As the dust settles after the momentous referendum on Scotland’s independence, academics involved with the ESRC Future of the UK and Scotland programme evaluate what the referendum result means.
As the dust settles after the momentous referendum on Scotland’s independence, academics involved with the ESRC Future of the UK and Scotland programme evaluate what the referendum result means.
The Scottish independence referendum was a momentous occasion in Scottish and British politics. The campaign produced what one commentator described as a ‘festival of democracy’ with discussion and debate over the issues at stake heard in cafes, pubs and community halls around the country. A staggering 84.6 per cent turned out to vote on the question of whether Scotland should be an independent country – Scotland’s highest ever electoral turnout. By a margin of 55.3 per cent to 44.7 per cent, they voted ‘No’.

For academics engaged in the ESRC Future of the UK and Scotland programme, the referendum provided an invaluable opportunity to observe and examine the process as it unfolded, and to participate directly by helping to ensure that political, civic and public debates were informed by academic research. We offer here some preliminary observations on the referendum and its aftermath.

**A FAIR AND DECISIVE OUTCOME?**
The Edinburgh Agreement set out that the referendum should deliver ‘a fair test and a decisive expression’ of the views of people in Scotland. The available evidence indicates that the process and the campaign were generally perceived to be fair. Fifty per cent of the voters agreed with the proposition that both sides of the referendum debate had a fair chance to present their point of view, whereas only 19 per cent disagreed. Although at time of writing we do not yet have post-referendum survey data that would allow us to examine perceptions of fairness from the perspective of winners and losers, the general view suggests that the fairness criteria were met.

Was the referendum decisive? Although the margin of victory produced a clear No outcome, the meaning of the No vote is far from clear. The pro-Union parties committed to increasing the powers of the Scottish Parliament in the event of a No vote, but did not agree on which powers would be devolved. Consequently, the referendum may have produced a decisive expression on the question of independence, but not on the constitutional status of Scotland within the Union. These are not wholly separate issues. A failure to deliver appropriate new powers could reopen the independence issue. Lord Ashcroft’s post-referendum poll suggested that 61 per cent of Yes voters and 38 per cent of No voters believed the referendum settled the question of independence only for the next five to ten years. Only one in four No voters believed it settled the question forever. The referendum may have been fair, but its decisiveness should not be overstated.

Robert Lineira is a post-doctoral fellow in the ESRC Centre on Constitutional Change.

**LESSON LEARNED: TRUST 16-YEAR-OLDS AND SCHOOLS WITH POLITICS**
One of the unique features of the Scottish independence referendum was the extension of the franchise to include 16- and 17-year-olds. This gave us the opportunity to collect representative data on the political attitudes of under eighteenes, bringing out two core conclusions.

First, young people are interested in and engaged with politics. We need to stop assuming that low voting turnout is associated with political apathy. Their political interest levels were equivalent to those of adults and their engagement with a variety of information sources was impressive. However, many did not find that traditional political institutions provided an avenue for the expression of their political interests. These feelings applied in particular to political parties, which is why many young people are involved in other forms of participation.

Second, the referendum experience suggests that lowering the voting age has the potential to harness this energy and engage young people with representative democracy. This goes beyond the referendum-specific effect (as also evidenced by research in Austria following the lowering of the voting age there). Schools have a crucial role to play. Those young people who had discussed the referendum in class had greater political confidence – an effect that talking to parents could not produce. Fears about inappropriate forms of ideologising school students could not be backed up empirically. To increase young people’s engagement with politics, enfranchising them at 16 and providing a space for engagement through schools would most likely be highly beneficial. Politicisation in schools should be embraced and the great work of teachers supported through appropriate curriculum space and materials.

Jan Eichorn is Chancellor’s Fellow in Sociology at the University of Edinburgh and Principal Investigator on the project Young Persons’ Attitudes on Scotland’s Constitutional Future.

**SETBACK OR PROGRESS FOR THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT?**
Does the rejection of independence in the referendum suggest that Scotland’s future is now cemented within the Union? The result was clearly a defeat for the Yes campaign, but for the SNP in particular the referendum was never only about winning or losing. Viewed historically, securing 45 per cent support for Scotland to be an independent country has to be seen as significant progress for supporters of independence, while the campaign itself generated a mass pro-independence movement that went far beyond the SNP’s rank and file. All of this helps to ensure that debates about...
Scotland’s place within the Union, and its degree of political autonomy, will continue.

All three UK parties had pledged to strengthen devolution, and are now committed to doing so through a cross-party process under the auspices of the Smith commission. That process includes the SNP, and involves engagement with civic Scotland. It is unlikely to produce a lasting settlement that can appease those whose motivations are to maximise Scotland’s decision-making autonomy. Meanwhile, the SNP has witnessed a dramatic upsurge in party membership – from 25,642 on referendum day to 75,000 (and rising) within two weeks – far higher than all other Scottish parties put together. In the coming months, the SNP will seek to reframe the terms of the ‘devo max’ debate, and try to push their competitors further than they have thus far been willing to go. Going forward, we can expect the SNP to revert to the gradualist strategy that has dominated the party’s recent history, pursuing a more incremental path towards greater Scottish self-government, with independence remaining the medium- to long-term goal.

Nicola McEwen is Professor of Territorial Politics at the University of Edinburgh and Associate Director of the ESRC Centre on Constitutional Change.

SCOTTISH DEVOLUTION: THE NEXT STEPS

One of the unfortunate things about the independence referendum campaign was its failure to clarify ‘devo max’. For some, ‘devo max’ refers to the idea of devolving everything except foreign and defence policy – something that can’t happen if Scotland seeks meaningful membership of the UK and the UK remains a member state of the EU. Instead, at the very least, the Bank of England would remain in charge of monetary policy and the UK government would retain control of many fiscal policies.

In the lead up to the referendum vote, the three UK party leaders offered ‘extensive new powers’ in a remarkably short space of time, with draft legislation to come before the next general election. From that starting point, several obstacles remain. First, the parties will have to agree on extensive new powers in less than a year, when their previous attempts to produce the more-limited Scotland Act 2012 took several years. Second, the balance of power in Westminster after the 2015 election, which is likely to influence the final settlement, is unclear. Third, the devolution of more powers will require more co-operation between the UK and Scottish governments, to pursue shared aims or distinctly Scottish solutions under a UK framework.

Yet, the experience so far is of two governments working as independently as possible. The potential devolution of economic, welfare, energy and other powers will not be enough to allow the Scottish public a sense that it can hold the Scottish government to account for tax and spending decisions. Rather, it will increasingly share responsibilities with the UK. This outcome should prompt us to consider how we can hold such governments to account. If two or three authorities – in

The referendum may have been fair, but its decisiveness should not be overstated

Scotland, the UK and EU – share responsibility for many policy choices, how can we blame any one of them at election time for the outcome?

Paul Cairney is Professor of Politics and Public Policy at the University of Stirling and leads research on public policy within the ESRC Centre on Constitutional Change.

THE ENGLISH QUESTION

People in England who went to bed on 18 September 2014 thinking the issue at stake was whether Scotland would vote Yes or No to independence may have been surprised to hear Prime Minister David Cameron speaking about England at breakfast time on the 19th. In his post-referendum statement, the PM linked the commitment to additional devolution to Scotland that he had promised if Scotland voted No to action on ‘English Votes on English Laws’ (EVEL). EVEL of course is shorthand for MPs from Scotland not being able to vote on legislation in the House of Commons that focuses on England. Linking Scottish devolution and EVEL was in part about internal party management. Many on the Conservative backbenches think that devolution outside of England – and further devolution for Scotland – leaves people in England without an effective voice in the UK political system. Cameron needed to act on England to shore up his own right flank.

But he also had Labour in his sights in promising action on EVEL. Labour is strong in Scotland. It could emerge from a UK General Election with a UK-wide majority because of its strength in Scotland, but a minority of MPs in England. EVEL could deny a future Labour administration the capacity to deliver policies in England. So Labour doesn’t like the prospect of EVEL. But that could create the impression that it opposes the right of people in England to have their own representative arrangements. That, as the May 2015 UK election approaches, may be a difficult sell in England.

Charlie Jeffery is Professor of Politics and Co-ordinator of the ESRC Future of the UK and Scotland programme.

www.futureukandscotland.ac.uk
BEHAVIOURAL ECONOMICS CAN EFFECT SMALL CHANGES IN THE WAY PEOPLE ACT. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN IT COMES TO BIG ISSUES?

BEHAVIOURAL ECONOMICS MOVED

Centre stage in UK policymaking with the establishment of the Behavioural Insights Team – or ‘nudge unit’ – within the Cabinet Office. Behavioural economics incorporates elements of psychology into extended economic models to explain why people make seemingly irrational decisions, such as failing to save for retirement, and why small changes to the way people make choices, such as automatically enrolling people in pension schemes rather than requiring them to opt in, can have powerful effects.

According to some, the nudge unit doesn’t do behavioural economics in the true sense, but instead does social psychology. But the implications for policy design are similar in both cases and, notably, are in marked contrast with the approaches suggested by standard economics. Take a desirable behavioural outcome – reducing energy consumption, for example, or eating more healthily. The standard economic approach involves changes to prices – through taxation and subsidies – which affect behaviour by changing people’s choice sets. The behavioural approach focuses instead on the way that choices are presented to people, the so-called ‘choice architecture’.

Behavioural policies have a number of attractive features. They can achieve the desired outcomes but they typically don’t cost a lot and they don’t impose additional constraints on choices. The success of the Behavioural Insights Team has been to demonstrate, through randomised controlled trials, numerous low-cost ways to improve policy delivery and save money. For example, tweaking the text of a reminder letter to inform people who failed to pay their tax that most other people had already paid, increased payment rates by over five percentage points. What’s not to like?

Most of what has been tested by the nudge unit has involved this type of relatively small change to policy delivery. But when it comes to tackling big issues – obesity or energy consumption – there is more work to be done to show that behavioural policies work, and work better than standard economic approaches.

DO ECONOMIC INCENTIVES WORK?

Recent research in collaboration with Rachel Griffith and Stephanie Scholder contrasts behavioural and standard economic approaches in the context of the UK government’s Healthy Start Scheme – vouchers for fruit and vegetables given to low-income households with young children. The behavioural view is that such vouchers will provide a strong signal to increase spending on fruit and vegetables. But the underlying economic incentive is for only households that currently spend very little on fruit and veg to increase their spending on these specific items. If you are a household that already spends money on fruit and veg, the vouchers are equivalent to an increase in income. Some of this may be spent on fruit and veg, but most of it won’t be (and some may be spent on crisps, cake and chocolate).

The evidence supports the standard economic view. There was an increase in spending on fruit and vegetables – equivalent to around one extra portion of fruit and veg a day. So the policy worked. But all of the increase came from low-spending households who had a direct incentive to change behaviour. There was no evidence of any wider nudge effect. The behaviour change was driven by standard economic incentives.

This is only one example but it highlights the need for evidence on when behavioural insights can deliver effective solutions to big policy issues. Nudges may work better when preferences are not so ingrained and when cognitive biases are more prevalent. But economic incentives may provide policymakers with a more proven and powerful tool for encouraging healthy eating: the focus should be on how to design the most cost-effective standard economic incentives, as well as on how to design effective nudge policies.

Nudges may work better when preferences are not so ingrained

BY PROFESSOR SARAH SMITH

Professor of Economics at the University of Bristol and Centre for Market and Public Organisation

www.bristol.ac.uk/cmpo/publications/papers
POLICYMAKING

HOW WE LIVE OUR LIVES

The Understanding Society study continues to provide new insights to help policymaking

UNDERSTANDING SOCIETY, the ESRC-funded study of over 40,000 households in the UK led by the Institute for Social and Economic Research, is now in its sixth year. The ability to look at society through a longitudinal lens has spawned a clutch of high-quality, incisive research on who we are and how we live our lives.

Recent research projects showcase the breadth of the survey’s coverage and relevance. The past few years have been dogged by a party political argument about who has been better or worse off as Britain has experienced the worst economic downturn in living memory. By using Understanding Society, the Social Market Foundation has shed fresh and timely light on a question that is best asked, and answered, longitudinally – concluding that a surprising 40 per cent of the middle quintile of earners in 2007 remained no better or worse off four years later.

IMPORTANT INSIGHTS

The Office of National Statistics (ONS) takes a different approach to understanding the state of the nation and is using the Understanding Society data to build a picture of wellbeing among adults in the UK. The study has contributed data across six of ten key wellbeing domains, including our relationships, health, personal finance, and why small changes to the way people make decisions, such as failing to save for retirement, do behavioural economics in the true sense, to opt in, can have powerful effects. In pension schemes rather than requiring them and why small changes to the way people make decisions, such as failing to save for retirement, can have powerful effects.

COMMITTEE RELATIONS

Building a bridge

Can engaging with Muslims in Bristol aid governance?

HOW HAVE MUSLIMS engaged in governance and how well do governance processes engage with diverse Muslim groups? These questions have been of political concern over the last two decades, driven by a shifting equalities agenda that has increasingly addressed the experiences of religious and Muslim – as distinct from ethnic – groups; by increased government recognition of the role of faith and faith groups across policy areas such as welfare delivery or urban regeneration; by shifts in integration and community cohesion policies; and by the security and counter-terrorism agenda.

In relation to the latter, under the Prevent strategy, the government set out to engage and partner with Muslim groups to address the causes of violent political extremism. The reception and delivery of Prevent have been highly contested and have varied widely at the local level. Researchers Aleksandra Lewicki, Therese O’Toole and Tariq Modood from the Centre for the Study of Ethnicity and Citizenship at the University of Bristol, working with Muslim communities in Bristol, set out to examine how engagement through Prevent has been conducted in Bristol. Funded within the ESRC Connected Communities Productive Margins research programme – a collaboration between the Universities of Bristol and Cardiff – the project works with Muslim communities in Bristol to explore Muslim participation in local democratic life and the impact of Prevent on local state-Muslim engagement.

BUILDING THE BRIDGE

In Bristol, Prevent was re-branded and re-shaped as Building the Bridge – a local civic forum uniting diverse Muslim community participants with Bristol City Council, the Police and various statutory agencies. Research found this enabled a genuine collaboration between public authorities and Bristol’s Muslim communities. Building the Bridge provided a new political opportunity structure for Muslim participation in local governance that addressed some of the deficits regarding Muslims’ political representation in the city. It enabled Muslim participants to raise public authorities’ awareness of community concerns and facilitated a critical dialogue about the implications of local political and policing practices. Importantly, it assigned agenda-setting powers and formal leadership roles to Muslim representatives, and facilitated the engagement of young people, women and mosque communities in the city.

For a while, Building the Bridge created a regulated form of community engagement, some of which continued even after the withdrawal of central government funding. The research findings have been fed back to Muslim communities and local authorities in Bristol to help guide the development of this initiative into the future. Working with a steering group of Muslim women activists in Bristol, the next phase of the project will co-produce research that focuses on spaces and mechanisms for Muslim women’s effective engagement in decision-making.

www.publicspirit.org.uk/building-the-bridge
POLITICS & GOVERNANCE | FEATURE

POLL POSITIONS

More than ever before citizens have multiple preferences for political parties with small events affecting the stability of polls and the election outcome

For obvious reasons, the final result of the 2015 general election will not be known until the day after. But in-depth studies of citizens’ preferences, based on information from interviews with more than 18,000 British citizens, conducted in June 2014 for the British Election Study (BES), allow us ahead of the actual election to sketch the extent to which the various parties vie for the same groups of voters, and how this determines the vote shares that they may obtain.

To understand how well or how poorly the various parties can be expected to do, we have to go beyond traditional polling questions that ask how people would vote if there were a general election today. Such questions assume that people may have a preference for just a single political party but most people feel that more than just one party is sufficiently attractive to consider voting for. The number of these co-existing preferences is not unlimited: most often there are two, and for a few people even three parties that are viable options. Obviously, these preferences change over time as a consequence of political developments, but the extent to which they change is quite limited when looking at periods of one to two years. Yet, such small differences may affect for a voter which of two most preferred parties is ‘on top’, and will thus be supported at the ballot box.

In the BES these electoral preferences were measured for each party on a scale from 0 (‘very unlikely’ to vote for this party) to ten (‘very likely’). For 54 per cent of British citizens the difference between their most and second-most preferred party is at most one point on this scale from 0 to ten. For these people, very small fluctuations in these two preferences may have large consequences for which party gets their vote. These findings demonstrate that the traditional notion of ‘core supporters’ of political parties fits, at best, only very small segments of the entire electorate, and that for all parties there is much to play for in the remaining period until the general election.

Because these questions about electoral preferences were asked for each of the political parties, as well as identifying which people are torn in their preferences between which parties, we can also look at it from the perspective of the political parties. Given the preferences of voters, what would, for each party, be the best result it conceivably could obtain – its ‘electoral potential’? This potential is calculated from the strength of the preferences of the respondents for the party in question; people who gave a low score to the preference question contribute hardly at all to this potential, while those with a high score contribute heavily. And, given that many voters see that there are two or sometimes three almost equally attractive parties, to what extent do these potentials overlap?

On the battlefield

The table opposite presents our findings (for reasons of space we restrict ourselves here to the Conservatives, Labour, the Liberal Democrats and UKIP). These findings show in a different way that citizens have multiple preferences for political parties: the sum of the electoral potentials for these four parties far exceeds 100 per cent (it is 114 per cent), and this total does not yet include the potentials for the Green Party and the BNP, and, in Scotland and Wales, for the SNP and Plaid Cymru.

The findings also indicate to what extent each of the parties has to compete with each of the other to realise its potential. The Conservatives, for example, risk losing considerable segments of its potential electorate to each of the other parties, but certainly most so to UKIP. No less than 39 per cent of the potential electoral support for
the Conservatives could be lost to UKIP. This ‘battlefield’ is even more important to UKIP, which has a smaller electoral potential than the Conservatives, and therefore the overlap of their respective potentials constitutes almost half (49 per cent) of the UKIP potential. The groups of citizens that make up these overlaps therefore provide, for each of the parties involved, opportunities (to win votes from competitors) but also risks (to lose to these competitors).

When looking at all the findings presented in this table we see that the largest group of contested voters is in the overlap between Conservative and UKIP; this group accounts for no less than 13 per cent of the entire sample. Because this is a group of voters that can go either way, the potential of the combined vote share of Conservatives and UKIP is not the sum of their separate potentials (which would be 70 per cent), but only 47 per cent.

UKIP can, as widely commented upon, inflict serious electoral damage to all three other parties, yet this threat is certainly the most serious for the Conservatives. Conversely, UKIP itself runs the risk of seeing large segments of its electoral potential vote for the Conservatives and Labour.

The Liberal Democrats may show poorly in the polls but the party has not lost all of its potential support and much of this potential is shared with each of the three other parties portrayed here. Interestingly, and in spite of its coalition partnership with the Conservatives, the segment of Liberal Democrat support that is also attracted to Labour is larger than the similar segment that is also attracted to the Conservatives.

More than at previous General Elections British citizens are torn between two (occasionally three) parties they see as equally attractive. Therefore, small political events may have large consequences: for these voters the effects of political successes or failures of the parties involved may lead to minor changes in their preferences, but these minor differences can very well change which of the rivals ranks highest for them. Many of such consequences may cancel out across voters, as people often react differently to political events and developments. But to the extent that such reactions were run in the same direction, the relative stability that many of the polls currently show may easily be upset.

**Who is Nigel Farage?**

- Man of the moment Nigel was in a plane crash on the day of the general election in May 2010. He likes cricket, fishing and beer from traditional pubs. Married twice, he has four children and lives in Berry’s Green, Bromley, with his family. His second wife, Kirsten Mehr, is German.

**EDUCATION**

- Dulwich College, south London
- He didn’t go to university, but worked in the city instead.
- Trading commodities from 1982

**POLITICS**

- A young Nigel was active in the Conservative Party, leaving it in 1992
- 1993, founding member of UKIP
- Leader of UKIP 2006-September 2009. Resigned to stand against speaker John Bercow
- Elected leader again August 2010

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**Table 1:**

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<th>Electoral potential</th>
<th>Overlap with Conservative</th>
<th>Overlap with Labour</th>
<th>Overlap with Liberal Democrats</th>
<th>Overlap with UKIP</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>39%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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<td>Liberal Democrat</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>54%</td>
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<tr>
<td>UKIP</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>31%</td>
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CONFLICT

MYTHS OF THE GREAT WAR

Learning from the mistakes of previous conflicts

THE GREAT WAR BROKE OUT a hundred years ago. As the story of the conflict has been told and retold, misperceptions about the war have emerged. Researcher Mark Harrison of the ESRC Centre for Competitive Advantage in the Global Economy (CAGE) at the University of Warwick has analysed the most common myths. The Great War was an ‘inadvertent conflict’ that happened without intention or calculation. The decisions that led to this war were calculated with considerable foresight of the wider costs and consequences. The spirit of those that started it could be defined as ‘rational pessimism’.

Most fighting on the Western front took the form of needless slaughter. The attrition was a deliberate strategy on both sides. The Allies outproduced the Central Powers in firepower and this was the basis of victory – but there was no other way of winning the war but by the sacrifice of millions of lives.

The Allies used food as a weapon to starve Germany out of the war. While the Allied blockade did some damage, it seems likely that German actions – such as the decision to attack Germany’s main trading partners, the impact of economic mobilisation on the internal food market and the massive scale of the Hindenburg plan – inflicted more suffering on German civilians.

The Treaty of Versailles laid the foundations for World War II. The negative impact of the treaty, the reparations and the hyperinflation of 1923 were short-lived, and by the mid-1920s German society was set on a course to political moderation and stability.

But the Great Depression of 1929 brought back to life the radical nationalism that existed long before World War I.

Professor Harrison argues that if we wish to learn from history and avoid repeating the mistakes of the past, it’s vital to examine what these mistakes actually were: “The world can hardly be reassured if we ourselves, social scientists and historians, remain uncertain of what mistakes were made – and even whether they were mistakes in the first place.”

www.esrc.ac.uk/_images/Myths%20of%20the%20great%20war_tcm8-31600.pdf

SCOTLAND

Migration matters

The Scottish public are slightly less concerned about the issue of immigration than the rest of the UK

THE FIRST DETAILED analysis of public opinion toward immigration in Scotland found that 60 per cent of Scots thought the Scottish government should make the crucial decisions about immigration policy. The research, led by Dr Scott Blinder of the Migration Observatory, was funded as part of the Future of the UK and Scotland programme to inform the 2014 Scottish independence referendum debate.

Previous public opinion surveys have consistently suggested that the Scottish public is slightly less concerned about the issue of immigration than the rest of the UK. This is despite the fact that Census data shows that Scotland experienced, proportionally, a greater increase in its migrant population than any of the other nations of the UK between 2001 and 2011, although its migrant population remains relatively small and its population density low in comparison with many other parts of the UK.

The new survey showed that the overall picture in Scotland is still one of broad support for reductions to immigration. But the issue is of less concern than in England and Wales, where 75 per cent support reduced immigration. In Scotland, a smaller majority (58 per cent) supported reduced immigration, and more people thought immigration is good for Scotland (41 per cent) than said it is bad for Scotland (31 per cent). Additionally, majorities in Scotland think of immigrants as coming from the EU or the rest of the world, but 12 per cent also included British people coming from England.

In relation to independence, opposition to immigration was noticeably lower among those intending to vote ‘Yes’ for independence (28 per cent) than for those who planned to vote ‘No’ (58 per cent). This shows some relationship between attitudes toward independence and immigration, although in both cases other issues, notably the economy, were more strongly linked to referendum voting plans.

IMPORTANT DECISIONS

Regardless of voting intentions, Scotland showed a strong preference for Holyrood over Westminster as the key decision-maker on immigration and asylum. When offered a choice of local councils in Scotland, the Scottish government, the UK government, and the EU, 60 per cent said that the Scottish government should make the most important decisions about immigration policy. The UK government was the choice for less than a third, while less than five per cent chose either local councils or the EU.

This data doesn’t present a simple picture of Scotland’s preferences for handling the issue of immigration to Scotland, but it does show a complex series of attitudes and concerns specific to the needs and issues that Scotland faces.

Opposition to immigration was lower among those intending to vote ‘yes’ for independence

www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk
www.futureukandscotland.ac.uk
**GOVERNANCE**

**DEMOCRACY UNDER THE MICROSCOPE**

*A new platform allows researchers to study how citizens become involved in governance*

THE INCREASING COMPLEXITY of contemporary governance over recent decades has led to experimentation by public authorities and civil society organisations with new forms of citizen involvement in the governing process. Examples of such participatory modes of governance include participatory budgeting (PB) in Porto Alegre, Brazil, and the British Columbia Citizens Assembly (BCCA) in Canada.

Established in the late 1980s, the original Porto Alegre model of PB engages thousands of citizens, the majority from the poorest social groups, in an annual cycle of decisions about the distribution of significant proportions of the municipal budget. The BCCA is very different: a random selection of the province’s citizens spent nine months in 2004 learning and deliberating about electoral systems before their recommendation for reform was put to a province-wide referendum.

While still in the relatively early stages of development, the promise of online engagement fuels hopes for a further wave of democratic innovation and, for some observers, such examples of democratic experimentation have the potential to radically transform democracy.

There is a growing interest in such democratic innovations within social science but, unlike the study of constitutions, elections, legislative votes or public opinion, no official records or statistics on the variety and spread of experiments exist.

Case studies and small-scale comparisons offer valuable insights but academics have little knowledge of the conditions under which such initiatives prosper. One of the major challenges is that knowledge of democratic innovations is dispersed across different communities, including university researchers and students, public authority and civil society practitioners, and activists and citizens who have organised, sponsored, evaluated or participated in such processes.

OPEN-ACCESS INFORMATION

Participedia is an attempt to respond to this challenge as an online, open global knowledge platform for researchers and practitioners in the field of democratic innovation and public engagement to upload information on their specific area of knowledge and expertise. The platform allows users to add and edit cases, methods and organisations and there are currently over 450 separate cases on the platform.

Rich descriptions are complemented with structured data to provide consistency across entries and to allow researchers to download datasets of all or selected cases. Users can also review cases according to a range of criteria including location, purpose, selection mechanisms and budget.

Professor Graham Smith at the Centre for the Study of Democracy (CSD), University of Westminster, has worked on the Executive Committee of Participedia since its launch, alongside colleagues at Harvard and the University of British Columbia. He has led a team that has improved the reliability of data download from the platform so that researchers can be more confident about the accuracy of the datasets and have clear guidance on how cases are coded.

This dataset changes in real time as new cases are added. The team has also improved the coverage of UK cases and worked with practitioners on how the platform might better reflect their needs. The real challenge to Participedia is to create a sustainable platform that is useful and attractive to the different needs of academic and practitioner/activist communities – both communities have an interest in the question of what works and under what conditions.

www.participedia.net

CANNABIS IS THE most widely used illicit drug in Britain. Its use has been in slow decline for over a decade, but evidence suggests that there may still be as many as 3.4m users, which exceeds all other illegal drugs combined. UK policy is prohibitionist: users and suppliers are threatened with maximum sentences of five and 14 years’ imprisonment respectively. Over 2,000 people a year are imprisoned for offences, despite the lack of clear empirical evidence of the effect of enforcement on cannabis use. So, should policy change?

Professor Stephen Pudney’s recent report, Licensing and regulation of the cannabis market in England and Wales: Towards a Cost Benefit Analysis, is co-authored with Mark Bryan and Emilia Del Bono, and sets out our one radical policy option – a system of licensed, regulated and taxed cannabis supply. The researchers identify 17 possible consequences to evaluate in the case for reform, including savings in policing and criminal justice costs; changes in cannabis-related crime, accidents, dependency, mental and physical illness, productivity and the scarring effects of a criminal record.

There are large uncertainties in evaluating the costs and benefits. The first is what a legalised market would look like. US models of legalisation lead to large numbers of suppliers and product heterogeneity that is hard to regulate. Other models, like the government monopoly proposed for Uruguay, mean fewer, larger licensed suppliers operating under tight controls.

WHO BENEFITS MOST?

Given these uncertainties, the researchers considered three scenarios based on alternative assumptions about the responsiveness of cannabis demand to legalisation. They assumed a significant degree of product regulation, with government setting excise taxes at a rate comparable to alcohol and tobacco markets but with the continued existence of residual illegal supply.

The striking feature of these estimates is how small the projected costs and benefits are. This is partly because the researchers only consider external costs and benefits, arguing that the anticipated private costs (for example, health risk) to cannabis users are necessarily outweighed by the anticipated enjoyment of consumption. But also because the scale of cost savings (reduced enforcement costs and so on) and cost increases (medical care, crime victimisation, for example) to society appear to be modest. There is no compelling evidence for a huge impact – either good or bad – on the rest of society from the changes in cannabis use produced by legalisation.

A possible exception is cannabis-related crime. Researchers found little evidence that cannabis use causes any crime, but the large size of the market means that costs could be high (almost £600m) under the most pessimistic ‘high response’ scenario. But the margin of error is plus or minus £800m.

The largest projected impact relates to the government budget. Under this reform, government would gain additional tax revenue from licensed supply and make net savings on policing and criminal justice costs. But taxes represent transfers within society rather than gains to society, so the improvement in the government’s budgetary position is not a strong argument for reform in principle, although it might be an attractive feature of reform to governments in practice.

The researchers don’t believe their findings make legalisation unthinkable. While there is a significant possibility of net social harm if the demand response to policy change turned out to be extremely high, close monitoring would allow the policy to be evaluated in practice and reversed if necessary. And one of the lessons of British drugs policy in the last decade is that abrupt reversals of liberal policy initiatives are always possible.

CANNABIS COSTS

What would be the benefits and costs of a system of licensed, regulated and taxed cannabis supply?

Product regulation is one of the strongest arguments for legalisation. The tobacco market has controls on tar, nicotine and carbon monoxide content, and a regulated cannabis market could have similar controls. The primary psychoactive component of cannabis is D9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), which has been linked to impaired brain function and psychotic symptoms, but research suggests that another component, cannabidiol (CBD), has a protective anti-psychotic effect.

In the last decade there has been a marked rise in the market share of high-THC, low-CBD forms of cannabis – up to 80 per cent at the end of 2010. Of samples seized in 2008, the potent varieties contained 16 per cent THC on average and the protective CBD content of these samples was close to zero. It has proved impossible to control this trend towards more harmful forms of the drug under prohibitionist policy. A second source of uncertainty is the nature of demand. There is no clear reason for the slow decline in cannabis use or shift towards higher-potency product. And a third difficulty is in identifying the true causal relationship between cannabis use and eventual long-term harms.

HEMP, HEMP HOORAH!

Cannabis cultivated for industrial use has very low concentrations of the intoxicating THC, and has many practical uses:

- Paper & cardboard Hemp regenerates in months (not years like a forest), so is a great source to make paper/cardboard products from. It can also be recycled more times than wood-pulp paper.
- Clothing & fabrics Hemp fabric doesn’t wear out and becomes softer with washing. An acre of hemp will produce as much material as 2-3 acres of cotton.
- Plastic & building materials A variety of hemp building supplies are rot-free, pest-free, mould-free and fire-resistant.
- Fuel Hemp can be made into fuel as oil from the pressed hemp seed – being turned into biodiesel, or ethanol and methanol.
- Nutrition Hemp seeds contain many vitamins, essential omega 3 and 6 fatty acids, are high in protein, and have a great nutty taste.

Source: www.collective-evolution.com

www.iser.essex.ac.uk/d/153
MIGRATION

People on the move

How have migration patterns changed in the last decade and what influences mass movement?

THE STORY OF HUMANITY is a story of mobility: the creation and revision of borders and communities, the rules governing who can and can’t move, the social and political practices shaping who is accepted within what kinds of spaces. As long as there have been people, there have been people on the move.

The last decade has seen momentous changes in migration patterns. Dramatic events such as the reconfiguration of Europe after the fall of the Soviet Union, economic growth in China and the spread of globalisation have caused social and economic turbulence, changing the migration landscape of Britain. This time also saw the founding of the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS) at the University of Oxford in 2003. During the following decade, COMPAS received funding from the ESRC to analyse what migration means from theoretical and practical perspectives at local, regional, national and global levels.

Its aim was to understand the dynamics and impacts of migration and the factors that influence the movement of people and their sense of identity and place.

COMPAS has used an inter-disciplinary approach to investigate these issues, applying research tools from disciplines such as sociology, economics, anthropology, political science, development studies and demography.

Rethinking diversity: Research has helped move academic and policy debates away from established, often limiting ideas about ‘multiculturalism’, to a more nuanced understanding of the interactions between groups in complex, super-diverse, modern societies.

The urban context: Researchers have been at the forefront of efforts to map and understand the changing contours of diversity in neighbourhoods, towns and cities.

Border crossing: Research across Europe will provide a comparative inventory of data on irregular migration. Research has also delved deeper into the concept and practices of ‘bordering’, analysing how borders affect both migrants and citizens.

Trade-offs: Work has revealed the trade-offs that characterise migration decision-making at every level. Key areas include analysis of the tension between access and rights for migrants to high-income countries, the rights of migrant care workers and their elderly employers, and questions about the opportunities and challenges that migration generates for welfare states.

As long as there have been people, there have been people on the move

Migration within Europe: COMPAS’ work during the 2004 accession of ten countries to the EU provided unique insights that have formed the basis of academic and policy responses to the mobility of EU citizens.

Providing dispassionate analysis: the Migration Observatory was established in 2011 to inject evidence-based analysis of migration into media, public and policy debates in the UK, and has rapidly become the UK’s most trusted, independent voice on the subject. www.compas.ox.ac.uk

MINORITY ATTITUDES

A new online data centre offers easy access to good quality information about ethnic minorities’ political integration, participation and attitudes. Designed by researchers from the University of Manchester, the website www.ethnicpolitics.org presents the main findings of the Ethnic Minorities British Election Study (EMBES) as well as other relevant data and expert opinions in an accessible format. EMBES was conducted after the 2010 General Election to provide the largest and most up-to-date survey of British ethnic minorities’ political attitudes and behaviour ever conducted.

Dr Maria Sobolewska, University of Manchester

WITNESS PROTECTION

Special measures for witnesses in rape trials – such as protective screens, live-links and video-recorded evidence – do not affect jurors’ evaluation of the evidence, says a recent study. Witnesses in criminal proceedings are generally required to give evidence ‘live’ in open court but, since 1999, some victims of rape have been granted more ‘witness-friendly’ trial arrangements. Researchers explored whether the use of special protective measures affects juror decision-making. Based on simulation of four different rape trials, findings suggest that use of video testimony did not reduce the emotional impact of evidence compared to evidence given in person. Nor did special measures substantially affect jurors’ evaluations of the rape testimony or perceptions of trial fairness.

Professor Louise Ellison, University of Leeds
How and why do young people’s attitudes to foreign policy differ from their elders?’

In March 2014, we surveyed a representative national sample of 5,125 Britons on the topic of foreign policy attitudes in Age and Foreign Policy Beliefs: Differences that Count? People between 18 and 30 years of age, about 20 per cent of Britain’s voting age population, have not yet experienced a time in their adult years when British troops were not engaged in one or both of the conflicts in Iraq or Afghanistan. As these people have grown into adulthood in the shadow of these protracted wars it is interesting to ask if they have foreign policy attitudes that differ significantly from their elders.

We are interested in knowing whether those aged 18 to 30 differ from the group who entered the electorate soon after the end of the Cold War (between 1989 and 2001), as well as older people who experienced much of their lives during the superpower political conflict between the US and the Soviet Union. Survey evidence shows broad opposition to recent and potential future British military incursions and many other forms of international engagement. But opposition is significantly softer among younger voters.

Turning to two conflicts that Britain may be called upon to enter in the near future - the civil war in Syria and the crisis in Ukraine – we find young people are most willing to engage. A majority (52 per cent) of those 30 and younger supported Britain enforcing a no-fly zone over Syria, whereas 50 per cent of those between 31 and 43 years of age and 45 per cent of those older supported this option.

Although there was clear opposition (57 per cent) across the entire sample to sending British troops into Syria to protect civilians, enthusiasm for doing so varied across age groups. Only 16 per cent of those entering the electorate before the Berlin Wall came down supported such a move, but 29 per cent of each of the two younger age groups expressed their approval.

Who wants a military response?

Support for a British military threat against Russia in response to that country’s aggressive tactics was low across the board – just five per cent were willing to select such an option. Again we see differences between those who came of age before the end of the Cold War; only three per cent of those who joined the electorate before 1989 wanted a military response, compared to nine per cent among those coming of age after 2001.

Across the electorate, there are multiple signs of disengagement when it comes to Britain’s future in the European Union. It is on choices in a potential EU referendum and on the issue of immigration where we see the largest age differences. Only 33 per cent of those under 31 stated they would vote for Britain to leave the EU if a referendum was offered. The percentage who would vote to leave rises to 41 per cent among those between 31 and 43 years old and to a clear majority (54 per cent) among those over 43 years of age. On immigration, 53 per cent of those over 43 and 45 per cent of those between 31 and 43 expressed agreement with the statement that ‘All further immigration to the UK should be halted’. Agreement fell to 36 per cent among the youngest (18-30-year-olds) group.

There are limits to what our data can tell us about British public opinion in the long term. As the youngest portion of the electorate grows older, it remains to be seen whether their attitudes will change or if they will constitute a distinct cohort that is relatively less sceptical of Britain engaging with the world via humanitarian or even military means. The possibility that future events may also shape attitudes about international engagement further clouds our crystal ball.

Evidence shows broad opposition to recent and potential future British military incursions

Professor Thomas Scotto

Professor of Government, University of Essex

www.psa.ac.uk/insight-plus/blog
www.iser.essex.ac.uk/misoc
WHO DO THEY THINK THEY ARE?
As the general election looms, the British public continues to be dissatisfied with politicians...

VOTING TRENDS
Although there was a small upturn in voting in 2010, the trends are still not positive.

GENERAL ELECTION TURNOUT SINCE 1945

MUST DO BETTER
With Prime Minister’s Questions a cue for the public’s wider perceptions of parliament and the behaviour of its MPs, how do recent comments from survey participants point MPs in the right direction?

ENGAGE ME
• 33% agree that Prime Minister’s Questions ‘puts me off politics’
  27% disagree

• 12% agree that PMQs ‘makes me proud of our Parliament’
  45% disagree

STOP SHOUTING
• 47% agree that PMQs ‘is too noisy and aggressive’
  15% disagree

• 20% agree that ‘it’s exciting to watch’
  44% disagree

A MATTER OF TRUST
• 86% agree that politicians ‘should be expected to act according to a set of guidelines about their behaviour’

• 77% agree that politicians ‘should undertake regular ethics and standards training’

• Only 23% agree that Parliament ‘encourages public involvement in politics’

BE MORE PROFESSIONAL
• 67% agree that ‘there is too much party political point-scoring instead of answering the question’
  5% disagree

• 16% agree that ‘MPs behave professionally’ at PMQs
  48% disagree

• Just 21% agree that ‘politicians are behaving in a more professional way than they were a few years ago’

LISTEN TO ME!
• 67% say ‘politicians don’t understand the daily lives of people like me’

• 36% agree it is ‘informative’
  22% disagree

• 40% agree ‘it deals with the important issues facing the country’
  20% disagree