



Economic
and Social
Research Council



Estimating the True Extent of Electoral Fraud Victimization in Britain **ESRC DTP Collaborative Studentship**

University of Nottingham and BMG Research Ltd.

The Midlands Graduate School is an accredited Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP). One of 15 such partnerships in the UK, the Midlands Graduate School is a collaboration between the Universities of Warwick, Birmingham, Nottingham, Aston Leicester, Loughborough, De Montfort and Nottingham Trent.

The University of Nottingham as part of Midlands Graduate School is now inviting applications for an ESRC Doctoral Studentship in association with our collaborative partner *BMG Research Ltd.* to commence in October 2025.

Instances of electoral fraud represent a major challenge to all democracies and have the potential to undermine trust in political institutions. However, the extent of such fraud amongst the British electorate is unknown, the topic poorly understood and under-theorised.

Building on Farrall et al. (2021), the studentship will remedy this via the rigorous design and execution of a large, nationally representative social survey of electoral fraud victimisation in Britain. The candidate will design survey questions relating to the five offences which electors could experience as victims (Undue influence, Personification, Bribery, 'Treating' and 'other' offences). The core aims of the PhD are to:

- (i) work with potential research-users to co-design and test self-report measures of electoral fraud which could form the basis of larger studies;
- (ii) field these items to assess the extent of electoral fraud,
- (iii) develop a theory of electoral fraud based on theoretical and empirical work undertaken by political scientists, sociologists and criminologists;
- (iv) work with relevant policy communities.

BMG's Research Ltd will assist in the following ways:

- (i) Facilitating two rounds of cognitive interviews aimed at designing robust survey questions to measure (at the individual level) electoral fraud victimisation.
- (ii) Running two experimental surveys (of around 1,500 respondents) to assess the impact of differently-worded questions to produce the most accurate estimations of electoral fraud victimisation.
- (iii) Piloting the main survey to assess the distribution of scaled items ahead of the final survey.
- (iv) Running a nationally representative social survey (circa. 4,500 respondents) of British adults to produce reliable estimates of the extent of electoral fraud victimisation. This will also

field survey questions to both develop and test theories of electoral fraud. This would include 5-10 dependent variables and 20 independent variables (all designed/selected by the candidate) and routine socio-demographic variables (n=30).

(v) Running a booster sample of black, and Asian minority ethnic groups (of upto 1,500 respondents) to assess their experiences of electoral fraud.

Application Process

To be considered for this PhD, please complete the Collaborative Studentship application form [available online here](#). Please upload an anonymised CV and cover letter as part of the online application process. Shortlisted applicants will also be required to provide transcripts and two references.

Application deadline: Midday, 14th February 2025 (12:00 GMT). Interviews will be held on 6th March 2025.

Midlands Graduate School ESRC DTP

Our ESRC studentships cover fees at the home rate, a maintenance stipend, and extensive support for research training, as well as research activity support grants. Support is available to both home and international applicants. For further details, visit: www.mgsdtp.ac.uk/studentships/eligibility/.

Informal enquiries about the research or the School of Sociology & Social Policy (SSP) and the School of Politics and International Relations (PIR) can be directed to Professor Stephen Farrall (SSP) or Dr Siim Trumm (PIR).