

● Geography and the General Election

Geography has been at the heart of the 2010 General Election on Thursday 6 May. From playing a key role in the tactics used by the parties in their campaigns, to the new boundary map of Parliamentary constituencies to better reflect our changing population.



Photo by [secretlondon123](#)

Campaign tactics and the 'nature' of our population

Knowing where different social 'groups' are located across the county empowers the political parties to target their campaigning activities. Mosaic, a massive database that [aims to classify the UK population into consumer groups](#), is being used by the three main parties to do just this.

Conceived by geographer Dr Richard Webber and now a commercial product, Mosaic works by classifying the UK population into 61 'consumer types' (forming 11 aggregated groups) based on the UK's 120 postal codes. 400 data variables, updated each year, are used in the classifications.

Using this tool, the political parties are able to gain a picture of the UK population in terms of demographics, socio-economics, lifestyles, culture and behaviour. They can then target their campaigning more effectively.

Motorway Man

Analysis of Mosaic in the run up to the General Election [has identified the floating voter that pollsters believe could swing the next election](#) as "Motorway Man".

Comprising of only [11.6% of the population and 15% of the vote](#), Motorway Man and Woman will have greater influence on the election because according to the geographic information in Mosaic they are significantly over-represented in key marginal constituencies.

"Where these sort of people live is increasingly incidental; the homes they live in are temporary. Often these people will be couples who live near motorway junctions and who will drive off separately in the morning to the different towns and business parks where they work" said Dr Webber, who led the analysis.

"These people are much more politically and ideologically footloose ... they look at political parties like some people look at cars. How they voted last time is not going to influence them this time."

Changing boundaries

[New boundaries are in place for the 2010 General Election](#) (PDF), and the number of seats in Parliament will increase from 646 to 650.

Boundary changes, reviewed by the Boundary Commission every 8 to 12 years, [are carried out to ensure that constituencies reflect the UK's changing population](#). For 2010, 478 of 533 seats in England, 22 of the 40 in Wales, and all 18 constituencies in Northern Ireland have been re-drawn.