

# OPTIMISING ELECTORAL ERGONOMY

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# The Function of Elections



- Ergonomics is about ensuring that elections fulfil their function. But what is this function?
- The obvious: to elect Representatives and Governments
- The less obvious, apparently more hardly quantifiable, but not any less important: to enact democracy and participation, for example:
  - to make citizens feel that they have ultimate sovereignty in the democratic system,
  - to bolster efficacy, trust, and perceptions of democracy,
  - to foster social cohesion and civic responsibility.

# What is Electoral Ergonomy?



- Electoral ergonomomy is the optimisation of all relevant electoral procedures and mechanisms to provide the best possible electoral experience for voters
- Electoral ergonomomy = (psychology x function) / system design
- Procedures and mechanisms may include ‘big’ decisions – such as whether to vote from home or in polling stations, stations locations, paper or electronic vote, etc. as well as ‘small’ decisions – such as opening times, ballots design, whether to tick boxes or circle names

# Does Electoral Ergonomics matter?



The electoral procedures and mechanisms affect every aspect of this democratic function of elections, such as:

- **WHO** people vote for,
- **WHY** they decide who to vote for
- How they **FEEL** when they vote
- How **EFFICACIOUS** and **IMPORTANT** in their democracy they feel
- How much **TRUST** they have in the system and how they perceive **DEMOCRACY**
- And ultimately how they will **BEHAVE IN SOCIETY**

Here is how...

# Studying Electoral Ergonomics and its Effects?



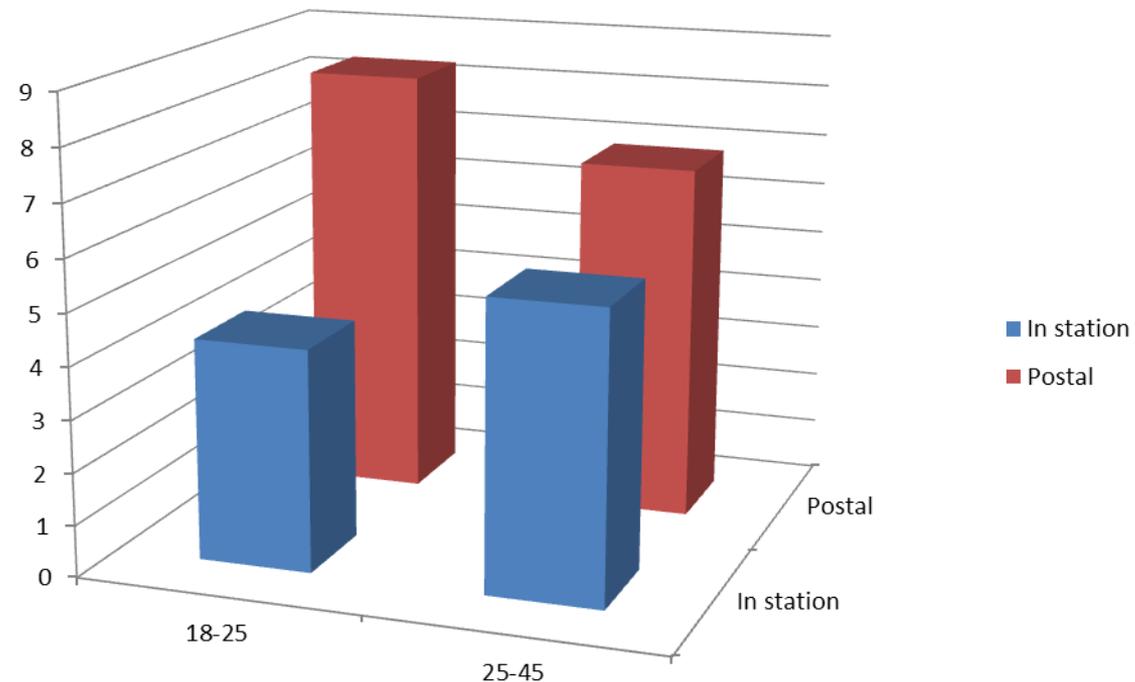
Studying electoral ergonomics and its effects is one of the most scientifically complex tasks in the field of elections. It implies an interaction between psychological, technical, and socio-cultural variables. We have designed highly advanced models to independently research it and optimise it relying on:

- Panel study surveys from real life elections
- Experiments
- Spotlight on specific population types (e.g. first time voters)
- Taking into account cultural, national and linguistic contexts
- Modelling / simulation

# Electoral Ergonomy and Electoral Choice



Real life example from the 2010 British General election. Controlling for everything including prior voting intentions, voters aged 18-25 were nearly twice more likely to choose an extremist party if voting by post than at a polling station. Among 25-45 year old, the likeliness to vote for the extreme right also increases by 24%

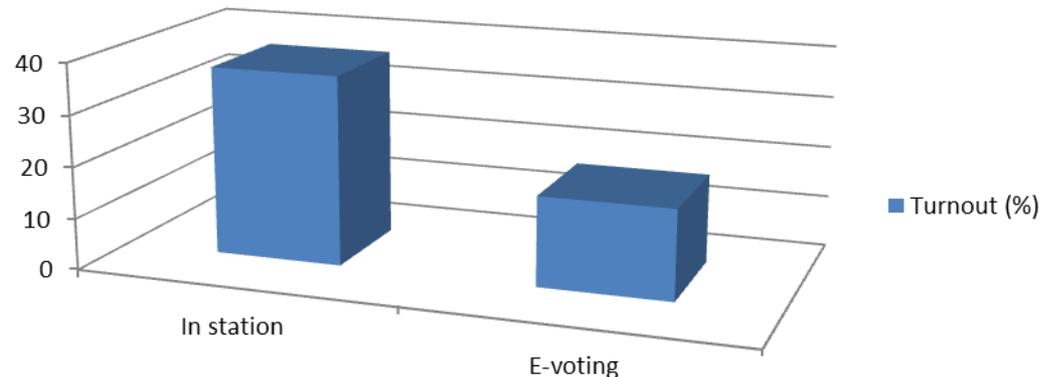


# Electoral Ergonomics and Turnout



Many consider that e-voting should be introduced to boost turnout amongst young voters. A six country experiment proves how negative the impact of e-voting can actually be on the turnout of first time voters

**Turnout - First time Voters**

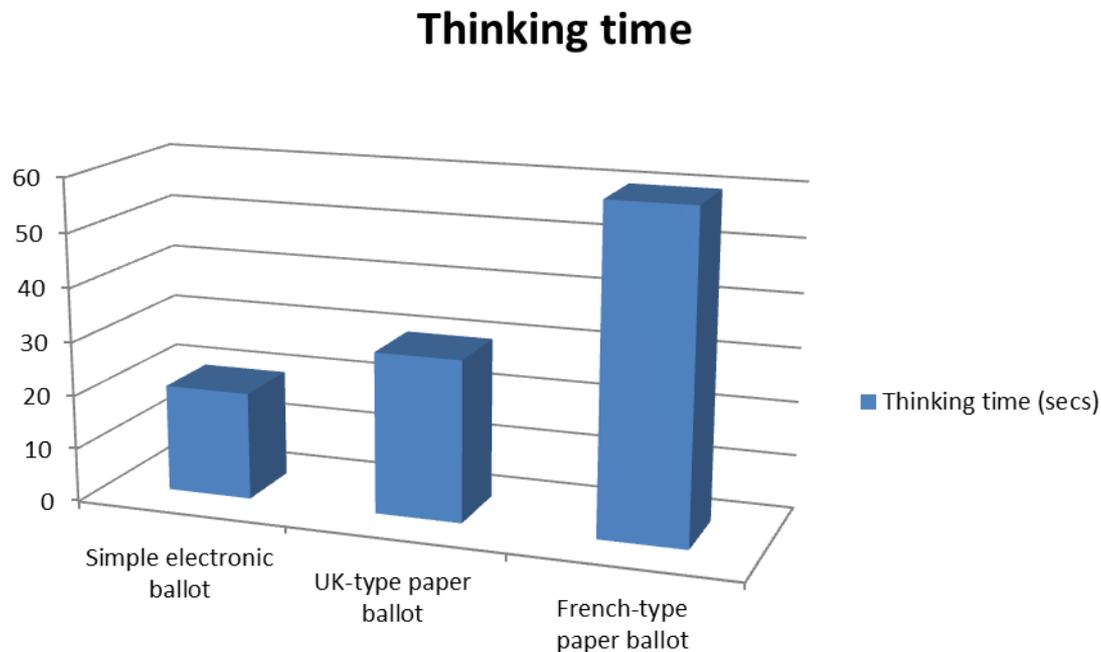


Study jointly realised by M. Bruter and S. Harrison with N. Anstead, S. Banaji, B. Cammaerts and LSE Enterprise for the European Commission , DG Education and Culture and the EACEA

# Thinking about one's vote



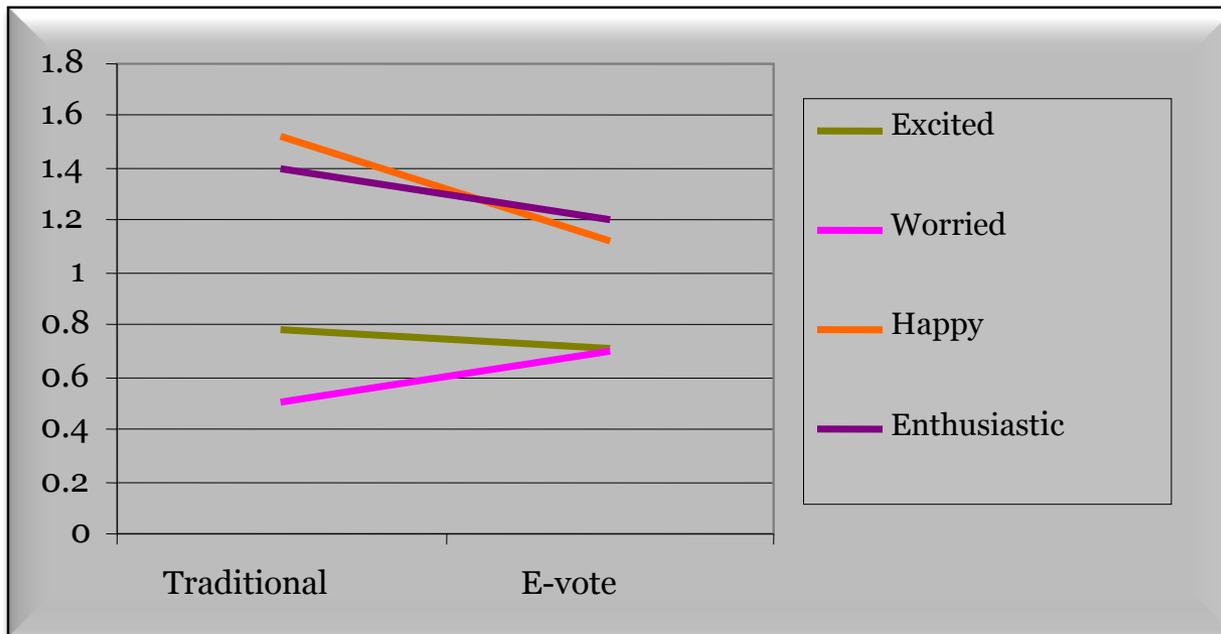
We conducted a polling station experiment using three types of electronic and paper ballots resulted in 'thinking' times that varied between 20 seconds (electronic ballot) and a full minute (French ballot)



# Electoral Ergonomics and Emotions



Electoral ergonomics strongly affects the emotions experienced by citizens as they vote. For example, based on a six-country experiment, young voters felt less happy, less enthusiastic, and more worried when using e-voting rather than voting at a polling station

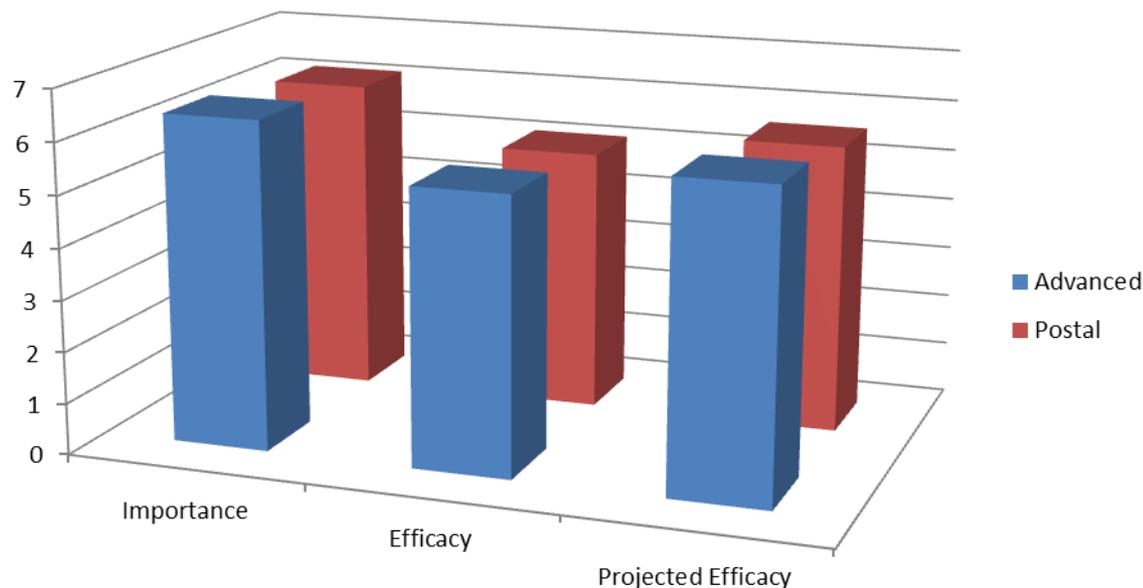


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# Ergonomics, Trust and Efficacy



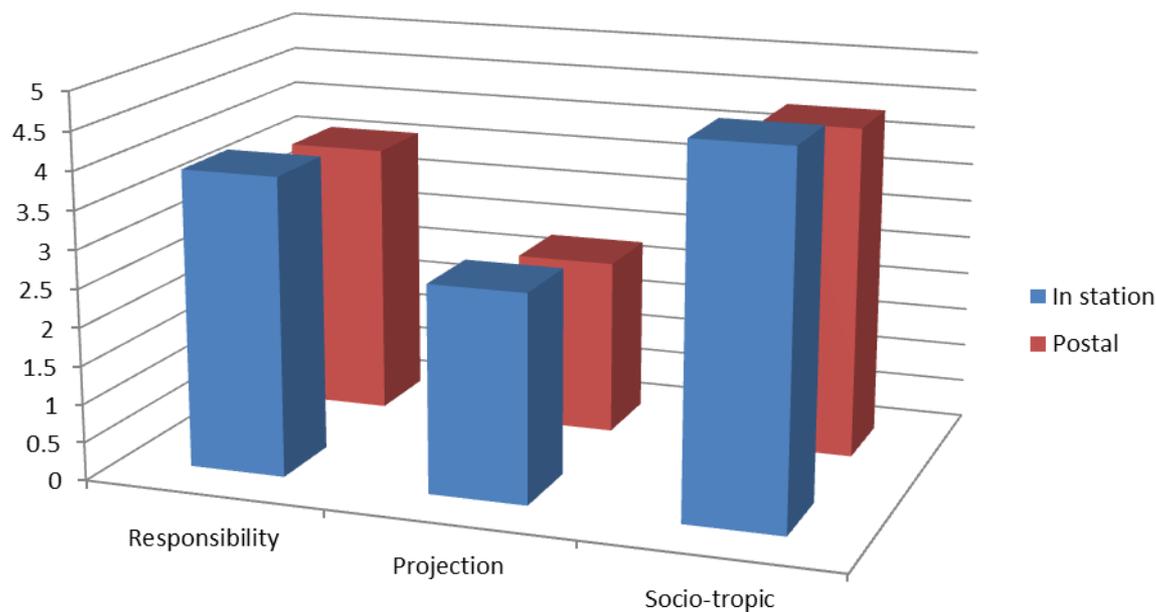
Using our research on the 2012 US Presidential election, we could compare the effects of two alternative ways of allowing people who cannot go to vote on election day to participate in elections: advanced voting and postal voting. We showed that advanced voting leads to significantly higher levels of efficacy, trust, and perception that elections are important than for postal voting.



# Making Civic Voters



Our 2011 UK referendum study showed that postal voting leads to more egocentric/less sociotropic voting (-10%) than voting in polling station, and lower levels of social projection (-18%). We found similar results when studying the 2012 US Presidential election.



# Conclusions



- Every details in electoral arrangement matters!
- It influences who votes, how they vote, why they vote the way they do, and how they feel about it
- Ergonomy interacts with psychology and context to produce such results, and the same arrangements may produce different results in two different contexts
- Those choices are relevant and meaningful, their effects should be experimented and measured independently to produce optimal results that are understood and controlled.