



Understanding Society

THE UK HOUSEHOLD LONGITUDINAL STUDY

# Introducing *Understanding Society* for politics research.

Dr. Nicole Martin  
University of Manchester

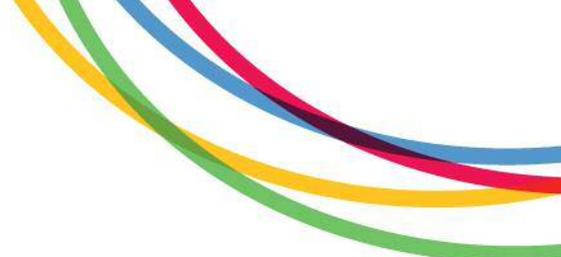
1<sup>st</sup> April 2020



University of Essex

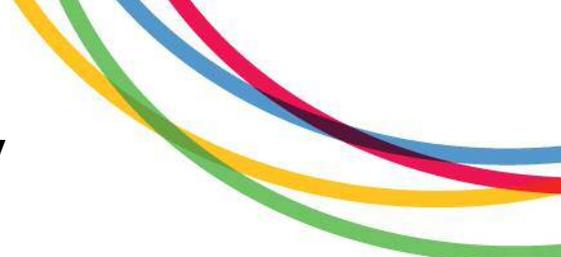


# Outline



- Study overview.
  - What kinds of questions?  
Which types of projects might use *Understanding Society*?
  - Documentation and training.
  - Data access.
  - Some existing research:  
Depression and Brexit.  
'It was the Sun wot won it'.  
Benefits and political participation.
-

# *Understanding Society* key features

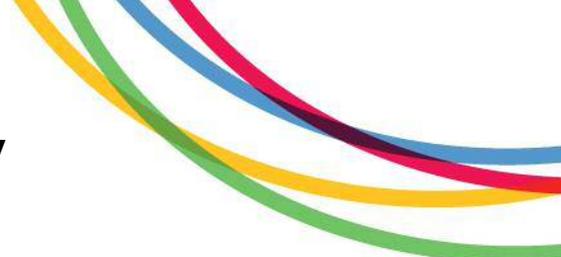


Household panel study, starting in 2009.

Includes respondents from the British Household Panel Study (started 1991).

- **Household:** everyone in the household contributes.
    - 16 years and over complete the mainstage questionnaire.
    - 10-15 year olds complete a youth questionnaire.
    - 0-9 year olds information collected from their parents.
  - **Panel:** the **same** people are interviewed again each year.
-

# *Understanding Society* key features



Household panel study, starting in 2009.

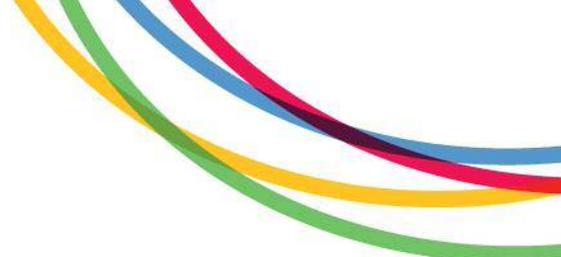
Includes respondents from the British Household Panel Study (started 1991).

- **Household:** everyone in the household contributes.
    - 16 years and over complete the mainstage questionnaire.
    - 10-15 year olds complete a youth questionnaire.
    - ~~0-9 year olds information collected from their parents.~~
  - **Panel:** the **same** people are interviewed again each year.
-

# *Understanding Society* key features

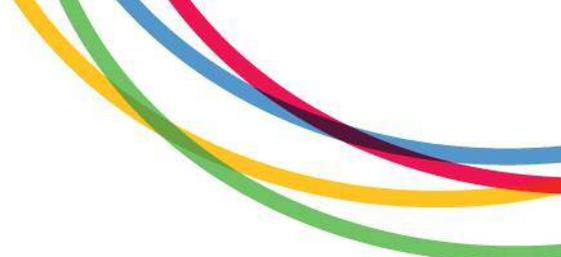
- Ethnic minority and immigrant boost samples.
  - All four countries in the UK.
  - Large sample size.
  - Multi-topic.
  - Geographical data linkage.
-

# Politics data



- **After elections: turnout, vote choice.**
    - 2010 and 2015 UK general elections – wave 2 and wave 7 only.
    - 2017 and 2019 UK general elections – across different waves.
    - 1992, 1997, 2001, and 2005 are in the BHPS.
    - 2014 Scottish Independence referendum.
    - 2019 European Parliament elections.
    - Future devolved assembly elections.
  - **EU referendum (wave 8, 2016-17):**
    - Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?
    - Remain a member of the European Union OR Leave the European Union.
-

# Politics data



## Political attitudes:

- Party identity and vote intention.

- Satisfaction with democracy, duty to vote, efficacy and others.

- Party like/dislike scores.

## Geographical data linkage to election results.

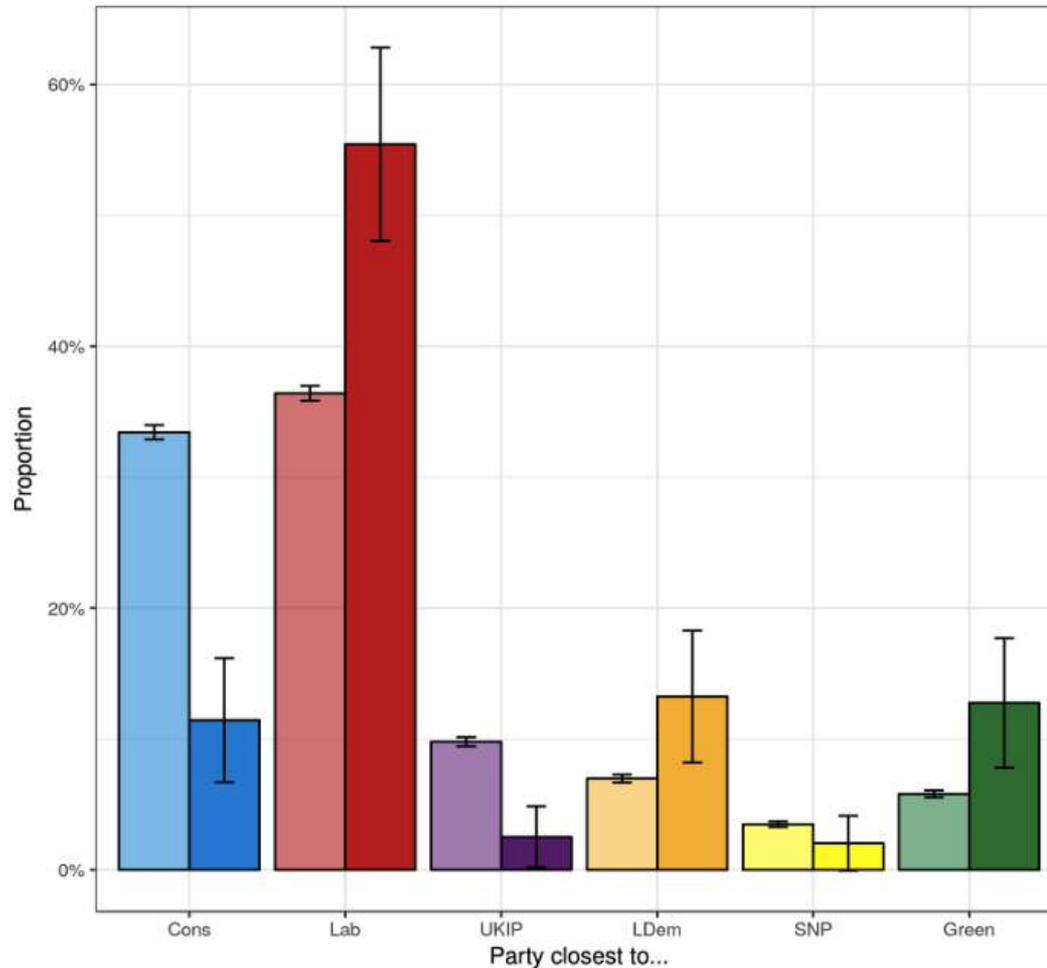
- Local authority and parliamentary constituency geocodes.

- Create your own boundaries using GIS (Secure Data Service).

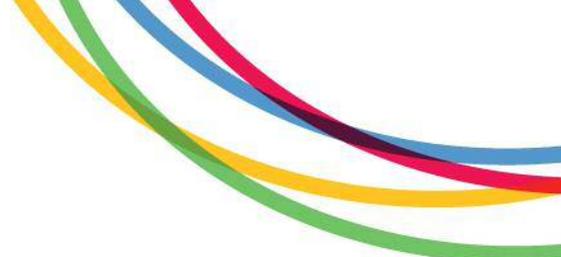
---

# People working in HE are more left-wing

Closest party, general population (lighter bars) and HE staff (darker bars)  
Source: Understanding Society Wave 6



# Politics data



Young people (10-15):

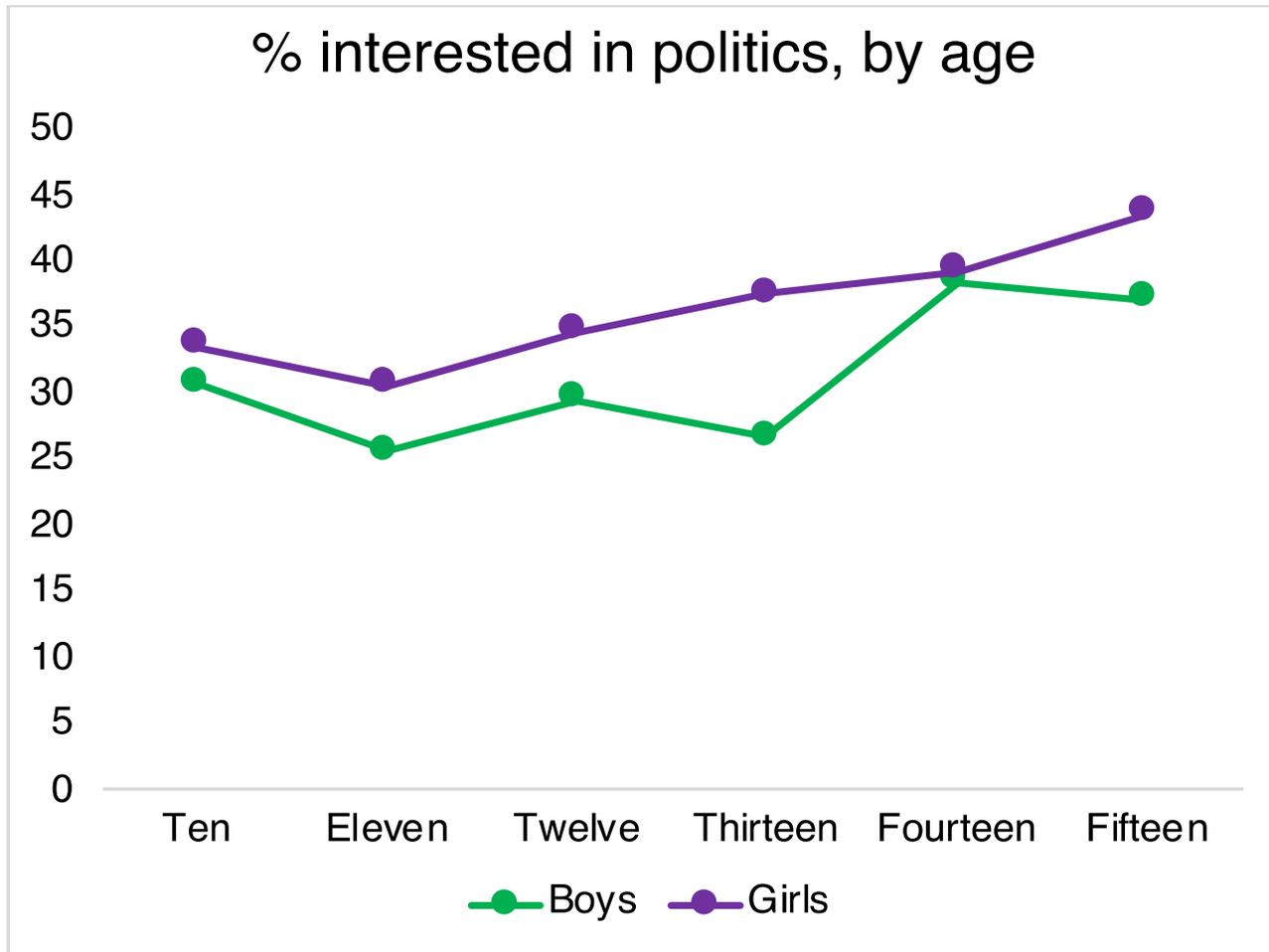
- Who would you vote for?
- How interested are you in politics?

~2,000 to 3,000 observations each wave.

Not every wave – currently waves 3, 5, 7, and 9 of *Understanding Society*, and others in BHPS.

---

# Girls are more interested in politics!



# Strengths of *Understanding Society* data

- Long-term political processes.  
BHPS-Understanding Society Harmonized Data.
- Dynamics.
- Household context.
- Detailed social, economic and health information.

There is often better data elsewhere on:

- Detailed specific political attitudes.
  - Short term dynamics.
-

# Documentation



Search



**DATA & DOCUMENTATION** ▾

RESEARCH ▾

PARTICIPANTS

ABOUT US ▾

HELP & SUPPORT ▾

BIOMARKERS, GENETICS & EPIGENETICS

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

EDUCATION

EMPLOYMENT

FAMILY & HOUSEHOLDS

POLITICS & SOCIAL ATTITUDES

More ▾

## THE UK HOUSEHOLD LONGITUDINAL STUDY

Capturing life in the UK in the 21st century

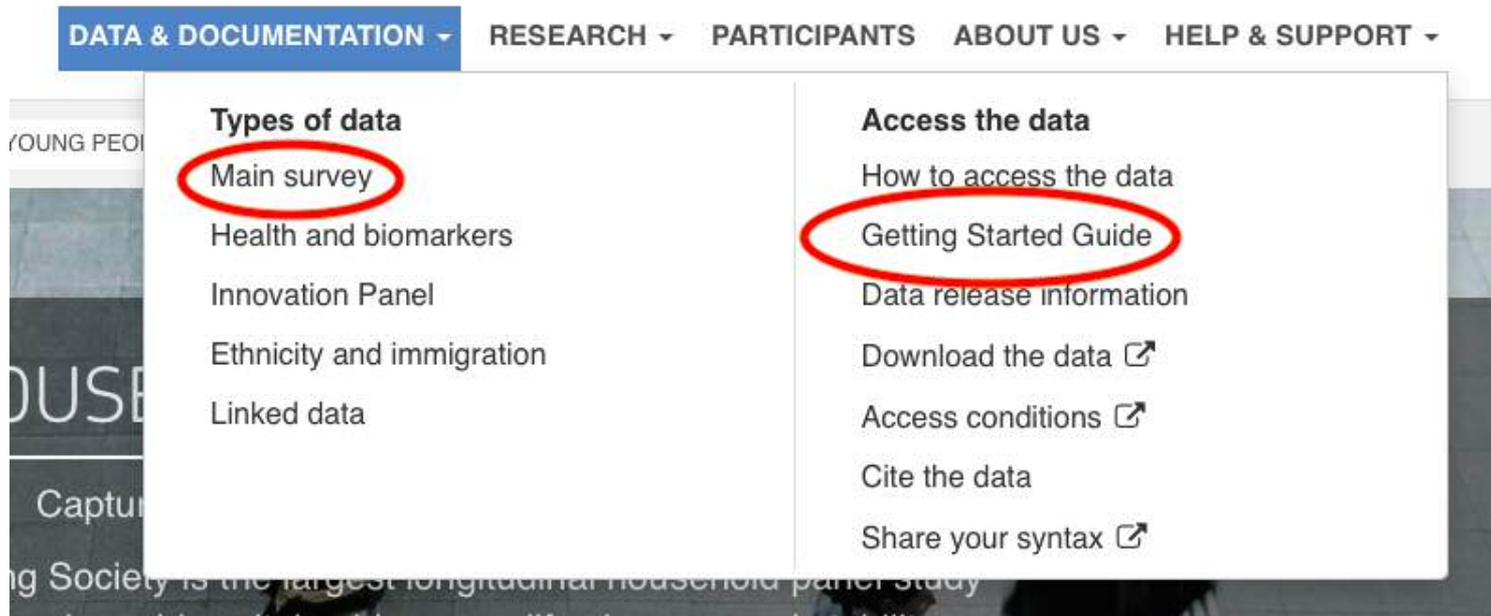
Understanding Society is the largest longitudinal household panel study of its kind and provides vital evidence on life changes and stability

About the study

Using the data

[www.understandingsociety.ac.uk](http://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk)

# Getting Started Guide



The Getting Started Guide walks you through important steps in accessing and using the data: downloading the data, data structure, navigating the study documentation, where to find further resources.

---

# User support forum

Home Projects Help

## Understanding Society User Support

Search:

Overview Activity Roadmap **Issues** News Wiki

### Issues

Filters

- Status
- Tracker

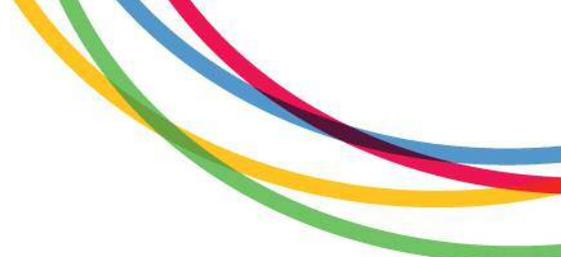
Options

Apply

<input type="checkbox"/>	#	Status	Priority	Subject	Author	Updated	Category	Target version	% Done	Assignee
<input type="checkbox"/>	1327	Feedback	Normal	Revision of derived variables in new release		27/03/2020 01:48 PM	Data documentation		<div><div style="width: 75%;"></div></div>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1326	Feedback	Normal	Attitudes Towards Immigration Info		25/03/2020 04:09 PM			<div><div style="width: 75%;"></div></div>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1324	Feedback	Normal	Childcare by grandparents		27/03/2020 12:04 PM	Data analysis		<div><div style="width: 75%;"></div></div>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1323	Feedback	Normal	youth self completion longitudinal weight		24/03/2020 04:21 PM			<div><div style="width: 75%;"></div></div>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1322	Resolved	Normal	Positive and negative events		18/03/2020 12:52 PM	Questionnaire content	M7	<div><div style="width: 100%;"></div></div>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1321	Resolved	Normal	Self-efficacy module - wave 2		18/03/2020 01:49 PM	Questionnaire content	M2	<div><div style="width: 100%;"></div></div>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1319	Feedback	High	clarification on jopen variable in UKHLS		23/03/2020 04:25 PM			<div><div style="width: 75%;"></div></div>	

<https://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/support/projects/support>

# Training available



In-person training courses are suspended due to COVID-19 – but will run instead online.

- 20-21<sup>st</sup> May 2020 and 25-26<sup>th</sup> November 2020.
- Further information at <https://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/help/training>
- The course is run simultaneously for users of Stata, SPSS, SAS and R.

Self-guided courses in Stata, SPSS, and SAS are available at any time from

<https://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/help/training/online>

---

# Data Access

UK Data Service



Studies

Series

`beta.ukdataservice.ac.uk/datacatalogue/series/series?id=2000053`

Copy series link

Login / register | Help | Accessibility | Data catalogue

About us | Get data | Use data | Manage data | Deposit data | News and events



[Home](#) / [Data catalogue](#) / [Series](#) / Series

## Understanding Society

Abstract

FAQ's

Resources

Access data

### Abstract

The Understanding Society study, or the United Kingdom Household Longitudinal Study (UKHLS), which began in 2009, is conducted by the Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER), at the University of Essex. As a multi-topic household survey, the purpose of Understanding Society is to understand social and economic change in Britain at the household and individual levels. It is anticipated that over time the study will permit examination of short- and long-term effects of social and economic change, including policy interventions, on the general wellbeing of the UK population. The Understanding Society study is a successor to the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS). The BHPS sample forms part of Understanding Society from Wave 2 onwards.

<https://beta.ukdataservice.ac.uk/datacatalogue/series/series?id=2000053>

# Data Access

UK Data Service



Studies

Series

beta.ukdataservice.ac.uk/datacatalogue/series/series?id=2000053

Copy series link

[Login / register](#) | [Help](#) | [Accessibility](#) | [Data catalogue](#)

Page

[About us](#) [Get data](#) [Use data](#) [Manage data](#) [Deposit data](#) [News and events](#)



[Home](#) / [Data catalogue](#) / [Series](#) / Series

## Understanding Society

[Abstract](#) [FAQ's](#) [Resources](#)

Access data

### Access data

**GN 33423**

Understanding Society: Waves 1- , 2008-



**GN 33428**

Understanding Society, 2008- : Special Licence Access

**GN 33429**

Understanding Society: Waves 1- , 2008-: Secure Access

Click on a series name or an arrow to see the datasets.

Add to account

# Data Access

## Series

beta.ukdataservice.ac.uk/datacatalogue/series/series?id=2000053

Copy series link

## Understanding Society

[Abstract](#) [FAQ's](#) [Resources](#)

Access data

### Access data

GN 33423

Understanding Society: Waves 1- , 2008-

SN	Study description	Explore online	Select
6614	<a href="#">Understanding Society: Waves 1-9, 2009-2018 and Harmonised BHPS: Waves 1-18, 1991-2009</a>		<a href="#">Login</a>
6849	<a href="#">Understanding Society: Innovation Panel, Waves 1-11, 2008-2018</a>		<a href="#">Login</a>
8473	<a href="#">Understanding Society: Marital and Cohabitation Histories, 1991-2015</a>		<a href="#">Login</a>
8465	<a href="#">Understanding Society: Ethnicity and Health Teaching Dataset Wave 1, 2009-2010</a>		<a href="#">Login</a>
7251	<a href="#">Understanding Society: Waves 2-3 Nurse Health Assessment, 2010-2012</a>		<a href="#">Login</a>

# Which study?!

- Main study, or Innovation Panel?
- End User License, or Special License?
- Anything specific in the dataset name?

Most likely datasets for politics researchers:

- Mainstage *Understanding Society* and harmonized BHPS – SN6614.
  - Special License Access: Westminster constituencies – SN6668.
  - Special License Access: Local authorities – SN6666.
-

# Different levels of access for researchers

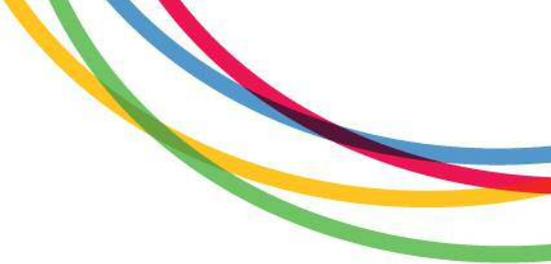
<b>End User License</b>	<b>Survey responses</b> Direct biomeasures Selected blood analytes Largest geocode links Mortality marker
<b>Special License (Approved Researcher)</b>	<b>Medium sized geographies (1 or 2 levels for a project)</b> <b>More sensitive survey responses</b>
Secure Data Service (Approved/Accredited Researcher), review by Data Access Committee	Linked administrative records Smallest geographies/ or 2+ levels at the same time.
Stored biological specimens, Review by Data Access Committee, REC approval	Extracted DNA Stored blood and plasma

# Depression and Brexit

Do you think people with clinical depression were more pro-Leave in 2016, or more pro-Remain?

---

# Depression and Brexit



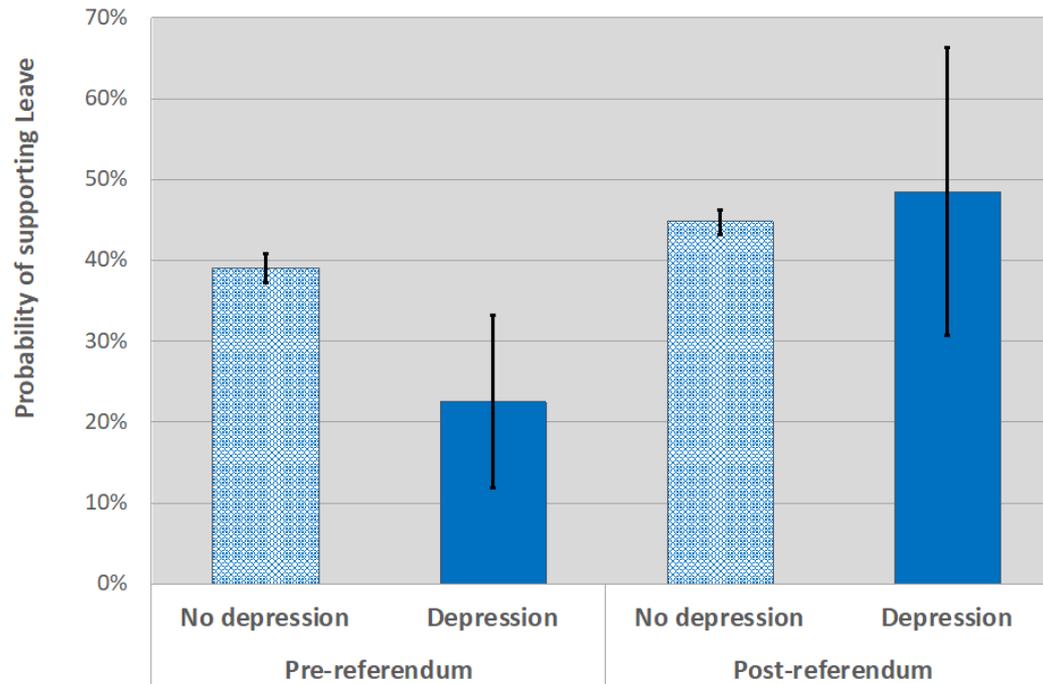
- Depression is rarely considered when thinking about politics
  - is this an oversight?

*Status quo bias* might affect the kinds of judgements central to electoral choice.

## Brexit and status quo bias.

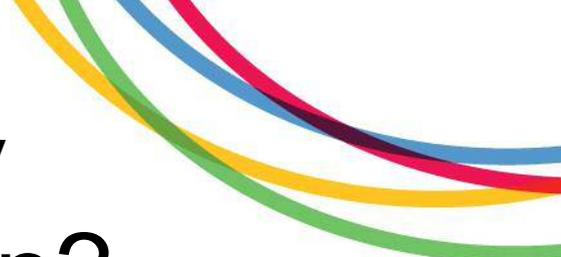
- Pre-referendum: Expectation that those with depression would have a dim view of the change involved in leaving the EU, and been sceptical about any prospect of ‘taking back control’.
  - Post-referendum: status quo has changed.
-

# Depression and Brexit



<https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/politics/blog/2020/depression/>

Bernardi, Luca and Robert Johns. "Depression and attitudes to change in referendums: The case of Brexit". Forthcoming in the *European Journal of Political Research*



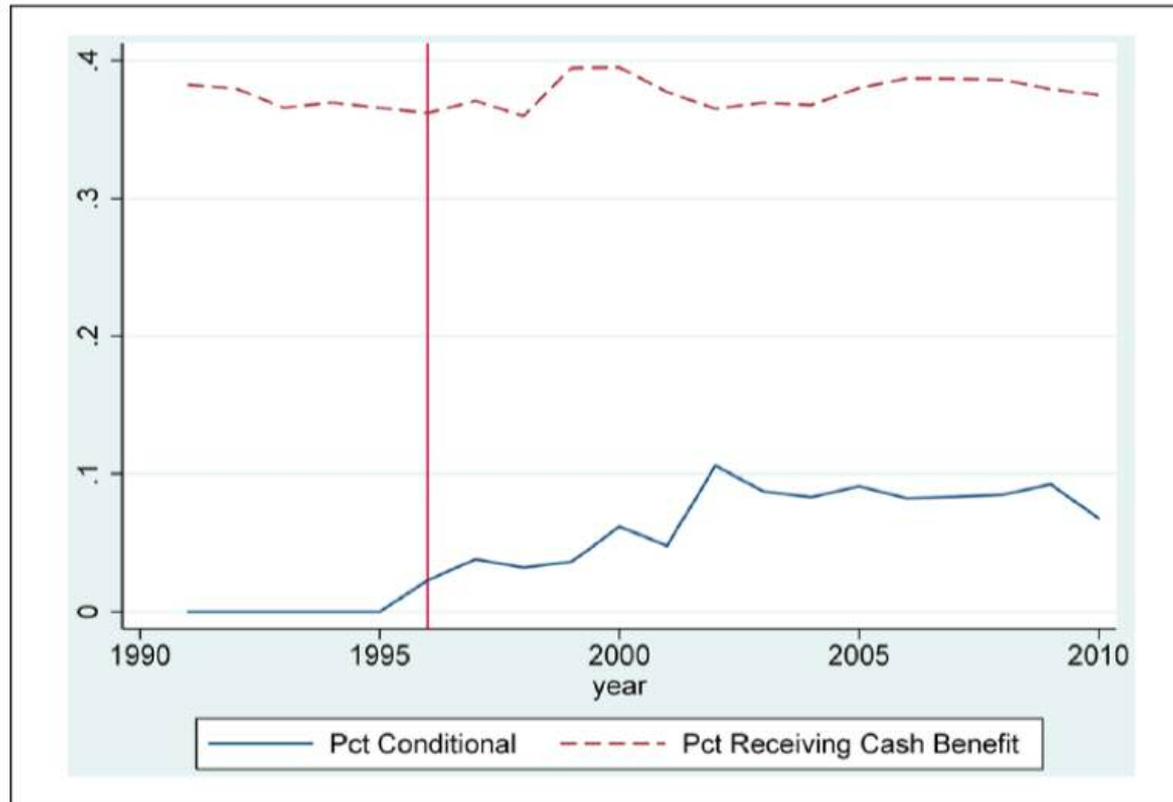
# Does welfare conditionality reduce political participation?

- Work-based welfare conditionality = access to social benefits is predicated on individuals agreeing to certain behaviours.
- Citizen's interactions with the state are likely to shape their views about it and about government responsiveness.

## UK case:

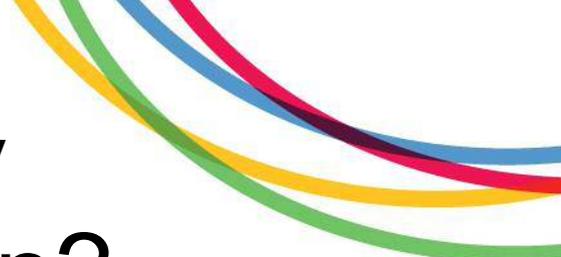
- Post-1997, increased resources available for job seekers- but much more intrusive conditionality.  
E.g. Work Focused Interviews, case workers.
-

# Does welfare conditionality reduce political participation?



**Figure 1.** Evolution of conditionality.

Percent of working-age population receiving cash benefits and receiving conditional welfare benefits.



# Does welfare conditionality reduce political participation?

*Contributory benefit?* participation increases.

*Conditional benefit?* reduced voter turnout, voluntary organisation membership and activity, political efficacy, interest, and personal efficacy.

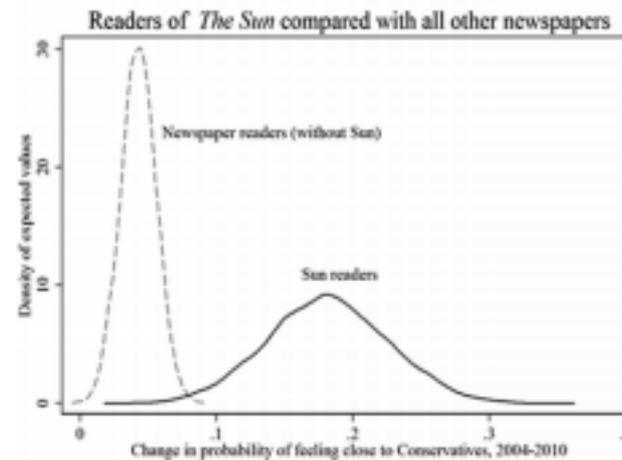
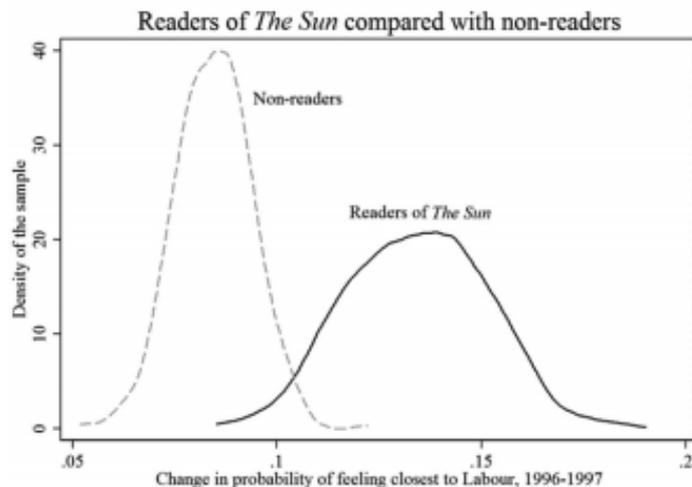
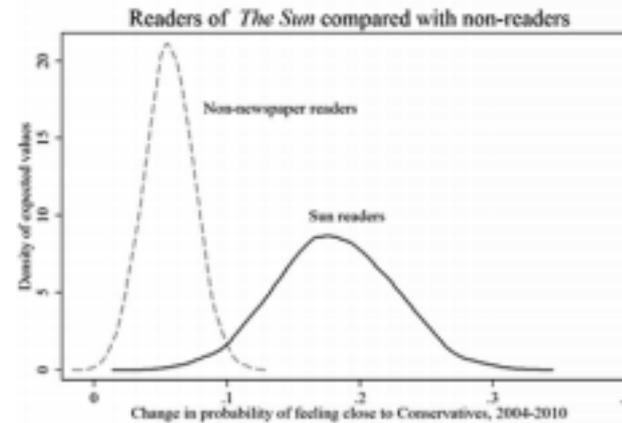
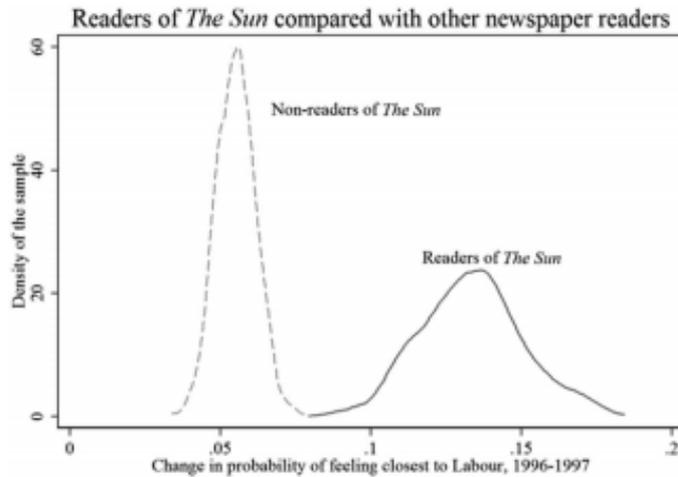
- Longitudinal.
- Details of benefit receipt.

Watson, S. (2015). Does Welfare Conditionality Reduce Democratic Participation? *Comparative Political Studies*, 48(5), 645–686.

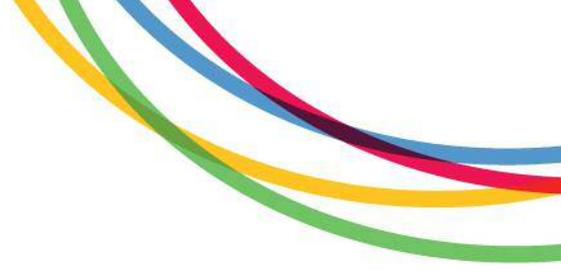
---



# Was it the Sun 'Wot Won It'?



Reeves, A., McKee, M., and Stuckler, D., 'It's The Sun Wot Won It': Evidence of media influence on political attitudes and voting from a UK quasi-natural experiment, *Social Science Research* (2015).



*Questions?*

---