

Perceptions of Electoral Fraud in Great Britain

Research Study conducted for
The Electoral Commission

The
Electoral
Commission

11-17 December 2003

Contents

Introduction	1
Summary of Findings	2
Different types of fraud	2
Attitudes towards electoral fraud	3
Technical Details	5
Sample Design	5
Fieldwork	5
Weighting and Data Processing	5
Statistical Reliability	6
Definition of Social Grades	7

Appendices

 Questionnaire and Topline Findings

Introduction

This report presents the findings of a survey among 1,001 adults, aged 18+ across Great Britain. The research was conducted by MORI (Market & Opinion Research International) on behalf of The Electoral Commission. The research was designed to provide the Commission with contextual data on public perceptions.

Methodology: questions were placed on the MORI Omnibus, the regular MORI survey among the general public. A nationally representative quota sample of 1,001 adults (aged 18 and over) was interviewed throughout Great Britain by MORI in 197 different sampling points.

Interviews were conducted face to face, in respondents' homes, using CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing) between (11th and 17th December, 2003).

Reporting: in the graphs and tables, the figures quoted are percentages. The size of the sample base from which the percentage is derived is indicated. Caution is advised when comparing responses between small sample sizes.

Please note that the percentage figures for the various sub-samples or groups need to differ by a certain number of percentage points for the difference to be statistically significant. This number will depend on the size of the sub-group sample and the % finding itself - as noted in the appendix.

Where an asterisk (*) appears it indicates a percentage of less than one, but greater than zero. Where percentages do not add up to 100% this can be due to a variety of factors – such as the exclusion of 'Don't know' or 'Other' responses, multiple responses or computer rounding.

Publication of Data: our standard Terms and Conditions apply to this, as to all studies we carry out. Compliance with the MRS Code of Conduct and our clearing of any copy or data for publication, web-siting or press release which contains any data derived from MORI research is necessary. This is to protect our client's reputation and integrity as much as our own. We recognise that it is in no one's best interests to have survey findings published which could be misinterpreted, or could appear to be inaccurately, or misleadingly, presented.

©MORI/21029

Jessica Elgood

Mark Gill

Summary of Findings

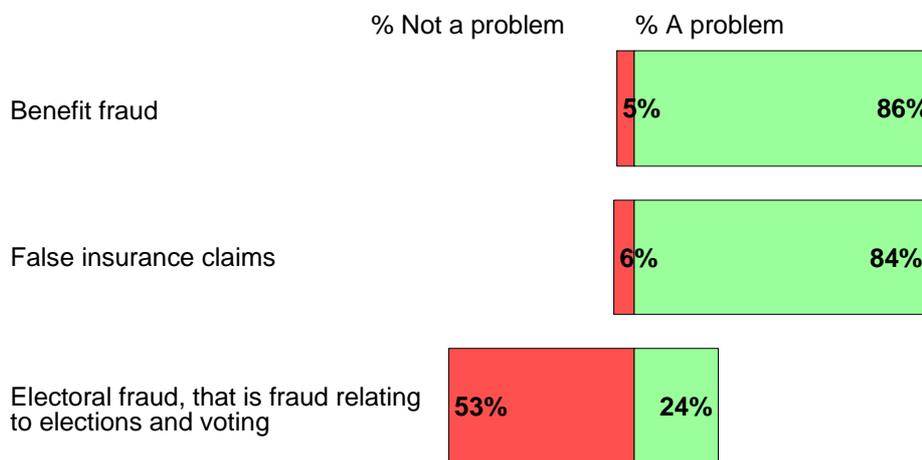
Different types of fraud

The vast majority of people believe that benefit fraud (86%) and false insurance claims (84%) are a problem in Great Britain. Three in five people (59%) say that benefit fraud is a *very big* problem.

In contrast, the majority of people (53%) feel that electoral fraud is not a problem. One in twelve people (8%) would identify it as a very big problem and one in six (16%) say it is a fairly big problem.

Different types of fraud

Q From what you know or have heard, how much of a problem, if at all, do you think different types of fraud are in Great Britain?



Base: 1,001 GB adults, 18+, 11-17 December 2003

Source: MORI

Younger people (those aged between 18 and 34 years) are twice as likely to think electoral fraud is a problem (36%), than those aged of 65 years (18%). Unskilled, manual workers and the unemployed, as well as those with less educational achievement are also more likely to see electoral fraud as a problem.

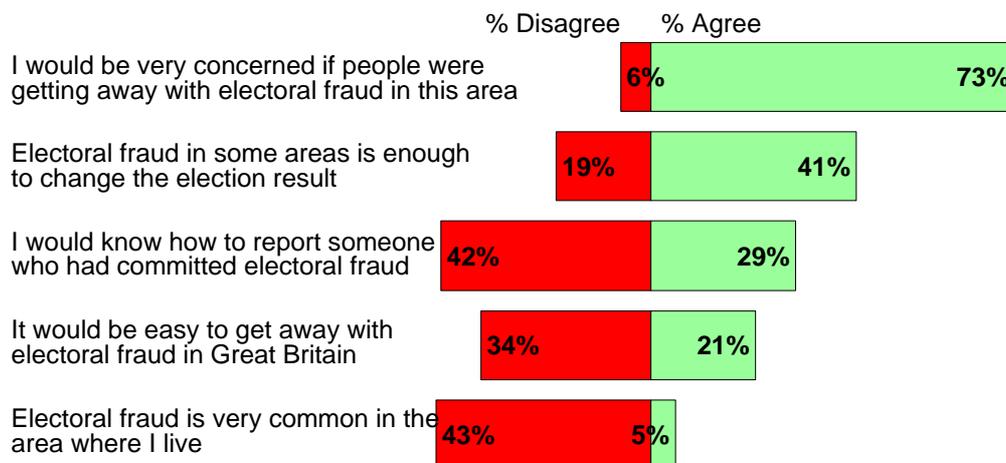
Newspaper readership may also have an impact on people's views. Broadsheet readers (who tend to be older, better educated and professional workers) are half as likely to say electoral fraud is a problem (15%) than those who read the tabloid press (28%).

Attitudes towards electoral fraud

The following chart presents the extent to which the British public agree or disagree about several aspects of electoral fraud. It is worth noting the relatively high proportion of people who do not express an opinion for many of these statements below, which reflects electoral fraud not being seen as a major concern for many people.

Attitudes towards electoral fraud

Q For each of the following please tell me whether you agree or disagree.



Base: 1,001 GB adults, 18+, 11-17 December 2003

Source: MORI

Few think electoral fraud is common

The majority of the public say they would be concerned if electoral fraud was happening in their area (73%), though this falls to 57% among 18-24 year olds. At the same time, very few adults (5%) actually believe electoral fraud is common where they live.

Two in five (41%) British adults think that electoral fraud in some areas is enough to change the result, one in five (19%) disagree. Given the low number who think that electoral fraud is a problem or is common, this figure probably reflects a theoretical assumption *if* fraud were to take place, rather than a reflection of what is happening in practice.

These findings are in contrast to similar research conducted in Northern Ireland. Adults in Northern Ireland are both more likely to think electoral fraud is common in some areas (66%), and more likely to think that electoral fraud can change the election result (64%).¹

¹ Millward Brown Ulster (MBU) for The Electoral Commission, October 2002, base: 972 adults. The MBU questionnaire asked "electoral fraud is very common in some areas" and so comparison with the GB survey should be seen as indicative only

Getting away with electoral fraud

A third (34%) disagree that electoral fraud would be easy to get away with; only one in five (21%) agree. Many say they do not know (21%) or do not give an opinion either way (23%). This is a consistent picture across sub groups of the population, though older people are more likely to think it is easier to get away with than younger people.

Most people do not know how to report electoral fraud

Perhaps reflecting the low levels of concern about electoral fraud, few adults say they would know how to report someone who committed electoral fraud (29%). Women (23%), those aged under 35 years (22%) and unskilled/unemployed people (23%) are least likely to know how to report this type of fraud.

Personal experience

Just one per cent of the public claim to have personal or second hand experience of electoral fraud or abuse at an election in Britain. Some of the answers given by respondents to the survey among those who say they have, or know someone who has had, experience of electoral fraud or abuse are shown below:

*Person with no vote allowed to vote. Reported to policeman.
No action.*

When applying for a postal vote it was stated by the Returning Officer that the application had not been received in time, despite other mail posted at the same time to nearby address being received the next day.

Local Asian population in [area mentioned] were multiple voting to gain control of the local council and the local Conservative Party.

The stealing of postal votes in particular amongst the ethnic minority communities.

An old lady in a home was guided to voting Conservative and when she found out she was not allowed another vote.

Local council chief executive – fiddling the electoral register.

A foreign student was allowed to vote locally in a General Election.

Local council election lists omitted some candidates.

A voter voting for his wife.

Technical Details

Sample Design

The sample design is a constituency based quota sample. There are 641 parliamentary constituencies covering Great Britain. From these, we select one in three (210) to be used as the main sampling points on the MORI Omnibus. These points are specially selected to be representative of the whole country by region, social grade, working status, MOSAIC rurality, tenure, ethnicity and car ownership. Within each constituency, one local government ward is chosen which is representative of the constituency.

Within each ward or sampling point, we interview ten respondents whose profile matches the quota. The total sample therefore is around 2,100 (10 interviews multiplied by 210 sampling points).

Gender:	Male; Female
Household Tenure:	Owner occupied; Council Tenant/HAT; Other
Age:	15 to 24; 25 to 44; 45+
Working Status	Full-time; part time/not working

These quotas reflect the socio-demographic makeup of that area, and are devised from an analysis of the 1991 Census combined with more recent ONS (Office of National Statistics) data. Overall, quotas are a cost-effective means of ensuring that the demographic profile of the sample matches the actual profile of GB as a whole, and is representative of all adults in Great Britain aged 15 and over.

Fieldwork

For this survey, fieldwork was carried out by MORI using CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing). All interviews were conducted face to face, in the home - one interview per household. No incentives were offered to respondents.

Weighting and Data Processing

The data were weighted using 6 sets of simple and interlocking rim weights for social grade, standard region, unemployment within region, cars in household, and age and working status within gender. This is to adjust for any variance in the quotas or coverage of individual sampling points so that the sample is representative of the GB adult population.

Statistical Reliability

Because a sample, rather than the entire population, was interviewed the percentage results are subject to sampling tolerances – which vary with the size of the sample and the percentage figure concerned. For example, for a question where 50% of the people in a (weighted) sample of 1,001 respond with a particular answer, the chances are 95 in 100 that this result would not vary more than 3 percentage points, plus or minus, from the result that would have been obtained from a census of the entire population (using the same procedures). The tolerances that may apply in this report are given in the table below.

Approximate sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels (at the 95% confidence level)			
	10% or 90% ±	30% or 70% ±	50% ±
Size of sample or sub-group on which survey result is based			
300	3	5	6
500	3	4	4
1,001	2	3	3
<i>Source: MORI</i>			

Tolerances are also involved in the comparison of results between different elements of the sample. A difference must be of at least a certain size to be statistically significant. The following table is a guide to the sampling tolerances applicable to comparisons between sub-groups.

Differences required for significance at the 95% confidence level at or near these percentages			
	10% or 90% ±	30% or 70% ±	50% ±
Size of sample on which survey result is based			
200 and 200	5	8	9
300 and 500	4	7	7
437 (men) and 564 (women)	4	6	6
<i>Source: MORI</i>			

Definition of Social Grades

The grades detailed below are the social class definitions as used by the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising, and are standard on all surveys carried out by MORI (Market & Opinion Research International Limited).

Social Grades			
	Social Class	Occupation of Chief Income Earner	Percentage of Population
A	Upper Middle Class	Higher managerial, administrative or professional	2.9
B	Middle Class	Intermediate managerial, administrative or professional	18.9
C1	Lower Middle Class	Supervisor or clerical and junior managerial, administrative or professional	27.0
C2	Skilled Working Class	Skilled manual workers	22.6
D	Working Class	Semi and unskilled manual workers	16.9
E	Those at the lowest levels of subsistence	State pensioners, etc, with no other earnings	11.7

Topline Results

Perceptions of Electoral Fraud in Great Britain

Topline results – 2 February 2004

- TOPLINE RESULTS ARE BASED ON 1,001 ADULTS AGED 18+ ACROSS GB.
- INTERVIEWS WERE CONDUCTED FACE-TO-FACE, IN HOME, BETWEEN 11-17 DECEMBER 2003.
- RESULTS ARE BASED ON ALL RESPONDENTS UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED.
- DATA ARE WEIGHTED TO THE PROFILE OF THE POPULATION.
- AN ASTERISK (*) INDICATES A FINDING OF LESS THAN 0.5% BUT GREATER THAN ZERO.
- WHERE PERCENTAGES DO NOT ADD UP TO EXACTLY 100% THIS MAY BE DUE TO COMPUTER ROUNDING, THE EXCLUSION OF "DON'T KNOWS" OR TO MULTIPLE ANSWERS.

Q17 **From what you know or have heard, how much of a problem, if at all, do you think the following types of fraud are in Great Britain?**

Base: GB respondents only (1,001)

	A very big problem %	A fairly big problem %	Not a very big problem %	Not a problem at all %	Don't know %
a) False insurance claims	37	47	5	1	10
b) Benefit fraud	59	27	5	0	7
c) Electoral fraud, that is fraud relating to elections and voting	8	16	40	13	24

Q18 **I am going to read out some statements people have made about elections in Great Britain. For each one, please tell me whether you agree or disagree.**

Base: GB respondents only (1,001)

	Strongly agree %	Tend to agree %	Neither agree nor disagree %	Tend to disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Don't know %
a) Electoral fraud in some areas is enough to change the election results	11	30	19	15	4	20
b) Electoral fraud is very common in the area where I live	1	4	17	27	17	35
c) It would be easy to get away with electoral fraud in Great Britain	2	19	21	25	9	23
d) I would know how to report someone who had committed electoral fraud	7	22	14	26	16	15
e) I would be very concerned if people were getting away with electoral fraud in this area	36	37	13	4	2	8

Q19 Have you or someone you know had personal experience of electoral fraud or abuse at an election in Britain? IF YES – what happened?

Base: GB respondents only (1,001)

	%
Yes (PLEASE SPECIFY)	1
No	96
Don't know	2
