

Measuring public perceptions of electoral integrity in England: the case of the 2019 voter ID trials

Abstract

Researchers generally agree that public confidence in the electoral process is central to the legitimacy of elected representatives and the functioning of democracy. However, studies have deviated in how they define and measure this all-important concept. This research seeks to use qualitative and quantitative evidence from the 2019 voter ID trials in England in order to propose a means by which public confidence can be better understood. Most importantly, this research provides a methodological critique for how confidence in the electoral process has previously been measured, and how previous attempts to measure the concept can be improved and validated through the use of a mixed-methods approach. Finally, this study examines the future of research on public perceptions of electoral integrity in England and how the use of qualitative and quantitative techniques can help to illuminate this phenomenon both as it exists in the UK and in other states. Overall it will be concluded that there is much we do not yet know about the phenomenon, but the method presented here suggests one way to proceed.¹

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Introduction

It is an essential feature of democratic legitimacy that the public is confident in the integrity of their elections. Citizens must believe that an election is free, fair, secure and competently managed because fairly conducted elections can work to legitimise a democracy (Banducci and Karp 2003). However, confidence is hard to guarantee. Any reform touted as a means to increase general confidence could have the opposite effect on certain social groups or confidence in another aspect of the electoral process. Because public perceptions of electoral integrity are crucial to democratic legitimacy it follows that accurately measuring this phenomenon: how it can be altered, how it manifests in different people, and its exact composition, is essential. This has long been recognised in polities where elections have only recently been established. However, it is equally important in older democracies. Public confidence in the integrity of elections in the United Kingdom cannot be assumed and in recent years a narrative has emerged which alleges that the trust-based electoral processes of the United Kingdom no longer have the full confidence of the public. Mandatory voter ID in polling stations is the most high-profile policy corrective being tested to tackle this perceived loss of confidence, and represents a perfect test-case to measure the varying effects of electoral reform on confidence. The reform can realistically be seen as either a bulwark against fraud or an obstacle to participation, or even both.

This research will demonstrate the complications of measuring confidence in the electoral process and explore the possibilities of a new mixed-methods approach. This will then be used to make some tentative conclusions on the impact of voter ID on confidence in the electoral process in England and conclude on the usefulness and validity of this new method finding that the mixed methods approach can help to assure a more accurate description of confidence. Overall, it will be concluded that: first, we have much left to learn about confidence in the electoral processes. Second, that this new method represents an important means to do so.

Context for the 'Crisis in Confidence Narrative'

In recent years public bodies and politicians have expressed concern over public confidence in the electoral process. For just a short example of why, we need look no further than the June 2016 EU referendum, where questions of electoral legitimacy became part of the established political battleground. In February 2016 then-Prime Minister David Cameron announced that there would be a vote on British membership of the European Union on June 23rd of that year (BBC 2016a). This happened to be on the date of the Glastonbury festival, which led to Conservative MP Steve Baker publicly rejecting theories suggesting that the EU referendum was planned on this date to give the

vote to leave an edge by discouraging young festival-goers from voting (Cowburn 2016). Closer to the day of the vote another conspiracy theory emerged on social media, this time arguing that voters should use pens in their polling stations, rather than the traditional pencils, to stop votes being tampered with before they could be counted (BBC 2016b). After the result, many continued questioning the legitimacy of the process. These ranged from an *Independent* front page claiming that 'Illegal Facebook Spending "Won 2016 Vote for Leave"' (Independent 2016). To claims that the government-funded leaflet delivered to all households before the referendum gave the Remain side an unfair advantage (Malnick 2018). It has been claimed that the referendum franchise, by excluding EU citizens, rigged the election (Wren-Lewis 2019). And doubts over the fairness of the process have only increased since the Electoral Commission fined the Vote Leave referendum campaign for overspending (Electoral Commission 2018b). Overall, the electoral process has come under sustained rhetorical and legal challenges, ranging from the marginal to the justified. A fraught election campaign marred by illegal practices and populist language and ending in a close result can shake the confidence of even the most trusting citizens.

Defining the research question

This is why public confidence must be measured. Because it is the consent of the whole public, rather than voters, experts or elites, on which electoral legitimacy rests. It is as important to understand the views of those who choose not to participate as it is participants. If the public is under or overconfident in the quality of their elections, they may be more likely to reject legitimate results or accept illegitimate contests, both of which threaten the overall quality of democracy in the country. This is why the public have been chosen for this research, not because they are particularly competent to judge the quality of an election, although evidence suggests they are, but because it is with the public's consent that the legitimacy of a democracy can be maintained (Norris 2014).

The exclusive focus on England is partially because England, as with most developed democracies, is relatively understudied in the literature (Clark 2017). Studying the English case will help to inform two other major fields of research: first, it may help to shed light on how confidence in England, with its particular political culture, electoral laws and history, differs from other states. Secondly, and more importantly, studying England may help us to understand confidence better as it exists as a phenomenon. If English perceptions of electoral integrity are correlated with different variables than in other states, then the phenomenon may be different to what had been assumed from the existing research. Any new studies of public perceptions of electoral integrity do not only help to explain the specific case, but also add to the understanding of the general phenomenon as it is manifested in individuals around the world. The reason this research focusses on England rather than the UK as a

whole is because England operates under a more uniform (and therefore comparable) set of electoral processes, and because voter ID was only trialled in England in 2019.

The selection of the voter ID trials for measuring public perceptions of electoral integrity was mainly because confidence is an omnipresent feature of the discourse surrounding the proposed reform. In the words of the Minister for the Constitution Chloe Smith: 'The British public deserves to have confidence in our democracy. Voter ID – where people are asked to provide identification to vote – is an important step to ensuring the public can have confidence in the systems that underpin our democratic system' (Smith 2018). In Eric Pickles' independent review of electoral integrity in the UK, in which voter ID was suggested as a means to improve trust, he stated 'My fear now is that such a trust-based system is becoming no longer tenable' (Pickles 2016 p. 55). Again, demonstrating the perceived importance of trust in the system and policies designed to bolster it. On the other side of the debate, however, are those who argue that the reform will lower integrity and therefore confidence. Labour's Shadow Minister for Voter Engagement stated that 'the Government's fixation with Voter ID is a blatant attempt by the Tories to rig the result of future elections by voter suppression' and the Electoral Reform Society argued that 'Rather than restoring public confidence in elections by tackling alleged personation, requiring voter ID at the polling station may lead to the exclusion of legitimate voters from the democratic process' (Smith 2019; Electoral Reform Society 2018). However, despite its ubiquity in the debate over the reform, academic research on the likely impact of mandatory identification on confidence in the UK is vanishingly rare, despite identification in polling stations having become a legal requirement in Northern Ireland in 2002 (Electoral Commission 2003). Research about the overall level of confidence in England, let alone the effect of voter ID on this, is lacking.

Thus, the question of how to measure confidence arises. At its heart this research is a study of measurement. How public perceptions of electoral integrity are measured is an issue that underpins all research on the topic. The question of what impact voter ID will have on public confidence is an empirical one, but it is only possible to assess the impact of the reform if there are accurate methods employed to test the effects. Thus, this research will assess the current methods used to measure public perceptions of electoral integrity in advanced democracies, put forward an alternative method, and conclude on the results of this new method and its implications for future measurements of confidence.

This dissertation will be split into four sections. The first will be a comprehensive review of the current research. The second chapter will examine the methods used in academic studies to measure public perceptions of electoral integrity, using the framework of measurement error to

assess these attempts and suggest an alternative. The third chapter will introduce the use of qualitative interviews to explore the views of the public on the 2019 voter ID trials. Finally, the new method will be used to measure the impact of the 2019 voter ID trials in England on public perceptions of electoral integrity and this measurement will be tested to determine its validity and utility. It will be found that the mixed-methods approach can illuminate the way the public thinks about electoral integrity in a way which can help us to better understand the phenomenon.

Chapter 1: Current Research Review

This review will focus on three broad research literatures. The first is the literature on electoral integrity in the United Kingdom, and how integrity is likely to be affected by the introduction of voter ID. It will be found that the limited literature converges on elections in Britain being generally held with integrity and the threats to that integrity identified by academics do not include widespread in-person voter fraud – the type of fraud voter ID is designed to prevent. The second body of literature is on public confidence in electoral processes in England, this will be found to be too limited to make any concrete conclusions. Finally, there is the extant literature on voter identification around the world and the impact of this policy on confidence. This literature demonstrates the divergent effects that voter ID can have on confidence and shows the centrality of individual-level variables (particularly partisanship) in determining a policy's effect on an individual. This chapter will end with three conclusions: first, electoral integrity in the UK is generally high, and fraud is not often seen by experts as a major area of concern. Second, there is a major gap in the literature on voter confidence in general, and particularly in England. Finally, the different methods of measuring perceptions of electoral integrity and the effect of different variables on them must be more thoroughly considered to determine any improvements.

Electoral Integrity in England

In order to understand public perceptions of electoral integrity it is important to first assess the quality of elections in England and how these relate to the introduction of mandatory voter ID in polling stations. This assessment of electoral integrity should allow us to determine whether the public should be confident before concluding on whether they are. However, there are disagreements in the literature over how electoral integrity should be defined. The simplest common definition, the ubiquitous 'free and fair', is largely inadequate for research purposes because there are so many different interpretations of what these terms mean. Within the academic literature there are disagreements over whether electoral integrity should be defined based on democratic values, legality, or international conventions and standards about elections (Norris 2014; Norris, Elklit and Reynolds 2014; Hall and Wang 2008). By using international standards, it is possible to avoid the conceptual confusion of measuring against democratic values (themselves highly contested) or based on legality (which makes the state the final judge of their own election quality). The international definition crucially demonstrates how both fraud (as a type of malpractice) and voter ID (as an obstacle to equal participation) could be seen to undermine integrity, representing the crux of the debate over the implementation of the policy (Norris 2013). However, the main

contention of this research is that despite the sophisticated academic considerations of what does and does not fall within the purview of electoral integrity, what matters most when assessing public perceptions of electoral integrity is what members of the public believe is important.

The academic reviews of electoral integrity in the UK are rare but virtually united in having never identified personation, when one person votes as another, as a significant threat. Clark's 2017 study looked to assess election integrity by identifying the elements likely to determine varied election quality across UK local authorities through a survey of Returning Officers, finding that the limited resources available to administrators, and the stresses of running concurrent elections were both likely to reduce election quality. James' 2018 and 2013 studies identified a more complete list of threats which included: large scale failures in election administration, incomplete electoral registers, the challenge of regulating digital media, the varying franchise for different elections, the complex legislative framework, and the financial constraints on administrators (James 2013; James 2018). Overall, however, the limited research suggests that elections in England are generally held with integrity and the specific institutional weaknesses identified do not include vulnerability to widespread personation.

A second strand of the literature is based on identifying and explaining the rare large failures in integrity. This is relevant considering highly-publicised examples of electoral malpractice can have an effect on general public confidence and might identify an area where voter ID could have prevented a large-scale problem (Denver, Johns, and Carman 2009, p. 17). The most relevant of these studies focussed on electoral fraud in Birmingham in 2004, and warned against taking the integrity of UK elections for granted considering the evidence of widespread fraud during these local elections and claimed that fraud might be found across other parts of the UK if equivalent scrutiny were applied (Stewart 2006, p.667). The focus on rare highly-publicised examples of failings in electoral administration as case-studies can help to identify their impact on confidence and the mechanisms which may facilitate electoral fraud. In this case, for example, the main identified weakness in the system was postal voting (Stewart 2006). Thus, the elements of electoral integrity which have been subject to high-profile failings also appear to be unrelated to identification in polling stations.

The specific literature on electoral fraud in the UK has tackled personation more explicitly, alongside identifying the facilitating mechanisms for fraud and the communities most at risk. Sobolewska et al (2015), Gill et al (2015) and Hill et al (2017) have studied the dynamics relating to vulnerabilities to fraud in British Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities, finding that cultural factors and political exclusion play an important role. These studies point towards a way to study fraud despite the rarity of outright evidence. All three used interviews with community members as an alternate way of

assessing fraud vulnerabilities. These studies also reveal how the same evidence can lead to variant policy solutions. Sobolewska et al (2015) recommended voter ID as a means to tackle fraud vulnerabilities within these communities. However, Hill et al (2017) warned that ID requirements in polling stations may exacerbate the factors which facilitate fraud (political exclusion) rather than acting as a productive way to eliminate the crime. The academic literature on fraud in the UK suggests that fraud is rare, effects some communities more than others, and attempts made to tackle fraud should consider their possible divergent effects. Importantly, these studies demonstrated how interviews with community members can give a broader and more nuanced understanding of perceptions of fraud than can be derived from purely quantitative studies which will be carried over into this research.

Another important element of the literature is the 'elite statecraft' theoretical framework for understanding electoral administration reform suggested by James (2010). This assessment of electoral processes suggests that they are adopted for political expediency rather than reasons of upholding integrity and is important for scholars of confidence in the electoral process. If the processes are adopted by elites hoping to consolidate their power, then the public could be justifiably suspicious of their integrity and fairness.

The final means for evaluating electoral integrity in England is to compare expert perceptions of electoral integrity across states. The data provided by Norris and Grömping (2019) and presented in Figures 1 and 2 show that overall electoral integrity (expressed as an index from 0-100) in the UK is relatively weak overall compared to other OECD countries, but that this weakness stems mainly from issues with boundaries, electoral laws, voter registration and media coverage, rather than fraud (included in the voting process bar of Figure 2). Finally, Figure 3 below shows the expert perceptions of fraud in each of the OECD countries. The United Kingdom is fairly high in comparison to the other countries on the list, but considering the wide scope of the question which will include types of fraud not connected to personation (including postal voting, a specific weakness of the UK system), and the low overall result, the UK does not appear to be especially outside the norm. This fits in with the other evidence collected which suggests no specific concerns on fraudulent votes in the UK. The crime statistics confirm the perceptions of experts. The rate of fraudulent votes cast in the UK is very low. The data collected by the Electoral Commission in 2018 saw only 57 cases of alleged voting fraud, and in 2017, the year of a general election, the number of allegations was only 104 (Electoral Commission 2017; Electoral Commission 2018a). Most of these led to no further action by the police. Overall, although the UK may have some areas of integrity which may be weaker than other comparable states, these do not often include voter fraud of the kind likely to be stopped by voter ID. This also emphasises the importance of understanding electoral integrity as a multi-faceted

phenomenon, as the UK's weaknesses lie in areas other than fraud. Thus, if integrity appears to be relatively high in the UK, then it is worth seeing how scholars have attempted to measure confidence in electoral integrity as a distinct phenomenon.

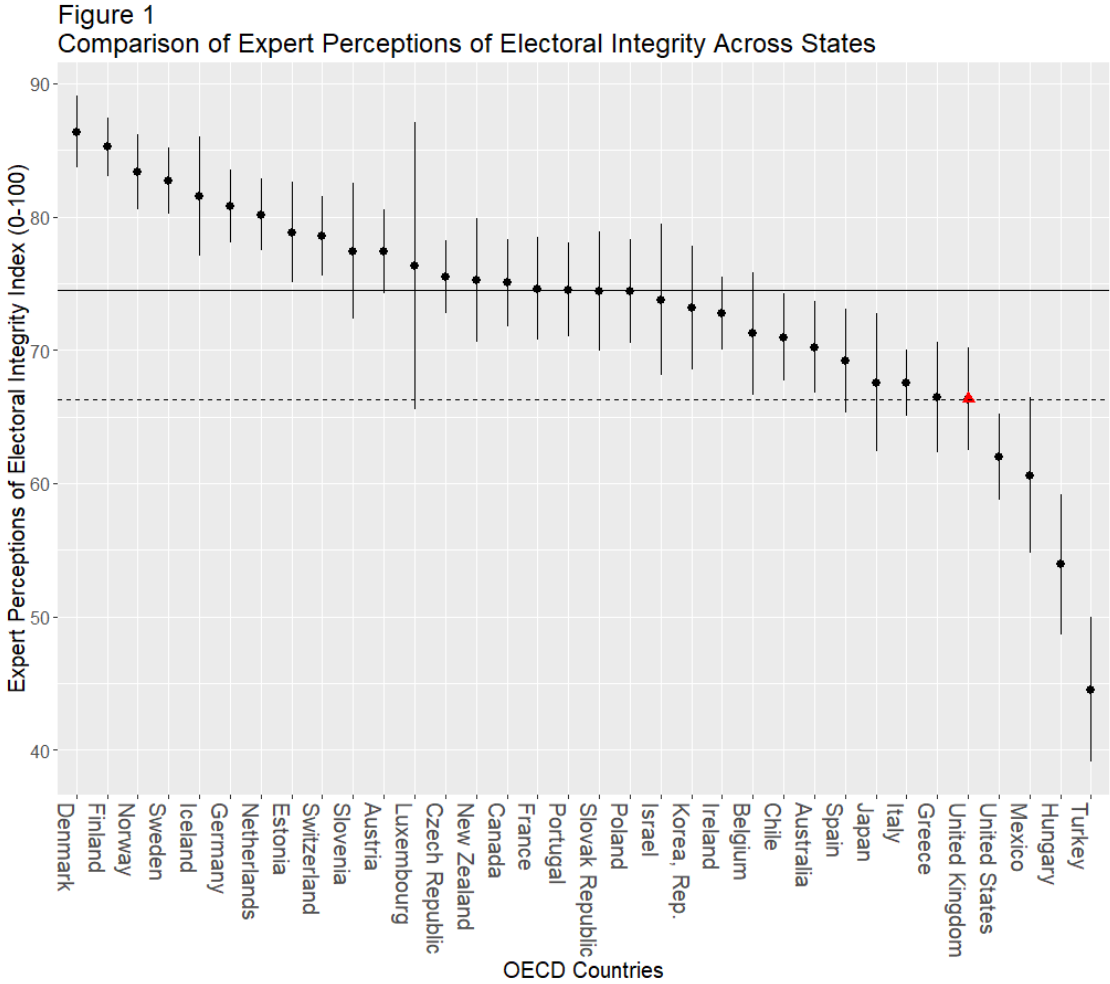


Figure 2
Comparison of OECD average and UK for elements of electoral integrity

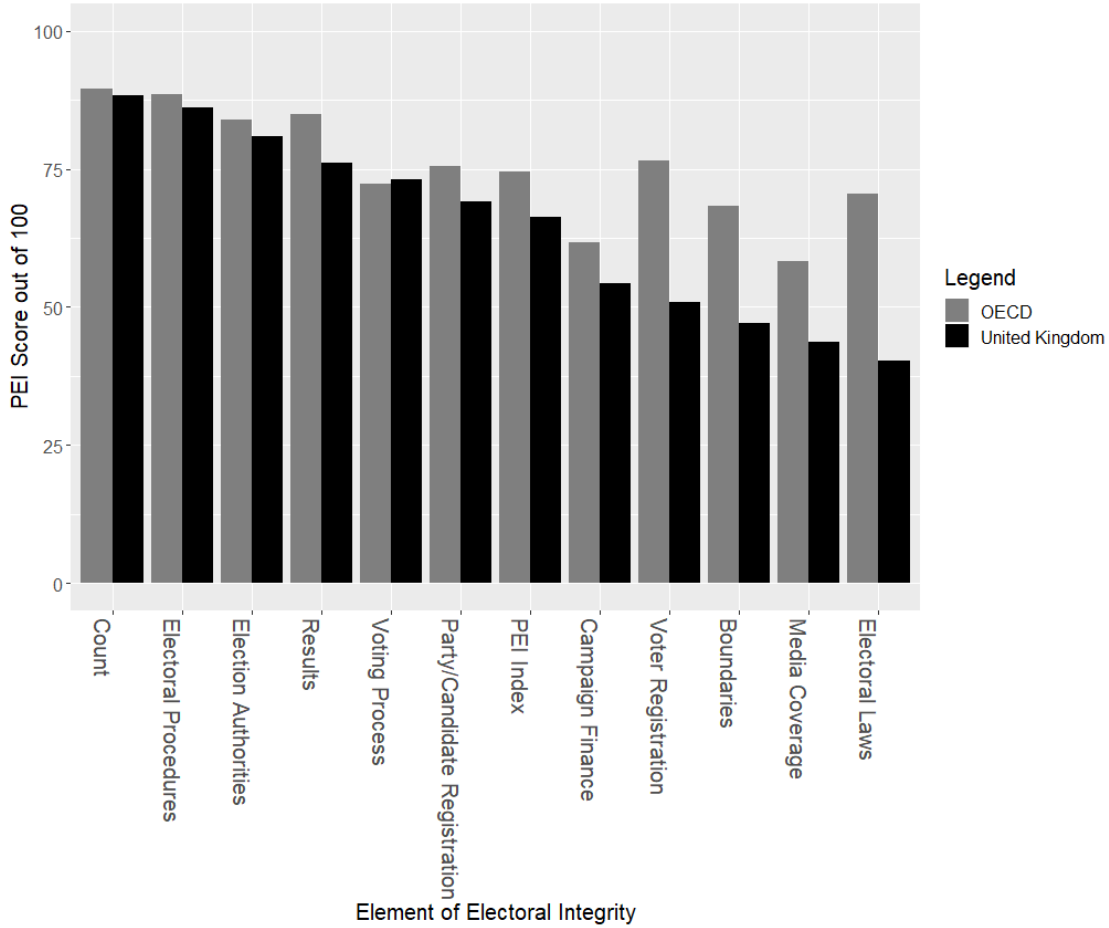
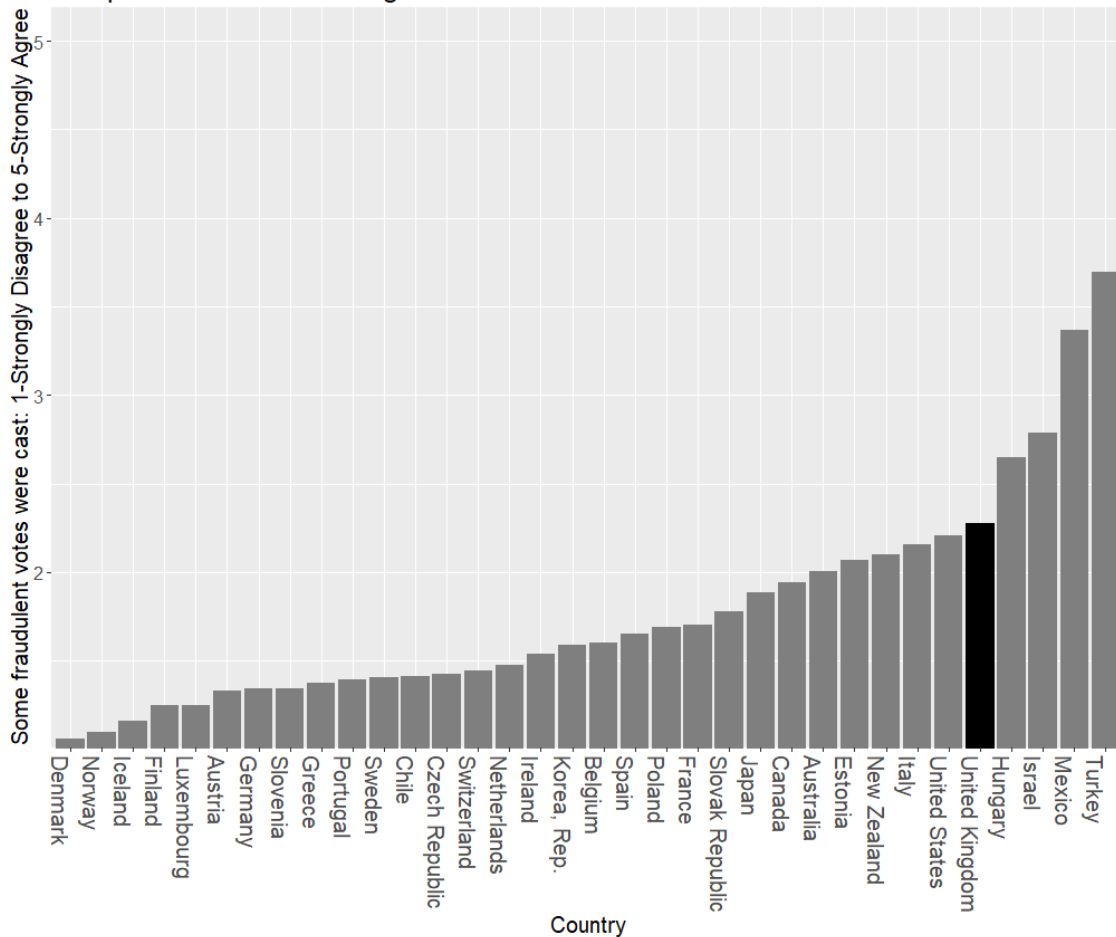


Figure 3
Comparison of OECD average and UK: fraudulent votes



Confidence in the electoral process in England

Public perceptions of electoral integrity have been low on the research agenda in the UK, despite their omnipresence in recent governmental and regulatory pronouncements on the topic. In fact, the topic has been generally under-studied across the world, as Birch argued in 2010 there has been ‘virtually no systematic consideration of what is arguably the most relevant aspect of institutional legitimacy: confidence in the electoral process itself’ (Birch 2010, p. 1603). The last systematic research on international confidence in the electoral process which included the UK used data from 1997 (Birch 2008). This gap in academic research means it is difficult to make general conclusions on the level of confidence in the UK.

The limited academic studies in the UK have focussed on the policies and institutional arrangements likely to affect confidence rather than on measuring confidence itself. James’ research on election management found based on interviews with election officials that election mishaps and manipulation can have a negative impact on voter confidence (James 2014). Wilks-Heeg has also written forcefully on how high-profile cases of fraud in the UK, particularly as they related to postal voting, have damaged public confidence in the process (2008). More recently Birch has written about how fraud in Tower Hamlets in 2014, British general election spending in 2015, and the honesty of the claims made during the 2016 Brexit referendum could all have had an impact on voter confidence (Birch 2018). This approach suggests that changes in policy to reduce the possibility of manipulation could be reasonably expected to improve perceptions of integrity. What all of these approaches have in common is their propensity towards explaining why confidence may or may not have decreased, rather than establishing measurements of confidence in general.

The current research on voter confidence in electoral processes in England is limited by a gap in academic attempts to measure the phenomenon which prevents any conclusions on what level of confidence the UK public have. However, the literature is limited in an even more fundamental way because there is no consensus on how confidence in the electoral process should be measured. This essential question must be considered before any attempt can be made to answer the specific question about the level of confidence in England.

What effect will voter ID have on confidence?

The final relevant aspect of the literature is on the impact mandatory voter ID has on confidence in the electoral process. Since the first voter ID trials in May 2018 there have been two academic studies on the impact of the policy in England. Stanford (2018) analysed the policy from a human rights perspective. Banducci, Stride and Testa (forthcoming) used survey evidence to evaluate the

impact of the voter ID pilots on turnout, and briefly assessed the effect of the reform on voters' perceptions of electoral fraud, finding limited evidence that the introduction of mandatory ID in polling stations reduced the overall perceptions of fraud. Considering this is the only current academic research on the impact of voter ID on confidence in England, research from other countries can be usefully considered as a weathervane for its likely effect. However, it will be found that there is no consensus on whether voter ID increases general public confidence.

First, there is the literature which seeks to assess whether voter ID reduces perceptions of fraud, which demonstrates no overall conclusion. Ansolabehere and Persily found that voters forced to show ID are equally likely to perceive fraud as their contemporaries who are not subject to an ID requirement (Ansolabehere and Persily 2008; Ansolabehere 2009). Bowler et al found that photo ID has limited effects on perceptions of electoral integrity (Bowler et al. 2015). However, Atkeson et al found that most voters (70%) in their sample tended to believe that voter ID laws work to prevent fraud (Atkeson et al. 2014). This complicates the question of voter ID laws' effects on perceptions of fraud, suggesting that in abstract voters may believe that voter ID prevents fraud, but when the measure is rolled out voters in the areas with the policy are equally likely to perceive fraud as those outside. Another possible mechanism by which perceptions of fraud could be affected by the introduction of mandatory voter ID is if the high-profile implementation of a policy designed to prevent fraud makes voters more suspicious about fraud in general. Where electoral fraud could previously have been an issue ignored by voters, it may become more salient. Thus, overall there is no consensus on whether voter ID reduces perceptions of fraud, and low perceptions of fraud are not the sum total of what it takes for the public to be confident in the process, hence why a multifaceted view will be introduced in chapter 2.

Secondly, there is the question of whether the introduction of voter ID decreases confidence because individuals may see the introduction of the policy as a deliberate attempt at voter suppression in order to benefit a single party. In the USA the evidence on voter ID's effect on confidence has suggested that generally the public do not see voter ID as a barrier to participation (Atkeson et al. 2014). However, responses are profoundly related to partisanship. Bowler and Donovan have found that the introduction of voter ID tends to make Republicans more confident but Democrats less confident in their elections (2016). Research has also found that voters are more likely to be concerned about fraud if it runs counter to their partisan interests and will not perceive the introduction of voter ID as suppressive unless it is perceived to harm their own party's electoral prospects (Beaulieu 2014). If a similar dynamic is to emerge in England, this could mean that voter ID, far from straightforwardly increasing confidence in the process, leads to some partisans

becoming more confident while others' confidence in the fairness of the system is reduced. Thus, the effect on confidence is more complicated than a simple positive or negative.

In conclusion, the literature review has revealed three important conclusions. First, elections in the UK are generally held with integrity and there is no specific problem regarding electoral fraud. Second, there is a gap in the literature on the level of confidence in the electoral process in England. Finally, there is no academic consensus on the effect voter ID has on confidence. Underpinning these last two conclusions is an even more fundamental question: how we measure public perceptions of electoral integrity? This question will form the basis on the next chapter.

Chapter 2: Measuring Perceptions of the Electoral Process

Introduction

This chapter will introduce the concept of measurement error to evaluate the existing academic methods for measuring public perceptions of electoral integrity across advanced democracies and construct an alternative approach. There will be four sections on aspects of potential measurement error: The systematisation of the background concept; question wording; mode effects; and sampling and coverage error. Of these, it will be found that the main potential sources of measurement error are the systematisation of the concept and error caused by the questions used. This chapter will conclude that current methods often use a top-down approach that starts with expert understandings of electoral integrity, therefore leaving the potential to miss elements the public themselves may identify within a specific political context. Second, current methods often consider confidence as a single-faceted phenomenon, therefore leaving open the possibility that confidence in different aspects may differ. Finally, this chapter will conclude that an alternative method – which considers disaggregated measures of confidence based on the results of qualitative interviews, will be a useful comparison and starting-point for further research.

Measurement Error

Throughout this chapter the measurement of confidence in the electoral process will be assessed using the framework of measurement error as elucidated by Weisberg (2005). In this context ‘error’ is not synonymous with mistake, but rather means the difference between the value observed by the researcher and the true value (Weisberg 2005, pp.18-19). In the case of perceptions of electoral integrity, potential measurement error will refer to any possibility for a difference between the observed attitude a population has towards the electoral process and its integrity, and the true attitude of the population. Importantly, this chapter is not arguing that the current methods have yielded inaccurate results. Instead, the aim of this chapter is to propose an alternative system which could be used to validate the results collected by other scholars and refine the concepts under investigation.

Concept Systematisation

The first significant room for deviation between the true value and the observed value of perceptions of electoral integrity is the definition of the concept under observation. Adcock and Collier (2001 p.530) describe how at the start of any process of measurement a background concept (defined as the diverse meanings associated with a given phenomenon) is transformed by

conceptualisation into a measurable systematised concept which takes the form of an unambiguous definition. The systematisation of the background concept must be precise, should include the important elements identified through interviews, and should lead to a series of questions likely to capture the systematised concept within a score (Adcock and Collier 2001). Therefore the first important step in measuring perceptions of electoral integrity is in precisely defining the composition of the phenomenon. As Sartori argued, the defectiveness of a concept results from its ambiguity and vagueness, and the concept of confidence in the electoral process has been beset by ambiguity between different studies (Sartori 1984).

As an illustrative example: some researchers make a distinction between trust and confidence. Norris has written on this at length: arguing that confidence is the belief in the capacity of an agency to perform its functions effectively, whereas trust is a rational belief in the benevolent motivation and performance capacity of another party (Norris 2017). Conversely, other researchers use the terms interchangeably, as Alvarez et al did in their 2008 study: 'Here we define trust in the electoral process as the confidence that voters have that their ballot is counted as intended' (Alvarez, Hall, and Llewellyn 2008, p. 755). We can already see how the definition of the concept under investigation is contested. It is possible that different researchers are trying to measure distinct phenomena and referring to them by the same name. Or even referring to the same phenomenon and using different names. In the case of public perceptions of electoral integrity, it will be concluded that all of the studies under review are referring to the same background concept – but their systematisations differ in their focus and risk missing important elements if transferred to the UK. As such, this research will suggest an alternative exploratory method where systematisation is based on the results of interviews with members of the public.

The aforementioned background concept is the main similarity between the studies included in this review. In all of the studies reviewed for this research, from across the world have included variations of the same background concept (Alvarez and Hall 2008; Alvarez, Hall, and Llewellyn 2008; Atkeson 2010; Atkeson and Saunders 2007; Birch 2008; Bowler and Donovan 2016; Bowler et al. 2015; Cantú and García-Ponce 2015; Hall, Quin Monson, and Patterson 2009; Karp, Nai, and Norris 2018; Kerr and Lührmann 2017; Rosas 2010). This is usually formulated as the public belief that the process by which they elect their representative is free, fair and legitimate, and often explains why this is crucial for the functioning of representative democracy. Atkeson's description is a succinct description of the movement from the background to a systematised concept:

‘The perception that citizens and voters have about the integrity of their vote and the election process more generally is critical because elections are the link between citizens and their elected officials. If voters do not have faith in this most fundamental aspect of a democratic society – the outcome of elections and the correct counting of votes – then the legitimacy of representative government might be at risk’ (Atkeson 2014, p.103)

Where these studies differ is in how they transform this background concept into a measurable systematised concept. In some cases, there is no distinction made between the background and systematised concept, or no rationalisation of why the systematised concept is the best way to capture the background concept. Take for example the 2014 study by Atkeson, where the definition from above is taken. It is unclear in this explanation why the systematised concept: whether votes are counted as intended, was the best indicator of the phenomenon described. Birch (2008) included a similar elucidation of the background concept but chose instead to measure ‘perceptions of the legitimacy and procedural fairness of the electoral process itself’ where people were asked to evaluate whether they thought elections in their country were conducted fairly (p. 307). These two systematisations may result in markedly different measures. A voter could have full confidence that their vote is counted as intended, but still be convinced that through the drawing of boundaries or the writing of election law that their vote is worthless. Atkeson’s measure would declare them as confident whereas Birch’s would not.

When scholars do explain why their systematised concept is the best fit for the background concept this can still reveal elements missing from the measurement. Kerr and Lührmann presented a rationale for selecting trust in the vote counting process as their systematised concept: ‘because it represents the stage of the electoral process that citizens are most likely to be intricately focused on and associate with the impartiality of election administration.’ (Kerr and Lührmann 2017, p. 54). However, there is still a possibility that this systematised concept, even if it is the most focussed on by citizens, may present a distorted picture of overall confidence. The question of whether votes are counted accurately/fairly may artificially inflate the level of confidence measured. By measuring a relatively uncontroversial element it is less likely there will be evidence of low confidence. This could be tested by collecting multiple different measures of confidence and testing each one against the others.

Other researchers have used a completely different systematisation in attempting to measure confidence by asking questions about perceptions of fraud (Ansolabehere and Persily 2008). Karp et al chose to systematise confidence as belief that the vote was free of malpractice (Karp, Nai, and

Norris 2018). This concept relates more closely to the idea of electoral malpractice than to the more normative question of fairness and is another important part of what could be seen as the overall phenomenon that allows the public to be confident in the legitimacy of the process. Yet still, belief in the non-existence of fraud may not be the last word in whether a person is confident in elections. It is another demonstration of how different focusses can fundamentally change the concept under investigation.

How best then to systematise the background concept? It is inevitable that elements will be missed. Completeness must always be sacrificed for efficiency in any empirical research. As Adcock and Collier argue, scholars should recognise that their systematisations emphasise different aspects of a background concept depending on their research goals, rather than claiming that their systematisation represents the one true version of a background concept (2001). However, the decision of what to include and what to miss out should be based on a theoretical foundation related to the concept under investigation. In this case, it should consider what the public in a given political context say when they communicate their perceptions of electoral integrity.

The problem of completeness when systematising the idea of perceptions of electoral integrity can be demonstrated by the example of electoral system design. Some researchers may consider electoral system design a part of electoral integrity (Norris and Grömping 2019). As substantive competition between parties is a part of electoral integrity, it would follow that an electoral system which usually results in disproportionate success for larger parties could be described as failings in the integrity of an election. However, other researchers may argue that the fairness of electoral system design should not be considered an element of electoral integrity as electoral system design is a question of political trade-offs between proportionality and stable government, rather than a simple question of more or less integrity. Thus, whether to include electoral system design or any other single facet of the electoral process is a complicated decision and needs to be made based on solid theoretical grounds. This is why this research takes a different approach to systematising the background concept. By determining what members of the public think of as electoral integrity through interviews we can determine what should be included within the systematised concept for that specific political context in a way that is theoretically meaningful. This approach may lead to expansive definitions of what falls within electoral integrity and may even contradict the sophisticated definitions provided in the specialist literature. However, this does not mean it is without value. By asking the public what they think about the phenomenon, including that they believe the phenomenon is, we may better understand their perceptions.

Questions and Respondent Error

The second major way in which the measures can deviate from the true level of confidence is through the choice of questions. This section will focus on two ways the choice of questions can cause issues for the measurement. The first is when the respondent does not provide the answers the researcher intended them to, most frequently because of ambiguities in the question wording. As Weisberg has stated: 'We minimize measurement error due to respondents by seeking the best way to word questions, and we do that by understanding how respondents process questions' (Weisberg p. 72). The second way is that surveys may leave part of the initial concept unexamined by only asking a single question. It will be found that the ambiguities in the systematised concept outlined in the previous chapter can result in unclear wording, and that a broader set of questions, covering a disaggregated set of indicators of confidence, could more appropriately capture individuals' perceptions of electoral integrity.

The most common questions used by scholars to measure confidence are based on whether voters believe their ballots were counted accurately or fairly (Alvarez, Hall, and Llewellyn 2008; Atkeson and Saunders 2007; Hall, Quin Monson, and Patterson 2009). There is some variation in these questions based on how specific they are. Alvarez, Hall and Llewellyn chose to ask the question as it related to a recent election: 'How confident are you that your ballot in the November of 2004 presidential contest between George Bush and John Kerry was counted as you intended?' (2008 p. 756). Whereas Kerr and Lührmann's version is much more general: 'respondents were asked to evaluate how often in their country's elections "votes are counted fairly."' (2017 p. 54). These two questions, although ostensibly attempting to measure the same variable, could result in different answers based on the respondent's interpretation. Kerr and Lührmann focus on the general principle of the fairness of the vote count, which may lead respondents to make value-judgments on the qualities of the electoral system. Whereas Alvarez, Hall and Llewellyn are more narrowly focussed on the mechanical aspect – whether the vote was counted as the respondent intended. This either suggests that the two questions are intending to measure a different concept while referring to it by the same name or that one of the two questions could result in a measurement error caused by the respondent's miscomprehension of the question (Weisberg 2005 p.74). Qualitative interviews can act as an important laboratory for testing how respondents interpret questions, as will be seen in chapter 3.

Birch utilised a different measure by analysing survey responses based on whether respondents believed the last election in their country was conducted fairly (2008). 'In some countries, people believe their elections are conducted fairly. In other countries, people believe that their elections are

conducted unfairly. Thinking of the last election in [country], where would you place it on this scale of one to five...' (Birch 2008 p. 310) This is an important general question related to confidence in the overall process. However, the answers would not offer any information over which aspects made the individual question the process. In this case the question may capture the concept broadly-defined, but as Birch argues 'the question might have been interpreted slightly differently in different countries, depending on variations in common perceptions of the electoral process. For this reason, the concept behind the variable 'confidence in electoral conduct' is interpreted in a fairly general manner in this analysis' (2008 p.310). Thus, a question can increase the chances of measurement error by being imprecise or culturally contingent. Ambiguous wording can open up a gap between the question the researchers are attempting to ask the respondent and the question they are actually answering (Tourangeau, Rips, and Rasinski 2000).

Another restriction on the existing research is that most of the studies here have focussed on the way a respondent answers a single question where multiple questions are usually more appropriate for measuring the true value, and for validating the findings of each measure. Bowler et al (2015) chose to ask multiple questions instead: 'in your view, how often do the following things occur in this country's elections... votes are counted fairly, and...election officials are fair.'(p.4). This approach can then allow the researchers to determine variation between the perceptions of different parts of the electoral process. The disaggregated method of analysing voter confidence is taken to its most comprehensive level by Norris, who gives an inclusive list of different questions on electoral integrity and electoral malpractice using World Values Survey data (Norris 2014, p. 105). Respondents were asked how often the following happen, all related to electoral integrity: 'votes are counted fairly,' 'journalists provide fair coverage of elections', 'election officials are often fair', 'voters are often offered a genuine choice in the elections'. Then, on electoral malpractice, how often the following happen: 'Opposition candidates are often prevented from running', 'TV news often favours the governing party', 'voters are often bribed', 'rich people often buy elections', 'voters are often threatened with violence at the polls' (p. 105). This series of questions allow for the measurement of disaggregated perceptions of electoral integrity. However, because these questions were designed for comparison between states, even within this list there are possible elements missing which could only be derived by investigating the views within a polity. With a theoretically limited systematised concept using qualitative studies to determine culturally specific areas of electoral integrity, it would be possible to include questions covering the largest possible range of significant factors.

In conclusion, more specific question wording and questions designed to measure disaggregated elements of confidence can have positive effects on the utility of a measurement. Asking multiple questions also gives an opportunity to validate any single score (Adcock and Collier 2001). Overall, by

using qualitative interviews first to determine the way the public considers elections it would be possible to minimise question ambiguity and include many of the relevant factors in a disaggregated measure.

Mode effects and Survey Types

A smaller criticism of the way in which researchers have chosen to measure perceptions of electoral integrity is based on the conduct of the surveys. Modes can affect the results of a survey. They can lead to different levels of nonresponse, or to different types of respondents, different rates of participation, and differing answers due to social desirability effects (Tourangeau, Rips, and Rasinski 2000; Weisberg 2005). Reviewing the survey modes used so far by researchers does not result in any clear best methods – but it remains an important way in which future measurements of perceptions of electoral integrity (for example that in chapter 4) should be considered and compared. However, the research does point to an important conclusion regarding survey timings: the timing of a survey on perceptions of electoral integrity is significant, especially as it related to an election.

Timing these surveys is an important aspect of measuring confidence. As claimed by Cantú and García-Ponce (2015) ‘Most of the literature on perceptions of electoral integrity relies on surveys conducted either before election day or after the results were made public. This convention inevitably creates noise in the accuracy of the reported assessments, as well as in the identification of voters and non-voters.’ (p. 2) To address this problem they used surveys to measure the attitudes of citizens before and after election day and an exit poll on election day. This method could be seen as the gold-standard, because the proximity of a survey to an election can have a major effect on confidence. For example, an elector whose preferred candidate loses may have been confident in the process before the election but be more suspicious after. This is why the exploratory study in chapter 4 includes a survey taken before an election, one after, and interviews on the election day.

Sampling Error and Coverage Error

Finally, another important way in which measurements of perceptions of electoral integrity should be considered is based on their sampling of the population, the assumptions underlying it, and the implications it has for generalisability. Sampling error is error that occurs because the sample of the population used in a survey is not representative of the population as a whole, meaning that the results of the survey cannot be validly generalised (Weisberg 2005). Coverage error is when a sampling frame omits elements from who differ significantly from those included in a way that is theoretically important (Weisberg 2005). The coverage of some sampling frames, especially when non-voters are omitted by design, is a less complete method for understanding perceptions of

electoral integrity. Various researchers ask questions focussed only on the experience of voters (Alvarez, Hall, and Llewellyn 2008; Atkeson and Saunders 2007). However, the attitude of non-voters is also important for the legitimacy of the contest, especially because non-voters may remain non-voters for a reason related to the dependent variable e.g. if their confidence in the integrity of the process is too low. Thus it is important that the measurement of perceptions of electoral integrity takes into account the sampling – and how the sample may differ from the population as a whole, and the coverage, making sure not to omit theoretically important elements of the population.

Conclusion on the Current Methods and an Alternative

The current attempts to measure public perceptions of the electoral process have been based on a top-down approach where experts use their understandings of electoral integrity to measure the public's own attitudes. Most commonly these have relied on a single survey measure. Norris (2014) has introduced an alternative way of considering perceptions of electoral integrity; focussed on disaggregating general confidence into perceptions of individual aspects of the process. This represents an important step in measuring perceptions of electoral integrity in a way that can be validated. This can be coupled with exploratory research into the way the public talks about issues of electoral integrity which may reveal previously unconsidered aspects. These alternatives, if they appear, can be considered important just by their very existence, even if they do not fit into the existing schema for understanding electoral integrity. By problematising the systematised concepts used in previous research, it should be possible to better understand confidence as it actually exists in England (Sandberg and Alvesson 2011, 2013).

The alternative approach to measuring perceptions of electoral integrity will be based on qualitative interviews with members of the public as a starting point for refining the systematisation of the concept. After the initial exploratory research, existing surveys will be used to see whether the results of the qualitative interviews can be backed up by wider quantitative data, and to see whether there are elements of the perception of electoral integrity which appeared important within the qualitative research that are absent from the quantitative measure. This is not to say that the interviews are important only for how they can refine the quantitative measurement of perceptions of electoral integrity. The strictly positivist approach to perceptions of electoral integrity – that it is a phenomenon that exists in the world and can be exactly measured, may be contrasted by how the interviews demonstrate the different ways people construct and rationalise their level of confidence in the process (Kvale 2007).

The interviews therefore serve two purposes: one, to act as an alternate source of knowledge on perceptions of electoral integrity, one that can be interpreted through a less positivistic lens to

understand the reality of confidence as it exists in the minds of the interviewees (Porta and Keating 2008). Second, to refine the concepts being measured using quantitative methods. This triangulating approach should allow for a more nuanced understanding of a concept which until now has been dominated by purely quantitative methodology with its underlying ontological assumptions (Porta and Keating 2008). This is a sequential exploratory strategy – quantitative methods that build on the result of qualitative methods (Creswell 2009). The contention of this research is that introducing a new method can only strengthen the existing research and help to verify the findings of previous research – as well as acting as an appropriate means to start forming an understanding of confidence in England.

The 2019 Voter ID Trials

The 2019 voter ID trials in England will be used as a natural experiment to test the applicability of this new approach. The voter ID trials used ten local authorities to test the effects of three different ID requirements on voters (Cabinet Office 2019, see Appendix 2 for specific requirements). In each of these local authorities voters were then required to show a form of identification before being able to vote at a polling station in the May 2019 local elections. This represents an important natural experiment for assessing perceptions of electoral integrity, considering one of the aims of the pilot scheme was to increase confidence in the integrity of the electoral process (Cabinet Office 2019). The next two chapters will use the 2019 voter ID trials to test this method: chapter 3 will focus on the use of qualitative interviews to determine the areas of electoral integrity which inspire confidence and those which the public express doubt over. Chapter 4 will then use large-scale survey data collected for the Electoral Commission to examine the measurement of perceptions of confidence based on this experiment.

Chapter 3: Interviews on the Voter ID Trials

In order to better understand the composition of public perceptions of electoral integrity and the effect that voter ID may have on it, the results of 19 semi-structured interviews from outside a polling station in Woking on Thursday 2nd May will be analysed. In answering open-ended questions members of the public gave their opinions on electoral integrity and voter ID. Theoretically, this could avoid the problem of priming participants to answer questions based on elements of electoral integrity determined by experts. The use of interviews is based on the idea that interviews can act as a means to see inside the meanings people create about a phenomenon (Silverman 2006). Thus, the study was designed to be descriptive rather than explanatory – the results from the interview would allow for a deeper understanding of how people think about elections. The interviews are intended to act as the first in a series of attempts to gauge how members of the public think and feel about electoral integrity. Overall, the answers provided presented evidence supporting the idea members of the public have a complex and multifaceted understanding of electoral integrity included elements which may have been missed in previous studies using large-scale surveys. The results of the interviews will then be used to test the quality of the measurement attempted in chapter 4.

Conducting the Interviews

In total, 19 members of the public were interviewed outside the polling station in Woking. They were all asked several questions for between two and ten minutes on the voter ID trials and their views on elections in the UK more generally. The participants were selected solely based on their willingness to take part. There was no systematic sampling, and nobody who agreed to take part was denied the opportunity. The interviews conducted for this event were semi-structured, meaning the questions asked were open to changes in form and sequence to follow up answers given by the interviewees (Kvale 2007; see appendix 1 for a list of the basic questions asked). The reason behind this specific form of interviewing was because the interview had to be rigid enough stay on a specific theme (elections) but had to be flexible enough to allow the interviewee to express their opinions in as detailed a way as possible.

Interviews are, as explained by Mason: an interactional exchange, informal, thematic and designed on the assumption that knowledge is contextual (Mason 2002). Interviews were suitable for this task compared to non-interactive forms of collecting non-numerical data because they allow for the interviewer to direct the conversation towards important themes (Kvale 2007). Interviews were also

considered more appropriate than focus groups or other forms of collective qualitative data-gathering because of the private nature of voting, although this could be reconsidered for subsequent studies. After the interviews were recorded, they were transcribed, and the answers split into a number of themes based on condensed versions of the sentiments expressed. These were then counted to see which sentiments were common (Kvale 2007). Finally, these themes were compared across the different interviewees and patterns of perceptions were identified. Quotes were selected to represent these specific patterns of sentiments and these were included in the following section.

Election Integrity

The participants were asked two broad questions to determine their baseline opinion about electoral integrity: whether they believe elections are free and fair and what they think the biggest problems with elections in the UK are. These questions provoked a range of different answers indicating differing levels of confidence in the process in general. Overall the key themes which emerged were: suspicion about the security of elections, belief that the availability of trustworthy information is a problem, questions on the fairness of the electoral system and political choice, and turnout. Again, this diversity even within a small sample demonstrates the remarkable range of how people feel about elections in the UK.

Various respondents indicated suspicion about the security of the elections: referring to ‘stories about Tower Hamlets’ or ‘computer interference’. However, overall most the respondents indicated that they were unconcerned with fraud or corruption. One participant offered an alternative perspective when asked whether they believed elections in the UK were free and fair: ‘Yes, precisely as mentioned earlier the fact that there is no pressure. I come from a country where...ok basically everybody’s fighting for your vote and you know this thing about guns, goons and gold? It’s a given.’ By contrasting their experience of voting in the UK with the corruption they had witnessed in their home country, the respondent emphasized the relative lack of electoral violence, intimidation or bribery in UK elections. Overall, when asked about whether the system was free and fair, very few respondents seemed concerned that the system was marred by corruption.

A more common concern amongst interviewees was to do with the availability of information and media bias. From one participant: ‘I mean you’re always going to have people paying a lot for like media, media presence, and having issues that may not be represented truthfully. I just keep thinking about the Brexit vans...’ Another interviewee took this even further when they stated the biggest problem was: ‘Propaganda. Just public sway based on propaganda. Incorrect facts.’ This sentiment was echoed by a respondent who spoke about the difficulty of regulating social media

campaigns: 'Social media's a lot more difficult to regulate. Because it shouldn't be regulated, the internet shouldn't be regulated. But because it's not regulated it's also harder to track where money is being put in from into certain campaigns...' The fact that several respondents viewed access to information on the electoral process as a major facet offers another way in which members of the public consider elections. This could point to a public conceptualization of elections as a process in which access to unbiased information is a major part of integrity.

Various respondents questioned the fairness of First Past the Post as an electoral system. 'Fair? I don't know, I think the electoral system is wrong to be honest. There should be more proportional representation.' From another participant: 'First past the post means you vote for one party you feel your vote is wasted. For instance, if you... Working for instance. Conservatives have won every election since the dawn of time. So, as a Labour voter, my Labour vote is wasted.' If they believe their vote is 'wasted', it is understandable why they might believe the system is unfair. These interview subjects took the question of fairness and attached their experience of believing their votes were not sufficiently recognised and that they did not get enough choice within their candidates.

Another common refrain in the perceived problems with elections was to do with turnout and interest in elections. A typical expression of concern on engagement: 'If the numbers of people voting do drop and continue to drop then yes there's a problem in that people aren't voting. What the solution to that is I don't know. But yeah that would be a problem if people weren't engaged.' Another respondent tied the problem of low engagement to that of fatigue: 'I think it's just you know voters are tired and exhausted and overwhelmed so it's a lot easier to just stick your head in the sand and not do it.'

The main conclusion we can draw from the answers to these questions is that even with this small relatively homogenous selection there were a range of concerns that emerged as prevalent themes with no prompting, each of which offered evidence of why a single question in a survey does not capture the full measure of people's opinions on elections. When asked about freedom and fairness, answers ranged from the electoral system, the media and access to information, choice of political candidates and the security of the electoral process arose as important themes, and interpretations differed between members of the public as to why each of these was important.

Assessments of neutrality and confidence

I then asked participants the most common question from previous studies on confidence: whether they believed their vote would be counted properly at the count centre. No respondents showed

any concern that there would be issues with counting the votes, apart from a few who took the question to mean whether their vote would count for anything in this specific election – who took the opportunity to criticise First Past the Post: ‘As long as we don’t have proportional representation my vote will never be counted properly.’ There are two conclusions we can draw from this: first, confidence in the way it is most frequently measured appeared to be high amongst the participants. Second: the traditional way of measuring perceptions of electoral integrity appears to miss the nuanced assessments individuals make. However, this question is certainly worth asking. The fact that these participants did not appear concerned does not mean that this would not be a concern to others. Also, in measuring perceptions of electoral integrity it does not help to systematise a concept to only include areas where the public has doubt. It is as important to know when the public believe the process is working as knowing when they believe it is flawed.

These answers also lend some credence to the points made about question ambiguity in Chapter 2. If these members of the public were confused about the choice of words and gave different answers based on whether they believed I was asking about whether the mechanics of the vote count were working properly or the principals behind it, then it is possible that the same ambiguity in previous studies would have resulted in occurrences of the same misunderstanding and the subsequent potential measurement error.

Voter ID

The respondents were then asked a series of questions about voter ID which introduced a number of new themes. The idea that the government must take precautionary measures, the admission by many of the participants that they lacked knowledge on the subject, concerns about the effect of the reform on turnout, and the idea that the reform was being introduced to confer partisan advantage. Overall, however, the participants had a largely positive view of voter ID and the effect it would have on the electoral process.

When asked why they believed voter ID was being introduced, the most common response was that it was an attempt to stop fraud. ‘I guess the indication would be to stop voter fraud for a large part. Because I guess in essence there’s not a lot that can stop that at the minute.’ In this assessment, as many others, voter ID is designed as a preventative measure. Overall, respondents were virtually united in believing that fraud would be less likely, occasionally tempered by theories on the other consequences the reform could have. This again demonstrates the importance of a more dynamic measure of confidence. A response such as this: ‘I think it’s [voter ID] a double-edged sword because yes on one hand absolutely it’s the logical step. But equally it may well put people off that may not find it a good idea.’ Is difficult to quantify as either more or less confident in the integrity of elections

in the UK – agreeing that voter ID could reduce fraud (more integrity) but worrying that it could suppress turnout (reduce integrity).

Then, there were the more hostile responses to the policy. The most notable of which framed voter ID as designed to grant a partisan advantage to the Conservative party, in an extreme version of James's theory of 'elite statecraft' (James 2010). 'Because the Conservative Party want less poor people to vote because poor people will probably vote Labour... Yeah because poor people might not be able to afford a driving license or a passport and you're suddenly putting a price on voting which isn't fair.' This respondent identified themselves as a Labour voter and said they had been turned away from the polling station because they had failed to provide ID – although said they would return later with the necessary identification. This response is informative in two ways: first, it demonstrates partisan framing of voter ID echoing elite cues on the subject. Second, it indicated frustration caused by the imposition of this new rule. The respondent was not concerned about the intentional depression of Labour turnout in an abstract sense; they implied that they themselves had been a victim of this policy. Thus, even within this small sample, the range of different effects ID can have on confidence, especially between partisans, was on display.

The Occurrence of Fraud

When asked about fraud the answers suggested that members of the public can simultaneously have three distinct opinions on the prevalence of fraud: first, its occurrence where they live. Second, the extent to which it is a problem across the country. Third, and most importantly, that fraud can be a problem in some areas of the UK without being a general problem. There was not widespread concern at the level of fraud either in Woking or across the UK. However, some respondents expressed concern about areas where they believed fraud could be more prevalent. Places mentioned included: 'Birmingham, London, Bradford, Leicester.' Another respondent stated: 'I think Tower Hamlets is a famous case...I think in the UK there's sporadic occasional outbursts which I tend to think are usually then found out and tackled.' One other respondent theorised about the types of areas where fraud might be more prevalent, mentioning 'high net-worth areas' where it was likely to be less common and 'flat areas where people can just go and grab people's polling cards' (presumably meaning people living in flats) where fraud might be more common. Overall, questions on the rate of fraud have opened up new avenues for thinking about how the public considers electoral fraud as a threat to electoral integrity. There is a differentiation between their local area, the United Kingdom as a whole, and the specific areas where they may believe fraud is more common, which should be considered when analysing public perceptions of electoral integrity.

Conclusions

Having considered these results, there are three major conclusions we can draw. First, what the public considers important when talking about electoral integrity, should be used to more accurately systematise the concept: suspicion about the security of elections, the availability of information, media bias, social media regulation, electoral system design and proportionality, the political choices available to voters, fraud across the UK/fraud where they live, fraud in some areas, election accessibility, and voter engagement. The questions about voter identification also raised important points about perceptions of electoral integrity. Concerns about the effect on turnout, the possibility of partisan advantage motivating the reform, and the idea that the reform would protect against electoral fraud. Overall any measure of perceptions of electoral integrity relating to voter identification should seek to take these attitudes into account to fully cover even just this limited selection of different opinions on electoral integrity. Second, public perceptions of electoral integrity are complex. When assessing voter ID many participants both raised concerns about the effect on participation, as well as suggesting they believe the measure would reduce fraud. This suggests that members of the public assess electoral integrity across multiple different evaluative criteria and make careful distinctions rather than simply becoming more or less confident in an uncritical way. Finally, we can construct a few hypotheses from this evidence about patterns we may expect to see in public perceptions of electoral integrity. First, that the voter ID trials will probably increase confidence and reduce perceptions of fraud. Second, that the public will give different answers on different elements of electoral integrity. Finally, partisanship will be a significant predictor of the differences between confidence in different elements of electoral integrity.

Methodological Review

The qualitative interviews have a number of weaknesses which further studies should seek to ameliorate. First, the sample must be larger and more representative. The way the interviewees were selected predisposed the respondents to be voters, from Woking, in possession of ID, and possibly more inclined towards sharing their opinion-meaning they may be more politically engaged. A larger sample would improve its generalisability and scope. The more cases we have, the surer we can be that we have covered most ways people think about electoral integrity in the UK. A larger sample would also most likely necessitate more interviewers. This would strengthen the research again by allowing for an assessment of the reliability of the interviews (Kvale 2007). Within the current research there is no way of knowing if the identity of the single interviewer led to any bias in the results (for example, by intimidating certain groups of respondents or subconsciously encouraging one type of response).

Second, any subsequent study must take note of demographic and attitudinal characteristics of the participants. These are included as standard in the quantitative research on the subject, but because of ethical considerations (and the interviewer's inexperience with the process of interviewing) were not included here. This will be an obstacle to overcome when conducting similar studies in the future. Anonymity and the secrecy of the ballot are both essential, but knowing how a person voted and their ethnicity, religion and gender, are important for understanding their experience of the electoral process. As of yet, there is no simple way to balance these two requirements for future research. Also, by including characteristics of the participants it will be possible to make the sample more representative by including quotas for sampling.

Two other limitations occurred in the analysis phase. First, the transcripts were all analysed by the same person, meaning there could be no testing for intersubjectivity (Kvale 2007). There has been no attempt to test whether the biases of the analyst have had any effect on the validity of the analysis. Second, the small size of the study meant that it was possible for a single person to analyse all of the interview answers without the aid of specialist software, but at a larger scale either hand-coding by a group of researchers or software-assisted thematic coding and categorisation would be necessary.

Overall the main strength of the qualitative interviews is that they have introduced a new type of data on citizen's analysis of electoral integrity in England. The results of the interviews themselves are important for showing the diversity in citizen understandings of election integrity. Also, the interviews, by relaxing the assumption that knowledge is context-free, also allow for us to examine how understandings of perceptions of electoral integrity are constructed differently in different contexts (Porta and Keating 2008). Future research may result in vastly different interpretations from the respondents, which may in turn demonstrate the importance of context for determining the construction of perceptions of electoral integrity.

Conclusion

Analysing these interview transcripts has allowed for a more nuanced understanding of how a small selection of the public thinks about electoral integrity. The results of these open-ended interviews have demonstrated how diverse and complex citizen assessments of integrity are. The traditional questions: including asking whether elections are fair or whether individuals believe their votes will be counted properly, appear to hide more complicated views about different aspects of electoral integrity. This study could be improved if replicated on a larger scale, with more questions and with a more diverse sample. In the next chapter this study will use these qualitative interviews to inform further quantitative work. Both by testing whether the answers from the qualitative study are

captured in the measurement, therefore adding to our understanding of the measurement error, and by testing whether any of the relationships noted in the qualitative interviews can be replicated using quantitative data.

Chapter 4: Testing Survey Data on the Voter ID Trials

Introduction

The voter ID pilots were accompanied by surveys conducted by BMG research before and after the May 2019 elections (BMG 2019a). BMG surveys covered the pilot local authorities before (January-February, not including Craven due to late confirmation) and just after the elections (n=3771) and another control survey covering every English local election area just after the local elections (n=1011) (Electoral Commission 2019a). These data collected for the Electoral Commission include rich information on demographic and attitudinal characteristics, as well as many questions on a range of different topics related to elections and election integrity. This chapter will be split into two parts: first, a section testing the results of the surveys to determine the validity and the utility of the measure. Second, a further attempt to use the concept of measurement error to determine the ways in which the measure used here could be improved. It will be concluded that the surveys conducted for the Electoral Commission represent an important means by which to assess confidence in the electoral process with regards to voter identification. However, the design of the experiment itself, alongside limits in the measurement caused by the design of the survey, mean that the reliability of this measurement, and the generalisability of its results, cannot be straightforwardly assumed. Alongside this, the measurement designed here, and the use of a mixed-methods approach for evaluating public perceptions of electoral integrity will be found to be valuable – especially insofar as the use of qualitative interviews can inform the areas of public confidence in need of further study.

Constructing a Confidence Index

Using the available data, the first aim of this research was to create an index to act as a basic means to determine overall perceptions of electoral integrity. This was achieved using the results of eight questions all answered on a scale of '1-Not a problem' to '5-Serious problem':

'How much of a problem do you think that each of the following is in the UK at the moment?'
Electoral fraud
Bias in the media
Low voter turnout at elections
Barriers to democratic participation for minority groups
Foreign influence on UK election results (e.g. funding, campaigning activity, disinformation or cyber-crime)
Inadequate regulation of political activity on social media
Intimidation of candidates that stand for election
Inadequate regulation of the money political parties spend on their election campaigns

First, any answers which were marked as 'Don't know' for any of the categories were removed. Then, the remaining answers for each respondent were summed and divided by the number of valid answers to give a mean value of each respondents overall belief in the seriousness of these election problems. Then these were transformed into a positive scale of 0-100 where 0 indicated that for every valid answer given to these eight questions the respondent had selected 'serious problem', and 100 indicated that for every answer they had given they had selected 'not a problem'. This is referred to as the 'confidence index' where full confidence (100) means believing that none of these aspects present a problem.

Testing the Measurement

These four tests have been developed to determine both what the measurement tells us about perceptions of electoral integrity in the UK, and how valid the measurement is. The first three tests focus on using the data to examine the substantive conclusions we can draw about perceptions of electoral integrity in the UK derived from the qualitative research. The last two tests take a different route and test the measurement here against previous research and expert perceptions.

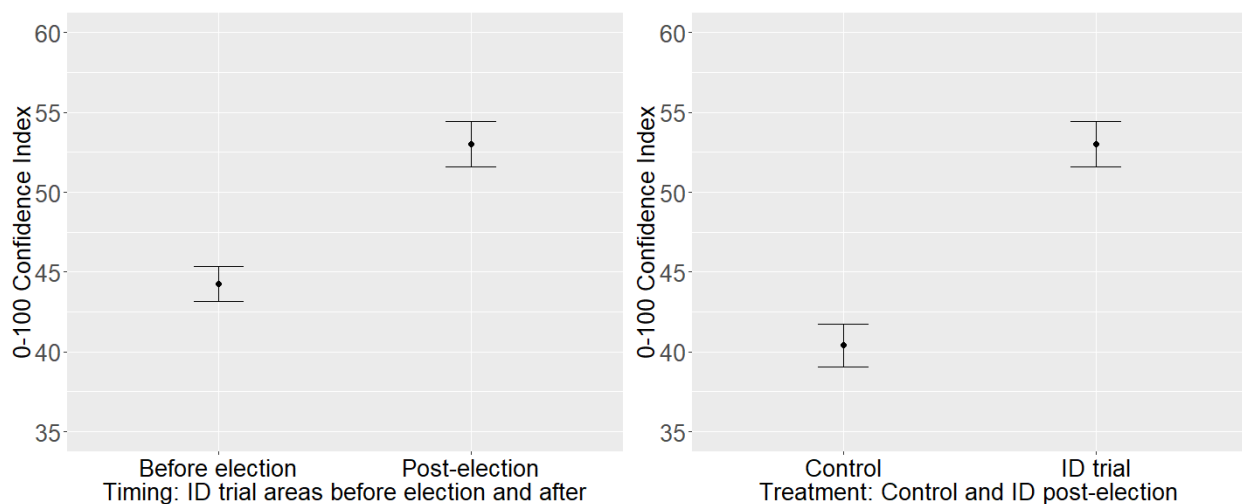
1. *The measure will suggest members of the public will be less concerned about problems with the electoral process after the voter ID trials*
2. *Questions on different aspects of the electoral process will suggest differing levels of public confidence*
3. *The independent variables of significance in other studies (Age, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic grade, and education) will have significant effects in this study*

4. *Members of the public and experts will share concerns on the elements of the electoral process which they believe to be a problem*

The effect of voter ID on confidence

The first theory is that the measure will suggest there has been a perceptible drop in concern over electoral integrity after the ID pilots. This is not in line with expectations derived from scholarship in the USA, but would confirm the expectations from the qualitative interviews. The diagram below (figure 4) suggests that the mean average aggregate confidence did increase in the voter ID trial areas after the election and were perceptibly higher in the voter ID trial areas after the election than in the non-ID trial control areas. Models 1 and 2 (overleaf) also suggest there is a significant relationship between the presence of voter ID checks and higher confidence in the overall process. This fits into the overall estimate derived from the qualitative interviews, where most people interviewed were positive about the effects of the voter ID trials. However, the evidence from figure 4 may be obscuring more complex changes in differing public estimates in different elements of the electoral process, which leads on to the next theory.

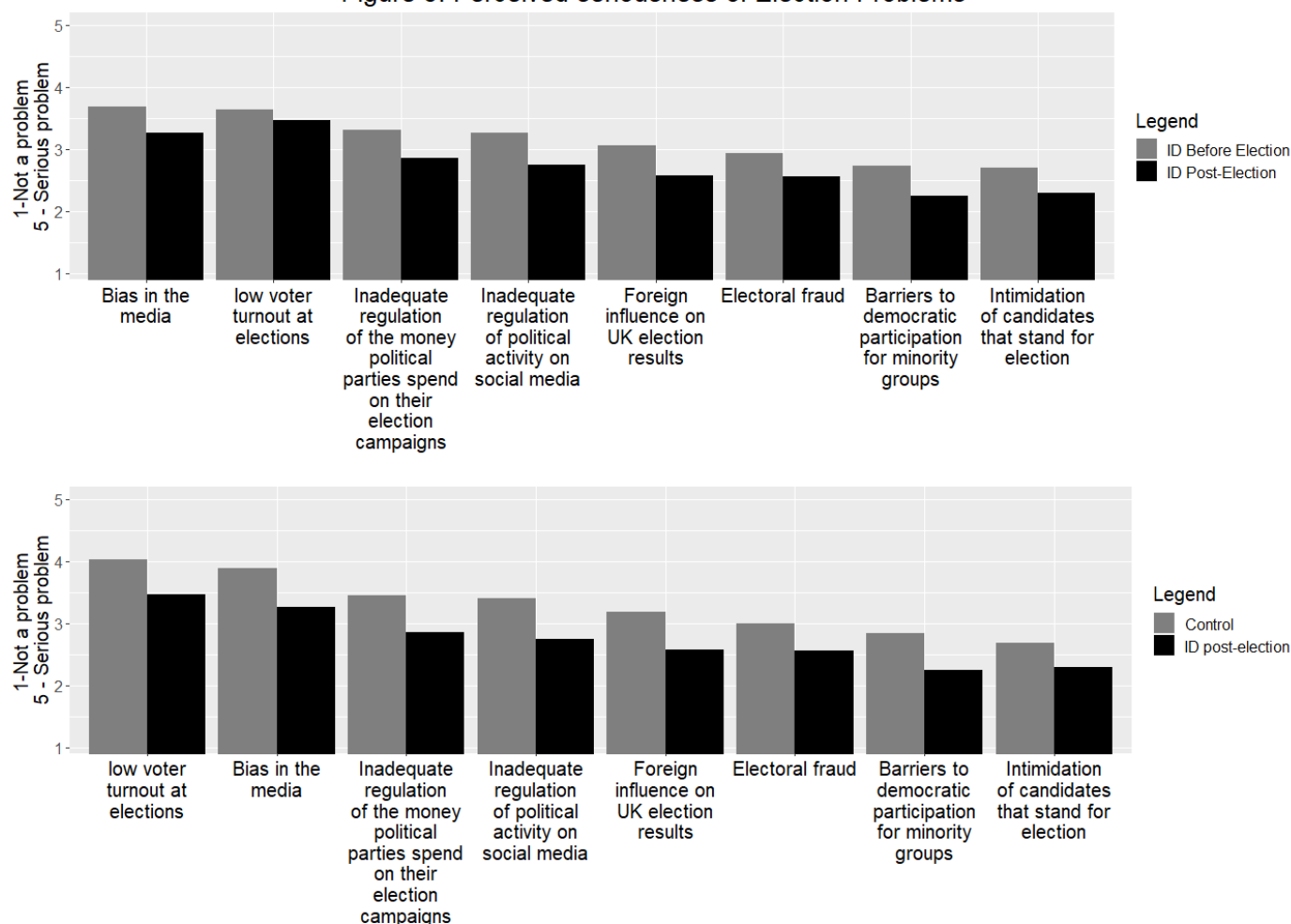
Figure 4
Average confidence in the
non-existence of election problems



Different aspects of voter confidence

The second theory is that members of the public make different judgements on different elements of the electoral process, lending credence to the idea that multiple measures are important for understanding the phenomenon. The graph below can help to illuminate the findings on overall confidence. By considering confidence as a disaggregated phenomenon, in the same way as Norris (2014) we can see that, although confidence overall has risen in the ID trial areas, compared to before the election (and compared to the control areas after the election) the average results conceal the deep differences between elements. First, the graphs below show that fraud, the element most likely to be materially effected by the introduction of voter ID, is not the only element where public concern dropped. In fact, across the different elements it appears that the mean average of all the public perceptions of election problems fell. This necessitates further research to explain why it is exactly that a relatively minor reform to one aspect of voting could have changed opinions across the different elements. Unless there are other effects occurring that we are not yet able to measure. The more important conclusion to take from this, from the perspective of

Figure 5: Perceived seriousness of Election Problems



measuring public perceptions of electoral integrity is that members of the public discriminate between different elements when deciding on their level of confidence. This fits in with the hypothesis that it is worth measuring different elements of voter confidence, considering that if the public frequently discriminate between elements of electoral integrity, and these differing levels aggregate into recognisable patterns, it follows that measuring different aspects is a fruitful way to understand the phenomenon.

Nomological validity

The third theory developed to test the utility and validity of this measurement is the idea that the independent variables found to have a significant relationship with confidence in other studies will also be significant here. The idea behind this test is from Adcock and Collier's (2001) theory of nomological validation, aptly summed up in the acronym AHM: 'Assume the Hypothesis, Evaluate the Measure' (p.542). What is being assumed here is that the independent variables found to have a significant effect in other studies on voter confidence (mainly from the US) will also be significant here, and that the direction of the correlation will be the same. This would provide some evidence that the measure being used here is measuring a comparable phenomenon – assuming the validity of previous studies and the causal relationships they have determined.

To this end OLS regression analysis has been performed on the two datasets (comparing the ID trial areas before and after the election and the control areas after the election with the ID trial areas after). Some relationships found in previous research are supported. Table 1 and 2 both suggest that women are less confident in the process than men across all the models, a relationship seen in other studies (Alvarez, Hall, and Llewellyn 2008; Birch 2008). Partisanship also seems to have an effect, as has been found in the USA (Bowler and Donovan 2016). Conservative-identifying voters are more confident than Labour-identifying or the supporters of other parties. Yet the models do not confirm everything we would have expected from previous studies. Ethnicity here shows the opposite effect as in the USA. Tables 1 and 2 suggest people of the non-majority ethnicity in Britain are more confident of the process than White Britons. Whereas in the US, non-white members of the public, particularly African-Americans are significantly less confident (Alvarez, Hall, and Llewellyn 2008). This introduces the first reason that nomological validation may not be appropriate here. The particular history of race and voting in the USA, where the majority of the scholarship is from, is different from England. Thus, 'assuming the hypotheses' may be inappropriate when the hypotheses were derived in a different political environment. The validation method is weakened by the lack of existing scholarship in England.

Secondly, although the idea is not to test hypotheses here, the models also do not support the reasoning presented by participants in the qualitative interviews. Concerns raised by the participants do not appear to have noticeable effects on confidence in the model. Neither the ease with which the voter can provide ID nor socio-economic grade appeared to be of importance in predicting confidence. This necessitates more research to fully explain.

Finally, considering the systematised concept used here (perceptions of electoral integrity approximated by a range of questions on different topics) is demonstrably different from that used in other studies, assuming those other studies to have produced causal relationships that would also be valid here is too great a leap. The results here are still worth taking into account. The fact that the model suggests the significance of various independent variables (especially the presence of voter ID) outside of our expectations from previous studies while simultaneously showing how little of the variance in voter confidence can be explained from the variables in the models (adjusted R-square is only 0.090 in the model with the largest explanatory power) suggests that much more research utilising more expansive methods and questioning must take place before any conclusions can be made on the scale of voter confidence in England or the factors that determine it.

Table 1 OLS ID Trial Areas Before and After Election			
	<i>Dependent variable: Confidence 0-100</i>		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
After Election	9.463 ^{***} (0.972)	9.597 ^{***} (0.973)	9.271 ^{***} (0.956)
Not White British	3.042 ^{**} (1.397)	3.444 ^{**} (1.436)	3.337 ^{**} (1.423)
Working	-1.889 [*] (1.085)	-1.794 [*] (1.086)	-1.688 (1.064)
Male	4.881 ^{***} (0.974)	4.795 ^{***} (0.972)	4.941 ^{***} (0.953)
Graduate	-3.538 ^{***} (1.068)	-3.379 ^{***} (1.072)	-3.403 ^{***} (1.053)
Renter	-1.409 (1.136)	-0.983 (1.157)	-0.872 (1.137)
Age over 45	1.291 (1.151)	1.130 (1.162)	1.256 (1.138)
SEG under A or B	-0.019 (1.146)	-0.262 (1.149)	-0.702 (1.151)
Party: Labour		-3.479 ^{**} (1.487)	-2.778 [*] (1.462)
Party: Other		-4.690 ^{***} (1.187)	-3.114 ^{***} (1.173)
Always vote		-0.498 (1.128)	-0.121 (1.108)
Easy to provide ID		3.132 (2.190)	3.286 (2.147)
Risk			22.714 ^{***} (4.265)
ID type: Photo			-19.128 ^{***} (4.491)
ID type: Poll Card			-11.931 ^{***} (1.431)
N Did not return			-0.139 ^{***} (0.021)
Constant	43.217 ^{***} (1.511)	43.668 ^{***} (2.762)	53.475 ^{***} (3.197)
Observations	2,976	2,976	2,976
R ²	0.047	0.053	0.095
Adjusted R ²	0.044	0.049	0.090
Residual Std. Error	26.419 (df = 2967)	26.356 (df = 2963)	25.783 (df = 2959)
F Statistic	18.221 ^{***} (df = 8; 2967)	13.729 ^{***} (df = 12; 2963)	19.340 ^{***} (df = 16; 2959)
<i>Note:</i> [*] p<0.1; ^{**} p<0.05; ^{***} p<0.01			

Table 2 OLS: Control and ID areas		
<i>Dependent variable: Confidence 0-100</i>		
	(1)	(2)
ID trial area	12.214 ^{***} (1.128)	12.405 ^{***} (1.130)
Not White British	1.781 (1.587)	2.505 (1.608)
Working	-1.709 (1.173)	-1.444 (1.161)
Male	3.785 ^{***} (1.091)	3.393 ^{***} (1.079)
Renter	-1.858 (1.210)	-0.990 (1.215)
Age over 45	1.449 (1.243)	0.480 (1.246)
SEG under A or B	-0.628 (1.243)	0.310 (1.243)
Party: Labour		-6.300 ^{***} (1.636)
Party: Other		-9.270 ^{***} (1.327)
Always vote		1.156 (1.229)
Easy to provide ID		6.575 ^{***} (2.031)
Constant	39.781 ^{***} (1.797)	38.710 ^{***} (2.876)
Observations	2,468	2,468
R ²	0.056	0.081
Adjusted R ²	0.053	0.076
Residual Std. Error	26.697 (df = 2459)	26.370 (df = 2455)
F Statistic	18.248 ^{***} (df = 8; 2459)	17.911 ^{***} (df = 12; 2455)
<i>Note:</i> * p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01		

Comparing public concerns to expert perceptions

The final theory developed to test the new measurement is that the different areas of elections which inspire doubt amongst members of the public will also be the areas of most concern for experts. This is based on the work of Norris (2014) who demonstrated in a cross-national study that members of the public have similar perceptions of electoral integrity to experts. This can also illuminate the aspects of electoral integrity that remain unconsidered in the Electoral Commission data.

By focussing on the ordering of the different categories in figures 7 and 8 we can see that both members of the public and experts suggested that media bias was one of the greatest threats to electoral integrity in the UK. Campaign finance also concerned both experts and members of the public. Equally, neither experts nor members of the public saw electoral fraud as a severe threat to electoral integrity. However, there is little overlap between the questions asked to members of the public and in the PEI survey. The questions differ too much, and there are too many elements explored in one but unexplored in the other. We can only visually identify a comparison by looking at the order of elements.

The main conclusion from the comparison of expert perceptions and public perceptions is that there are still elements of the electoral process missing from Electoral Commission survey which may be important in how the public perceive electoral integrity: most importantly, the fairness of boundaries and electoral laws. We can make the tentative initial conclusion that the measure appears to be conforming to our expectations based on the assumption that experts and the public will broadly agree on the areas of electoral administration which have more or less integrity, but that this is severely limited by the lack of overlap in the two measures.

Figure 6
Reversed mean average belief in the seriousness of election problems
Control post-election

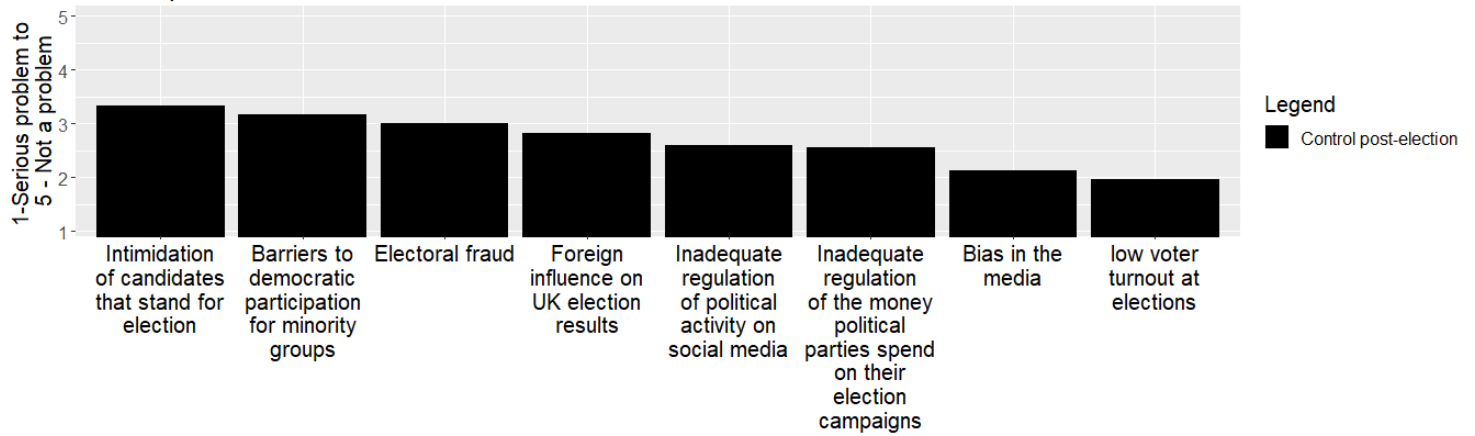
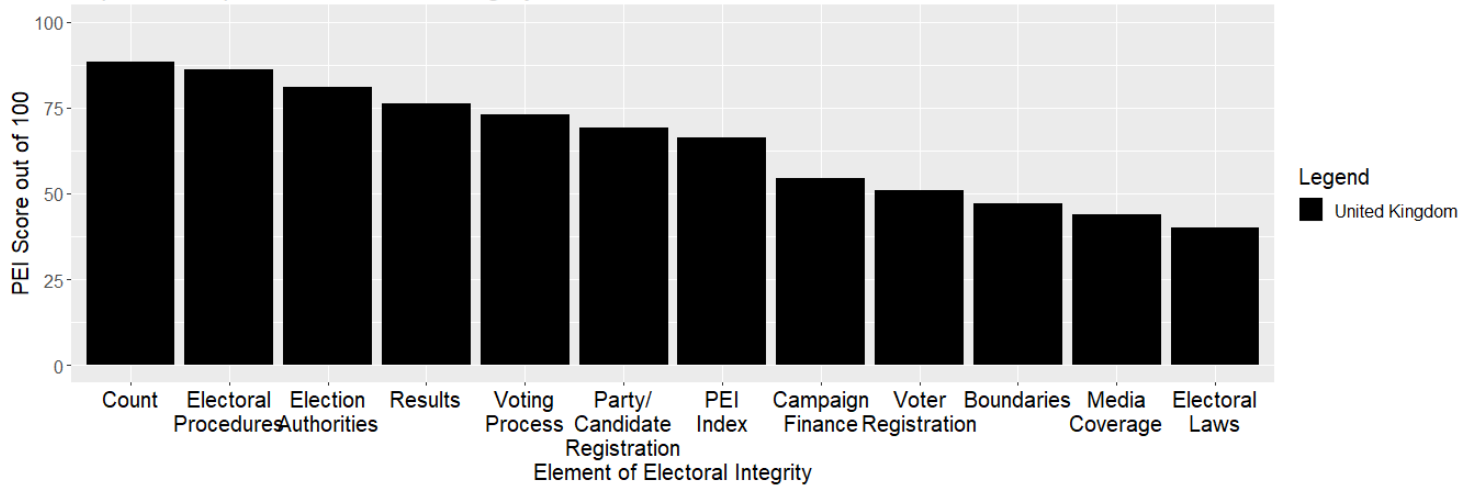


Figure 7
Expert Perceptions of Electoral Integrity in the UK



Limits in the measurement: Systematisation of the concept

Finally, using the four sources of measurement error identified in the second chapter, we will now evaluate the existing problems with this measurement, and outline the need for further study and the necessity of qualitative interviews alongside the existing measures. First, as has been demonstrated from the comparison between public and expert perceptions of electoral integrity, and based on the evidence from the qualitative interviews, the systematised concept used in the Electoral Commission surveys still does not cover every element of electoral integrity that is theoretically important. This undermines the content validity of the new measure, as it can be criticised in the same way as previous measures: for not including every important aspect of electoral integrity (Adcock and Collier 2001).

First, regrettably from the perspective of determining measurement error, the surveys commissioned do not ask every participant the most common question from other surveys of voter confidence: whether votes are counted fairly/accurately. Meaning there is no suitable comparison for analysing the relationship between the answers to the vote count question and other approximations of voter confidence, which could have acted as a useful way to measure how far this measure differs from previous academic measures of confidence.

The qualitative interviews revealed elements of electoral integrity which have not been considered in the measurement. Most significantly, there are no questions on the electoral system which appeared frequently as an area of concern in the qualitative interviews and the expert survey (Norris and Grömping 2019). Nor were there questions on the availability of choice for the elector or differentiation between fraud in different areas (UK/parts of the UK/where they live). There were no questions asking whether the process of elections is reformed by the governing party in order to win elections – a particular concern expressed in the qualitative interviews by an opponent of voter ID. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, there were no questions asking about previous specific electoral events, issues or politicians. This exemplifies the limitations of working with data collected before and without reference to the process of systematising the concept using qualitative interviews.

Finally, some independent variables which have been identified as important in other studies, and which would be worth testing, are not included. There is no way to test the closeness of the election results for these local elections using the available data, which identifies only the local authority of each respondent rather than the ward. Nor is it possible to test whether the candidate a person voted for (if they voted) won in the election, for the same reason. Overall, although the inclusivity and disaggregation of this means of measuring voter confidence improves the measure, it is not

clear that this measure captures all of the relevant aspects of perceptions of electoral integrity, considering elements which are theoretically important from the qualitative interviews and the previous research literature are absent.

Respondent error

The range of questions here and their careful wording are two of the main strengths of the evidence collected for the Electoral Commission. However, despite the careful wording, the data collected for the Electoral Commission include a large proportion of ‘Don’t know’ responses. ‘Don’t know’ answers have been removed from the analysis so far, but they may shine a light on public perceptions of electoral integrity. The table below compares the different proportions of ‘Don’t know’ answers depending on the dataset and the question for each of the eight main aspects of electoral integrity. In total 45.2% of those answering the survey in the ID trial areas gave at least one ‘don’t know’ answer to one of the five questions regarding problems. The fact that some elements have relatively few ‘Don’t know’ answers, such as turnout, and others have a larger proportion, such as barriers to minority access, may demonstrate an important distinction between the salience of these issues or how members of the public consider them. These are significant for researchers because, as Weisberg states, it carries a number of different meanings: it can mean that the respondent does not understand the question, that they cannot remember anything to substantiate an answer, or they cannot remember enough to justify an answer, or their answer cannot be easily fitted into any of the categories available to them (Weisberg p. 132). This is another example of why qualitative interviews represent a step forward in the analysis. By simply asking members of the public why they say they do not know we can better determine what the large number of “don’t know” responses implies.

Table 3: The percentage of the total respondents answering : “Don’t know”									
	Total	Fraud	Media Bias	Turnout	Minority Access	Foreign Influence	Social Media	Intimidation	Campaign funding
ID Trial Before	22.07	23.62	16.88	14.6	26.6	24.53	24.26	23.36	22.72
ID Trial After	23.69	26.5	16.8	16.75	28.99	26.61	25.76	25.18	22.9
Control After	22.45	24.73	13.85	12.07	28.09	25.72	23.83	27.59	23.74

Mode effects

Mode effects should also be considered here for determining limits in the measurement because the control areas and the voter ID trial areas were conducted using different modes. The ID pilot surveys (both before and after the election) were conducted using face-to-face interviewing, while the surveys in the control area was conducted online (BMG Research). Although the control surveys have been presented here alongside the results from the ID trial surveys, the use of different survey modes could conceivably have had a significant effect on the types of answer given. This is a serious limitation for the measurement here, as it means there is no way to determine which elements of the difference between the post-poll surveys in the ID trial areas and the control areas are due to the effects of the mode of data collection, and which are due to other variables. In the future, two avenues could be taken to avoid this. Mode effects could be tested by comparing the differences between different surveys unexplained by other variables. Second, and more ideally, the control and trial surveys could be held using the same method. Overall, however, for the majority of the analysis presented here, mode effects would not have limited the accuracy of the results, as the ID area surveys both before and after the trials were conducted using the same mode.

Sampling and Coverage Error

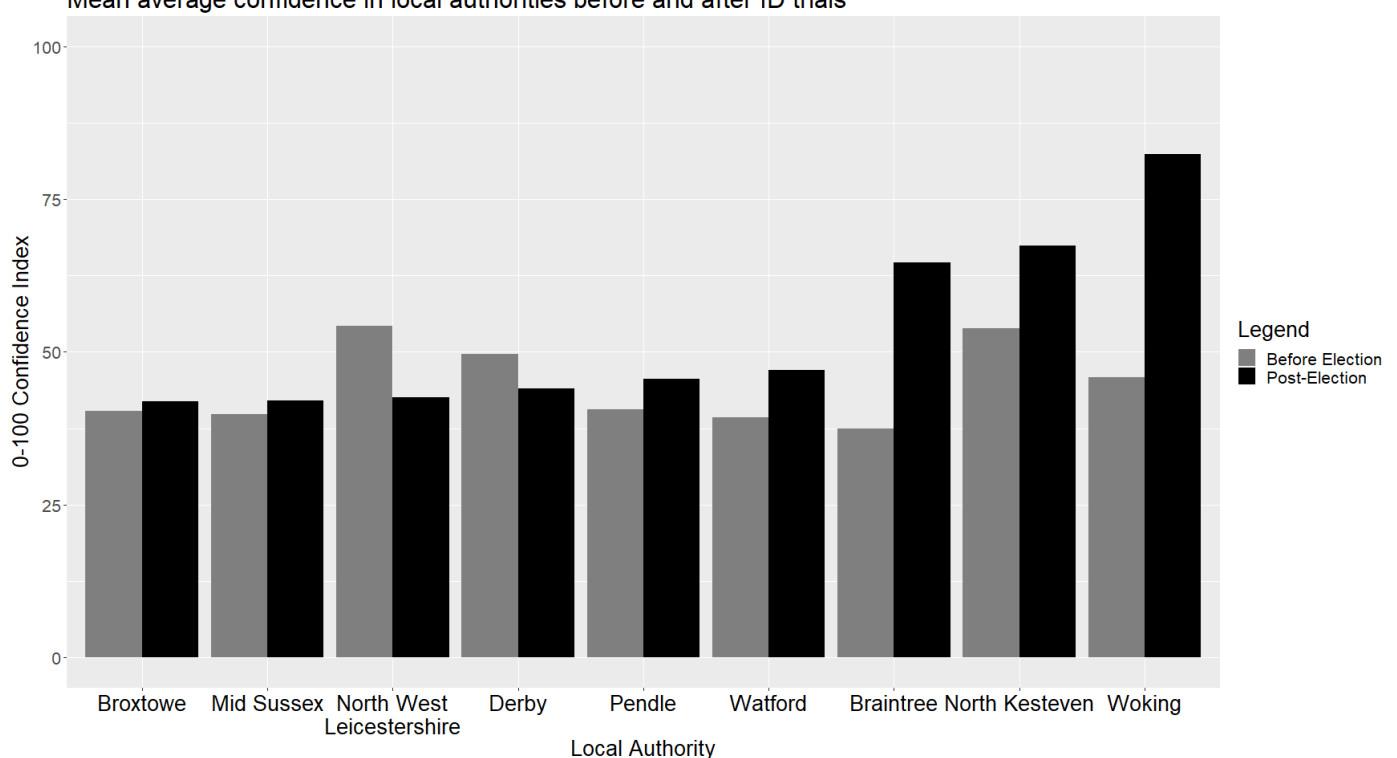
Having established the qualities of this measure, it is worth asking whether there is any way in which it is systematically biased because of its sampling that might mean it, and therefore the conclusions it suggests, are not generalisable. The sampling of this survey, in including both voters and non-voters and using quotas for demographic groups, was demographically representative (BMG 2019a, BMG 2019b). The greater opportunity for measurement error is from the design of the experiment itself and the possibility that the local authorities chosen and the type of election studied may lead to conclusions on voter ID that may not hold in other local authorities, countries of the UK, or higher-stakes elections.

Coverage error is less about what the sample tells us about the ID trial areas, which is plenty, and more about what the ID trial areas can tell us about the rest of the country. The sampling of local authorities was non-random, each local authority was self-selected, and the criteria by which the decisions were finalised have not been made available (Cabinet Office 2019). These criteria could have major implications for the results of the measure. Considering council-level variables such as risk of fraud and even just the local authority itself seem to be significant when measuring confidence (Table 1: risk variable, figure 8), it follows that the way these local authorities were chosen has implications for the measure. The coverage of the pilots could be missing out authorities which would have reacted completely differently to the reform.

The local authorities varied demographically enough to have represented a significant amount of the demographic range of the UK, and covered councils which had previously been found at risk of electoral fraud, both of which suggest the authorities were selected appropriately (Electoral Commission 2003; Cabinet Office 2019). However, even without knowledge of the criteria we can observe that the pilot local authorities included no Labour-majority councils, nor any councils from outside England (BBC News 2019). Given the Labour party opposes the policy and we have seen significant partisan effects in the existing measurements, it could be expected that the partisanship of the council may have had an effect in the sampling of the local authorities, and therefore may have an effect on the overall perspective on electoral integrity the voter ID reform would have. Yet because these were not included in the experiment we cannot conclude on whether this difference would have been observed.

Finally, the experiment is based on local elections, which are relatively low-stakes compared to general elections. This could imply that it is less likely the legitimacy of results will be contested. Local elections also have lower turnout, and only more politically engaged citizens engage with local elections. To put this in perspective, the turnout for the 2017 general election was 69%, whereas the turnout in the 2018 local council elections was only 34.6% - although there are some problems with assessing voter turnout in local elections due to uncontested seats (Dempsey and Loft 2019; Electoral Commission 2019b). Thus, in a general election the 30% more voters who are likely to be less politically engaged may have different reactions to the introduction of voter identification in a general election.

Figure 8
Mean average confidence in local authorities before and after ID trials



The ultimate test of voter ID on public confidence would only occur under adverse circumstances not present in this experiment. Take for example a constituency in a high-stakes general election where the number of people rejected due to lack of ID is smaller than the margin between the winner and second place, and those who are turned away appear to have been supporting the second-place candidate who had opposed the voter ID reform. This would immediately transform voter ID from a theoretical consideration to one of immediate concern for the consequences of an election. Thus, this survey, even if perfectly conducted, could only tell us so much about the likely effects of voter ID on confidence across the UK or in a general election. The circumstances most likely to test confidence in the process, and therefore those presumably of most interest to policymakers aiming to increase confidence, have not yet been tested. In a general election it is likely they would be.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we have seen that the measurement presented here represents a step forward in understanding confidence in England, but is not without drawbacks which are exposed, and can be ameliorated, through the use of qualitative interviews. The measure has suggested an overall increase in confidence in the voter ID trial areas. It has demonstrated that members of the public do discriminate between different elements of the electoral process, therefore lending credence to the idea of using multiple questions to test the phenomenon. Finally, the measurement, despite being broader and more comprehensive than others, still does not include important parts of the concept identified in the qualitative interviews, most prominently the electoral system, and has a large number of 'don't know' answers which can be illuminated by the use of qualitative interviews. Most importantly, the experimental design itself calls into question whether this measurement can be generalised. This suggests that although the measurement may be worthwhile where it has been implemented, its results should not necessarily be assumed to be the same in other parts of the UK or other levels of election. Overall, the measure used here could be further validated and improved through the use of qualitative interviews to help to develop the survey to cover the areas of electoral integrity of most interest to voters, and to interpret the measurement we have seen.

Conclusion

This research has demonstrated the positive case for using a mixed-methods approach to understand public perceptions of electoral integrity. The results found here suggest that this new method can help to refine the existing quantitative approach and demonstrate how interview techniques can illuminate the complexities of public confidence in the electoral process, as well as indicating just how much there is we do not yet know about the phenomenon.

This research has been necessarily exploratory and descriptive and rather than explanatory and conclusive, and there is much that can yet be learned about the subject. There are three ways this approach can be positively utilised in the future. The first is by refining the methods here and applying the two parts of the research (the interviews and surveys) in a joined-up way. This was impractical for this research because of resource constraints, but in the future interviews or focus-groups can be used to build the questions to be included in the survey and therefore refine the measurement, as well as to interpret the meanings behind the survey responses. Of particular interest would be seeing whether the partisan framing of questions affects the results.

The second is by widening the scale of the research. This review has focussed only on perceptions of electoral integrity in the context of the introduction of voter ID. There is reason to believe that this research, if carried on with a wider sample, could yield yet more important results about the scale and composition of public perceptions of electoral integrity. A wider scale would also allow the results to be more easily generalisable and could therefore be involved in examining how the UK compares to other states in terms of public confidence. Learning more about the UK as a whole can therefore act as another point of comparison to understand the phenomenon internationally.

The scale of the research could also be broadened by attempting to consider variables unconsidered here. Elite interviews with electoral administrators may help to discern the effects of public confidence and would offer another perspective on this phenomenon by involving the practitioners who most frequently have to deal with the effects of public perceptions of electoral integrity. Examining media and elite cues may also be a fruitful avenue for further research, and using these to construct more specific questions e.g.: 'Do you believe the EU referendum was fairly conducted' may yield revealing, and potentially concerning, results about general confidence in the process. This approach has focussed on discerning what exactly the public think about elections, but further research must move from the purely descriptive to the explanatory.

The final way in which this approach could be extended is also the most challenging. The research so far has been built on a series of assumptions, many of which have been upheld: that the public have standards they expect elections to meet, that they have opinions about whether elections meet these standards, and that these opinions are measurable. The next step with this research could be further problematisation. Even these are based on even more fundamental assumptions: that the public agrees on what elections are, what they are for, and that public confidence is in general a positive outcome. This approach has demonstrated what we do not yet know about public confidence in England, and suggested a way we could learn it. The next steps will include applying this technique to further examine and explain the phenomenon, how it changes, and its implications.

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Code

Accessible here in a github raw format, all written by the author.

https://raw.githubusercontent.com/gdstride/Mres_Diss/master/README.md

Appendix 1: Basic Questions Asked in Interviews

These questions were asked to every interview subject, usually in the same order. Some interviews included slight variations or clarifications depending on the respondent's reactions to previous questions as outlined in chapter 3.

Interviewees were approached with the phrase "do you have a few minutes to talk about elections in Woking?"

- 1) Do you often vote in elections?
- 2) When you do, do you usually vote in a polling station?
- 3) On the whole, do you think elections in the UK are free and fair, and why?
- 4) Do you believe your vote will be counted as you intended it at the count centre?
- 5) Are you aware of the plans to roll out voter identification across the country?
- 6) Why do you think it is that voter identification is being introduced?
- 7) How common do you think electoral fraud is in Woking?
- 8) How about across the country?
- 9) Do you think identification at polling stations will make elections safer?
- 10) Do you think voter identification is a fair measure?
- 11) Are elections in the UK easy for everyone to access?
- 12) Just one final question: if you can think of any, what do you think are the biggest problems with elections in the UK today?

Appendix 2: ID types used in trial areas

Taken from Cabinet Office (2019)

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/819404/2019_Voter_ID_Pilots_Evaluation.pdf?_ga=2.267366604.39742634.1566906254-827430544.1565694619

Types of ID used in ID Trials

ID Type	Local Authorities
Poll Card	Mid Sussex, Watford
Mixed ID: One form of photo ID or two forms of non-photo ID	Braintree, Broxtowe , Craven, Derby, North Kesteven
Photo ID	Pendle, Woking

Appendix 3: List of Figures

Figure 1: Comparison of Expert Perceptions of Electoral Integrity Across States

Source: Norris, Pippa; Grömping, Max, 2019, "Perceptions of Electoral Integrity, (PEI-7.0)", <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/PDYRWL>, Harvard Dataverse, V2, UNF:6:2wnukYraCZzg+gojPE/ljg== [fileUNF]

Figure 2: Comparison of OECD average and UK for elements of electoral integrity

Source: Norris, Pippa; Grömping, Max, 2019, "Perceptions of Electoral Integrity, (PEI-7.0)", <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/PDYRWL>, Harvard Dataverse, V2, UNF:6:2wnukYraCZzg+gojPE/ljg== [fileUNF]

Figure 3: Comparison of OECD average and UK: fraudulent votes

Source: Norris, Pippa; Grömping, Max, 2019, "Perceptions of Electoral Integrity, (PEI-7.0)", <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/PDYRWL>, Harvard Dataverse, V2, UNF:6:2wnukYraCZzg+gojPE/ljg== [fileUNF]

Figure 4: Average confidence in the non-existence of election problems

Source(s): Electoral Commission, 2019. "ID Pilots Post-Wave" Made available to the author by request. Tables available at the following link: <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/our-views-and-research/our-research/voter-identification-pilots/may-2019-voter-identification-pilot-schemes> (Accessed September 2019).

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Figure 5: Perceived seriousness of Election Problems

Source(s): Electoral Commission, 2019. "ID Pilots Post-Wave" Made available to the author by request. Tables available at the following link: <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/our-views-and-research/our-research/voter-identification-pilots/may-2019-voter-identification-pilot-schemes> (Accessed September 2019).

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Figure 6: Reversed mean average belief in the seriousness of election problems Control post-election

Source: Electoral Commission, 2019. "2019_Post_Poll_SPSS" Made available to the author by request. Tables available at the following link: <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/our-views-and-research/our-research/voter-identification-pilots/may-2019-voter-identification-pilot-schemes> (Accessed September 2019).

Figure 7: Expert perceptions of electoral integrity in the UK

Source: Norris, Pippa; Grömping, Max, 2019, "Perceptions of Electoral Integrity, (PEI-7.0)", <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/PDYRWL>, Harvard Dataverse, V2, UNF:6:2wnukYraCZzg+gojPE/ljg== [fileUNF]

Figure 8: Mean confidence in local authorities before and after ID trials

Source(s): Electoral Commission, 2019. "ID Pilots Post-Wave" Made available to the author by request. Tables available at the following link: <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/our-views-and-research/our-research/voter-identification-pilots/may-2019-voter-identification-pilot-schemes> (Accessed September 2019).

Table 1: OLS ID Trial Areas Before and After Election

Source(s): Electoral Commission, 2019. "ID Pilots Post-Wave" Made available to the author by request. Tables available at the following link: <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/our-views-and-research/our-research/voter-identification-pilots/may-2019-voter-identification-pilot-schemes> (Accessed September 2019).

Table 2: OLS: Control and ID areas

Source(s): Electoral Commission, 2019. "ID Pilots Post-Wave" Made available to the author by request. Tables available at the following link: <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/our-views-and-research/our-research/voter-identification-pilots/may-2019-voter-identification-pilot-schemes> (Accessed September 2019).

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Table 3: The percentage of the total respondents answering : “Don’t know”

Source(s): Electoral Commission, 2019. “ID Pilots Post-Wave” Made available to the author by request. Tables available at the following link:

<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/our-views-and-research/our-research/voter-identification-pilots/may-2019-voter-identification-pilot-schemes> (Accessed September 2019).

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