

British Election Study 2005

Technical Report

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The survey series

The British Election Studies (BES) constitute the longest academic series of nationally representative probability sample surveys in this country. They have taken place immediately after every general election since 1964, giving a total of twelve so far. There have also been two non-election year surveys (in 1963 and 1969); a postal referendum study in 1975; additional or booster Scottish studies in 1974, 1979, 1992, 1997, 2001 and 2005 additional or booster Welsh boosters in 1979, 2001 and 2005; Northern Ireland Election Studies in 1992, 1998 and 2001; Campaign Studies in 1987, 1992, 1996-7, 2001 and 2005; Scottish and Welsh Referendum Studies in 1997; Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly Election Studies in 1999 and 2003; and panel studies including the 1992-1997 and 1997-2001 British Election Panel Studies. The 1997 study included an ethnic minority boost and a qualitative study of electoral volatility. The 2005 study has a survey modes comparison between face-to-face and internet surveys.

The BES series was originated by David Butler (Nuffield College, Oxford) and Donald Stokes (University of Michigan) who continued to direct the studies until 1970. The series then passed to Ivor Crewe, Bo Särilvik and James Alt at the University of Essex (later joined by David Robertson) who organised the two 1974 studies and the 1979 study. The 1983, 1987, 1992 and 1997 studies were directed by Anthony Heath (Jesus then Nuffield College, Oxford), Roger Jowell (*National Centre for Social Research* – known as SCPR until May 1999) and John Curtice (University of Liverpool then University of Strathclyde). From 1994, this collaboration was through the Centre for Research into Elections and Social Trends (CREST), an ESRC funded Research Centre, linking the *National Centre for Social Research* and Nuffield College, Oxford. In 1997 the BES team was joined by Pippa Norris (Harvard University). Responsibility for the 2001 and 2005 studies moved back to another team from the University of Essex, comprising David Sanders, Paul Whiteley, Harold Clarke and Marianne Stewart. The fieldwork and data preparation was carried out by the *National Centre for Social Research* (SCPR at that time) for the October 1974 election and between 1983 and 1997, then again in 2005. For publication of these studies see, for example, Butler and Stokes (1974); Särilvik and Crewe (1983); Heath, Jowell and Curtice (1985); Heath, Jowell and Curtice *et al.* (1991); Heath, Jowell and Curtice (1994); Evans and Norris (1999); Heath, Jowell and Curtice (2001); Clarke, Sanders, Stewart and Whiteley (2004); Whiteley, Stewart, Sanders and Clarke (2005); Sanders, Clarke, Stewart and Whiteley (2005); and Clarke, Sanders, Stewart and Whiteley (2006, forthcoming).

Nuffield College found the bulk of the funds for the fieldwork for the early Butler and Stokes surveys. The ESRC (formerly the Social Science Research Council) then became the major funding agency, wholly supporting the Essex surveys in the 1970s. The 1983 study was jointly funded by the ESRC, Pergamon Press and Jesus College, Oxford; the 1987 study by the ESRC, Pergamon Press and the Sainsbury Family Charitable Trusts; the 1992 and 1997 studies by the ESRC and the Gatsby Charitable Foundation, one of the Sainsbury Family Charitable Trusts, in 1997 together with the Commission for Racial Equality. The 2001 and 2005 surveys were again funded by the ESRC; in 2001 with support from the Electoral Commission.

1.2 The 2005 British Election Study

1.2.1 Overview

The 2005 BES comprised a series of linked studies.

- The British Election Study pre-election cross-section survey
- The British Election Study pre-election internet survey
- The Rolling Campaign Panel survey
- The British Election Study post-election panel and cross-section survey
- The British Election Study post-election internet survey
- The British Election Study post-election internet follow-up survey

This Technical Report covers:

- The British Election Study pre-election cross-section survey
- The British Election Study post-election panel and cross-section survey
- The British Election Study post-election internet follow-up survey

1.2.2 Pre-election face-to-face survey

This survey comprised a random sample of the adult population of Britain living in private households. It consisted of a 30-minute face-to-face computer-assisted personal interview (CAPI). The sample was drawn from the Postcode Address File, as it has been since 1997 (prior to that the sampling frame was the Electoral Register). There were both Scottish and Welsh boost samples, which are explained in more detail in Section 2.

1.2.3 Post-election face-to-face survey

The post-election survey followed as many respondents from the pre-election wave as was possible. In addition, a top-up sample of fresh respondents was added in order to maintain the sample size and reduce bias due to attrition.

There are therefore three types of respondents to the face-to-face surveys:

- Respondents only interviewed for the pre-election survey
- Respondents interviewed for both pre and post-election surveys
- Respondents only interviewed for the post-election survey

1.2.4 Post-election internet follow-up

This stage of the study followed up as many respondents from the post-election wave as was possible. The questionnaire was only available on the internet.

2 THE SAMPLE

2.1 The BES pre-election sample

2.1.1 Overview

The survey was designed to yield a representative sample of adults aged 18 or above living in private households in Britain (excluding the area north of the Caledonian Canal). Adults living in Northern Ireland were excluded from the study. The sample was drawn from the Postcode Address File, a list of addresses (or postal delivery points) compiled by the Post Office. For practical reasons, samples are confined to those living in private households. People living in institutions (though not in private households at such institutions) are excluded, as are households whose addresses are not on the Postcode Address File.

The sampling method involved a clustered multi-stage design, with three separate stages of selection.

In the first instance, 128 constituencies were sampled at random: 77 in England, 29 in Scotland and 22 in Wales, using stratification on marginality of election results, geographic regions and population density. (In Wales, percent Welsh-speakers was used instead of geographic region). Scottish and Welsh constituencies were over-sampled to achieve Scottish and Welsh boost samples. In England, marginal constituencies were slightly over-sampled.

Within each constituency, two wards were sampled at random, giving 256 sample points.

At each sample point (ward), addresses were selected with equal probability across the sample point. More addresses were selected in Scottish and Welsh sample points than in English ones (27 compared with 24) – again, in order to achieve Scottish and Welsh boost samples. Using random methods, the interviewer then selected one person for interview at each address.

2.1.2 Selection of constituencies

128 constituencies were sampled as follows:

First stratifier: marginality

Within each of England, Scotland and Wales, constituencies were divided into two strata: marginal and non-marginal. Marginal constituencies were defined as ones where the winning party was no more than 10% ahead of the second party at the 2001 election.

Second stratifier: England/Scotland: geographic; Wales: percent Welsh-speakers

Within each marginality band, constituencies were ordered by:

- In England: Government Office Region
- In Scotland: Parliamentary Electoral Region (Central Scotland, Glasgow, Highlands and Islands, Lothians, Mid Scotland and Fife, North East Scotland, South of Scotland, West of Scotland). Scotland north of the Caledonian Canal was excluded. As a result, six parliamentary constituencies containing postcode sectors north of the Caledonian Canal were removed from the sampling frame.¹
- In Wales: percent Welsh-speakers (obtained from the 2001 Census). Within each marginality band, cut-off points were drawn approximately one third and two thirds (in terms of percent Welsh-speakers) down the ordered list, to create three roughly equal size bands.

Third stratifier: population density

Within each of the bands thus created, constituencies were ordered by population density (the number of delivery points). For the Scotland constituencies the count of delivery points refers to the counts after expansion by the Multiple Occupancy Indicator (MOI).

Selection from the stratified bands

Using the ordered lists thus created, constituencies were drawn with probability proportionate to the number of delivery points in Scotland and Wales. (I.e. marginal constituencies were sampled with the same probability as non-marginal constituencies).

In England, the marginal constituencies were over-sampled, drawing 26 from these bands (compared with the 23-24 that might have otherwise been expected). Within each of the marginal and non-marginal bands, constituencies were sampled with probability proportionate to the number of delivery points.

The resulting constituency sample is as follows:

Table 2-1 Sampled constituency marginality by country

	England	Scotland	Wales	Total
Marginal	26	3	4	33
Non-Marginal	51	26	18	95
Total	77	29	22	128

This sampling implies an over-sampling of Scottish and Welsh constituencies, compared with English constituencies, in order to achieve Scottish and Welsh boost samples.

A list of sampled constituencies is given in Appendix F.

¹ Argyll & Bute; Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross; Inverness East, Nairn & Lochaber; Orkney & Shetland; Ross, Skye & Inverness West; and Western Isles.

2.1.3 Selection of wards

Within each selected constituency, two wards were drawn with probability proportionate to the number of delivery points.

2.1.4 Selection of addresses

Within each ward, addresses were drawn with equal probability across the whole ward using a random start and fixed sampling interval. From the total list of addresses drawn these were issued as followed:

The addresses were drawn as follows:

England: 24 addresses per ward

Scotland and Wales: 27 addresses per ward

This implies a further over-sampling of Scottish and Welsh addresses.

2.1.5 Selection of dwelling units

At each address, the interviewer enumerated the number of occupied dwelling units. In most cases, an address contains one dwelling unit, but where there were several, one was selected at random using a modified Kish grid: the interviewer listed all occupied dwelling units in flat number order or from bottom to top, and selected one using computer-generated random numbers (generated separately for each address). For details of this process see the Address Record Form and Project instructions in Appendix B.

Addresses which did not contain a private household with at least one person aged 18+ were deemed ineligible ('deadwood').

2.1.6 Selection of individuals

At each (selected) dwelling unit, the interviewer enumerated all eligible persons (people aged 18+ resident at the address). Where there were several, one was selected at random using a modified Kish grid: the interviewer listed all eligible persons in alphabetical order and selected one using computer-generated random numbers (generated separately for each address). For details of this process see the Address Record Form and Project instructions in Appendix B.

No substitution was allowed at any stage during the selection procedure.

2.2 The BES post-election wave sample

2.2.1 Overview

The post-election sample was made up of two components:

- The recontact sample: pre-election wave respondents who were willing and suitable to be recontacted.
- The top-up sample: a fresh sample of addresses in the same wards as the pre-election sample (see section 2.1.2–2.1.3).

2.2.2 Recontact sample

Out of the 3,589 respondents interviewed on the pre-election wave, 3,379 were included in the post-election wave, as follows:

Table 2-2 Number interviewed on pre-election wave issued for post-election wave, by country

	England	Scotland	Wales	Total
Interviewed on pre-election wave	2,014	933	642	3,589
Issued for post-election wave	1,878	894	607	3,379

2.2.3 Top-up sample

The top-up sample of addresses was selected using the same method as described in section 2.1 above. This was done at the same time as the initial pre-election wave sample. Dwelling units and individuals were selected at each address using the same procedures as set out in sections 2.1.5 and 2.1.6 above.

The addresses were drawn as follows:

England: 9 addresses per ward

Scotland: 10 addresses per ward

Wales: 11 addresses per ward

2.3 The BES post-election internet follow-up sample

The sample for the post-election internet follow-up comprised all of those people interviewed in the post-election survey who agreed to be recontacted for a possible follow-up survey. Out of the 4,161 respondents to the post-election wave, 3,907 agreed to be recontacted for this purpose as follows:

Table 2-3 **Number interviewed on post-election wave issued for post-election internet follow-up, by country**

	England	Scotland	Wales	Total
Interviewed on post-election wave	2369	1019	773	4,161
Issued for post-election internet follow-up	2219	963	725	3,907

3 DATA COLLECTION AND RESPONSE

3.1 Piloting

Both the pre-election wave and post-election wave questionnaires were piloted, the former in December 2004 and the latter in March 2005. The purpose of the pilots was two-fold, firstly to test the questions and secondly to test the CAPI program. Respondents were selected by quota sampling methods to include men and women in manual and non-manual jobs across a range of ages. The pilot interviewers were debriefed by members of the research team.

3.2 Main stage fieldwork – pre-election wave

The fieldwork for the survey was conducted by the *National Centre for Social Research*. Interviewing began in February 2005 and was complete by 12 April 2005.

An advance letter was sent to ‘the resident’ at all selected addresses. It briefly described the purpose of the survey and the coverage of the questionnaire, and asked for co-operation when the interviewer called. It contained a book of six first class stamps and promised a £5 High Street gift voucher for taking part (£10 in London). The interviewers had extra copies of the advance letter for use on the doorstep in convincing selected people to take part. The advance letters are given in Appendix A.

Fieldwork was conducted by 252 interviewers drawn from NatCen’s regular panel. Interviewers attended half-day briefing conferences conducted by the researchers, to familiarise them with the selection procedures and questionnaires.

The names of some potential respondents who had been difficult to find at home, or had refused or broken appointments, were re-issued to interviewers (in most cases interviewers who had not made the initial call) during the later phases of fieldwork.

The survey consisted of a face-to-face computer-assisted personal interview. The questionnaire was implemented using the Blaise version 4 software. A documentation of the CAPI program is given in Appendix C.

The mean interview length was 35 minutes². The median interview length was 33 minutes.

3.3 Response – pre-election wave

All PAF samples contain a proportion of addresses which are ineligible (‘deadwood’), such as unoccupied and non-residential addresses. These are always excluded from the base before response rates are calculated.

² Calculated omitting outliers of more than 100 minutes.

Table 3-1 Pre-election wave response rates

	N	%
Addresses issued	6,450	
Out of scope	515	
Eligible	5,935	100.0
Interview achieved	3,589	60.5
Interview not achieved	2,346	39.5
Refused ³	1,679	28.3
Not contacted ⁴	382	6.4
Other unproductive	285	4.8

A more detailed breakdown of response is given in Appendix D.

3.4 Main stage fieldwork – post-election wave

3.4.1 Face-to-face interview

The fieldwork for the survey was conducted by the *National Centre for Social Research*. Interviewing began immediately after the general election, on 6 May 2005 and was complete by 4 July 2005. Respondents in the recontact sample who had moved house between the pre-election and post-election wave were followed, where possible, to their new address.

All recontact sample members were sent a personally addressed advance letter containing a £5 High Street gift voucher (£10 for addresses in London). The letter reminded them that they took part in the pre-election wave, and explained why they were being asked to take part again.

All top-up sample addresses were sent an advance letter addressed to ‘the resident’. It briefly described the purpose of the survey and the coverage of the questionnaire, and asked for co-operation when the interviewer called. It contained a book of six first class stamps and promised them a £5 High Street voucher for taking part (£10 in London). The interviewers had extra copies of the advance letter for use on the doorstep in convincing selected people to take part. The advance letters are given in Appendix A.

Fieldwork was conducted by 240 interviewers drawn from NatCen’s regular panel. Interviewers who had worked on the pre-election wave were sent detailed instructions about this stage of the project, along with a quiz to check that they had understood them. Interviewers who had not worked on the pre-election wave attended one-day briefing conferences conducted by the researchers, to familiarise them with the selection procedures and questionnaires.

The names of some potential respondents who had been difficult to find at home, or had refused or broken appointments, were re-issued to interviewers (in most cases interviewers who had not made the initial call) during the later phases of fieldwork.

³ Refusals include refusals before selection of an individual at the address, refusals to the office, refusal by the selected person, ‘proxy’ refusals (on the selected person’s behalf), and broken appointments after which the selected person could not be recontacted.

⁴ Non-contacts include households where no-one was contacted and those where the selected person could not be contacted (never found at home).

The survey consisted of a face-to-face computer-assisted personal interview and a self-completion mail-back paper questionnaire. The face-to-face questionnaire was implemented using the Blaise version 4 software. A documentation of the CAPI program and the English, Scottish and Welsh versions of the self-completion are given in Appendix C.

The interview was very slightly different in certain places for recontact and top-up sample respondents. Some data that had been collected in the pre-election wave was not asked again for recontact respondents, but was asked for top-up respondents. Therefore, the length of interview for top-up respondents tended to be slightly longer than for recontact respondents. The average interview length for recontact respondents was 42 minutes⁵ and the median interview length was 39 minutes. The average interview length for top-up respondents was 49 minutes⁶ and the median interview length was 46 minutes.

3.4.2 Telephone supplementary information

In the early stages of fieldwork, it was discovered that an error in the questionnaire was causing some respondents to miss question [bq2b]. Where these respondents had indicated their willingness to be recontacted and had given a telephone number, they were contacted by the NatCen Telephone Unit and given a very short questionnaire covering this question (see Appendix C). Some 126 respondents were interviewed in this way.

3.4.3 Self-completion

The self-completion questionnaire was left with all face-to-face respondents together with a reply-paid envelope. If necessary, up to three postal reminders were sent to obtain the self-completion supplement. The second reminder was accompanied by a further copy of the questionnaire. Copies of the reminder letters are included in Appendix A.

A prize draw was used to encourage response, with a first prize of £500, three prizes of £100, ten prizes of £10, and twenty prizes of £5. The winners were drawn from self-completions returned by 15 August 2005. The details of the procedures for the prize draw are set out in Appendix E.

3.5 Response – post-election wave

The top-up sample included some addresses which were ineligible ('deadwood') in the same way as for the pre-election sample (see Section 3.3). These are excluded from the base before response rates are calculated. For the recontact sample, the only ineligible cases were those where the pre-election wave respondent had died or moved abroad.

Tables 3.2 and 3.3 show the response breakdown for the recontact and top-up samples at the post-election wave.

⁵ Calculated omitting outliers of less than 20 minutes and more than 158 minutes.

⁶ Calculated omitting outliers of less than 20 minutes and more than 158 minutes.

A total of 4,161 respondents were interviewed on the post-election wave. Of these, 3,226 respondents (77.5 per cent of those interviewed) returned their self-completion questionnaires.

Table 3-2 Pre-post panel response rates

	<i>N</i>	% of those interviewed at pre	% of those issued for post	% of those eligible for post
Interviewed for pre-election	3589	100.0		
Not issued for post-election	210	5.9		
Refused recontact	206	5.7		
Other not issued ⁷	4	0.1		
Eligible for post-election	3379	94.1	100.0	
Out of scope	17	0.5	0.5	
Eligible	3362	N/a	N/a	100.0
Interview achieved	2959	82.4	87.6	88.0
Self completion received	2343	65.3	69.3	69.7
Interview not achieved	403	11.2	11.9	12.0
Refused ⁸	213	5.9	6.3	6.3
Not contacted ⁹	71	2.0	2.1	2.1
Other unproductive	85	2.4	2.5	2.5
Mover not traced	34	0.9	1.0	1.0

Table 3-3 Top-up sample response rate

	<i>N</i>	%
Addresses issued	2450	
Definitely out of scope	224	
Eligible	2226	100.0
Interview achieved	1202	54.0
Self completion received	883	39.7
Interview not achieved	1024	46.0
Refused	701	31.5
Not contacted	197	8.8
Other unproductive	126	5.7

A more detailed breakdown of response is given in Appendix D.

⁷ Deemed unsuitable for issuing at post-election wave in view of comments made by interviewer at pre-election wave.

⁸ Refusals include refusals before selection of an individual at the address, refusals to the office, refusal by the selected person, 'proxy' refusals (on the selected person's behalf), and broken appointments after which the selected person could not be recontacted.

⁹ Non-contacts include households where no-one was contacted and those where the selected person could not be contacted (never found at home).

3.6 Data collection – post-election internet follow-up

All recontact sample members were sent a personally addressed advance letter containing a book of six first class stamps. The letter reminded them that they took part in the post-election wave and explained why they were being asked to take part again. It gave them the website address where the questionnaire could be accessed, and their unique password for entering the site. They were informed that everyone who completed the questionnaire would be entered into a prize draw. The letter was accompanied by a postcard which they were asked to return if they were not going to complete the internet survey. The advance letter and postcard are given in Appendix A.

Those respondents who had provided an email address (1,031) were also emailed informing them about the study, and giving them the website address and their password. The email text is given in Appendix A.

A reminder letter and reminder email were sent to those who had not responded. These are given in Appendix A.

A prize draw was used to encourage response, with a first prize of £500, three prizes of £100, ten prizes of £10, and twenty prizes of £5. The winners were drawn from questionnaires completed by 31 May 2006. The details of the procedures for the prize draw are set out in Appendix E.

The website went 'live' on 4th May 2006 and was closed on 26th June 2006.

3.7 Response post-election internet follow-up

There is no definitive way in which response can be calculated for a sample of this nature. The postcard that respondents were asked to return if they were not completing the questionnaire, requested that they revealed why. The information from this allowed the identification of respondents who were 'ineligible', either because they had no access to the internet or because they had died, emigrated or moved house leaving no forwarding address. These people are excluded from the base when calculating the response rate. However, 40 per cent of those people contacted did not complete the questionnaire or return the postcard and were thus 'outstanding'. The way in which these people are treated has major implications for the response rate. The following table shows two response rates, one assuming that all of the outstanding cases were eligible, the other assuming that none of the outstanding cases were eligible.

Table 3-4 Post-election internet follow-up response rate

	<i>N</i>	% (assuming all 'outstanding' were eligible)	% (assuming no 'outstanding' were eligible)
Issued	3907		
Ineligible	1119		
Eligible	2788	100	
Outstanding	1547	55.5	
Not outstanding	1241	44.5	100
Questionnaire completed	931	33.4	75.0
Refused	204	7.3	16.4
Other unproductive	106	3.8	8.5

If all 'outstanding' cases were eligible, then the response rate was 33 per cent; if none were eligible the response rate was 75 per cent. A response rate can also be calculated assuming that the 'outstanding' cases were eligible or ineligible in the same proportion as those cases for which we have information. We know that 53 per cent of those issued who were not 'outstanding' were eligible. Were that replicated within the 'outstanding' cases, the response rate would be 40 per cent.

3.8 Welsh telephone follow-up

Due to the omission of a question establishing whether or not respondents in Wales spoke Welsh, it was necessary to re-contact some via telephone. Only those who did not take part in the internet questionnaire (because the question was asked in that), and who gave consent for being recontacted and provided a telephone number were contacted in this way. This resulted in 377 interviews.

4 THE DATA

4.1 Topics covered

The full questionnaires for the pre-election wave, post-election wave and the self completion are shown in Appendix C. On the pre-election wave, the general topic areas covered were:

- Issues in the election
- Party identification (version 1)
- Party supporter (version 2)
- Voting intentions
- Rating of party leaders
- Trust in British institutions
- Ratings of the political parties
- Contact with local MP
- Social and political attitudes
- Party leader images
- Economic evaluations
- Europe
- Own/party positions on tax/spend
- Own/party left-right positions
- Attitudes to Iraq
- Likelihood of voting in the General Election
- Recall vote
- Social trust
- Attitudes to voting and politics
- Beliefs and values
- Party identification (version 2)
- Party supporter (version 1)
- Classification
- Interviewer observation of respondent

On the post-election wave, the general topic areas covered were:

- Issues in the election
- Party identification (version 1)
- Party supporter (version 2)
- Voting
- Rating of party leaders
- Trust in British institutions
- Ratings of the political parties
- Social and political attitudes
- Economic evaluations
- Contact with authorities/NHS/MP
- Views on change in the country

- Europe
- Own/party positions on tax/spend
- Own/party left-right positions
- Own/party positions on civil liberties
- Attitudes to Iraq war and War on terrorism
- Recall vote
- Involvement in politics and community affairs
- Persuaded to vote
- Party membership
- Self-rated class and social trust
- National identity
- Attitudes to voting and politics
- Beliefs and values
- Party identification (version 2)
- Party supporter (version 1)
- Political knowledge
- Attitudes to democracy/risk taking
- Media use and party contact
- Views on election campaign
- Reasons for voting/not voting
- Classification
- Interviewer observation of respondent

On the self-completion questionnaire the general topic areas covered were:

- Who the parties look after
- Views on the parties
- Voting in local election
- Crime and punishment
- Views on elections
- Women and ethnic minorities in politics
- Trust in institutions
- Left-right scale
- Libertarian-authoritarian scale
- Political efficacy
- Attitudes to democracy
- Social attitudes
- Discuss politics
- View on neighbourhood
- AV ballot paper

On the internet questionnaire the general topic areas covered were:

- Issues facing the country
- Party identification
- Attitudes to voting and politics

- Ratings of the political parties
- Economic evaluations
- Own/party positions on tax/spend
- Own/party positions on civil liberties
- Likelihood of voting in a General Election
- Rating of party leaders

4.2 Weighting

4.2.1 Pre-election wave

The weights for the pre-election wave were designed to fulfil two main purposes: correcting for unequal selection probabilities and calibration weighting to fit the profile of the sample to population estimates for Britain.

Unequal selection probabilities

Unequal selection probabilities arose from:

- the over-sampling of Scotland and Wales;
- the over-sampling of marginal constituencies in England; and
- the selection of one person per address for interview (hence giving people in small households and in single dwelling unit addresses a higher selection probability than people in large households or at multi-dwelling unit addresses).

The selection weights correct for these unequal selection probabilities as described below.

Correcting for oversampling of Scotland and Wales and of marginal constituencies in England

The first stage of the selection weighting corrects for the over-sampling of addresses in Scotland, Wales and marginal constituencies in England. The weight for each address is calculated in such a way to ensure that the issued sample of addresses, when appropriately weighted, matches the distribution of addresses on the sampling frame (the Postcode Address File) across four strata (marginal English constituencies, non-marginal English constituencies, Scotland and Wales). Addresses within each of these four strata had the same chance of selection.

The selection probability for each address was calculated as:

$$a \times \left(\frac{C_i}{N_{strata}} \right) \times 2 \times \left(\frac{w_i}{C_i} \right) \times \left(\frac{\text{selected addresses}_{ward}}{w_i} \right)$$

where:

a = number of constituencies selected in the strata

C_i = total number of addresses (DPs) in the selected constituency

N_{strata} = total number of addresses in the strata

2 = the number of wards selected in each constituency

w_i = the total number of addresses in the selected ward

This formula simplifies to give:

$$a \times \left(\frac{1}{N_{strata}} \right) \times 2 \times selectedaddresses_{ward}$$

showing that the chances of selection for individual addresses depends on the number of constituencies selected within the strata; the number of addresses chosen for interview within each selected ward and the total number of delivery points in the strata. The selection weight for the address is the inverse of this selection probability.

Correcting for unequal selection probabilities at the address

As set out in Section 2.5 only one dwelling unit was selected from multi-dwelling unit addresses. Individual units at multi-dwelling unit addresses thus had a smaller chance of selection than single dwelling unit addresses. To compensate for this, dwelling units were weighted by the number of dwelling units recorded at the address.

As set out in section 2.6 only one person was randomly selected from all eligible persons (adults aged 18+) resident in the (selected) dwelling unit. Persons in large households thus had a smaller chance of selection than adults in smaller households. To compensate for this each adult was weighted by the number of eligible adults in the household.

Combined selection probability weight

The final sample selection weight was calculated as the product of the address; dwelling unit; and adult weights.

Calibration weighting

At the second stage of weighting the sample selection weights set out above are further adjusted so that the weighted sample distributions for certain variables (age and sex) conform to known population distributions for those variables. This stage is often termed post-stratification, population weighting or calibration. It serves to compensate for non-response and to improve the precision of the survey estimates.

When applied separately within England, Scotland and Wales, the selection weights for each adult are adjusted by a calibration factor to ensure that the age and sex distribution of the surveyed adult is brought into line with each country's age-sex distribution.¹⁰

More specifically, calibration weighting methods minimise a distance metric (i.e. a function of the aggregate 'distance' between the selection weights and the final

¹⁰ The 2003 English mid-year population estimates can be found at:
<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Expodata/Spreadsheets/D8557.xls>.
The 2003 Welsh mid-year population estimates can be found at:
<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Expodata/Spreadsheets/D8558.xls>.
The 2003 Scottish estimates can be found at:
<http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/files/03mid-year-estimates-table1.xls>.

weights), subject to the final weights matching the specified population totals. The simplest distance function is a weighted sum of squared differences and is called the linear weighting method. The algorithm implementing the linear method minimises a chi-squared distance:

$$\sum_{sample} c_j \left(\frac{(w_j - b_j)^2}{w_j} \right)$$

between the initial sample selection weights (w_j) and the final calibration weights (b_j). c_j is a specified constant ($c_j > 0$). This 'distance minimisation problem' is solved using Lagrange multipliers and Newton's method. The final calibration weights adjust the initial sample selection weights as little as possible subject to their matching exactly the specified population totals.

Computational algorithms have been developed to produce the final calibration weights. A SAS macro, CALMAR, produced by the French national statistics office INSEE, implements a number of these algorithms including the linear weighting method. CALMAR was used to produce the final weights.

British, English, Scottish and Welsh weights

As a final stage, the weights are scaled to give the corrected weighted sample size. The pre-election datafile contains separate weights for Britain, England, Scotland and Wales. The difference lies in the scaling. Thus, in the British weights, the Scottish and Welsh boosts are downweighted to their correct proportions in the British population. However, the Scottish and Welsh weights give the correct sample sizes for the Scottish and Welsh (boosted) samples and should be used when Scottish or Welsh respondents are being analysed separately.

4.2.2 Post-election wave – cross-section

The same weighting strategy was used for this as for the pre-election wave discussed above (i.e. the weights correct for unequal selection probabilities and a calibration step to fit the profile of the sample to population estimates for Britain). As with the pre-election wave separate weights were computed for Britain, England, Scotland and Wales.

4.2.3 Post-election wave – panel

The panel sample are those respondents who took part in both the pre and post election waves (2,959 respondents). The weighting strategy for the panel sample was made up of three components:

- Weighting to correct for unequal selection probabilities.
- Weighting for potential non-response bias between the pre and post election waves.
- Calibration weighting to fit the sample to the population estimates.

Thus these weights differ from the weights for the pre- and post-election wave weights described in sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 by the inclusion of a wave-on-wave non-response weight. As with panel surveys in general, it can be assumed that the sample attrition has not occurred randomly. Hence certain groups may be more or less likely to be both willing and suitable to be recontacted and successfully reinterviewed for later waves. Failure to take into account this sample attrition will mean that the analysis of the panel sample may not be representative of adults in general.

Using the selection weight as the analysis weight we examined the nature of response to the post-election wave. The variables examined, gathered at the sampling stage or at the pre-election wave interview, can be grouped into the following categories:

- Individual socio-demographic information: age, sex, marital status, ethnic group, educational or work qualifications, and social class.
- Household socio-demographic information: income, tenure, region, and size.
- Political information: traditional party identification, strength of party identification, political party supporter, whether lived in a marginal constituency (2001 election), likelihood to vote, whether decided who to vote for, and level of interest in the election.
- Interviewer observational information: number of contacts at the pre-wave, respondent's co-operation, general level of information, and level of interest in the study.

The non-response weight was based on a logistic regression model of response at the post-election wave (1 = response, 0 = non-response) with the predictor variables entered by a forward stepwise selection procedure. The variables remaining in the optimal model were:

- Age-group of respondent;
- Household income;
- Whether lived in a marginal seat;
- Region;
- Work or educational qualifications;
- Social class;
- Level of interest in the study;
- Level of co-operation; and
- Number of pre-wave interviewer visits.

The predicted response probabilities from the final optimal model were converted into a non-response weight by obtaining their reciprocal (e.g. a response probability of 0.8 corresponds to a non-response weight of 1.25). To avoid extreme weights having a large influence on the estimates the non-response weight was trimmed at the 5th and 95th percentiles.

The weight prior to the calibration step was obtained by multiplying the selection weight with the non-response weight. This weight was then adjusted by the algorithm described in Section 4.2.1 to ensure that the age and sex distribution of the panel sample was brought into line with each country's adult (18+) age-sex distribution. Separate panel weights were computed for Britain, England, Scotland and Wales (see Section 4.2.1).

4.2.4 Post-election self-completion

As a third stage in the survey, a self-completion questionnaire was handed to respondents on the post-election wave. The respondents were asked to mail this back in a reply-paid envelope. (There was a prize-draw to encourage response).

The self-completion was returned by 3,226 respondents. This sample contains two groups of respondents:

- Those who took part in both the pre and post election waves (2,343 respondents); and
- Those selected as top-ups who took part in the post-election wave only (883 cases).

The weighting strategy for this sample mirrored that used for the panel sample discussed in Section 4.2.3. The weighting strategy for those who returned the self-completion questionnaire was made up of three components:

- Weighting to correct for unequal selection probabilities.
- Weighting for potential non-response bias between the post election wave and self-completion stage.
- Calibration weighting to fit the sample to the population estimates.

The inclusion of a non-response weight is necessary, as certain groups may be more or less likely to return the self-completion questionnaire. Failure to take non-response into account will mean that the analysis of self-completion data may not be representative of adults in general.

Using the selection weight as the analysis weight we examined the nature of response to the self-completion questionnaire. The variables examined, gathered at the sampling stage or at the post-election wave interview, can be grouped into the following categories:

- Individual socio-demographic information including age, sex, marital status, ethnic group, and work status.
- Household socio-demographic information including region.
- Political information including traditional party identification, strength of party identification, political party supporter and whether lived in a marginal constituency (2001 election).
- Interviewer observational information including level of respondent's co-operation, general level of information, and level of interest in the study.

The non-response weight was based on a logistic regression model of response at the self-completion stage (1 = response, 0 = non-response) with the predictor variables entered by a forward stepwise selection procedure. The variables remaining in the optimal model were:

- Age-group of respondent;
- Sex;
- Work status;
- Marital status;
- Ethnic group;

- Whether had access to the internet;
- Strength of political party identification;
- Level of co-operation; and
- Level of interest in the study.

The predicted response probabilities from the final optimal model were converted into a non-response weight by obtaining their reciprocal (e.g. a response probability of 0.8 corresponds to a non-response weight of 1.25). To avoid extreme weights having a large influence on the estimates the non-response weight was trimmed at the 5th and 95th percentiles.

The weight prior to the calibration step was obtained by multiplying the selection weight with the non-response weight. This weight was then adjusted by the algorithm described in Section 4.2.1 to ensure that the age and sex distribution of the self-completion sample was brought into line with each country's adult (18+) age-sex distribution. Separate self-completion weights were computed for Britain, England, Scotland and Wales.

4.2.5 Post-election internet follow-up

Of the 4,161 respondents to the post-election wave, 3,907 agreed to be recontacted for a possible follow-up survey. Of these, 931 responded to the Internet follow-up. The weights created for the Internet survey were designed to fulfill two main purposes: correcting for unequal selection probabilities and calibration weighting to fit the profile of the sample to the (weighted) profile of the post-election wave.¹¹

The selection weights used to correct for unequal selection probabilities were as described above. Using calibration weighting, the selection weight was adjusted by the algorithm described in Section 4.2.1 to ensure that the profile of respondents to the Internet survey was brought into line with the (weighted) post-election wave along the following dimensions:

- Age-group of respondent;
- Sex;
- Country;
- Whether had access to the internet; and
- Whether a supporter of a political party.

To avoid extreme weights having a large influence on the estimates the weight was trimmed at the 5th and 95th percentiles.

Table 4.1 compares the profile of respondents to the Internet survey to that of the post-election wave on these five dimensions. (Note that the profiles would have been identical had the weights not been trimmed). For example, 43.9% of the 4,161 respondents to the post-election wave were estimated to have had access to the internet at the time of the post-election wave, compared with 70% of respondents to

¹¹ Given the size of the achieved Internet follow-up sample, applying a non-response weight and adjusting it to match population estimates (by age and sex within England, Scotland and Wales) would have led to a rather large variation in the final weights. Such large variation decreases survey precision and could result in a few cases having a large influence on the estimates.

the Internet survey. The weights for the Internet survey aim to bring the estimate of internet access (47.1%) closer to the post-election wave.

Table 4-1 Post-election wave characteristics of Internet respondents

Characteristics at post-election wave	Internet follow-up (unweighted)	Internet follow-up (weighted by IntWtBr)	Post-election cross-section (weighted by postwtbr)
	%	%	%
<i>Age-group</i>			
18-24	4.4	9.8	11.3
25-34	14.9	17.5	17.4
35-44	26.1	21.4	19.6
45-54	24.7	18.0	16.5
55-64	18.7	15.7	14.6
65-74	8.3	10.7	10.8
75+	2.9	6.8	9.8
<i>Sex</i>			
Male	49.1	47.5	48.2
Female	50.9	52.5	51.8
<i>Country</i>			
England	63.7	84.6	86.1
Scotland	21.5	9.8	8.8
Wales	14.8	5.7	5.1
<i>Internet access</i>			
Yes	70.0	47.1	43.9
No	30.0	52.9	56.1
<i>Party supporter</i>			
Yes	56.5	52.4	52.6
No	43.5	47.6	47.4
Total	931	931	4,161

Separate internet weights were computed for Britain, England, Scotland and Wales.

Summary of weights for internet respondents

	England	Scotland	Wales	Britain
Internet respondents	IntWtEn	IntWtSc	IntWtWa	IntWtBr

4.2.6 Post-election internet follow-up (all waves respondents)

Of the 2,343 respondents to the pre and post election waves *and* who returned the self-completion questionnaire, 640 responded to the Internet follow-up. For these subset of Internet respondents, the aim of the weighting was to fit the profile of the Internet sample to the (weighted) profile of the 2,343 panel respondents (i.e. pre, post and self-completion) along the dimensions of:

- Age-group of respondent;
- Sex;
- Country;
- Whether had access to the internet; and
- Whether a supporter of a political party.

To avoid extreme weights having a large influence on the estimates the weight was trimmed at the 5th and 95th percentiles.

Table 4.2 compares the profile of the (panel) respondents to the Internet survey to that of the (panel) post-election wave on these five dimensions.¹² (Note that the profiles would have been identical had the weights not been trimmed). For example, 46.1% of the 2,343 panel respondents to the post-election wave were estimated to have had access to the internet at the time of the post-election wave, compared with 71.1% of the (panel) respondents to the Internet survey.

The weights for the (panel) respondents to the Internet survey aim to bring the estimate of internet access (48.4%) closer to the post-election wave.

Table 4-2 Post-election wave characteristics of Internet respondents (all waves)

Characteristics at post-election wave	Internet follow-up (unweighted)	Internet follow-up (weighted by PInWtBr)	Post-election cross-section (weighted by pscwtbr)
	%	%	%
<i>Age-group</i>			
18-24	3.3	8.5	11.3
25-34	14.7	17.5	17.4
35-44	26.1	21.8	19.7
45-54	25.2	18.5	16.4
55-64	19.2	16.4	14.6
65-74	8.4	10.6	10.8
75+	3.1	6.6	9.8
<i>Sex</i>			
Male	50.3	47.6	48.2
Female	49.7	52.4	51.8
<i>Country</i>			
England	64.4	84.1	86.1

¹² In this case the (panel) post-election wave respondents refers more specifically to those who also returned the self-completion questionnaire.

Scotland	21.4	10.0	8.8
Wales	14.2	5.8	5.1
<i>Internet access</i>			
Yes	71.1	48.4	46.1
No	28.9	51.6	53.9
<i>Party supporter</i>			
Yes	57.2	55.2	54.6
No	42.8	44.8	45.4
Total	640	640	2,343

Separate internet weights for panel respondents were computed for Britain, England, Scotland and Wales.

Summary of weights for internet respondents (all waves)

	England	Scotland	Wales	Britain
Panel respondents (pre,post,self-comp,internet)	PInWtEn	PInWtSc	PInWtWa	PInWtBr

4.2.7 Summary of weights

In summary, the names of the weighting variables are as follows:

	England	Scotland	Wales	Britain
Pre-wave respondents	PREWTEN	PREWTSC	PREWTWA	PREWTBR
Post-wave respondents	POSTWTEN	POSTWTSC	POSTWTWA	POSTWTBR
Panel respondents (pre and post wave)	PANWTEN	PANWTSC	PANWTWA	PANWTBR
Panel respondents (pre, post, self-comp)	PSCWTEN	PSCWTSC	PSCWTWA	PSCWTBR
Panel respondents (pre, post, self-comp, internet)	PINWTEN	PINWTSC	PINWTWA	PINWTBR

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APPENDIX A LETTERS TO RESPONDENTS

- Pre-election wave advance letter outside London
- Pre-election wave advance letter in London
- Pre-election wave advance letter in Welsh

- Post-election wave advance letter: recontact respondents: England outside London and Scotland
- Post-election wave advance letter: recontact respondents: London
- Post-election wave advance letter: recontact respondents: Wales
- Post-election wave advance letter: recontact respondents: in Welsh

- Post-election wave advance letter: top-up addresses: England outside London
- Post-election wave advance letter: top-up addresses: London
- Post-election wave advance letter: top-up addresses: Scotland
- Post-election wave advance letter: top-up addresses: Wales
- Post-election wave advance letter: top-up addresses: in Welsh

- Self-completion reminder letter 1
- Self-completion reminder letter 2
- Self-completion reminder letter 3

- Post-election internet follow-up letter 1
- Post-election internet follow-up letter 2
- Post-election internet follow-up email 1
- Post-election internet follow-up email 2

APPENDIX B ADDRESS RECORD FORMS AND PROJECT INSTRUCTIONS

- Pre-election wave Address Record Form
- Pre-election wave Project instructions

- Post-election wave: recontact respondents: Address Record Form
- Post-election wave: recontact respondents: Mover's Address Record Form
- Post-election wave: top-up addresses: Address Record Form

- Post-election wave Project instructions

APPENDIX C QUESTIONNAIRES AND SHOWCARDS

- Pre-election wave face-to-face questionnaire
- Pre-election wave showcards

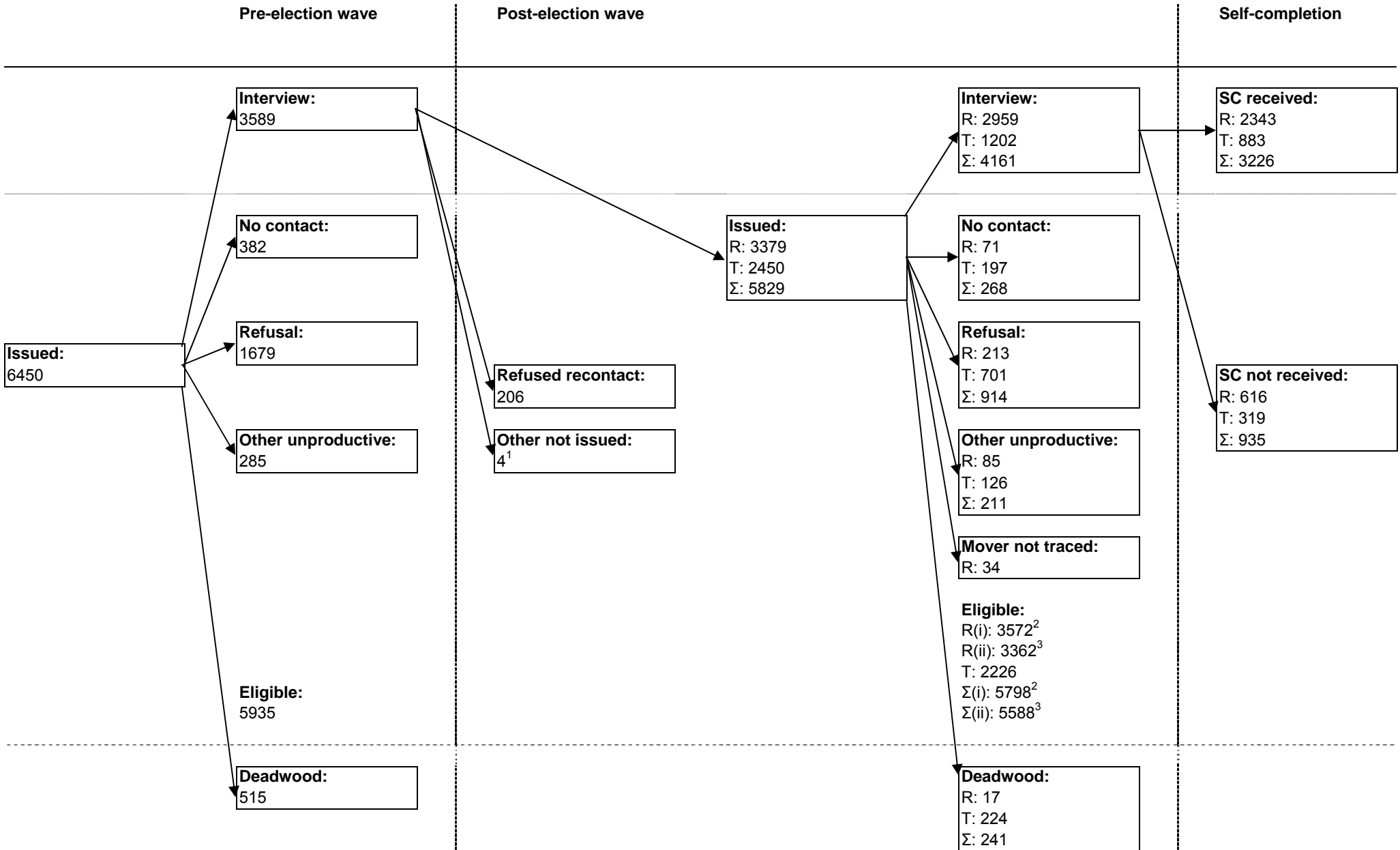
- Post-election wave face-to-face questionnaire
- Post-election wave showcards

- Self-completion: England
- Self-completion: Scotland
- Self-completion: Wales

- Telephone questionnaire for [bq2b]

APPENDIX D DETAILED BREAKDOWN OF RESPONSE

British Election Study 2005: Pre-election wave, post-election wave, self-completion response



R= recontact from pre-election wave; T= top-up (fresh sample at post-election wave); Σ= total (R+T);

Notes: 1. Deemed unsuitable for reissue in light of interview comments; 2. Of all interviewed at pre-wave; 3. Of those issued for post-wa

Detailed breakdown on response on pre-election and post-election waves

	Pre	Post – recontact	Post – topup
PRODUCTIVE			
Full productive	3587	2955	1198
Partial productive	2	4	4
NO CONTACT			
No contact with anyone at address	54	0	26
No contact with dwelling unit at address	52	24	32
Contact but not with selected dwelling unit	2	0	3
Contact but not with responsible adult	9	0	6
Contact but not with selected respondent	121	46	53
Unknown whether residential (no contact)	38	0	24
Unknown whether occupied (no contact)	106	0	53
REFUSAL			
Office refusal	209	14	50
Refused information on number of dwelling units at address	75	0	43
Refused information on number of persons in selected dwelling unit	231	1	103
Refusal by selected person	842	96	347
Proxy refusal on behalf of selected person	123	11	69
Refusal during interview (partial unproductive)	3	1	1
Broken appointment	166	90	76
Unknown whether residential (information refused)	7	0	2
Residential but unknown eligibility (refusal)	23	0	10
OTHER UNPRODUCTIVE			
Ill at home during survey period	70	15	29
Away/in hospital during survey period	59	30	27
Physically/mentally incompetent	75	4	30
Language difficulties	31	1	19
Lost productive	0	0	2
Other non-productive	50	35	19
Issued but not attempted	0	1	0
OUT OF SCOPE			
Not yet built/under construction	12	0	2
Demolished/derelict	37	0	19
Vacant/empty	296	0	129
Non-residential	67	0	17
Occupied, no resident household	44	0	21

	Pre	Post – recontact	Post – topup
Communal/institution	8	0	6
Residential, no eligible respondent	8	0	4
Respondent emigrated	-	9	-
Respondent dead	-	8	-
Other ineligible	24	1	16
Unable to locate address	14	1	7
Other unknown eligibility	5	0	3
MOVER NOT TRACED			
Mover – no contact at stable address	-	2	-
Mover – refusal or don't know at stable address	-	6	-
Mover – no stable address	-	20	-
Mover – out of area	-	4	-
	6450	3379	2450

APPENDIX E PROCEDURES FOR SELF-COMPLETION PRIZE DRAW

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British Election Study 2005 Procedures for self-completion prize draw

The British Election Study 2005 offered a prize draw to respondents who returned the self-completion questionnaire. All information regarding the prize draw was given on the front and back pages of the self-completion. Respondents were asked to do two things:

- To tick a box if they did **not** wish to be part of the draw (i.e. if the box is **not** ticked, this implies that they **do** want to be part of the draw)
- To write in a name for any prize cheque to be made out to. (If this is left blank, any prize will be sent as gift vouchers. This is to avoid the possibility of having to send cash through the post).

The procedures for the prize draw are as follows:

1. All self-completion received were coded as follows at booking-in:

PRIZEDRAW:
Box not ticked, no name given = 1
Box not ticked, name given = 2
Box ticked = 3

All self-completions returned were coded to this scheme, whether the questionnaire itself was filled in or not. (I.e. if someone has returned a blank questionnaire, they were still eligible for the draw so long as they hadn't ticked the box on the back page).

2. All questionnaires returned by 15 August 2005 were eligible for the draw. After the post has been received on 15 August, the computer programmer produced a file of all serial numbers for which self-completions had been received. This file contained 3,197, of which 29 were coded 3 at PRIZEDRAW.
3. The winners were drawn from the 3,168 cases coded 1 or 2 at PrizeDraw. The draw was made in SPSS by the following strategy:

For the first prize of £500: sample one from all cases

For the three prizes of £100: Exclude the serial number of the person who has already won a prize, then sample 3 cases.

For ten prizes of £10: Exclude the serial numbers of the 4 people who have already won prizes, then sample 10 cases.

For 20 prizes of £5: Exclude the serial numbers of the 14 people who have already won prizes, then sample 20 cases.

4. If the respondent had filled in a name (PRIZEDRAW=2), the self-completion was checked and a cheque will be made out to that name. If the respondent had not filled in a name (PRIZEDRAW=1), gift vouchers were sent instead.
5. The prizes were sent by special delivery on 18 August 2005 (gift vouchers) and 6 September 2005 (cheques).
5. The independent adjudicator of the draw was Professor Roger Jowell, Centre for Comparative Social Surveys, City University.

APPENDIX F SAMPLED CONSTITUENCIES

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Aberdeen Central Burgh
Aberdeen North Burgh
Airdrie and Shotts Burgh
Aldridge-Brownhills Boro
Alyn and Deeside Co
Banff and Buchan Co
Basildon Boro
Beverley and Holderness Co
Bexleyheath and Crayford Boro
Birmingham, Hall Green Boro
Blackpool North and Fleetwood Boro
Bournemouth East Boro
Bradford North Boro
Bradford South Boro
Brentford and Isleworth Boro
Buckingham Co
Burton Co
Caernarfon Co
Caerphilly Co
Calder Valley Co
Cardiff Central Boro
Cardiff South and Penarth Boro
Cardiff West Boro
Cities of London and Westminster Boro
City of Chester Co
Clwyd South Co
Clwyd West Co
Clydebank and Milngavie Co
Clydesdale Co
Cunninghame South Co
Dartford Co
Denton and Reddish Boro
Don Valley Co
Dover Co
Dudley North Boro
Dumbarton Co
Dumfries Co
Dundee East Burgh
Dunfermline West Co
Edinburgh East and Musselburgh Burgh
Edinburgh North and Leith Burgh
Enfield North Boro
Epsom and Ewell Boro
Falkirk West Co
Falmouth and Camborne Co
Forest of Dean Co
Fylde Co
Galloway and Upper Nithsdale Co
Gillingham Boro
Glasgow Baillieston Burgh
Glasgow Kelvin Burgh

Glasgow Pollok Burgh
Glasgow Shettleston Burgh
Glasgow Springburn Burgh
Gower Co
Guildford Co
Hamilton South Burgh
Hartlepool Boro
Harwich Co
Havant Boro
Hendon Boro
Ilford South Boro
Islington South and Finsbury Boro
Islwyn Co
Kilmarnock and Loudoun Co
Lancaster and Wyre Co
Liverpool, Riverside Boro
Livingston Co
Loughborough Co
Luton South Boro
Mole Valley Co
Montgomeryshire Co
Moray Co
Neath Co
New Forest East Co
Newark Co
Newport East Co
North Cornwall Co
North East Bedfordshire Co
North East Hertfordshire Co
North Southwark and Bermondsey Boro
North Swindon Co
North Tayside Co
North West Norfolk Co
Northampton South Boro
Nottingham South Boro
Ochil Co
Ogmore Co
Oxford East Boro
Penrith and the Border Co
Peterborough Boro
Plymouth, Devonport Boro
Pontypridd Co
Preseli Pembrokeshire Co
Pudsey Boro
Putney Boro
Reigate Boro
Sedgefield Co
Sherwood Co
Shipley Co
Shrewsbury and Atcham Co
Sleaford and North Hykeham Co

South West Norfolk Co
South West Surrey Co
Southend West Boro
Southport Boro
St. Helens North Boro
St. Helens South Boro
Stirling Co
Stoke-on-Trent North Boro
Stratford-on-Avon Co
Strathkelvin and Bearsden Co
Sutton and Cheam Boro
Swansea East Boro
Swansea West Boro
Teignbridge Co
Torfaen Co
Tyne Bridge Boro
Vale of Clwyd Co
Vale of Glamorgan Co
Wakefield Co
Walsall South Boro
Wantage Co
Waveney Co
West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine Co
West Dorset Co
Westbury Co
Ynys Mon Co