![Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council logo]

| Title of Report: | Correspondence |
|---|---|
| Committee Report Submitted To: | Corporate Policy and Resources Committee |
| Date of Meeting: | 26 September 2023 |
| For Decision or For Information | FOR DECISION |
| To be discussed In Committee   YES/NO | No |

| Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25) | |
|---|---|
| Strategic Theme | Cohesive Leadership |
| Outcome | Council operates as one effective and efficient corporate unit with a common purpose and culture |
| Lead Officer | Director of Corporate Services |

| Budgetary Considerations | |
|---|---|
| Cost of Proposal | |
| Included in Current Year Estimates | YES/NO |
| Capital/Revenue | |
| Code | |
| Staffing Costs | |

| Legal Considerations | |
|---|---|
| Input of Legal Services Required | NO |
| Legal Opinion Obtained | NO |

| Screening Requirements | Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals. | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Section 75 Screening | Screening Completed: | No | Date: |
| | EQIA Required and Completed: | No | Date: |
| Rural Needs Assessment (RNA) | Screening Completed | No | Date: |
| | RNA Required and Completed: | No | Date: |
| Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) | Screening Completed: | No | Date: |
| | DPIA Required and Completed: | No | Date: |

**1.0    Purpose of Report**

1.1    The purpose of the report is to present correspondence for Members' consideration.

**2.0    The following correspondence has been received:**

**2.1    Karen Smyth, Head of Policy & Governance, NILGA, dated 14 August 2023** (copy attached)

2.2    At the NILGA Executive Committee NILGA on 23rd June, it was agreed to form a Strategic Policy Network. A Terms of Reference for this Network (attached) was agreed by the NILGA Executive on 11th August 2023.

2.3    Council nominations are therefore now being sought, to complement the NILGA nominated Chair and Vice Chair. No specific party membership is required for these nominations.

2.4    NILGA is seeking one (1) elected member from each council (who may or may not be one of its NILGA Full members) to participate in the NILGA Strategic Policy Network. This Network will meet on a bi-monthly basis, and it is anticipated that the first meeting will be either 19th or 26th September 2023, depending on member availability.

2.5    Council NOTED the above correspondence at its meeting held Tuesday 5 September 2023.

**3.0    Recommendation**

**It is recommended** that Corporate Policy and Resources Committee consider nominating one Elected Member to participate in the NILGA Strategic Policy Network.

**4.0    Cahir Hughes, Head of Electoral Commission Northern Ireland, dated 13 September 2023** (copy attached)

4.1    On 13 September 2023, the Electoral Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) published its report on the May 2023 local elections in Northern Ireland (copy attached).

4.2    Overall, it found voters in Northern Ireland continue to have positive views about how elections are run in Northern Ireland, with satisfaction over the registration and voting processes remaining high. However, the Digital Registration Number (DRN) continues to be a barrier to voters. The report found over 5,000 postal or proxy vote applications were rejected due to a missing DRN.

4.3 ECNI continues to call on the UK Government to urgently review the operation of the DRN in Northern Ireland to ensure barriers are removed while also maintaining the integrity of the absent voting process.

4.4 The report also found that the capacity and resilience of election administrators, both in Northern Ireland and across the UK, remains a significant challenge. Recruiting and retaining experienced polling station and count staff continues to be difficult. Alongside this, these were the first elections with changes introduced from the Elections Act came into force, and further significant administration changes are expected ahead of the next set of elections.

4.5 It is vital the UK Government carefully considers whether the necessary time and resources are available before making final decisions about implementing the remaining Elections Act changes.

4.6 ECNI looks forward to hearing from the Council on these matters and would welcome the opportunity to discuss this research, and our recommendations, in further detail at a future meeting.

**5.0 Cahir Hughes, Head of Electoral Commission Northern Ireland, dated 18 September 2023** (copy attached)

5.1 On 18 September 2023, the Electoral Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) published its report on the accuracy and completeness of the electoral registers (copy attached).

5.2 The ECNI analysis shows substantial improvements have been made to the quality of the electoral registers in Northern Ireland following the last canvass of electors in 2021.

5.3 However, almost 300,000 people in Northern Ireland are still either incorrectly registered to vote or missing completely. In particular, young people, private renters, and those who have recently changed address continue to be less likely to be correctly registered to vote.

5.4 This means that almost one fifth (17%) of the eligible voting population in Northern Ireland may not be able to vote if an election was called now.

5.5 The study of the 2022 registers found that in Northern Ireland:

- The parliamentary register was 84% complete, and 86% accurate.

- The local government register was 83% complete, and 86% accurate.

5.6 Although the improvements in the accuracy and completeness of the 2022 registers highlighted in this research are the result of the 2021 canvass, we have previously seen subsequent declines between canvasses when the continuous registration system is operating.

5.7 The registration system continues to struggle to capture population movement in the period between each canvass, and the canvass process itself requires the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland to contact and receive a response from all eligible electors, even if they were registered before the canvass and their details had not changed.

5.8 It is therefore unlikely that levels of accuracy and completeness – and therefore the number of eligible people able to have their say at elections – will significantly improve without significant changes to the electoral registration system.

5.9 The Electoral Commission is calling on the UK Government to create clear legal gateways for government departments and public bodies to share data on potentially eligible voters Ireland to further improve accuracy and completeness of the electoral registers. Such reform would enable the Chief Electoral Officer to register voters directly, or to send them invitations to register.

5.10 The Commission would be pleased to meet with Council to discuss its proposals for reform, should Council find that helpful.

## 6.0 Recommendation

**It Is recommended** that the Corporate Policy & Resources Committee considers the correspondence.

**To: Council Chief Executives**
**Cc. Democratic Services Officers**

14th August 2023

Dear Chief Executive

**Formation of new NILGA Strategic Policy Network**

Further to my letter of 31st March 2023, highlighting key dates and information needed by NILGA further to the election, thank you for supplying us with the necessary nominees to the NILGA Full membership and Partnership Panel.

You may have noted in the letter that at that time, NILGA was seeking nominations from councils to one network only (Elected Member Development), with nominations to other policy structures to be sought at a later date.

At the NILGA Executive Committee NILGA on 23rd June, it was agreed that a more streamlined approach would be taken to NILGA policy activity, and to this end it was agreed to form a **Strategic Policy Network**. A Terms of Reference for this Network (enclosed) was agreed by the NILGA Executive on 11th August.

**I am therefore writing to seek one (1) elected member from each council (who may or may not be one of your NILGA Full members) to participate in the NILGA Strategic Policy Network. This Network will meet on a bi-monthly basis, and it is anticipated that the first meeting will be either 19th or 26th September 2023, depending on member availability.**

Due to the short time frame, I would appreciate your expediting this request. Please feel free to come back to me at any point about the attached ToR or with any other queries about this Network. With thanks for your co-operation and support as always.

Yours faithfully
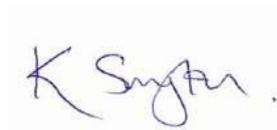
**Karen Smyth**
**Head of Policy and Governance**

# NILGA Strategic Policy Network Draft Terms of Reference

**Role**

The NILGA Strategic Policy Network (SPN) exists to provide scrutiny and leadership, democratic accountability, support and challenge in the development of regional approaches to priority policy issues.

**Purpose and Scope**

The SPN will provide the NILGA Executive Committee and staff team with:

a) A strategic focus on key policy issues, through a robust policy framework and policy priorities.
b) Oversight of the NILGA policy service in accordance with NILGA objectives.
c) Oversight of the work between local and central government, arms length bodies and partners on delivery of priority policy issues impacting on councils, and on which councils can have an influence.
d) Contribution to NILGA's sustainability, including by supporting NILGA to embrace new income-generating policy opportunities and projects, within the bounds set out in the Policy Framework.
e) Assurance that NILGA is delivering against agreed NI local government sector policy priorities.
f) Promotion of good practice and collaboration.
g) Supporting elected member development in key policy areas.
h) Lobbying for improvements and for resources to deliver

**Membership and nomination (Total 13) – NB NILGA Officer Bearers/alternates can attend any NILGA meeting.**

- A chair and vice chair for the full mandate, nominated by NILGA through the d'Hondt process.
- One elected member nominated from each of the 11 member councils, confirmed each June of the mandate.

**Advisors**

- At least two council CEOs or Strategic Directors, nominated by Solace NI (supported by Solace NI Policy Officer)
- NILGA CEO and NILGA Head of Impact
- Technical specialists and additional expertise to be accessed as required

Advisors will bring a strategic view to bear across the local government portfolio, and to act as 'generous generalists'.

**NILGA Support Officer**

- NILGA Head of Policy and Governance

**Conflicts of Interest**

Members and advisors are required to act in accordance with the requirements of the relevant local government code of conduct. They must declare any personal, private, or commercial interests that might conceivably conflict with the interests of the NILGA SPN and must withdraw from any discussion of topics in which they have such an interest.

**Meeting Frequency**

Bimonthly.

**Deliverables/Reporting**

- After each meeting the NILGA Head of Policy and Governance will assist the Chair to prepare a report with key messages, outcomes, decisions taken and next steps, to be delivered to the NILGA Executive Committee before dissemination to the wider NILGA membership.
- The NILGA Head of Policy and Governance will also assist the Network to provide timely responses to relevant government consultations, via the NILGA Executive Committee and in liaison with relevant council officer groups.
- The NILGA support officer will liaise with NILGA Communications staff to ensure the NILGA website is updated appropriately and timely press releases are issued on key pieces of work.

# The Electoral Commission

# Report on the May 2023 local council elections in Northern Ireland

September 2023

# Report on the May 2023 local council elections in Northern Ireland

This report looks at how the May 2023 Northern Ireland local council elections were run, how voters and campaigners found taking part, and what lessons can be learned for the future. We have reported separately on the elections held this year in England.

On 18 May 2023, the Northern Ireland local council elections were held. A total of 1,380,372 people were registered to vote, up from 1,305,553 at the last local council elections in 2019.

Overall, voters continue to have positive views about how elections in Northern Ireland are run, with most people confident the elections were well-run and satisfaction with the registration and voting processes remaining high.

However, the large number of rejected postal and proxy applications show that the digital registration number (DRN) continues to be a barrier to voters. It is therefore vital that the UK Government urgently reviews the DRN to ensure that these barriers are removed while also maintaining the integrity of the absent voting process.

Campaigners reporting on their experiences of the Northern Ireland local council elections highlight that their ability to reach voters was constrained by spending limits. We welcome the UK Government's intention to review these spending limits to ensure they allow candidates to effectively engage with the electorate.

Half of all candidates also reported experiencing threats, abuse and/or intimidation. It is completely unacceptable that candidates continue to face any form of abuse when campaigning at elections. Tackling these problems will require coordinated action from a range of partners across the electoral community, including political parties and campaigners themselves as well as the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and Public Prosecution Service (PPS).

While the administration of polling day went well, with voters and campaigners reporting high levels of confidence, there were some concerns raised relating to campaigning in the vicinity of polling stations. We have recommended that the Chief Electoral Officer reviews and updates the Code of Conduct for canvassing in the vicinity of the polling stations to set out agreed standards on what is acceptable behaviour.

The administration of the counts also generally went well, but more could be done to improve the efficiency of the latter stages of the count. The Chief Electoral Officer should explore what improvements can be made to the count process and its management that will support efficient count calculations and provide effective oversight of count processes.

The capacity and resilience of electoral administrators, both in Northern Ireland and across the UK, remains a significant challenge. It is vital that electoral administration changes expected to be implemented ahead of elections in 2024 are well managed and that the UK Government carefully considers whether the necessary time and resources are, or will be, available before making any final decisions about implementing the remaining Elections Act changes.

# Contents

# Voting at the elections

<div style="border: 1px solid">

**The experience of voters at the 2023 Northern Ireland local council elections**

- Voters continue to have positive views about how elections in Northern Ireland are run, with most people confident the elections were well-run and satisfaction with the registration and voting processes remaining high.

- The large number of rejected postal and proxy applications show that the digital registration number (DRN) continues to be a barrier to voters. It is vital that the UK Government urgently reviews the operation of the DRN to ensure that these barriers are removed while also maintaining the integrity of the absent voting process.

- The Chief Electoral Officer put in place a number of new initiatives to improve accessibility arrangements, but more needs to be done to raise awareness of the support that is available.

</div>

On 18 May 2023 the Northern Ireland local council elections were held. A total of 807 candidates contested 462 seats across the 11 councils in Northern Ireland. The last local council elections took place in 2019.

A total of 1,380,372 people were registered to vote, up from 1,305,553 at the last local council elections.

The date of the local council elections was postponed by two weeks from 4 May to 18 May 2023 to avoid the counting of ballot papers clashing with the coronation of King Charles III on 6 May.

The Elections Act 2022 introduced provisions to increase flexibility in relation to what support could be provided in polling stations to enable, or make it easier, for disabled people to vote independently and in secret.

## Voters continue to have positive views about how elections are run

After each election we ask members of the public who were eligible to vote for their views on voting and elections. This helps us understand if views have changed since the last comparable set of elections.

**Satisfaction with the registration and voting processes remains high**

People had high levels of satisfaction with the process of registering to vote and voting. Our research shows that:

- 86% of people were satisfied with the process of registering to vote – this is consistent with the levels of satisfaction reported by people after the 2019 local council elections (84%)

- 97% of voters were satisfied with the process of voting – this is broadly consistent with the 2019 local council elections (95%)

- 93% of people report being able to vote using their preferred method of voting – this is consistent with the 2022 Assembly elections (91%)

**Most people continue to be confident that elections are well-run**

When asked, four-in-five (80%) said they were confident that the elections were well-run. This is broadly consistent with the 2019 local council elections (75%).

The most chosen reasons for being confident were:

- it was quick and easy to vote (67%)

- the polling station was accessible and easy to get to (65%)

- a lack of negative experiences when taking part in the election (57%)

Only 8% said they were not confident that the elections were well-run and when we asked people why they were not confident, it was because of issues accessing information.

The most chosen reasons for not being confident were:

- a lack of information about the elections or candidates (28%)

- media, TV and press coverage was biased (27%)

- campaigns were based on incorrect or untrue claims (22%)

Confidence that the election was well run was lower amongst those limited a lot by a disability or health condition, with 72% saying they were confident the elections were well-run.

Most people think voting is safe from fraud and abuse. Views about the safety of voting and whether electoral fraud is a problem were consistent with the 2022 Assembly election, with 84% of people saying they thought voting was safe from fraud and abuse. This was an improvement when compared with the last local council elections in 2019 where 77% of people said they thought voting was safe from fraud.

When asked if they thought electoral fraud was a problem in Northern Ireland, 14% of people said they thought it was, which is a significant reduction from 35% at the last local council elections and 20% at the 2022 Assembly election.

The main reasons given by people who thought fraud had taken place was that they believed postal or proxy voting was not secure or that they had a general impression that fraud was a problem.

The PSNI provide us with data on alleged cases of electoral fraud relating to offences under the Representation of the People Act. It has confirmed they have one allegation relating to irregularities on a nomination form that is under investigation.

**Turnout at these elections increased**

Overall turnout at the election was 54.7%, an increase of two percentage points on the last local council elections in 2019 (52.7%).

The most common reasons given by people who told us they didn't vote were:

- a lack of time or being too busy at work (15%)
- a lack of interest in, or being fed up with, politics (14%)
- being away on polling day (12%)
- medical reasons unrelated to Covid (11%)

# The digital registration number continues to be a barrier to voters

In Northern Ireland, people can vote in one of three ways; in person, by post or by proxy (asking someone they trust to vote on their behalf). Unlike in the rest of the UK, voters must provide a valid reason why they cannot attend their polling station on polling day to be able to vote by post or proxy.

Voters who have registered to vote online in Northern Ireland are required to provide a digital registration number (DRN) when applying to vote by post or proxy.  A DRN is supplied to voters when they register online or can be requested from the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland. The DRN is intended to be a digital replacement for the wet ink signature that is required on paper registration applications. The DRN, or the wet ink signature, is a security measure used to link the person applying for a postal or proxy vote, with their electoral registration application. The DRN is not a requirement elsewhere in the UK.

**There are low levels of awareness surrounding the digital registration number**

At the 2023 Northern Ireland local council elections we ran a targeted campaign to raise awareness of the DRN, alongside our large-scale voter registration campaign, 'Got 5?'. This campaign targeted those groups we knew were more likely to need a postal or proxy vote. The campaign directed voters to the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland's website where they could request their DRN. It was supported by both partnership and public relations activity.

Despite this campaign, awareness levels are low:

- 43% of people who registered online say they can't remember receiving a DRN
- 56% of people would not be confident accessing their DRN

**Large numbers of postal and proxy vote applications continue to be rejected**

In total there were 14,286 postal and proxy vote applications approved for the 2023 local council elections, with 7014 applications rejected. Of those rejected applications, 5,118 (73%) were rejected because there was no DRN. This is a significant increase from the 2022 Assembly election in which 3,636 applications were rejected because there was no DRN, which equated to 60% of all rejected applications.

The Electoral Office for Northern Ireland received 8,700 requests for a DRN in the run up to the election, with 53% of those requests made in the last week before the absent vote deadline on 26 April 2023. This put a considerable administrative burden on the Electoral Office and created a significant challenge for staff to respond to requests for DRN in a timely manner.

It is clear from the rejection rates and low awareness levels that the DRN is acting as a barrier to voters, a view that has also been explicitly expressed to us by candidates, political parties, and electoral administrators.

It is also unclear if the DRN is achieving its intended purpose as a security measure against potential fraud. The personal identifiers required to request your DRN are the same as those needed to apply for a postal or proxy vote, which in effect means voters are being asked to supply the same information twice. The DRN is not a requirement elsewhere in the UK. Even when changes to absent voting rules are introduced in Great Britain later this year to enhance the security of the process there, a DRN will not be used but instead voters will be asked to provide their National Insurance number to confirm their identity and protect against voter fraud.

The Electoral Office has advised that it is reviewing its processes relating to the administration of the DRN and has run workshops with political parties to collect their views on how the process could be improved. While this is welcome it is unlikely that this alone will address the fundamental issues that the DRN causes for voters and the Electoral Office. Ultimately, only legislative change would be able to remove this barrier to voting.

**Recommendation 1:**

The large number of rejected postal and proxy applications show that the DRN is a barrier to voters.

We recommend that the UK Government urgently reviews the operation of the DRN to ensure that these barriers are removed, while also maintaining the integrity of the absent voting process.

## The Chief Electoral Officer took steps to support disabled voters at the elections but more needs to be done to raise awareness of what is available

Further to changes in the law, electoral administrators across the UK now have increased flexibility on what support and equipment they can provide in polling stations to enable, or make it easier, for disabled people to vote independently and in secret.

Restrictions have also been removed on who can be a 'companion'. Anyone who is 18 or over can now accompany a disabled voter to the polling station and, if requested by the voter, provide support. The companion no longer needs to be eligible to vote at the elections taking place, but they are still required to complete a declaration before assisting the voter.

**The Chief Electoral Officer provided a range of support at polling stations**

We published guidance for Returning Officers (ROs) to support them to implement the new accessibility arrangements, which ROs across the UK are required to consider. We consulted extensively on this guidance to ensure we could get wide input to help identify the measures that would help to improve the accessibility of polling stations.

The Chief Electoral Officer put in place a number of new initiatives to improve the accessibility of voting at the local council elections. These included making hearing loops available at polling stations and an online application process on the Electoral Office website where voters could make a request for additional adjustments or support to be put in place at their polling station. The Electoral Office once again ran a telephone service, in partnership with the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB), to provide an audio solution for voters with visual impairments.

Almost all adults who voted in person and told us that they have a disability or long-term health condition (94%) said that, once they arrived at their polling station, it was easy to get inside the building to vote.

Only a small proportion (2%) of in-person voters said that they had help filling in their ballot paper in the polling booth. Voters with a disability or long-term health condition were more likely to report needing help to vote, with most people getting help from their spouse/partner. 4% of in-person voters with a disability or long-term health condition said that they needed additional assistance or equipment to allow them to cast their vote independently and in secret.

**Further work is needed to ensure disabled voters receive and are aware of the support available**

We asked those who have a disability or long-term health condition for their views on the experience of voting.

- 49% agreed that they received the equipment, information and support that they need in order to vote (5% disagreed)

- 61% felt that staff at polling stations are properly trained to assist them with voting (9% disagreed)
- 60% disagreed with the fact that the way elections are run at present prevents them from voting in person, with 8% agreeing

It is clear from feedback from the Chief Electoral Officer that awareness of the support available was low. This is supported by the fact that no requests were received through the new online application process where voters could request additional adjustments at polling stations.

We will continue to work with the Chief Electoral Officer and civil society organisations to ensure disabled voters are aware of, and receive, the support they need to vote.

## Most people were confident they knew how to vote without making a mistake

Nearly all voters (97%) said that they found it easy to fill in their ballot paper, but some votes continue to be rejected and not included in the count.

9,740 ballot papers were rejected at the count, which represents 1.3% of all votes cast. This was a slight increase compared to the 2019 elections (0.9%) and in line with the 2022 Assembly election (1.3%).

# Campaigning at the elections

> **The experience of campaigning at the 2023 Northern Ireland local council elections**
>
> - Candidates report that their ability to reach voters is being constrained by spending limits. The UK Government has already indicated its intention to review the spending limits for candidates to ensure they allow candidates to effectively engage with the electorate.
>
> - Half of all candidates reported experiencing threats, abuse and/or intimidation. It is completely unacceptable that candidates continue to face any form of abuse when campaigning at elections. Tackling these problems will require coordinated action from a range of partners across the electoral community, including political parties and campaigners themselves, as well as the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and the Public Prosecution Service (PPS).

A total of 807 candidates stood in the 2023 local council elections (12 fewer than in 2019).

Sinn Féin fielded the most candidates with 162, followed by the DUP with 152, Alliance with 110, the Ulster Unionist Party with 101 and the SDLP with 86. In total, 15 political parties and 56 independent candidates contested the elections.

## Candidates report that their ability to reach voters is being constrained by spending limits

At the 2023 local council elections, campaigners provided information in a variety of different ways. The most common way people reported seeing information on parties and candidates included:

- leaflets from a candidate / political party (74%)
- posters / billboards (52%)
- social media (27%)
- advert or message on television (26%)

Candidates responding to our survey also told us that leaflets, posters / billboards and social media, along with canvassing, were their most used campaigning methods, specifically:

- almost all (96%) of candidates told us they used leaflets and canvassing
- over three-quarters (79%) listed posters / billboards and social media in their top three campaigning methods

Despite candidates being able to engage with the public using a variety of methods, political parties and candidates have told us that the spending limit was too low for candidates at these elections, and this impacted their ability to campaign.

Candidates responding to our survey said:

> *Level of spending appropriate for 15 years ago. Limit is now too small and unable to communicate properly with whole electorate now."*

> *The spend limit meant we had to limit the materials in terms of number and type of leaflet..."*

The spending limit is lower at local council elections in Northern Ireland compared to local council elections elsewhere in the UK, reflecting the fact that freepost election communications are available to local election candidates in Northern Ireland.

However, parties and candidates have told us that the sharp rise in the printing costs of campaign materials has impacted their ability to use this freepost entitlement. Figures provided to us from Royal Mail indicate an 8.2% drop in the number of candidate mail items being sent from the most recent comparable election in 2019 (4.5 million to 4.13 million).

It is important that voters have access to information to help them make an informed decision when they vote. However, only 67% of adults said they felt they had enough information on candidates to make an informed decision.

A lack of information can have an impact on confidence in the elections. While most people are confident the election was well run (80%), for those not confident the top reason for this was the lack of information on the election and candidates (28%).

The UK Government has announced that it intends to increase party and candidate spending limits for all reserved polls (except for local council elections in England, which it did in 2020), in line with inflation. While we wait to see the full proposals, we welcome the proposed review of the spending limits for candidates at the Northern Ireland local council elections. It is important to ensure any changes to the limits allow candidates to effectively engage with the electorate and for voters to be confident they have the information they need to inform their decision at the ballot box.

## Candidates continue to raise concerns about harassment

After each election we ask candidates about their experiences of taking part. Our research following the 2022 Northern Ireland Assembly highlighted that a majority of candidates (71%) said they had some sort of problem with threats, abuse, or intimidation.

Candidate responses after the 2023 local council elections indicate that harassment continues to be a significant issue. [1]

In the lead up to the local council elections, we made it clear that intimidating and abusive behaviour has no place in our political system and worked closely with the PSNI to raise awareness of the support available to candidates, particularly female candidates, who face abuse and/or intimidation while campaigning.

In March 2023, we published joint guidance with the PSNI, the PPS and the Electoral Office on the steps candidates can take to campaign safely, what support is available, and how to report an incident. The PSNI also attended our pre-election seminars for candidates to share this information and make contact with candidates. Almost half (46%) of all candidates reported looking at the guidance on campaigning safely.

**Half of all candidates reported experiencing threats, abuse and/or intimidation**

When asked about how much of a problem candidates had with harassment, intimidation, or threats in this election, 50% of those who responded to our survey said they had a problem, with 6% reporting having a serious problem. 50% of candidates reported having no problem with harassment, intimidation or threats.

The types of harassment most frequently experienced included:

- having campaign assets (such as posters) removed or destroyed (74%) or defaced (65%)

- someone intimidating or intentionally making you feel unsafe (41%)

- abuse posted on social media (26%)

Women were more likely than men to have experienced harassment.

The harassment most frequently came from members of the public (57%) and anonymous/unknown sources (40%). 17% was received from campaigners/volunteers and 13% from other candidates.

When asked if they had avoided doing something as part of their campaign to keep themselves safe, 39% of respondents said that they avoided campaigning on their own and 19% avoided campaigning on social media.

Almost 200 incidents were reported to the police relating to the elections. The vast majority of these (168) related to the theft, removal or damage of election posters. Other incidents reported related to intimidation, harassment or assault linked to campaigning.

---

[1] Responses cannot be directly compared due to the different elections taking place each year and the self-selecting nature of the sample.

Despite the significant number of reported incidents, it appears many more go unreported, with only 25% of candidates telling us they reported incidents that happened to them or they witnessed happening to others.

The Elections Act 2022 introduces a new electoral sanction for those found guilty of intimidating candidates, campaigners and elected representatives. This will come into force from 1 November 2023. This should strengthen the deterrent against intimidating behaviour by enabling someone to be banned from standing for elected office, as well as imposing criminal sanctions, such as a prison sentence or fine.

The UK Government has also recently committed to explicitly exempt reasonable security expenses from contributing to spending limits for parties and candidates at certain elections, to ensure that these limits are not a barrier to providing adequate security during election campaigns.

**Recommendation 2: The electoral community should take action to protect voter trust and confidence in the democratic system**

Candidates and campaigners should be able to participate freely in the democratic process, ensuring that voters can hear from a range of voices and have confidence in our elections. However, abuse and intimidation continue to persist.

Tackling these problems will require coordinated action from a range of partners across the electoral community, including political parties and campaigners themselves, as well as the PSNI and PPS.

Campaigners should recognise the impact their choices have on how the public views our democratic system. They should actively discourage the use of inflammatory language and emphasise the importance of respect and constructive engagement with opposing viewpoints.

Political parties should consider reviewing their membership criteria to include a clause explicitly emphasising respect for other campaigners and fostering a healthy political debate.

The PSNI and PPS must continue to treat allegations and cases of election-related intimidation seriously and demonstrate that those committing offences against candidates and campaigners will face significant sanctions.

We will build on the positive relationship we have with the PSNI, PPS and the Electoral Office and will continue to work together to promote our joint guidance on campaigning safely to ensure all candidates and campaigners are able to freely participate in the democratic process.

# Delivering the elections

**The experience of electoral administration at the 2023 Northern Ireland local council elections**

- The 2023 Northern Ireland local council elections were well-run, with voters and campaigners reporting high levels of confidence.

- The administration of polling day generally went well, although some concerns were raised relating to campaigning in the vicinity of polling stations. A review of the Code of Conduct for campaigning in the vicinity of polling stations should be undertaken ahead of the next elections to help address these concerns.

- The administration of the counts generally went well, but more could still be done to improve their efficiency. The Chief Electoral Officer should explore what improvements can be made to the count process and its management that will support efficient count calculations and provide effective oversight of count processes.

- The capacity and resilience of electoral administration teams remains a significant challenge and the UK Government must carefully consider if the necessary time and resources are, or will be, available before making any final decisions about implementing the remaining Elections Act changes.

The local council elections took place across all 11 councils in Northern Ireland. Each council is made up of seven District Electoral Areas (DEAs), except for Belfast which has 10. In total there are 80 DEAs across the 11 councils. Councillors are elected to represent a DEA, with each DEA made up of five, six or seven wards. In total there are 462 wards.

For the Northern Ireland local council elections, the local council Chief Executives are appointed as Deputy Returning Officers (DROs). There are 11 DROs, one for each of the 11 councils in Northern Ireland. The DROs act with the authority of the Returning Officer. Their responsibilities at these elections included managing nominations, the counting of votes and the receipt of candidate spending returns.

The Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) for Northern Ireland is the registration officer and returning officer for all elections in Northern Ireland. The Chief Electoral Officer's duties include managing electoral registration, absent voting, and polling stations. An interim CEO was appointed on 3 April 2023 to oversee the local council elections while the process to recruit a permanent CEO was completed.

Our evidence shows that, overall, the elections were well-run, and voters and campaigners reported high levels of confidence. However, underlying issues relating to capacity and resilience remain. Additionally, improvements to the efficiency of the count process are needed to support the effective delivery of future elections.

# The administration of polling day generally went well, although campaigning in the vicinity of polling stations remains an issue

The administration of polling day generally went well, with a majority of voters (80%) and most candidates (89%) reporting that they were confident the elections were well run.

**Concerns raised relating to campaigning in the vicinity of polling stations**

A small number of complaints were received relating to the behaviour of campaigners in the vicinity of polling stations.

Candidates responding to our survey said:

> *The guidance to stay a distance from polling stations and not hand out sample ballots is widely ignored by some parties."*

> *…area in which candidates and supporters are able to hand out leaflets at the polling station seems to change from election to election..."*

Campaigners are an essential element of a healthy democracy, and their right to put their arguments to voters should be supported and protected. It is equally important, however, that the activities of campaigners do not bring into question the integrity of the electoral process.

All political parties have agreed to a Code of Conduct for canvassing in the vicinity of polling stations, which provides a guide on what is considered acceptable behaviour. However, it has been some time since this Code was reviewed. Also, its scope is limited to campaigning in the vicinity of polling stations. Elsewhere in the UK, political parties have agreed to a code that also covers campaigning in the community in the run up to polling day. Upcoming Elections Act changes to the rules on postal and proxy voting provide an opportune time to review the scope of the Code in Northern Ireland.

**Recommendation 3:**

The Chief Electoral Officer, working in consultation with political parties and the Electoral Commission, should review and update the Code of Conduct for canvassing in the vicinity of the polling stations.

The updated Code should provide political parties with agreed standards on what is acceptable behaviour both before and during polling day.

# Improvements to the count process are needed to support the effective delivery of future elections

The counting of votes was managed by the 11 DROs, across 11 count venues, to fill 462 council seats across Northern Ireland.

The majority of candidates (81%) were satisfied with the efficiency of the count, and the majority of voters (70%) agreed the votes were counted accurately. However, it is clear from our observations and feedback provided to us that the latter stages of the count are not as efficient as they could be.

**Action needed to improve the efficiency of the count**

STV election counts are historically long events, with most taking two days to complete, subject to how the votes fall.[2] Improvements introduced to the verification and primary sort stages in 2016 and 2017 have supported the effective management of the early parts of the count. However, it is clear that improvements could be made to the latter stages of the count which could improve the efficiency of the process as a whole. The management of the adjudication of doubtful ballots and the decision making on the transfer and exclusion of ballot papers in some instances took a considerable time.

In one instance, in the Waterside DEA of Derry and Strabane City Council, there was an error at the final stage of the count, which was confirmed by an election petition. The high court ordered a continuation of the count, with the redistribution of surplus votes from elected candidates. The continuation of the count took place on 9 August with the initial result remaining unchanged.

Positive steps were taken to improve oversight of the count process, including through the establishment of a central hub by the Electoral Office, to which all 11 councils shared their count sheets digitally. This allowed the Chief Electoral Officer to see in real time what was happening and help identify any potential discrepancies. Nevertheless, the hub's ability to

---

[2] In STV elections, voters rank candidates in order of preference. Any candidate who obtains enough first preference votes to reach the minimum required to be elected (known as the quota), is deemed elected. If a voter's first-choice candidate does not get elected, or if they are elected with more votes than the next candidate, their vote can be transferred to help elect their second choice and so on. If no candidate has reached the quota at the end of a stage, the candidate with the lowest number of votes is excluded and their votes transferred.

At the 2023 local council elections and 2022 Northern Ireland Assembly elections, there were many stages of the count where only a small number of votes were able to be transferred at each stage, with more stages than needed before candidates had enough votes to get above the quota and be deemed elected.

provide oversight was limited by its reliance on a small number of people checking a selection of stages of the count across 11 councils.

An increased use of technology could play an important role in improving efficiencies at the count and supporting the further development of an oversight mechanism for the Chief Electoral Officer. It could also mitigate against the risk of human error and potentially, in time, provide cost savings in the delivery of elections.

**Recommendation 4:**

The Chief Electoral Officer, working with us and other key stakeholders, should explore what improvements can be made to the count process and its management that will support efficient count calculations and provide effective oversight of count processes.

## The capacity and resilience of electoral administrators remains a significant challenge

The Chief Electoral Officer continued to highlight problems around recruiting and retaining experienced polling station and count staff, with a growing number of recruits dropping out ahead of polling day.

Alongside this, these were the first elections in Northern Ireland when changes introduced by the Elections Act came into force. Further significant electoral administration changes arising from the Elections Act are expected to be implemented ahead of elections across the UK in 2024. These include changes to the arrangements for postal and proxy voting appointments, and the removal of the 15-year registration limit for overseas voters.

This will increase risks, which will be exacerbated without sufficient clarity and resources for the Chief Electoral Officer to prepare effectively, well in advance of delivery. Before making any final decisions about implementing the remaining Elections Act changes, the UK Government must carefully consider whether the necessary time and resources are, or will be, available. Any decisions must be informed by a robust analysis of available data and evidence about realistic levels of preparedness, particularly given the complex range of changes that must be delivered and the interdependencies between them.

The UK Government should continue to work with the electoral community in Northern Ireland to ensure there is sufficient clarity and time to implement these changes.

# Accuracy and completeness of the electoral registers

We run accuracy and completeness studies to measure the quality of the electoral registers, and assess how this changes in response to legislative developments and administrative and population changes.

The results of this study on the December 2022 registers finds that levels of completeness are broadly stable across the UK with the notable exceptions of Northern Ireland which has seen a significant increase in registration levels since 2018 and, to a lesser extent, Wales where we also see a positive change. The accuracy of the registers is also stable, again with the exception of Northern Ireland where there has been an improvement.

The changes in Northern Ireland bring levels of accuracy and completeness broadly into line with England, Scotland and Wales; both are at the highest levels we have recorded through these research studies. These improvements are the direct result of the recent 2021 canvass in Northern Ireland, something we also saw following the previous canvass in 2013. However, in our earlier studies we have seen declines between canvasses when the continuous registration system is operating.

In Great Britain, both accuracy and completeness are largely stable. The annual canvass process was reformed in 2019 by the UK, Scottish and Welsh governments with the aim of reducing the burden on Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) while maintaining levels of accuracy and completeness. There is no evidence of any significant negative impact on either measure as a result of canvass reform but there has also been no significant improvement.

Across the UK, potentially as many as 8 million people are not correctly registered at their current address (the research estimated a range of around 7-8 million people not correctly registered on the local government registers in December 2022). This matters because, while people can register ahead of each set of elections, it increases the chances that people will think they are registered when they are not and therefore be unable to vote come election day. Also, the more updates that are required to the registers in the short period before a poll, the more pressure is placed on the delivery of the service for voters.

The Commission plays an important part in addressing under-registration through our continuing public awareness campaigning work, which we update regularly to ensure we are in-line with the latest insights about both voter attitudes and the demographic patterns of under-registered groups.

However, there is little evidence to suggest that levels of accuracy and completeness are likely to significantly improve without major changes to the current electoral registration system. We have highlighted since 2019 how the UK's governments could support EROs to improve the accuracy and completeness of electoral registers – and improve efficiency to alleviate resource burdens, by introducing modern registration approaches to supplement the current annual canvass and year-round online registration.

These would involve utilising data from the many millions of transactions that voters already have with major public sector organisations. Depending on the quality and coverage of the data sets, and the specific data fields that are available, changes could support different levels and forms of modernisation, ranging from automatic registration to forms of integrated or assisted registration where voters would need to provide some information directly themselves.

We have set out a range of options for how specific data sources could be used to improve the accuracy and completeness of electoral registers, and in particular how registration rates of attainers and other young people, private renters and other recent home-movers could be improved. Further exploratory work would be needed to confirm the detailed feasibility and delivery implications of these options.

The electoral community needs a clear plan to ensure that electoral registration processes are modernised so that people are registered and able to exercise their right to vote. As part of this plan we recommend that the UK's governments should pass legislation to create clear legal gateways for government departments and public sector bodies to share data on potentially eligible individuals with EROs. They should also require relevant departments and other public bodies to work with EROs to facilitate electoral registration using their data. We also recommend that the UK Government should develop the existing Individual Electoral Registration digital service so that it can support secure and efficient data sharing between data source organisations and EROs, to enable modern registration processes to be delivered.

# Summary findings

The results of our most recent study across the UK show that for the local government registers[1]:

| | | 2022 | Change from 2018 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Completeness** | Great Britain | 86% | +3 |
| | England | 86% | +3 |
| | Scotland | 81% | -2 |
| | Wales | 87% | +6 |
| | Northern Ireland | 83% | +10 |
| **Accuracy** | Great Britain | 88% | -1 |
| | England | 88% | -1 |
| | Scotland | 88% | +2 |
| | Wales | 89% | 0 |
| | Northern Ireland | 86% | +6 |

The table above shows the percentage point change in accuracy and completeness compared to our last study in 2018. However, as these are survey results and subject to margins of error, not all of these changes are likely to be statistically significant.

Overall across Great Britain, the completeness of the local government registers has increased slightly, while accuracy has stayed the same. The increase in completeness in Wales is likely to be a real improvement since 2018 while the apparent decline in Scotland is within the margin of error and should be treated as no change. In Northern Ireland, there has been a notable improvement in both the accuracy and completeness of the registers.

Figures for the parliamentary registers are not shown but closely mirror the findings for the local government registers.

Underneath these headline figures, the accuracy and completeness of the registers is expected to vary considerably across local authority areas due to the demographics of the local population as well as registration practices.
Detailed results by part of the UK are available in factsheets:

- England

- Scotland

- Wales

---

[1] The franchise for local elections in Scotland and Wales includes those aged 16 and 17 and, in those nations, residents aged 14 or 15 at the time of fieldwork (who turn 16 during the lifetime of the registers) are counted as attainers on the local government registers. However, legally, registration data on 14 and 15 year olds cannot be shared by Electoral Registration Officers so this group was excluded from the research and any measure of accuracy and completeness. All findings should be read with this in mind.

- Northern Ireland

The completeness of the registers varies for different socio-demographic groups. These patterns are largely consistent with the findings of our previous studies. Across the UK, age and duration at address were the variables most strongly associated with differences in completeness. Older people and those who have lived at their address longer are more likely to be correctly registered.

Variations in accuracy are more difficult to analyse because characteristics can only be collected for current residents. However, as in previous studies, we see that households where the existing residents have lived there for less time are more likely to have inaccurate register entries linked to them.

You can also explore the data by headline demographics using our interactive tool.

## Quantifying accuracy and completeness

Using the percentage figures produced from this research, it is possible to estimate the number of people in the population who are not correctly registered, or who have inaccuracies in their register entries.

| | Not correctly registered | Inaccurate register entries |
|---|---|---|
| **United Kingdom** | 7,000,000 - 8,000,000 | |
| Great Britain | 6,700,000 - 7,800,000 | 5,100,000 - 6,000,000 |
| England | 5,600,000 - 6,600,000 | |
| Scotland | 650,000 - 1,000,000 | 390,000 - 640,000 |
| Wales | 275,000 - 400,000 | 200,000 - 300,000 |
| Northern Ireland | 230,000 - 280,000 | 170,000 - 210,000 |

These can only be estimates for the following reasons:

- Both the accuracy and completeness estimates are subject to **confidence intervals** (for example, +/- 1.1% for completeness in Great Britain and 1.9% in Northern Ireland; +/- 1% for accuracy in Great Britain and 1.5% for Northern Ireland). These margins will also apply to any quantification of the estimates.

- The overall population figures on which these are based, sourced from the Office for National Statistics, are mid-year estimates derived from the 2021 census. While these provide a reasonably accurate estimate of the UK population, they do not include nationality figures. As eligibility to vote differs by election and is determined by age and nationality, this means that it is not possible to definitively determine the size of the population which is eligible to vote.

## Trends in the quality of the registers

The Commission has measured the accuracy and completeness of the registers in England and Wales since 2001, and before that studies were carried out by other organisations following each census.

In Great Britain, the completeness of the registers was at its highest (around 95%) in the 1950s and 1960s and started declining in the 1980s. It decreased up to 2011 (82%) but has stabilised since, with successive studies findings levels between 83-86%.

In Northern Ireland, the completeness is now at its highest level since the Commission began measuring it in 2012.

**Completeness of local government electoral registers, Great Britain and Northern Ireland,**

**2011 - 2022**
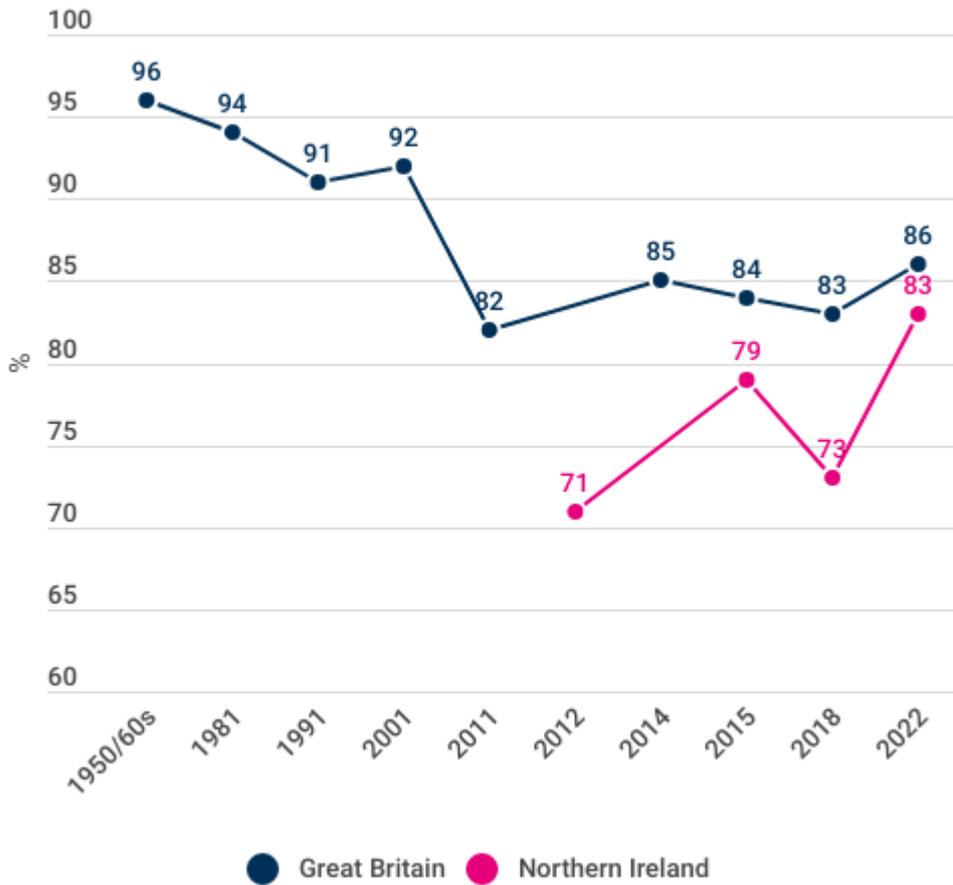


Accuracy has not been consistently measured over as long a period as completeness. In Great Britain levels have remained relatively stable over the last decade. In Northern Ireland the picture is more volatile, reflecting similar changes in completeness.

**Accuracy of local government electoral registers, Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 2011 –**

**2022**



100

95

91

90    89        88

87        87    86

85                80

%    80

78

75

70

65

60
2011    2012    2014    2015    2018    2022

● Great Britain    ● Northern Ireland

6
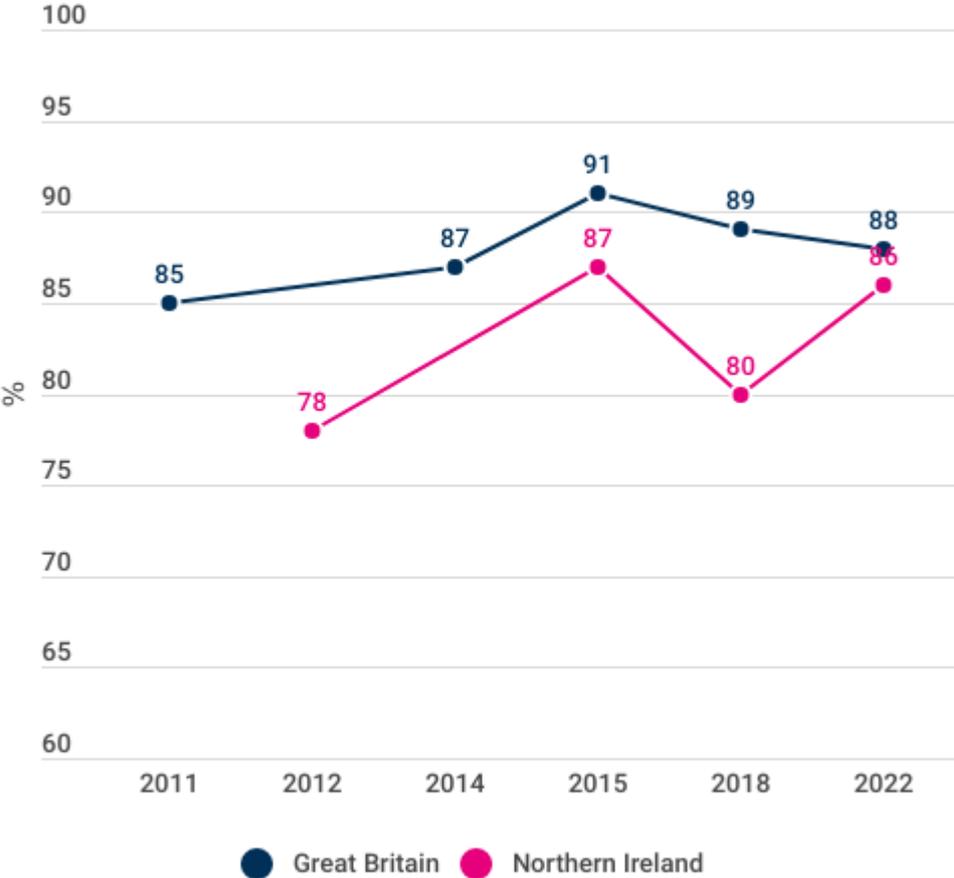
# Completeness

| | 2011 | 2012 | 2014 | 2015 | 2018 | 2022 | Change from 2018 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Great Britain** | 82% | - | 85% | 84% | 83% | 86% | +3 |
| England | - | - | - | 84% | 83% | 86% | +3 |
| Scotland | - | - | - | 85% | 83% | 81% | -2 |
| Wales | - | - | - | 84% | 81% | 87% | +6 |
| Northern Ireland | - | 71% | - | 79% | 73% | 83% | +10 |

The completeness of the registers varies for different socio-demographic groups. These patterns are largely consistent with the findings of our previous studies. Where reliable data is available for each part of the UK it is shown. In some cases the size of samples means it is not possible to show a demographic breakdown for each of England, Scotland Wales and Northern Ireland. In that case the most detailed breakdown available is included.

Additional analysis was carried out, for Great Britain as a whole and separately for Northern Ireland, to identify the demographic characteristics which are associated with higher or lower levels of accuracy and completeness (once other factors are controlled for), as well as the strength and statistical significance of these relationships.

In Great Britain, age and duration at address were the variables most strongly associated with differences in completeness. Tenure, ethnic group, social grade and the number of adults in the household were also significant factors, and there were also significant differences between urban and rural areas and between the regions of England which remain even after controlling for demographic factors.

In Northern Ireland, age and duration at address were also the main drivers of completeness. Although levels of completeness have similar socio-demographic patterns compared to Great Britain, when other factors are controlled for, no other demographics, beyond age and length of residence, were found to have a significant relationship with completeness.

## Population mobility

**Length of residence**

Previous research into the registers, which are property-based databases, has found a connection between home movement and completeness: greater mobility is associated with lower levels of completeness, while the longer an individual has been resident at their property, the more likely they are to appear on the electoral registers.

This pattern continues in this latest research, with completeness lowest among those who have lived at their address for less than a year and increasing by length of residence.

Since 2018 in Northern Ireland, completeness has increased most significantly for those who have lived at their address for less than five years. This is likely to be a direct result of the 2021 canvass.

**Completeness of local government registers by length of residence, 2018 vs 2022**

| | Great Britain | | England | | Scotland | | Wales | | Northern Ireland | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 |

| | Great Britain 2018 | Great Britain 2022 | England 2018 | England 2022 | Scotland 2018 | Scotland 2022 | Wales 2018 | Wales 2022 | Northern Ireland 2018 | Northern Ireland 2022 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Up to one year | 36% | 39% | 36% | 40% | 32% | 33% | 45% | 53% | 11% | 20% |
| More than one, up to two years | 71% | 72% | 70% | 73% | 65% | 63% | | | 29% | 44% |
| More than two, up to five years | 84% | 82% | 83% | 82% | 84% | 81% | 83% | 83% | 61% | 76% |
| More than five, up to 10 years | 90% | 91% | 90% | 92% | 91% | 83% | 83% | 86% | 78% | 82% |
| More than 10, up to 16 years | 88% | 92% | 88% | 92% | 95% | 89% | 88% | 91% | 80% | 92% |
| Over 16 years | 92% | 95% | 92% | 95% | 94% | 92% | 91% | 95% | 90% | 92% |

*Bases (unweighted): Great Britain 2018 8,699, Great Britain 2022 9,495, Northern Ireland 2018 1,713, Northern Ireland 2022 1,948*

# Demographic characteristics

**Age**

Levels of completeness continue to increase with age.

As in 2018, completeness is highest for those aged 65+. It also remains lowest for attainers aged 16-17. In Great Britain completeness for this group has dropped further from 45% in 2015, to 25% in 2018, to 16% in 2022. In Northern Ireland the level for attainer registration has increased, albeit from virtually zero in 2018 and to a lower level than in Great Britain.

Otherwise the pattern of completeness by age group has not changed dramatically since 2018.

**Completeness of local government registers by age group, 2018 v s 2022**

| | Great Britain | | England | | Scotland | | Wales | | Northern Ireland | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 |
| 16-17 | 25% | 16% | - | - | - | - | - | - | 0% | 12% |
| 18-19 | 66% | 60% | | | | | | | 31% | 45% |
| 20-24 | 68% | 67% | 72% | 70% | 68% | 68% | 66% | 79% | 61% | 76% |
| 25-34 | 74% | 74% | | | | | | | 50% | 69% |
| 35-44 | 82% | 84% | 83% | 84% | 78% | 76% | 78% | 82% | 70% | 83% |
| 45-54 | 90% | 91% | 90% | 91% | 91% | 88% | 85% | 90% | 81% | 87% |
| 55-64 | 90% | 94% | 90% | 94% | 95% | 93% | 92% | 91% | 85% | 90% |
| 65+ | 94% | 96% | 95% | 97% | 95% | 92% | 92% | 97% | 94% | 95% |

*Bases (unweighted): Great Britain 2018 8,152, Great Britain 2022 9,434, Northern Ireland 2018 1,445, Northern Ireland 2022 1,946*

## Gender

In 2018, for Great Britain and Northern Ireland there was little or no difference in the likelihood that men and women would be correctly registered. In 2022, however, women were marginally more likely to be correctly registered than men. The differences in Scotland and Wales are not statistically significant.

| | Great Britain | | England | | Scotland | | Wales | | Northern Ireland | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **2018** | **2022** | **2018** | **2022** | **2018** | **2022** | **2018** | **2022** | **2018** | **2022** |
| **Male** | 83% | 85% | 82% | 85% | 85% | 82% | 80% | 86% | 72% | 81% |
| **Female** | 83% | 87% | 83% | 87% | 82% | 81% | 82% | 87% | 73% | 84% |

*Base (unweighted): Great Britain 2022 9,490, Northern Ireland 2022 1,947, Great Britain 2018 8,215, Northern Ireland 2018 1,447*

## Nationality

Findings corroborate previous research which show that registration rates are lower among eligible non-UK nationals than among UK or Irish nationals.

UK and Irish citizens continue to be the most likely to have complete electoral register entries. However, in Great Britain, EU citizens have seen an increase in their registration levels and are slightly more likely to be registered than Commonwealth citizens. Small base sizes do not allow for separate analyses of EU and Commonwealth citizens in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.

### Completeness of local government registers by nationality, 2015 vs 2018

| | Great Britain | | England | | Scotland | | Wales | | Northern Ireland | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **2018** | **2022** | **2018** | **2022** | **2018** | **2022** | **2018** | **2022** | **2018** | **2022** |
| United Kingdom/Irish | 86% | 87% | 85% | 88% | 85% | 84% | 82% | 88% | 74% | 84% |
| Non-UK/ROI | 55% | 68% | 55% | 68% | 58% | 44% | 58% | 70% | 45% | 41% |
| European Union | 54% | 70% | 54% | 71% | - | - | - | - | 42% | - |
| Commonwealth | 62% | 66% | 62% | 67% | - | - | - | - | 80% | - |

*Bases (unweighted): Great Britain 2018 8,186, Great Britain 2022 10,045, Northern Ireland 2018 1,437, Northern Ireland 2022 2,018*

## Ethnicity

As in previous studies, completeness in Great Britain is highest among those from a white ethnic background. Small base sizes mean we cannot analyse variation in levels of completeness for different ethnic groups in Northern Ireland.

Since 2018, completeness rates have increased for every group except those from Black ethnic backgrounds where it has fallen from 75% to 72%.

**Completeness of local government electoral registers in Great Britain by ethnicity, 2018 vs 2022**
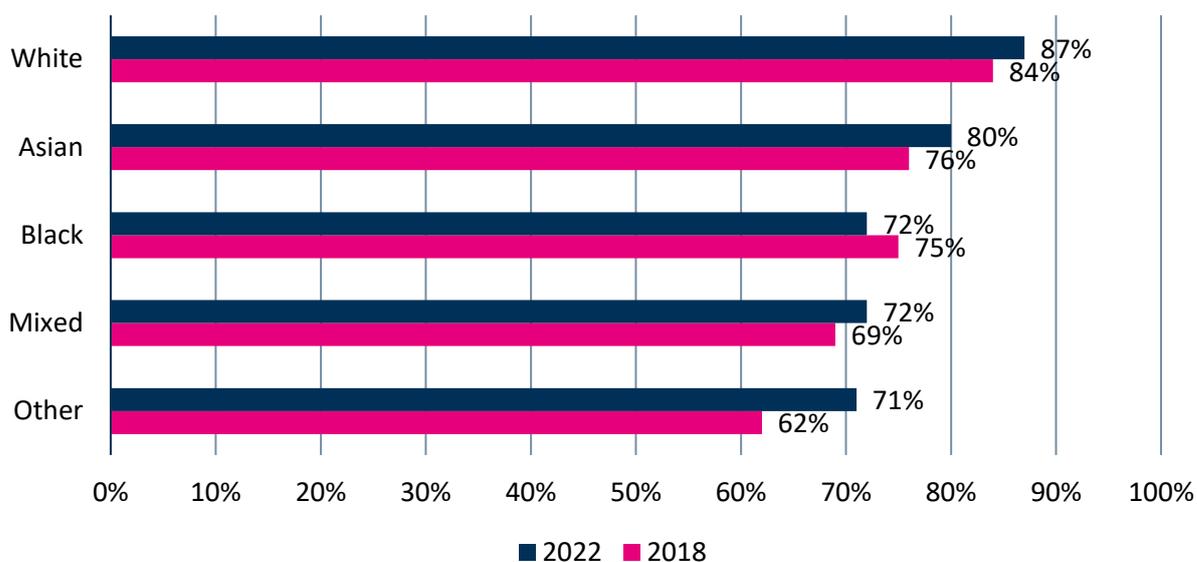


*Base (unweighted): 2022 9,404, 2018 8,157*

**Disability status**

As in previous years, completeness is higher among those with a disability than among those without. Of those with a disability, completeness was highest among those with a physical condition and lowest among those with a mental disability.

**Completeness of local government registers by disability status, 2018 vs 2022**

|  | Great Britain | | Northern Ireland | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | *2018* | 2022 | *2018* | 2022 |
| Mental disability | 83% | 84% | 71% | 79% |
| Physical disability | 92% | 92% | 83% | 88% |
| Other type of disability | 93% | 89% | - | 84% |
| No disability | 82% | 85% | 72% | 82% |

*Bases (unweighted): Great Britain 2018 8,091, Great Britain 2022 9,447, Northern Ireland 2018 1,444, Northern Ireland 2022 1,935*

# Social and economic conditions

**Socio-economic group**

Levels of completeness are also affected by socio-economic status. With the exception of Scotland, completeness is highest among those in AB households, followed by those in C1 and C2 households. Completeness is lowest among those in DE households. The unusually high level of completeness in Scotland for C2 households is an outlier and may be a distortion caused by a relatively small base size.

**Completeness of local government registers by socio-economic group, 2018 vs 2022**

| | Great Britain | England | Scotland | Wales | Northern Ireland |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |

| | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| AB | 86% | 89% | 86% | 89% | 88% | 86% | 87% | 87% | 80% | 88% |
| C1 | 85% | 86% | 84% | 87% | 85% | 76% | 82% | 86% | 72% | 82% |
| C2 | 80% | 86% | 80% | 85% | 80% | 88% | 82% | 89% | 76% | 83% |
| DE | 80% | 81% | 79% | 81% | 78% | 78% | 76% | 85% | 63% | 78% |

*Base (unweighted): Great Britain 2022 9,472, Great Britain 2018 8,782, Norther Ireland 2022 1,942, Northern Ireland 2018 1,718*

**Tenure**

In previous years, tenure has been strongly associated with levels of completeness and this relationship continues in 2022. Outright homeowners are more likely to be registered than people in other types of tenure.

Private renters again had the lowest level of completeness.

**Completeness of local government registers by tenure, 2018 vs 2022**

| | Great Britain | | England | | Scotland | | Wales | | Northern Ireland | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 |
| Owner occupier | 91% | 95% | 91% | 95% | 95% | 91% | 91% | 94% | 88% | 91% |
| Buying on mortgage/ shared ownership | 86% | 88% | 86% | 88% | 87% | 84% | 78% | 84% | 72% | 82% |
| Private renter | 58% | 65% | 59% | 66% | 49% | 45% | 60% | 73% | 38% | 46% |
| Local Authority renter | 83% | 79% | 83% | 79% | 87% | 84% | 86% | 73% | 64% | 78% |
| Housing Association renter | 82% | 79% | 84% | 80% | 73% | 72% | 76% | 82% | | |

*Bases (unweighted): Great Britain 2018 8,790, Great Britain 2022 9,259, Northern Ireland 2018 1,718, Northern Ireland 2022 1,930*

**Number of adults in the household**

Levels of completeness are lower for larger households. In Great Britain overall levels of completeness for one or two person households are notably higher than three to five person households. The pattern is flatter in Northern Ireland with limited differences although the base size for households with six or more residents is very small.

**Completeness of local government electoral registers by number of adults in household, 2018 vs 2022**

| | Great Britain | | England | | Scotland | | Wales | | Northern Ireland | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 |
| One | 86% | 88% | 86% | 86% | 79% | 79% | 82% | 90% | 72% | 80% |
| Two | 84% | 88% | 84% | 89% | 84% | 83% | 83% | 87% | 73% | 83% |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Three to five | 81% | 82% | 81% | 82% | 85% | 80% | 77% | 85% | 72% | 83% |
| Six or more | 78% | 79% | 79% | 80% | | | | | 96% | 81% |

*Base (unweighted): Great Britain 2022 9,495, Great Britain 2018 8,791, Northern Ireland 2022 1,948, Northern Ireland 2018 1,718*

# Geographic variables

**English regions**

There continues to be some variation in levels of completeness among the regions in England. However, the confidence intervals on the results mean that most differences are not statistically significant. The East Midlands does record significantly higher completeness levels compared to London.

**Completeness of local government electoral registers by English region 2018 vs 2022**

| Region | 2018 | 2022 |
|---|---|---|
| Eastern | 79% | 86% |
| East Midlands | 83% | 91% |
| London | 81% | 82% |
| North East | 83% | 88% |
| North West | 85% | 84% |
| South East | 84% | 88% |
| South West | 84% | 86% |
| West Midlands | 86% | 87% |
| Yorkshire and Humber | 87% | 86% |

**Urban/rural classification**

In both Great Britain as a whole and in Northern Ireland, completeness remains slightly higher in rural areas as compared with urban areas. There is little or no difference between the categories in Scotland and Wales.

**Completeness of local government electoral registers by urban/rural classification, 2018 vs 2022**

| | Great Britain | | England | | Scotland | | Wales | | Northern Ireland | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 |
| Urban | 83% | 85% | 83% | 86% | 84% | 88% | 81% | 87% | 70% | 81% |
| Rural | 85% | 89% | 84% | 90% | 91% | 88% | 81% | 86% | 76% | 85% |

*Bases (unweighted): Great Britain 9,474, Northern Ireland 1,943*

**Local authority type**

In England, among different types of local authority area, the most notable change in completeness has been among London boroughs with an increase from 76% in 2018 to 82% in 2022.

**Completeness of local government registers by local authority type, 2018 vs 2022**

|  | 2018 | 2022 |
|---|---|---|
| District | 84% | 89% |
| London borough | 76% | 82% |
| Metropolitan borough | 86% | 85% |
| Unitary authorities | 83% | 84% |
| Scottish unitary | 83% | 81% |
| Welsh unitary | 81% | 87% |
| Northern Ireland | 73% | 83% |

*Bases (unweighted): Great Britain, 9,495, Northern Ireland 1,943*

## Attitudinal and behavioural characteristics

**Attitudes towards registration and voting**

Completeness is lowest among people who believe that 'it is not really worth registering' and is highest among those who think it is 'everyone's duty to register to vote'.

**Local government register completeness in Great Britain by attitude towards registration,**



It's not really worth registering: 74% (2022), 72% (2018)
It's only worth registering to vote in order to secure a better credit reference: 80% (2022), 68% (2018)
People should only register to vote if they care who wins an election: 83% (2022), 79% (2018)
It's everyone's duty to register to vote: 91% (2022), 85% (2018)
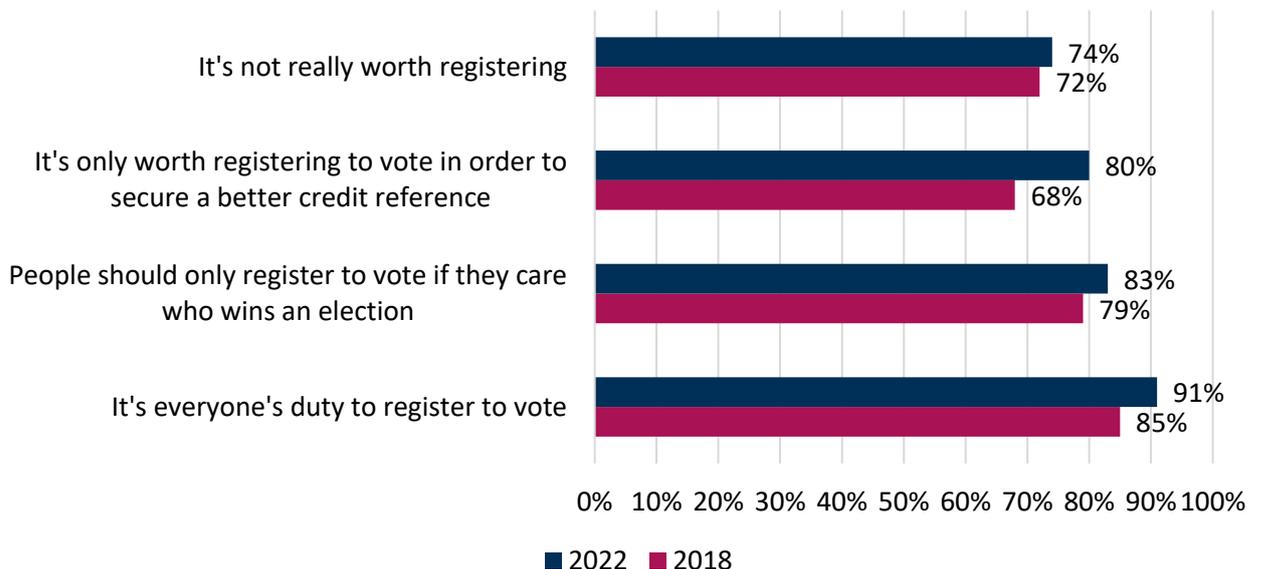
■ 2022  ■ 2018

**2018 vs 2022**

*Base (unweighted): 2022, 4,692, 2018 4,679*

**Local government register completeness in Northern Ireland by attitude towards registration, 2018 and 2022**

It's not really worth registering
- 2022: 69%
- 2018: 54%

It's only worth registering to vote in order to secure a better credit reference
- 2022: 82%
- 2018: 52%

People should only register to vote if they care who wins an election
- 2022: 72%
- 2018: 68%

It's everyone's duty to register to vote
- 2022: 87%
- 2018: 77%

■ 2022  ■ 2018
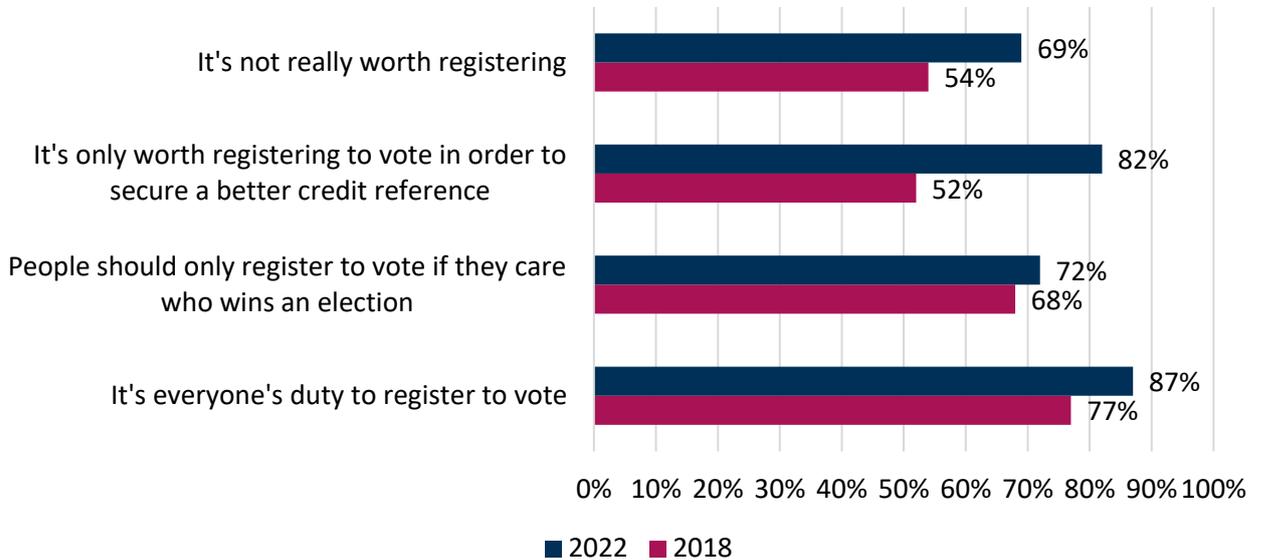
*Base (unweighted): 2022 935, 2018 945*

Attitudes towards voting show a similar pattern, with completeness lowest among those who believe it is not really worth voting and highest among people who believe it is everyone's duty to vote (91%).

**Local government register completeness in Great Britain by attitude towards voting, 2018 vs 2022**

It's not really worth voting
- 2022: 77%
- 2018: 78%

People should only vote if they care who wins an election
- 2022: 84%
- 2018: 79%

It's everyone's duty to vote
- 2022: 91%
- 2018: 84%

■ 2022  ■ 2018
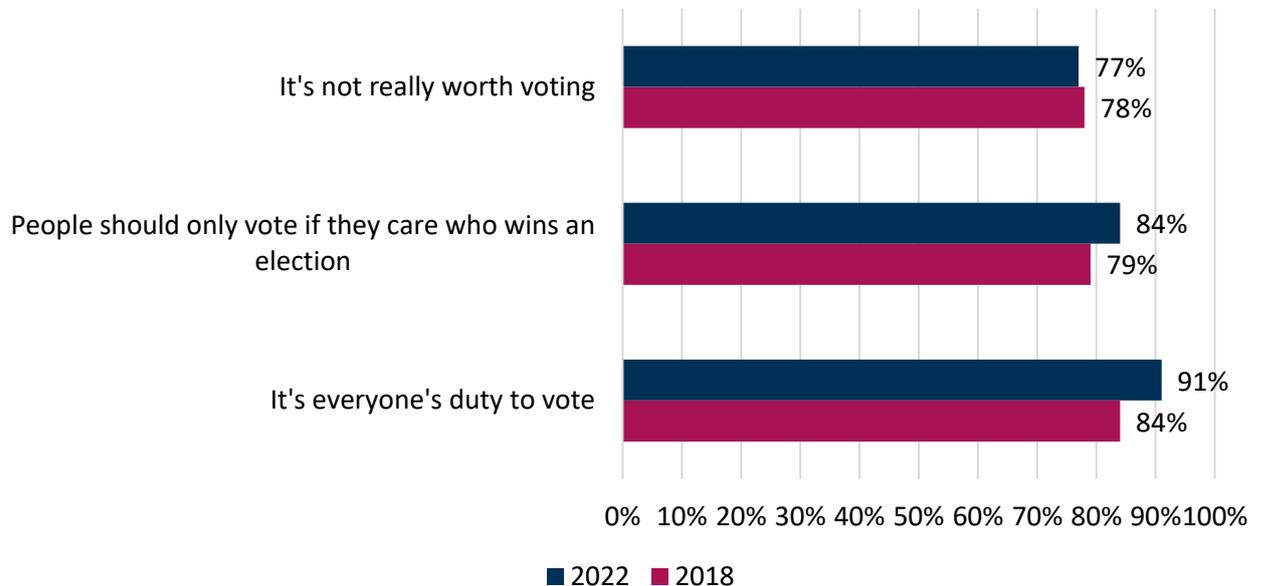
*Base (unweighted): 2022 4,664, 2018 4,679*

**Local government register completeness in Northern Ireland by attitude towards voting, 2018 vs 2022**



| | 2022 | 2018 |
|---|---|---|
| It's not really worth voting | 74% | 62% |
| People should only vote if they care who wins an election | 77% | 64% |
| It's everyone's duty to vote | 86% | 77% |
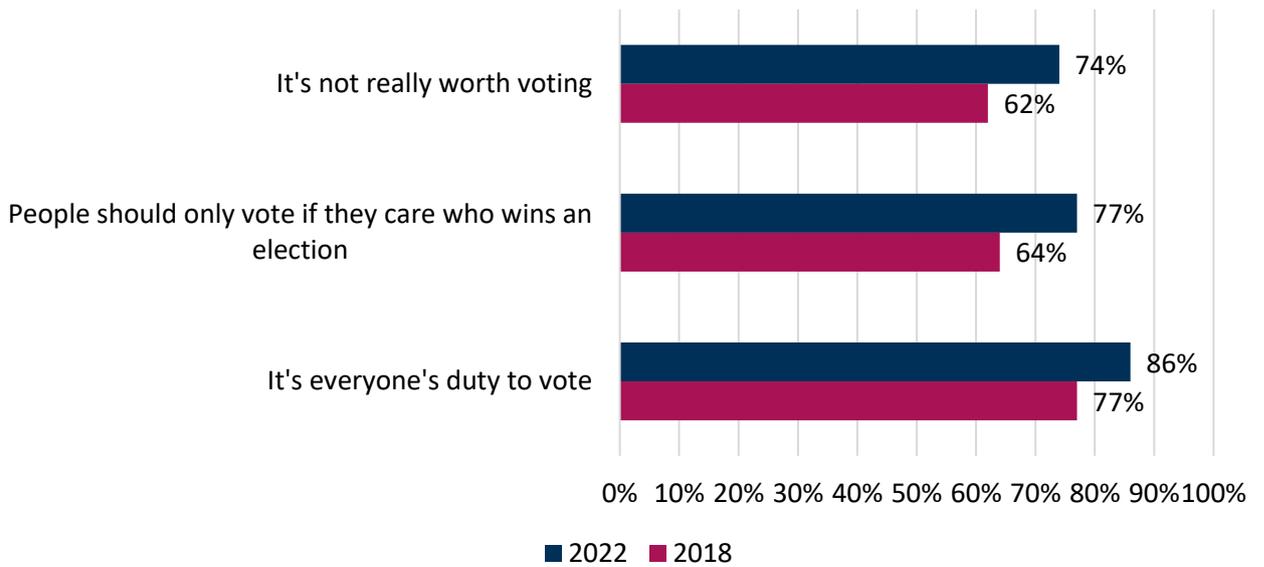
*Base (unweighted): 2022 919, 2018 945*

**Northern Ireland – political affiliation**

Additional questions were asked in Northern Ireland to explore how completeness here might vary according to citizens' political affiliation. Completeness is higher among than those who identify as Nationalist or Unionist than it is among those who do not hold any of the listed political identities (Unionist, Loyalist, Republican, Nationalist).

**Local government register completeness in Northern Ireland by political affiliation, 2018 vs 2022**



| | 2022 | 2018 |
|---|---|---|
| Nationalist | 89% | 76% |
| Unionist | 92% | 80% |
| Neither | 76% | 65% |
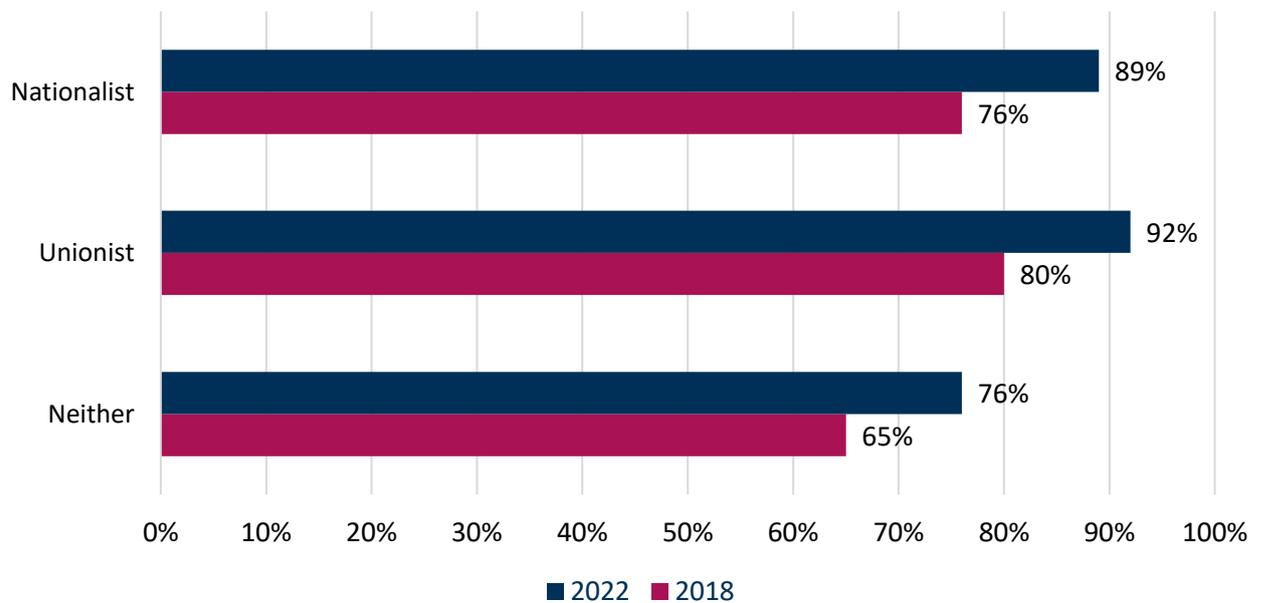
*Base (unweighted): 2022 899, 2018 945*

# Accuracy

| | 2011 | 2012 | 2014 | 2015 | 2018 | 2022 | Change from 2018 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Great Britain** | 85% | - | 87% | 91% | 89% | 88% | -1 |
| **England** | - | - | - | 90% | 89% | 88% | -1 |
| **Scotland** | - | - | - | 91% | 86% | 88% | +2 |
| **Wales** | - | - | - | 93% | 89% | 89% | 0 |
| **Northern Ireland** | - | 78% | - | 87% | 80% | 86% | +6 |

Accuracy has remained stable since 2018 in England, Scotland and Wales but has seen a notable increase in Northern Ireland, bringing it into line with the figures for Great Britain. Households where the current residents have lived at the address for less time, and those renting from a private landlord, continue to be more likely to have inaccurate register entries linked to them.

## Type of errors

In analysing the accuracy of the electoral registers, a number of different types of error can be identified. These errors are then categorised as either a 'major' or 'minor' error:

A minor error would not prevent someone from casting their vote (e.g. a misspelt name). A major error is any of the following:

- entries which refer to individuals who no longer live at the given address

- entries which may prevent an individual casting their vote at a polling station (e.g. an incorrect name)

- errors that would enable an ineligible person to vote (e.g. an incorrect date of birth for someone under the age of 18)

A breakdown of the types of errors used to calculate the accuracy of the registers can be found in the table below.

**Types of error on the December 2018 and December 2022 local government registers for Great Britain and Northern Ireland**

| | Great Britain | | England | | Scotland | | Wales | | Northern Ireland | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 |
| **Major errors total** | 11.2% | 11.7% | 8.7% | 11.7% | 10.9% | 12.1% | 8.8% | 10.8% | 20.1% | 14.1% |
| **Major errors – (a)** | | | | | | | | | | |
| No corresponding name taken at address | **10.4%** | **9.8%** | **7.7%** | **9.8%** | **10.0%** | **9.7%** | **8.2%** | **9.3%** | **18.7%** | **13.0%** |
| **Major errors – (b)** | **0.7%** | **1.1%** | **0.6%** | **1.2%** | **0.5%** | **0.8%** | **0.2%** | **0.6%** | **0.7%** | **0.7%** |
| First name and/or surname wrong on register | 0.4% | 0.7% | 0.3% | 0.7% | 0.2% | 0.5% | 0.2% | 0.3% | 0.5% | 0.5% |
| First name and/or surname missing on register | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| UK/Irish/ Commonwealth marker present | 0.3% | 0.5% | 0.3% | 0.5% | 0.3% | 0.4% | 0.0% | 0.3% | 0.2% | 0.2% |
| **Major errors – (c)** | **0.5%** | **0.7%** | **0.4%** | **0.7%** | **0.4%** | **1.6%** | **0.4%** | **0.9%** | **0.6%** | **0.2%** |
| Name on register corresponds to ineligible name on survey | 0.2% | 0.3% | 0.1% | 0.3% | 0.1% | 0.0% | 0.2% | 0.0% | 0.5% | 0.2% |
| Attainers - DOB missing or wrong | 0.1% | 0.2% | 0.1% | 0.1% | 0.2% | 1.6% | 0.0% | 0.8% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| EU citizens marker missing | 0.2% | 0.2% | 0.2% | 0.2% | 0.1% | 0.1% | 0.2% | 0.1% | 0.1% | 0.0% |
| **Accurate with minor errors** | **9.1%** | **8.8%** | **7.9%** | **8.9%** | **9.6%** | **14.3%** | **7.9%** | **9.0%** | **5.6%** | **7.6%** |
| First name /surname on register misspelled | 1.2% | 0.7% | 1.0% | 0.7% | 0.7% | 0.4% | 0.6% | 0.9% | 0.9% | 0.7% |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| First name /surname on register incomplete | 0.5% | 0.3% | 0.4% | 0.3% | 0.2% | 0.4% | 0.4% | 0.3% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Middle name missing from register | 6.4% | 6.6% | 4.6% | 6.1% | 7.1% | 12.2% | 6.1% | 6.6% | 2.8% | 6.0% |
| Middle name or initials misspelled or incomplete on register | 0.0% | 0.2% | 0.0% | 0.2% | 0.0% | 0.1% | 0.0% | 0.5% | 0.5% | 0.5% |
| Middle name or initial wrong on register | 0.1% | 0.2% | 0.1% | 0.2% | 0.0% | 0.3% | 0.0% | 0.2% | 0.5% | 0.1% |
| Person does not have a middle name but middle name on registers (respondents only) | 1.3% | 1.1% | 1.3% | 1.2% | 1.3% | 0.6% | 0.6% | 0.6% | 0.0% | 0.6% |
| Surname is/ assumed to be previous surname | 0.5% | 0.3% | 0.4% | 0.2% | 0.3% | 0.3% | 0.2% | 0.5% | 0.5% | 0.1% |
| First/middle/surname in different order on register | 0.1% | 0.0% | 0.1% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.1% |
| DoB earlier on register for attainer | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |

*Bases (unweighted): Great Britain 2018 9,155, Great Britain 2022 9,478, Northern Ireland 2018 1,783, Northern Ireland 2022 1,975*

# Demographic characteristics

Examining demographic variation of inaccuracies on the electoral registers is challenging. This is because we cannot record demographic details for an individual who is registered but no longer lives at the address. The analysis below takes into account household data where a resident was interviewed. However, this data still only presents a limited picture and so must be treated with caution.

**Tenure**

Accuracy by tenure follows a similar pattern to completeness. In Great Britain owner-occupier households are the most likely to have accurate register entries (96%). In Northern Ireland, 89% of those who own their home outright have accurate register entries, as do 90% of those who have a mortgage or shared ownership.

**Accuracy of local government electoral registers by tenure**

| | Great Britain | | England | | Scotland | | Wales | | Northern Ireland | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 |
| Owner occupier | 95% | 96% | 96% | 96% | 90% | 94% | 94% | 95% | 86% | 89% |
| Buying on mortgage/ shared ownership | 95% | 91% | 95% | 91% | 94% | 89% | 93% | 92% | 86% | 90% |
| Private renter | 81% | 77% | 81% | 78% | 79% | 58% | 82% | 78% | 61% | 75% |
| Local Authority renter | 92% | 88% | 92% | 87% | 91% | 94% | 91% | 88% | 82% | 83% |
| Housing Association renter | 91% | 90% | 91% | 90% | 86% | 91% | 91% | 85% | | |

*Bases (unweighted): Great Britain 8,816, Northern Ireland 1,881*

**Socio-economic group**

Social grade is also calculated at the household level, based on the occupation of the chief income earner. Whereas in 2018, there was a slight negative correlation between social grade and accuracy, in 2022 accuracy was almost entirely flat across the social grades in both Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

**Accuracy of local government registers by socio-economic group**

| | Great Britain | | England | | Scotland | | Wales | | Northern Ireland | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 |
| **AB** | 94% | 97% | 95% | 91% | 89% | 91% | 93% | 92% | 86% | 99% |
| **C1** | 93% | 98% | 93% | 91% | 93% | 87% | 96% | 93% | 85% | 98% |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **C2** | 93% | 98% | 94% | 93% | 90% | 90% | 95% | 93% | 82% | 98% |
| **DE** | 89% | 98% | 89% | 89% | 88% | 92% | 86% | 88% | 78% | 98% |

*Bases (unweighted): Great Britain 8,449, Northern Ireland 1,708*

## Length of time at address

Accuracy in both Great Britain and Northern Ireland follows the same pattern as completeness when looking at how long households have occupied their accommodation, with higher levels of inaccuracy at households with a more recent change in residency.

**Accuracy of local government registers by duration at address**

| | Great Britain | | England | | Scotland | | Wales | | Northern Ireland | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **2018** | **2022** | **2018** | **2022** | **2018** | **2022** | **2018** | **2022** | **2018** | **2022** |
| Up to one year | 56% | 54% | 57% | 54% | 71% | 67% | 73% | 69% | 22% | 38% |
| More than one, up to two years | 93% | 84% | 93% | 84% | | | | | 58% | 85% |
| More than two, up to five years | 94% | 91% | 94% | 91% | 97% | 88% | 92% | 93% | 84% | 87% |
| More than five, up to 10 years | 96% | 94% | 96% | 94% | 98% | 91% | 93% | 91% | 90% | 91% |
| More than 10, up to 16 years | 95% | 94% | 95% | 94% | 92% | 94% | 96% | 92% | 90% | 93% |
| Over 16 years | 95% | 95% | 96% | 95% | 91% | 93% | 95% | 96% | 87% | 89% |

*Bases (unweighted): Great Britain 8,342, Northern Ireland 1,685*

# Looking ahead: addressing the challenges of accuracy and completeness

The evidence from this research shows that although there have been improvements in some areas since our previous analysis of the 2018 electoral registers, as many as 8 million people across the UK are still not correctly registered to vote.

This means they may not be able to vote when elections take place, and they are not counted at all when constituency boundaries are set. It also means that at the most critical time ahead of major elections, Electoral Registration Officers are required to use their limited resources and capacity to respond to applications that are needed so that registers can catch up with population movement and eligible voters are able to participate.

This evidence continues to highlight the need to develop new approaches to electoral registration that will bring sustained long-term improvements. This will require governments to bring forward legislation. We set out below the case for change, and explain our own proposals for how EROs can benefit from access to information from other public service organisations.

## The current system of electoral registration is not working well for voters or Electoral Registration Officers

We and many others – including Parliamentary committees, professional associations and academics – have repeatedly highlighted evidence that illustrates the impact of the current failing systems of electoral registration in the UK:

- Evidence from our programme of electoral registration research over more than a decade continues to show that up to 8 million people across the UK are either missing from the registers or incorrectly registered, meaning they are unable to have their say. We have consistently found that some specific groups of people are significantly less likely to be correctly registered, particularly young people, people who live in private rented accommodation, and those who have recently changed address. The number of people it is estimated are not correctly registered is more than the combined adult population of Scotland and Wales, and would be equivalent to more than 100 UK Parliament constituencies.

- Although changes to the annual canvass in Great Britain have helped to reduce the resource and capacity taken up through unnecessarily chasing households with no change, there is evidence from the most recent annual canvass in 2022 to suggest that it is a significantly less effective mechanism for identifying 16- and 17-year-olds who are newly eligible to register, compared with older people. There is no evidence from our most recent research on the 2022 registers that canvass reform has led to any significant improvement in the accuracy or completeness of the registers for Great Britain.

- Our analysis of the most recent canvass in Northern Ireland in 2021 highlighted that, in its current format, the canvass is not an efficient tool for helping to maintain an accurate and complete electoral register, both for the Chief Electoral Officer and for voters. Although the improvements in the accuracy and completeness of the 2022 registers highlighted in this research are the result of the 2021 canvass, we have previously seen subsequent declines between canvasses when the continuous registration system is operating. The registration system continues to struggle to capture population movement in the period between each canvass, and the canvass process itself requires the Electoral Office to contact and receive a response from all eligible electors, even if they were registered before the canvass and their details had not changed.

- Our [recent research on attitudes to registration](#) has highlighted that people continue to face both practical and knowledge barriers to registering to vote under the current system. These include misunderstanding about the registration process and incorrect assumptions about whether people are already registered, and low levels of urgency or priority to register to vote. Some people don't realise that they need to actively apply to register to vote, don't know how to apply, and don't view registration as a priority when they change address.

- An accessible online registration process means it is easy for people to apply to register, update or confirm their registration throughout the year, and to do so close to the deadline for an election. But, as we highlighted in our [report on the 2019 UK Parliamentary general election](#), this means that large volumes of electoral registration activity are focused in the weeks leading up to major electoral events, which significantly increases risks to well-run elections.

## Levels of accuracy and completeness are unlikely to improve without significant changes to the registration system

[Evidence from our programme of electoral registration research](#) over more than a decade shows that a large number of people remain incorrectly registered. There is little evidence to suggest that levels of accuracy and completeness are likely to significantly improve without major changes to the current electoral registration system.

The introduction of online registration since 2014 (and since 2018 in Northern Ireland) has improved access and made it easier for people to register to vote ahead of specific electoral events, but there is no evidence that it has had a lasting significant positive impact on overall levels of accuracy or completeness. The most recent data from the 2022 registers shows no significant improvement in Great Britain in the proportion of people who are correctly registered, even if the decline in rates of accuracy and completeness identified in previous studies appears to have at least paused.

We have highlighted since 2019 [feasibility studies](#) which showed how the UK's governments could support EROs to improve accuracy and completeness of electoral registers – and improve efficiency to alleviate resource burdens – by giving them access to high-quality data from other public service organisations. This would allow EROs to take advantage of the many millions of transactions that voters already have with major public sector organisations, and could sit alongside and enhance existing annual canvass and year-round online registration activities.

The [Welsh Government](#) has already highlighted its intention to work with local authorities to design and pilot automatic voter registration for devolved elections, and we will continue to work with EROs and the Welsh Government to support further development of this important area of work.

## The electoral community needs a clear plan to modernise electoral registration processes

Changes to the way elections and electoral registers are run should be considered in consultation with the whole electoral community. The experiences of voters, electoral administrators, and political parties and campaigners are important considerations in building a registration system that works well for everyone, and to ensure all eligible voters can have their say at elections.

Developing specific detailed proposals to move towards more automatic or automated systems of electoral registration would need to involve a broad range of partners:

- Data source organisations (for example, the DVLA/DVA, HMRC or HMPO) would bring their detailed understanding of the data and transactions that they currently manage, and would

need reassurance that data sharing is operationally straightforward, secure and legally compliant.

- Technical partners, including electoral management software suppliers and the IER digital service which is managed by officials at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) supported by the Government Digital Service, would need to work together with the data source organisations to ensure the secure and efficient management of data and transfer to individual EROs.

- EROs themselves would need to consider any changes to their teams and processes, so that they are able to integrate automatic or automated registration alongside the existing annual canvass and year-round online registration.

- Governments would need to legislate to create the necessary legal gateways for data sharing by data source organisations, and to specify the powers and duties of EROs to determine registration applications created using automatic or automated processes.

- The Information Commissioner's Office would need to provide advice and guidance on how to manage information risks relating to data sharing.

Making electoral registration more joined-up with other public services and citizen transactions raises particularly important questions relating to data protection and cyber security. In its February 2023 written evidence to the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (LUHC) Committee inquiry on electoral registration, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities highlighted measures already put in place to improve the robustness and security of the IER digital service alongside further recommendations for improvements – for example, in relation to cyber incident reporting in the local government sector. Similar or equivalent protections would also be needed for any systems established to manage the provision and use of data for automatic or automated electoral registration processes.

---

**Recommendations: Delivering modern registration processes**

The electoral community needs a clear plan to ensure that electoral registration processes are modernised so that people are registered and able to exercise their right to vote.

As part of this plan the UK, Scottish and Welsh governments should pass legislation that creates clear legal gateways for government departments and public sector bodies to share data on potentially eligible individuals with Electoral Registration Officers. This is needed to enable EROs to register them to vote directly, or to send them targeted invitations to register.

All three governments should require relevant departments and other public bodies to work with EROs to facilitate electoral registration using their data. A consistent approach between governments would ensure that changes are developed and delivered in a way which makes it as straightforward as possible for EROs and data source organisations, and ensures that voters are accurately included in the registers for all types of elections they are eligible to vote in.

The UK Government should develop the existing Individual Electoral Registration (IER) digital service so that it can support secure and efficient data sharing between data source organisations and EROs and their electoral management software systems, to enable modern registration processes to be delivered.

---

## Case studies show how registration could be modernised

We have spoken to several UK Government departments, public bodies, universities and tenancy deposit schemes about the data they hold. We discussed whether and how data could be used to improve the accuracy and completeness of electoral registers. We particularly focused on how new approaches could improve registration rates for those groups of people who our research has

consistently shown are less likely to be registered correctly: attainers and other young people; people who live in private rented accommodation; and recent home-movers.

Depending on the quality and coverage of the data sets, and the specific data fields that are available, we have identified changes that could support different levels and forms of modernisation, ranging from automatic registration to forms of integrated or assisted registration where voters would still need to provide some information directly themselves.

The information that is currently required to register to vote includes the individual's name, address, date of birth, nationality and National Insurance number. An application must also state whether the voter wants to be included in the open register which is available to anyone who wants to buy a copy. Nationality information is required given the different franchises for different types of election, and in some cases – for example for Commonwealth citizens – applicants must also confirm that they have leave to enter or remain in the UK or that they don't require that leave. The National Insurance number is currently used as a way of verifying an individual's identity using Department for Work and Pensions records.

We have outlined below a range of options for new registration processes, which have been informed by our discussions with the above-mentioned departments and organisations. These case studies were not proposed by or formally agreed with the organisations involved.

One of the case studies – integrating electoral registration into the university student enrolment process – describes the current model operated by Cardiff University and Cardiff City Council to boost student registration levels. A further case study – the use of tenancy deposit scheme data to improve registration among private renters through signposting – is based on our discussions with representatives of the schemes, who have indicated their willingness to explore ways of taking this idea forward together with us. The other case studies, namely HM Passport Office, the Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency/Driver & Vehicle Agency and HM Revenue & Customs, are more speculative and reflect our views as to what might work in practice.

Further exploratory work would be needed to confirm the feasibility and delivery implications of these options.

**Automatic registration**

Automatic registration means that a data source organisation would provide EROs with the names and addresses of people who meet the eligibility criteria for registration. Because of the specific information required to register to vote, it is likely that very few data sources would be able to support fully automatic registration. The case study below highlights how the information required to be provided by British citizens as part of the passport application process could meet these requirements.

The ERO would contact these people at their home address to inform them that they will be added to the register, giving them the opportunity to request to be registered as an anonymous elector if their safety would be at risk from being registered as an ordinary elector. There would also be an opportunity for anyone else living at the address to provide evidence that the person is not in fact eligible to be registered there.

Subject to any further evidence that the person was not eligible to register, the ERO would add them directly to the register.

The data source organisation could limit the information it provided to EROs to include only new or recently updated records. This would give EROs reassurance that the data was current and should reduce the risk of duplicating registration activity with people who have already applied to register.

A centralised data processing service, similar to the current IER digital service, could be used to simplify the process of transferring data between data source organisations and EROs. This could also be used to screen potential new electors against current electoral registers, to minimise duplicate registrations.

Automatic registration of voters is common around the world. The Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust published a report in 2020 called *Is it time for Automatic Voter Registration in the UK?*. According to the report, 40 countries considered to be liberal democracies have automatic registration. More recent international comparative research has shown that automatic registration not only increases the completeness of electoral registers, but also has a positive impact on accuracy.

According to the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), in Argentina, Austria, Chile, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Japan, Italy, Spain, and South Korea (among others), the national electoral register is extracted from the population/civil registry.

The Australian Electoral Commission operates the Federal Direct Enrolment and Update program. It uses trusted data from other government agencies to add some individuals to the electoral roll or to update their electoral registration. It writes to individuals to inform them of the addition or update.

In five American states, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures, when an individual applies for a driving licence and/or engages with another state agency, the data from the transaction is used to register them to vote. The voter receives a notification informing them that they will be registered unless they respond to it and decline the registration.

In Canada the National Register of Electors is updated using data from provincial and territorial drivers' licence, statistics and electoral agencies. Elections Nova Scotia updates the voters' list data from a variety of sources including the Registry of Motor Vehicles, the Nova Scotia Civic Address File and Elections Canada.

---

**Automatic registration case study: using HM Passport Office data to improve registration among young people and recent home-movers**

HM Passport Office (HMPO) is an agency of the Home Office which issues passports to British citizens. HMPO carries out identity checks to verify an applicant's identity, including with the Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency. Passport data is already shared with around 80 government departments and public sector bodies to carry out around 25 million identity checks each year.

HMPO forecasts that it will receive around 7.4 million passport applications in the next year. These applications will cover the full range of age groups, including applications from young people aged 16 and over applying for adult passports, and people who have recently moved home.

When someone applies for a passport, they must provide their name, date of birth, evidence of British citizenship, and home address for delivery of the passport. Although HMPO does not collect National Insurance numbers from applicants, it does undertake rigorous checks to verify applicants' identities, which could provide a sufficient level of assurance for an electoral registration application (equivalent to the assurance currently provided by checking National Insurance numbers).

Once HMPO has verified the identity of an applicant, this data could be transferred to EROs to automatically register them to vote. To do this, the ERO would write to the individual, informing them that they are going to be placed on the register, giving them the opportunity to correct any mistakes and to request to be registered anonymously if their safety would be at risk from being registered as an ordinary elector.

There would also be an opportunity for anyone else living at the address to provide evidence that the person is not eligible to be registered there.

Sharing HMPO data for electoral registration would require identifying an appropriate legal

---

gateway. Legislative changes are likely to be required to create a gateway.

**Integrated registration applications**

An integrated registration model means that registering to vote would be integrated within another public service transaction. At the end of those transactions, people would be asked whether they also want to register to vote.

If the individual confirms that they do, relevant data would be transferred to an electoral registration application. The individual would be provided with information about eligibility to vote and asked to confirm their eligibility in the same way they are currently required to when applying using the online electoral registration service. They would also provide any missing data, such as National Insurance number and nationality.

Once complete, this data would be transferred to the relevant ERO via the IER digital service. The ERO would process the application, add them to the register and write to confirm their addition.

As the individual would have recently updated their details as part of that public service transaction and provided the remaining data required for registration, EROs could be sure that their data, in particular their address, was up to date.

A number of countries and territories integrate electoral registration into other public service transactions.

In Canada citizens can agree to share their data with Elections Canada on their federal income tax return. New citizens can agree to share their data with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada on their citizenship applications.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, in 17 American states and Washington DC, people are asked if they want to register when applying for a driving licence from the state's Department of Motor Vehicles and/or when interacting with another government agency. If they agree, their details are added to the state voter registration database.

**Integrated registration case study: using university student enrolment to improve registration among young people**

Cardiff University has integrated an electoral registration module into its online process for enrolling students. Enrolment tasks open in September and students have until the third week of October to complete them, including the electoral registration task.

The university holds name, address, date of birth and nationality data about students. It has developed a coding system for rooms in its halls of residence to assist the Electoral Services Team at Cardiff City Council to match the addresses with the council's systems.

Students are asked if they want to register to vote. If they do, the university asks them to provide the additional data needed to complete the registration application. This includes their National Insurance number and whether they want to be on the open/full register.

Once the university has the data needed for registration applications, it sends it to the Electoral Services Team at Cardiff City Council, which registers the students. Over 8,000 students' details are sent to Cardiff City Council annually and around 90% of these students are registered each year. Once the information is sent to the Council, Cardiff University deletes from its student record system any data relating to this process that it does not use internally.

**Integrated registration case study: using the driving licence application or renewal process to improve registration among recent movers and young people**

The Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) is the executive agency responsible for issuing driving licences in Great Britain. The Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA) is the Northern Ireland Executive agency responsible for issuing driving licences in Northern Ireland.

Individuals interact with the agencies when they apply for a provisional driving licence, renew or reapply for their photocard driving licence at the end of the 10-year validity period, and when they move address. Both agencies hold name, address and date of birth data but not nationality data or National Insurance numbers.

DVLA receives around 1 million applications for provisional driving licences and around 4 million address change notifications each year. DVA processed just over 29,000 applications for provisional driving licences and around 26,000 name and address change notifications from April 2022 to March 2023.

An electoral registration prompt asking drivers if they want to register to vote could be integrated into these transactions. The data that DVLA or DVA already hold could be used to prepopulate an electoral registration application, with the driver filling in any missing data. The completed applications would then be sent to the relevant Electoral Registration Officer via the IER digital service, who would determine the application and register them. DVLA is currently developing an online account for new licences. A prompt could be integrated into users' accounts asking if they want to register to vote.

## Assisted registration

Assisted registration means that a data source organisation would provide EROs with the names and addresses of people who may be eligible to vote, taking into account relevant information about the qualification criteria. The ERO would then write to those individuals inviting them to register. The invitation would ask them to provide any missing information needed to complete their registration (such as their nationality or their national insurance number), and give them the opportunity to request to be registered as an anonymous elector.

As with automatic registration, transferring only recent transactional data to the specific EROs would ensure that the data is current. A centralised data processing service, similar to the current IER digital service, could be used to simplify the process of transferring data and to reduce the potential for large numbers of records being shared with EROs.

It is common around the world for public bodies to share data to assist with voter registration, as shown in the examples in the automatic registration section above.

Elections New Brunswick (ENB) in Canada receives information on a regular basis about name and address changes from drivers' licence information. ENB carries out automated and manual checks to attempt to match that data with information on the Register of Electors. If a match is not found, ENB sends the individual a certification form and return envelope. The individual must complete the certification to confirm they meet the eligibility requirements to register and return it to ENB. They are then added to the register.

**Assisted registration case study: using National Insurance data to improve registration of attainers**

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) holds data about children whose parents or carers have claimed child benefit and/or tax-free childcare/thirty free hours of childcare. This includes the child's name and date of birth. When a child reaches the age of 15 years and 9 months, HMRC issues a National Insurance number (NINO) to them which is sent in the post to their parent or carer's address. It issues around 700,000 each year.

HMRC does not keep a record of children's nationalities, and NINOs are issued regardless of nationality. HMRC does not have a record for every child in the UK as not every parent or carer makes a claim for child benefit or tax-free childcare/thirty free hours. HMRC is also dependent on claimants to keep their address details up-to-date.

Nonetheless, the name, address and date of birth of those young people issued with NINOs could be shared with EROs, who could then send an Invitation to Register to those young people, prepopulated with this data. They would be invited to provide their nationality information, sign the declaration and post the completed application to the ERO.

A further option would be to develop an online process for providing the missing information, with the individual scanning a QR code included in the Invitation to Register letter. This could provide immediate online access to a pre-populated application on the register to vote digital service, which could then be completed by the individual and processed electronically through the existing IER infrastructure.

Sharing a child's name, date of birth and NINO for electoral registration purposes would require the identification of an appropriate legal gateway and need to adhere to data protection legislation. It would require consideration and agreement by HMRC and the Department for Work and Pensions. It may also require legislative change to create a legal gateway for data sharing for this specific purpose.

**Signposting registration**

Signposting registration means that an individual would be provided with information about registering to vote during a transaction with, or in a communication from, an organisation or public body.

This could include a prompt at the end of a transaction or in a communication directing the individual to the UK Government's Register to Vote website. The individual would then complete the usual steps in that process to apply to register and their data would be sent to the Electoral Registration Officer for their area via the IER Digital Service. This process of signposting could work in a number of scenarios – for example, at the end of a transaction when applying for a driving licence or a new passport, or when an individual is updating their details or in communication with a government department or agency.

Such an approach does not require legal change. It should therefore be explored now, even if the other innovations discussed above follow in the future.

---

**Signposting registration case study: using tenancy deposit scheme data to improve registration among private renters**

Landlords in the private rented sector are required to protect tenants' deposits with a government approved tenancy deposit scheme. There are three authorised tenancy deposit schemes which operate in England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, protecting around 4.5 million deposits and representing around 6 million tenants. Around half of all deposits are protected through custodial schemes which hold the deposit for the duration of the tenancy. The balance of protected deposits are held and managed by the landlord or letting agent via insured-backed schemes and where schemes have far less interaction with the tenant.

The schemes communicate with tenants via email at the start of the tenancy to confirm that their deposit is protected, and then at various points throughout the tenancy, but mainly when the tenant is seeking to gain return of their deposit from the scheme (custodial scheme), or the scheme has unprotected the deposit (insured scheme). Prompts with information about

registering and a link to the Register to Vote website could be embedded into these communications, and on scheme websites or mobile apps.

All schemes have indicated that they are open to exploring ways in which they could work with the Commission to improve registration rates among private renters.

The Electoral Commission

# The December 2022 electoral registers in Northern Ireland

This factsheet should be read in conjunction with the main report: The Electoral Commission Accuracy and Completeness report 2022 Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The results from this wave show that in Northern Ireland in December 2022:

- Local government registers were 83% complete and 86% accurate
- Parliamentary registers were 84% complete and 86% accurate

**Figure 1.1: Completeness and Accuracy of local government and parliamentary registers in Northern Ireland**
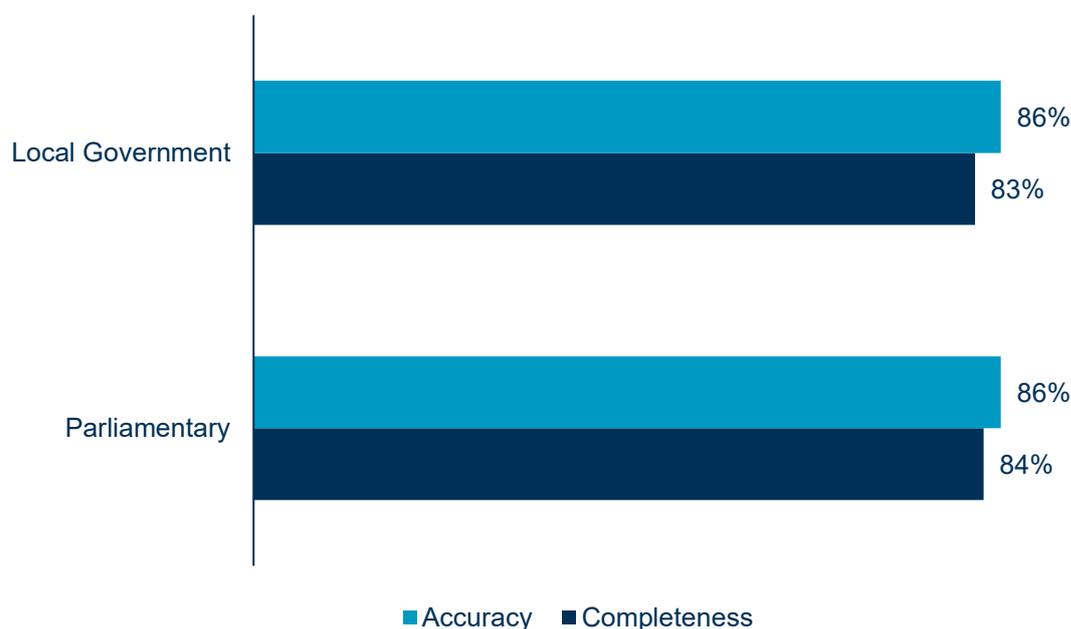


*Base (unweighted): Parliamentary: Completeness 1,889; Accuracy 1,940, Local Government: Completeness 1,948; Accuracy 1,975*

## Completeness

The level of completeness of Northern Ireland registers has increased substantially since 2018. Both the local government and parliamentary registers have improved by 10 percentage points, standing at 83% complete and 84% complete respectively. These improvements are likely a result of the 2021 canvass in Northern Ireland. While not part of

the canvass, the Northern Irish Covid-19 recovery scheme might have also incentivised the public to register.[1]

## Type of completeness errors

Completeness means that every person who is entitled to have an entry on the electoral register is registered. It refers to the percentage of eligible people who are registered at their current address.

A variety of errors can be identified when analysing the completeness of the electoral register. These are categorised as either 'major' or 'minor' errors.

Major errors can be split into three different categories:

A.   The proportion of eligible residents who are currently not included on the register at their current address (i.e., the surveyed address).

B.   Errors relating to someone's name may prevent an individual from casting their vote at a polling station which mean they are not truly registered (e.g., the first name or surname).

C.   Errors which would prevent an eligible elector from casting their vote by suggesting they are ineligible (e.g., an incorrect nationality marker on the parliamentary register or a recorded date of birth which is later than an attainer's birthday).

Minor errors are those which would not prevent someone from casting their vote (for example, an entry with a spelling error).

The highest proportion of major errors in Northern Ireland remains due to eligible residents not being registered at their current address (16.9%), a significant decrease from 2018 (26.7%). Minor errors are found in 7.1% of entries.

**Table 1: Types of completeness errors on the local government registers in Northern Ireland**

|  | Northern Ireland | | Great Britain | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | **2018** | **2022** | **2018** | **2022** |
| **Major errors total** | **27.2%** | **17.4%** | **16.9%** | **14.1%** |

---

[1] In the 2021 canvass, The Electoral Office of Northern Ireland ran a large registration campaign, which sent information leaflets to all homes and pre-populated registration forms to Northern Ireland Housing Executive tenants and electors aged over 75 to encourage paper registration; setting up digital kiosks and registration clinics in local council areas; and a multimedia campaign targeting those who are less likely to be registered or face additional barriers to registering. As part of a Covid-19 recovery scheme, people in Northern Ireland were also offered a 'Spend Local' £100 voucher. Although the scheme was not associated with the canvass, some Executive Ministers linked eligibility for the scheme to being registered to vote and the register was one of the data sets used to check applications for the vouchers. More details are available here: https://www.eoni.org.uk/

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Major errors – (a)** | | | | |
| Living at address but not named on register | **26.7%** | **16.9%** | **16.5%** | **13.4%** |
| **Major errors – (b)** | **0.7%** | **0.5%** | **0.4%** | **0.7%** |
| First name and/or surname wrong on register | 0.7% | 0.5% | 0.5% | 0.7% |
| First name and/or surname missing on register | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Middle name wrong on register (where necessary) | 0.1% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| **Major errors – (c)** | **0.0%** | **0.0%** | **0.0%** | **0.1%** |
| Incorrect nationality marker that excludes from a register | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| DoB on register later than actual DoB | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.1% |
| **Minor errors total** | **4.9%** | **7.1%** | **8.2%** | **8.6%** |
| First name/surname on register misspelled | 1.2% | 0.7% | 1.3% | 0.6% |
| First name/surname on register incomplete | 0.3% | 0.0% | 0.5% | 0.3% |
| Middle name missing from register | 3.8% | 5.5% | 7.2% | 6.5% |
| Middle name or initials misspelled or incomplete on register | 0.5% | 0.4% | 0.0% | 0.2% |
| Middle name or initial wrong on register | 0.4% | 0.1% | 0.1% | 0.2% |
| Person does not have a middle name but middle name on registers (respondents only) | 0.4% | 0.6% | 1.3% | 1.1% |
| Surname is/assumed to be previous surname | 0.8% | 0.1% | 0.5% | 0.3% |

Patterns among key demographics have remained the same since 2018, with lower levels of registration among young people, private renters and those living at their address for a shorter duration. Reflecting the substantial increase in completeness at the national level, most demographics groups have also experienced an uplift, especially when people living in rural areas, younger people, renters and social economic group DE.

**Table 2: Local government register completeness by key characteristics in Northern Ireland**

| | | Northern Ireland | | Great Britain | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **2018** | **2022** | **2018** | **2022** |
| **Urban/rural** | Urban | 70% | **81%** | 83% | **85%** |
| | Rural | 76% | **85%** | 85% | **89%** |
| **Gender** | Male | 72% | **81%** | 83% | **85%** |
| | Female | 73% | **84%** | 83% | **87%** |
| **Age** | 18 - 34 | 51% | **68%** | 68% | **71%** |
| | 35 - 44 | 70% | **83%** | 82% | **84%** |
| | 45 - 54 | 81% | **87%** | 90% | **91%** |
| | 55 - 64 | 85% | **90%** | 90% | **94%** |
| | 65+ | 94% | **95%** | 94% | **96%** |
| **Tenure** | Own outright | 88% | **91%** | 91% | **95%** |
| | Mortgage/Shared ownership | 72% | **82%** | 86% | **88%** |
| | Private renters | 38% | **46%** | 58% | **65%** |
| | Local authority renters | 64% | **78%** | 84% | **79%** |
| | Housing Association renter | | | 82% | **79%** |
| **Socio-economic group** | AB | 80% | **88%** | 86% | **89%** |
| | C1 | 72% | **82%** | 85% | **86%** |
| | C2 | 76% | **83%** | 80% | **86%** |
| | DE | 63% | **78%** | 80% | **81%** |
| **Adults in household** | 1 | 72% | **80%** | 86% | **86%** |
| | 2 | 73% | **83%** | 84% | **88%** |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 3 - 5 | | **83%** | 81% | **82%** |
| | 6+ | 73% | | 78% | **79%** |
| **Duration at address** | Up to 1 year | 19% | **34%** | 36% | **39%** |
| | 1 - 2 years | | | 71% | **72%** |
| | 2 - 5 years | 61% | **76%** | 84% | **82%** |
| | 5 - 10 years | 78% | **82%** | 90% | **91%** |
| | 10 - 16 years | 80% | **92%** | 88% | **92%** |
| | 16 years + | 90% | **92%** | 92% | **95%** |
| **Nationality** | UK and RoI | 74% | **84%** | 86% | **87%** |
| | EU | 45% | **41%** | 54% | **70%** |
| | Commonwealth | | | 62% | **66%** |

*Bases (Unweighted): Great Britain: Dec 2022 (9,495); Dec 2018 (9, 679)*

*Bases (Unweighted): Northern Ireland: Dec 2022 (1,948); Dec 2018 (1,946)*

## Accuracy

The table below shows the types of error found on the December 2022 local government registers. As for Great Britain overall, the highest proportion of major errors (those which would prevent someone from voting, or incorrectly allow someone to vote) relate to entries where the individual on the register no longer lives at the address (12.9%). In Northern Ireland, 7.6% of entries contain minor errors which would not prevent someone from voting.

**Table 3: Type of errors in accuracy on local government registers in Northern Ireland**

| | Northern Ireland | | Great Britain | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **2018** | **2022** | **2018** | **2022** |
| **Major errors total** | **20.1%** | **14.1%** | **11.2%** | **11.7%** |
| **Major errors – (a)** | **18.7%** | **13.0%** | **10.4%** | **9.8%** |
| No corresponding name taken at address | | | | |
| **Major errors – (b)** | **0.7%** | **0.7%** | **0.7%** | **1.1%** |
| First name and/or surname wrong on register | 0.5% | 0.5% | 0.4% | 0.7% |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| First name and/or surname missing on register | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| UK/Irish/Commonwealth marked as qualifying foreign national present | 0.2% | 0.2% | 0.3% | 0.5% |
| **Major errors – (c)** | **0.6%** | **0.2%** | **0.5%** | **0.7%** |
| Name on register corresponds to ineligible name on survey | 0.5% | 0.2% | 0.2% | 0.3% |
| Attainers – DOB missing or wrong | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.1% | 0.2% |
| Qualifying foreign national with marker missing | 0.1% | 0.0% | 0.2% | 0.2% |
| **Minor errors total** | **5.6%** | **7.6%** | **9.1%** | **8.8%** |
| First name/surname on register misspelled | 0.9% | 0.7% | 1.2% | 0.7% |
| First name/surname on register incomplete | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.5% | 0.3% |
| Middle name missing from register | 2.8% | 6.0% | 6.4% | 6.6% |
| Middle name or initials misspelled or incomplete on register | 0.5% | 0.5% | 0.0% | 0.2% |
| Middle name or initial wrong on register | 0.5% | 0.1% | 0.1% | 0.2% |
| Person does not have a middle name but middle name on registers (respondents only) | 0.0% | 0.6% | 1.3% | 1.1% |
| Surname is/assumed to be previous surname | 0.5% | 0.1% | 0.5% | 0.3% |
| First/middle/surname in different order on register | 0.0% | 0.1% | 0.1% | 0.0% |
| DoB earlier on register for attainer | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |

*Bases (unweighted): Great Britain: Dec 2022 (9,478); Dec 2018 (9,155)*

*Bases (unweighted): Northern Ireland: Dec 2022 (1,975); Dec 2018 (1,783)*

As in Great Britain, private renters and those where residents have been living at their address for a shorter duration are less likely to have an accurate entry on the register. As with completeness, most demographic groups have experienced an uplift in accuracy, reflecting the improvements at the national level. There has been particularly noteworthy increases in accuracy in urban areas, among private renters and among those who have lived at their address for less than two years.

**Table 4: Accuracy of local government register by key demographics in Northern Ireland**

| | | Northern Ireland | | Great Britain | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **2018** | **2022** | **2018** | **2022** |
| **Urban/Rural** | Urban | 78% | **86%** | 88% | **88%** |
| | Rural | 82% | **87%** | 91% | **91%** |
| **Tenure** | Owner occupied | 86% | **89%** | 95% | **96%** |
| | Buying on mortgage/shared ownership | 86% | **90%** | 95% | **91%** |
| | Private renters | 61% | **75%** | 81% | **77%** |
| | Local authority renters | 82% | **83%** | 92% | **88%** |
| | Housing Association renter | | | 91% | **90%** |
| **Socio-economic group** | AB | 86% | **91%** | 94% | **91%** |
| | C1 | 85% | **88%** | 93% | **91%** |
| | C2 | 82% | **89%** | 93% | **93%** |
| | DE | 78% | **83%** | 89% | **89%** |
| **Duration at address** | Up to 1 year | 38% | **64%** | 56% | **53%** |
| | 1 - 2 years | | | 93% | **84%** |
| | 2 - 5 years | 84% | **87%** | 94% | **91%** |
| | 5 - 10 years | 90% | **91%** | 96% | **94%** |
| | 10 - 16 years | 90% | **93%** | 95% | **94%** |
| | 16 years + | 87% | **89%** | 95% | **95%** |

*Bases (unweighted): Great Britain: Dec 2022 (9,478); Dec 2018 (9,155)*

*Bases (unweighted): Northern Ireland: Dec 2022 (1,975); Dec 2018 (1,783)*

## Quantifying accuracy and completeness

Using the percentage figures produced from this research, it is possible to estimate the number of people in the population of Northern Ireland who are not correctly registered, or who have inaccuracies in their register entries. These estimates are provided in Table 6.

However, it is important to be aware that these can only be estimates for several reasons – these are detailed in the main report, which should be read in conjunction with this factsheet to ensure the limitations of these estimates are understood.

**Table 6: Quantifying accuracy and completeness in Northern Ireland**

|  |  | **December 2018** | **December 2022** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Completeness** | Local government register | 356,000 - 431,000 | **228,000 - 284,000** |
|  | Parliamentary registers | 346,000 - 421,000 | **205,000 - 254,000** |
| **Accuracy** | Local government register | 229,000 - 286,000 | **172,000 - 213,000** |
|  | Parliamentary registers | 221,000 - 278,000 | **163,000 - 203,000** |

It should also be noted that the range presented above does not mean that there should be an additional 228,000 - 284,000 entries on the register. Those within this 'not correctly registered' total will include those who are included on the register but at a previous address (an inaccurate entry).