

Response to Ofcom's review of major parties

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On the 8th January 2015 you published your consultation paper regarding Ofcom's list of major parties. In that paper, you set out three questions. The first of these was as follows:

Please provide your views on: a) the evidence of current support laid out in Annex 2; and b) whether there is any other relevant evidence which you consider Ofcom should take into account for the purposes of the 2015 review of the list of major parties.

In that paper, you also wrote the following (p. 9, fn. 29):

Ofcom is not aware of any recent opinion polls of support for the political parties in England only. We have therefore used the Great Britain-wide polls as a proxy for gauging levels of current support in England only.

We would like to suggest one source of relevant evidence which can be used to gauge levels of current support in England only, and which we have developed as part of our election forecasting project www.electionforecast.co.uk,

Our forecasting model has two components. One part of the model uses raw polling data from YouGov together with published constituency polls by Survation and Lord Ashcroft to estimate parties' vote share in each constituency. A second part of the model projects these vote shares forward in the light of what we know about pre-election polling trends from 1979 onwards. In this note we use results from the first part of the model only. *All figures quoted in this document thus refer to the parties' levels of support as of the time of writing.* These indications of current support – or our “nowcast” – have previously proven accurate in “predicting” the results of constituency polls based on data available before those polls were fielded.ⁱ

We can aggregate our estimates of constituency vote shares to provide estimates of vote shares in England, Scotland, and Wales.ⁱⁱ These estimates, and the associated 90% credible intervals, are reported in the table below.

Nation	Cons.	Lab.	Lib.Dem s	Greens	UKIP	Other
England	31.8 [31.9, 31.7]	31.5 [31.6, 31.3]	10.4 [10.3, 10.5]	6.3 [6.2, 6.4]	18.6 [18.5, 18.6]	1.6 [1.5, 1.6]
Scotland	11.7 [11.6, 11.7]	31.6 [32, 31.3]	6.3 [6.1, 6.6]	3.8 [3.6, 4.1]	2.1 [2.1, 2.2]	1 [0.9, 1.2]
Wales	19.1 [19.4, 18.8]	38.6 [39.5, 37.8]	7.3 [7.1, 7.6]	3.4 [3.1, 3.6]	17.9 [17.9, 17.8]	1.6 [1.4, 1.9]

The figures for Wales and Scotland are broadly similar to the figures reported by you in Tables 24 and 25, except that the figure for the Conservatives is lower in our estimates than it is in the December polls cited by you.

Our estimates therefore suggest that *the same parties identified by you as major parties in Great Britain are also the four largest parties in England.*

Should you require further information concerning these estimates, and in particular regarding the methods used in their construction, please do not hesitate to contact us at feedback@electionforecast.co.uk.

ⁱ See two blog posts available at <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/generalelection/predicting-the-polls/> and <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/generalelection/predicting-the-polls-december/>

ⁱⁱ There is insufficient polling evidence for us to provide estimates for Northern Ireland.