
for elections

| | 2015 | 2016 (EU ref) | 2017 | 2019 |
|----------|------|------------------|------|------|
| Pre | 4 | 7 | 11 | 17 |
| Campaign | 5 | 8 | 12 | 18 |
| Post | 6 | 9 | 13 | 19 |

Weights

- BESIP is not a probability sample
- Weighting is therefore especially important
- Use `wt_new_*` where possible
 - Includes corrections for political attention and education
- `wt_full_*` is still used for some earlier waves
- `wt_new_W6W13`: weight covering all respondents who took wave 6 and wave 13
- `wt_new_W6_W13`: weighting covering all respondents who took all of the waves 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13

Profile data

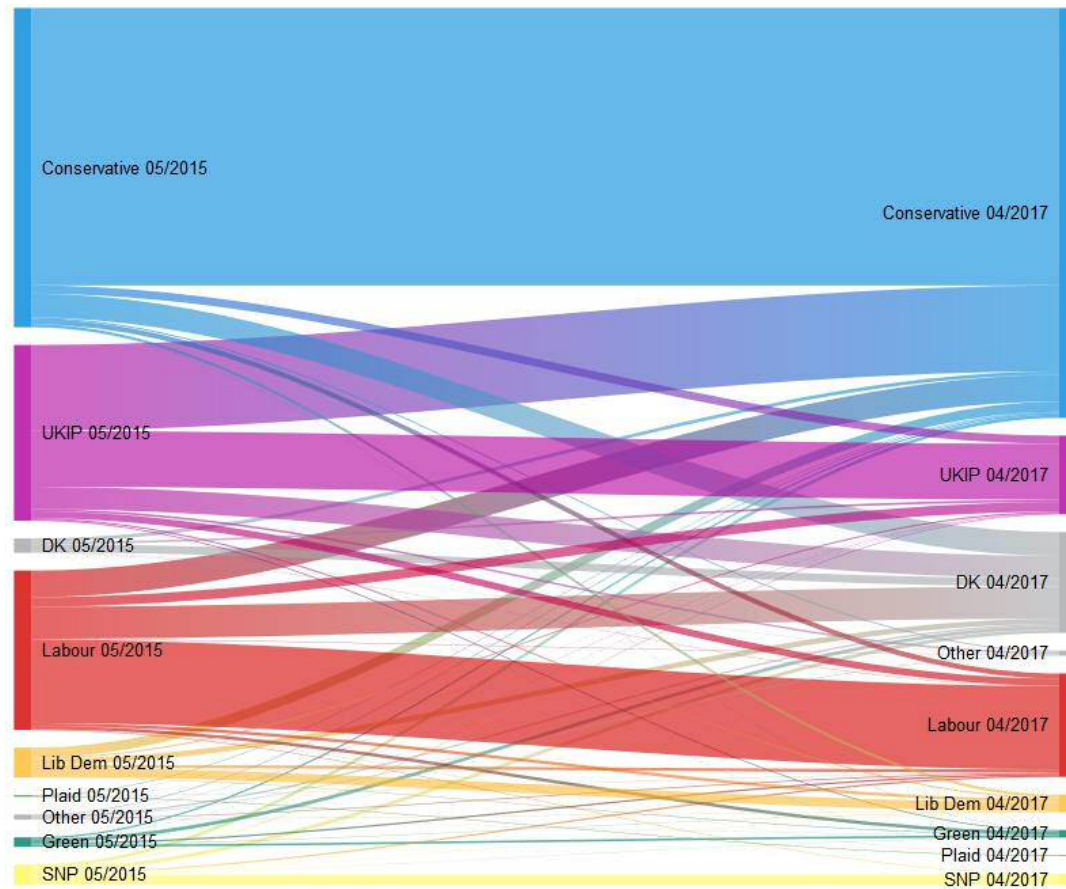
- YouGov collects demographic data about respondents every ~6 months
- Included in the BES file
- Currently profile_* but will change to p_* and be better documented in future releases

Understanding the 2017 campaign

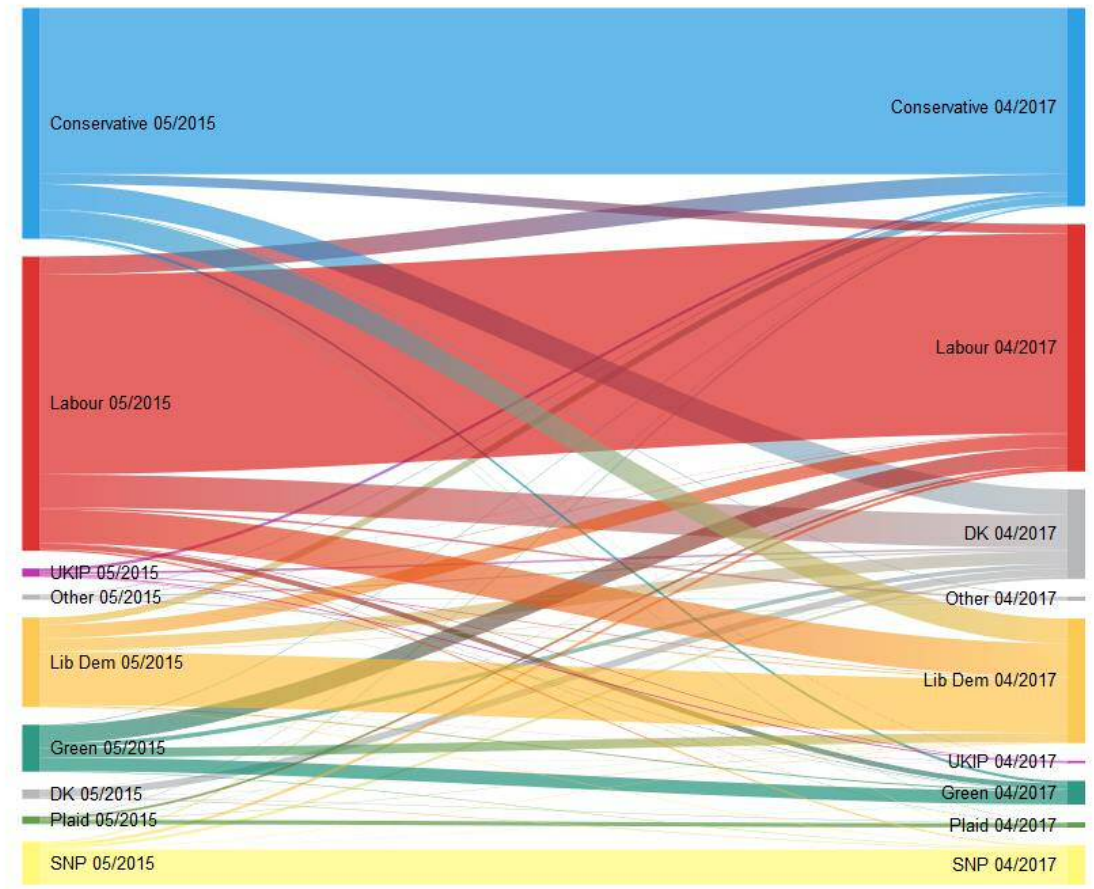
- 2017 election saw a large increase in the two party share of the vote
- What drove this change?
 - Brexit positions?
 - Perceptions of Corbyn and May?
- *Mellon et al., 2018, “Brexit or Corbyn? Campaign and Inter-Election Vote Switching in the 2017 UK General Election”, Parliamentary Affairs*

Vote flows 2015 (wave 6)- pre-2017 election (wave 11)

Leave

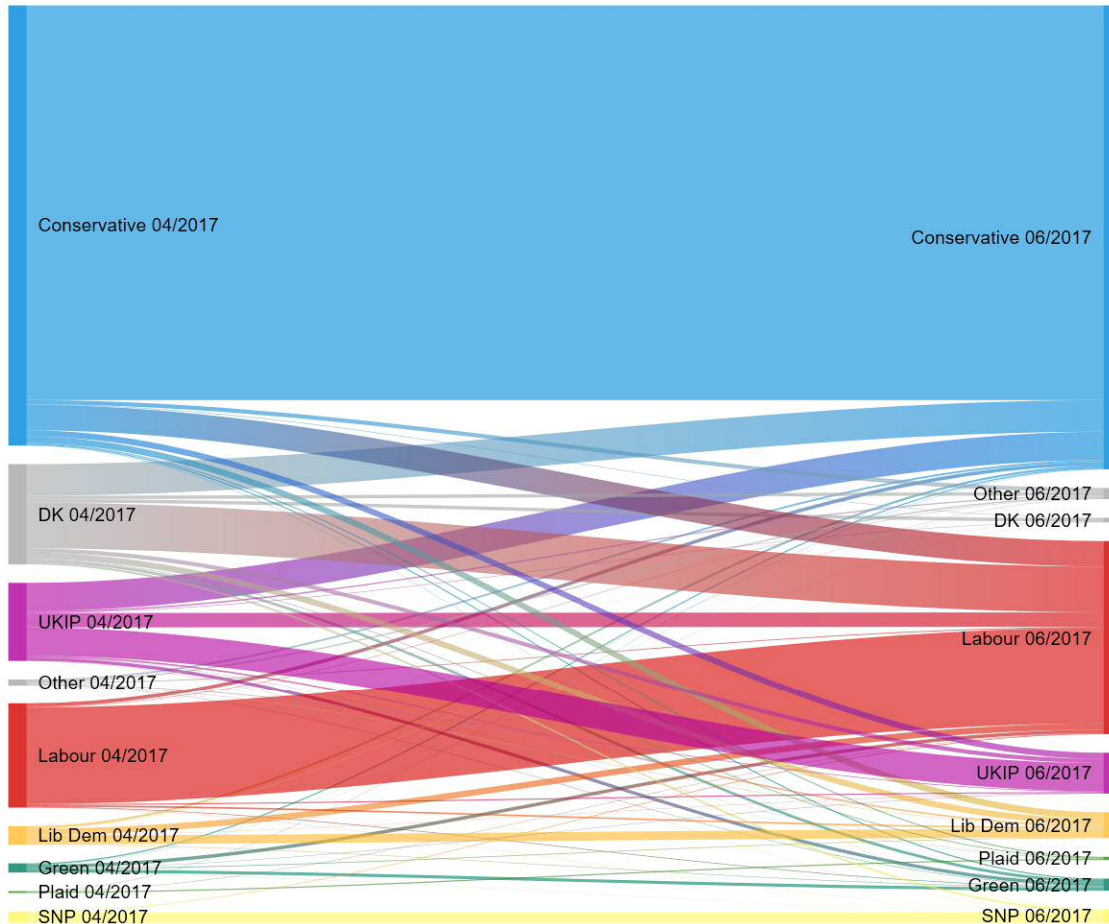


Remain

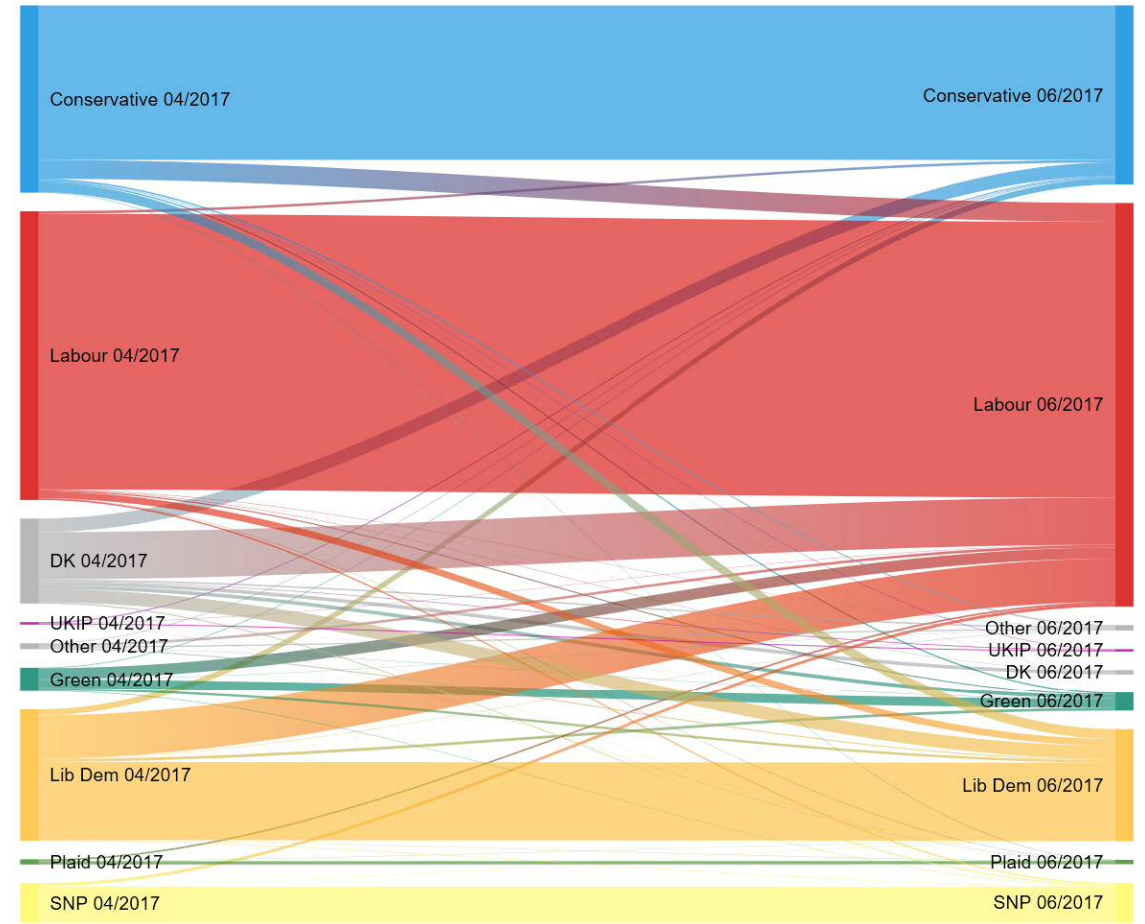


Vote flows pre-2017 election (wave 11) to post 2017 election (wave 13)

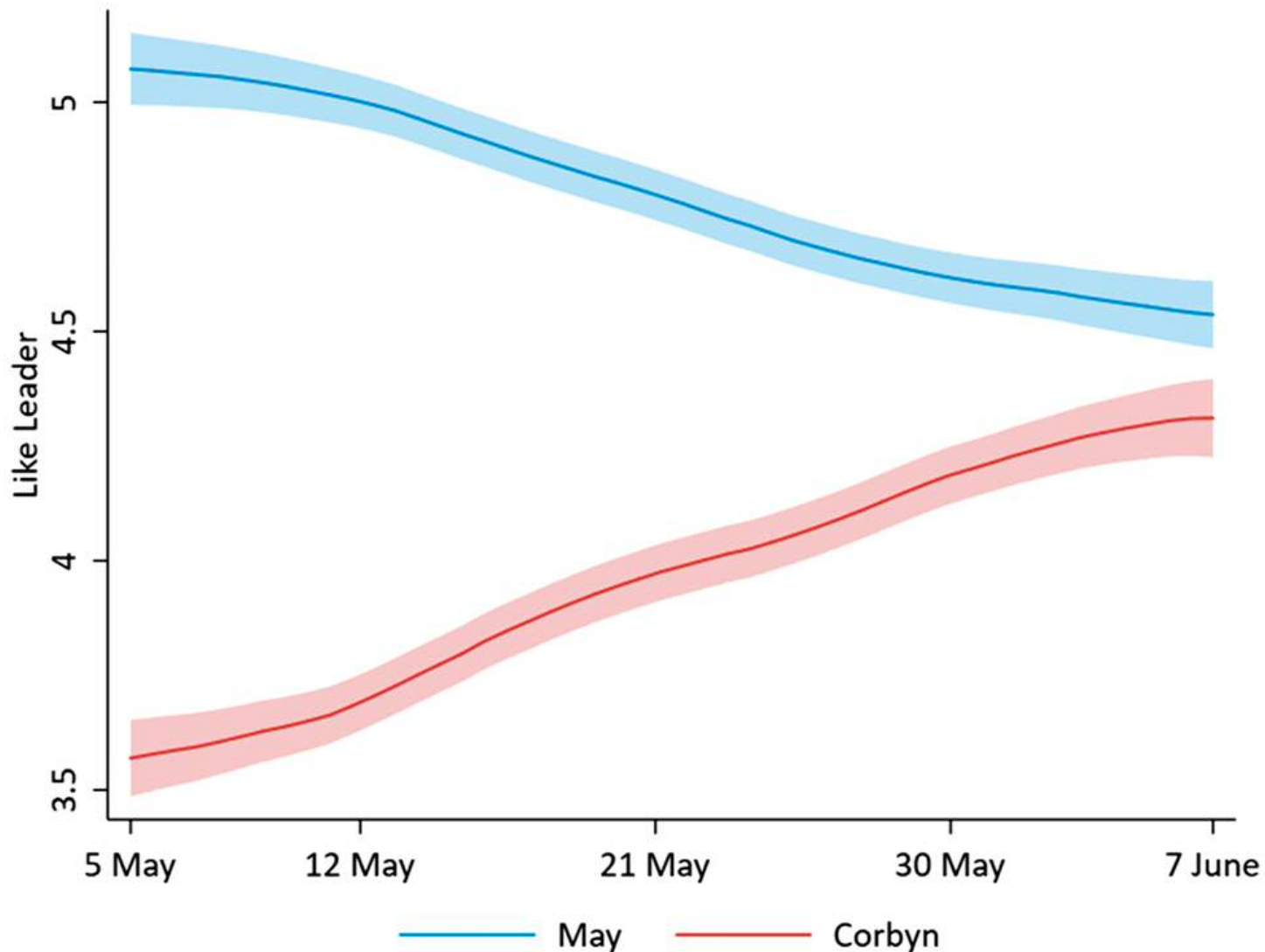
Leave



Remain



Leadership ratings across the 2017 campaign



Mellon et al., 2018, "Brexit or Corbyn? Campaign and Inter-Election Vote Switching in the 2017 UK General Election", Parliamentary Affairs

Understanding the 2017 election

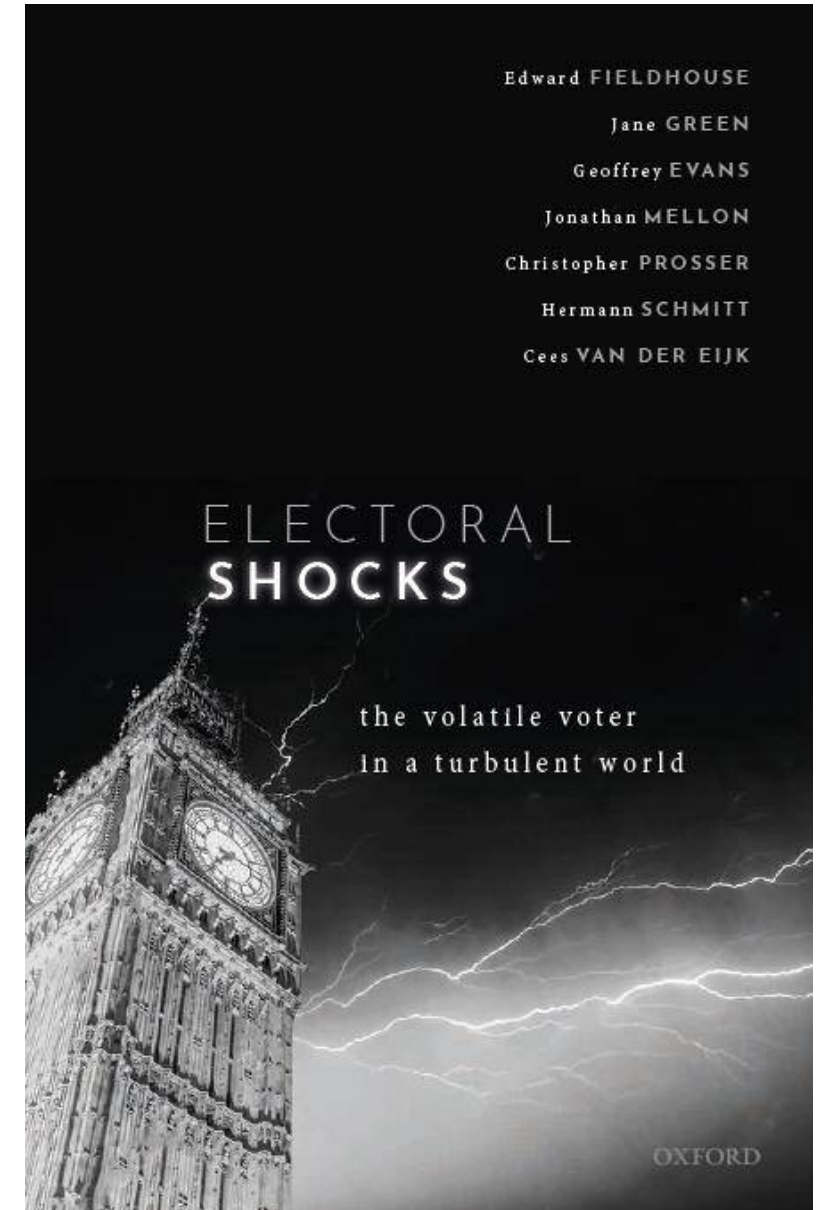
- 2017 saw polarization along Brexit lines but this took place before the campaign started
- The 2017 campaign saw Labour gain Leavers and Remainers in similar numbers
- This coincided with Corbyn and May's leadership ratings converging

Long-term analysis

- British Election Study has been running since 1963
- You can download the older panel studies or cross-sections through the BES website or UKDS
- Unfortunately, you will have to harmonize the questions manually which takes some work

Example: Long-term trends

- How have voters' attachments to parties changed over this time period?
- Do they switch parties more or less than they used to?
- We use the BES panels and cross-sections to examine these questions
- Fieldhouse et al. 2020, "Electoral Shocks: the volatile voter in a turbulent world". *Oxford University Press*, ch. 4



Proportion of voters with attachment to a party

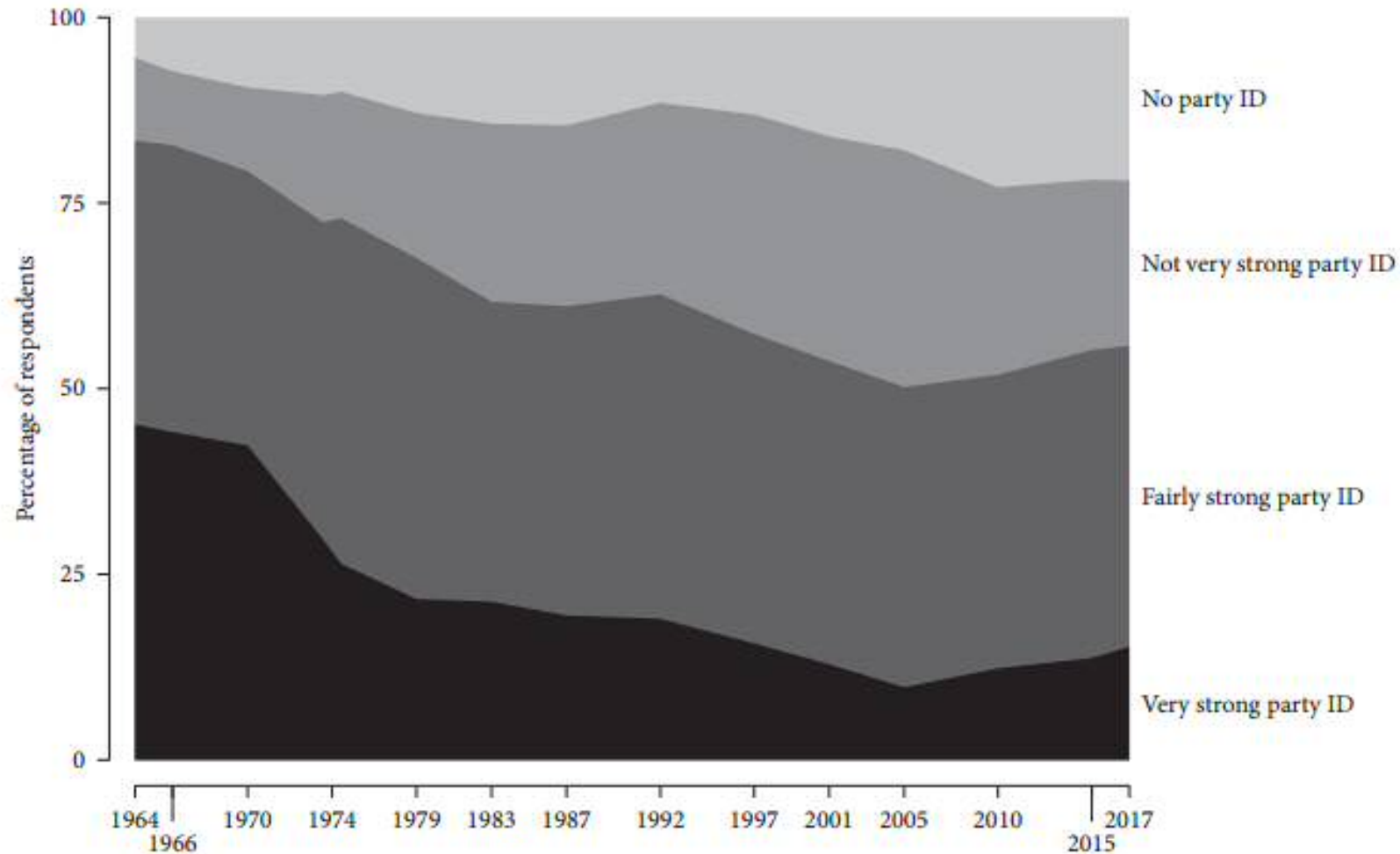


Figure 4.1 Declining levels of party identification and strength of identification

Proportion of voters switching parties between elections

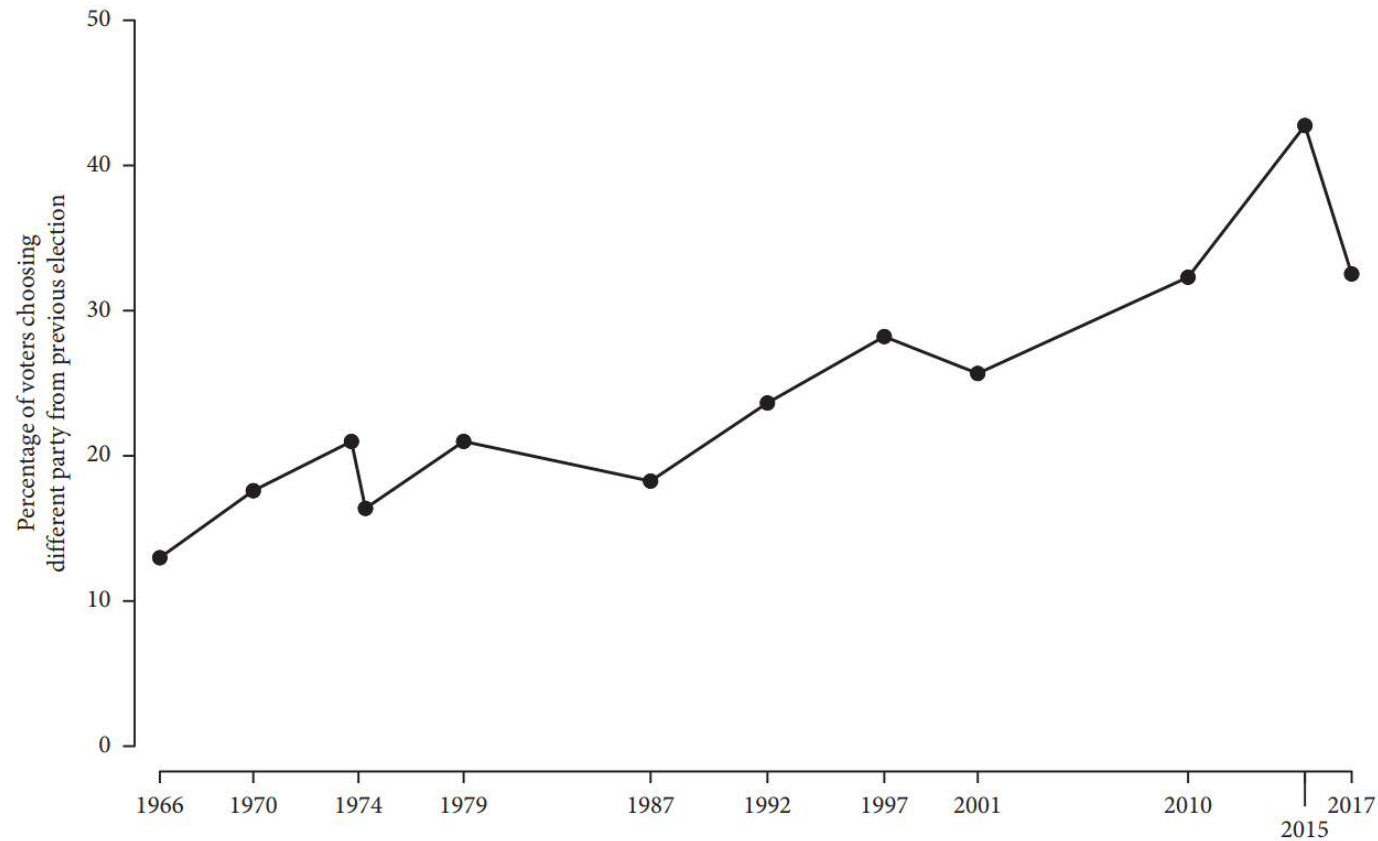


Figure 2.4 Individual-level voter volatility in Eleven pairs of elections between 1964 and 2017 in the British Election Study

Other UK Polisci data

- Scottish/Welsh/Northern Ireland election studies:
 - User license data from UKDS
 - Covers Scottish/Welsh/NI respondents after various Devolved Parliament elections, referendums and UK general elections
 - Various sampling methods
- British Social Attitudes Survey (BSA):
 - 1983-present
 - Cross-sectional probability sample data
 - Asks some politics questions as well as many other topics
 - User license data through UKDS
- EMBES:
 - Ethnic minority probability sample data
 - Open access through UKDS
 - Most recent data was 2010

BES linked data

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BES linked data

2019 BES Expert Survey

December 2019 - February 2020 N = 74 Mode: Online survey

The 2019 BES Expert Survey of Issue and Policy Positions of British Parties.

 [DOWNLOAD](#)

2014-19 BES Expert Survey Trendfile

April 2014 - December 2019 N = 303 Mode: Online survey

A combined dataset containing the 2014, 2015, 2017, and 2019 BES Expert Surveys

 [DOWNLOAD](#)

2019 BES Constituency Results with Census and Candidate Data

December 2019 - December 2019 N = 632 Mode: Linked data

2019 election results and contextual data. The data is also available as an [excel file](#).

Fieldhouse, E., J. Green., G. Evans., H. Schmitt, C. van der Eijk, J. Mellon & C. Prosser (2017) British Election Study 2019 Constituency Results file, version 1.0.

 [DOWNLOAD](#)
