Perceptions of Electoral Fraud: Qualitative Research

Report of Findings for Stage 1

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Introduction

1. Executive Summary

Project Context

1.1 The Electoral Commission is undertaking a review into the current voting system with a focus on any potential vulnerabilities. Proven cases of electoral fraud are relatively rare in the UK and levels of concern amongst the public and politicians are comparatively high. A key aim of the review is to better understand concerns amongst the general public and others about electoral fraud and to get a better picture of the actual level of fraud.

1.2 The Commission’s review will consider:
- potential vulnerabilities in the electoral system
- the integrity of electoral administration processes in the UK
- the role and effectiveness of different stakeholders involved in supporting the delivery of elections

1.3 The Commission will publish its final conclusions and recommendations from the review in the autumn of 2013, in time for legislation to be brought forward during the life of the current UK Parliament.

1.4 This report details findings from the first stage of a two stage qualitative research study undertaken as part of this wider review. The key objective of this first stage was to gain public perceptions and understanding of activities identified as electoral fraud.

1.5 The intention is for stage 2 of the research to be designed to allow testing of implications of findings from this first stage and also from the initial stage of the wider fraud review. This may include testing possible changes to the current voting process. More detail on the context of the project can be found in Appendix 1.

Overview of Approach

1.6 The methodology included a combination of 10 group discussions and 12 individual depth interviews, undertaken in a range of locations across the UK (two locations represented in each of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and four locations represented in England). Locations were chosen to reflect areas with different characteristics (e.g. rural, urban) as well as different histories in terms of reported cases of electoral fraud. A detailed breakdown of the methodology and sample can be found in Appendix 2.
1.7 In order to be able to unpack attitudes about what makes people concerned about fraud and think that it happens, the majority of the sample agreed at the point of recruitment that they think electoral fraud happens ‘a little’ or ‘a lot’. The sample should therefore be considered as reflective of the ‘concerned population’ rather than the general population. A detailed breakdown of the methodology and sample can be found in Appendix 2.

Stage 1 Key Findings

Experience and knowledge of electoral fraud amongst the public is minimal

1.8 For participants within this research, concern did not stem from direct experience of fraudulent practice at ground level.

1.9 Very few examples were given of first hand experiences of electoral fraud activities. These examples also tended not to relate to specific times and dates. Instead, most were based on rather vague recollection of events that had struck participants as inappropriate or unusual. These examples arose occasionally across the sample (and not in every session).

1.10 The public are mainly getting their information about electoral fraud from media reports and second hand information passed by word of mouth (which might relate to someone else’s personal experience but more often also relates to media stories).

The public feel concerned but are not clear what their concern is based on

1.11 This research highlights how the ‘concerned’ public find it very difficult to establish their own level of concern about electoral fraud. Although they have a broad understanding of what electoral fraud is, there is very little spontaneous understanding of how prevalent or serious specific electoral fraud activities are. They therefore struggle to make a considered judgement about how much of a problem they feel electoral fraud is in the UK.

Five factors are heightening concern amongst the public

1.12 Lack of knowledge of voting processes, the extent of electoral fraud and/or safeguards in place to protect against it is compounding concern. Concern is highest amongst those who know least about these areas but exists to some extent for most.
1.13 **Deliberation of new information**¹ can heighten concern for all, irrespective of their pre-existing level of knowledge and experience. This raises questions around what is most appropriate to convey to the public to help reduce concern; but also explains to some extent how concern becomes raised in response to information passed on through the media.

1.14 There is a ‘blurring’ of electoral fraud with more general concerns around politics and politicians. Some specific activities undertaken by politicians and parties are considered to be electoral fraud. However, as these relate to misleading the public, abuse of the system and corruption, consideration of these becomes muddied with wider concerns of distrust and disaffection with politicians and the political system.

1.15 There is also a ‘blurring’ of electoral fraud with more general concerns around community issues and local politics. While there were some reports of specific instances of electoral fraud within a community (gleaned from the media), some members of the public used concerns about electoral fraud as a way of discussing their dissatisfaction with or concern about specific ethnic minority communities and/or their culture. These ‘general impressions’ of electoral fraud amongst ethnic minority communities without specific examples indicate that some assumptions of fraudulent activity may be speculation based on negative stereotyping.

1.16 Electoral fraud is not a top of mind consideration. However, **placing the issue of electoral fraud in the spotlight** (by asking questions about it or drawing attention to it through research or media focus) naturally raises anxiety. There is some assumption that the topic would not be brought to attention unless it exists as an issue. In light of this, having concern for a low awareness topic could be a proxy for ‘caring’ about democracy and fairness.

**Participants felt there would be value in receiving selected information about the electoral system to reassure and reduce concern**

1.17 There are indications that selected information may help reduce concern about electoral fraud: for example, information in relation to safeguards in place, commitment to keeping fraud to a minimum and low reported levels of fraud. However, while findings highlight these areas as having potential, further work is required to understand what specific information content would have value (since this research also showed that some specific details serve to compound concern by highlighting areas of vulnerability).

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¹ New information might relate to anything to do with the topic of electoral fraud, with examples in this research including:
- types of electoral fraud they might not have considered before or in depth;
- examples of electoral fraud incidents mentioned by other people (which those people would have taken initially from media stories);
- new information about how voting processes work, such as the specific procedures for checking postal votes.
Participants felt there would be value in making some changes to voting processes, in order to reduce concern

1.18 Areas where participants in England, Wales and Scotland felt improvements may be possible to reduce the risk of fraud are focused on the areas they recognised as vulnerable and include:

- Introduction of Individual Electoral Registration, as intended in 2014 (in response to being prompted that this is happening).
- Requirement for identification when voting at polling stations (both spontaneously suggested and agreed with when prompted).
- Changes to the postal voting system to make fraud much harder to achieve (both spontaneously suggested and agreed with when prompted).

1.19 By comparison to the system in England, Wales and Scotland, the system in Northern Ireland was considered by most across the sample to be ‘gold standard’.

1.20 In Northern Ireland such significant changes were not felt necessary. However, some felt that the security of postal and proxy voting could be improved further.

Detailed Findings

2. What the public consider to be electoral fraud

2.1 Spontaneous definitions of electoral fraud given by the public interviewed in this research were very much in line with official definitions².

Spontaneous definitions of fraud

2.2 Participants tended to describe electoral fraud as ‘criminal behaviours’ in relation to a range of behaviours and different potential offenders, as follows:
- individuals registering to vote and voting
- in relation to electoral staff or officials vote counting
- candidates winning an election under false pretences (for example, through lying about self or policy)

2.3 Specific activities that were more likely to be mentioned spontaneously (either during the session or recorded via their pre-task exercise\(^3\)) as examples of electoral fraud included:

- Pretending to be someone else to cast more than one vote – which might take the form of either voting using someone else’s identity or registering for additional opportunities to vote.
  
  *Someone voting when they are not entitled to or amending another’s vote, voting for someone else without their knowledge.*
  
  [Group Discussion, 36-68, ABC1, Edinburgh]

  *Someone else voting for you, someone else using your vote, number fiddling, inaccurate figures.*
  
  [Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Oldham]

  *People not voting as they should, e.g. using votes of others.*
  
  [Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, Cardiff]

  *Someone voting in another’s name.*
  
  [Depth Interview, Male, 45-59, AB, Lisburn, Northern Ireland]

  *Someone using false ID to try and vote more than once.*
  
  [Group Discussion, 18-35, ABC1, Newcastle, Northern Ireland]

- Registering to vote under someone else’s name – for the purposes of identity fraud rather than voting.
  
  *Registering at addresses as a false person so you can claim benefits.*
  
  [Depth Interview, Male, 17-20, B, London]

- Undue influence on other people’s individual votes – for example, through using promises to bribe voters or pressurising voters in other ways to vote for someone they would not necessarily choose to vote for themselves.
  
  *Deception in ballot counting, pressurised voters.*
  
  [Depth Interview, 30-44, DE, Oldham]

  *Rigging or swaying the vote before or after to a favoured outcome.*
  
  [Group Discussion, 17-35, C2DE, Glasgow]

- Vote ‘fixing’ – through deliberate miscounting, interfering with ballot papers (such as ‘changing’ or ‘losing’ them) and obtaining votes deceptively (such as buying blank ballot papers).
  
  *Tampering with or overly influencing the voting process.*
  
  [Depth Interview, Female, 17-20, C1, Edinburgh]

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\(^3\) See Appendix 3 for copy of pre-task exercise.
When a group or someone rigs an election process through illegal means or immoral methods...paying someone for a box to go missing.
[Group Discussion, 18-35, ABC1, Newcastle, Northern Ireland]

Using votes wrongfully to get your party more votes than would be otherwise possible.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Lisburn, Northern Ireland]

2.4 Although mentioned less commonly than the above, elected individuals breaking campaign promises or behaving inappropriately before or after elections were also mentioned by some unprompted.

The MPs and their expenses and stuff. That’s fraud I think. And some of them have gone to jail for other things.
[Depth Interview, Male, 17-20, AB, London]

Candidates misrepresenting the truth in order to get more votes.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, ABC1, Leicester]

Misleading the public on the party views...it’s people coming round your door, promising you this and promising you that...and you put the X in the box...then they end up doing nothing for you.
[Group Discussion, 18-35, ABC1, Newcastle, Northern Ireland]

MPs making pledges etc. to gain votes knowing they can’t be kept.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Lisburn, Northern Ireland]

Where spontaneous understanding comes from

2.5 In terms of where participants had acquired their spontaneous understanding of fraud, this was a mix of:

- Occasional first-hand examples.
- Media reports.
- Second-hand examples from other people (usually initiated by a past media report but occasionally initiated by a first-hand example from someone else).

2.6 First-hand examples were isolated and arose from across the sample as a whole, rather than within each session (where often none were mentioned at all), which indicates that personal experience is not driving understanding of electoral fraud or concern about it. Examples included incidences of:
  - missing polling cards
  - personation
  - registration of fake identities at addresses
  - undue influence

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When unprompted by either the pre-task exercise or stimulus material.
2.7 In the main, both understanding of what electoral fraud is, and ‘evidence’ of it happening, was being drawn from a mix of media reports and second-hand examples based on previous media reports passed on by word of mouth.

*It’s just the TV really.*
[Depth Interview, Male, 30-44, DE, Oldham]

*News – if there’s been a close election...there’s calls for a re-count...there’s debates after elections and you hear things coming up on the TV.*
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Lisburn, Northern Ireland]

*News is the first way...usually when the count is due...you hear about wrong counting or miscounting.*
[Group Discussion, 18-35, ABC1, Newcastle, Northern Ireland]

*I don’t know much about voting yet so I asked my friend who knows more – he’s doing politics at college. And he says it’s a big issue.*
[Depth Interview, Male, 17-20, AB, London]

2.8 In some instances, these sources had generated a specific story or example.

*I think something maybe happened in Govan 3 or 4 years ago. I think it was very slow to come out – it started on a local radio station, then local news and then finally it hit national news.*
[Group Discussion, 17-35, C2DE, Glasgow]

2.9 However, in most cases, recall of specific instances of electoral fraud was very vague. Participants made generalisations drawn from media headlines (such as the fact that people can and do register at multiple addresses to create multiple identities) rather than recalling specific details or events.

*It’s like when that happened in the nineties...I think it was in the nineties when they had to recount all the votes. It was on the TV...when they thought he’d won by a landslide but actually it wasn’t a landslide in fact he hadn’t won at all. Who was it?*
[Depth Interview, Male, 30-44, DE, Oldham]

*Destroying ballot papers; you put them in the box, or you don’t, what was that election where there was none in the box?*
[Group Discussion, 36-68, ABC1, Leicester]

*Over the years you’ve heard about dead people [voting].*
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Lisburn, Northern Ireland]

*I’ve heard of postal votes going a bit peculiar.*
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Ceredigion]

2.10 Assumption also plays a significant role. For some participants who had not heard much in the way of electoral fraud, there was still some confidence that electoral fraud was likely to take place, with examples given of what ‘could happen’ or ‘could have happened’.

Electoral Commission – Perceptions of Electoral Fraud: Stage 1 Report
I haven’t heard, I just think there’s obviously people will sign up to people with certain addresses, make up people’s names, birth certificates, people who’ve died. I’ve heard, obviously in the states I think that’s happened more but I think there would be people who would.

[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]

You know, people are always moving and then you get this thing [card] for someone else...then some people would take it. I think some people would.

[Depth Interview, Male, 30-44, DE, Oldham]

Prompted examples of fraud

2.11 Following discussion of spontaneous understanding of electoral fraud, participants were also prompted by stimulus material outlining a range of potential activities that might be considered to be electoral fraud. These broadly covered the spontaneously suggested activities outlined above but also some further activities, as detailed in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Prompted examples of electoral fraud

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Candidates who have been voted in then breaking promises they made when campaigning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elected individuals undertaking fraudulent activities once elected, e.g. MPs accepting illegal donations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone making another person vote for a party or candidate they don’t want to vote for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A person registering to vote under somebody else’s name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People vote even when they are not eligible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliberately miscounting votes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tampering with ballot papers to change who the elector voted for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postal ballot papers being sent to the wrong address</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone pretending to be another person so they can vote more than once</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A candidate making false statements about another candidate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone giving any money to a voter, to get them to vote for a particular candidate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.12 The purpose of this discussion was to check whether there were further specific activities that participants had simply not remembered, to ‘test’ definitions in more detail and start to unpick understanding of electoral fraud further. For example, did participants categorise activities in different ways (some as fraud and some not) and why?

2.13 On consideration, participants thought that most of these activities were fraud in some way. The activities either tied in with their spontaneous suggestions or made sense as ‘fraudulent activities’. The two exceptions were postal ballot papers being delivered to the wrong address and candidates making false statements about another candidate, both of which were felt to fall outside of electoral fraud.

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5See Section 4 for detail on audience understanding of these specific issues.
2.14 More detailed findings of what participants thought each type of electoral fraud entailed and how concerning it is, are provided in the next section.

3. **Which activities appear to cause most concern for the public?**

3.1 Following on from discussion about what electoral fraud is considered to include and where knowledge and experience of electoral fraud is broadly drawn from, participants were asked to consider a range of specific electoral fraud activities in more detail.

3.2 Through asking participants to evaluate how much of an issue they perceived each activity to be and why, the purpose of this part of discussion was to:

- Dig more deeply into experience, in order to investigate whether any electoral fraud activities might be widespread but unreported.
- Help understand participants’ own rationale for concern, that is, what rational considerations they use to arrive at a position of concern.

**Rational considerations used by participants to judge their concern about activities that might be considered electoral fraud**

3.3 Across the sample, participants used a consistent set of criteria to make judgements about how concerning different activities that might be considered electoral fraud are to them. These criteria included:

- Perceived level of impact on the outcome of the voting event (and within this, whether they feel the value of their own vote is affected).
- Level of impact on the overall integrity of the democratic voting system.
- The extent to which an activity is felt to involve negative intent or ‘true criminality’ versus someone simply taking advantage of an opportunity.
- The extent to which an activity is perceived to be controllable through safeguards or ‘impossible to control or influence’.
- Likelihood of happening in the UK and therefore ‘definitely affecting me’.

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6 Questions were asked directly and exercises undertaken to map and prioritise the activities to understand specific factors used to consider the activities.
- Frequency or volume at which the issue is perceived to happen in the UK which would increase impact further.

3.4 Despite having consistent factors for considering the extent of their concern around different electoral fraud activities, participants found it difficult to rank the activities in terms of which they thought were of most concern to them personally. They also struggled to rank the activities in terms of which presented most of a problem within the UK. Specifically, while participants could make assumptions about the first two factors above, they were often unable to make a confident judgement about safeguards, criminality and prevalence (that is, definitely happening in the UK and at what scale). This was particularly the case for those with less experience of voting but not exclusively.

3.5 However, although participants had difficulty reaching a confident conclusion on which activities were most concerning, there was some consistency in how the activities were grouped by participants. These groupings show:
- how the factors above combine to create higher concern
- assumptions or guesses about prevalence
- and the specific activities that are then considered to be potentially more of a problem in the UK

3.6 The different activities are discussed one by one below and are clustered into the following four groups):

- Activities considered by participants to be high concern and presenting an issue for the UK.
- Activities considered by participants to be high concern but with doubts as to whether they are an issue for the UK.
- Activities considered to happen in the UK at least sometimes but of lower overall concern.
- Activities considered by participants to be lower concern and not to happen in the UK.

**Activities considered by participants to be high concern and presenting an issue for the UK**

3.7 The following activities tended to be both grouped as high concern and considered to happen relatively widely in the UK:

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7 Note: The way in which issues were grouped was not universal but groupings described here reflect the most dominant themes.
Candidates who have been voted in then breaking promises they made when campaigning

3.8 This was considered to be a common activity with candidates in different elections often making false promises to secure votes.

That’s a very big thing, that because it’s all of them isn’t it?
[Depth Interview, Male, 30-44, DE, Oldham]

That’s just normal! unethical and corrupt.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, C2DE, Glasgow]

That’s standard practice; politicians since time immemorial. If that was illegal you’d have to lock up most of parliament.
[Depth Interview, Male, 60+, AB, Edinburgh]

3.9 Although perceived to be a norm, and not ‘technically’ electoral fraud, this activity was still considered high concern. This concern arises from frustration and disappointment with politics and politicians. Having a democratic system was felt to be less meaningful if people could not be clear what they are voting for (for example, if a policy that was promised was reneged upon or changed) or if candidates voted in to represent people and political parties proved untrustworthy.

That is so frustrating...that’s what destroys your will to vote and your democratic outlook on it all...they should be held to their party manifesto...they should be held to account.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, ABC1, Leicester]

Less and less people are voting because less and less people have got confidence in the system.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Oldham]

Making promises which are not kept, that should be electoral fraud really – they are telling a lie to get elected, then go back on it.
[Depth Interview, Male, 60-64, Ceredigion]

That’s the most important thing but it’s not in my opinion you know, electoral fraud.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, Cardiff]

The Conservatives did that with the NHS, student fees...this just happens all the time...it is very immoral though.
[Depth Interview, Female, 21-29, C1C2, Leicester]

3.10 The media was felt to be the main source of information about this particular activity, reinforced by word of mouth in many cases. Participants often found it hard, however, to give specific examples that they had heard or read. Rises in Higher Education Tuition fees was sometimes given as an example, with participants clear that they had heard of this in the context of ‘broken promises’. However, when thinking this through, not all were comfortable with this as an example, given the context of decision-making and power within a coalition rather than a single leading party.
This government have done the opposite of everything that they said they were going to do.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]

I know I’ve got lots of friends who’ve been very disappointed because they voted for this government because they said they’d do this and they’ve not done what they promised.
[Depth Interview, Female, 45-59, DE, Cardiff]

I thought Nick Clegg’s statement that he would definitely not increase student expenses, and the Liberal party signed statements to that effect and then promptly did nothing about it whatsoever. I thought that was fraud.
[Depth Interview, Male, 60-64, Ceredigion]

People who are voted in aren’t always in control...which means they can’t always live up their promises.
[Group Discussion, 18-35, ABC1, Newcastle, Northern Ireland]

**Elected individuals undertaking fraudulent activities once elected, e.g. MPs accepting illegal donations**

3.11 This was considered to be a relatively common activity. While not thought to apply to all MPs, participants felt that at any one time there would be some individuals who were abusing their position in some way for their own gain. As above, high concern around this activity arises from frustration and disappointment with politicians. The democratic system was felt to be undermined and less meaningful if candidates voted in to represent people and political parties were shown to be corrupt and untrustworthy.

*It’s massive, you think everywhere now, you know with Murdoch and things...it’s like 90% of them are doing something dodgy.*
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, Cardiff]

*MPs accepting illegal donations goes on left, right and centre and is very wrong. Some of them have gone to jail, but not enough of them. Tony Blair’s expenses details ‘disappeared’ or were destroyed ‘accidentally’, so nobody could tell whether he had committed any fraud.*
[Depth Interview, Male, 60-64, Ceredigion]

*Without a doubt, this happens...that’s happened since the start of time... I think there’s a whole lot of that going on ... Didn’t MPs get caught using our tax to get naughty videos, I mean if they’re doing that what are they doing on a bigger scale?...things are underground that you wouldn’t even think of though, like the level of corruption is really deep and clever and disguised.*
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]

*We have put these people in places of trust and then not only are they behaving illegally but they are actually abusing the trust the nation has put in them through the system.*
[Group Discussion, 36-68, ABC1, Leicester]

*That’s serious – they’re holding a position of public interest...they’re letting the people who voted for them down.*
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Lisburn, Northern Ireland]
3.12 Compounding concern further, however, was a sense that this type of activity was hard to control or influence, particularly if all those in positions of power were ‘in it together’.

Well you know they’re all doing it. It’s like with their expenses...nothing happens! If we would have done that we would have gone to jail!
[Depth Interview, Male, 30-44, DE, Oldham]

3.13 Again, participants were not always able to articulate specific examples or individuals, but it was thought that this type of story was relatively frequently reported in the media.

Someone making another person vote for a party or candidate they don’t want to vote for

3.14 This issue was felt to be something that would happen in other countries to a worse degree than in the UK. For example, it was recalled that violence or the threat of violence was used to influence support for some parties or candidates (for example, party leaders) in a number of ‘third world countries’.

Intimidation, threatening. Like in some countries; ‘you vote this way or your fingernails go missing’...the main time we come to hear about it is when the BBC starts banging the gong about these third world nations. You know, you see some horrific sights there where they’re going round and beating ‘em. But we’re a bit more subtle than that I think.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, ABC1, Leicester]

3.15 However, many participants felt that undue pressure to vote for a particular candidate did happen in the UK. Whether this pressure or influence was felt to be criminal or just unfair varied according to the specific activity.

3.16 While the threat of violence was unlikely to be the influencing factor, participants felt that people may be intimidated in other ways and that any form of direct intimidation was wrong and in some cases criminal activity (although it might be hard to identify an ‘unspoken’ threat). For example, it was thought that people such as small business owners in a community might be threatened with (or feel worried about) a lack of support for their business, or that people might be ostracized within a community if known to support a different or specific voting choice. Past or potential examples of this type of activity were mentioned more often in areas where specific minority communities are found but this activity was acknowledged as a potential problem across the sample.

Well I think in certain areas you’ve got a certain candidate and he’s got an entourage with him...it’s not a very nice atmosphere is it...I think its worrying for the older generation, and there probably the ones that are doing most of the voting.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Oldham]
There was a big issue with the Welsh hall of residence – I think two elections ago. It was a very close thing between Plaid and the Lib Dems. There was a stink about it – just local gossip, but all life comes to a taxi driver! The Welsh students were coerced into going and voting by Plaid activists on campus.

[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Ceredigion]

It used to be there’d be people standing there when you were voting, there was a lot of intimidation, areas where the police wouldn’t go in to supervise but you don’t hear about that so much now.

[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Lisburn, Northern Ireland]

You used to have people there [at the polling station] counting people as they went in cos they thought they could rely on them voting a certain way...it’s the way people are brought up, so if you’re Catholic then you’ll supposedly vote for Sinn Fein.

[Group Discussion, 18-35, ABC1, Newcastle, Northern Ireland]

I think that’s happened, personally, cause there was a thing in the papers, well and I know someone who was around and about, some little old people a certain age who’ve lived there all their life going voting and people outside saying ‘are you voting, d’you want me to come in and help you’...I’m not saying they twisted their arm round the back but it was quite an intimidating atmosphere.

[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Oldham]

3.17 It was felt that undue influence might also arise from decision-making being taken away from the individual in some way, i.e. someone telling someone else who they should vote for. This was not felt to be fraud or criminal activity but it was felt to be unfair and go against the idea of democracy.

I suppose that’s like peer pressure...I’d say that’s pretty common between friends and family, because no one would report that...I can see that happening very, very easily, especially amongst a younger crowd pressured by family.

[Depth Interview, Male, 21-29, DE, Glasgow]

Coercing someone to vote in a certain way is wrong, although as a union member I recognise that there is a preference for certain political parties...it would be very difficult to trace this kind of thing unless you have someone actually trying to spot people being forced at the polling station.

[Depth Interview, Female, 21-29, C1C2, Leicester]

Or if someone is not of their right mind...what’s to stop someone saying ‘there you just put an X in that box’.

[Group Discussion, 18-35, ABC1, Newcastle, Northern Ireland]

Some people might not understand what they’ve voting for.

[Group Discussion, 18-35, ABC1, Newcastle, Northern Ireland]

Intimidation definitely happens...in churches and families...

[Group Discussion, 36-68, ABC1, Leicester]

Wives voting for who their husband wants them to. I know it’s very sexist, but I can just imagine it happening...I don’t think it’s talked about that much.
There should be more promotion to make your own vote...that's something I've thought about before. You never really see a household with different allegiances. I wouldn't use the term fraud though, more informal persuasion.
[Depth Interview, Female, 17-20, C1C2, Edinburgh]

3.18 This activity tended to raise more concern when it was linked to ethnic minority communities that were perceived to have either strong, local political agendas or domineering community leaders. For example, it was suggested that 'lead' individuals within a community or the head of a household would or could take charge of voting. If this was just a question of instructing others who to vote for (with no apparent 'option' given to vote differently) then, as above, this was not felt to be fraud or criminal activity but simply unfair and working against democracy.

Certain groups in society – such as the Asian community – husbands could be likely to vote for themselves and their wives – that's a possibility just because it's a male orientated social group.
[Depth Interview, Male, 60-64, Ceredigion]

3.19 However, it was thought that in some instances, postal vote ballot papers would be completed by a single individual on behalf of others (for example, those unable to read English or have little decision-making within the household). In this case, the activity was felt to be more fraudulent as it was more in line with personation and explicitly taking someone else’s vote.

I could tell you most Asians do that. The younger ones'll do that for the older ones.
[Depth Interview, Male, 30-44, DE, Oldham]

People in these ethnic communities were encouraged to get postal ballots so they could be used...if you’re in a community where there are elders who are revered and they said vote this way, then you would
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Ceredigion]

This kind of thing is more likely to occur by postal vote.
[Depth Interview, Female, 21-29, C1C2, Leicester]

They need to inform the immigrants and things, when you come here. I mean I know they say there’s this and there’s that, but they need to explain – this is your vote.
[Depth Interview, Male, 30-44, DE, Oldham]

3.20 Examples were drawn from a mix of hearsay and occasional second hand experiences from other people, alongside media reports about happenings in local areas. All examples, however, were given by those outside of ethnic minority communities rather than those within ethnic minority communities.

There’s an Asian family near where I live where a family member was a candidate. They were all casting each other’s votes. I think someone did report this and it’s getting followed up...I would have thought that this would be caught out easily, but I’ve never heard of anything happening. What are the punishments?
[Group Discussion, 17-35, C2DE, Glasgow]
3.21 Participants could often not recount detail about specific events (for example, the candidate, party or person in question, or the specifics of the activity). However, they felt that **undue influence** was the main gist of the problem and they could imagine many ways in which it might happen.

**A person registering to vote under somebody else's name**

3.22 Responses to this activity were very mixed overall. As an activity, it was felt to be relatively easy to achieve. However, where participants considered this entirely in the context of voting it was not perceived to be a particular problem. Although it was felt to happen relatively frequently, it was not felt to happen on a large scale (that is, in high volume in a particular area). As such, it was considered to lead to the gain of a few votes only, which they felt would have little overall impact on an election result.

*That's easy enough to do – there are no controls against it.*  
[Group Discussion, 17-35, C2DE, Glasgow]

*I can imagine that being easy with people you know, like family.*  
[Depth Interview, Female, 17-20, C1C2, Edinburgh]

*One person taking another person’s vote - yes it’s wrong but it’s not going to make a massive difference.*  
[Depth Interview, Female, 45-59, DE, Cardiff]

*That’s something I’ve thought about before. That probably happens quite a bit...you may do it if you were passionate about who you support, to make your say bigger.*  
[Depth Interview, Female, 17-20, C1C2, Edinburgh]

*But would you go through that trouble just to put an x in a box? We've all heard of it but I've definitely never met anyone that's done it...how do you do it?! It couldn't be on a big scale.*  
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Lisburn, Northern Ireland]

*A person registering to vote under someone else’s name is presumably only going to do it once - so unless it’s a greatly organised scale, it’s not going to have much effect or impact really.*  
[Depth Interview, Male, 60-64, Ceredigion]

3.23 However, some participants considered this activity to be of high concern, given its role in underpinning the potential for other, 'more serious' types of fraud such as benefit fraud or identity theft. These crimes were felt to be serious, since the consequences to society and/or individual are significant. It was also noted that identity fraud and benefit fraud were treated seriously by the police and courts with proven criminal activity resulting in prison terms, criminal records and financial penalties. As such, concern tended to be high when focused on this issue, particularly if participants felt their own identity was at risk.

*For example: you could be up to criminal activity but on the electoral role it says these people live here.*  
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, Cardiff]
If somebody’s committing identity fraud then it kind of gives that more strength.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]

A different twist but it’s still electoral fraud...that would go into the category of identity fraud.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, Cardiff]

Stealing another person’s identity is a serious thing in any case.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Lisburn, Northern Ireland]

3.24 All participants felt they had heard of this activity happening. In general, they felt that examples had been reported in the media (although they lacked detail about specific stories) and occasional incidences were mentioned by participants as having happened in their local area or to someone they knew. It was clear, however, that ‘evidence’ of this activity was also drawn from general discussion between peers and family as to how benefit or identity fraud works.

You hear about people getting caught claiming benefits from different addresses [in the news].
[Depth Interview, Male, 17-24, ABC1, London]

I’ve not heard of any specific cases, just rather something to watch out for. But it’s not really big news, unless it gets really out of control.
[Depth Interview, Male, 21-29, DE, Glasgow]

Actually, my friend knew a guy who, he was in a big house and he just registered people for every room in the house he just create a person for credit cards and things...maybe that was for that.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]

I had my bank card cloned by a Polish guy.
[Depth Interview, Female, 60+, DE, Newcastle, Northern Ireland]

**People vote even when they are not eligible**

3.25 Participants could not identify specific examples of this happening but felt this was an activity that occurred at least occasionally in the UK. These assumptions were driven in the first instance by perceptions of high levels of immigration from Europe and Asia.

3.26 Where opinion about immigration was more negative, for example, for those participants who were focused on immigrants claiming state benefits, there tended to be more concern about voting while ineligible. Where articulated, the motivation behind such activity was felt to be new immigrant groups looking to establish a cultural presence and influence in a particular area.

I know in so many cases that illegal immigrants have used the person next to them because they’re legal.
[Depth Interview, Female, 45-59, DE, Cardiff]
That’s it with the Asian communities they all use each others...because they’ve got the same surnames! Without sounding racist, and we’ve said it before: it’s very Asian influenced.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Oldham]

3.27 However, discussion also revealed more generally that participants were often unaware of eligibility criteria for voting and, as such, were drawing assumptions about a potential problem amongst communities with whom they lacked trust.

Are these Polish and Lithuanians allowed to vote? I’m sure that’s open to fraud ‘cos they’re into everything...that would worry me, especially with these Polish people...their names are unbelievable, it would be quite easy wouldn’t it!
[Depth Interview, Female, 60+, DE, Newcastle, Northern Ireland]

Activities considered by participants to be high concern but with doubts as to whether they are an issue for the UK

3.28 The two activities below are grouped together as they were identified as high concern on the basis that the impact on voting outcomes and democracy is substantial where they happen, however, there was doubt as to whether they occur in the UK.

Deliberately miscounting votes

3.29 This issue was considered to be serious electoral fraud given the potential impact on the outcome of an electoral event and undermining of democracy.

That’s just going against the whole voting system...the reason why you vote is your opinion - so it’s going completely against the concept.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]

Like I say voting is a person’s right and that’s taking away that person’s right.
[Depth Interview, Female, 45-59, DE, Cardiff]

That certainly is electoral fraud; whether it happens, I don’t know. I haven’t heard of any cases.
[Depth, Male, 60+, AB, Edinburgh]

That would be worrying...that would be directly impacting on what was going to happen.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, Cardiff]

The consequences would be serious because it would get the wrong person in.
[Group Discussion, 18-35, ABC1, Newcastle, Northern Ireland]

3.30 All examples given, which were drawn from media stories, related to foreign countries.

That was sort of on TV really, and more American than British.
[Depth Interview, Female, 45-59, DE, Cardiff]
What you hear in the news and media, mostly concerning other countries you don’t expect it to happen here but maybe it does, I don’t know...that’s what happened in America isn’t it...with Bush...?
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]

You hear a lot more about it abroad.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, Cardiff]

3.31 Overall, participants were relatively confident that deliberate miscounting is not an issue for the UK.

It could be real but I don’t think it’s worrying at all...if it’s a close one anyway normally the person who comes runner up says I want a re-count, which is their right. And then it happens again the whole process. To me that’s just not an issue.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, Cardiff]

It’s something that you hear in places that have much more unstable voting systems...I doubt we would have ended up with a hung parliament [if this was an issue].
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]

I don’t think that’s very easy...and they have recounts don’t they?
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Oldham]

I can’t see that being an actual issue...that’s at the bottom of the pile for me – it would have to involve far too many people for it to work.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, ABC1, Edinburgh]

I don’t think it’s a massive issue in the UK. The system is too transparent at the moment.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, C2DE, Glasgow]

I’d say it does happen but as to how much it happens...I can’t see it happening on a large scale...I can’t see too many counters doing it, but I can see the odd vote kicked under the table.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Lisburn, Northern Ireland]

3.32 Those with little knowledge about how the voting system and processes work, and who were more highly impressionable, felt that this issue was a possibility if vote counters had links to the candidates (which they also believed was possible), had their own agenda to try and influence the vote in a particular way or were not appropriately monitored.

3.33 Lack of information about the process of counting votes meant they could not be sure this was not the case. In Northern Ireland reports of re-counting ballot papers on the news at election time were also perceived by some (in the context of the conversation) to be linked to potential incidences of fraud or deliberate miscounting.

Isn’t it the people from the local council that do the counting? And they work for them [the candidates].
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, Cardiff]
I would say it might take place at the counting – up to the box it seems everything’s in place [to keep it safe from fraud] but you don’t know what happens after the box...so it’s between the box and the results.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Lisburn, Northern Ireland]

You see, the people in the polling stations on the day, are supposed to be neutral. There not supposed to belong to any party. But they usually work for the local government or something. I think you’ve got to be a local government officer or something like that. But everybody’s got a political view don’t they? They must [also] get fed up...it’s just that we don’t know. Unless we could actually sit in on the count, you just don’t know.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Oldham]

I’m hoping that it would be difficult to do but I don’t know how the counting’s set up so without knowing it’s difficult to say.
[Depth Interview, Female, 45-59, DE, Cardiff]

You hear so often about it being miscounted...from the news...but for what reason nobody knows. You don’t know what’s happening after you’ve put your vote in the box, where it goes or who is counting it...the people that do the counting – do they have a NI police check? They should be checked so they have no criminal record...there might be a bit of trust there.
[Group Discussion, 18-35, ABC1, Newcastle, Northern Ireland]

Who are the counters? Are they members of another party? Everybody has a political bias – what’s the criteria for getting the job?
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Lisburn, Northern Ireland]

Tampering with ballot papers to change who the elector voted for

3.34 The sample was split between those who felt this was a type of electoral fraud (or potential electoral fraud) that happened in the UK. Some felt it was possible to change the vote on a ballot paper and that this might happen if some of the people involved in collecting or counting votes wanted to do this.

I don’t know the process of how they’re counted...it wouldn’t surprise me [if there was tampering].
[Depth Interview, Female, 45-59, DE, Cardiff]

You could easily be an employee of the council and know the councillor and them say ‘Oh I’ll give you a grand if you change that’.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, Cardiff]

I think actually there was a case of tampering, yeah going back about three years ago they were manipulating the...I forget where it was again I mean it wasn’t a general election or anything like that but it was like a by-election or a local election and there was...they had been adapting the cards.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, C2DE, Glasgow]

3.35 Others believed changing a vote was not possible but understood that ballot papers could be tampered with to make them void and this would be a way of influencing the results of an election, potentially even in the UK.
Could put a few more crosses on behind the scenes and then call that void.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, ABC1, Leicester]

3.36 Most participants had no examples from media or word of mouth from which to draw evidence that tampering with ballot papers is problem and most therefore tended to assume it was less relevant as an issue.

I’ve never heard of it happening...I just think there’s always that 10%.
[Depth Interview, Female, 45-59, DE, Cardiff]

I can’t see that happening in a room with loads of people. It’s not something that I’ve thought about before.
[Depth Interview, Male, 21-29, DE, Glasgow]

3.37 Those participants with more experience of voting felt that tampering was particularly difficult to achieve so was unlikely to happen to any significant scale and was not an issue for the UK. However, they also believed as above, that ballot papers which showed any changes on them would not be counted in the voting.

The opportunity to do this is very small because ballot papers go straight from hand of voter to the ballot box which then goes straight to the counters. All the counters would need to be in on it.
[Depth, Male, 60+, AB, Edinburgh]

You’re not allowed to, when you go to vote and you put the X in if there’s any other crossing out or anything they cancel the vote. So that can’t happen...it’s impossible for that to happen, unless someone who was actually counting the vote was in on something. But then I think three or four people do that as well so it’d have to be a group of people.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]

It’s pretty hard to tamper with ballot papers...the boxes are locked, so I’m not sure how they’d be able to do that...that would be very difficult to do; it would have to be tampered with en route.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, ABC1, Edinburgh]

I’m not sure how easy that is to do logistically. I can’t imagine that would happen much – it’s not particularly worrying.
[Depth Interview, Female, 17-20, C1C2, Edinburgh]

The person opening the box has to have the wherewithal to do that and how many are they going to do before they get noticed?
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Lisburn, Northern Ireland]

Activities considered to happen in the UK at least sometimes but of lower overall concern

3.38 Electoral fraud activities which participants thought happens in the UK, at least sometimes, but generates a lower level of concern overall include the following:
Postal ballot papers being sent to the wrong address

3.39 This was considered by participants to be mildly concerning as it might mean that individuals could lose out on their opportunity to vote, or the ‘lost’ ballot papers might be used by someone who found it in an inappropriate way (such as to cast an extra vote or vote when not eligible themselves).

You know, people are always moving and then you get this thing for someone else...then some people would take it. I think some people would.
[Depth Interview, Male, 30-44, DE, Oldham]

I think it happens a lot but the intention isn’t there to be fraud...think you will have people who take advantage of it.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, Cardiff]

And then I can just go, tick tick tick, write this, send that off and pretend it’s me then.
[Depth Interview, Male, 30-44, DE, Oldham]

3.40 Concern, however, was relatively low. Participants felt that while the action of using someone else’s ballot card was wrong, the impact on the voting outcome was likely to be negligible. There was also some sense that being ‘opportunistic’ and taking advantage of situation was less ‘criminal’ overall than planning deliberate fraudulent activity (such as actively registering as another person).

I think it would be more of a one-off, opportunistic thing, rather than organised...I don’t think that’s such a big problem – one extra vote isn’t going to make a huge difference. It would be more significant if it were a group acting in concert...or it could be an unscrupulous party activist.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, ABC1, Edinburgh]

Others might take advantage of this spur of the moment – if the opportunity landed on their doorstep.
[Depth Interview, Male, 21-29, DE, Glasgow]

But I don’t think it’s going to make a big difference to the outcome.
[Depth, Male, 60+, AB, Edinburgh]

3.41 Participants also assumed that postal votes going to the wrong address was not widespread. They could not recall any reports from the media of this happening. However, there was some recall from word of mouth stories, about people failing to receive their polling cards, or other irregularities around the arrival of postal ballot paper or voting cards, which was felt to provide some evidence of the issue.

I guess in London lots of people change addresses quite often so if you got a poll card through the post you could just put it in the post ...I think it’s down to voters not having their addresses up to date rather than Royal Mail.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]
It’s not a huge issue. The chances of it being sent to the wrong address and then someone taking advantage of it is slim.
[Depth Interview, Female, 17-20, C1C2, Edinburgh]

I don't think it happens enough for it to be a problem.
[Depth Interview, Female, 60+, DE, Newcastle, Northern Ireland]

That just leaves people open to fraud. It happens to me – for years they’ve been sending my postal vote to my mum’s house, and I’ve told them I’ve moved.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, C2DE, Glasgow]

I remember when I was 15 getting a voting card...you know far too young to vote, and then last year two came through and then this year my husband he didn’t even get a voting card and we went down and his name wasn’t on the register...so I know there’s a problem with the register not being up to date.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, Cardiff]

3.42 The delivery of postal votes to the wrong address was not considered to be electoral fraud but ‘poor system management’ instead.

That’s not fraud, that’s a mistake.
[Depth Interview, Female, 60+, DE, Newcastle, Northern Ireland]

This could happen a lot more than is reported, but it might just be an accident.
[Depth Interview, Male, 21-29, DE, Glasgow]

3.43 However, it contributed to raising concern by creating a perception of ‘slackness’ in the system. This idea of general ‘slackness’ led to a perception that there were weak points in the system which people could take advantage of to commit electoral fraud if they want to. Some of these weak points were evident in discussion of specific areas of voting (e.g. postal voting and no need to present identification at polling stations). The existence of weak points per se, however, was sufficient for some to worry that there might be other weak points they are not currently aware of.

The registration end of the system is very slack.
[Depth, Male, 60+, AB, Edinburgh]

If postal voting is not an issue now then it can always become one – it’s hugely open to fraud.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, ABC1, Edinburgh]

I’d say the electoral register is probably 70% out of date. I’d guess at that number and think it was probably accurate.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, Cardiff]

Someone pretending to be another person so they can vote more than once

3.44 Participants considered this activity to be electoral fraud. The reasons for considering this wrong behaviour were given as ‘impersonation’ involving lying
and misleading other people (which are generally inappropriate) and the loss of a vote to someone else who might want to have that voice.

I think it would be wrong, I don’t think it would be a good thing...it’s undermining your right as an individual, for that person’s vote.
[Depth Interview, Female, 45-59, DE, Cardiff]

3.45 In England, Wales and Scotland, opinion was mixed as to how prevalent this type of fraud is. Occasional examples were mentioned as either first or second hand examples passed on by word of mouth.

I know that’s happened round here...‘cos I was at the polling station and this bloke...when I saw him it wasn’t him. I said – that’s not you!
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Oldham]

3.46 However, most had no examples to draw from (from either personal experience, second hand stories passed on by others or the media), which generated a mixed response in terms of assumed prevalence. For some, this lack of evidence generated a perception that the activity was unlikely to be common.

It would just be people going as other people that they lived with...
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]

3.47 For others, the sense that this activity was both easy to achieve and unlikely to be reported or noticed, led to a belief or assumption that it might be fairly prevalent.

It’s quite easy to do, especially with the houses in some student areas, something like 90% of the houses are rented and people who live in the house for 6 to 12 months, the ballot cards can come through all the time...
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, Cardiff]

I can see that happening a lot. Someone could some back to the same station later on and it would be very hard to catch it...that’s one of the big ones. People voting for others that couldn’t make it to the polling station that day – like family voting for family.
[Depth Interview, Male, 21-29, DE, Glasgow]

It’s far more prevalent than you think; it’s really hard to detect and there are no measures against it!
[Group Discussion, 36-68, ABC1, Edinburgh]

It’s so easy to walk in and give anyone’s card, I know all my mum’s details, I could impersonate my mum. I think it is quite frequent, more so than the others.
[Depth Interview, Female, 21-29, C1C2, Leicester]

3.48 In Northern Ireland, however, the perception was largely that this type of fraud did not happen. There was some recall of a news story in the past where this had happened, which positioned the activity as possible in participants’ minds. However, awareness of checks being in place (such as presentation of identification and checks on postal voting) reduced concern by generating the
impression that this would be very difficult to achieve and there was potential for getting caught out. In light of this, the return would not be worth the effort since the action of doing this was unlikely to change voting outcome.

Same as registering to vote ...I don't think that could happen.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Lisburn, Northern Ireland]

It's not something I've ever heard about.
[Depth Interview, Male, 45-59, AB, Northern Ireland]

I don't really know how they would do that...I've never heard of someone doing that.
[Depth Interview, Female, 60+, DE, Newcastle, Northern Ireland]

3.49 Despite variances in perceptions of prevalence, overall concern was relatively low. While participants felt there was some negative impact if a person was to vote more than once (as someone else would potentially lose their vote) and some lack of fairness (as the offender in question would have more than one), the overall impact was thought likely to be low. This was because the expected scale (i.e. several additional votes at an election) was felt unlikely to have a significant influence on the outcome.

As an individual I don't think it would be that significant.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, ABC1, Edinburgh]

I can't see that it would make enough of a difference.
[Depth Interview, Female, 45-59, DE, Cardiff]

8It doesn't effect, well it does but I wouldn't go on worrying about it.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, Cardiff]

It would have to be spread over a lot of people for it to make a difference.
[Depth, Male, 60+, AB, Edinburgh]

It's quite easy to do, especially with the houses in some student areas, probably not done with any bad intent.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, Cardiff]

3.50 Participants were more concerned when this type of perceived fraud was linked to undue influence as mentioned in paragraph 4.18 above - for example, one person taking charge of a number of postal votes and filling them in on other people’s behalf, without any genuine input from the named voter to the vote cast. It was felt that if this type of activity was common practice by people supporting the same party or candidate in an area then the scale would increase and resulting impact would be more significant.

There’s an Asian family near where I live where a family member was a candidate. They were all casting each other’s votes. I think someone did report this and it’s getting followed up...I would have thought that this would

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8 Section 3, paragraph 3.16
be caught out easily, but I’ve never heard of anything happening. What are the punishments?
[Group Discussion, 17-35, C2DE, Glasgow]

A candidate making false statements about another candidate

3.51 This activity was considered to happen relatively frequently, as candidates often use ‘dirty tactics’ as part of the political process. It was felt, however, that smear campaigns are obvious and usually brought to light through the media (although no specific examples were given) so there was little chance of such activity really influencing the outcome of an election or the integrity of the system.

You just think they’re all doing the same...I guess the only way it is, is in that its skewing people’s potential view and way they’re going to vote but as much as one does it to another the other does it back.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]

The consequence actually is just that it makes him look like an idiot.
[Depth Interview, Male, 30-44, DE, Oldham]

3.52 As mentioned earlier, this activity was also not felt to be ‘true’ electoral fraud by participants, rather just a part of the political process. This type of electioneering, although ‘distasteful’, generated less frustration than other candidate activity, such as breaking promises to the electorate or undertaking fraudulent behaviour) as voters themselves were not seen to be losing out as a result.

That’s not electoral fraud, just bad practice. Someone did that recently and went to jail, which seemed a bit harsh. I would have just bumped them out their seat.
[Depth, Male, 60+, AB, Edinburgh]

You still make your own decision, even if you hear that and hear that.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]

Making false statements – most politicians make those...it is bad and happened at the last election. There were allegations made against a Liberal candidate by another party machine issuing false statements and trying to smear the candidate.
[Depth Interview, Male, 60-64, Ceredigion]

That’s misrepresentation, not fraud. It’s a typical thing that happens in voting all the time.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, C2DE, Glasgow]

I wouldn’t call that fraud, more just dirty politics. It depends on how false the statements are. If it’s a small error it’s just politics.
[Depth Interview, Female, 17-20, C1C2, Edinburgh]
Activities considered by participants to be lower concern and not to happen in the UK

3.53 Finally, an activity highlighted from the list of activities that might be considered fraud, but was felt to be lower concern and considered not to happen in UK included:

**Someone giving any money to a voter, to get them to vote for a particular candidate**

3.54 Overall, participants felt that cash bribes were likely to be highly unusual in the UK. Participants could not recall any instances where they had heard of this happening. However, they also could not imagine instances where it might happen, as they felt that a single vote would be unlikely to make a difference in a public election (and therefore not worth ‘buying’) or that bribery on a large scale could not be hidden and would come to light.

That is fraud for sure. To happen on a significant scale would require considerable resources, and there’d be no way to check. But I would have thought that would be very unlikely.
[Depth, Male, 60+, AB, Edinburgh]

I’m not sure that’s very effective, so I wouldn’t think it would happen that often...there’s no way you gonna get a thousand people to take money and not say anything...I just can’t imagine how that could happen unnoticed though on a large enough scale to make a difference...
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]

I think that’s more likely to happen from a business...a business man might bribe a particular candidate...they’re gonna gain more from it.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Oldham]

I don’t think that would happen. I don’t have any examples of it, and I don’t think you would hear about it if it did happen.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, C2DE, Glasgow]

I can’t see that happening - the parties would need a lot of money.
[Depth Interview, Male, 45-59, AB, Northern Ireland]
4. Which elections and geographical areas generate most concern?

4.1 In the course of discussion, participants were also asked to consider whether their concerns about electoral fraud and specific electoral fraud activities were the same across different types of elections held in the UK or if there were differences specific places in the UK.

Types of election

European Parliament Elections

4.2 For many in the sample, elections for the European Parliament were felt to be of least concern. This lower level of concern stemmed from a variety of considerations for different individuals.

4.3 Some felt that risk of fraudulent activity was lower because there was relatively little to gain for those undertaking voting offences. This variously related to:

- A perception amongst some that the election of a ‘European’ MP might involve votes from across Europe, so small numbers of additional votes in the UK would have little influence on the election result.

  I don’t think for Europe because it’s too big...you’re not going to bother with that because you couldn’t sway it. So I don’t think, you wouldn’t bother.
  [Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Oldham]

  Your vote is one of so many more and anything could happen.
  [Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]

- The belief that individuals stood less to gain from the policies or political activity of a specific candidate, since they would be operating in such a distant capacity (geographically and in terms of policy), which would reduce the inclination to try and influence the result.

  I’d imagine there’s less at the European elections and things like that because it’s not going to make much impact, there’s not as much of a benefit to them to do it.
  [Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, Cardiff]

  Less [motivating] than it would be at a local one - you’d probably have less knowledge of what the outcome is going to be.
  [Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]

- There being lower interest in these elections (and European politics) amongst the general population which would again reduce inclination to try and influence the result in any way.
I don’t think you would with Europe...what’s the point?
[Depth Interview, Male, 30-44, DE, Oldham]

4.4 Others felt that the risk of fraudulent activity was potentially higher on the basis that these elections might be under less scrutiny than national ones and therefore electoral fraud might be harder to identify or less likely to be spotted.

At your local election level...if there was corruption it would be much easier to find out, whereas if it on a huge international scale I think it’s harder to.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]

4.5 However, they were not particularly worried about this since the personal impact of that fraud was also seen as lower versus other elections; for example, because MEPs do not deal with local issues and are not perceived to influence them.

4.6 In terms of specific electoral fraud activities within European elections, some had a vague sense that those activities more closely linked to politics (false statements about other candidates or potentially forms of pressure or ‘backhanders’ to key influencers) would be more relevant for this type of election. However, this was not based on any specific rationale.

4.7 There was also some confusion around where votes are counted (for example, in Europe rather than the UK), leading some to believe that a longer and more convoluted process might create more risk or opportunity.

I would have thought of the larger level ones like the European ones it was more likely to happen because of the way it’s got to travel to get there.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]

UK Parliamentary General Elections

4.8 UK Parliamentary general elections were generally considered to be less problematic than ‘local elections’ (see below). Participants had some vague recollections of issues arising over the winning of seats or election results in specific local areas during this type of election. However, lack of specific detail about what happened and when meant that participants tended to categorise these examples of ‘possible fraudulent events’ and their associated concerns with ‘local elections’ instead.

4.9 In other words, participants often found it very difficult to distinguish between UK Parliamentary and local elections. As a result, they considered examples of electoral fraud activity they had heard of in specific ‘local’ areas to relate to local elections.

I think for myself, I was still quite confused because I even went online to find out exactly what vote was for what because it was so confusing and I can’t say that I was a hundred percent sure what I was voting in.
[Depth Interview, Female, 45-59, DE, Cardiff]

4.10 Some participants also had a vague perception that somehow UK Parliamentary General Elections are more important (given this decides who
the Prime Minister will be). In light of this, they expected attention to detail to be heightened and any safeguards or controls to be at their tightest around these events.

Electoral ‘safety’ is probably variable depending on the type of elections and how far you go up the electoral tree. The higher up, the more rigorous the checking procedures. Probably for the local elections, it may be looser.
[Depth, B, male, 63, Ceredigion]

It would be much harder to get away with on the national level.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Oldham]

From a more national point of view it would take so many man hours and so much effort it would get you caught.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, Cardiff]

4.11 Some also felt, however, that it is more difficult to influence the outcome of a national result, e.g. who is Prime Minister. For those who knew more about the political system, they related this specifically to the fact that the leading party would be determined by number of seats across the UK, rather than the outcome of a ‘single’ voting event. For others, this was linked to a more vague belief that, because many more people tend to vote in a general election, fraud would need to happen in very high volume or another substantial way to exert influence on the result (which seemed unlikely to them).

I don’t think it’s national elections. I don’t think you could have enough to sway it. I don’t think you’d want to bother with that.
[Depth Interview, Male, 30-44, DE, Oldham]

Local Elections

4.12 Across the sample, local elections were considered more likely to present issues in terms of electoral fraud. This was as a result of several factors.

- Firstly, participants held the perception that there is more to gain from undertaking fraudulent activity at the local level: that is, an action will have a bigger return for the offender(s) due to the smaller scale of the event.

It would make more of a difference at a local council election where there was a lower turnout. But it would be less likely in a general election.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, ABC1, Edinburgh]

I think there’d be more rigging in local elections where it would be more likely to swing the vote.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, C2DE, Glasgow]

I think at local levels myself...I wouldn’t say the general elections but the local ones...I don’t usually bother voting at the local ones cause I don’t know, they’re already covered and people already know who they want and they kind of team up and influence other voters.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]
I would think that it’s local...I think it’s people who gain from small victories...parties like the BNP with an actual agenda to prove a point may actually adopt a strategy.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, Cardiff]

- Secondly, it was felt that the impact of some fraudulent activities in a local election had more of an impact on local voters than activities in national or European elections. This was because the outcome of a vote determined who was in power locally and, as such, would have direct local impact.

  It’s where people all know each other, they get in together.
  [Depth Interview, Male, 30-44, DE, Oldham]

  The community...that’s it, conspiring the whole lot to [elect] a certain candidate. The people of Oldham are getting down as well because certain areas are having money spent on them when we need to spend on the town centre to attract people to come here because it’s dying a death.
  [Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Oldham]

  The need for you to find out about something that’s that distant from you [in a national or European election] is probably less than it would be at a local one.
  [Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]

- Lastly, it was felt that more examples or ‘evidence’ was available in relation to electoral fraud happening in relation to voting outcomes in a ‘specific locality’ (which was interpreted as in relation to ‘local’ voting events).

4.13 Although the source of such examples tended to be media stories, it was clear that in some cases, a headline or overview of the story had been passed on by word of mouth rather than picked up directly from the media.

  I know, well I don’t know but I’ve heard it’s been done in Glodwick.
  [Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Oldham]

  I have heard rumours that places like the Midlands are dodgy.
  [Depth Interview, Male, 60-64, Ceredigion]

Geographical areas considered to be more at risk of electoral fraud

Urban versus rural areas

4.14 When drawing on such evidence or examples about electoral fraud, participants often noted that the locations tended to be towns or cities, which supported the view that electoral fraud is more likely to take place in urban areas (versus rural areas). However, participants also assumed that there would be increased risk in urban areas due to higher population numbers, highly mobile and transient groups (e.g. lots of students and social housing) and the relative anonymity people have within communities/local areas.
In line with this, rural participants in the sample felt that the risk of problems in their own area was low by comparison, given that within smaller communities fraud relating to identity in some way would be very difficult (as perpetrators would be easily identified).

Who knows if it’s happening in Aberystwyth – you’d never know. But everybody knows each other here...you chat and have a cup of tea with your MP around here.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Ceredigion]

I think it’s less of an issue round here.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, C2DE, Ware]

Cities are more anonymous. In a small community, most people know each other.
[Depth Interview, Female, 45-59, Ceredigion]

Areas with high populations of specific communities (mostly ethnic minority)

Many examples drawn on by participants from across the sample also tended to link the activities in these urban locations with specific communities, most often ethnic minorities. Cases were recalled from Leicester (most widely recalled across various locations in England), Coventry, Oldham and Aberystwyth (for mid-Wales participants). All examples reported were from participants situated outside of these ethnic minority communities rather than within them.

It’s probably where you’ve got your big immigrant communities in the North and Midlands.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, C2DE, Ware]

It’s one of those things that happens, you know in the communities, you hear of it happening...cos I went to my neighbour and she’s African...and she says “I’ve got to vote for these”. And I said “what d’you mean? What you talking about, no you ain’t, it’s your vote. Nobody can tell you who to vote for”. And she says “aven’t I? Because my landlord came round and he says I’ve got to vote for these”.
[Depth Interview, Male, 30-44, DE, Oldham]

I remember hearing on the news that there were enclaves of suspicious voting patterns. I’ve got a feeling it was Leicester. I think some ethnic minorities are told to vote in a particular fashion.
[Group, 36-68, C2/D/E, Ceredigion]

I had friends on the same street and they had polling cards came through and one of them was [Asian name] and I think the other one I’m pretty sure was [Asian name] and they went down and they didn’t even question them.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, Cardiff]

It was notable that participants from some areas in or closer to those locations where fraud had allegedly happened, or been found to have happened...
(Oldham and Leicester), expressed higher levels of concern overall about electoral fraud taking place in ethnic minority communities as a result of ethnic minority communities working together to ensure their representatives win.

4.18 Activities that were mentioned in respect of this, however, covered both those which participants felt were definitely electoral fraud and other cultural considerations (where participants were less sure whether activity was actual fraud or just inappropriate influence or unacceptable voting practice in their view):

- Promising a specific return or ‘payment’ for support (although some also recognised that this was unlikely to be necessary).

- Community leaders putting pressure on communities to vote for a particular candidate, including collecting postal votes in some cases.

- Landlords using their influence over newly immigrated tenants to influence voting choice (one second hand report of experiencing this).

- Men in some ethnic minority communities having strong influence over their family’s political allegiance and voting choices. For example, household leaders using votes of women or non-English speakers to vote in the way the householder decided (rather than the individual registrant).

5. How concerned are the public overall?

5.1 The true extent of concern amongst participants was difficult to gauge.

5.2 Participants revealed during discussion that electoral fraud is not a top of mind consideration. They often expressed that, beyond carrying a vague awareness of activities happening or being possible, they had not spent much time considering electoral fraud in any great detail prior to being asked to in the research (even though they had registered ‘concern’ at the point of recruitment). To some extent, this reflects their low level of personal experience of electoral fraud. However, it would also appear to indicate that electoral fraud is not a burning issue for the public, certainly by comparison to some other concerns.

*I just honestly I've never even thought about it.*
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]

*I'd never thought about that happening before.*
[Group Discussion, 36-68, ABC1, Edinburgh]

*To be honest I didn't really think about it.*
[Group Discussion, 18-35, ABC1, Newcastle, Northern Ireland]
It brought up things I don’t normally think about.
[Follow up call, 36-68, C2DE, Newcastle, Northern Ireland]

5.3 Their concern levels also often fluctuated within the group or interview sessions. As new information was learned (for example, about incidences of electoral fraud reported by others or information about the voting process from stimulus material or other people), concern either grew or waned. Participants clearly demonstrated in their discussion that they held conflicting beliefs about both:

- Electoral fraud generally.
- The criminality of activities that participants perceived to be electoral fraud.

5.4 In more detail:

**Conflicting beliefs about electoral fraud generally**

5.5 Participants often held conflicting beliefs about electoral fraud in general. Through discussion they would regularly move from a position of declaring that fraud was not a big issue (on the basis that they would have heard more about it and had not seen much evidence personally) to one of assuming that it must take place and may indeed be quite significant. Some participants would ‘move’ in the opposite direction, assuming activities were rife at first and then rationalising that they may not be such a problem as originally thought. For others, their opinion was circular, moving from one position to the other and back again.

I ’know’ people [i.e. understand they can act badly] so there could be a 10% chance [of it happening]...but I couldn’t sit here and say ‘I know this’ because I’ve got no evidence.
[Depth Interview, Female, 45-59, DE, Cardiff]

I think electoral fraud is, obviously it’s a problem but it’s not a massive thing because there’s not, as much as there is benefit there’s not a major benefit of the notion of it. So although I’m sure there is a lot of deception going on by some people...
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, Cardiff]

What you hear in the news and media, is mostly concerning other countries . You don’t expect it to happen here but maybe it does, I don’t know.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]

I’m sure all of these happen...it’s hard to judge though when you don’t know the scale.
[Group Discussion, 18-35, ABC1, Newcastle, Northern Ireland]

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9 This was both in relation to different types of electoral fraud and in relation to overall concern about electoral fraud.
You never hear about electoral fraud here in the UK, I’m sure it happens but I think of it mostly happening abroad, but there are enough crooked people around in the UK...I have no personal experience but I wouldn’t be surprised by any of these.
[Depth Interview, Female, 21-29, C1C2, Leicester]

5.6 This shifting of position was particularly marked within the ‘control groups’ that included some participants who felt electoral fraud did not happen at all or hardly at all, as a result of more strongly contrasting views being put forward. However, it was also a feature in many other groups, as a result of deliberating the issue and specific activities (and therefore imagining possibilities or considering new information).

Conflicting beliefs and confusion about the criminality of electoral fraud

5.7 The criminality of electoral fraud was also uncertain. Participants often defined electoral fraud as ‘crimes’ or criminal activity in relation to voting, partly driven by the word ‘fraud’ having strong connotations of criminal behaviours.

5.8 However, at the same time they doubted the ‘official’ criminality of those activities. Little was known about whether many of the activities discussed would give rise to a conviction. Moreover, participants were also not sure in their own minds whether some activities that they counted as electoral fraud warranted such a serious penalty.

People can get caught on insurance and tax and benefit fraud quite easily, but there aren’t many cases of electoral fraud – in terms of fiddling the vote or trying to adjust the number of votes cast.
[Depth Interview, Male, 60-64, Ceredigion]

That message [of criminality] doesn’t come across, well I don’t really hear that message when it comes to voting...I don’t hear any implications of what would happen to you afterwards.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, Cardiff]

Well you never hear of any consequences, do you?
[Depth Interview, Male, 30-44, DE, Oldham]

I’m not sure what the law would be in that situation.
[Depth Interview, Male, 21-29, DE, Glasgow]

5.9 There was less confusion about using false registration for financial gain (such as benefit or other financial fraud) since this was reinforced by a link to another type of fraud recognised as having serious legal consequences.

5.10 In line with doubts about criminality, participants tended to suggest that they also would be unlikely to report activity they suspected as electoral fraud. No participants had felt compelled to report anything they had come across to date. Reasons given for not reporting, or being unlikely to report in future, included:
- Lack of confidence regarding evidence required - Without a benchmark of how a similar event was reported and any specific outcome, participants felt unsure as to what constituted sufficient evidence for an accusation to stand. In light of this, they were concerned that reporting might be a waste of time and effort.

  * I think it’s one of them, it’d be very hard to prove. It’s one of those jobs.  
  [Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Oldham]

  * How would you prove a crime was actually committed? Would it be a police matter? What would get done about it, and how would you prove it? How would you trace that polling card?  
  [Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Ceredigion]

  * You can’t report peer pressure.  
  [Group Discussion, 18-35, ABC1, Newcastle, Northern Ireland]

- Lack of confidence about anything happening as a result of reporting electoral fraud – this was partly related to lack of understanding of the legal consequences as mentioned above. For some, however, there was also a sense that activity by politicians and big business was potentially ‘untouchable’ or protected in some way. In either case, this again gave rise to concern that reporting might be a waste of time and effort.

  * Probably because they’re operating at a corporate level they wouldn’t be arrested for it because they fund lots of other public services too.  
  [Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]

  * I don’t think they’d do anything even if they did prove it...  
  [Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Oldham]

  * If I was in the queue and I knew that that person wasn’t that person I’d think ‘well what am I gonna do? Go to the police’ For me, rightly or wrongly – it’s a lot of hassle!  
  [Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, Cardiff]

- Suffering from personal consequences as a result of reporting - participants were variously concerned that reporting electoral fraud might lead to personal ‘come back’ in some way, for example:

  - emotional consequences - through being made to feel like a complainer or time waster by the police

    * I’d feel a bit like I was wasting police time if I did ring and report it.  
    [Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, Cardiff]

    * I would go to the local councillor. I know him and I could do it anonymously, otherwise I wouldn’t go. Going to the police would be taking it too far.  
    [Depth Interview, Female, 45-59, Ceredigion]

  - rational consequences - through their own suspicion that police time is better spent on more pressing criminal matters
I can’t imagine contacting the police. If it was happening on an individual level I wouldn’t report it.
[Depth Interview, Female, 17-20, C1C2, Edinburgh]

I wouldn’t report it...unless I knew it was an identity fraudster.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, Cardiff]

– social consequences or potentially even physical harm – as a potential outcome of being identified as the person who reported the issue by the offender, should that person not be incarcerated (which was felt unlikely)

You wouldn’t want to be that person, would you? You don’t know it’s going to be kept confidential...that they won’t know it was you.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Oldham]

6. What drives public concern?

6.1 Given that experience does not appear to be driving concern, it follows that other factors must create concern in some way.

6.2 Discussion across the sessions highlighted that five factors are working to heighten concern amongst this section of the general public. Concern is driven by:

- The public’s current knowledge and experience – or lack of it – of voting processes, the extent of electoral fraud and safeguards in place to protect against it.

- Deliberation of new information.

- A blurring of electoral fraud with more general concerns around politics and politicians.

- A blurring of electoral fraud with more general concerns around community issues and local politics.

- The fact that electoral fraud is not a top of mind consideration, so placing the issue of electoral fraud in the spotlight (by asking questions about it or drawing attention to it) naturally raises anxiety.

6.3 Findings in relation to each of these are discussed in detail below.
Current knowledge and experience of voting (or lack of it)

6.4 Broadly speaking, the more participants knew about the general voting process, the lower their overall concern that electoral fraud happens or could happen. This was particularly the case, if they had some pre-existing knowledge of safeguards or had made assumptions about protective measures (which were sometimes incorrect).

6.5 Some level of confidence, however, appeared to be drawn from experience – that is, having used the voting system without problems themselves and from (very) little personal or close experience of electoral fraud or problems with pressure or vote counting.

I thought it was generally quite safe, because they’re quite strict with you when you get there. I’ve never postal balloted before. When you get to your polling station it’s not like people are just running around. They’re quite regimented...when you’re there it doesn’t feel like there’s any moment when it could happen...it all depends how you vote. I think if you physically go and see the process for your own eyes then you kind of feel safe in the knowledge that it’s fine...you go with your card and you have to show identification of who you are...and your card has your name on it and a special code.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]

The system here now, you’ve got to have ID which helps.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Lisburn, Northern Ireland]

I would say it’s safe, in so far as there are polling booths, and there are people there to cross you off the electoral register and prevent you voting twice or more times. Here is pretty safe I think.
[Depth Interview, Male, 60-64, Ceredigion]

I would say it’s quite safe really, I’ve never seen anything to make me think any different.
[Depth Interview, Female, 45-59, DE, Cardiff]

6.6 Conversely, the less participants knew about the electoral and voting process and the less experience they had, the more they were likely to imagine the possibility of electoral fraud happening when the topic is raised. Without a frame of reference as to how the process might work, they were less able to consider how this might not be the case and more able to imagine how it might happen.

My idea of what voting fraud is, is just literally what it could be, not on what I believe it is or how I’ve experienced it because I’ve never heard of it ever...but just because we haven’t experienced it personally doesn’t mean it’s not going on.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]

Well I’ve not really thought about it to be honest....but yes, I can see it could be really bad. Does all that happen? I don’t know...I haven’t heard but then I haven’t really got into voting yet...it could do.
[Depth Interview, Male, 17-20, AB, London]
Overall, however, while it was clear that a pre-existing lack of knowledge about the electoral process and voting leads to higher concern regarding electoral fraud, introducing specific information can heighten concern for all.

**Deliberation of new information**

The process of deliberating new information in the research highlighted how the public is impressionable to that information\(^\text{10}\). Irrespective of their pre-existing knowledge, or their initial general estimate around prevalence at recruitment\(^\text{11}\), participants’ definitions of electoral fraud often changed during the course of discussion to include suggestions made by stimulus or others in the session.

You see I wouldn’t have said at the beginning that politicians and whatever – lying – would be electoral fraud...but now I realise that it is.

[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Lisburn, Northern Ireland]

You’ve heard about deliberately miscounting and people being given money...those were the ones I would have known about...but the rest, not until tonight - I wouldn’t have thought about them until tonight.

[Group Discussion, 18-35, ABC1, Newcastle, Northern Ireland]

Concern levels were also raised, at least temporarily, as a result of experiencing this new information. For participants, the sense that there was a gap between their existing knowledge and the technical scope of electoral fraud or the opinions of others, prompted a sense that the issue was perhaps broader than they had initially thought.

I generally thought it was safe but after reading the pre-task it made me think and I’m not sure now.

[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]

I haven’t got much experience [of voting] so, you know, I haven’t thought about it but I can see from this there’s lots of problems.

[Depth Interview, Male, 17-20, B, London]

The follow up calls with participants also showed that for those who knew less, information about electoral fraud and/or about the electoral process received in the session had sometimes made a lasting impression. For others with more

\(^{10}\) For example, information about a wider range of examples of potential electoral fraud activities than they had currently considered, information or evidence from other respondents about examples of fraudulent activity having taken place and information about the voting system presented in the stimulus material (see Appendix 4).

\(^{11}\) That is, whether they stated at recruitment that they felt electoral fraud happened ‘not at all’ or ‘hardly at all’ (control groups only) or ‘a little’ or ‘a lot’ (all groups).
experience, the benefit of time passing and further reflection meant their concern had lowered again.

I came home and felt quite shocked...I talked about it with my husband...you realise that these things are happening...these things do happen and you don't realise...fraud happens everywhere.
[Follow up call, 18-35, ABC1, Newcastle, Northern Ireland]

6.11 This highlights how concern can rise in response to deliberating new information passed on by media stories or second hand from other people, such as electoral fraud activity happening in a certain area or in a particular way. It also raises questions around what specific information can be supplied to the public to be helpful in reducing or countering concern and what information may act to compound it (and should therefore be avoided). Section 8 details how participants reacted to example information on current safeguards.

Blurring with politics and politicians more generally

6.12 As seen earlier in this report\textsuperscript{12}, electoral fraud is felt to be bound up with wider dissatisfaction and distrust with political situations and grievances with national or local politicians.

6.13 Candidate activity (pre and post-election) was considered by participants to be a grey area. Participants generally considered that the campaigning activities below are not what they would categorise as electoral fraud\textsuperscript{13}, either because they ‘are simply part of politics’ or take place outside of the electoral event (before or after).

- Making false statements about another candidate.

Candidates breaking promises and smear campaigns – they all do that. That’s just politics, not fraud!
[Depth Interview, Female, 45-59, Ceredigion]

They definitely do that...that is just politics.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]

It's tit for tat. Over-exaggeration, not fraud. It happens all the time.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, C2DE, Glasgow]

That’s politics! It’s not always a false statement, just an opinion.
[Group Discussion, 18-35, ABC1, Newcastle, Northern Ireland]

- Candidates breaking promises once elected.

\textsuperscript{12} Section 3, in relation to what people consider fraud to be and Section 4, in terms of activities that generate most concern.

\textsuperscript{13} These are technically an offence under the Representation of the People Act 1983.
It’s not electoral fraud but political fraud once in power.
[Depth Interview, Male, 21-29, DE, Glasgow]

I don’t really class that as that...because the elections already happened.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, Cardiff]

I wouldn’t use the term fraud, just not on!
[Depth Interview, Female, 17-20, C1C2, Edinburgh]

• MPs undertaking activities such as claiming fraudulent expenses and accepting illegal donations, etc.

That’s common fraud, not electoral fraud, and it’s worth a jail sentence.
[Depth, Male, 60+, AB, Edinburgh]

It’s an issue, but I would put it in a different group as it’s after the electoral process has happened. It’s more concerning what the donation may result in.
[Depth, Female, 17-20, C1C2, Edinburgh]

It’s not really electoral fraud, I’ve put it on my list because I think it’s definitely something that happens.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]

6.14 However, being inextricably linked to electoral process and outcome, these activities were felt to contribute to overall perceptions of ‘fraudulent practice’ happening in relation to, or directly as a result of, elections.

6.15 In light of this, candidate activity makes a significant contribution to overall concern around fraud within the general electoral and democratic process. When the concerned public are considering this process, they are thinking of the UK’s political system and the way that its ‘key players’ (politicians, political parties and influences like ‘big business’) operate as a whole.

You think that the impact that politicians can have on business and things, it’s massive.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, Cardiff]

It sounds really silly but it’s like really political. And everyone’s part of that process like lots of things are connected...I work with buildings and whether the development happens or not is really political, and people wouldn’t necessarily assume it would be...
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]

It’s all corrupt, it all is.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Oldham]

I don’t expect my politicians to be even remotely honest I expect them to be devious.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, Cardiff]

The press are probably paid off not to [publish it].
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]
Blurring with community issues and local politics more generally

6.16 As seen in the previous section, examples of electoral fraud were often given in relation to activities happening within an area with ethnic minority communities.

6.17 Although the examples generally related to an incident of electoral fraud, or came up in discussion of it, explanation of why fraud was felt to happen in ethnic minority communities and the perceived personal impact of it sometimes showed broader concerns or queries about unfairness. In these cases, electoral fraud was used as a way of discussing frustrations with local politics or concerns around different cultures and communities. For example, participants highlighted perceptions of unfairness in relation to the impact of policies in an area as the result of a specific candidate being elected in, or concerns about potential unfairness in how the democratic system operates if individuals are not making an independent voting choice.

Not making others vote, but men filling in wife’s postal ballot form – voting in place – will happen. It seems to be a problem amongst [South Asian] communities.
[Depth, Male, 60+, AB, Edinburgh]

In certain areas once the segregation to a degree starts you start to lose faith in people...in Oldham you’ve got Glodwick you’ve got Werneth.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Oldham]

Placing electoral fraud in the spotlight

6.18 As mentioned, many participants noted that they had not spent much time thinking about electoral fraud prior to the research and it was not a top of mind consideration.

6.19 However, simply raising the question of whether people are concerned or focusing attention to the topic appears sufficient to actually generate concern. There is some assumption that it would not be being brought to attention unless there is an issue with electoral fraud.

I haven’t really thought about it and have no personal experience but I wouldn’t be surprised by any of these things here.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, ABC, Leicester].

It brought up things I don’t normally think about.
[Follow up call, 36-68, C2DE, Newcastle, Northern Ireland]

6.20 In the absence of knowledge to rationalise otherwise, the public are not able to discount the issue. Furthermore, some feel they have evidence (albeit hearsay or past media headlines) that support the fact that there might be a problem.
6.21 The word ‘fraud’ itself also works to heighten concern, given it immediately sets a frame of mind around being misled, losing out and criminality.

6.22 This phenomenon may account to some extent for reported levels of concern captured by the quantitative survey. However, it may also reflect how people respond to media stories. For example, hearing that something has happened (and how it has happened), can prompt the public into wondering if (or being worried) that this is perhaps only one example of many and evidence of a bigger problem.

7. What do people know already about current safeguards against fraud? And how do they respond to more information about existing or future measures to prevent electoral fraud?

7.1 Participants were asked whether they were aware of any safeguards in place to prevent electoral fraud and, if so, what these were.

7.2 Following this discussion of existing knowledge, they were then shown selected information\textsuperscript{14} about different safeguards in the UK currently.

7.3 Those in England, Wales and Scotland were shown:

- Existing measures in England, Wales and Scotland in relation to postal voting, the police and the Electoral Commission.

7.4 Those in Northern Ireland were shown different information reflecting the system in place in Northern Ireland, which covers existing measures in relation to:
- the police
- the Electoral Commission
- individual electoral registration (IER)
- postal voting (including being unable to request a postal vote on demand and the requirement for a Declaration of Identity form with postal ballot papers)

\textsuperscript{14} See Appendix 1 for Information about the voting process provided through stimulus material. Note: Different stimulus was used in England, Wales and Scotland and Northern Ireland to reflect differences in the two systems.
- photographic identification at polling stations
- qualification for the electoral register
- to qualify to be on the electoral register, eligible individuals must demonstrate they have been in Northern Ireland for at least 3 months prior to their application for registration.

Note: this information about the system in Northern Ireland was also shown to participants in England Wales and Scotland but at the end of discussion and in relation to potential changes in the system. As such, their responses to these measures are covered in Section 9.

**Spontaneous awareness of current measures against fraud**

7.5 In England, Wales and Scotland, little to nothing was known about *safeguards* to reduce fraud.

7.6 When considering measures, participants were more likely to focus on what happens during the counting of the votes. However, while some felt there were likely to appropriate procedures in place, others were unclear whether there were any particular safeguards.

> I don’t know who would do this – I’m not sure how the counting process works. I’d assume there are lots of measures in place so won’t be easy to do.
> [Depth Interview, Female, 17-20, C1C2, Edinburgh]

> I don’t know what procedures are currently in place to prevent this happening, but I would imagine there’s something, like people working in teams etc.
> [Depth, Male, 60+, AB, Edinburgh]

> Do they put them into like Labour, Conservative and that and then when they get them all in the put them in a machine and go (makes sound of machine) there’s a hundred and fifty there...or does someone randomly count them? The people in the polling stations on the day are supposed to be neutral. They’re not supposed to belong to any party. But they usually work for the local government or something. I think you’ve got to be a local government officer or something like that.
> [Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Oldham]

> There has to be a certain amount of people to watch and then they have people watching them...I think it’s an outside body isn’t it? It’s not just the government that do the counting...cos you can’t just have people work for the government ...I imagine it’s done properly – recounting, I don’t know some sort of process so there’s no mistakes.
> [Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]

7.7 In Northern Ireland, there was widespread awareness of the requirement to present photographic ID. Further measures (or perceived measures) such as sealed ballot boxes and ballot papers being counted at police stations were mentioned by some.
You’ve got a registration card that you must take with you and photographic ID.
[Depth Interview, 45-59, AB, Northern Ireland]

You have to have your identification – photographic ID.
[Group Discussion, 18-35, ABC1, Newcastle, Northern Ireland]

As far as I know [the ballot boxes] are taken away to a police station and counted the next day.
[Depth Interview, Female, 60+, DE, Newcastle, Northern Ireland]

I know some of the people working in the polling stations who have a respectable standard in the community to get the position...from the television, the counting seems to be done in the open.
[Depth Interview, Male, 45-59, AB, Northern Ireland]

Responses to information about current safeguards in England, Wales and Scotland

7.8 In England, Wales and Scotland, some of the information provided in the stimulus material\(^\text{15}\) provided a degree of reassurance to participants. However, much of the information had no impact in reducing concern. In some cases this was because the specific content did not help reduce concern and, in others, specific detail that was provided detracted and compounded concern (see below).

7.9 Overall, the information provided was met with some disappointment. It must be noted, however, that it was considered after discussion of participants’ spontaneous understanding of electoral fraud and prompted consideration of specific activities, both of which often served to highlight areas of fraudulent activity that were not previously top of mind. In light of this introduction to new activities or rigorous discussion of the breadth of potential activities, participants were looking for information that inferred that system and processes were ‘tight’ and it was felt that this was not apparent from the information provided.

7.10 Of the current and future measures in place, two areas had most interest and influence on perceptions:

Individual electoral registration (IER)\(^\text{16}\) from 2014

7.11 All participants considered the move to IER to be positive as it was felt to be an improvement on the current system.

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\(^{15}\) See Appendix 1 for Information about the voting process provided through stimulus material. Note: Different stimulus was used in England, Wales and Scotland and Northern Ireland to reflect differences in the two systems.

\(^{16}\) Individual Electoral Registration requires people to register to vote individually, rather than by household, and provide ‘identifying information’, such as a date of birth and national insurance number when they apply to register.
Well that should be going on now, should be going on years ago.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Oldham]

I really agree with that – there’s no reason why it shouldn’t be like that.
[Depth Interview, Female, 17-20, C1C2, Edinburgh]

I’m very much in support of that.
[Group Discussion, 36-38, ABC1, Edinburgh]

7.12 Provision of a national insurance number was felt to be key, as it was felt that this would be hard work to falsify and this implied checking against some form of database. In both cases, this was felt likely to reduce the potential for fraud and efforts to undertake it.

Then you might think that there actually is someone who does actually care if you’re cheating and I might get caught this time rather than just filling it out, and if I’m putting fake ID as well.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]

That’s a step in the right direction – the more data people are asked to provide the harder it is for the fraudster.
[Depth Interview, Male, 60+, AB, Edinburgh]

7.13 Some recognised, however, that this would only tighten up part of the system and opportunities for abuse would still exist.

It’s a step in the right direction – DOB and NI is better, but it’s still not watertight.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, C2DE, Glasgow]

Yeah, it will make a difference. But it won’t deter them really...if you really want to do it you’re going to do it aren’t you?
[Depth Interview, Male, 30-44, DE, Oldham]

I guess it’s just another layer of control but things can still fall through.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]

It doesn’t help the problem of the postal vote issue...it’s a very small measure I’d say.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Oldham]

It depends on what checks are done. National Insurance numbers are not the identity thing they used to be. Loads of dead people still have National Insurance numbers. The system was chaotic at one point and presumably still is.
[Depth Interview, Male, 60-64, Ceredigion]

7.14 However, learning of this change tended to compound concern to some degree around the current system. By comparison to IER, the current system of
household registration\textsuperscript{17} was perceived as ‘slack’ and open to abuse, which worked to confirm suspicion or raise concern that electoral fraud is a problem.

**Postal voting**

7.15 Participants were told that for absent voting (postal and proxy) an elector’s signature and date of birth need to be supplied at the time of registering and again when casting a vote.

7.16 The notion that postal votes were thoroughly checked against application records to allow a ballot paper to stand was welcomed. Specifically, participants wanted to envisage that while people may try to cast fraudulent postal votes, checks of this type would prevent those votes being counted.

7.17 However, the detail of matching being made on signature and date of birth worked to undermine confidence. These were two points of identification that were felt to be easily falsified.

\textit{A signature’s easy though...anyone can do that.}
[Depth Interview, Male, 30-44, DE, Oldham]

\textit{It’s not tight, all you’ve got to do is get a date of birth.}
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, Cardiff]

\textit{Realistically, will they check every single signature? It sounds good, but there are loopholes. It’s not that strong a measure, the head of household could fill all that it...signatures are easily changed and replicated...it’s the easiest thing to copy, that’s why we have pin numbers on cards these days.}
[Group Discussion, 17-35, C2DE, Glasgow]

\textit{I can’t see how that would stop anyone or prevent fraud...I had no idea about that, but I could still sign that for my husband.}
[Group Discussion, 36-38, ABC1, Edinburgh]

\textit{I know we fill in that form every year. How do they check my signature? What evidence do they have of what my signature looks like – where have they got it from?}
[Depth Interview, Male, 60-64, Ceredigion]

\textit{That’s not gonna stop anyone if they want to.}
[Depth Interview, Male, 30-44, DE, Oldham]

7.18 Of less interest and value was information about the current role of police and the Electoral Commission:

\textsuperscript{17} Under the current system, the majority of people are added to the register between August and November each year (the ‘annual canvass’), when a form is sent to every household. One person is responsible for completing the form to register all eligible people at that address (and this person then signs the form).
Police responsibilities in helping reduce fraud

7.19 The information provided on the existence of designated police people and the ability of the police force or service to investigate allegations did not help specifically with concern. Participants felt that the provision was not surprising. However, it also inferred that police attention to electoral fraud is ‘as required’ rather than a specific activity area. Without a clearer idea of how much of a problem electoral fraud is (such as a clear statement or through statistics), participants found it hard to evaluate whether this level of police activity was useful.

Things being made criminal acts has a certain deterrent to it but I don’t know we would just assume that the police would be part of that process.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]

That’s good that there’s someone designated to this kind of thing. But will police really follow it up? At the moment there’s an inbuilt reluctance to chase these things up – I don’t think police like getting involved in white collar crime; they’re not particularly good at it.
[Depth Interview, Male, 60+, AB, Edinburgh]

I hadn’t thought about police involvement before. Other than having the designated person, they’d have other things on their list of priorities. It doesn’t seem to fit.
[Depth Interview, Female, 17-20, C1C2, Edinburgh]

However, one person isn’t enough, you need a team of people to tackle it.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, C2DE, Glasgow]

That says it all doesn’t it, every police force has a dedicated person...just doesn’t hack it does it.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Oldham]

The Electoral Commission and the steps described for helping reduce fraud

7.20 Few participants had heard of the Electoral Commission so the scope of their role as described was largely unknown.

7.21 However, participants largely felt that while the Commission’s anti-fraud measures provided in the stimulus material seemed relevant to establishing and maintaining good protocol, there was little to convey a real impact on reducing fraud or keeping fraud to a minimum.

So basically you’re saying to me that a property has got to have 8 or more people before they check it. So I’d just keep it down to 7 if I was trying to organise some sort of fraud.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Oldham]

That stuff’s kind of obvious too though...I’m sure that it happens with all best intent, but maybe not all the time...we just would have expected that to be the case.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]
All that doesn’t seem like it would make an impact.
[Depth Interview, Female, 17-20, C1C2, Edinburgh]

7.22 Furthermore, for some, the mention of producing guidance, pocket guides and training felt particularly ‘hands off’ rather than practical and effective. Some also questioned the integrity of postal workers and their appropriateness of having a seemingly active role in managing fraud.

It sounds good, but guidelines and advice does not sound strong enough. I’d be inclined to get someone in the Returning Officer’s department solely responsible for seeking out fraud.
[Depth Interview, Male, 60+, AB, Edinburgh]

Throwing leaflets at things is a waste of money. You’re better to spend the money on producing a better process.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, C2DE, Glasgow]

It sounds thorough, but you can write reports and they are totally meaningless.
[Depth Interview, Male, 60-64, Ceredigion]

That’s just ticking boxes...it’s all just written procedure but it’s not actually followed up.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Oldham]

I’d question whether they’d care about that training. Postal workers won’t care.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, C2DE, Glasgow]

It’s just guidelines, it’s not very proactive. Do postmen really care what they put through the letter box and whether it’s there in 3 weeks time? They’re just doing a job.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Ceredigion]

7.23 While adjusting the phrasing and content may help this information have more impact, other information\(^\text{18}\) may have more impact on reducing concern.

**Responses to information about current safeguards in Northern Ireland**

7.24 By contrast, for those in Northern Ireland, information about their current system was largely encouraging, reassuring participants that the system had a number of safeguards and required substantial effort to abuse. On the whole, participants felt that the difficulty in abusing the system was likely to outweigh the perception of gain for most people and, as such, was an appropriate deterrent.

7.25 Although they were generally unable to give the full list of safeguards and must detail in relation to these, impressions that safeguards were in place

\(^{18}\) As described at the end of this section, see 8.36.
tended to be higher amongst participants in Northern Ireland (than amongst those in England, Wales and Scotland). This was particularly in relation to the need for identification and confidentiality and the security of ballot papers once the vote is cast.

**Impersonating someone else** – that’s more or less ruled out here and it would have to be on such a large scale for it to be worthwhile...if you were in the business of trying to get illegal votes you’d have to be quite creative...it’s not a straightforward thing as it was years ago...

[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Lisburn, Northern Ireland]

*I think it’s pretty safe – it’s only from the news that I’ve heard people say there is fraud, I’ve never experienced it.*

[Depth Interview, Male, 45-59, AB, Northern Ireland]

*I don’t know who would do it. I don’t why anyone would want to – I don’t know what they’d get out of it.*

[Depth Interview, Female, 60+, DE, Northern Ireland]

7.26 Amongst Northern Ireland participants, all measures in place in Northern Ireland were felt to have value. Two of the five aspects discussed were felt to be particularly effective in reducing fraud:

**Anyone wanting to have their name included in the register must provide their name, address, date of birth and national insurance number on an individually-signed form**

7.27 The registration process was broadly accepted as being safe enough. The requirement for individual registration and signatures was felt to be preferable to one member of the household being able to register all inhabitants. Providing a national insurance number was felt to be the important factor here as this infers that this will be checked against a database which reduces potential for electoral fraud activity.

*Just makes it more secure.*

[Depth Interview, 45-59, AB, Northern Ireland]

*That’s a good idea...we’re safer here than you are in England.*

[Depth Interview, 60+, DE, Northern Ireland]

*Yes, your National Insurance number – everyone’s got that and you can’t just make it up.*

[Depth Interview, Female, 60+, DE, Northern Ireland]

**Voters must present photographic identification at their polling station to confirm their identity**

7.28 No participants felt this measure was inappropriate. On the contrary, it was felt to be an easy and sensible way of reducing impersonation activity at polling stations as getting hold of fake photographic ID was felt likely to be very difficult and not worthwhile for the purposes of casting a vote.
Photographic ID, you have to have a passport or driving licence...you’d have to go to some trouble to get a fake passport or driving license in order to vote as somebody else...years ago we just had to bring our pensions book or something... it’s a lot harder now – I wouldn’t know where to start!

[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Lisburn, Northern Ireland]

You have to be a citizen, the right age to vote...that will be on your ID.

[Group Discussion, 18-35, ABC1, Newcastle, Northern Ireland]

7.29 Elements of the system which were felt to be less effective than the above but still have value in reducing fraud included those outlined below. Perceived lower efficacy arises partly from how the measure is explained, rather than the measure per se.

7.30 Postal voters in Northern Ireland have to complete and return a declaration of identity form with their ballot papers. The declaration, which requires date of birth and signature of voter, must be signed by and in front of a witness. All postal voters are checked and cross-referenced with the information provided at the time of registration (date of birth, signature) - the notion of checking postal votes carefully was considered important to mitigate abuse in this area. However, the level of detail provided to participants tended to raise some issues.

7.31 Specifically, explanation of the need to provide a witness to the signature tended to raise questions rather than create reassurance. Without confirmation of the witness being checked as part of the process, participants felt this lacked value as a measure: specifically, they felt that if someone wanted to create a fraudulent postal vote, providing a fraudulent witness would simply be part of that process and not a deterrent.

But anyone could sign that and anyone could be the witness.

[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Lisburn, Northern Ireland]

I can’t see that solving anything.

[Group Discussion, 18-35, ABC1, Newcastle, Northern Ireland]

[Postal voting] is the only area I can see there must be fraudulent behaviour happening.

[Depth Interview, 45-59, AB, Lisburn, Northern Ireland]

At the moment you cannot request a postal vote on demand. You have to give a reason

7.32 Rather than being specifically reassuring, this information tended to focus participants on the idea that being able to request a postal vote without a reason is unsafe. As such, this was felt to be a sensible measure but it was hard for participants to specifically imagine how this would impact on fraud reduction overall.
[This gives] the impression that people were voting postal votes who could have gone along to the polling station...I’d want to know who was eligible for a postal vote – so who is using them and why.
[Depth Interview, Male, 45-59, AB, Lisburn, Northern Ireland]

Possibly within the postal voting [there is space for fraud], I don’t know what the rules and regs are for postal voting, whether you have to be disabled or some form of illness...I don’t think you can just request it.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Lisburn, Northern Ireland]

To qualify to be on the electoral register, eligible individuals must demonstrate they have been in Northern Ireland for at least 3 months prior to their application for registration

7.33 Again, this was felt to be a sensible measure. However, it was considered to be related more to entitlement to vote than to fraud reduction.

7.34 This information also showed some potential to confuse, for example by inferring that older children who are temporarily resident in England for university would not be able to vote by proxy or postal vote.

Students at university in England...they’re not even in the country, how do they still get the vote?
[Depth Interview, 60+, DE, Northern Ireland]

7.35 As mentioned, measures in Northern Ireland were also shown to participants in England, Wales and Scotland later in discussion (as potential measures). Responses are therefore detailed in Section 9.

Respondent suggestions for useful information

7.36 Overall, findings indicate that selected information about current processes may help reduce concern.

7.37 In Northern Ireland, clarity on current processes appears to be sufficient (with the exception of detail around witnessing signatures).

7.38 In England, Wales and Scotland, the public are seeking information that reassures that sufficient controls are in place. Responses to information provided in stimulus material and spontaneous suggestions indicate this would potentially include confirmation of (rather than explicit detail in relation to):

- Security and quality checks on those responsible for counting votes.
- Rigorous checking procedures on postal voting with any problem or suspect ballots being rejected.
- Electoral fraud being taken very seriously and constantly monitored, with any allegations investigated and charges brought if appropriate (which carry consequences for the offender).
I think it’s consequences, you need consequences. If the consequences are bad enough, it’s a deterrent.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Oldham]

It’s good that there’s a designated person – good that there’s a starting point if you were concerned about anything or wanted to report something. I’d feel much better about voting if I was ensured about the set up.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, C2DE, Glasgow]

Overall we need a clearer sense of responsibility as to whose job it is to investigate, seek out and punish fraud. I don’t think we’re prosecuting quickly enough – I think there’s a threshold number of people that need to report fraud before it’s investigated.
[Depth Interview, Male, 60+, AB, Edinburgh]

7.39 Given issues with the different information shown to participants in this first stage of research, however, it is not clear what the exact content of information should be and this will require further investigation.

7.40 In developing information to share with the public, consideration will also need to be given to how best to reach them. The electorate are unlikely to actively seek reassuring information themselves so this will need to be pushed to them.

7.41 Some specific opportunities suggested by participants for reaching the public with information to improve knowledge included:

- National curriculum/PSHE in schools – for providing information around general process and safeguards.

  I think there should just be much more awareness of the voting system, what it means, how it works, what your role is in it from a much younger age because you just, when you first can vote it’s actually quite complicated...we don’t learn about this in school!
  [Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]

  It should be, we should be teaching it in schools, really.
  [Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, Cardiff]

- Information at polling stations and on electoral materials (e.g. poll cards, other voting and registration information) – for example, to convey information that electoral fraud is a crime and statements on commitment to fraud prevention, as well as more general process information as above.

  It doesn’t say anything, for example, if I go into a shop there’s a sign telling me if I’m under 18 and I buy alcohol I’m breaking the law. There’s nothing to say, if you fraudulently [vote] that might make you think twice about it.
  [Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, Cardiff]

7.42 As detailed below, participants in England, Wales and Scotland also felt they had needs beyond information and that there are some areas where changes in electoral processes would be important to reduce the potential for fraud.
8. Do people feel there is likely to be value in making changes to electoral processes?

8.1 Participants were asked for their spontaneous suggestions for changes to the process that would, in their view, be important to help reduce electoral fraud. Following this, participants were also asked for their reactions to potential changes\(^\text{19}\) to the system.

8.2 Again, stimulus varied between that shown in England, Wales and Scotland and that shown in Northern Ireland, to reflect the fact that the different systems.

8.3 In England, Wales and Scotland, potential measures included:

- Stopping postal voting on demand (at the moment you can request a postal vote without giving a reason).
- Stopping postal voting completely.
- Stopping people voting for others as their proxy (at the moment you can get someone else to make a proxy vote on your behalf).
- Having police in polling stations at all times throughout the poll.
- People being required to sign in order to check their identity before being given their ballot paper in the polling station.
- People being required to show some form of identification at their polling station before being given their ballot paper.

8.4 In Northern Ireland, potential measures included:

- Stopping people voting for others as their proxy (at the moment you can get someone else to make a proxy vote on your behalf).
- Having police in polling stations at all times throughout the poll.

8.5 As mentioned earlier, at the end of discussion participants in England, Wales and Scotland were also shown the stimulus describing current measures in Northern Ireland, to understand their perceptions of this system and how relevant it felt to voting Great Britain.

\(^{19}\) See Appendix 2 for information introducing potential changes to voting processes.
Areas for potential change and development in England, Wales and Scotland

8.6 Findings relating to each change that participants were prompted with are detailed below. Where a change was suggested spontaneously by participants this has been identified.

8.7 Responses varied according to the specific measure; however, on the whole, responses were relatively consistent for each measure. Changes are detailed in order of their overall perceived value or perceived effectiveness within the process.

People being required to show some form of identification at their polling station before being given their ballot paper

8.8 This was a spontaneous suggestion put forward from a range of participants in England, Wales and Scotland. Many participants with experience of voting at a polling station had experienced not being asked for identification. In some cases they been asked to produce a polling card and, in others, they had been asked offer a name and address to receive a ballot paper only. Several participants believed this was already the case, including those with little or no experience of voting.

When you go to the polling station, they just ask you your name and check their register – how do they know you’re who you say you are? There should be some form of ID...you should have to have it with you.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Oldham]

I don't think I did get asked for ID...I think that showing ID, like your passport or driving license should be mandatory.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]

Some sort of ID would make me feel comfortable.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, C2DE, Glasgow]

8.9 In light of discussion about individuals potentially voting fraudulently at polling stations, this part of the process was raised as a significant weakness which opened up opportunities for impersonation or other illegal voting should an individual want to do this.

8.10 Most participants were supportive of this measure being introduced. Opinion was mixed, however, as to whether identification should be photographic or not – with photographic being the ideal but some recognition that this may pose difficulties for those without passports or driving licenses.

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20 Where ‘value’ is understood as having a likely impact on reducing both attempts and ability to commit electoral fraud offences.
I think you need to use something like a passport where there’s been a rigorous process to get it.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Ceredigion]

It’s one vote every two years or something, it’s not like you’re voting every week, so surely you can get all that information there together in advance. There’s no excuse...if you’ve not got one, it’s up to you to get one.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Oldham]

I think that would curb any fraud problems in terms of people actually going to vote...you have to scan your passport to get into a club these days so I’m shocked that you don’t have to scan it at polling station when it’s such a big thing.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]

You need ID. I agree with identity cards. They are proof of who you are. They should apply to voting and everything else...it should be more stringent – like a passport – if you want to have a say in your country.
[Depth Interview, Female, 45-59, Ceredigion]

I think the only thing with that is you have got people who haven’t got it and they couldn’t vote...I think it would stop people to go because they'll think well I’m not going to go and pay for a passport...think of all the ethnic minority women who don’t have a passport and don’t have a driving licence...and then your disenfranchising people then because they can’t vote...
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, Cardiff]

That’s not easy though, photographic ID.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Oldham]

**General changes to postal voting**

8.11 A further spontaneous suggestion made by a range of participants in England, Wales and Scotland was making changes to postal voting. Suggestion for change was largely prompted by the perception that postal voter identification needed to be tightened up in some way to make it harder to commit electoral fraud and reduce potential for abuse.

I would make postal voting much more difficult to do because the current process is very open to fraud. Registering households rather than individuals is a problem.
[Depth Interview, Male, 60+, AB, Edinburgh]

It’s the postal vote. That still doesn’t solve the problem of the postal vote.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Oldham]

8.12 Participants tended not to offer specific suggestions themselves for how this might be achieved, although a couple of suggestions were put forward, relating to either photographic ID in some way or a receipt for a postal vote that can be verified by the voter.
Maybe they could have a signatory – like recorded delivery – and if someone suspects their postal vote has been stolen then they can check against the signature given.
[Depth Interview, 21-29, DE, Glasgow]

A receipt of your vote would be good, which you could personally verify.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, C2DE, Glasgow]

**Stopping postal voting on demand (at the moment you can request a postal vote without giving a reason)**

8.13 Where prompted with the specific idea of stopping postal voting on demand (at the moment you can request a postal vote without giving a reason), participants from across the sample tended to feel that stopping postal voting without a valid reason was a sensible measure.

Well they should have to do that anyway. That should be in place anyway.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Oldham]

I think that’s fair enough cause then it’s going to stop a lot more people doing fraudulent [voting].
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]

It should be like that anyway!
[Depth Interview, Male, 30-44, DE, Oldham]

8.14 However, they also felt that eligibility on the reason given was unlikely to be a deterrent or measure to reduce fraud since people would simply lie (e.g. about being on holiday).

That’s a bit irrelevant really. It’s easy to get around.
[Depth Interview, Male, 60-64, Ceredigion]

8.15 In line with queries raised in response to information given on postal checks[^21], they also found it difficult to imagine how eligibility and checking would be managed.

What would the reasons be? What would count [as eligibility]?  
[Group Discussion, 17-35, C2DE, Glasgow]

I think that’s going to be a very hard thing to impose. Who’s going to check?  
[Group Discussion, 36-38, ABC1, Edinburgh]

It depends on the criteria.  
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, Cardiff]

8.16 Furthermore, there was some acknowledgement that postal voting without a valid reason was an incentive or encouragement for some voters who might otherwise not bother to vote.

[^21]: See Section 8.
It will be good but you’ll lose votes because I won’t be bothered to go and vote.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]

Postal voting is for convenience, to encourage people to vote.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, C2DE, Glasgow]

I think, you don’t have to justify, if you want a postal vote you should...people who are working it’s quite convenient.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, Cardiff]

8.17 Therefore, when considering this measure in further detail, conviction about it being a worthwhile change was relatively low.

Changes to proxy voting

8.18 This measure was not raised spontaneously but participants were prompted about stopping people voting for others as their proxy (at the moment you can get someone else to make a proxy vote on your behalf).

8.19 As this was felt to be an area of potential weakness, participants tended to see this initially as an appropriate change to make. However, none had experience of, or much understanding about, proxy voting. Questions were therefore raised (and unresolved) as to whether this would result in some people missing out.

I hadn’t thought about it before, but I would say that proxy votes are not quite as safe as physical voting in person. But then I don’t understand the proxy system that well – I don’t know what checks and balances there are.
[Depth Interview, Male, 60-64, Ceredigion]

Why would you vote by proxy when you could vote by post? Why? The only reason you’re gonna vote by proxy is if you say ‘I’m not bothered mate you take mine’.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Oldham]

I don’t understand why there’s a proxy vote anyway. If you’ve got plenty of time to ask for a postal vote, you don’t really need it.
[Group Discussion, 36-38, ABC1, Edinburgh]

I think that’s maybe not quite right I think you should be able to but I guess it’s circumstantial too because there are people who are maybe not able to go to the polling station but still want to have a say.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]

You’ve got no control over proxy voting. What’s it for?
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Ceredigion]

They should still allow it, but only if necessary.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, C2DE, Glasgow]
If they were not going to [allow] vote by proxy, they’d have to put something else in place...I don’t think they could just stop it.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Oldham]

Increasing use of police

8.20 Participants were prompted about having police in polling stations at all times throughout the poll.

8.21 Having police at polling stations was felt likely to deter acts of fraud by individuals within the polling station. However, this was felt likely to be less effective than asking for identification, since police, while acting as a general deterrent, would not be able to identify impersonators.

That would work because it’d be a deterrent if you see a police officer there at the back.
[Depth Interview, Male, 30-44, DE, Oldham]

They don’t know what’s going on!
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Oldham]

Maybe it would make people think twice. Authority is big in persuasion. You always try and behave yourself when policemen are about.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, C2DE, Glasgow]

That won’t be very useful, unless we’re all told why they’re there...I think they’d be lucky if they were to see someone to go in and vote three times.
[Group Discussion, 36-38, ABC1, Edinburgh]

8.22 Some also recognised that this involved a cost both directly to running elections and in terms of taking police away from other crimes that was not warranted. Although participants felt electoral fraud should be prevented, they felt that it was less of a priority than other crimes or (at the level of individual acts) not of sufficiently high volume to warrant such a cost.

It happens in countries abroad where they riot, but seems a bit excessive in Aberystwyth! Most times there’s only 1 person in there and they’re 95!
[Depth Interview, Male, 60-64, Ceredigion]

They would just stand around looking spare. It’d be a huge use of police manpower with very little ability to do anything.
[Depth Interview, Male, 60+, AB, Edinburgh]

That’s just overkill, that’s big brother.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]

I don’t think that’d make any difference whatsoever. They’d be stood outside and that’s all they’d be doing.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Oldham]

That would be ridiculous. It’s an inappropriate use of the police – it’s going to cost a lot of money and they won’t know anyone.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Ceredigion]
They could be out doing other stuff...and our taxes would probably have to go up to pay for them being there.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]

People being required to sign in order to check their identity before being given their ballot paper in the polling station

8.23 On the whole, participants felt this was less likely to be effective than presentation of identification. There was a low level of trust in this being a sufficient measure for checking and they found it hard to imagine how it could work. If envisaging large databases of signatures, this raised additional concerns around security.

Yes but some people copy other people’s signature...they’d be better asking for ID.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Oldham]

It’s a good step, but I would instead go for a fingerprint. Signing is open to much abuse anyway.
[Depth Interview, Male, 60+, AB, Edinburgh]

How would it work? They’d have to have your form? Signatures are easy to copy.
[Depth Interview, Female, 45-59, Ceredigion]

It’s easy to forge a signature.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]

What’s the signature compared to? Anyone could sign anything anyway.
[Group Discussion, 36-38, ABC1, Edinburgh]

Stopping postal voting completely

8.24 While some saw this as appropriate to ensure a particular type of fraud was stamped out, most participants acknowledged that certain groups of people (and often vulnerable or protected groups) would be adversely affected.

Well I probably agree with that but then there’s people who really can’t get out. Who deserve to vote, you know.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Oldham]

It’s not something that I ever think should be withdrawn.
[Group Discussion, 36-38, ABC1, Edinburgh]

I’m not in support of that at all. The postal vote is very useful.
[Group Discussion, 36-38, ABC1, Edinburgh]

Some people can’t go in though can they? Some people like older people or disabled people and then they wouldn’t be able to vote.
[Depth Interview, Male, 30-44, DE, Oldham]

It’s the only way for some people if you’re disabled or in hospital. It seems pretty valid to me.
[Depth Interview, Male, 60-64, Ceredigion]
Electoral Commission – Perceptions of Electoral Fraud: Stage 1 Report

I don’t think you could get rid of postal voting because of the elderly – it would be against human rights.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Ceredigion]

If someone’s ill or not able to go to the polling station, they’re still entitled to vote.
[Depth Interview, Female, 60+, DE, Northern Ireland]

Reactions to the system in Northern Ireland amongst participants in England, Wales and Scotland

8.25 Current measures in Northern Ireland were generally considered ‘gold standard’ by participants in England, Wales and Scotland and all likely to contribute to keeping electoral fraud to a minimum. However, there was also some perception that while such stringent measures might be required in Northern Ireland, given socio-religious conflicts, all measures may not be required in Great Britain and there was some danger of complicating the process to the extent that the effort becomes a deterrent. This assertion was made in general terms, however, rather than by prioritising or selecting and rejecting specific measures that had been introduced through the stimulus material.

Ours is clearly not good enough is it...that'll do, that's how it should be...I think we're behind them.
[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Oldham]

If it works in Northern Ireland then it would have to work here.
[Group Discussion, 36-38, ABC1, Edinburgh]

That just seems so much more secure.
[Depth Interview, Male, 17-20, B, London]

I think their historical situation means that they've had to have this, and I'm quite glad we've been a lot more stable here. I understand why they have such stringent measures.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, Cardiff]

It's because for them the vote means more than it does in this country 'cos its very political...it's had a much more chequered history with political unrest...there's a lot of deterrents in there...it would take a lot of time to do that, for a fraudster to do it.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, ABC1, London]

It's on the extreme side, but I'm guessing NI had extreme cases previously. But NI is smaller, so probably easier to keep tabs. I think it would be a big order for the entire UK.
[Depth Interview, 21-29, DE, Glasgow]

I agree with it, but I think it'll put a lot of people off. I have to force myself to vote as it is, so that would put me off...it's a fine line between security and deterring people.
[Group Discussion, 17-35, C2DE, Glasgow]
8.26 As with Northern Irish participants, some in England, Wales and Scotland noted the specifics required for witnessing signatures in postal voting as both complicated yet not particularly reliable.

*I think some of those measures, such as needing a witness, would be difficult for old, infirm or disabled people.*

[Group Discussion, 36-38, ABC1, Edinburgh]

*Providing a witness would be very complicated.*

[Depth Interview, 21-29, DE, Glasgow]

**Areas for potential change and development in Northern Ireland**

8.27 For participants in Northern Ireland, changes to the system were not considered necessary. Without information specifying particular problems were happening in Northern Ireland, the process was considered to be structured in a way that made fraud difficult to achieve (and therefore likely to be low level overall).

*The only thing they could do next is to give us all a micro-chip! Other than that they've done all they can.*

[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Lisburn, Northern Ireland]

*I would say it still happens but on a very small scale.*

[Group Discussion, 36-68, C2DE, Lisburn, Northern Ireland]

8.28 However, although not essential, the area of postal voting was felt to have potential for making more ‘fraud-proof’ than currently – with this being mentioned spontaneously by some. As noted above, the practice of witnessing signatures in Northern Ireland was felt to be insufficient to prevent fraud in this area.

*[Postal voting] is the only area I can see there must be fraudulent behaviour happening.*

[Depth Interview, Male, 45-59, AB, Lisburn, Northern Ireland]

*Postal voting is another thing – postal voting I think is open to fraud.*

[Depth Interview, 60+, DE, Newcastle, Northern Ireland]

8.29 Respondent-generated suggestions focused on introducing a role for photographic ID, in line with polling station identification processes, e.g. needing to present photographic ID at the point of application for a postal vote.

*You should have to show photographic ID for the postal vote too – you have to send off your passport to get your driving licence so it seems strange that it’s different to vote.*

[Depth Interview, Male, 45-59, AB, Lisburn, Northern Ireland]
9. Conclusions

9.1 In this sample, evidence of electoral fraud amongst participants expressing greater concern was drawn largely from newspaper headlines and interpretation of occasional incidences witnessed and/or passed on by word of mouth, which indicates that their concern is not driven by experience of fraudulent practice at ground level.

9.2 The research process demonstrated in several ways how concern arises or is created for those who express it.

9.3 Many admitted that electoral fraud is not something they have dwelled upon or considered outside of the research. It may have come up momentarily in relation to a media story, brief experience or word of mouth example but is otherwise not a top of mind consideration. However, when they are asked to reflect on electoral fraud this can automatically generate a position of concern. This is the result of them considering why the question/topic has been raised (that is, they assume it is because there may be problem) and/or caring that electoral fraud is kept under control.

9.4 At this point of starting to consider whether or not electoral fraud is a problem, many amongst the ‘concerned’ public lack detailed knowledge from which to develop a confident opinion. Although they have a broad understanding of what electoral fraud is, largely picked up from headline information passed on by the media and others, there is very little spontaneous understanding of how prevalent specific activities are. Examples tend to be related to occasional, location-specific and one-off events but without confirmation, it is assumed that these may be one example of many.

9.5 There is also little knowledge about the official ‘criminality’ of different activities which can further confuse participants’ understanding of how concerned they should be.

9.6 However, sometimes these events are also mixed up with more general frustrations or dissatisfaction around a political situation, dissatisfaction with individual MPs or concerns about specific communities. Where this is the case, electoral fraud activity perceived to be linked to this (for example, undue influence of voters or on voting in a community or MPs breaking campaign promises) can become particularly emotive and concern can grow further.

9.7 Where the concerned public have more experience of elections (i.e. they vote regularly) personal concern tends to be lower. These participants were not able to identify specific measures they found reassuring but drew from a general sense that if electoral fraud was prevalent then they would know about it through their experience and information gathered through their general interest in those elections.
9.8 Conversely, where participants had less personal experience of voting and voting processes there tended to be more personal concern. New information acquired in the research sessions (via stimulus or the experiences and beliefs of others) prompted them to imagine gaps and weak points in the system and to think that electoral fraud was more extensive than they had previously considered.

9.9 Irrespective of this level of experience and concern, focusing participants from England, Wales and Scotland on the detail or specifics of the system tended to compound concern rather than reassure. Participants felt there were weaknesses in household registration, polling station processes (e.g. through lack of need for ID) and through postal voting processes (which were felt to vulnerable at different points). Questions were also raised about the integrity and identity of those who count votes and counting processes.

9.10 In light of this, suggestions were made to make changes to electoral processes that will reduce the potential for fraud. Many felt the system in Northern Ireland offered a model for consideration, although some questions remained about the integrity of the postal voting set up and whether sectarian tensions meant that needs were greater than in England, Wales and Scotland. Behind this question was a low level concern that increasing the effort of voting might serve to reduce interest in voting as well as put some sections of society at a disadvantage.

9.11 Information shown to participants during the course of research demonstrated that while the concerned public know very little, information about anti-fraud safeguards and the electoral processes can easily exacerbate concern rather than reduce it. For example, in relation to postal vote checking procedures, the detail offered around process was seen as proof of vulnerability rather than reassuring. In light of this, further investigation is required to understand what specific, accurate information might be helpful in reducing concern.

* * * * *
APPENDICES

1. Project Background and Objectives
2. Research Methodology and Sample
3. Pre-task Exercise for Groups
4. Stimulus material introducing information about the current voting process
5. Stimulus material introducing potential changes to voting processes
6. Discussion Guide
7. Recruitment Questionnaire
Appendix 1 – Project Background and Objectives

Project Context: A Review into Concern on Electoral Fraud

1.1 Proven cases of electoral fraud are relatively rare in the UK and yet levels of concern amongst the public and politicians are comparatively high. In light of this, the Commission is undertaking a review of the UK’s current voting system. This review aims to achieve consensus about the best balance between ensuring the integrity and accessibility of electoral process in the UK.

1.2 The first phase of the review is underway and will gather evidence and views about electoral fraud from as wide a range of sources as possible. It focuses on concerns that people have about the current electoral process and any evidence about the nature and extent of electoral fraud that people may have – either first hand or indirectly.

1.3 The findings from this phase will feed into a paper identifying key issues and potential policy options that will be published in March 2013.

1.4 Following further work, the Commission will then publish its final conclusions and recommendations in the autumn of 2013, in time for legislation to be brought forward during the life of the current UK Parliament.

The Role for Qualitative Research

1.5 Qualitative research was required to feed into and assist the review in several ways. Firstly, it can provide a distinct set of data about both concern about and experiences (direct or indirect) of electoral fraud, as well as ideas or perceived needs for change. Secondly, by providing a forum for discussion within the timeframe of the overall review, it offers an opportunity to gauge public responses to information and hypotheses for other sources, for example:

- Responses to issues or questions raised by stakeholders in phase 1 of the review
- Responses to specific policy ideas raised by stakeholders or the Commission (in terms of both perceptions of value and consideration of specific benefits and drawbacks to the process)

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23 As part of phase 1 of the review, the Commission have written to a range of stakeholders, including elected representatives, political parties, professionals working in the elections field, the police and prosecuting authorities, academics, voluntary organisations and think tanks to invite contributions in the following key areas:

- Firstly, what concerns do they have, if any, about vulnerabilities within the current electoral process (in relation to, for example, electoral registration, absent voting, voting in polling stations, the counting of votes, staff responsible for elections)?
- Secondly, what evidence do they have – either first-hand or indirect – about the extent and nature of electoral fraud which may have taken place in the UK?
1.6 In light of this, research is being conducted over two stages:

- **Stage 1** – to gain public perceptions and understanding of issues identified via phase 1 of the fraud review
- **Stage 2** – to follow up the research findings from stage 1 and test out possible policy recommendations with the public

1.7 This report details the findings from Stage 1.

**Research Aims and Objectives**

1.8 The overall objective for Stage 1 was defined as: to gain public perceptions and understanding of issues identified as Electoral Fraud (such as those raised as part of Phase 1 of the Commission’s fraud review).

1.9 Specific areas for the research to focus on included what public perception and experience indicate about:

- **What is understood as ‘electoral fraud’?**
  - Is it perceived to relate to electoral issues such as postal voting, impersonation at polling stations or registration fraud for electoral or financial reasons or other issues such as political candidates being dishonest?
  - Or does ‘fraud’ also include wider issues such as dissatisfaction with the voting system or wider issues such as MP’s / MLA’s / MSP’s / AM’s expenses?

- **Are the low reported levels of fraud masking a larger problem?**
  - Have people seen or heard about specific instances of electoral fraud and where from?
  - Are there indications that *not all* suspected instances of electoral fraud are reported to the police and, if not, why not?

- **Where the public get their information on fraud and what drives their views?**
  - Is it based upon stories in the media, or from peers, family and friends or any other sources?
  - Have people experienced / witnessed electoral fraud first-hand?

- **What would reassure people** or what additional actions would help prevent electoral fraud?

1.10 The specific objectives for Stage 2 of the research will be finalised as the plan for Stage 2 is confirmed. Overall, however, the intention is to follow up the research findings from Stage 1 and to test-out possible policy recommendations with the general public.
Appendix 2 – Research Methodology and Sample

Methodology

2.1 The research used a mixed methodology of individual depth interviews and groups:
   - Groups of six participants lasted 1.5 hours each
   - Depth interviews lasted 1 hour each

2.2 **Group discussions** were used to access the debate and discourse on the topic of electoral fraud and to see how issues or ideas 'hothouse' within this social setting and on what basis.

2.3 **Depth interviews** were used to provide a contrast to the group data and a means to access attitudes and opinions that would be less influenced in the moment by others. The privacy afforded by a depth allows participants to raise comments, experiences or questions that they may choose to withhold in a group setting.

2.4 **Topic areas** discussed in both the depth interviews and group discussions included:
   - What people understand electoral fraud to be
   - Their awareness of electoral fraud in the UK and sources of information in relation to this
   - Their concern in relation to both electoral fraud per se and a range of specific electoral fraud activities their responses to selected information about the current electoral system
   - Their responses to some ideas for potential changes to the electoral system

2.5 **Pre-tasking** was undertaken with half the sample. Half of the groups (all participants within a group) and half of the depths were asked to undertake a simple self-completion exercise. Via a tick box table, participants were to pinpoint examples they would consider to be electoral fraud, as well as their level of concern against these. The specific benefits of pre-tasking in this way were as follows:
   - Rapport and positive dynamics with participants was easier to establish
   - Session efficiency, productivity and depth of detail was enhanced
   - In the case of the groups, facilitating participants to develop their own view prior to attending improved the level and richness of debate and discussion. It also made it easier for them to both contribute and challenge others as they had examples on hand and developed views from which to draw.

2.6 Care was taken to ensure that pre-tasking did not have any undue effect on data or analysis. In the early stages of fieldwork, only part of the sample was...

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24 A copy of the pre-task is in Appendix 3.
given a pre-task so that we could assess whether there was any influence from providing some information about potential electoral fraud activities in advance. No differences were noted – in that we could see the same effects of supplying information whether this was in advance of the session (for those pre-tasked) or during the session (for those without a pre-task). However, we retained the split of half pre-tasked and half not pre-tasked for the remainder of fieldwork in order to monitor further whether advance information impacted on views. The overall finding is that delivery of new information and the opportunity to deliberate information serves to raise concern (at least temporarily) at whichever point it is given.

2.7 **Follow up calls** were used with about 50% of the sample. Individuals were re-contacted after the face to face session to access any latent thoughts which come to mind after ideas had had time to settle or be discussed further. This also helped to reveal the priorities and the prominence of certain themes, draw out any further examples and to unpick some themes arising within the analysis process.

**Sample**

2.8 The purposive sample was designed to ensure a wide range of variables including age, SEG, locations, disability and ethnic origin and provide thorough representation of the characteristics of the British public. No one was excluded on the basis of protected characteristics.

2.9 To summarise the key characteristics represented with the sample and how different sessions were arranged:

**a) Individual Depth Interviews**

12 interviews were undertaken, 1 hour in length and conducted face-to-face, with half of the depth participants asked to undertake a pre-task exercise\(^{25}\).

<table>
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<th>Depths</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21-29</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30-44</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45-59</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>60+</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td><strong>SEG</strong></td>
<td>(A)B</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C1C2</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DE</td>
<td>4</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

\(^{25}\) A copy of the pre-task is in Appendix 3.
b) Group Discussions

10 group discussions were undertaken, with six participants per group interviewed for 1.5 hours. Five of the groups were given the pre-task exercise to complete.

<table>
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<th>Location</th>
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<th>Wales</th>
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<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
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<table>
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<table>
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<td>Mixed, Asian/Asian British, Black/Black British, Chinese or other ethnic group</td>
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<thead>
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<th>England</th>
<th>Wales</th>
<th>Scotland</th>
<th>Northern Ireland</th>
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<td>5. Younger ABC1</td>
<td>7. Older ABC1</td>
<td>9. Younger ABC1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Older C2DE</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Younger C2DE</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Additional criteria for Northern Ireland sample:**
- Representation of both Protestant and Catholic participants in depths (minimum 1 of each)
- Groups were split between Protestant and Catholic communities, i.e. all participants were from the same community

**Definitions and additional criteria for group participants:**
- Age range of Groups defined as:
  - Younger: 17-35
  - Older: 36-60+
- Minimum 1, maximum 2 participants per group had a disability
- 8 participants in overall group sample represented an ethnic minority

**Additional criteria for all participants:**
- All eligible to vote
- Spread of levels of concern about electoral fraud happening to be represented (range across depths and within groups)
- A good spread of different socio-economic groups within each broad break of ABC1 and C2DE
- Even mix of men and women across each method and other characteristics
  - Depths to be split by gender
Groups to include minimum of 3 men and 3 women each
• Thorough spread of past voting behaviour across whole sample and by location:
  o From regular voters to those who seldom or never vote, although:
    o Maximum of 1 depth per area to choose not to vote
    o Maximum of 1 respondent per group to choose not to vote
      and must think electoral fraud happens at least a little
  o Good representation of both those who vote at polling station and those who vote by post
• Spread of political awareness and interest, including:
  – Levels of understanding of voting and elections
  – Interest in politics and current affairs
  – Parties voted for at the last election (for those who voted)
• Representation of a range of news consumption: frequency, format, title/channel as appropriate
• Spread of working status:
  o To include full time and part-time in a range of sectors and non-working (unemployed, retired, house-person), as well as some in full time Higher/Further education
• Thorough representation of different life-stages, i.e. with/without children, married/single.

2.10 Fieldwork took place across four locations to cover the North of England (Oldham), Midlands (Leicester), South of England (Ware) and London, Wales (Ceredigion and Cardiff), Scotland (Edinburgh and Glasgow) and Northern Ireland (Lisburn and Newcastle) from 22nd January – 30th January 2013.

2.11 The research team included: Joceline Jones, David Proctor, Lucy Bush, Robert Lee and Elena Hailwood.

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26 With one mop-up interview conducted on 12th February 2013.
Appendix 3 – Pre-task Exercise for Groups

Note: Pre-task was identical for depths apart from some explanatory wording reflecting depth interview instead of groups.

Thank you very much for agreeing to take part in this research, which is exploring public attitudes about electoral fraud.

There will be a lot to discuss in the group, so before coming along it would be very helpful if you could fill in this short task. This will also be a good opportunity for you to think about some things in advance. It shouldn’t take you too long to complete – and hopefully you will find it interesting too!

Please look through the issues in the left hand column below and place a tick in whichever columns on the right apply to you (You can tick more than one). The grey boxes at the top give you examples of how to complete the table.

This is not a test and there are no right or wrong answers, so please be as honest as you can.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Issue</th>
<th>This is something I think happens and I have been concerned about it before now</th>
<th>This is something I think happens but I hadn’t really thought about it before seeing it written here</th>
<th>I have personal experience of this</th>
<th>I have heard about this happening from someone else</th>
<th>I don’t think this happens currently</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone making another person vote for a party or candidate they don’t want to vote for</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>A person registering to vote under somebody else’s name</td>
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<tr>
<td>Someone making another person vote for a party or candidate they don’t want to vote for</td>
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<tr>
<td>A candidate making false statements about another</td>
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<tr>
<td>Candidate</td>
<td>Postal ballot papers being sent to the wrong address</td>
<td>Someone pretending to be another person so they can vote more than once</td>
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<td><strong>Issue</strong></td>
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<td>I don’t think this happens currently</td>
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</table>

Candidates who have been voted in then breaking promises they made when campaigning

If there are any other issues that you think relate to electoral fraud please write in here:

Please bring this sheet along to the session with you as it will be helpful for our discussion. Your answers are confidential and you do not need to show this sheet to others in the group. However, the moderator would like to collect it from you at the session.

If you have any questions about the research, please contact Joceline Jones, Director at Define on 020 8346 7171 or joceline@defineinsight.co.uk.

Many thanks in advance for your help.
Define
Appendix 4 – Stimulus material introducing information about the current voting process

a) Stimulus used in England, Wales and Scotland

![Diagram of the voting process]

Existing measures in England, Wales and Scotland

Postal voting
- Since 2007, electors have had to provide their signature and date of birth when applying to vote by post, and also when casting their postal vote.
- Both records are checked. If they don’t match, the ballot paper is rejected.

Police
- The Representation of the People Act 1983 specifies a number of criminal offences relating to electoral fraud.
- Every police force has a designated person to lead on election-related crime and who will give advice to local police officers.
- The relevant police force can investigate any allegations that an offence may have taken place.

The Electoral Commission
- The Electoral Commission provides resources to Returning Officers, electoral administrators, candidates, agents, postal workers, the police and prosecuting authorities to help uphold and improve the integrity of the electoral process. This includes:
producing guidance for local authorities – e.g. checks should be made where a large number of electors are registered at a property (8 or more).
- producing pocket guides for postal workers and police to help them detect fraud.
- providing a code of conduct with political parties for the handling of postal vote applications and postal ballot packs by political parties, candidates and canvassers.
- reporting each year on allegations of electoral malpractice made to the police.
- producing guidance and holding training with police representatives each year to update their knowledge to help them detect fraud.

Future measures for England, Wales and Scotland

Individual electoral registration (IER) from 2014

To date, Great Britain has operated a dual system of electoral registration:
- The majority of people are added to the register between August and November each year (the ‘annual canvass’), when a form is sent to every household. One person is responsible for completing the form to register all eligible people at that address (and this person then signs the form).
- At other times of the year, individuals can register themselves by filling in a separate form.

However, the Government has now legislated for Individual Electoral Registration (IER) to tighten up the registration process and it is due to be introduced in 2014.

Under this new system:
- Each person will be required to register to vote individually, rather than by household.
- Individuals will be asked to provide ‘identifying information’, such as a date of birth and national insurance number, when they apply to register.
b) Stimulus used in Northern Ireland

Existing measures in Northern Ireland

- Anyone wanting to have their name included in the register must provide their name, address, date of birth and national insurance number on an individually-signed form.
- At the moment you cannot request a postal vote on demand. You have to give a reason.
- Postal voters in Northern Ireland have to complete and return a declaration of identity form with their ballot papers. The declaration, which requires date of birth and signature of voter, must be signed by and in front of a witness. All postal voters are checked and cross-referenced with the information provided at the time of registration (date of birth, signature).
- Voters must present photographic identification at their polling station to confirm their identity.
- To qualify to be on the electoral register, eligible individuals must demonstrate they have been in Northern Ireland for at least 3 months prior to their application for registration.

The Electoral Commission
- The Commission provides resources to people such as the Chief Electoral Officer, candidates, agents, the police and prosecutors to help uphold and improve the integrity of the electoral process.
Police

- The Representation of the People Act 1983 specifies a number of criminal offences relating to electoral fraud.
- The Police Service has designated officers to lead on election-related crime and who will give advice to local police officers.
- The Police Service can investigate any allegations that an offence may have taken place.
Appendix 5 – Stimulus material introducing potential changes to voting processes

a) Stimulus used in England, Wales and Scotland

Potential measures in England, Wales and Scotland

- Stop postal voting on demand (at the moment you can request a postal vote without giving a reason)
- Stopping postal voting completely
- Stopping people voting for others as their proxy (at the moment you can get someone else to make a proxy vote on your behalf)
- Having police in polling stations at all times throughout the poll
- People being required to sign in order to check their identity before being given their ballot paper in the polling station
- People being required to show some form of identification at their polling station before being given their ballot paper

b) Stimulus used in Northern Ireland

Potential measures in Northern Ireland

- Stopping people voting for others as their proxy (at the moment you can get someone else to make a proxy vote on your behalf)
- Having police in polling stations at all times throughout the poll
Appendix 6 – Discussion Guide

DRAFT DISCUSSION GUIDE
1934 – EC – Electoral Fraud Perceptions Research
Depths (1 hour) and Groups (1.5 hours)

Notes on Qualitative Questioning:
1. This guide indicates the areas to be explored in the discussion, the likely order in which topics will be covered and the kinds of questions and techniques that may be used. As it is qualitative research, there will be diversions taken within the dynamics of each interview in order to fully explore respondents’ data. (Timings given are for guidance only and will not be strictly adhered to – times spent on each section will be dependent upon the knowledge/interests of each respondent/group)
2. The objectives of the research may be addressed through direct questioning, indirect questioning, observation of non-verbal response in response to stimulus, or analysis of data post hoc.

Moderator notes
The overall requirement of this research is to gain further understanding of why a proportion of the public are concerned about electoral fraud and hold views that are not in line with reported volumes.

Stage 1 Overall: To gain public perceptions and understanding of issues identified as Electoral Fraud (such as those raised as part of Phase 1 of the Commission’s fraud review).

Specifically, what does public perception and experience indicate about:

- **What is understood as ‘electoral fraud’?**
  - Is it perceived to relate to electoral issues such as postal voting, impersonation at polling stations or registration fraud for electoral or financial reasons or other issues such as political candidates being dishonest?
  - Or does ‘fraud’ also include wider issues such as dissatisfaction with the voting system or wider issues such as MP’s / MLA’s / MSP’s / AM’s expenses?

- **Are the low reported levels of fraud masking a larger problem?**
  - Have people seen or heard about specific instances of electoral fraud and where from?
  - Are there indications that not all suspected instances of electoral fraud are reported to the police and, if not, why not?

- **Where the public get their information on fraud and what drives their views?**
  - Is it based upon stories in the media, or from peers, family and friends or any other sources?
  - Have people have experienced / witnessed electoral fraud first-hand?

- **What would reassure people** or what additional actions would help prevent electoral fraud?

27 MPs relevant in the UK, MLAs in NI, MSPs in Scotland, AMs in Wales.
1. Introductions and Background (5 mins)

- Moderator to introduce self and explain the process of social research to respondents (MRS/SRA guidelines, confidentiality and recording), and the format of the interview /discussion (some topics for discussion and occasional exercise for them to do)
- Permission to record audio
- Explain that we are here to talk about electoral fraud – any thoughts about this and experiences they may have
- Explain that first, however, we’d like to find out a little more about them as individuals
- Brief respondent ‘warm up’ questions– select questions as necessary until warmed up:
  - First name and age
  - Who lives at home?
  - What do you do for a living/what occupies your daily life?
  - Any hobbies or interests?
  - Favourite TV programme? Favourite film? Internet sites?

2. Overall knowledge, understanding and experience of electoral fraud (10-20 mins)

Moving on to our main topic of discussion...
Ask respondents to complete a brief self-completion exercise (Bubble Diagram – see Slide 2 in Stimulus Pack) to write down individual thoughts first on how they would explain electoral fraud in their own words and the examples they would give.

Briefly (to gauge initial thoughts - we will return to this later in discussion):
- In general, when it comes to being safe from fraud and abuse, would you say that voting is safe, not safe or somewhere in between? Why/what makes you say/think that?
- How much, if at all, do you think that electoral fraud took place at: Last General Election / Scottish Parliament Election / Northern Ireland Assembly Election / Welsh Assembly Election / European Parliament Elections / Referendum on the Voting System / Local Election in this area / (London only) GLA/Mayoral Elections? What makes you say that? Why that one / those in particular? As relevant, why not the others?

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28 Those who have completed a pre-task can reference this to complete their exercise.
Opening up to discussion and asking respondent(s) to share what they have written down (groups) or explain their self-completion (depths):

- What do you tend to think of when we say the term ‘electoral fraud’?
- How much do you feel you understand about electoral fraud in the UK - that is fraud relating to elections and voting? Why do you say that?
- Where do you get any information on electoral fraud? Who do you trust to give this kind of information?
- Who do you think commits electoral fraud? Why do they do it / what are their aims?
- Do you know of anything that is in place to prevent electoral fraud happening?

Moderator to write down any examples given to return to later

For groups only, write down all suggestions on cards to pool group ideas:

- Are there any here that are a surprise to you?
- Any you had forgotten about but consider they are something you had previously thought about?

For groups and depths, then add in prepared examples on cards of any which have not been put forward spontaneously (see Slides 3 and 4 in Stimulus Pack for list)

- For each issue -
  - Had you thought of that issue before? If so, when was that/in what context?
  - Where did you come across information about this (probe for which media, family, friends etc) - note for further probing as below

Once full set of cards displayed to individual or group:

- Anything else you would add that you think is an issue in electoral fraud?

Show chart with schematic of key voting and election steps to help respondents consider all potential points of activity (see Slide 5 and 6 in Stimulus Pack)

- Ask respondents to pick out the three you feel most concerned about and make a note of these in a space on the front of their self-completion sheet

3. Understanding of individual issues (30-45 mins)

- Then taking each of the total set of issues one by one (rotating order in which covered in each session):
  - How much of an issue do you think this is?
  - How frequently/ commonly or easily do you think it happens? What makes you say this? How do you know this /what makes you think so? Moderator to lay out source board (see Slide 7 in Stimulus Pack) as a prompt to consider where they might have heard things from and establish whether through personal experience, hearsay, media reports, etc

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29 Note: These are alternative variants’ for England, Wales and Scotland and Northern Ireland. Only one will be used depending on location (5 for EWS and 6 for NI).
30 In relation to issue of ‘Candidates who have been voted in then breaking promises they made when campaigning’, listen out for candidates changing parties or policies after being elected and probe as appropriate.
31 Board will remain on show as ongoing prompt as discussion progresses through the different issues.
When does it happen?  (Probe - particular times of the year?) Where does it happen? (Probe - specific elections?)

Who do you think does this? Why do they do it / what are their aims?

For any examples from personal or close experience raised, explore all as appropriate
  ▪  What happened? Was it reported to the police? Why/why not? What was the outcome?

How worrying is it as an activity/issue? If so, what is it that makes it concerning?
  ▪  How does it make you feel? Show emotion board if helpful (depths only) and ask respondent(s) to identify what kind of response they have when they think about these things and why
  ▪  Establish what concern is based on (e.g. severity of deceit, gain of individual, loss to others, impact on electoral process, frequency, general morality, etc)

Do you know of anything that is in place to prevent this happening?

Is there anything that could or should change to prevent it happening?
  Probe regarding specific things relating to the electoral process if not mentioned

What are the consequences of someone being caught committing this type of electoral fraud?

How much of a priority should this change/dealing with this issue be? How important is it? Versus other (general) issues? Versus the other issues of electoral fraud we have in this pile?

Once all issues covered as above:

- Now we have discussed each of these things, which would you say stand out as the top three that you are most concerned about (ask respondents to write these down on the back of their self-completion sheet)
- If these have changed from those written previously:
  - What is the reason your choices have changed? Understand if learned something in the discussion that has made a difference, concerns of others in the group where relevant, whether simply a change of mind, etc

And, overall (as a group or individually) which of these issues would you say...

- Happen more and less frequently overall?
- Are different from each other in other ways, such as overall importance or overall concern?
- Respondent(s) to then prioritise the issues through one or both of the following:
  - Moderator to explain: Taking all things into consideration (how concerned you are about it, how often it happens, impact when it does, etc, please rank these issues in terms of most to least of an issue in your view and explain why you would rank them in this order
  - Moderator to ask: If we think of these things as being more or less frequent, and both more or less a problem in terms of their impact,

32 If need a reference, use insurance fraud or benefit fraud as a comparator.
where would you place each issue (using axes laid down by moderator – see Slide 8 in Stimulus Pack for example)

Briefly (to gauge whether thoughts have changed following more detailed discussion):

- We touched on this earlier but just to check, when it comes to being safe from fraud and abuse, would you say that voting is safe, not safe or somewhere in between? Why/what makes you say/think that?
- How much, if at all, do you think that electoral fraud took place at: Last General Election / Scottish Parliament Election / Northern Ireland Assembly Election / Welsh Assembly Election / European Parliament Elections / Referendum on the Voting System / Local Election in this area / (London only) GLA/Mayoral Elections? What makes you say that? Why that one / those in particular? As relevant, why not the others?

4. Potential changes and developments (10-15 mins)

- Do you know of any other measures in place, that haven’t been mentioned already, to help stop electoral fraud happening?
  - Draw together any mentioned earlier and in relation to specific issues in discussion above
  - How effective is this?
  - Any more you know about?

- In your view, what could change to help stop electoral fraud taking place? (and probe in specific things relating to the electoral process if not mentioned).
  - Refer respondent(s) back to schematic and people to help them consider all points of potential activity and people involved

**England, Wales and Scotland only:**
Show cards of Existing and Future Measures in England, Wales and Scotland (see Slides 9 to 12 in Stimulus Pack) and explain that these are current features of the electoral system in England, Wales and Scotland:

- Which of the following are you aware of currently? In relation to police roles, probe to check if anyone is aware that information on reported instances of electoral fraud and outcomes is publically available
- Which, if any, are you not aware of?
- And are there any of these measures you do not understand/would like to know more about?
- How much do you feel each of these helps in reducing electoral fraud? What are your reasons for this?
- If any information is new, does this make a difference about how concerned you feel about electoral fraud overall or any specific issues? Which (if relevant) and why?

- Show cards for Potential Measures in England, Wales and Scotland (see Slide 13 in Stimulus Pack) and explain that these are additional things that could be put place
• How effective do you think each of these would be at stopping electoral fraud taking place? EXPLORE ONE BY ONE
  o Stop postal voting on demand (at the moment you can request a postal vote without giving a reason) – NOTE TO MODERATOR TO EXPLAIN AS REQUIRED: People will still be able to apply for a postal and proxy vote but they would have to have a specific reason for doing so.
  o Stopping postal voting completely
  o Stopping people voting for other as their proxy (at the moment you can get someone else to make a proxy vote on your behalf)
  o Having police in polling stations at all times throughout the poll33
    • Moderator to explain: Police officers on duty can be present in polling stations. Generally, officers will visit a number of polling stations throughout polling day on the instructions of the Returning Officer. The UK also has an observer scheme (anyone with an interest can apply) and that independent observers will be present at a number of polling stations of their own choosing (though obviously not at all)
  o People being required to sign in order to check their identity before being given their ballot paper in the polling station
  o People being required to show some form of identification at their polling station before being given their ballot paper

• For each:
  o Why is this a good idea/not a good idea in your view? What do you see as the benefits / drawbacks / overall impact?
  o Which do you think is likely to have most impact?

• EXPLAIN THAT THE SYSTEM IS SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT IN NORTHERN IRELAND AND SHOW SHEET WITH EXISTING MEASURES IN NORTHERN IRELAND (SLIDE 15 IN STIMULUS PACK):
  o What are your thoughts on this system?
  o Does it make you feel differently about the system in GB in any way? If so, how?

NORTHERN IRELAND ONLY:
Show sheet with Existing Measures in Northern Ireland (slides 14 and 15 in Stimulus Pack) and explain that these are current features of the electoral system in Northern Ireland:
• Which of the following are you aware of currently?
• Which are you not aware of?
• And are there any you do not understand/would like to know more about?
• How much do you feel this helps in reducing electoral fraud? What are your reasons for this?
• Show cards for Potential Measures in Northern Ireland (see Slide 16 in Stimulus Pack) and explain that these are additional things that could be put place

33 The term Police Service is used in both NI and London (rather than Police Force which is the common term in GB).
How effective do you think each of these would be at stopping electoral fraud taking place? *Explore one by one*
- Stopping people voting for other as their proxy (at the moment you can get someone else to make a proxy vote on your behalf)
- Having police in polling stations at all times throughout the poll

For each:
- Why is this a good idea/not a good idea in your view? What do you see as the benefits / drawbacks / overall impact?
- Which do you think is likely to have most impact?

Moderator to explain: The electoral system is slightly different in England, Scotland and Wales. Under the current system in Great Britain, one person in a household can register an entire household without needing to provide proof of identity. In Northern Ireland citizens have to register individually and provide proof of identity to do so.
- What do you think of the system of household registration, as currently used in GB, rather than individual registration system used here’
- Do you that think the household system of registration is more or less safe from fraud than the system in Northern Ireland in any way? Why is that?

5. Summing up (5 mins)

Overall how do you feel about our discussion today?
- If you had to go back to the Electoral Commission and say what was the most important thing that has come out of this discussion what would it be?
- Any questions?
- Collect in pre-tasks as relevant and remind all of follow up calls and potential contact at Stage 2

**Thank and close**

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34 Notes regarding NI:
- The term *Police Service* is used in both NI and London (rather than Police Force which is the common term in GB).
- Police used to be at polling stations at almost all elections prior to 2003 but this has since been scaled back. While we wish to understand what people feel about this as a measure, there is currently no intention to increase police presence.
- The UK also has an observer scheme (anyone with an interest can apply) and independent observers will be present at a number of polling stations of their own choosing (though obviously not at all).
- Political parties in NI make use of polling *agents*. They are present in almost all polling stations during any election. Participants may be aware of this in NI and perceive them as observers but they are undertaking a different role.
Appendix 7 – Recruitment Questionnaire

Define Research and Insight, 69-85 Tabernacle Street, London EC2A 4RR, 020 8 346 7171

PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF ELECTORAL FRAUD RESEARCH – RECRUITMENT SCREENER

INTRODUCTION

RECRUITER SCRIPT: Good morning/afternoon/evening. My name is (…) from Define Research and Insight. We are an independent market research company.

We are looking for people to take part in an informal social research discussion group or interview in your local area to find out what they think about the way we vote in the UK.

We will be giving you a ‘thank you’ to all those participating of £30 [1 hour depth] or £30 [1.5 hour group]. Any discussion will be completely confidential. I can give you more details of where and when it is being held if you fit the criteria we are looking for.

So I need to ask you a few simple questions first to see if you are right for our study – this will only take about 5 minutes. Please do answer all the questions honestly, we don’t mind what your responses are as long as you say what you feel. This questionnaire is totally confidential and details of who you are won’t be passed on to anyone else.

RECRUITER, ENSURE THAT RESPONDENT UNDERSTANDS THAT THE INCENTIVE RELATES TO ATTENDING A GROUP DISCUSSION/DEPTH INTERVIEW AND NOT COMPLETION OF THIS RECRUITMENT INTERVIEW.

Please ensure that the respondent understands that anything they say in the discussion will not be used with their name attached and their name will not be passed on to anyone other than the researchers working on the project.

Ascertain from Welsh respondents whether they would prefer the screening to be undertaken in Welsh, English or they don’t mind. If Welsh is specified, explain that we need to arrange a screening session with a Welsh speaker and take contact details so this can be arranged. If arises, contact office ASAP.
SCREENING QUESTIONS

QA. Please tell me if: a) you; or b) any of your immediate family or friends work or have ever worked in any of the following trades/sectors mentioned here?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a)</th>
<th>b)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Market Research</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalism</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Relations</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Activism</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any Political Party</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central / National Government*</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Government in a role that relates to voting and elections **</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Police</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*explain further if required as: a job in any Government department (e.g. Department for Work and Pensions, Department of Health, Department for Education, HMRC, etc).

**anyone working in a different type of role within Local Government (e.g. a council) can be included.

Other public sector organisations such as emergency services can be included.

RECRUITER: Close if code a or b to any of the above.

QB. Have you ever taken part in a market research depth interview or group discussion on any subject?

Yes | □ | □ | 1 | GO TO QC
No | □ | □ | 2

Q.C When did you last take part in a market research group discussion/depth interview?

In the last 6 months | □ | □ | 1 | CLOSE
More than 6 months ago | □ | □ | 2 | GO TO QD

Q.D How many times have you taken part in a market research group discussion/depth interview?

1-2 | □ | □ | 1 | GO TO QE
3-5 | □ | □ | 2 | CLOSE
6+ | □ | □ | 3 | CLOSE
Q.E  What was the subject of the last group discussion/depth interview?

RECRUITER: Please ensure that none have taken part in research relating to elections and voting before. If mentioned please close.

QFa. What is the occupation of the head of your household?

QFb. Which of the following best describes your current working status?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am working full time</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am working part-time</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am currently a student</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am currently at home looking after my children</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am currently unemployed</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am retired</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RECRUITER: Aim for a spread of occupations.

QG. Male/Female

RECRUITER: Ensure a minimum of at least 3 of each gender in groups, depths to be split between male and female.

QHa. What is your age?  

Depths | Groups
-------|--------
17-20  | Younger: 17-35 | 6
21-29  | 2
30-44  | 3
45-59  | Older: 36-60+  | 7
60+    | 5

QI. What is your current living situation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single, no children</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married/co-habiting, no children</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single/Married/Co-habiting children living at home</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single/married/co-habiting children now not living at home</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RECRUITER: Aim for a spread.

QJ. Which of these best describes you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White British</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>Quantity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Irish</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other white background</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed - White and Black Caribbean</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed - White and Black African</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed - White and Asian</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other mixed background</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladeshi</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other Asian Background</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other Black background</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other (please write in below)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RECRUITER: Aim for spread appropriate to area and inform office on recruitment of EM to enable overall quotas to be managed

QKa. Which of the following would you say is your first language?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welsh</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

QKb. Would you prefer to be interviewed in Welsh or English?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welsh</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t mind</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RECRUITER: Respondents coding 2 (Welsh preference) to be recruited to depths only

QKc. Are you fluent enough in English to take part in detailed discussion comfortably and without a translator?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RECRUITER: If taking part in group, respondent must be able to take part in discussion in English unaided.

QLa Are you registered with a disability of any description?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>CHECK QUOTAS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q7b What is this disability .................................................................

RECRUITER: Please note and understand if respondent as any specific accessibility requirements that need to be accommodated. If qualify on other parts of screening (see below), recruit as appropriate to group or depth.
### VOTING ELIGIBILITY

**Q1a** Are you currently registered to vote in elections to the UK Parliament?
- Yes □ 1 □ GO TO Q2
- No □ 2 □ GO TO Q1b

**Q1b** You mentioned that you are not registered to vote, is that because you are not eligible to vote?
- Yes □ 1 □ CLOSE
- No □ 2 □ GO TO Q2
- Don’t know □ 3 □ CHECK FOR ELIGIBILITY AT BACK OF QRE

**RECRUITER:** Please ensure all are eligible to vote and that 17 year olds will be 18 by 2nd May 2013.

### VOTING PERCEPTIONS

**Q2** Which of the following best describes your attitude towards voting? READ OUT
- I always vote in elections when I can □ 1 □ GO TO Q3
- I tend to vote in some elections and not others □ 2 □ GO TO Q3
- I only really vote occasionally □ 3 □ GO TO Q3
- I don’t tend to vote □ 4 □ GO TO Q4
- I’ve never voted before □ 5 □ GO TO Q4

**RECRUITER:** CHECK QUOTAS. Ensure a good spread of voting behaviour in groups. IF RESPONDENT CODES 4, THEY MUST CODE 3 OR ABOVE AT 4C BELOW TO BE INCLUDED IN A GROUP.

**Q3** And what type of voting method do you use? READ OUT
- Polling station □ 1 □ GO TO Q4
- Postal vote □ 2 □ GO TO Q4
- Mix of polling station and postal voting □ 3 □ GO TO Q4

**RECRUITER:** Ensure a good spread of polling station and postal voters in each location across sample and at least two of each type in each group.

**Q4** How much do you think the following happen on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 is not at all and 4 is a lot

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Hardly at all</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Benefit fraud</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) False insurance claims</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Electoral fraud, that is fraud relating to elections and voting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RECRUITER: All depths to code 3 or above. Minimum 2 and maximum of 3 per group to code 1 or 2 at 4c in Groups 2 and 8. For all other groups, all respondents to code 3 or above.

AS ABOVE, ANY RESPONDENT CODING 4 AT QUESTION 2 MUST CODE 3 OR HIGHER AT Q4C IF RECRUITED FOR GROUP.

Q5 From the following statements, which best describes how you feel about politics and current affairs?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am very interested in politics and current affairs</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am interested in politics and current affairs</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am not very interested in politics and current affairs</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have no real interest in politics and current affairs</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RECRUITER: Aim for a spread of level of interest within groups and across sample

Q6 ENGLAND/WALES/SCOTLAND ONLY: Do you mind telling us who you voted for in the last general election?

[RECRUITER: If respondent expresses concern about revealing party affiliation, please reassure that we are asking this question to ensure that people who take part represent a range of the population and are not biased to one particular group. All recruitment screener data is kept fully confidential and is only used for the purposes of this research project]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservatives</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Democrats</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish National Party</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plaid Cymru</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UKIP</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refused/rather not say</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RECRUITER: Aim for a spread per group and across depths

Q7 From the following statements, which best describes your understanding of processes of voting and elections in the UK?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I know a lot about voting and election processes in the UK</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know a fair amount about voting and election processes in the UK</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know a bit about voting and election processes in the UK, but I am unsure about some things</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t really know anything about voting and election processes in the UK</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RECRUITER: Aim for a spread of level of awareness within groups and across sample
Q8  How, if at all, do you stay up to date with current news? Please state what sources you access (e.g. Daily Mail, Sun, Guardian), how you access it (e.g. newspaper, online, smartphone) and how frequently you use it.

Recruiter to note all as relevant:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Format (e.g. online, newspaper etc.)</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RECRUITER: Aim for representation of range of news consumption across whole sample

Q9  NORTHERN IRELAND ONLY: Regardless of whether they actually practice a particular religion, most people in Northern Ireland are perceived to be members of either the Protestant or Roman Catholic communities. Please indicate the community to which you belong by ticking the appropriate box below: Show respondent: USE SHOW CARD

[RECRUITER: If respondent expresses concern about revealing community, please reassure that we are asking this question to ensure that people who take part represent a range of the population and are not biased to one particular group. All recruitment screener data is kept fully confidential and is only used for the purposes of this research project]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>CHECK QUOTA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am a member of the Protestant community</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>CHECK QUOTA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am a member of the Catholic community</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>CHECK QUOTA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>SEE BELOW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'd rather not say</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>CLOSE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RECRUITER: Check quotas (see details on front of questionnaire). If code 3 then please consider for depths or only a maximum of 2 per group.

Thank you very much for taking the time today to help us
RECRUITER SCRIPT
We very much hope you can take part in a group discussion/one on one interview. Recruit respondent and explain procedures.

Thank you very much for taking the time today to help us with this survey

If you need to call us to check any details or re-arrange a time then please do so on 020 8346 7171. Please ask for Alison Samuel.

I confirm that this interview was administered according to the MRS Code of Conduct.

Signature of Recruiter: ...........................................................

Interviewer: ___________________________________________________________________

Respondent ___________________________________________________________________

Address: _____________________________________________________________________

Post Code: _______________________

Tel._______________ (Hm) ________________ (Wk)_________________ (Mobile)

Please note method of recruitment: (street/snowballing*)
Eligibility to vote

All must be:
- Be 18 years of age or over on polling day (2nd May 2013)
- Be resident in the UK
- Be a citizen of the United Kingdom, a citizen of the Republic of Ireland
- A qualifying Commonwealth citizen (see below)
- Not be subject to any legal incapacity to vote

Qualifying Commonwealth citizens are Commonwealth citizens resident in the UK who are entitled to register to vote provided that they also fulfil the age requirement for registration and are not subject to any other legal incapacity. Citizens of the following countries meet the nationality criteria to register in respect of all elections:
- Antigua and Barbuda
- Australia
- The Bahamas
- Bangladesh
- Barbados
- Belize
- Botswana
- Brunei Darussalam
- Cameroon
- Canada
- Cyprus*
- Dominica
- Fiji Islands**
- The Gambia
- Ghana
- Grenada
- Guyana
- India
- Jamaica
- Kenya
- Kiribati
- Lesotho
- Malawi
- Malaysia
- Maldives
- Malta*
- Mauritius
- Mozambique
- Namibia
- Nauru
- New Zealand
- Nigeria
- Pakistan
- Papua New Guinea
- St Kitts and Nevis
- St Lucia
- St Vincent and the
• Grenadines
• Samoa
• Seychelles
• Sierra Leone
• Singapore
• Solomon Islands
• South Africa
• Sri Lanka
• Swaziland
• Tonga
• Trinidad and Tobago
• Tuvalu
• Uganda
• United Kingdom
• United Republic of Tanzania
• Vanuatu
• Zambia
• Zimbabwe**

*Although also EU member states, citizens of Cyprus and Malta are eligible to be registered to vote in respect of all elections held in the UK.

**Citizens of Fiji and Zimbabwe retain their voting rights despite Fiji being currently suspended from the Commonwealth and Zimbabwe having withdrawn from the Commonwealth in 2003. The voting rights are laid out in the British Nationality Act 1981 and are not affected by subsequent circumstances; they could only be altered by an Act of the UK Parliament.