

NatCen
Social Research that works for society

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Digital deliberations: creating a tool for thoughtful democracy?

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From Tracy Wilson to Everyone
(writing it down now) Thanks!

NatCen
Social Research

This workshop

Aims:

- Share learning about running ‘digital deliberations’ from our project The Future of Britain after the EU Referendum
- Model the principles of a Deliberative Poll to consider the issue of whether digital deliberations can be a thoughtful tool for democracy.

Your role today:

- We invite you to be participants in a ‘mock’ Deliberative Poll
 - Complete two brief surveys
 - Engage in small group discussions and pose questions to ‘experts’

What is Deliberative Polling?

- A method developed by Professor James Fishkin at Stanford University - aims to create more informed and reflective public opinion
- Takes a random, representative sample of citizens and engages them in **deliberation** on current issues through small-group discussions and conversations with competing experts
- Participants complete a survey on attitudes related to the issues under discussion before and after the event

The Deliberative Polling process

Participants receive impartial briefing materials to read ahead of the event



Participants complete a pre-event survey exploring attitudes to the issues in the briefing materials



At the event participants join small group discussions with trained moderators and attend sessions with experts



Participants complete a post-event survey (which asks the same questions as the pre-survey)

Stage I: Pre-Survey

1

Questions

1. *On the whole, do you think that technology is more of a barrier or a facilitator to participation in democracy?*

A barrier

A facilitator

2. *Do you think that digital deliberations are more inclusive or less inclusive than in-person deliberations?*

More inclusive

Less inclusive

About the same

3. *Do you think that the quality of deliberation via digital media is higher or lower than the quality of in-person deliberation?*

Higher

Lower

About the same

4. *How likely are you to use online methods for research?*

Very/not very/definitely not

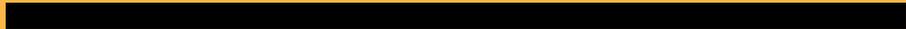
The Future of Britain after the EU Referendum

- ESRC-funded project to explore public attitudes to policies subject to change when UK leaves the EU
 - Immigration
 - Food policy
 - Customer regulation
- Collaboration between NatCen and Centre for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford University
- Using online and face-to-face deliberative methods
- Online poll – largest ever in the UK!
 - Pilot with 26 participants in May 2019
 - Mainstage event with 152 participants in June 2019

Introducing...

Professor James Fishkin
Director, Center for Deliberative
Democracy, Stanford University
(California)

Stage II: The Deliberations



Taking Deliberative Polls online

Recruitment - NatCen panel

- Participants asked about access to technology and willingness to take part in the event
- Further invitation by email and process of follow up

Technology - Zoom

- Allowed for up to 350 participants in one session
- Plenary and breakout 'rooms'
- Secure recording
- Features that give host appropriate controls

Briefing materials

- Outlined key debates and questions for the topics of the Poll
- Experts joined the event for virtual Q+A session
- Materials overseen by an independent advisory group

Moderators

- Initial training about Deliberative polling
- A further practical training session two weeks before the event

Recruitment

3,429 people interviewed
March and 7 April

1,634 said that they had

1,198 said willing to participate

---- sample stratified and

1,122 could or might

26 participated in pilot
survey (target = 45)

152 took part in main
survey (target = 270; 1

Variables of interest

Age

Ethnicity

Vote in EURef

Party ID

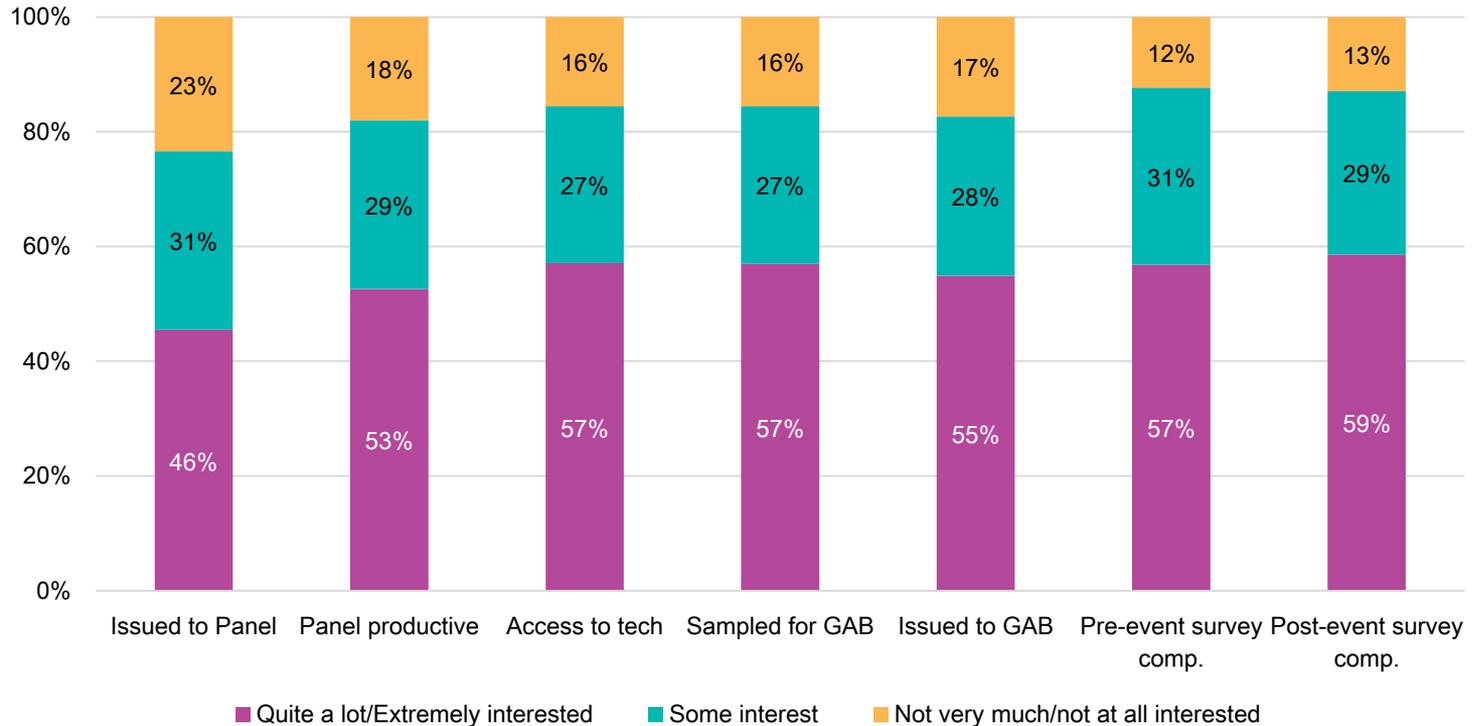
National ID

Engagement in politics

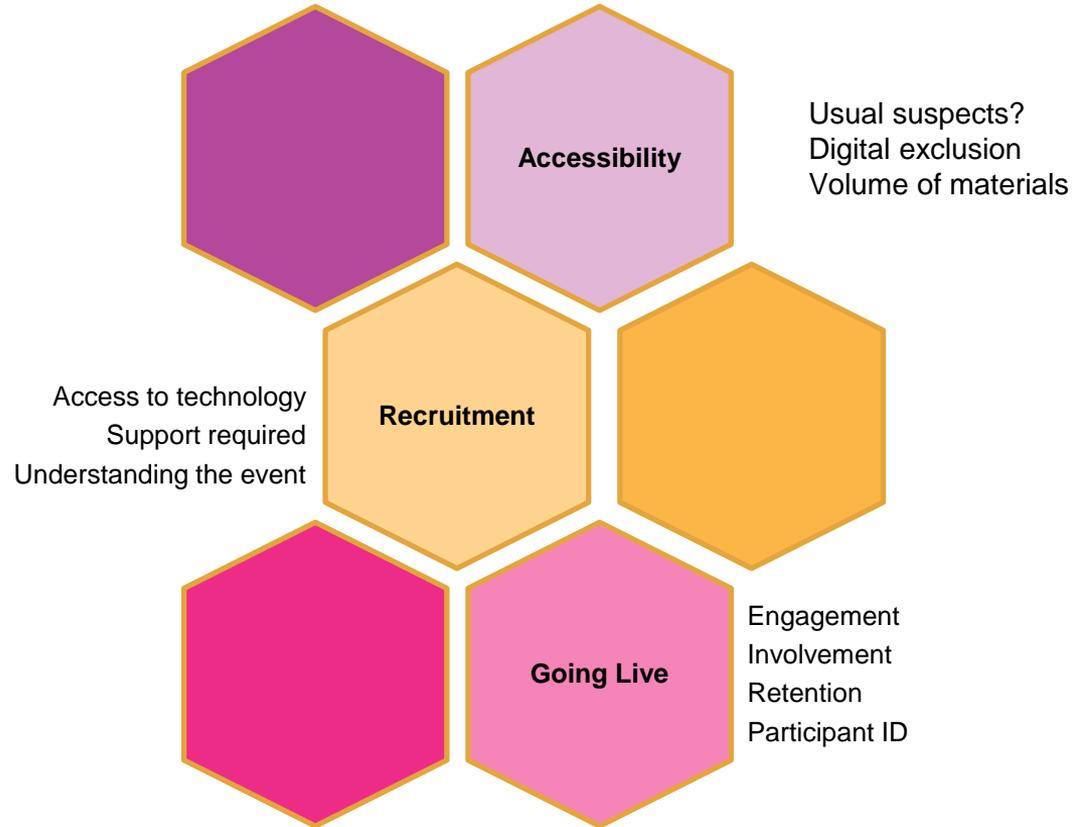
Income (also proxy for education)

Who Participated?

Sample composition by interest in politics



The level and nature of participation



Feedback...

"[the weekend] exceeded expectations and I learnt a lot."

"Thanks for being such a good host on our event, I found the whole weekend very interesting and informative."

"I loved it – I loved every minute of it, I wish I could do it again!"

"Thanks to you and all the team for your help and support during an interesting and stimulating



90% agreed that everyone had a chance to have their say

95% agreed that important aspects of the issues were covered in discussions

The role of the researcher

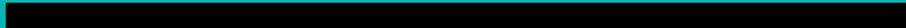
Managing group dynamics

Non-verbal communication online

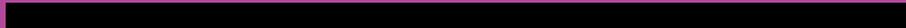
The nature and level of participant involvement

The role of the environment

Stage III: Q & A



Stage IV: Post-Survey



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Thank you!

To find out more about our project see here:

<https://whatukthinks.org/eu/future-of-britain-after-the-eu-referendum/>

To chat more about what you've heard today or talk to NatCen about deliberative projects and methods contact:

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