

Studying politics? Come play in the Data Playground

December 11 2014, by Mike Addelman



The Data Playground is a great resource for politics junkies

Unprecedented volumes of information about political behaviour, previously only accessible to experts, are to be made available by Britain's oldest study of electoral behaviour.

Students with an interest in politics will, at the click of a mouse, be able to make their own graphs and charts based on detailed surveys of thousands of people, conducted during 2014 by the renowned British Election Study. More data will be added too.

The British Election Study is managed by a team based at The Universities of Manchester, Oxford and Nottingham. It is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council.

If you want to use the [Data Playground](#), available at www.britishelectionstudy.com/data you don't need any specialist statistical skills or software – just an interest in politics.

There are over 400 variables to choose from, such as how the citizens engage with politicians during election campaigns, and what we feel about our [political parties](#) and their leaders.

You'll also be able to find out our attitudes to a range of policies, public spending, the European Union, immigration and other issues you might read about every day in the newspapers.

And that's not to mention demographic details of the people who take part in the surveys such as their age, religion and even the newspapers they read.

You'll be able to compare different variables– and examine data from England, Wales, and Scotland.

Professor Jane Green, from The University of Manchester, has led the development of the Data Playground.

She said: "Because there are so many new questions facing the British electorate, there's never been a more important time to have an [election](#) study in the UK.

"The public are grappling with issues such as coalition politics, concerns over immigration, the economy and the rise of UKIP.

"It's a complex mix of issues, which BES data can help to unpick."

She added: "The Data Playground, for the first time in BES's history, allows anyone to examine large parts of BES's topical and recent data

without the need for specialist expertise or software.

"We hope students and sixth formers will use it, as it is part of our mission to provide balanced and impartial information about [electoral politics](#), away from the lens of the political parties.

"As academics, we feel it is important to make our research accessible and relevant to the wider community and our belief is that this is a powerful way to do that."

Provided by University of Manchester

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