

# Local Elections in England 2012

(including Mayoral referendums and Greater London Authority elections)

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## Summary

- Local elections were held for just under 2,400 seats in 128 authorities in England. In six authorities the whole council was elected following boundary changes; in the other authorities either a third (115 councils) or a half (seven councils) of members were elected.
- In 11 cities there were referendums on an elected mayor; direct elections for the new post of Mayor in both Liverpool and Salford; and the fourth contest for the election of the Mayor and Assembly of the Greater London Authority.
- Some 8,800 candidates contested the local elections, yielding a candidate/seat ratio of 3.6 overall. Just 4 councillors were elected unopposed.
- The 2012 local elections gave over 15.9 million registered electors the opportunity to vote: 40% of the total electorate in England.
- Nearly 75,000 electors (0.5% of the total) registered in the weeks leading up to the election under the so-called '11 day rule'.
- Some 4.94 million valid local election votes were cast at the ballot box, making the overall turnout 31.0%. This was some four percentage points below the turnout at the comparable stage in the electoral cycle in 2008.
- The proportion of ballots that are rejected at the official count continues to be small. In 2012 it was about one in every two hundred votes cast.
- Over 2.6 million postal votes were issued -16.6% of all those with a contested election in their ward.
- In five council areas more than 30% of the electorate had a postal vote; in another ten fewer than 10% had a postal vote.
- More than two in three (68.0%) of those with a postal ballot returned it. In contrast fewer than a quarter of those electors required to vote 'in person' did so (24.2%).
- The proportion of postal votes rejected or otherwise not included in the count was 4.2%.
- Rejection following a mismatch of signature and/or date of birth was much more common than rejection for incomplete information.
- In a little under one in five of these cases voters returned their postal voting envelopes but failed to include either the ballot paper itself or the verification statement or both.
- About one half of one percent of electors with a postal vote were granted a waiver to use their date of birth as their sole identifier.
- Some 16,000 local electors (0.10% of the total electorate) appointed proxies to act on their behalf.

- The proportion of ballot papers rejected at the count, and of postal votes rejected before the count, was higher at the mayoral referendum than at the local elections in those cities which had a combined electoral event.
- The pattern of postal voting and postal vote rejection at the GLA contests was similar to that in other parts of England with local elections only.

## Introduction

Local elections took place in 128 local authorities in England on May 3 2012. One third of the council was elected in 36 metropolitan boroughs, 16 unitary authorities and 63 district councils. In seven districts elections were held for half the seats on the council. In two unitary authorities and four districts there were whole council elections following boundary changes.

In addition, there were referendums in 10 English cities on whether or not to have an elected mayor; a referendum in Doncaster on whether or not to continue to have such an elected mayor; direct elections for the new post of Mayor in both Liverpool and Salford; and the fourth contest for the election of the Mayor and Assembly of the Greater London Authority. Outside London these mayoral referendums and elections were combined with scheduled local elections everywhere except in Bristol and Nottingham.

## Local elections

### Results

Local elections were scheduled in 2,231 wards with a total of 2,383 seats at stake. The breakdown of vacancies for the different types of authority is given in Table 1. In a small number of cases voters were asked to cast an additional ballot where a casual vacancy following the death or resignation of a sitting councillor was being filled in conjunction with the due election in that ward.

**Table 1: Wards/seats falling vacant local elections 2012**

	Wards	Seats	Casual vacancies (seats)
Metropolitan boroughs	815	815	7
Unitaries –whole council	31	90	n/a
Unitaries –thirds	277	277	2
Districts –whole council	55	147	n/a
Districts –thirds/halves	1,053	1,054	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,231</b>	<b>2,383</b>	<b>10</b>

Labour decisively beat the Conservatives in votes cast overall. They were also more efficient in terms of converting votes into seats, winning a greater proportion of them than either of their main rivals –see Table 2. In the metropolitan boroughs Labour won nearly three-quarters of the seats with just over 50% of the votes cast; in the districts by contrast the Conservatives polled the largest share of the vote (37%) and won nearly half of all the seats.

**Table 2: Vote and Seat share local elections 2012**

	Vote (%)	Seats (%)
Conservative	27.5	32.5
Labour	43.1	49.4
Lib Dem	14.0	11.9
Green	4.2	1.1

Independent	3.2	2.8
Other	8.0	2.3

## Contestation

A total of 8,801 candidates contested seats at the 2012 local elections –an overall candidate/seat ratio of 3.6. The most competitive elections were in the metropolitan boroughs where 4.1 candidates contested each vacancy; in the districts, by contrast, there were 3.4 candidates for each seat. In just four wards across England were candidates elected unopposed.

## Electorate

The local elections in 2012 gave 15.9 million registered electors the opportunity to vote: four in ten of the total electorate in England. Nearly 75,000 electors (0.5% of the total) took advantage of the so-called ‘11 day rule’ (which was introduced by the 2006 Electoral Administration Act and allows people to register to vote until 11 working days before an election or referendum) and chose to register during the pre-election period. In just one authority (Castle Point) did fewer than 0.2% of the local electorate register under this procedure, and in only one (Ipswich) did more than 0.9% do so. At least a further 11,500 people tried to register after the closing date and some 500 were recorded as trying to vote on election day itself despite not being registered<sup>1</sup>. Local election votes were cast at some 11,300 polling stations as well as by post.

## Turnout

Across the country some 4.94 million local votes were cast at the ballot box, making the overall aggregate turnout 31.0% - see Table 3. Taking into account those who tried to vote but had their postal vote returns rejected, the level of participation rises to 31.5%. This compares with 35.1% and 35.5% respectively at the same point of the electoral cycle in 2008 –see Table 4.

In the rest of this report we use the term ‘adjusted turnout’ to refer to calculations based simply on the number of valid votes cast; ‘minimal unadjusted turnout’ to refer to calculations taking into account those whose vote was rejected at the count; and ‘maximal unadjusted turnout’ to refer to calculations which take into account votes rejected at the count *and* those rejected at the postal ballot verification stage. The evidence in Tables 3 and 4 confirms that only a small fraction of voters try to vote but fail to do so successfully. We return to this issue later in the context of the regulations on postal voting.

**Table 3. Adjusted and unadjusted turnout at English local elections 2012**

	max unadjusted	min unadjusted	adjusted
Total	31.5	31.0	30.8

<sup>1</sup> Not all local authorities were able to supply this information.

Mets	31.7	31.2	31.0
Unitaries	30.2	29.7	29.5
Districts	31.7	31.3	31.2

**Table 4. Adjusted and unadjusted turnout at English local elections 2006-2011\***

2011 max unadjusted 42.7	2011 min unadjusted 42.0	2011 adjusted 41.6
2008 max unadjusted 35.5	2008 min unadjusted 35.1	2008 adjusted 35.0
2007 max unadjusted 38.3	2007 min unadjusted 38.1	2007 adjusted 37.9
2006 max unadjusted 37.0	2006 min unadjusted 36.7	2006 adjusted 36.5

\*Elections in 2009 and 2010 are excluded because of their clash with the 2009 European Parliament and 2010 general election. The local elections in 2011 were held on the same day as a referendum on the parliamentary voting system.

Naturally, there are greater variations when turnout is examined at the local authority or ward level as set out in Table 5. In the case of wards, the highest recorded turnout is at least four times larger than that of the lowest recorded turnout in each type of authority. Turnout was in touching distance of 50% in only one authority (South Lakeland) and below 30% in 48 -12 metropolitan boroughs, nine unitary councils, and 27 districts. It is worth pointing out that many of these councils and wards appear in a similar place in the 'league' year after year. Liverpool Central also had the lowest turnout in the country in 2011, whereas Bastwell in Blackburn with Darwen was again in second top place. Having whole council elections following boundary changes seems to have helped propel Hartlepool from a place in the bottom three unitary turnouts in 2011 to one in the top three this time. On the other hand, a similar occurrence in Broxbourne saw turnout drop by more than ten percentage points since last year.

**Table 5. Highest and lowest aggregate % turnouts by local authority/ward 2012**

Local authority	Highest	Lowest	
<b>Mets</b>			
Trafford	37.5	Coventry	26.8
Bradford	37.1	Manchester	25.7
Wirral	36.4	Sandwell	25.4
<b>Unitaries</b>			
Blackburn	35.7	Thurrock	27.1
Plymouth	33.0	Portsmouth	26.3
Hartlepool	32.6	Kingston upon Hull	25.5

## Districts

South Lakeland	48.4	Basildon	25.5
Harrogate	40.8	Cannock Chase	24.5
Mole Valley	40.0	Broxbourne	24.2

## Ward

### High turnouts

Mets	Bradford	Bradford Moor	55.0
Unitaries	Blackburn with Darwen	Bastwell	62.4
Districts	South Lakeland	Levens	67.5

### Low turnouts

Mets	Liverpool	Central	12.6
Unitaries	Southampton	Bargate	16.3
Districts	Gosport	Grange	13.2

## Rejected ballots

As suggested by the differences between adjusted and unadjusted turnout set out in Table 3, only a small fraction of electors who tried to vote had their ballot papers rejected. This can happen at one of two stages. Under the provisions of the Electoral Administration Act 2006, postal voters must first meet the statutory requirements for the documentation they return by supplying personal identifiers in the form of their date of birth and signature both when they apply for a postal vote and when they return a ballot paper. Votes submitted by those whose details are deemed to match are then added at the count to those of electors who have voted in person. At this stage votes are checked against four criteria to determine their validity. The voter's intention should be clear; they should not have voted for more candidates or parties than allowed at that election; they should not mark the ballot paper in such a way that they can be personally identified; and the ballot paper itself should contain the official mark.

**Table 6. Rejected ballots as % of total included at count –England 2001-12**

2001 general election	0.4
2004 European/local elections	0.8
2005 general election	0.3
2006 local election	0.6
2007 local election	0.4
2008 local election	0.4
2009 local election	0.8
2009 European Parliament election	0.7
2010 general election	0.3
2010 local election	0.6
2011 local election	1.0
2012 local election	0.6

Table 6 shows the proportion of ballot papers examined at the count and subsequently rejected at a selection of recent elections in England. At the 2012 local elections more than 29,000 votes were rejected at the count –that

is 0.6% of all those counted. This marks a return to the long-term average after a small spike in 2011 which was probably caused by electors having the opportunity to vote at both the local elections and the coincident referendum. Voters in the unitaries were slightly more likely (0.73%) to have their ballots rejected than those in the metropolitan boroughs (0.55%) or districts (0.59%).

The most common reason for rejection is an unclear ballot paper –‘unmarked or wholly void for uncertainty’ in the technical language. In 2012 these accounted for two-thirds of rejections in those cases where we have complete data. In only two cases (Cheltenham 2.2% and Blackburn with Darwen 5.5%) were in excess of 2% of ballots coming to the count rejected. The Blackburn council and constituency areas also topped the list of rejected ballot papers in the local and general election/referendum counting in 2010 and 2011. However, we cannot know what proportion of such rejections is the result of deliberate as opposed to accidental actions by voters or, indeed, a consequence of the policies of local election officials.

### Postal voting –uptake and turnout

A sizeable number of electors continue to take advantage of the opportunity to apply for and cast a postal vote. At these elections some 2.63 million postal votes were issued -16.6% of all those with a contested election in their ward (Table 7). Exact comparisons with previous years are impossible because of the varying electoral cycle, but it can be noted that 14.9% of local electors had a postal vote in 2008 (the previous occasion when almost all the seats being contested this year last fell vacant) and that 15.9% of electors throughout England had one at the 2010 general election. Postal voting remains most common in the metropolitan areas, not least because 29 out of a total of 36 such boroughs are located in the North East, North West, and Yorkshire and The Humber regions which had substantial experience of all-postal voting between 2000 and 2004.

**Table 7. Postal electors and local votes 2012 –overall and by type of authority**

Number of postal ballot papers issued	2,634,723	as % of electorate	16.6
Number returned	1,791,301	as % of issued	68.0
Number included ‘in count’	1,715,656	as % of votes at count	34.8
Rejected or otherwise not included in count	75,645	as % of those returned	4.2

#### **Mets**

Postal ballot papers as % of electorate:	18.1 (16.5 in 2008)
% ‘Turnout’ among postal voters:	67.9 (71.4 in 2008)
Rejected ballot papers as % of those returned:	4.3 (3.8 in 2008)
Postal ballots as % of those at count:	37.6 (32.6 in 2008)

#### **Unitaries**

Postal ballot papers as % of electorate:	14.6 (14.3 in 2008)
% ‘Turnout’ among postal voters:	67.9 (71.0 in 2008)
Rejected ballot papers as % of those returned:	5.4 (3.6 in 2008)
Postal ballots as % of those at count:	31.7 (28.5 in 2008)

#### **Districts**

Postal ballot papers as % of electorate:	14.9 (12.9 in 2008)
% ‘Turnout’ among postal voters:	68.3 (72.0 in 2008)

Rejected ballot papers as % of those returned: 3.5 (3.1 in 2008)  
 Postal ballots as % of those at count: 31.4 (24.8 in 2008)

In five areas more than 30% of the electorate had a postal vote –see Table 8. These councils make a regular appearance on this list and all have conducted all postal pilots in the past. At the other extreme, there were ten authorities where fewer than 10% had a postal vote. Propping up this end of the table is Kingston upon Hull from the Yorkshire and The Humber region. Its presence demonstrates that council/party activity remains necessary to reinforce a culture of continuing to use postal votes even where there have been all postal elections in the past. It is also instructive to note that the proportion of electors with postal votes in Birmingham is just 8.4%. This remains by some way the lowest figure for a metropolitan borough and may reflect reaction by the local authority and voters alike to the high profile court case relating to postal vote fraud in 2004. There are even sharper variations when ward level data are examined.

**Table 8. Biggest and smallest take up of postal votes - % electorate by authority 2012**

**Local authority**

**Biggest**

Sunderland	39.7
South Tyneside	36.5
Stevenage	35.6
Newcastle upon Tyne	31.4
Telford and Wrekin	30.9

**Smallest**

Kingston upon Hull	6.1
Oxford	7.4
Halton	7.8
Birmingham	8.4
Epping Forest	8.7

The proportion of postal voters returning their ballot papers always exceeds the turnout among ‘in person’ voters. To an extent this can be explained by the fact that applying for such a vote in the first place often indicates a higher than average level of interest in and engagement with political events. More than two in three postal electors used their vote, although this was a little lower than at the comparable local elections in 2008 when 71.5% of postal electors participated. By contrast the turnout among those obliged to visit a polling station was barely a quarter (24.2%) compared with 28.7% in 2008 and 36.7% at the combined elections/referendum in 2011. This phenomenon also means that postal votes form a disproportionate number of those at the count. In 2012 more than a third of all local votes counted (34.8%) were cast by post; in the metropolitan boroughs it approached four in ten (37.6%). Indeed some argue that the success of postal voting acts to disguise a continuing problem of low electoral participation among those who choose not to take advantage of this facility.

Postal vote rejection

As outlined earlier some electors who try to vote by post are found to have completed the documentation incorrectly and their ballot papers never reach the count. The introduction of personal identifiers appears to have led to a small increase in the proportion of postal votes rejected or otherwise not included in the count. In terms of the actual local election returns for England in 2012, the overall proportion of postal votes rejected or otherwise not included in the count was 4.2% compared with 5.2% in 2011, 4.0% in 2010, 4.7% in 2009, 3.6% in 2008, 3.2% in 2007, and 3.0% at the last local elections before the new regulations in 2006. Where electoral events are combined, as in many cases in 2009 and 2011, there is some evidence that the rejection rate of postal ballots is higher<sup>2</sup>. We comment on this in the context of the combination of local elections and mayoral referendums in ten English cities later in this report.

In order to obtain more information on the reasons for postal vote rejection than the statutory forms allow and to try to overcome inconsistencies within and between local authorities in the recording of answers, each returning officer was asked to compile and submit additional data on the outcomes of their verification process. Table 9 makes clear that rejection following a mismatch of signature and/or date of birth was much more common than rejection for incomplete or missing information. The latter accounts for between one in three (metropolitan boroughs) and one in five rejections; the former for at least a half of all rejections in each type of local authority.

In other cases, varying from 12% in the unitaries to 23% in the metropolitan boroughs, electors returned their postal voting envelopes but failed to include either the ballot paper itself or the verification statement or both. The proportion doing this was, though, somewhat lower than in 2011 when it may have been that some voters deliberately decided not to vote at both electoral events –the local elections and the PVS referendum. We further address this issue too below. Having said all that, the vast majority of postal voters did correctly file their returns complete with matching signature and date of birth.

**Table 9. Reasons for rejection of postal votes at verification by % of total rejected at 2012 local elections**

	<b>Mets</b>	<b>Unitaries</b>	<b>Districts</b>
PV statement rejected (No signature)	16	15	8
PV statement rejected (No DoB)	4	4	4
PV statement rejected (Both)	10	6	10
<b>Proportion rejected (incomplete information)</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>22</b>
PV statement mismatched signature	25	34	26
PV statement mismatched DoB	19	21	20
PV statement mismatched both	7	8	9
<b>Proportion rejected (mismatching)</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Prop rejected (ballot paper or statement missing)</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>23</b>

<sup>2</sup> This does not seem to apply, however, when local elections are combined with a general election.

## Waivers

A concession granted under the terms of the EAA 2006 was that postal electors who either had a disability, or were illiterate, or were unable to furnish a consistent signature could apply for a waiver to use their date of birth as their sole identifier. Table 10 shows that the proportion of postal electors granted such a waiver varied from 0.43% in the metropolitan boroughs to 0.57% in the shire districts. These summary figures are very similar in both proportion and pattern to those recorded for the 2011 local elections and Referendum, the 2010 general election, and the 2009 European Parliament and English local elections. The range varied from 2.23% of postal electors in Newcastle under Lyme being granted a waiver to just 0.05% in Liverpool. It is likely that such differences are at least in part attributable to how far the local authority publicises the availability of such a waiver.

**Table 10: Postal electors granted ‘waivers’ at the 2012 English local elections**

	As proportion of postal electors	Average per local authority
England	0.48	99
Mets	0.43	181
Unitaries	0.52	177
Districts	0.57	59

## Proxy votes

The introduction of postal voting on demand has had a downward impact on the number of electors appointing proxies, especially when there is no concurrent general election –see Table 11. This year was no different with some 16,000 local electors (0.10% of the total electorate) appointing a proxy and just 54 emergency proxies being issued across all councils with local elections.

**Table 11. Proxy voters as percentage of electorate in England 2001-2012**

2012 Loc	2011 Loc	2010 Loc	2010 Gen	2009 Loc	2008 Loc	2005 Gen	2001 Gen
0.10	0.15	0.28	0.32	0.13	0.09	0.22	0.47

## Mayoral Referendums

### Results

#### Mayoral elections

In Liverpool and Salford there were inaugural contests for directly-elected Mayors. Turnout and the use of postal and proxy votes closely matched that at the concurrent local elections. The winning candidate in Liverpool polled over 50% of first preference votes and was elected on the first count. In Salford the eventual winner received 70% of all valid first and second preference votes.

## Referendums

Of the ten cities which held referendums on introducing a directly elected mayor, Bristol alone voted in favour with 53.3% voting 'Yes'. Among the other cases, Manchester was closest to approving a mayor with a 'Yes' vote of 46.8%; in Sheffield, at the other extreme, only 35.0% were in favour. Voters in Doncaster chose to continue with their elected mayoralty by a margin of 62% to 38%.

### The impact of combined local elections and mayoral referendums

There were combined local elections and a referendum in 8 of the 10 areas where the public was consulted about a directly elected mayor. In the two cities without local elections the ballot box turnout was below 25%; in the other eight it was higher (if not always by much). In each of these cases a slightly smaller proportion of the electorate cast a valid ballot at the referendums than the elections –see Table 12.

**Table 12: Valid vote turnout at the 2012 mayoral referendums and English local elections**

	Mayoral referendum	Local elections	Difference
Bristol	24.1	n/a	-
Nottingham	23.8	n/a	-
Birmingham	27.6	28.5	-0.9
Bradford	33.5	36.8	-3.3
Coventry	26.2	26.7	-0.5
Leeds	30.3	31.2	-0.9
Manchester	24.7	25.6	-0.3
Newcastle	32.0	33.1	-1.1
Sheffield	32.1	32.8	-0.7
Wakefield	28.6	28.7	-0.1

There are perhaps three explanations for this difference. First, it is likely – though impossible to quantify – that some voters declined to accept a ballot paper for the referendum. Second, there was a higher rate of rejection of ballot papers at the count at the referendums. Third, there was a higher rate of rejection of postal votes at the referendums.

In the two cities without local elections (Bristol and Nottingham) the proportion of ballot papers rejected at the count was 0.34 and 0.36 respectively. In the other eight cases, the aggregate referendum rejection rate was 2.1%. It varied from 0.75 in Newcastle to 3.46 in Bradford. In the first two cases the proportion rejected as being unmarked or wholly void for uncertainty was 66% and 63%; elsewhere it was 69% in Newcastle, but otherwise never less than 83% (peaking at 95% in Leeds). By contrast, at the *local* elections in those metropolitan boroughs with a coincident referendum the overall rejection rate at the count was 0.56%. In Bradford it was 0.8%; in Newcastle 0.3%.

The average rate of rejection of postal votes was 7.6% where the referendum was combined with local elections and 6.4% where it was not –see Table 13.

Among individual authorities it varied from 3.4% in Newcastle to 10.5% in Birmingham. At the local elections in the eight cities the PV rejection rate was 5.5% with all except Manchester showing a lower rate of rejection than at the referendum. A failure to return the ballot paper and/or postal vote statement accounted for 8.2% of all PV rejections in 'non-combined' areas and for 32.7% of them in 'combined' areas. The proportion so rejected ranged from 2.8% in Bristol to 59.5% in Wakefield.

**Table 13: Postal vote rejection rate at the 2012 mayoral referendums and English local elections**

	Mayoral referendum	Local elections	Difference
Bristol	4.7	n/a	-
Nottingham	8.0	n/a	-
Birmingham	10.5	5.4	-5.1
Bradford	8.2	7.5	-0.7
Coventry	7.1	4.9	-2.2
Leeds	9.8	5.3	-4.5
Manchester	6.3	6.5	(0.2)
Newcastle	3.4	2.9	-0.5
Sheffield	7.9	5.2	-2.7
Wakefield	7.3	6.4	-0.9

It is difficult to escape the conclusion that a small proportion of those who voted both in person and by post deliberately decided to ignore the mayoral contest while participating in the concurrent local election.

### **GLA elections –postal voting and additional data**

The body responsible for conducting the GLA elections, *London Elects*, collected and published data on voting patterns and rejected ballot papers at ward, local authority, Assembly constituency, and cross-London levels. The valid vote (adjusted) turnout at the Mayoral election was 38.1% compared with 44.6% in 2008. The proportion of ballot papers rejected at the Mayoral count was 1.8% (1.7% in 2008) making the overall turnout 38.8% (45.3% in 2008). The analysis here is confined to information especially collected for the Commission on postal voting and other aspects of electoral administration.

#### Electoral administration

Some 54,000 electors (0.9% of the London electorate) took advantage of the so-called '11 day rule' and chose to register during the pre-election period. About 10,000 electors were reported as trying to register after the closing date. This may well underestimate the true figure as not all local authorities were able to provide data and, in other cases, record keeping may not have been precise. At least a further 1,000 tried to vote on the day but were found not to be registered<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Not all local authorities were able to supply this information.

More than 2,500 postal electors were granted a waiver under the terms of the 2006 EAA (0.3% of all such electors). This is somewhat lower than the proportion in the rest of England –see Table 10. Proxies were appointed by over 7,000 London electors (0.12% of the total electorate) with just 34 emergency proxy votes being issued.

### Postal voting

Postal votes were issued to nearly 820,000 London electors (14.1% of the total) -see Table 14. At the time of the 2010 general/London borough elections 13.8% had a postal vote and at the previous GLA elections in 2008 it was 11.7%. The largest proportions of postal electors were in the City of London (29.4%) and the borough of Barnet (19.7%), and the lowest in the borough of Ealing (9.1%). 68.8% returned their postal ballots, varying from 80.3% in Hammersmith and Fulham to 62.9% in Redbridge. This compares with 72.0% at the 2008 contests. The turnout among those obliged to vote ‘in person’ was 34.4%.

**Table 14. Postal electors in London 2012**

Number of postal ballot papers issued	817,585	as % of electorate	14.1
Number returned	562,862	as % of issued	68.8
Number included ‘in count’	536,794	as % of votes at count	23.9
Rejected or otherwise not included in count	26,068	as % of those returned	4.6

### Postal vote rejection

The overall proportion of postal votes rejected or otherwise not included in the count was 4.6%, compared with 4.8% in 2008 and 5.2% in 2010 when the general and London borough elections were combined. Table 15 makes clear that rejection following a mismatch of signature and/or date of birth was much more common than rejection for incomplete or missing information. Some one in five potential voters returned their postal voting envelopes but failed to include either the ballot paper itself or the verification statement or both. In each case these figures are in line with the pattern seen in English local elections and described above.

**Table 15. Reasons for rejection of postal votes at verification by % of total rejected at 2012 GLA elections**

PV statement rejected (No signature)	6
PV statement rejected (No DoB)	5
PV statement rejected (Both)	10
<b>Proportion rejected (incomplete information)</b>	<b>21</b>
PV statement mismatched signature	29
PV statement mismatched DoB	21
PV statement mismatched both	8
<b>Proportion rejected (mismatching)</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Prop rejected (ballot paper or statement missing)</b>	<b>21</b>