



# European Parliament Elections 2009

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## Introduction

Elections to choose members of the European Parliament took place in Great Britain and Northern Ireland on June 4<sup>th</sup> 2009. This was the seventh occasion that such elections had been held, and the third on which a regional party list system was used in Great Britain. England was divided into nine electoral regions coinciding with the Government Office Regions (GORs), with Scotland and Wales forming a ‘region’ each for electoral purposes. As at all previous contests, Northern Ireland formed a single constituency region with its three MEPs being elected using the Single Transferable Vote system. As in 2004, simultaneous elections were held to choose local council representatives in some parts of the country. In 2009 these contests covered 27 county councils and 7 unitary authorities, all in England.

## Number and distribution of elected representatives

The United Kingdom’s allocation of European Parliament seats in 2009 was reduced to 72 from 78 following the accession of new member states of the European Union. As directed by the Lord Chancellor the Electoral Commission recommended to the Government how these seats should be distributed between the regions<sup>1</sup>. Its recommendations were accepted in their entirety as follows:

**Table 1. Distribution of MEP seats 2009 and 2004**

Region	2009	2004	change
East Midlands	5	6	-1
East of England	7	7	0
London	8	9	-1
North East	3	3	0
North West	8	9	-1
South East	10	10	0
South West (including Gibraltar)	6	7	-1
West Midlands	6	7	-1
Yorkshire and the Humber	6	6	0
Wales	4	4	0
Scotland	6	7	-1
Northern Ireland	3	3	0
Total	72	78	-6

## ELECTION RESULTS<sup>2</sup>

Although the votes are counted and the seats allocated within each region, most public and media interest in the European Parliament contests naturally centred on the overall result –see Table 2. Across Great Britain the Conservatives polled the most votes (4,198,394 or 27.74% of the total), ahead of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) with 2,498,226 votes (16.50%). Labour came third with 2,381,760 votes (15.73%). As in 2004 the combined share of the vote for the two largest political parties at Westminster was less than 50%. The Liberal Democrats were

<sup>1</sup> See Electoral Commission, Distribution between electoral regions of UK MEPs. July 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Detailed results by region, local authority and party are contained in the Appendix, which is an Excel file which can be found alongside this report on the Electoral Commission’s website.

fourth with 2,080,613 votes (13.75%). Together these four parties accounted for more than seven in every ten votes cast (73.72%). The two other parties which won a seat in England were the Green party with 1,303,745 votes (8.61%) and the British National Party (BNP) with 943,598 votes (6.23%). The Conservatives also won the largest number of seats (25), ahead of Labour and UKIP with 13 each. The Liberal Democrats won 11 seats, and the Green party and BNP two each. The Scottish National Party and Plaid Cymru also won representation based on their support in Scotland and Wales respectively.

**Table 2. Summary EP election result in Great Britain**

Party	Votes	%share of vote	seats	% share of seats
Conservative	4,198,394	27.74	25	36.2
UKIP	2,498,226	16.50	13	18.8
Labour	2,381,760	15.73	13	18.8
Liberal Democrat	2,080,613	13.75	11	15.9
Green	1,303,745	8.61	2	2.9
British National Party	943,598	6.23	2	2.9
Scottish National Party	321,007	2.12	2	2.9
Plaid Cymru	126,702	0.84	1	1.4
Others	1,282,887	8.48	0	0

In Northern Ireland Sinn Fein topped the poll ahead of the Democratic Unionist Party –see Table 3. In 2004 their positions were the reverse. For the first time the Ulster Unionist party reflected their electoral alliance with the Conservatives in the name under which they contested the elections. There was no change to party representation in Northern Ireland.

**Table 3. Summary EP election result in Northern Ireland**

Party	1 <sup>st</sup> preference votes	% share of vote	change on 2004	seats
Sinn Fein	126,184	26.0	-0.3	1
Democratic Unionist	88,346	18.2	-13.8	1
Ulster Conservatives & Unionists	82,893	17.1	+0.5	1
Social Democratic and Labour	78,489	16.2	+0.3	-
Traditional Unionist Voice	66,197	13.7	n/a	-
Alliance	2,669	5.5	n/a	-
Green	15,764	3.3	+2.4	-

*Quota for election = 121143. Calculated as: (No. of valid votes cast) ÷ (No. of seats to be filled + 1)*

## TURNOUT

The European Parliament election is the only contest other than the general election at which all voters in the United Kingdom have an opportunity to vote on the same occasion. In 2009, more than 45 million electors were registered and some 15.6 million of them cast valid votes at the election. Across the country more than 190,000 electors were added to the register between 8<sup>th</sup> April (the previous last date for registration to take effect before the election) and 19<sup>th</sup> May (the new closing date) –an average of 485 per counting area or about 0.4% of the total electorate. In 3 cases, Brighton and Hove, Cardiff Central, and Newport West,, names amounting to an extra

2% of the total electorate were added; in 15 other cases the electorate rose by more than 1% following the addition of names.

However, the overall turnout of 34.5% was four points lower than that at the previous EP election in the UK and more than 25 points less than at the 2005 general election – see Table 4. Turnout declined in each country. In Wales, where there had been simultaneous local elections in 2004, it was down by eleven percentage points and in Northern Ireland there was a fall of nearly nine points. In England, turnout dropped by 3.7 points compared with four years previously when there was all postal voting in four regions. Scotland once again had the lowest national turnout, although it declined by only just over two percentage points.

**Table 4. Turnout at European Parliament elections 1979-2009 (valid votes as a % of the electorate – i.e. adjusted turnout)**

	2009	(2005 general election)	2004	1999	1994	1989	1984	1979
United Kingdom	34.5	(61.4)	38.5	24.0	36.5	36.8	32.9	32.7
Great Britain	34.3	(61.3)	38.2	23.1	36.2	36.5	32.1	32.1
England	35.1	(61.3)	38.8	22.7	35.5	35.8	31.6	31.8
Wales	30.4	(62.6)	41.4	28.1	43.1	41.1	39.7	34.4
Scotland	28.5	(60.8)	30.6	24.7	38.2	40.8	33.1	33.6
Northern Ireland	42.4	(62.9)	51.2	57.0	48.7	48.3	64.4	55.6

It is also possible to express the level of turnout in terms of all those who tried to vote. This includes electors whose completed postal ballot was rejected because documents were missing or the postal voting statement was not correctly completed,<sup>3</sup> as well as those whose ballot paper was rejected at the count for one of the statutorily described reasons. In the rest of this report we use the term ‘adjusted turnout’ to refer to calculations based on the number of valid votes cast; ‘minimal unadjusted turnout’ to refer to calculations which take 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 Table 5 suggests that only a small fraction of voters try to vote but fail to do so successfully. In those few instances where the difference between our turnout measures is more than a couple of tenths of one percent, an explanation is usually readily available in terms of the context of the election. We shall return to this issue later.

**Table 5. Adjusted and unadjusted turnout at European Parliament elections 1999-2009**

2009 max	2009 min	2009 adj	2004 max	2004 min	2004 adj	1999 max	1999 min	1999 adj
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<sup>3</sup> ‘Under the provisions of the 2006 Electoral Administration Act all postal voters are required to provide the Electoral Registration Officer with personal identifiers, in the form of their signature and date of birth. These must be provided on a postal voting statement when the voter returns their postal vote, an can be checked to verify the voter’s identity.’

United Kingdom	35.1	34.7	34.5	39.2	38.8	38.5	24.1	24.0	24.0
Great Britain	34.9	34.5	34.3	38.9	38.5	38.2	23.2	23.1	23.1
England	35.7	35.3	35.1	39.5	39.1	38.8	22.7	22.7	22.7
Wales	30.9	30.5	30.4	42.1	41.9	41.4	28.3	28.2	28.1
Scotland	28.9	28.6	28.5	30.8	30.6	30.6	24.8	24.7	24.7
Northern Ireland	42.9	42.8	42.4	51.8	51.7	51.2	57.3	57.1	57.0

Table 6 highlights some quite striking regional variations in turnout in England. In those regions where there was all-postal voting in 2004, participation rates this time were much lower –down by over 10 percentage points in the North East, for example. Turnout was also lower in London, where there had been London Mayor and Assembly elections in 2004, and in the West Midlands where many authorities had had metropolitan borough elections four years previously. By contrast, turnout was actually a little higher than in 2004 in those three regions, East of England, South East and South West, where a majority of the electorate also had the opportunity to vote in shire or unitary council contests.

**Table 6. Adjusted and unadjusted turnout 2004-2009 by electoral region**

	2009 maximal	2004 maximal	change	2009 adjusted	2004 adjusted	change
<b>All postal voting in 2004</b>						
East Midlands	38.0	44.7	-6.7	37.1	43.7	-6.6
North East	31.1	42.5	-11.4	30.4	41.0	-10.6
North West	32.3	42.3	-10.0	31.7	41.1	-9.4
Yorkshire & Humber	32.9	43.7	-10.8	32.4	42.3	-9.9
<b>Conventional elections in 2004</b>						
East of England	38.4	36.9	+1.5	37.7	36.5	+1.2
London	33.9	37.9	-4.0	33.3	37.3	-4.0
South East	38.2	36.9	+1.3	37.5	36.6	+0.9
South West	39.4	38.0	+1.4	38.8	37.7	+1.1
West Midlands	35.4	36.8	-1.4	34.8	36.3	-1.5
Wales	30.9	42.1	-11.2	30.4	41.4	-11.0
Scotland	28.9	30.8	-1.9	28.5	30.6	-2.1
Northern Ireland	42.9	51.8	-8.9	42.4	51.2	-8.8

### Rejected ballots

As suggested by the differences between adjusted and unadjusted turnout set out in Table 5, a relatively small number of electors who tried to vote had their ballot papers rejected. This can happen at one of two stages. Postal voters must first meet the statutory requirements for the documentation they return –see above. Votes which pass this test are then added at the count to those of electors who have voted in person. At this stage votes are checked against four other criteria to determine their validity. The voter’s intention should be clear; they should not vote for more candidates or parties than allowed at that election; they should not mark the ballot paper in such a way that they can personally be identified; and the ballot paper itself should contain the official mark.

Table 7 shows that the proportion of ballot papers examined at the count and subsequently rejected has been less than 1% at every European Parliament election. The general election of 2005 follows a similar pattern. Only in Northern Ireland does the figure exceed 1% on more than a single occasion. The proportion of rejected papers is slightly lower than in 2004 everywhere except Scotland. The substantial drop in Wales is likely to reflect the absence this time of potentially confusing local elections. The more complex the ballot paper, and the more electors are asked to vote in different ways on different ballot papers, the more likely they are to make a mistake. The breakdown of reasons for rejection at the count (where available) is contained in the Appendix. It is worth noting in passing that an unmarked or unclear ballot paper – ‘void for uncertainty’ in the technical language – is by far the most common reason for rejection. In 2009 this accounted for more than two-thirds of rejections – a similar proportion to that found at both the 2005 general election and the 2004 EP contests. However, we cannot know what proportion of such rejections are the result of deliberate as opposed to accidental actions by voters.

**Table 7. Rejected ballots as proportion of total included at count, 1979-2009**

	<b>2009</b>	<b>(2005 general election)</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1989</b>	<b>1984</b>	<b>1979</b>
United Kingdom	0.7	0.3	0.8	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.4
Great Britain	0.6	0.3	0.8	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.3
England	0.7	0.3	0.8	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.3
Wales	0.5	0.3	1.2	0.4	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.4
Scotland	0.4	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2
Northern Ireland	0.9	0.9	1.0	0.3	1.6	1.0	1.7	2.4

**English regions 2004 and 2009**

	<b>2009</b>	<b>2004</b>
East Midlands	0.8	0.5
East of England	0.8	0.6
London	0.6	0.9
North East	0.4	1.4
North West	0.6	1.0
South East	0.8	0.5
South West	0.8	0.4
West Midlands	0.6	0.9
Yorkshire & Humber	0.5	1.5

**POSTAL VOTING –UPTAKE AND TURNOUT**

At the first five cycles of European Parliament elections only a small fraction of electors applied for and were given postal votes. However, the change in legislation prior to the 2001 general election has brought with it a steady increase in the number of those taking advantage of postal votes ‘on request’, further emphasised in 2004 by all-postal voting in four regions in England. Tables 8, 9 and 10 show that at the 2009 EP contests at least 11% of electors in every part of the country except Northern Ireland, where different rules apply, opted for a postal vote. This represents more than 6.25 million individual electors. There has even been an increase compared with

the 2005 general election, despite the new rules on personal identifiers together with the need to reapply for a postal vote.

The North East, which was the region with the widest experience of all-postal voting pilots, has the highest proportion of postal voters and some legacy from 2004 is also retained in East Midlands, North West, and Yorkshire and the Humber. In Wales, 15% of electors now have a postal vote. In many local authorities the figure is much higher than that for the region of which they are a part, often due to a campaign by either the councils themselves and/or local political parties. In seven counting areas more than three in ten electors are registered for a postal vote –Chorley, Newcastle upon Tyne, Rushcliffe, South Tyneside, Stevenage, Sunderland, and Telford and Wrekin. At the other extreme there are five areas in Great Britain where fewer than 7% of the electorate has a postal vote –Barrow in Furness, Ealing, Isles of Scilly, Kingston upon Hull, and North Warwickshire.

**Table 8. Postal electors and votes at the 2009 EP elections—overall and by country**

UK

Number of postal ballot papers issued	6,318,501	as % of electorate	13.9
Number returned	4,070,902	as % of issued	64.4
Number included ‘in count’	3,892,085	as % of votes at count	24.8
Rejected or otherwise not included in count	178,817	as % of those returned	4.4

GB

Number of postal ballot papers issued	6,304,650	as % of electorate	14.2
Number returned	4,061,362	as % of issued	64.4
Number included ‘in count’	3,883,538	as % of votes at count	25.5
Rejected or otherwise not included in count	177,824	as % of those returned	4.4

England

Number of postal ballot papers issued	5,512,772	as % of electorate	14.4
Number returned	3,565,394	as % of issued	64.7
Number included ‘in count’	3,407,535	as % of votes at count	25.4
Rejected or otherwise not included in count	157,859	as % of those returned	4.4

Scotland

Number of postal ballot papers issued	453,231	as % of electorate	11.7
Number returned	287,015	as % of issued	63.3
Number included ‘in count’	275,491	as % of votes at count	24.8
Rejected or otherwise not included in count	11,524	as % of those returned	4.0

Wales

Number of postal ballot papers issued	338,647	as % of electorate	15.0
Number returned	208,953	as % of issued	61.7
Number included ‘in count’	200,512	as % of votes at count	29.2
Rejected or otherwise not included in count	8,441	as % of those returned	4.0

Northern Ireland

Number of postal ballot papers issued	13,851	as % of electorate	1.2
Number returned	9,540	as % of issued	68.9
Number included 'in count'	8,547	as % of votes at count	1.8
Rejected or otherwise not included in count	993	as % of those returned	10.4

**Table 9. Postal votes as % of electorate 1979-2009**

	2009	(2005 general election)	2004*	1999	1994	1989	1984	1979
United Kingdom	13.9	12.1	8.3	1.3	1.2	1.1	1.4	2.0
Great Britain	14.2	12.4	8.6	1.2	1.1	1.1	1.3	2.0
England	14.4	12.8	9.0	1.3	1.2	1.1	1.3	1.9
Wales	15.0	12.7	10.1	1.7	1.6	1.5	1.8	2.7
Scotland	11.7	8.1	4.7	1.2	0.9	0.8	1.1	2.0
Northern Ireland	1.2	2.4	1.9	2.2	2.2	2.5	3.0	3.9

*\*In electoral regions without all-postal voting*

**Table 10. Postal votes as % of electorate by English region 2004-9**

	2009	2004	change
Eastern	13.0	8.9	+4.1
London	12.4	8.4	+4.0
South East	13.1	9.1	+4.0
South West	13.8	10.5	+3.3
West Midlands	11.6	8.6	+3.0

All postal voting 2004

East Midlands	14.8	100
North East	25.5	100
North West	16.2	100
Yorkshire and the Humber	16.6	100

The introduction of postal voting on demand has also had an impact on the number of electors appointing proxies. Although this figure has always risen and fallen depending on the election at hand, the proportion of proxies in 2009 was further sharply reduced compared with 2004 and is now less than a quarter just a fraction of that recorded at the inaugural 1999 European contests –see Table 11.

**Table 11. Proxy votes 1999-2009**

	2009	(2005 gen el)	2004	1999
United Kingdom	0.09	0.22	0.17	0.42
Great Britain	0.09	0.22	0.16	0.41
England	0.10	0.22	0.16	0.40
Wales	0.08	0.19	0.19	0.48
Scotland	0.08	0.19	0.15	0.50
Northern Ireland	0.13	0.59	0.36	0.62



The proportion of postal voters who return their ballot papers has always exceeded the turnout among ‘in person’ voters. To an extent this can be explained by the fact of applying in the first place indicating a level of interest in and engagement with political events. However, especially in the case of second order elections, the convenience and flexibility of postal voting is also likely to boost participation. Table 12 shows that in each of the last three rounds of European elections twice as many postal as non-postal electors voted, whereas at the 2005 general election only about a third more did so. The figures for Wales are particularly interesting. Without the campaign stimulus of local election contests, turnout fell dramatically compared to 2004 among ‘in person’ voters whereas those voting by post were more likely to participate than they had been four years previously.

**Table 12. Turnout among postal voters and non-postal voters 1999-2009\***

	2009		(2005 general election)		2004*		1999	
	Postal	Other	Postal	Other	Postal	Other	Postal	Other
United Kingdom	61.6	30.4	76.7	59.5	64.8	34.0	55.2	23.6
Great Britain	61.6	30.0	76.6	59.4	64.6	33.7	54.1	22.7
England	61.8	30.9	76.7	59.3	65.5	34.0	53.8	22.2
Wales	59.2	25.5	74.6	60.7	56.3	39.7	52.8	27.7
Scotland	60.8	24.4	77.8	59.4	64.9	28.9	58.5	24.2
Northern Ireland	61.7	42.6	83.0	63.0	80.6	50.6	79.7	55.9

*\*Calculation based on ballot papers included in the count - ‘minimal unadjusted turnout’. In 2004 only electoral regions without all-postal voting are included in summaries.*

Some electors who try to vote by post are inevitably found to have completed the documentation incorrectly and their ballot papers never reach the count. The proportion of such cases has varied at previous European elections, but increased quite sharply this year compared with 2004 –see Table 13. This is likely to be explained by the new personal identifier regulations requiring electors in Great Britain to provide verifiable information before their ballot paper is allowed to go through to the count. The apparently high figure for Northern Ireland represents fewer than 1,000 electors given the small number of postal votes issued.

The new (2006 EAA) postal voting regulations require returning officers to verify the personal identifiers on a minimum 20% sample of all postal ballot papers returned. All local counting authorities met this statutory duty, with the large majority (more than 9 in 10) claiming to have sampled 100% (or very nearly) of all returns. A further report on the verification and rejection of postal ballots contains more detail on that aspect of the administration of the election.

**Table 13. % Ballot papers returned by post but rejected at verification 1999-2009**

	2009	2004	1999	1994	1989	1984	1979
United Kingdom	4.4	2.1	3.3	3.9	5.7	5.2	3.1
Great Britain	4.4	2.1	3.1	4.0	6.1	5.3	3.1
England	4.4	2.1	3.0	3.7	5.6	5.1	3.0
Wales	4.0	4.3	4.5	6.0	10.5	8.8	4.6
Scotland	4.0	2.1	2.6	5.7	7.2	3.7	2.8
Northern Ireland	10.4	5.7	6.3	2.4	2.2	4.1	2.7

**English regions 2004 and 2009**

	2009	2004
East Midlands	6.4	1.8
East of England	4.3	2.8
London	4.5	3.9
North East	3.7	2.3
North West	4.4	1.9
South East	4.6	2.3
South West	4.0	2.2
West Midlands	4.5	3.0
Yorkshire & Humber	3.5	1.9

**IMPACT OF COMBINED ELECTIONS**

Local elections took place in 34 local authorities in England on the same day as the UK-wide elections to the European Parliament. 27 county councils and 7 unitary authorities held contests, with some 17.6 million registered electors (just over 45% of the total electorate in England) having the opportunity to vote. Table 14 shows that EP turnout was higher in those places where the local and Euro contests were combined than in places without local elections.

**Table 14. Turnout and combined elections, England 2009**

	Mean %turnout	Aggregate adjusted Euros	Aggregate adjusted locals
Local elections	38.95	39.04	39.2
No local elections	32.10	31.70	-

It is likely that part of this difference can be accounted for by the pattern of where local elections fell in 2009. For example, none took place in the metropolitan boroughs (average local election turnout in 2007 35%), whereas there were elections throughout shire England (2007 average 39%). To control for this we have examined the change in turnout between 2004 and 2009 in regions which did not have all-postal voting according to whether individual councils had elections on one, both or neither of those occasions. Nonetheless, the data in Table 15 still appear to confirm that local elections play a role in boosting turnout. In places where there were local elections this year but not in 2004, Euro turnout is up by more than three percentage points.

Conversely where there were local elections in 2004 but not this time, Euro turnout has dropped by 4%. In Wales, as discussed above, the decline was fully 11 points.

**Table 15. Turnout at combined elections in England 2004 and 2009**

	Mean %turnout 2009	Mean %turnout 2004	Difference
Local elections both	37.8	38.2	-0.4
Local elections 2009 only	40.3	37.0	+3.3
Local elections 2004 only	31.2	35.2	-4.0
(London 2004 only)	33.3	37.3	-4.0)
Local elections neither	34.4	34.1	+0.3

Combination also had an impact on the number of ballot papers rejected. Although the aggregate adjusted Euro and local turnout was very similar in 2009 –see Table 14, in every region except East Midlands the proportion of EP votes rejected at the count was twice or more as high where there were local elections –see Table 16. This is likely to be the result of either voter confusion and/or a failure to cast a clear Euro vote. The option of refusing to accept one or other of the ballot papers from the presiding officer at the polling station would appear extremely rare. In most cases, too, it was electors with combined Euro and local elections who were more likely to fall foul of the postal voting regulations so that their return was rejected at the verification stage.

**Table 16. Rejected ballots and combined elections in England 2009\***

	% votes rejected		%postal ballots rejected	
	combined	EP only	combined	EP only
East Midlands	0.8	0.5	5.9	8.5
East of England	0.9	0.4	4.3	4.4
North West	1.0	0.4	6.3	3.7
South East	0.9	0.3	5.0	3.4
South West	0.9	0.4	4.1	3.5
West Midlands	0.9	0.4	4.9	4.2
Yorkshire & the Humber	0.8	0.4	3.8	3.5

\*There were no local elections in either London or the North East and therefore no variability to measure.

## Conclusions

- The Conservatives topped the poll in Great Britain and won the largest number of seats. A total of 8 parties won at least one seat, with the British National Party securing its first two seats in the European Parliament.
- There was no change in party representation in Northern Ireland, although the Ulster Unionist party reflected their electoral alliance with the Conservatives in the name under which they contested the elections.
- More than 15.6 million valid votes were cast, making the overall turnout across the UK 34.5%. This is four percentage points lower than in 2004, but in line with the long-term average for European Parliament elections.

- Turnout declined in each country, being especially lower in Wales (where there had been simultaneous local elections in 2004) and Northern Ireland. It also dropped markedly in those regions of England which had had all postal voting in 2004 but, in contrast, was a little higher in some other regions.
- The proportion of ballots that are rejected at the official count continues to be very small. In 2009 it was about six in every thousand votes cast. However, there is some evidence that the rate of rejection is greater for whatever reason when elections are combined.
- More than 6.25 million postal votes were issued -13.9% of the entire electorate. Despite the new rules on personal identifiers, together with the need for electors to reapply for a postal vote, this is nearly two percentage points above the level at the 2005 general election. Only in Northern Ireland, where different regulations apply, was there a decline in postal votes issued.
- The increase in postal voting had a clear impact on the number of electors appointing proxies. Across the country less than a tenth of one percent of electors now opt for this method of voting –fewer than 45,000 electors in total.
- 61.6% of those with a postal ballot returned it in valid form. By way of contrast, only three in 10 of those electors who have opted to vote ‘in person’ did so.
- The proportion of postal votes rejected or otherwise not included in the count was, at 4.4%, rather higher than the long-term average for EP elections, but it is unclear how far this was a consequence of the additional requirement for electors to provide personal identifiers when applying for and casting a postal ballot. The verification and rejection of postal votes is the subject of a separate report.
- All local authorities met their statutory duty to sample a minimum of 20% of returned postal ballot papers in order to verify their legality. The large majority claimed to have sampled 100% (or very nearly) of all returns.
- Areas which had local as well as European elections appear to have attracted a greater proportion of their electorate to vote. In particular turnout was up in local authorities where there were local contests this time but not in 2004.