

# The quality of the 2014 electoral registers in Great Britain

Research into the last registers  
produced under the household  
registration system

July 2014

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## Contents

	Foreword	4
	Executive summary	7
1	Introduction	18
2	Accuracy and completeness of the February/March 2014 electoral registers	27
3	Explaining the trend	52
4	Implications for Individual Electoral Registration (IER)	66
	Appendices	
	Appendix A	71
	Appendix B	84

### **Notes on tables of contents**

To add more rows into your table of contents highlight a whole row, right click and select insert rows.

Note that forewords and appendices are not like numbered chapters so do not include a number in the left-hand column. Please see above example on how to format these.

# Foreword

This report assesses the accuracy and completeness of the most recent registers published in February and March 2014. This was the last study conducted into a register compiled under the old ‘head of the household’ system of registration before the introduction of individual electoral registration (IER) last month in England and Wales

Alongside this report, we are also publishing an accompanying report “Electoral Registration in 2011” which assesses the quality of the electoral registers in December 2010 and April 2011 using data from the 2011 Census. This periodic review is the most complete and detailed assessment of the electoral registers in Great Britain, and can only be conducted every 10 years. We thank our colleagues at the Office of National Statistics, our colleagues at the National Records for Scotland and all of the Electoral Registration Officers and their staff for their help and collaboration on these studies. These two reports provide an invaluable snapshot, based on the latest data, of the state of the electoral register as we begin the move to IER. In particular, they tell us two important things.

First, following a decline in the completeness of the registers between 2001 and 2011, it now appears that registration levels have remained stable since 2011. This is welcome news and suggests that, as the transition to IER begins, we can use the opportunity this brings to help increase the number of people registered to vote.

Secondly, we now know that there were potentially around 7.5 million people not correctly registered in December 2010. In our report, “*Great Britain’s Electoral Registers 2011*” we said that in December 2010 at least 6 million people were not correctly registered at their current address. It is the availability of the detailed census analysis that means we can now give this more accurate estimate (rather than the minimum estimate of at least 6 million that we gave in our December 2011 report).

Despite the completeness figures apparently remaining stable since 2011, no one should underestimate the scale of the challenge that the transition to IER represents. As these reports establish, there is a lot of work to do. For example:

- younger people (under 35) remain considerably less likely to be registered
- People who rent from a private landlord remain considerably less likely to be registered
- voters of White or some Asian ethnicities are more likely to be registered than those claiming some Black, mixed or other ethnicity
- citizens of the European Union and Commonwealth are under-

registered.

- those classified as social grade DE are less likely to be registered than other social grades.

The fact that many of these groups of people are less likely to be registered to vote is linked to wider trends such as increasing population mobility. These reports reinforce an important finding from all the Commission's previous research: moving from one address to another is a major factor in determining whether a person is likely to have registered to vote. For example:

- People who rent from a private landlord are more likely to change their address (they are also less likely to be registered than those who own their own home).
- There are much higher levels of population mobility in most large urban populations than in many rural areas – there are also lower levels of registration, particularly in London.
- Young people, who are more likely to move frequently from one address to another, are less likely to be registered.

This research confirms that the public engagement plans that Electoral Registration Officers have put in place to help support the transition to IER are correctly targeted. The challenge now is to make sure that they are delivered. We will be working with them as closely as possible and monitoring the transition to ensure that this happens. We will also continue to monitor the state of the register closely during the transition to IER and in particular we will report to Parliament soon after the May 2015 general election on the impact of the transition to IER up to that date.

The Commission will also use this evidence to help inform our campaign before the UK Parliamentary General Election in 2015.

We are also working with a wide range of partners, such as the National Union of Students, Citizen's Advice and others to help us raise awareness amongst those groups least likely to be registered. We will be expanding this work over the next 12 months as we build towards our national public awareness campaign. Any organisations that want to be involved in this work can find out how from our website

at <http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/find-information-by-subject/electoral-registration/partnership-working>

The move to IER and a more modern, secure and streamlined registration system is an important step forward. In particular, the fact that since June 2014 people have been able for the first time to register online will, we hope, make the system more accessible to many of those that are not currently registered. Registering to vote is now as straightforward to do online as many other everyday transactions that people have come to expect. This may be particularly useful for people who are currently less likely to be registered, for example those who move frequently and for whom ease of registration might

be of particular importance.

It is important to see this research in the context of other findings about people's engagement with politics. Large sections of society are feeling out of touch with politics in general (50% of people say they are not interested in politics and only 30% say they are a fairly or very strong supporter of a political party), and continued disengagement with politics has – and will continue to have – a negative impact on voter registration.<sup>1</sup> Simplifying the registration process through methods like online registration and making the system more accessible will help to ensure that people find it easier to register to vote. EROs, supported by the Commission and many others who work hard to support our democratic process, will continue to work hard to ensure that they register as many people as possible during the transition to IER. Of course there is a legal requirement to respond to the ERO's canvass form. But political leaders and campaigners can play a vital role in inspiring and engaging us all to participate and giving people a reason to *want* to register to vote.

The Electoral Commission will continue to work with and provide support and resources to organisations, groups and individuals who are already working hard to promote voter registration and to achieve a greater response from voters. We have not only a general election in May 2015, but in May 2016 we are expecting elections to the Scottish Parliament, elections to the Welsh Assembly, Police and Crime Commissioner elections, local government elections, and elections in London for the Mayor and the Greater London Assembly. With so many opportunities in the next two years for electors to use their right to vote, this research gives us and others the best possible foundation for our work to ensure that every eligible voter can have their say.

Jenny Watson  
Chair, Electoral Commission

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<sup>1</sup> Hansard Society, *Audit of Political Engagement* 2014.

# Executive Summary

## Background

This report sets out our most recent research into the quality of the electoral registers in Great Britain. This has involved a nationally-representative survey in order to produce an estimate of the accuracy and completeness of the electoral registers, as well as demographic characteristics associated with lower and higher levels of completeness.

Understanding the accuracy and completeness of the electoral registers is particularly relevant at this time because in Great Britain the way that the electoral registers are created is changing to a system known as individual electoral registration (IER). The electoral registers assessed in this study are the ones published in February 2014 (England) and March 2014 (Wales and Scotland), the last ones compiled under the household registration system.

The transition to the new system of IER began in June 2014 in England and Wales and will start after the independence referendum in September in Scotland, and will end in either December 2015 or December 2016.<sup>2</sup>

Under this new system each individual is responsible for registering to vote, rather than one member of the household registering all those who live at a property. Individuals are also required to provide personal identifiers when registering to vote (date of birth and national insurance number) in order to help make the registers more secure.

The findings presented set out the accuracy and completeness and provide a baseline position for the overall impact on the registers as a result of the transition. A further study, to be conducted once the transition is complete, will provide the same assessment for the first full IER registers and will allow for a clear understanding of any change to levels of accuracy and completeness.<sup>3</sup>

This report also makes use of the findings from a separate study on the quality of the December 2010 and April 2011 registers - *Electoral registration in 2011* – which used the 2011 Census data to provide a more detailed assessment of the state of the registers. The two reports have been published alongside each other.

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<sup>2</sup> Whilst the legislation says that the transition to IER will be completed in December 2016, Ministers can lay an order before Parliament to provide for the transition to be completed by December 2015 and the UK Government has previously indicated that its intent is to complete the transition in 2015.

<sup>3</sup> The timing of this study is dependent on the end date for the IER transition period. Currently, the legislation sets this end point in December 2016 but gives the government the ability to bring it forward to December 2015. A decision on this would need to be approved by UK Parliament in summer 2015 and the Commission will publish its advice to the Government and Parliament ahead of that decision.

## Definitions of accuracy and completeness

Our approach to assessing the quality of the electoral registers is based on two measures: accuracy and completeness. The Commission defines accuracy and completeness as follows:

By **accuracy** we mean that ‘there are no false entries on the electoral registers’.

The accuracy of the electoral registers is therefore a measure of the percentage of entries on the registers which relate to verified and eligible voters who are resident at that address. Inaccurate register entries may relate to entries which have become redundant (for example, due to home movement), which are ineligible and have been included unintentionally, or which are fraudulent.

By **completeness** we mean that ‘every person who is entitled to have an entry in an electoral register is registered’.

The completeness of the electoral registers therefore refers to the percentage of eligible people who are registered at their current address. The proportion of eligible people who are not included on the register at their current address constitutes the rate of non-registration.

## Methodology

The methodology used for this research was a house-to-house survey of 5,000 addresses conducted by trained interviewers with the aim of gathering information from residents which could be checked against the details held on the electoral registers. This built on two previous studies conducted by the Electoral Commission and has been validated by the findings presented in *Electoral registration in 2011*.<sup>4 5</sup>

## Headline findings

### Completeness

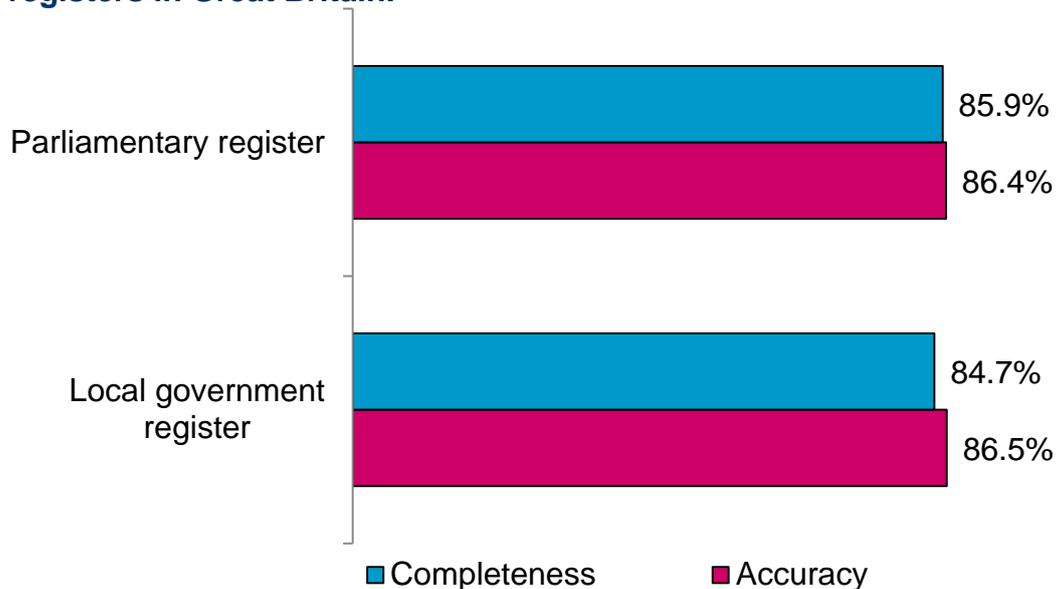
The February/March 2014 parliamentary registers were 85.9% complete. The local government registers were 84.7% complete.

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<sup>4</sup> These two reports are ‘*The completeness and accuracy of the electoral registers in Great Britain*’ (March 2010) and ‘*Great Britain’s electoral registers 2011*’ (December 2011).

<sup>5</sup> *Electoral registration in 2011* is an assessment of the quality of the December 2010 and April 2011 registers and used the 2011 Census data to provide estimates of the accuracy and completeness of the registers. *Great Britain’s electoral registers* provides estimates for the same registers but is based on the house-to-house survey methodology also used to assess the 2014 registers. The two studies have returned similar results.

**Figure ES1: Accuracy and completeness of the February/March 2014 registers in Great Britain.**



Base (unweighted): Completeness - 9,179 for parliamentary registers; 9,601 for local government registers .  
 Base (unweighted): Accuracy - 9,251 for parliamentary registers; 9,446 for local government registers.

These results show that **the level of completeness of the registers has remained stable since our previous assessments.** Table ES1, below, sets out the headline findings from the various studies.

Any attempt to calculate the absolute number of people not correctly registered at their current address can only be a rough estimate. Mid-year population estimates from the Office for National Statistics do not provide information on nationality or passport and it is therefore not possible to determine with certainty the size of the eligible population of Great Britain (nationality is one of the criteria determining eligibility to register).

Our previous estimate for December 2010, published in *Great Britain's electoral registers 2011*, suggested that *at least* 6 million people were not correctly registered at their current address. We estimated then that the registers were between 85-87% complete. The higher end of this range (87% complete) gave the figure of 6 million people not correctly registered at their current address, which has since been used as shorthand for the state of the register then. It was the *minimum* figure based on the range.

A new study published alongside this report, *Electoral registration in 2011*, provides a more exact completeness estimate for December 2010.<sup>6</sup> This study is based on the 2011 Census data and provides the most accurate and

<sup>6</sup> The Electoral Commission, *Electoral registration in 2011* (July 2014).

comprehensive picture of the state of the electoral registers today. It shows that levels of completeness in December 2010 were in fact at the lower end of our previously published range – 84.9%.<sup>7</sup> It is therefore now clear that the estimated number of people not correctly registered at their current address in December 2010 is around 7.5 million (that is, closer to the *maximum* figure based on our previously estimated range).<sup>8</sup> Table ES1 below sets out the different estimates.

**Table ES1: Completeness estimates, 2010-2014.**

<b>Electoral registers used</b>	<b>Completeness</b>	<b>Numbers not correctly registered from registers</b>
Feb/March 2014	84.7%	Approximately 7.5 million
December 2010 (Census)	84.9%	Approximately 7.5 million
December 2010 (House to House)	85-87%	<i>At least</i> 6 million

This report has found the same level of completeness for the February and March 2014 registers as for December 2010. A similar number of individuals, approximately 7.5 million, are therefore estimated to have not been correctly registered at their current address in February/March 2014.<sup>9</sup>

As with all estimates of unregistered people, it is important to stress that this does not mean that the registers should contain 7.5 million more entries in total because many, but not all, of those not registered correctly may still have been included on an electoral register but in an entry that is inaccurate (for example, at a previous address).

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<sup>7</sup> This is an estimate for England and Wales and not for Great Britain. However, while separate data for Scotland suggests a slightly higher level of completeness, the relative size of the population of Scotland means that the combined Great Britain wide figure would not be substantially different from that for England and Wales.

<sup>8</sup> The estimates of the numbers not correctly registered are based on population estimates and are not therefore precise figures. The population estimates will include people ineligible to register as they do not take account of nationality.

<sup>9</sup> The size of the population has increased since 2010 and the same level of incompleteness would therefore lead to slightly more people not correctly registered. However, the difference is small (around 100,000) and, as noted before, these estimates for the numbers not correctly registered are approximations, not precise figures. The approximate figure of 7.5 million is therefore used for both 2010 and 2014.

**Table ES2: Recent Electoral Commission national studies into the accuracy and completeness of the electoral registers (2011-2014). All estimates are for the local government registers.**

Report	Published	Electoral registers	Accuracy	Completeness	Methodology	Notes
<b><i>Great Britain's electoral registers 2011</i></b>	December 2011	December 2010	Not measured	85%-87% <sup>10</sup>	House-to-house survey	Research designed to assess the quality of the April 2011 registers. An estimate for December 2010 was generated from the April 2011 results.
		April 2011	85.4%	82.0%		
<b><i>Electoral registration in 2011</i></b>	July 2014	December 2010	89%-92% (E&W)	84.9% (E&W)	Census 2011 data	Conducted separately in England & Wales and in Scotland (only April 2011 registers). Used different method to estimate accuracy that generated higher results. (Only available following the census)
		April 2011	88%-90% (E&W) 90.1% (Scot.)	83.2% (E&W) 86.5% (Scot.)		
<b><i>The quality of the 2014 electoral registers</i></b>	July 2014	Feb/March 2014	86.5%	84.7%	House-to-house survey	Methodology based on the one used for <i>Great Britain's electoral registers 2011</i>

<sup>10</sup> 'Great Britain's electoral registers 2011' focused on the April 2011 registers. The study therefore provided only a rough estimate for the December 2010 Parliamentary and Local government registers (no distinction): 85-87%.

## Socio-demographic variation

The patterns of registration by socio-demographic factors are in line with previous research findings and confirm that **population mobility remains the demographic variable with the strongest impact on completeness.**

All figures presented below are for the local government registers.<sup>11</sup> Where differences are noted, they are statistically significant.

- Women are slightly more likely to be registered than men (85.8% against 83.6%).
- Levels of completeness generally increase with **age** with the exception of those aged 18-19 (76.1%) who are more likely to appear on the register than those in the age group 20-24 (70.2%). The highest level of completeness is seen for those aged 65+ (95.45%) and the lowest level is recorded for 16-17 year old attainers (51%).
- Levels of completeness also increase with **length of residence** at a property, with the highest level seen for those who have been at their property for more than sixteen years (93.9%) and the lowest one for those who have lived at their property for less than one year (40.1%).
- **Housing tenure** also has a clear relationship with levels of completeness with home-owners – outright, mortgage or shared ownership – more likely to be registered than people who rent or live in communal establishments. As with previous studies, private renters have the lowest level of completeness (63.3%).
- **Nationality** has previously been linked to variations in the completeness. This study found that 86.5% of UK citizens were registered at their current address against 61.8% of Commonwealth citizens and 53.2% of European Union citizens.
- Completeness varies by **ethnicity**, with those identifying as White or Asian having higher levels of completeness (85.9% and 83.7% respectively) than those claiming Black (76%), Mixed (73.4%) or other (62.9%).
- There is little variation in levels of completeness between **social grades** AB, C1 and C2 (84-87% complete). However, those classified as DE were less likely to be registered (79.6%).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> There are no notable differences between the two registers in terms of patterns of registration by socio-demographic factors.

<sup>12</sup> A definition of all social classes is available in the Appendix.

- Completeness varies by the **number of adults living in the household**. Two-person households have the highest levels of completeness (86.2%) while addresses where more than six people are resident record notably lower levels of completeness (72.8%).
- There is a difference between **rural and urban** areas with the former recording slightly higher levels of completeness (86.8%) than the latter (84.3%).
- Whether or not someone has a **disability** appears to be relevant to levels of completeness. Those with a physical disability (91.3%) are more likely to be registered than the general population or those with a mental disability (81.1%) or no disability (84.1%).
- **Attitudes** towards electoral registration and voting also have an impact on the likelihood of an individual appearing on the register. Those who see registering (90.8%) and voting (90.2%) as a duty are more likely to be registered than those who think it is not worth registering (73.7%) or voting (76%).<sup>13</sup>

## Accuracy

**There has not been a significant change in levels of accuracy since 2010.** A separate study, published alongside this report, estimated the accuracy of the December 2010 registers to be around 89%. This study has found the February/March 2014 registers to be 86% accurate.<sup>14</sup> Taking into account the margins of error on both sets of findings we do not believe there has been a notable change in levels of accuracy since 2010.

The 2014 results for accuracy presented in this report are slightly higher than those found in our previous house-to-house survey on the April 2011 registers (85.5% for the parliamentary and 85.4% for local government). However, this is what we would expect as the April 2011 registers were published a few months after the conclusion of the canvass. Previous research showed how the quality of the registers decline each month after their publication largely due to people changing address and failing to update their details on the registers.

The most common accuracy error relates to register entries that refer to individuals who no longer live at the property (more than 11% of all entries on both the parliamentary and local government registers). The second most common type of error (1.2%) is for an incorrect name or surname (i.e. the person included on the register is the same person resident at the property but there is a significant error in their name on the register).

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<sup>13</sup> These figures are for respondents only and are not weighted for the overall population

<sup>14</sup> Our research using census data, *Electoral registration in 2011*, produced an accuracy assessment of the December 2010 post-canvass register for England and Wales only.

It is not possible to provide useful analysis of socio-demographic variables in relation to accuracy because most inaccurate entries are for people we cannot gather demographic details about (because they no longer live at the address).

However, it is clear that to a significant extent, some important factors which influence levels of completeness also influence levels of accuracy. For example, addresses which are privately rented are much more likely than other properties to have inaccurate register entries associated with them.

## Explaining the trend

Research suggests that the completeness of the registers was at its highest in the 1950s and 1960s and started declining in the 1980s. Non-registration increased considerably between 2001 and 2011, but it appears to have stabilised, between 2011 and 2014, at the level presented in this report (around 85% for the registers published right after the canvass).

The accuracy of the registers in contrast has remained quite stable from the early 1980s. The April 1981 registers were estimated to contain between 10.4% and 13.5% inaccurate entries. In April 2011 that figure was estimated to be 15% and the most recent estimate for 2014 is 14%.

There is no single, convincing reason to explain the decline in completeness between 2001 and 2011, but it is likely to be due to a number of contributing factors such as:

- **Increased internal population mobility** – census data from 1981, 1991 and 2001 indicated that there has been an increasing number of people moving home per year over the last 30 years. Relevant data from the 2011 census is not yet available but there is no reason to suspect that this trend did not continue between 2001 and 2011. Patterns of registration are clearly linked to mobility as research frequently finds that those less likely to be registered are often those who move home more often.
- **Increased immigration** – there has been more immigration from European Union countries since 2004 and EU citizens are consistently found to be less likely to be registered. However, the total number of EU citizens is not large enough to account for much of the overall decline in completeness.
- Some changes to **electoral registration practices** – the use of all-postal canvasses in the early 2000s appears to have led to a decline in the total numbers on the registers at the time. Also, overall canvass response rates in the period 2007–14 were lower than in the 1990s:<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Data on canvass response rates has been collected sporadically with a gap in the data series between 1996 and 2003.

The level of canvass response has remained stable (at around 92-94%) from 2007 to the present but, since 2008, fewer EROs have reported canvass response rates below 90%.

- **Financial motivations** – we have previously speculated that rising levels of personal debt (and defaults on that debt) may mean that more people wish to remain off the registers for financial reasons. On the other hand, people in need of credit (for example mortgage applicants) may want to be on the electoral register to improve their credit scores. However, it is not possible to do more than speculate about this factor, as well as the possible impact of council tax avoidance, on overall levels of completeness.

One of the most important reasons for declining levels of registration is **increasing disengagement with politics and decreasing turnout at elections** as the desire to participate in elections remains a key driver for registering. Findings presented in this report show that people who say they are less likely to vote are less likely to be registered.

Disengagement with traditional party politics is even more marked among young people (only 24% said they were certain to vote in a general election compared to 60% or above for those aged 55 or over) and, with mobility, is likely to be the main reason behind the low level of completeness among this group.<sup>16</sup>

Our public opinion data shows that the public is generally satisfied and confident with the registration process. In addition, our research around each set of elections has not found any evidence of any significant levels of complaints from people who try to vote and are unable to do so as a result of not being registered.<sup>17</sup>

We hope that online registration will have a positive impact on registration but it cannot solve the problem on its own, particularly if levels of electoral participation continue to decline.

## Implications for IER

The successful implementation of IER in Great Britain will depend on effective partnerships: EROs working with local groups including political parties and campaigners to encourage people to take the action they need to be registered under IER, supported by public awareness campaigns developed and delivered by the Electoral Commission.

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<sup>16</sup> Hansard Society, *Audit of Political Engagement* 2014.

<sup>17</sup> Although there is evidence that some EU citizens were unable to exercise their vote in the 2014 European Parliament elections in the UK as they had not completed an additional registration form.

All that vital work relies on good quality analysis and intelligence about the scale of the challenge in ensuring complete and accurate electoral registers under IER, and also to identify where more effort is required to increase registration rates among currently under-registered groups.

Current plans and strategies have been informed by the findings from the Commission's previous registration research about which groups are less likely to be correctly registered. The findings from the research presented in this report do not suggest that any significant changes are required to the under-registered groups which need to be targeted during the transition to IER. The overall pattern of under-registration among specific demographic and social groups has remained consistent with our previous research.

Our monitoring work has already shown that EROs across Great Britain have good plans in place for the transition to IER. They have been supported by a mass-media public awareness campaign which launched in England and Wales in July 2014, and by the development of an online registration system which is available for the first time.

While it is important to recognise and welcome these successful foundations for the transition to IER, the findings presented in this research report highlight the scale of the significant challenge facing all of us who care about participation in our electoral processes: roughly one in seven people eligible to vote at elections in Great Britain are not registered correctly, and that proportion is significantly higher among some social and demographic groups. The evidence suggests that the trend towards increasing under-registration has not yet begun to be reversed, even if it may have stabilised.

The challenge now is to ensure that good plans are translated into effective action which has a real impact on levels of registration. We will continue to monitor closely the work of EROs as they manage the transition to IER, and we will provide both support and challenge where we think they are needed. We will continue to report on the performance of EROs across Great Britain, including highlighting clearly if we are concerned that any ERO is at risk of not delivering effective registration activities, focusing particularly on those who we think may need more targeted support.

We will also use the evidence from this research to shape the work we do to help EROs deliver improvements in levels of registration. We will use the information this report gives us to help ensure that our public awareness campaigns in advance of the next UK Parliamentary General Election in May 2015 have the widest possible reach, including refining the key messages that will best encourage those who need to take action to join the new register. We will also continue to refine the range of resources that we make available for EROs to use to support public awareness locally.

We have also started work with a range of partner organisations to help us reach these under-registered groups more effectively, from the National Union of Students, Citizen's Advice and others. We will continue to identify and build new partnerships over the next 12 months to help support the work that EROs are delivering locally.

It is also important for campaigners who are actively engaged in the electoral system to continue to do their part to raise awareness. The introduction of online registration means that candidates, political parties, campaigners and elected representatives including Members of Parliament and local councillors can not only encourage people to register to vote but also provide a simple link to a website which will allow people to complete their application in minutes. Many already do this, and we will continue to encourage campaigners to direct people to the online registration website.

## Monitoring the transition: next steps

The Commission will continue to monitor closely the transition to IER through regular data collection exercises which will allow us to build up a picture of how the transition is affecting the registers at a local authority level.

We will continue to share data about electoral registration with all those who are interested in monitoring the transition to IER, and we intend to publish further reports analysing data on the transition to IER at the following points:

- Autumn 2014 – the results of the confirmation process, at ward level, across Great Britain.
- Spring 2015 – the result of the write out, following the confirmation process, to those electors not confirmed and those missing from the registers.
- June 2015 – the results of additional activities undertaken by EROs between the publication of the December registers and the UK Parliamentary general election in May 2015. This report will form our advice to the UK Government on whether the end date for IER transition can be brought forward from December 2016 to December 2016.
- July 2016 or July 2017 – our assessment of the accuracy and completeness of the first full IER registers. The timing for this research will depend on the end date for the transition to IER.

# 1 Introduction

1.1 This report sets out our most recent research into the accuracy and completeness of the electoral registers in Great Britain.<sup>18</sup> This has involved a nationally-representative survey of the accuracy and completeness of the electoral registers.

1.2 Understanding the accuracy and completeness of the electoral registers is also particularly relevant at this time because the way that the electoral registers are created has changed to a system known as individual electoral registration (IER).

1.3 The Electoral Commission supports the introduction of IER as an important improvement in how people register to vote. The Commission has been calling for IER to be implemented in Great Britain since 2003, principally because the previous household registration system was more vulnerable to fraud as there was no requirement to provide any evidence of an individual's identity to register to vote. Great Britain's system of electoral registration had remained largely the same since the Victorian period, and was one of the few systems in the world not based on registration by individuals.

1.4 In June 2014 the transition to the new system of IER began in England and Wales. Due to the referendum on independence for Scotland, the transition does not begin in Scotland until 19 September 2014. Under the new system each individual is responsible for registering to vote, rather than one member of the household registering all those who live at a property. Individuals are also required to provide personal identifiers when registering to vote (date of birth and national insurance number).

1.5 In order to introduce this new system effectively and particularly to guard against the risks brought about by such a major change it is vital that the transition is managed and implemented carefully. The Commission has set out its plan to monitor the transition to IER through the period and will report on progress at several points (see paragraphs 1.27 – 1.32 for full details).

1.6 This research and report sets a baseline position for the overall impact on the registers as a result of the transition. The findings presented set out the accuracy and completeness of the last registers to be compiled under the household registration system. A subsequent study, to be conducted once the transition is complete, will provide the same assessment for the first full IER

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<sup>18</sup> Northern Ireland, where a system of individual electoral registration is already in operation, is not covered by this report. A separate programme of research is in place to monitor the Northern Ireland register.

registers and will allow for a clear understanding of any change to levels of accuracy and completeness.<sup>19</sup>

## The system of electoral registration

### Transition to individual electoral registration

1.7 The transition to IER began on 10 June 2014 in England and Wales. The first stage involves matching of existing electors' details against the Department for Work and Pensions database in order to verify their identity. This process is known as confirmation and takes place from June to July 2014 in England and Wales (it will take place in September 2014 in Scotland). Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) are also able to use locally held data in order to confirm the identity of existing electors.

1.8 Existing electors whose details are matched to the DWP database or via local data sources will be confirmed directly onto the first IER registers – they will not need to take any action.

1.9 Those electors whose entries are not confirmed, those who have moved house and any new electors will be asked to (re)register by providing unique identifying information: their National Insurance number and date of birth. This process of writing out to unconfirmed and new electors is taking place from early July 2014.

1.10 EROs still have a duty to maintain their electoral registers and will therefore be required to follow up with non-responders by sending reminders through the post or, if required, via door-to-door canvassing.<sup>20</sup>

1.11 Any existing elector with an absent vote (postal or proxy voters) will need to be confirmed or re-register by providing their personal identifiers before the revised electoral registers are published by 1 December 2014 in England and Wales (2 March 2015 in Scotland) in order to retain their absent vote.

1.12 Electors on the pre-confirmation registers who cannot be confirmed will not be removed immediately as a result of the change to the system, but if they do not re-register by providing personal identifiers by December 2016 they will be deleted from the registers. Whilst the legislation says that the transition to IER will be completed in December 2016, Ministers can lay an order before the UK Parliament to provide for the transition to be completed

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<sup>19</sup> The timing of this study is dependent on the end date for the IER transition period. Currently, the legislation sets this end point in December 2016 but gives the government the ability to bring it forward to December 2015. A decision on this will be taken in summer 2015 and the Commission will publish its advice to the minister ahead of that decision.

<sup>20</sup> Section 9A of the Representation of the People Act 1983 sets out this duty. In addition, secondary legislation for the Electoral Registration Act 2013 makes specific provision in relation to follow up steps required to pursue non-responses.

by December 2015 and the UK Government has made it clear that its intent is to complete the transition in 2015.

1.13 We have therefore made clear to EROs that they should plan on the basis that they will have to be ready for the point of removal to be December 2015.

## The role of the Electoral Commission

1.14 A key challenge for EROs in the transition to IER will be to encourage residents to take the required action to join or remain on the register, and to ensure that they can vote by post or by proxy, if that is their preferred method. Delivering a successful transition to IER will therefore depend on good local public engagement strategies, designed to support targeted local activity; effective partnership work across and beyond the local authority; and a continued focus on progress and results so that adjustments can be made if necessary.

1.15 Public engagement covers all aspects of the ERO's interaction with their local residents, including sending forms or letters to individuals or households, local activity with partner organisations who will help spread the message and contact with organisations such as schools, universities, landlords, housing associations and hostels.

1.16 Each ERO's engagement strategy should identify the particular challenges for their local area and what mechanisms they will use to engage with residents to maximise registration on the IER register. It should cover which groups the ERO needs to engage with, how they will be targeted, how the ERO is going to work with internal and external partners to ensure that they reach people, and how they will evaluate that activity. Engagement strategies will in particular need to address how the ERO will engage with those who are less likely to be confirmed by data-matching and those who are less likely to be currently registered.

1.17 EROs' engagement strategies should be supported by an implementation plan that sets out how the transition as a whole will be delivered, covering areas including identification of the required resources, the management of contractors and suppliers and details of how the necessary steps as set out in Section 9A of the Representation of the People Act 1983 will be carried out, both during the canvass and throughout the year, including leading up to the May 2015 polls

### **Guidance and performance standards**

1.18 The Electoral Commission has provided comprehensive written guidance for EROs to support them in planning for and delivering the transition to IER We have also made available a range of resources, including template letters, forms and envelopes, and template text, branding, leaflets and advertisements for use in local public engagement activities.

1.19 The Commission also has a statutory power to set, monitor and report on performance standards for EROs. In September 2013, following a period of

consultation, we published a new performance standards framework<sup>21</sup> designed to support EROs in planning for and delivering the transition to IER, which reflects what we and the UK Electoral Advisory Board<sup>22</sup> agree that EROs need to do in order to ensure a successful transition to IER.

1.20 The standards were developed around the key challenges facing EROs in the transition, with a focus on what EROs will need to do and know in order to effectively deliver the transition and the information they will need in order to determine whether these challenges are being met. There are two standards: the first covering the planning phase and the second covering the delivery phase.

1.21 The objective of performance standard 1 was to ensure that all EROs have in place a local public engagement strategy which recognises their own specific challenges, taking into account their confirmation dry run results, and an implementation plan which sets out how they plan to deliver the transition as a whole.<sup>23</sup> We have been monitoring performance against this standard and we are confident that all EROs have the necessary strategies and plans in place to be able to meet the challenges of IER in their local area.<sup>24</sup>

1.22 The objective of performance standard 2 is to ensure that EROs deliver their strategies and plans, using available data to monitor progress and make amendments where necessary to ensure they remain appropriate.

1.23 We will continue to engage with EROs and their staff to support them with refining and updating their plans as necessary throughout the period of the transition, with a particular focus on those EROs we believe may need more targeted support to implement IER successfully.

1.24 We undertook research to identify the social groups most likely to be affected by the transition to IER and carried out focus group message testing to develop key messages that would best encourage those who needed to join the new register to take action. We used this information to develop a range of resources for EROs.

1.25 To ensure the registration message reaches a wide audience we are undertaking stakeholder and partnership work, to encourage community, voluntary and membership organisations such as the NUS and commercial companies such as MoneySavingExpert to use their own communication

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<sup>21</sup> New performance standards for EROs, September 2013.

<sup>22</sup> The UK Electoral Advisory Board (EAB) is an advisory group convened by the Electoral Commission consisting of senior Electoral Registration and Returning Officers, and with representation from SOLACE (the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives) and the AEA (the Association of Electoral Administrators). The EAB gives the Commission strategic advice about matters relating to elections, referendums and electoral registration.

<sup>23</sup> The dry run of confirmation took place in 2013 and was intended to test the system as well as give each ERO a clear indication of the match rates they were likely to see during the transition.

<sup>24</sup> [http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/168908/Analysis-of-electoral-registration-data-for-Great-Britain-2013.pdf](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/168908/Analysis-of-electoral-registration-data-for-Great-Britain-2013.pdf)

channels to spread the registration message to their communities and contacts. This activity will continue in the run-up to the UK general election.

1.26 In July and August 2014 we are running a mass-media public awareness campaign in England and Wales, across TV, digital and outdoor media, to drive people to look out for the letter that their ERO sent about the new registration system and to take any required action. The aim of the campaign is to support the public engagement and registration activity undertaken locally by EROs. The campaign will also take place in Scotland in October 2014 after IER is launched.

### **Monitoring the impact on the registers**

1.27 The Commission's plan for monitoring the transition to IER will involve three distinct data collection exercises. We will publish the data and an analysis of what it is telling us about the progress of the transition after each of these points.

1.28 Following **conclusion of the confirmation process** we will be able to identify the local authorities and individual electoral wards which have the lowest rates of matched electors and are therefore the immediate pressure points. We will also know the extent of postal voters who have failed to match and so are at risk of losing their absent vote at the UK General Election in May 2015.

1.29 After **the conclusion of the write-out and 2014 canvass**, we will collect detailed, local authority-level data from every ERO including the numbers of electors on the registers who have not been confirmed and have not yet registered individually using personal identifiers. This data will allow us to assess how the transition has progressed from the end of the confirmation exercise up to the publication of the revised registers.

1.30 Importantly, by collecting the data from every ERO we will be able to see any significant variations across the country. We will therefore be able to assess whether areas which had lower match rates in confirmation, which we therefore expected to face a greater challenge in managing the transition to IER, also have a greater proportion of electors on their registers in December 2014 (March 2015 in Scotland) who would be removed at the end of the transition period.

1.31 In **June 2015**, we will report on our assessment of the effectiveness of the transition up to that point, with a view to informing the Ministerial decision on whether to bring the end point for IER transition forward from the current date in December 2016 to December 2015, which will need to be taken very soon after the UK General Election in May 2015. Our assessment will be underpinned by a clear understanding of what the effect on the registers would be of ending the transition in December 2015 and therefore removing those electors not yet registered individually at that point. Our focus will be on the potential impact on the May 2016 elections – which will see everywhere in Great Britain going to the polls.

1.32 While we will collect and collate this data to create a national picture, it will also be essential that each individual ERO understands what their data is telling them about the progress they are making in registering people under IER in their local area, and that they amend their activity if necessary to build on what is effective and address what is not working so well.

## The franchise for parliamentary and local government registers

1.33 The franchise is not affected by the introduction of IER.

1.34 Not every resident in the United Kingdom can register to vote. Entitlement to register comes from the entitlement to vote. As the entitlement to vote differs according to the type of election, there are now two types of register in place – the parliamentary registers and the local government registers.

1.35 To be on either of the registers, a resident is required to have British, Irish, Commonwealth or European Union (EU) citizenship. Since 1999, EU citizens have been eligible to vote at local, devolved and European Parliamentary elections and are therefore entitled to be on the local government registers (they must then complete an additional form to be registered to vote in the European Parliament elections in the UK rather than their home country). However, as they are not eligible to vote at UK parliamentary elections they are not entitled to be on the parliamentary registers.

1.36 Table 1 sets out entitlement to vote by citizenship. Those not listed here are not eligible to be on either the parliamentary or local government registers.

**Table 1: Franchise for citizenship and elections.**<sup>25</sup>

Citizenship	Elections			Register
	UK Parliament	EU Parliament	Local government	
British	√	√	√	Parliamentary and local government
Commonwealth*	√	√	√	
Irish	√	√	√	
European Union	×	√	√	Local government

Notes: \*Citizens resident in the UK who either have leave to remain or do not require such leave.

<sup>25</sup> British citizens resident overseas, who have appeared on a UK electoral register in the last 15 years, are also entitled to register on the parliamentary registers.

1.37 The age at which citizens become entitled to vote is 18, but the electoral registers also include records of ‘attainers’ – 16 and 17 year olds who turns 18 by the end of the twelve months following the 1 December after the ‘relevant date’ (with ‘relevant date’ defined as 15 October for canvass returns, and the date the application was made in all other cases).<sup>26</sup>

1.38 There are a small number of specific exceptions to these general rules. For instance, all convicted prisoners currently lose their right to vote while they are imprisoned. Anyone convicted of electoral offences will also be disqualified from voting for a specific period.

## The uses of the electoral registers

1.39 Electoral registers underpin elections by providing the list of those who are eligible to vote. Those not included on the registers cannot take part in elections. However, the registers are also used for other public purposes. For example, the various Boundary Commissions use the registers to calculate electoral quotas when they review parliamentary and local government boundaries.

1.40 The registers are also used as the basis for selecting people to undertake jury service and for certain law enforcement and crime prevention purposes. Credit reference agencies are also able to purchase complete copies of the registers, which they use to confirm addresses supplied by applicants for bank accounts, credit cards, personal loans and mortgages.

## Our research programme

1.41 Since 2004, we have become the principal body in the United Kingdom undertaking research into the electoral registers. Following the publication of our 2005 report, *Understanding electoral registration*,<sup>27</sup> much of this work has been focused on the piloting and testing of new techniques for assessing accuracy and completeness. This concern with developing new methods has arisen from the limited scope to produce reliable estimates using existing approaches in the periods between the census of population, which takes place every 10 years.

1.42 We undertake research into electoral registers in order to:

- provide an overview of the accuracy and completeness of Great Britain’s electoral registers
- provide up-to-date information on those groups that are more likely to be under-registered and thereby inform our guidance to EROs and our approach to public awareness activity

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<sup>26</sup> The voting age for the Scottish Independence Referendum (September 2014) is 16.

<sup>27</sup> The Electoral Commission, *Understanding electoral registration: the extent and nature of non-registration in Britain* (August 2005)

- provide ongoing tracking of how electoral registers change in response to legislative developments, administrative change or population change and use this tracking to inform our role in scrutinising proposals and policies to revise the registration system.

1.43 Since 2004, we have also commissioned a series of studies examining the state of the registers in Northern Ireland, where a system of individual registration has been in place since 2002.<sup>28</sup>

## Defining accuracy and completeness

1.44 The quality of the registers is considered in two main ways: their accuracy and their completeness.

1.45 By **accuracy** we mean that ‘there are no false entries on the electoral registers’.<sup>29</sup>

1.46 The accuracy of the electoral registers is therefore a measure of the percentage of entries on the registers which relate to verified and eligible voters who are resident at that address. Inaccurate register entries may relate to entries which have become redundant (for example, due to home movement), are ineligible and have been included unintentionally, or which are fraudulent.

1.47 By **completeness** we mean that ‘every person who is entitled to have an entry in an electoral register is registered’.

The completeness of the electoral registers therefore refers to the percentage of eligible people who are registered at their current address. The proportion of eligible people who are not included on the register at their current address constitutes the rate of under-registration.

## Producing accuracy and completeness estimates

1.48 There are various methods used to assess the quality of the electoral registers, which differ mainly by the frequency with which they can be used and the reliability of the results. These approaches are set out below, while Appendix C outlines each of the approaches in more detail and considers their strengths and limitations.

1.49 **Using large-scale national surveys:** This is the approach that has been used in this study. It was first used to assess both the accuracy and

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<sup>28</sup> For instance, Electoral Commission/PricewaterhouseCoopers, *Electoral Registration in Northern Ireland: Accuracy and Comprehensiveness of the Register (September 2008)* [www.electoralcommission.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0009/64872/Accuracy-and-Comprehensiveness.pdf](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/64872/Accuracy-and-Comprehensiveness.pdf).

<sup>29</sup> Our definition of accuracy excludes minor errors, such as the misspelling of an elector’s name, which would not prevent an eligible elector from being able to vote.

completeness of the registers at a national level for the Commission's analysis of the April 2011 registers, although the main elements of the methodology were tested in our previous case study research.<sup>30</sup> Full details on the specific approach taken to this study are set out in the next chapter.

**1.50 Matching census records against the electoral registers:** a sample of census returns or data from the Census Coverage Survey can be cross-matched against the electoral registers to derive estimates of accuracy and completeness, although this exercise can only be repeated every 10 years.

**1.51 Comparing ONS electoral statistics** (number of entries on the registers) with mid-year population estimates: these two datasets can be used to provide relatively crude estimates of the annual registration rates at national and subnational levels, although they cannot be used to report on the accuracy of the registers.

## This report

**1.52** This report is based on the findings from the national survey of the registers in Great Britain, plus a wider analysis of the latest data related to electoral registration.

**1.53** The remainder of the report is divided into five chapters:

- Chapter 2 outlines the accuracy and completeness of the 2014 registers.
- Chapter 3 sets the findings in historical context and offers some explanations for the trends observed.
- Chapter 4 sets out our conclusions and looks ahead to the further work the Commission and others will be carrying out as part of the transition to IER.

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<sup>30</sup> The Electoral Commission, *The completeness and accuracy of the electoral registers in Great Britain* (March 2010)

## 2 Accuracy and completeness of the February/March 2014 registers

2.1 This chapter sets out the findings of the research conducted across Great Britain in order to estimate the accuracy and completeness of the February/March 2014 electoral registers.

### Key points

#### Key points

- The research found the parliamentary and local government registers to be 85.9% and 84.7% complete respectively while their accuracy was 86.4% and 86.5%.
- These results indicate that the accuracy and completeness of the registers have remained the same from the last assessment carried on equivalent registers – those published in December 2010.
- The new estimates indicate that approximately 7.5 million people are potentially not correctly registered to vote.
- Our previous study, published in 2011, provided a rough estimate of completeness for the December 2010 registers of 85-87%. However, while the new estimate for completeness falls within this range the estimate for the absolute number of people not correctly registered at their current address has changed. This is because the previous figure of at least 6 million people not correctly registered used the higher end of the completeness range (87%) but recent research has provided a more precise figure which is at the lower end of the range (85%).
- In line with previous findings, this study also confirmed the correlation between certain demographic characteristics and lower and higher levels of completeness.
- Home-movement remains the most important variable affecting the quality of the electoral register.
- Young people, private renters, people who recently moved home and European Union citizens remain considerably under-registered. These demographics are all associated with population mobility.
- This study also provided useful data on the correlation between completeness and attitudes towards the electoral process: those who see registering and voting as a duty are significantly more likely to be registered than anybody else.
- The main type of error causing inaccuracy on the registers is register entries that refer to individuals who are no longer resident at the property to which the register entry refers.

# Methodology

2.2 The methodology used for this research was a house-to-house survey conducted by trained interviewers with the aim of gathering information from residents which could be checked against the details held on the electoral registers.<sup>31</sup> This built on two previous studies conducted by the Electoral Commission: 'The completeness and accuracy of the electoral registers in Great Britain', published in March 2010, and 'Great Britain's electoral registers 2011' published in December 2011.

2.3 We have also assessed this methodological approach through a separate study on accuracy and completeness, using census data, for which we have recently published our final findings. That study analysed the same registers as our previous national house-to-house survey (December 2010 and April 2011 registers) and returned similar headline findings.<sup>32</sup> Table 1.1. shows all estimates of accuracy and completeness produced between 2011 and 2014, using the two different methodology: census data, arguably the most robust method but can be conducted only every 10 years; and the house-to house survey which is the one used to generate the findings in this report and back in December 2011.

2.4 The findings in this report are for the registers published by 17 February in England and by 10 March 2014 in Scotland and Wales. These are the registers that were published following the last annual canvass under the old household system. Due to the size of the sample, the figures for the three different areas are combined.

2.5 The research looked at both parliamentary and local government registers (see paragraphs 1.33 – 1.38 for an explanation of the differences between the two).

2.6 Full information on the methodology used to produce the estimates in this report can be found in the Appendix.

## Headline findings

2.7 The research found that the February/March 2014:

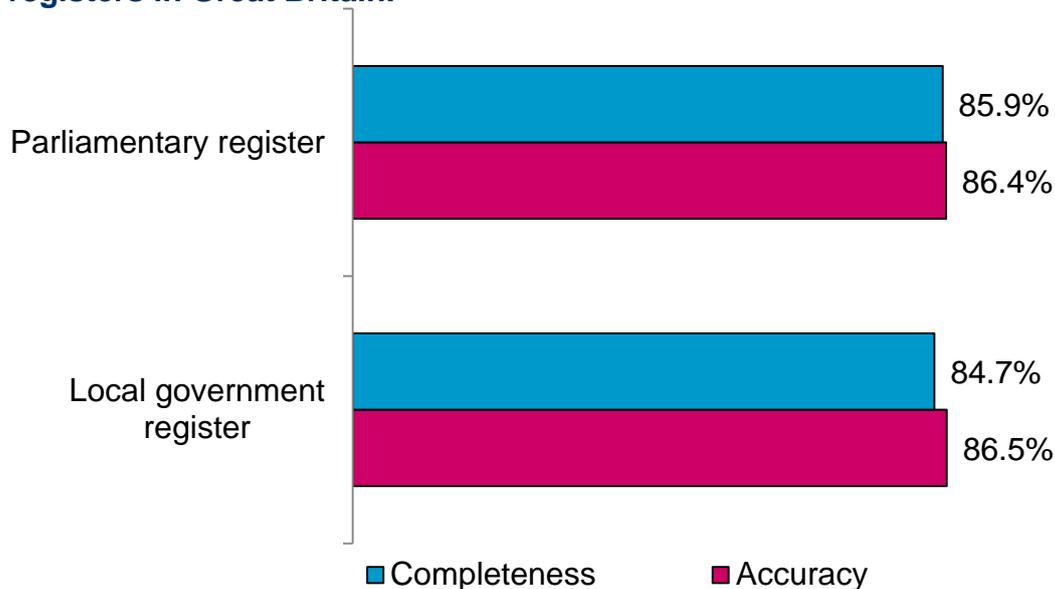
- **parliamentary** registers were **85.9% complete** and **86.4% accurate**.
- **local government** registers were **84.7% complete** and **86.5% accurate**.

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<sup>31</sup> Where the property was found to be unoccupied, this was recorded in order that these empty properties could be included in the subsequent analysis. For example, if an address unoccupied at the time of fieldwork was found to have register entries, they would be classed as inaccurate.

<sup>32</sup> The Electoral Commission, *Electoral registration in 2011* (July 2014).

**Figure 1: Accuracy and completeness of the February/March 2014 registers in Great Britain.**



Base (unweighted): Completeness - 9,179 for parliamentary registers; 9,601 for local government registers .  
 Base (unweighted): Accuracy - 9,251 for parliamentary registers; 9,446 for local government registers.

2.8 These results show that **the level of completeness of the registers has remained stable since our previous assessments**. Table 2.1, below, sets out the headline findings from the various studies and Table 2.2 provides additional detail.

2.9 Any attempt to calculate the absolute number of people not correctly registered at their current address can only be a rough estimate. Mid-year population estimates from the Office for National Statistics do not provide information on nationality or passport and it is therefore not possible to determine with certainty the size of the eligible population of Great Britain (nationality is one of the criteria determining eligibility to register).

2.10 Our previous estimate for December 2010, published in Great Britain’s electoral registers 2011, suggested that at least 6 million people were not correctly registered at their current address. We estimated then that the registers were between 85-87% complete. The higher end of this range (87% complete) gave the figure of 6 million people not correctly registered at their current address, which has since been used as shorthand for the state of the register then. It was the minimum figure based on the range.

2.11 A new study published alongside this report, Electoral registration in 2011, provides a more exact completeness estimate for December 2010.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup> The Electoral Commission, *Electoral registration in 2011* (July 2014).

This study is based on the 2011 Census data and provides the most accurate and comprehensive picture of the state of the electoral registers today. It shows that levels of completeness in December 2010 were in fact at the lower end of our previously published range – 84.9%.<sup>34</sup> It is therefore now clear that the estimated number of people not correctly registered at their current address in December 2010 is around 7.5 million (that is, closer to the maximum figure based on our previously estimated range).<sup>35</sup> Table ES1 below sets out the different estimates.

**Table 2.1: Completeness estimates, 2010-2014.**

<b>Electoral registers used</b>	<b>Completeness</b>	<b>Numbers not correctly registered from registers</b>
Feb/March 2014	84.7%	Approximately 7.5 million
December 2010 (Census)	84.9%	Approximately 7.5 million
December 2010 (House to House)	85-87%	At least 6 million

2.12 This report has found the same level of completeness for the February and March 2014 registers as of December 2010. A similar number of individuals, approximately 7.5 million, are therefore estimated to have not been correctly registered at their current address in February/March 2014.<sup>36</sup>

2.13 As with all estimates of unregistered people, it is important to stress that this does not mean that the registers should contain 7.5 million more entries in total because many, but not all, of those not registered correctly may still have been included on an electoral register but in an entry that is inaccurate (for example, at a previous address).

2.14 **There has not been a significant change in levels of accuracy since 2010.** A separate study, published alongside this report, estimated the accuracy of the December 2010 registers to be around 89%. This study has found the February/March 2014 registers to be 86% accurate.<sup>37</sup> Taking into account the margins of error on both sets of findings we do not believe there has been a notable change in levels of accuracy.

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<sup>34</sup> This is an estimate for England and Wales and not for Great Britain. However, while separate data for Scotland suggests a slightly higher level of completeness, the relative size of the population of Scotland means that the combined Great Britain wide figure would not be substantially different from that for England and Wales.

<sup>35</sup> The estimates of the numbers not correctly registered are based on population estimates and are not therefore precise figures. The population estimates will include people ineligible to register as they do not take account of nationality.

<sup>36</sup> The size of the population has increased since 2010 and the same level of incompleteness would therefore lead to slightly more people not correctly registered. However, the difference is small (around 100,000) and, as noted before, these estimates for the numbers not correctly registered are approximations, not precise figures. The approximate figure of 7.5 million is therefore used for both 2010 and 2014.

<sup>37</sup> Our research using census data, *Electoral registration in 2011*, produced an accuracy assessment of the December 2010 post-canvass register for England and Wales only.

2.15 The 2014 results for accuracy presented in this report are slightly higher than those found in our previous house-to-house survey on the April 2011 registers (85.5% for the parliamentary and 85.4% for local government). However, this is what we would expect as the April 2011 registers were published a few months after the conclusion of the canvass. Previous research showed how the quality of the registers decline each month after their publication largely due to people changing address and failing to update their details on the registers.

**Table 2.2: Recent national studies into the accuracy and completeness of the electoral registers (2011-2014). All estimates are for the local government registers.**

Report	Published	Electoral registers	Accuracy	Completeness	Methodology	Notes
<b><i>Great Britain's electoral registers 2011</i></b>	December 2011	December 2010	Not measured	85%-87% <sup>38</sup>	House-to-house survey	Research designed to assess the quality of the April 2011 registers. An estimate for December 2010 was generated from the April 2011 results.
		April 2011	85.4%	82.0%		
<b><i>Electoral registration in 2011</i></b>	July 2014	December 2010	89%-92% (E&W)	84.9% (E&W)	Census 2011 data	Conducted separately in England & Wales and in Scotland (only April 2011 registers). Used different method to estimate accuracy that generated higher results.
		April 2011	88%-90% (E&W) 90.1% (S)	83.2% (E&W) 86.5% (S)		
<b><i>The quality of the 2014 electoral registers</i></b>	July 2014	Feb/March 2014	86.5%	84.7%	House-to-house survey	Methodology based on the one used for <i>Great Britain's electoral registers 2011</i>

<sup>38</sup> Estimates from our 2011 national survey and published in '*Great Britain's electoral registers 2011*' are for the April 2011 registers. The study only provided a generic estimate for the Parliamentary and Local government registers (no distinction): 85-87%.

# Completeness

2.17 The **parliamentary** registers were found to be **85.9% complete**, and the **local government** registers **84.7% complete**.

2.18 As shown in Table 1 above, these figures indicate that there has been no decline since our last estimate conducted on the 2011 registers.

2.19 Below we present the findings on completeness broken down by available demographic variables. Where a greater level of detail is available from *Electoral registration in 2011*, this is also noted. Unless stated, the figures refer to the local government registers.

2.20 Comparing the 2014 results with the one from 2011 is not always possible due to a number of reasons: the studies were conducted on two different registers (one published immediately after the canvass, the other one four months after the canvass); there were some differences with the methodology, mainly on how interviews were stratified across local authorities; in some cases the categories used for reporting are slightly different; there are also differences in weighting and other methodological aspects with previous studies. Moreover, all figures presented are subject to margin of errors.

2.21 An analysis of the changes of the quality of the registers in Great Britain by demographics is provided in *Electoral registration in 2011* where the results are compared over a longer timescale (10 years).

2.22 Where there are notable differences with previous findings and a comparison is methodologically possible and statistically significant, it is noted in the text.

## Gender

2.23 Women were more likely to be registered than men – 85.8% compared to 83.6%.<sup>39</sup>

## Length of residence

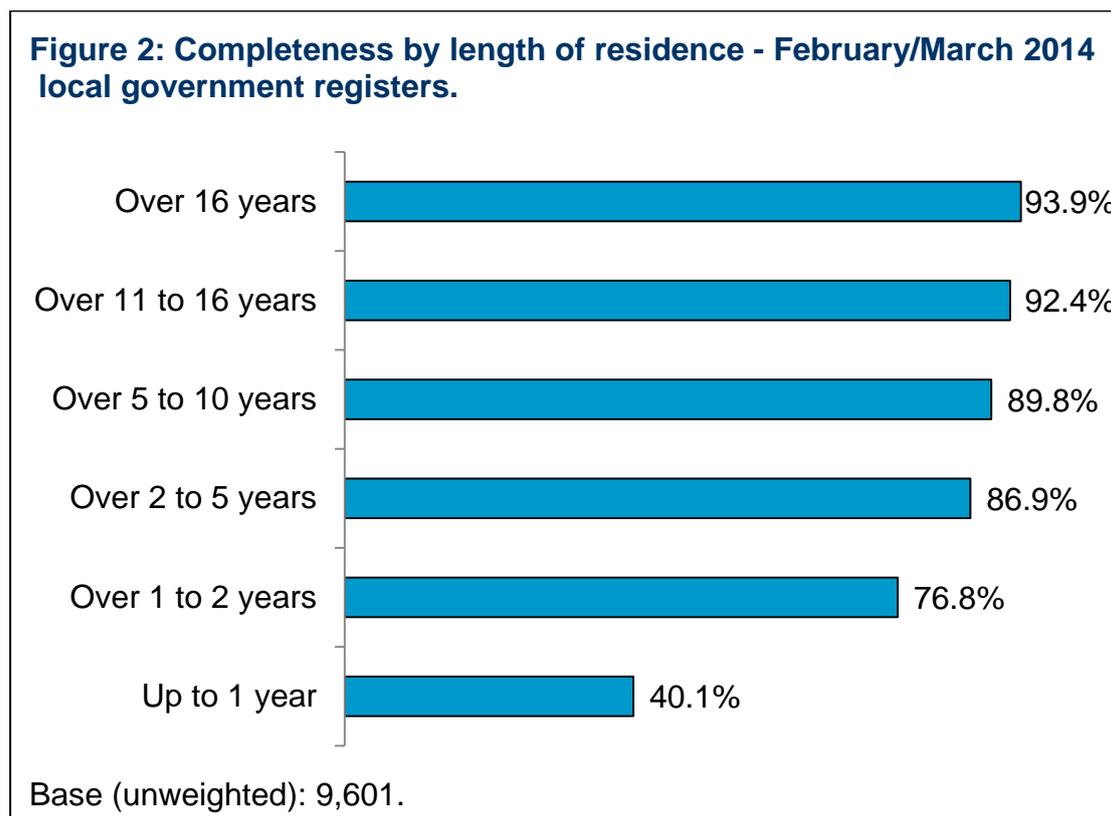
2.24 Previous research into the registers has found a clear link between mobility (home movement) and completeness – greater mobility is associated with lower levels of completeness and the longer an individual has been resident at their property, the more likely they are to appear on the electoral register. The findings from this study support those previous findings.

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<sup>39</sup> This is a statistically significant difference. Findings in *Electoral registration in 2011* indicate a difference (with men also less likely to be registered) of 1.9% between the two genders.

2.25 Figure 2 below shows that completeness increases with length of residence at a property, with the highest level seen for those who have been at their property for more than sixteen years (93.9%) and the lowest for those who have lived at their property for less than one year (40.1%). These figures show no relevant change when compared with the 2011 results.<sup>40</sup>

2.26 The relationship between mobility and completeness is also present in our analysis of other demographic variables. For examples, the levels of registration for younger people and private renters are lower, at least in part, because people in these groups also have a higher mobility rate.



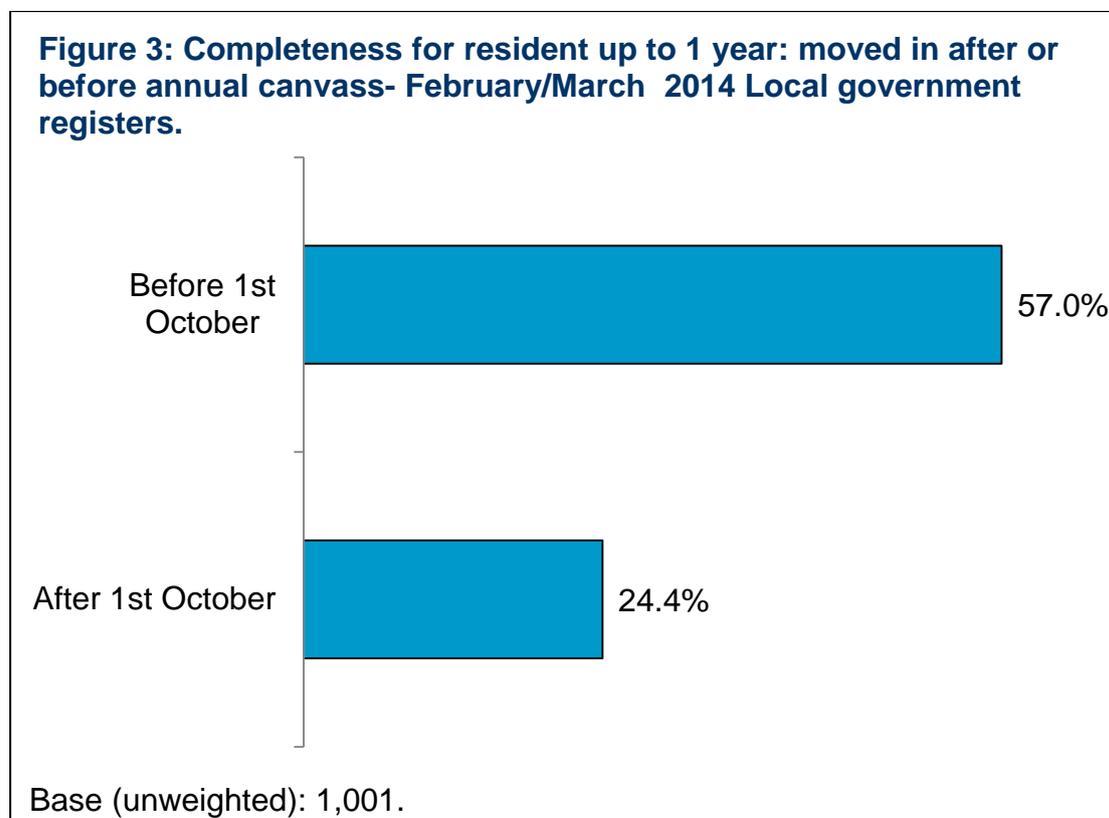
2.27 We asked those who had been resident at their property for less than one year in the month in which they moved, to allow us to verify how completeness changes between those who moved in before and after the start of the annual canvass.<sup>41</sup>

2.28 Figure 3 shows that completeness for those who moved in before the canvass is considerably higher than the ones of those who moved in after 1 October (57% vs. 24.2%).

<sup>40</sup> Completeness for those residents at their property 'Up to 1 year' was 26% in 2011. However, that estimate was for the April 2011 registers which were published 4 months after the canvass and this is expected a strong impact on the level of completeness in this category due to the low effectiveness of rolling registration.

<sup>41</sup> The annual canvass was conducted between October 2013 and mid-February 2014 in England and between October 2013 and mid-March 2014 in Scotland and Wales.

2.29 Findings from previous electoral registration studies showed that the registers are at their most complete and accurate immediately following the annual canvass and that rolling registration (the process through which people can register to vote outside of the period of the annual canvass) does not effectively mitigate the negative impact of home movement.<sup>42</sup>



## Age

2.30 All previous studies on the quality of the registers have highlighted how completeness varies significantly by age, with people in younger age groups significantly more likely to not be correctly registered.

2.31 This trend has been confirmed by the findings from this research. Figure 4 below illustrates that the highest level of completeness is seen for those aged 65+ (95.4%) and the lowest level is recorded for attainers (51%).

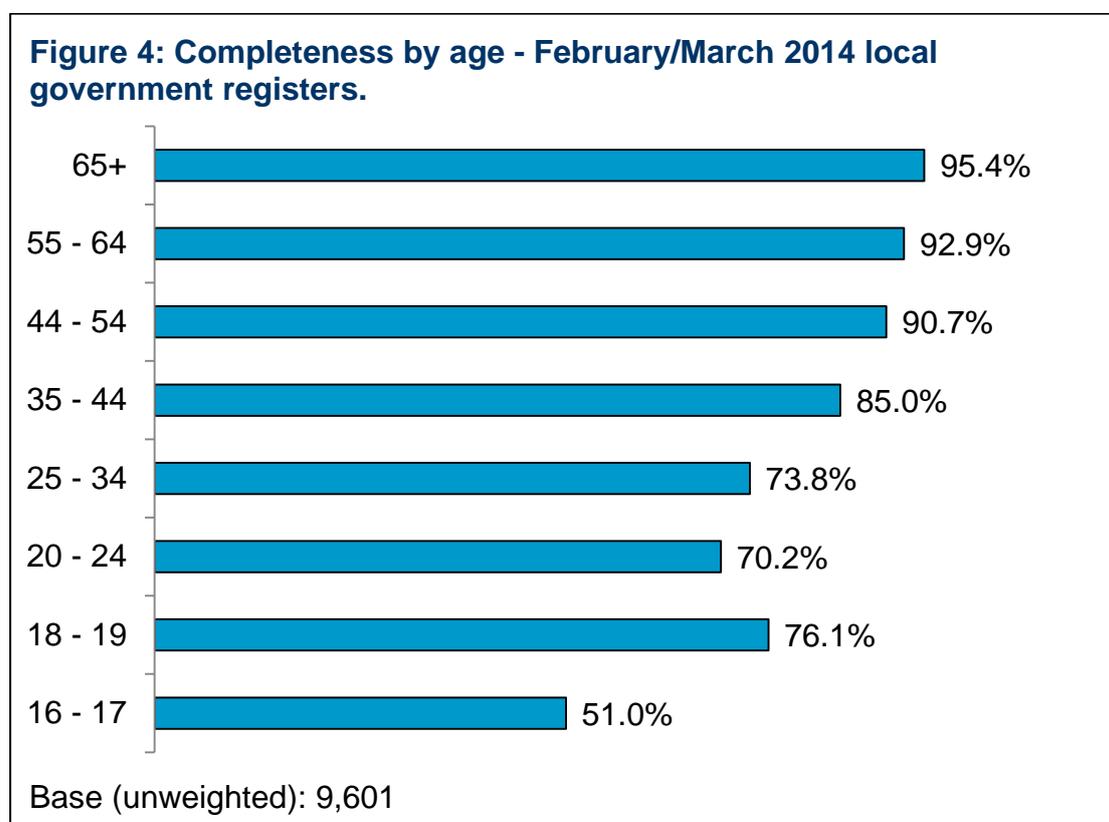
2.32 Completeness generally increases with age with the exception of those aged 18-19 (76.1%) who are more likely to appear on the register than those in the age group 20-24 (70.2%).

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<sup>42</sup> The Electoral Commission, *Great Britain's electoral registers 2011* (December 2011).

2.33 This is something we have previously found: those aged 18-19 were more likely to be on the register than people a few years older (21-28).<sup>43</sup> This may be because many of those aged 18-20 are living at their parents'/home address and have been resident there for several years. Their registration rates may then decline as they move out and into their own accommodation and then subsequently change address more frequently.

2.34 It is worth noting that the estimate for the 20-24 age group are notably higher than the equivalent findings (for 19-24 year olds) in 2011. This is likely to be, at least in part, because the previous estimates were for registers published several months after the canvass (April 2011). The fact that young people are more likely to change address more frequently means their likelihood of registration at the correct address will decrease more sharply than other age groups as the time from the canvass increases.



2.35 Notably, there is a significant leap in levels of completeness between the 25-34 and 35-44 age groups. This supports the view that declining levels of home movement lead to higher levels of completeness.

2.36 Analysis undertaken as part of our research using census data found that younger people were not only found less likely to be registered than older people, they are also more likely to drop off the registers during the year. This

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<sup>43</sup> The Electoral Commission, *Electoral registration in 2011* (July 2014). This was also found in our previous analysis of the registers against the 2001 census, *Understanding electoral registration* (September 2005)

is in part a result of the association with levels of mobility but younger people are also less likely to update their records following a move.<sup>44</sup> This may change as online registration now offers a more convenient way to register to vote.

2.37 Previous studies indicated the completeness of the registers fell considerably between 2001 and 2011.<sup>45</sup> Our analysis by social characteristics presented in *Electoral registration in 2011* found that the most significant change seen during this period is the drop in registration for those under 35s. The reasons behind lowering registration level of young people are investigated further in the next chapter.<sup>46</sup>

## Tenure

2.38 Tenure is another variable that has previously been strongly associated with levels of completeness.

2.39 Figure 5 below confirms previous findings: home-owners – outright, mortgage or shared ownership – are more likely to be registered than people in other types of tenure. As with previous studies, private renters have a low level of completeness (63.3%).

2.40 As in the case of young people (noted above) completeness for private renters was lower in 2011 (56%): this is likely to be due to home movement, which is high among private renters, as the 2011 estimates are for April 2011, four months after the publication of the post-cavass registers.

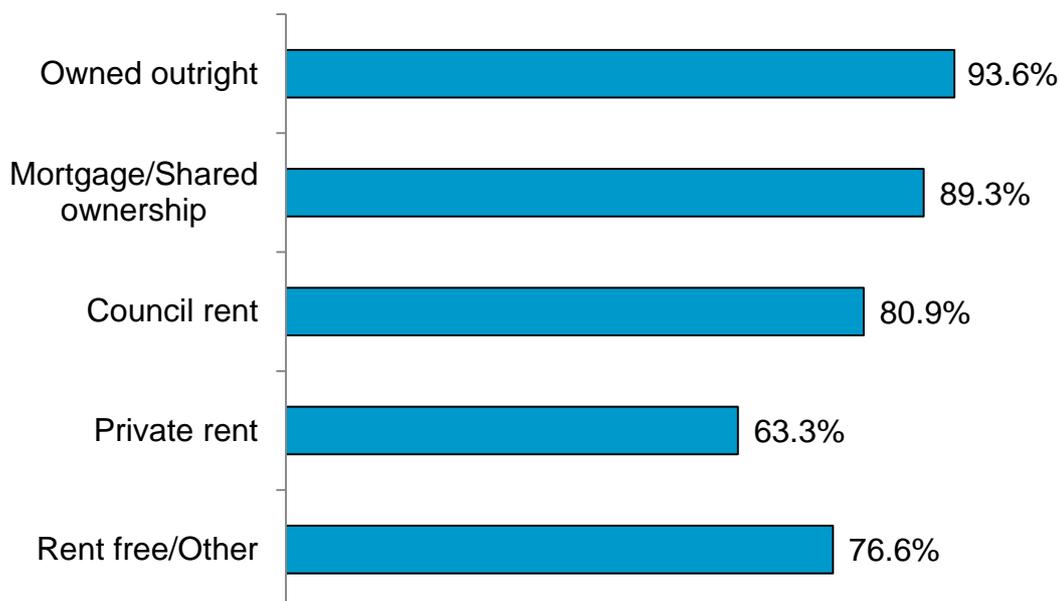
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<sup>44</sup> The Electoral Commission, *Electoral registration in 2011* (July 2014).

<sup>45</sup> The census survey was conducted in 2001 and 2011 and so were studies on the quality of the registers that allowed detailed population analysis.

<sup>46</sup> The Electoral Commission, *Electoral registration in 2011* (July 2014).

**Figure 5: Completeness by tenure - February/March 2014 Local government registers.**



Base (unweighted): 9,601.

2.41 The variation of completeness by tenure is also strongly associated with length of residence at a property. The 2012-13 English housing survey shows that among all private renters, 34% have resided at their property for less than one year and 67% for less than three. The corresponding figures for owner occupiers are 4% and 12%. Mobility and tenure are also associated with age: 51% of all private renters in England are aged 16-34, while 66% of all 16-34 year olds rent either privately, from local authorities or housing associations.<sup>47</sup>

2.42 Moreover, census data on tenure for England and Wales shows that the percentage of people who own their home decreased from 69% in 2001 to 64% in 2011, the first fall in homeownership since records began in 1918. On the other hand, renters now represent 36% of the overall population (up 5% since 2011) and the percentage of private renters, for the first time since 1918, equalled the one of social renters (18%).<sup>48</sup>

## Socio-economic groups

2.43 Our 2011 study found little variation in completeness by socio-economic groups.<sup>49</sup> The findings for the 2014 electoral registers show a more significant variation across classes, especially between AB (87.2%) and DE (79.6%).

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<sup>47</sup> Department for Communities and local government, *English housing survey 2012-2013* (February 2014).

<sup>48</sup> The Office for National Statistics, *A century of home ownership and renting in England and Wales* (April 2013).

<sup>49</sup> The Electoral Commission, *Great Britain's electoral registers 2011* (December 2011).

**Figure 6: Completeness by socio-economic group - February/March 2014 Local government registers.**



Base (unweighted): 9,601.

2.44 In 2011 there was only a 3% difference between the group with the highest and lowest completeness level.<sup>50</sup> The 2014 results show a larger margin between those in group AB and C2 – the ones with the highest level of completeness – and DE, the lowest one (a difference of 7.5%).

2.45 These new findings are supported, at least partly, by our analysis of completeness by occupation available in *Electoral registration in 2011*. This shows that in England and Wales those in administrative occupation are the most likely to be registered (93.1%), followed by ‘Professionals’ (91.2%) and ‘Manager and Directors’ (90.3%). The lowest levels are seen for people working in ‘Customer services’, ‘Caring and leisure’ (86.1%), those with ‘Elementary professions’ (85.7%) and people who are unemployed (76.4%).<sup>51 52 53</sup>

2.46 Those classed as social grade DE are also less likely to vote than others and have shown a more marked decline in levels of turnout in the last 20

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<sup>50</sup> The Electoral Commission, *Great Britain’s electoral register 2011* (December 2011).

<sup>51</sup> The Electoral Commission, *Electoral registration in 2011* (July 2014).

<sup>52</sup> The Office for National Statistics used the Standards Occupational Classification (SOC) to classify occupations.

<sup>53</sup> The 2011 Census questionnaire asked ‘What is (was) your full and specific job title?’. For those no longer in employment, the classification was based on their last main job. People who did not provide a full job title were categorised with ‘None’: their level of completeness was 74.1%. The level of completeness for those who are unemployed is derived by the question on economic status.

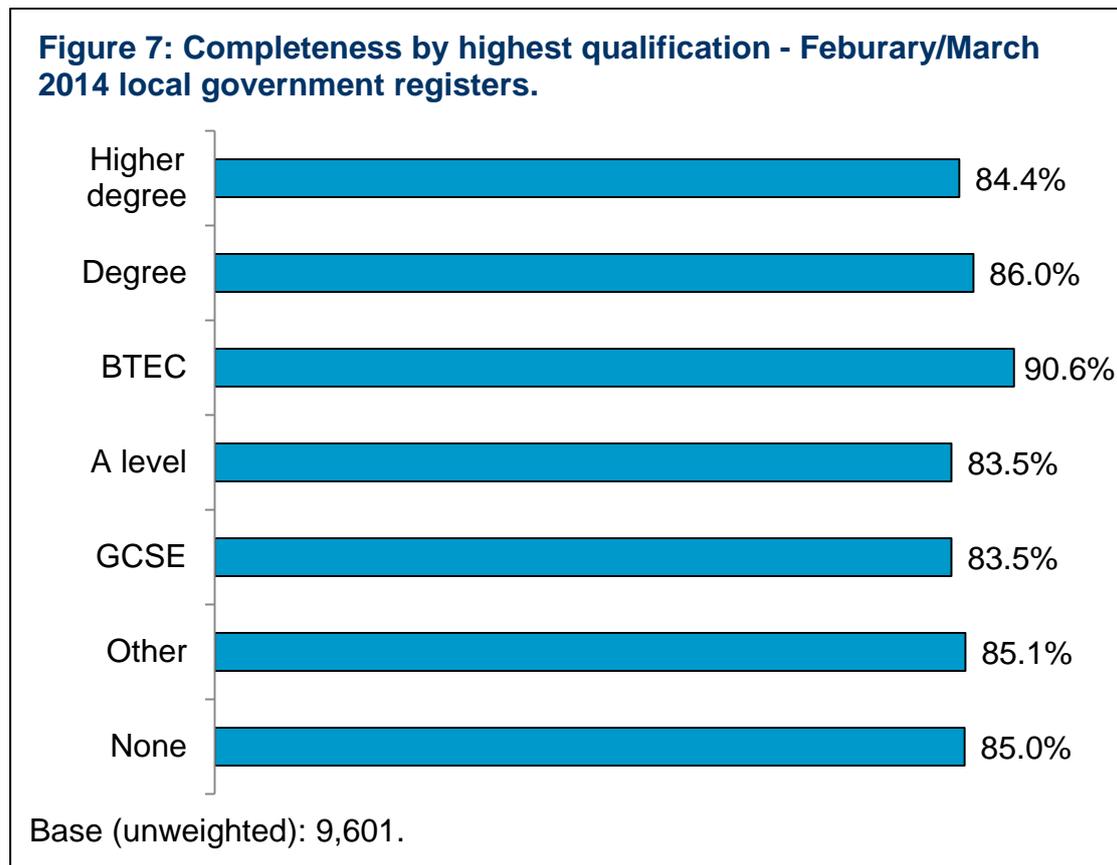
years – 77% were estimated to have voted in the 1992 general election but only 57% in the 2010 general election.<sup>54</sup>

## Highest qualification

2.47 The results from the survey found that completeness does not vary significantly according to the highest level of education achieved.

2.48 The chart shows that those with a Business and Technician Education Council qualification (BTEC) are more likely to be registered than those with any other qualification (90.6%). The difference in completeness for people in the other categories varies by 2.5% maximum.

2.49 These results largely mirror the findings published in *Electoral registration in 2011* with completeness varying by up to 3.1% across all categories. In that report, the further analysis of completeness by highest qualification for people aged 18-34 showed that those with no qualification are significantly less likely to be registered than those with one.<sup>55</sup>



<sup>54</sup> Ipsos MORI, *How Britain voted 2010*, <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/2613/How-Britain-Voted-in>

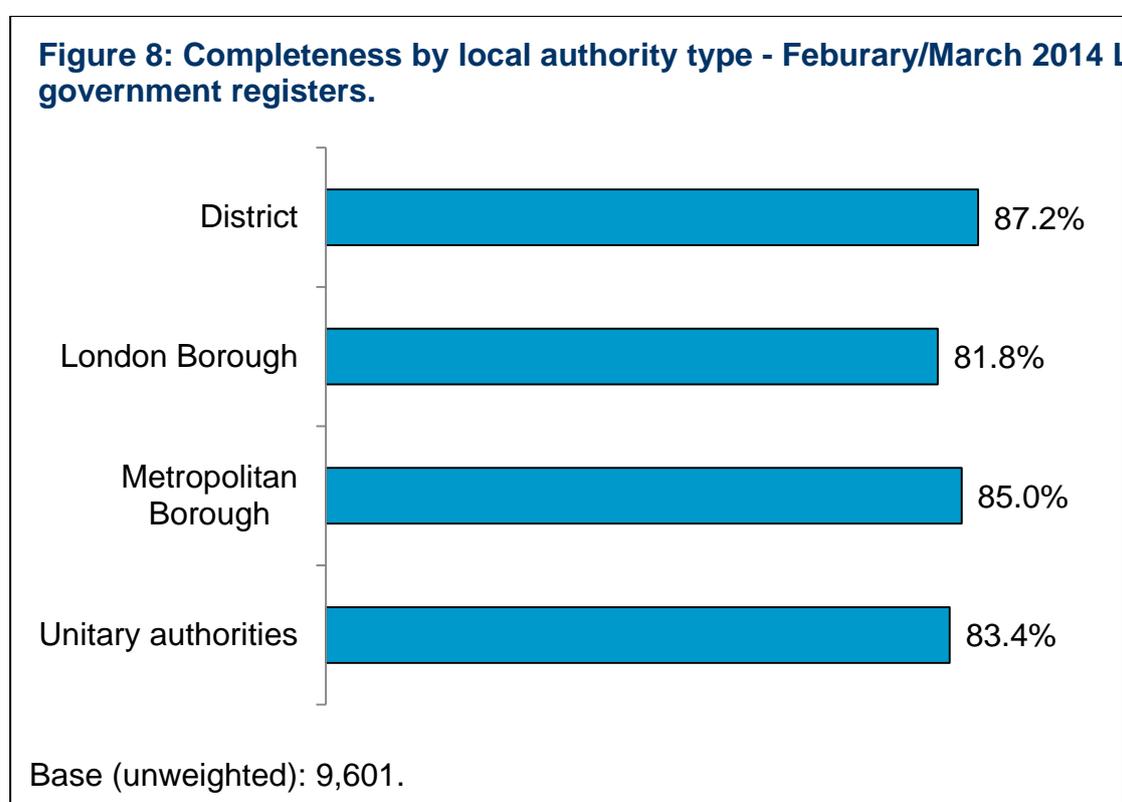
<sup>55</sup> The Electoral Commission, *Electoral registration in 2011* (July 2014).

## Local authority type

2.50 In our 2011 studies on the electoral registers, we found little difference between types of local authorities, with London presenting the lowest level of completeness.<sup>56</sup> The findings presented in this study confirm those results.

2.51 People living in London boroughs are again found to be less likely to be registered. The regression analysis presented in *Electoral registration in 2011* suggested that this is primarily due to demographic factors linked to non-registration: when variables are controlled for, being from inner London increases the likelihood of being on the register more than any other region with the exception of the East Midlands.<sup>57</sup>

2.52 Related to the type of authorities is the distinction **between rural and urban areas**. The results confirmed that rural areas have higher completeness rates (86.8%) than urban (84.3%).



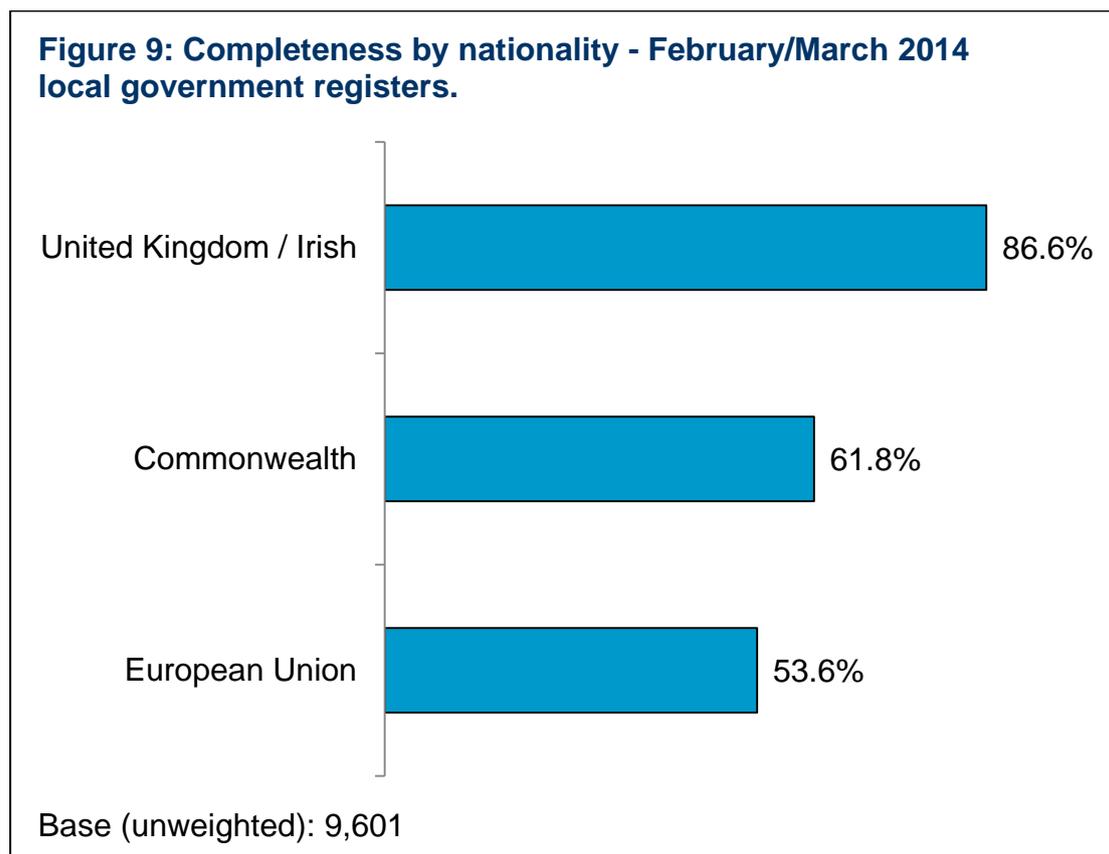
## Nationality

<sup>56</sup> The Electoral Commission, *Electoral Registration in 2011* (July 2014); The Electoral Commission, *Great Britain's electoral registers 2011* (December 2011).

<sup>57</sup> The Electoral Commission, *Electoral Registration in 2011* (July 2014). Scotland not included in the analysis conducted by the Office for National Statistics.

2.53 The chart below shows the level of completeness by nationality: 86.6% of UK citizens were found to be correctly registered against 61.8% of Commonwealth citizens and 53.6% of European Union citizens. This pattern is familiar from previous research.<sup>58</sup>

2.54 Completeness by nationality is also related to length of residence in the UK: our study on electoral registration using census data found that 26% of those who had been resident for less than one year were registered compared to 76% of those who had been in the UK between 5 and 10 years.<sup>59</sup>



## Ethnicity

2.55 The chart below shows that completeness is higher for people whose ethnicity is white (85.9%) while those whose ethnicity falls into the 'Other' category reported the lowest level of completeness (62.9%).

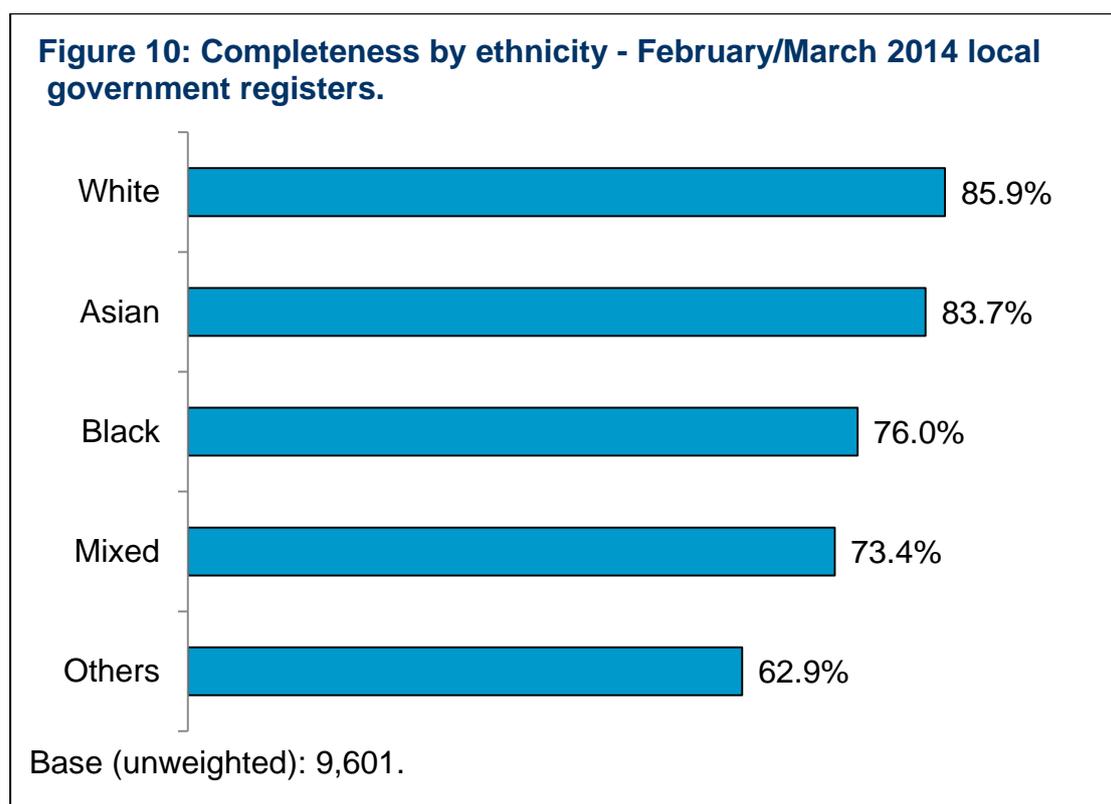
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<sup>58</sup> The results are in line with the findings presented in *Great Britain's electoral registers 2011* (The category 'Commonwealth citizens' in 2011 included Irish people). *Electoral registration in 2011* provided estimates by nationality but 'National identity' and 'Country of birth', rather than passport, were used to assess eligibility and categorise individuals.

<sup>59</sup> The Electoral Commission, *Electoral Registration in 2011* (July 2014).

2.56 This is also in line with previous findings.<sup>60</sup> These broad category findings are useful in identifying possible under-registration but the size of the sample means that a detailed analysis was not possible.

2.57 However, the sample size in *Electoral registration in 2011* allows for a breakdown of some of the categories used in this report. For example, among Asians, those whose ethnicity is Indian have a higher level of completeness than Pakistani and Bangladeshi people. Among black people, those with Caribbean origin had a higher registration rate than those with African origin.<sup>61</sup> These results provide a more nuanced assessment of how completeness varies by ethnicity.



## Disability

2.58 For the first time, we are reporting on levels of completeness by disability. Our survey asked whether any individual living in the household had a mental, physical or other type of disability.<sup>62</sup>

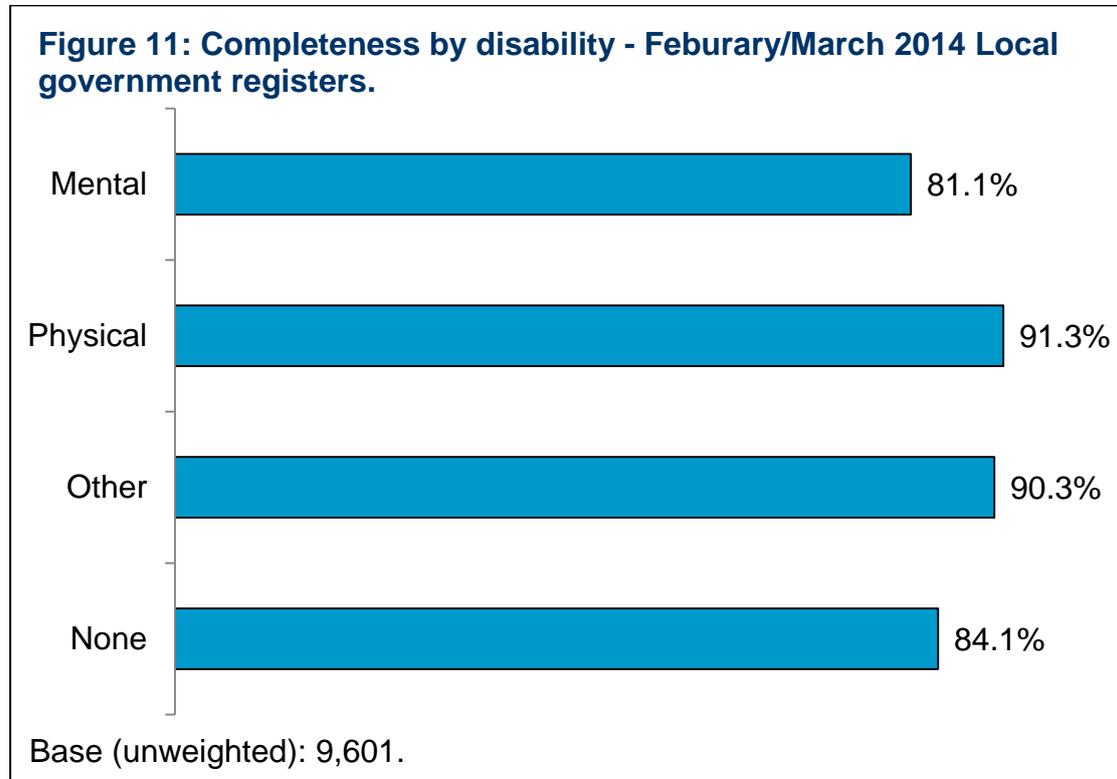
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<sup>60</sup> People in the 'Mixed' ethnicity category were found to have a higher level of completeness in *Electoral Registration in 2011* but this is likely to be due to the method used to classify ethnicity.

<sup>61</sup> The Electoral Commission, *Electoral registration in 2011* (July 2014).

<sup>62</sup> A question on disability was also included in the 2011 questionnaire but was only asked to those who responded to the survey and not for everyone in the household.

2.59 Figure 11 below shows that people with a physical disability are more likely to be registered (90.3%). It is possible that one of the reasons for the high level of completeness is that people with physical disability are less likely to move home than the general population.



## Adults in the household

2.60 Chart 12 below shows completeness by the number of adults living in the household. It indicates that two-person households have the highest levels of completeness. There is no statistically significant difference between one person or three-five person households but addresses where more than six people are resident record notably lower levels of completeness.

2.61 Houses of multiple occupation (HMOs) have previously been associated with lower levels of registration partly because many residents can be there for only a short period of time. They can also be more challenging for EROs to canvass.

**Figure 12: Completeness by number of adults in the household - February/March 2014 local government registers.**



Base (unweighted): 9,601.

## Person who fills out the form and relationship with everyone else in the household

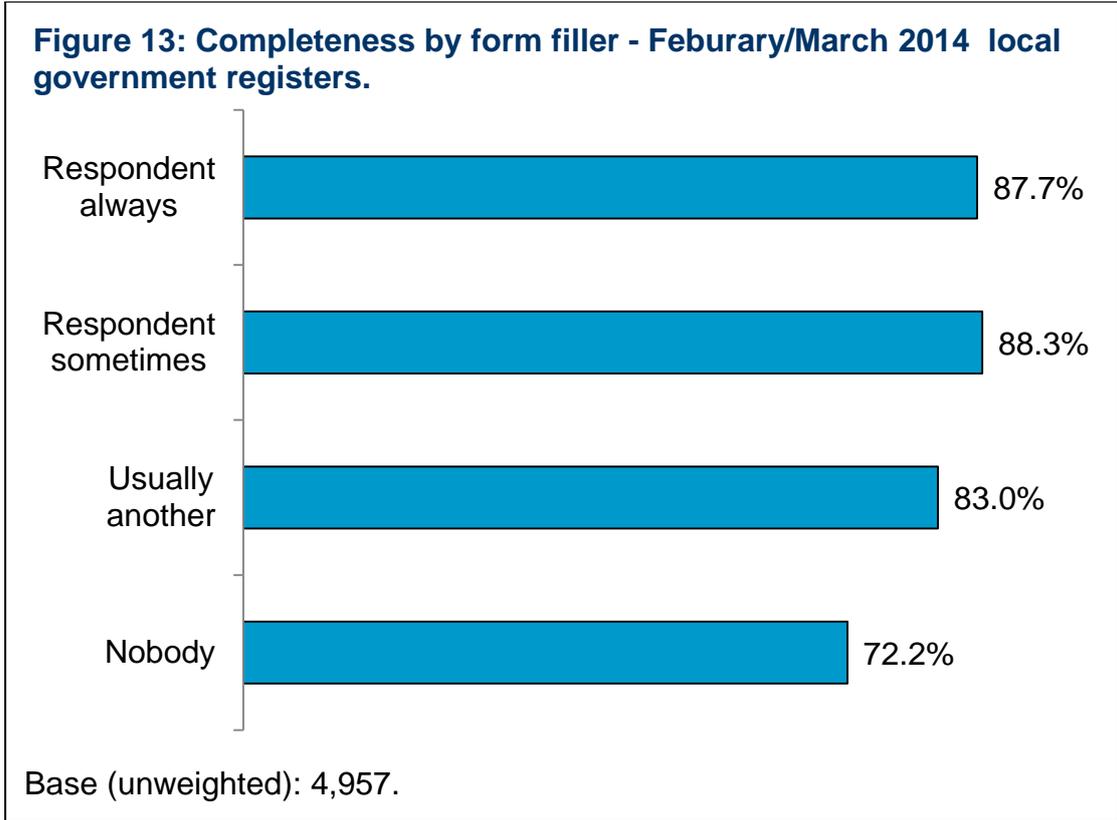
2.62 As part of the house-to-house survey, we asked respondents who, among the people in the household, usually fills in official forms received at their property and the relationship of everyone in the household with that person.

2.63 The figure below presents the level of completeness based on whether the respondent fills in the forms 'always' or 'sometimes', whether 'someone else is responsible' or no one normally fills in forms at their property. The base for these estimates is for respondents only: this means that it is limited to those who responded to the survey and not everyone we have collected information about.<sup>63</sup>

2.64 The data shows that those who fill in the form are more likely to be registered than those who do not.

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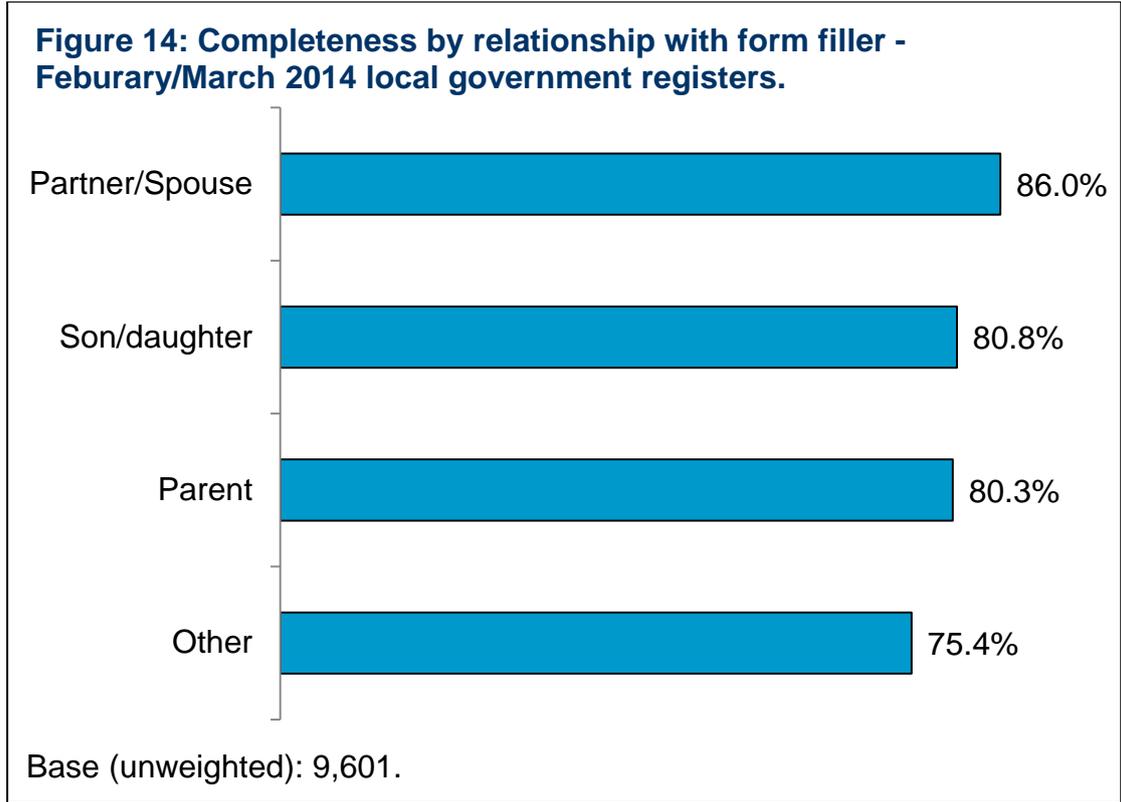
<sup>63</sup> The house-to-house survey was designed to collect information about everyone living at the selected properties by asking questions to the individual who was available for the interview (the respondent). This means that the results for some questions – like in this case – can be applied only to respondents and are not representative of the overall population.



2.65 Figure 14 presents results for everyone for whom we have information. It shows that a closer relationship with the person who fills in the form makes it more likely an individual will be correctly registered at their current address.

2.66 Partner/spouse of the form-filler (86%) are more likely to be registered than their children (80.8%) and their parent (80.3%). The lowest level of completeness is for those in the 'Other' category (75.4%) which covers relationships such as lodger, housemate or carer.

2.67 Again, these findings confirm the correlation found in *Electoral registration in 2011* which shows that the person who fills in the form is the most likely in the household to be on the register (92.1%, except single occupier), followed by partner (90.3%), child (83%) and parent (81%). Other type of relationship – siblings (73.8%), grandchild (74.9%) – and those with no relation with the form filler (55.6%) had lower levels of completeness.



2.68 This data is particularly relevant in light of the move to IER which means everyone is responsible for their own registration. The effect of such a change on the completeness of the registers could be positive for some groups (those who want to be registered but do not have control of their registration) and negative for others (those who do not care about registering but are on the register because someone else in the house included their name on the form).

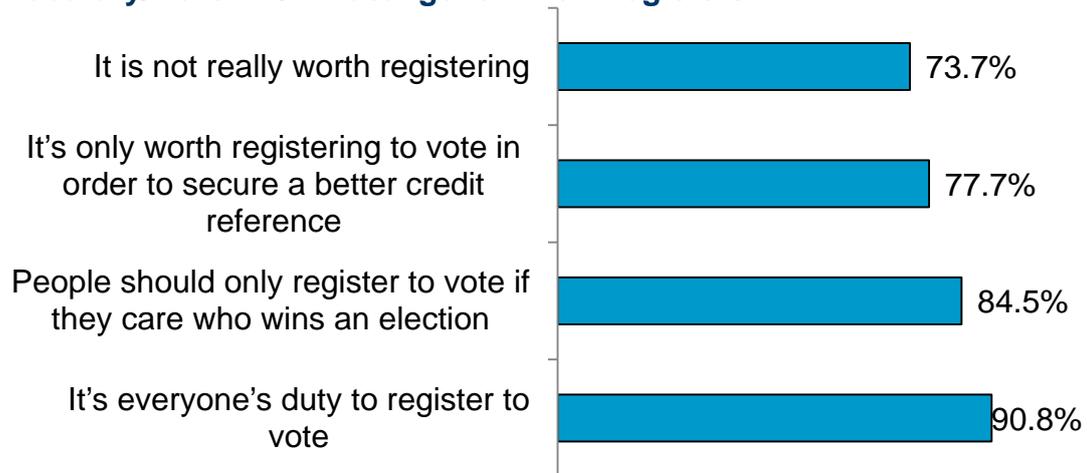
## Attitudes towards electoral registration and voting

2.69 In the survey we also asked respondents about their views towards electoral registration and voting.

2.70 The data presented below is not nationally representative: it is based on the responses collected from people who were interviewed rather than on the people who are resident at that property. Despite not being representative of the views of the overall population, it still provides an interesting insight into the relationship between completeness and attitudes towards registration and voting.

2.71 Figure 15 and 16 shows that there is a clear correlation between attitude towards electoral registration and level of completeness. More than 90% of respondents who think that registering and voting is a duty appear to be correctly registered.

**Figure 15: Completeness by attitude towards electoral registration - February/March 2014 local government registers.**



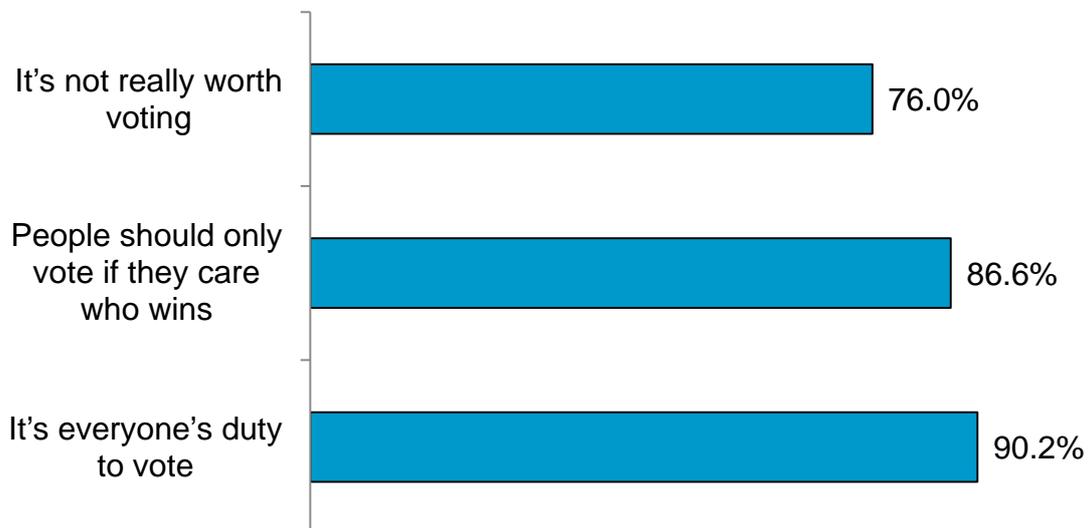
Base (unweighted): 4,957. 'Don't know' excluded.

Question: Which one of these statements comes closest to your views about registering to vote?

2.72 On the other hand, respondents who think that registering and voting is 'not worth it' have considerably lower levels of completeness.

2.73 The relation between attitude towards voting (and registration) and the quality of the register is investigated further in the following chapter.

**Figure 16: Completeness by attitude towards voting - February/March 2014 local government registers.**



Base (unweighted): 4,957. 'Don't know' excluded.

Question: Which one of these statements comes closest to your views about registering to vote?

# Accuracy

2.74 This section presents the findings on the accuracy of the February/March 2014 electoral registers in Great Britain.

2.75 Great Britain's **parliamentary** and **local government registers** were found to be respectively **86.4%** and **86.5%** accurate.

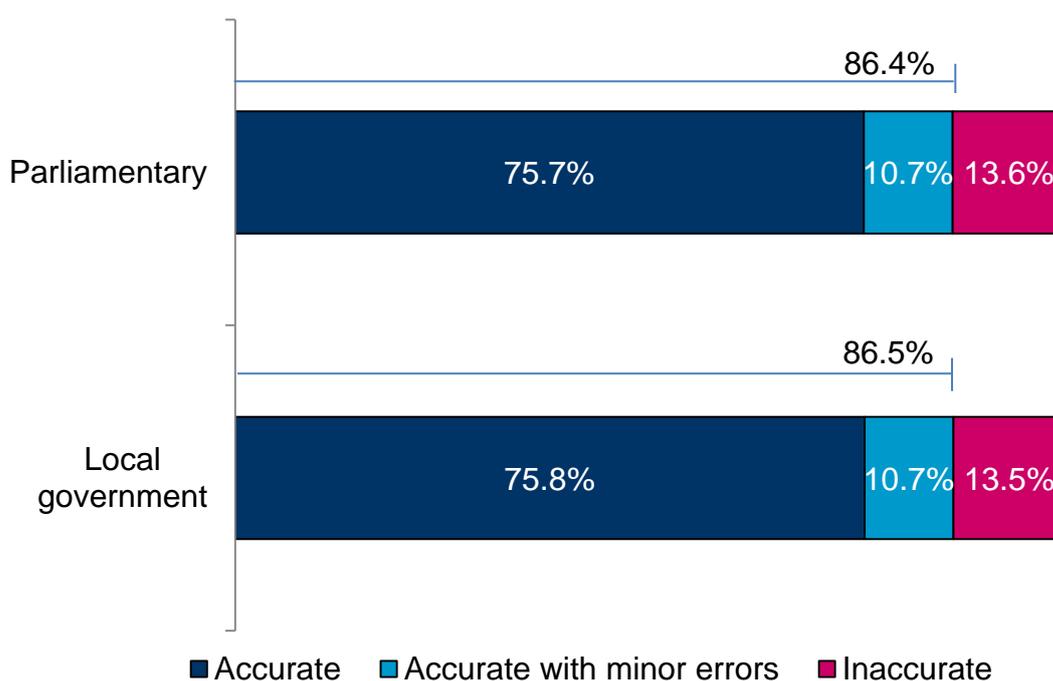
2.76 Unlike for completeness, only limited analysis can be conducted on the demographic and social characteristics associated with inaccurate register entries. This is because most inaccurate entries are for individuals who are no longer resident at an address. It was not therefore possible to collect demographic information about these persons and to report on their characteristics.

2.77 Inaccurate entries - 13.4% and 13.7% on the parliamentary and local government register respectively – are due to '**major errors**' on the register (for example a register entry for an individual no longer resident at that property).

2.78 A further one in ten register entries (10.6% of the parliamentary and 10.7% of the local government) presented errors that would not prevent an individual casting their vote at a polling station and are therefore classed as '**minor errors**' (for example an entry with a spelling error).

2.79 All different types of errors checked to calculate the accuracy of the registers are listed in Table 2.3.

**Figure 17: Accuracy of the February/March 2014 electoral registers.**



Base (unweighted): Parliamentary registers - 9,251; Local government registers - 9,446.

## Type of errors

2.80 The table below provides a breakdown of the types of errors found on the electoral registers.

2.81 For **major errors**, the most common error relates to register entries that refer to individuals who no longer live at the property (more than 11% of all entries on both registers). The second most common type of error (1.2%) are due to an incorrect name and/or surname on the registers.

2.82 The most common types of minor error are the missing middle names on the register (7.9% of all register entries) and misspelling errors (2.2%).

**Table 2.3: Type of errors on the February/March 2014 electoral registers.**

	Parliamentary	Local government
<b>Major errors</b>	<b>13.6%</b>	<b>13.5%</b>
No corresponding name taken at address	11.6%	11.3%
First name and/or surname wrong on register	1.2%	1.2%
First name and/or surname missing on register	0.0%	0.1%
Name on register corresponds to ineligible name on survey	0.0%	0.0%

Attainers - DOB missing or wrong	0.1%	0.1%
EU citizens marker missing	0.0%	0.5%
UK/Irish/Commonwealth marker present <sup>64</sup>	0.2%	0.3%
<b>Accurate with minor errors</b>	<b>10.7%</b>	<b>10.7%</b>
First name/surname on register misspelled	2.1%	2.2%
First name/surname on register incomplete	0.5%	0.6%
Middle name missing from register	8.0%	7.9%
Middle name misspelled on register	0.0%	0.0%

## Conclusions

2.83 These results show that completeness of the registers in Great Britain has remained stable since our previous assessment. There has also been no significant change in levels of accuracy since 2010.

2.84 The analysis of completeness by demographics confirms the findings from previous research: registration is strongly linked to factors such as tenure and age.

2.85 The electoral register is a property-based database and home-movement is confirmed being the main variable affecting the quality of the registers. Factors such as age and tenure are linked to mobility (i.e.: younger people are more likely to be private renters and to change home more frequently) so it is not possible to say definitively whether some are more significant drivers than others.

2.86 However, previous research has suggested that all have some impact, so for example, young people are not just less likely to be registered because they move home more frequently, there is also an effect associated directly with age.<sup>65</sup>

2.87 The introduction of individual electoral registration should help to further improve the accuracy of the registers as anyone registering at a new address will be asked to provide their previous address. This information can then be passed onto the relevant ERO for the old address and the old register entry deleted.

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<sup>64</sup> These electors should not have a marker.

<sup>65</sup> The Electoral Commission, *Electoral registration in 2011* (July 2014).

# 3 Explaining the trend

## Introduction

3.1 This chapter provides an overview of the trend of the quality of the electoral registers. In previous reports, we set out potential reasons for the decline in the completeness of the electoral registers and concluded that there is no single explanation. Here we present some additional information around public engagement, public opinion data on electoral registration and data from our most recent report '*Electoral registration in 2011*'.

### Key points

- The findings presented in this report are consistent with our previous assessment conducted in 2011. The registers are growing in size, but the registration rate has fallen since its post-war peak in the 1950s.
- Historic research available indicates that completeness had declined by the 1980s, it almost doubled between 2001 and 2011 and has now stabilised at around 85%.
- The accuracy of the registers in contrast has remained quite stable. The April 1981 registers were found to contain 10.4–13.5% inaccurate entries, in line with the 2014 estimates.
- There is no single reason to explain the decline in completeness which is likely to be due to a combination of contributing factors such as population changes, internal mobility and immigration, changes to electoral registration practices and financial motivations.
- A significant factor affecting the electoral register, a property-based database, is population mobility which has increased notably in the last 30 years.
- However, the issue of disengagement with traditional party politics, with fewer people voting and participating in the electoral process, must also have a role in the decline in levels of completeness.
- Disengagement among young people is particularly marked. This, and high levels of mobility, are likely to be the main reason behind the low level of completeness among this group.
- Our public opinion data shows that the public is generally satisfied and confident with the registration process. In addition, our research around each set of elections has not found any evidence of any significant levels of complaints from people who try to vote and are unable to do so as a result of not being registered (except for the specific recent example of some EU citizens who tried to vote in the 2014 European Parliament elections and were unable to do so).
- The advent of online registration will, we hope, make the system more accessible to many of those that are not currently registered. This should be particularly true for many younger people

# Levels of registration: 1950 - 2011

## Accuracy

3.2 Any estimate of accuracy represents a ‘snapshot’ at a particular moment in the lifecycle of the registers.

3.3 The 1981 OPCS study set out estimates for the accuracy of the registers for April 1981 and used this estimate to calculate what the accuracy of the registers may have been at the time of the qualifying date for the canvass (October 1980). The study found that between 10.4–13.5% of the names on the April 1981 registers belonged to people who, by that time, were not living at the address listed in the registers.

3.4 The OPCS estimated that 3.8% of registered electors had moved within the six months following the October 1981 qualifying date. Making an allowance for moving and an additional allowance for those registered people who may have died since the qualifying date, the OPCS estimated that the proportion of names on the registers that were inaccurate at the qualifying date was between 6.1% and 9.4%. As rolling registration was not in place when this study was undertaken, no updates would have been made between the time of the qualifying data and the April estimates; the OPCS would therefore not have had to take into account any subsequent changes to the registers when producing their estimates.

3.5 There were no subsequent estimates of the accuracy of the registers until the Commission’s 2011 report on the April 2011 registers in Great Britain.<sup>66</sup> This found that the registers were 85% accurate, indicating a decrease in accuracy.

3.6 Analysis carried out using the 2011 census and the December 2010 and April 2011 registers found a slightly higher level of accuracy for the April 2011 registers. That study estimated accuracy to be between 89 – 91%.<sup>67</sup>

3.7 Overall, the accuracy of entries on the registers has shown relatively little change in the last 30 years compared to the declines recorded in completeness.

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<sup>66</sup> J.E. Todd and B. Butcher, *Electoral registration in 1981* (1981). The 1991 OPCS study also considered redundant entries on the registers in Great Britain at the time of the 1991 census. This study found that between 6.0% and 7.9% of the names listed at addresses which were occupied at the time of the census did not correspond with people living there at the time. However, unlike the 1981 study, an estimate for the percentage of names on the registers that were listed at addresses which were unoccupied at the time of the census was not added to this percentage. Consequently, the figures do not represent a complete picture of the possible scale of inaccuracies on the registers. S. Smith, *Electoral registration in 1991* (HMSO: London, 1993).

<sup>67</sup> The methodology used in *Electoral registration in 2011* to calculate accuracy is slightly different to the one used in this report and in *Great Britain’s electoral registers 2011*.

## Completeness

3.8 As with accuracy, any estimate of completeness represents a ‘snapshot’ at a particular moment in the lifecycle of the registers. In previous years, the snapshot has tended to be provided in the period immediately following the compilation and publication of the annual registers – when the completeness of the registers was at its highest.

3.9 There are several ways to estimate rates of completeness (please see Chapter 1 for more information). The table below summarises the estimates produced by successive studies based on a comparison of the electoral registers with census data.

**Table 3.1: Completeness estimates summary 1950s-2011 (estimated completeness following census results).**

Year	1950s/1960s	1981	1991	2001	2011
Estimated percentage of completeness	96%	93.5%	91.3%	91.5%	85%

3.10 The highest recorded levels of completeness were produced in the 1950s and 1960s. The next estimates were undertaken using the 1981 census (based on the 1980 registers),<sup>68</sup> and the same for the 1991 census (on the 1990 registers) and the 2001 census (2000 registers). These estimates pointed towards a gradual long term decline in the completeness of the registers as shown in the table above.

3.11 The Electoral Commission’s 2011 report *Great Britain’s electoral registers* was the first to produce national estimates for accuracy and completeness without using census data (see chapter 1 for more details on methodologies). This study found that the April 2011 registers were 82% complete and 85% accurate. It also found that the December 2010 registers (the post-canvass register most comparable to historic studies) were 85-87% complete. This study confirmed the continued decline in levels of completeness.

3.12 More recently, we have used data from the 2011 census to publish an assessment of the accuracy and completeness of the registers. That study considered the electoral registers in England and Wales in December 2010

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<sup>68</sup> J.E. Todd and B. Butcher, *Electoral registration in 1981* (HMSO: London, 1981) (referred to as the 1981 OPCS study). Between these two estimates there was a change to the franchise in the UK with the minimum age at which a person can vote being lowered from 21 to 18. The OPCS 1981 study estimated that while some of the decline in registration between the 1966 and 1981 estimates could be attributed to this (because young people are less likely to register) there was a decline not associated with the change.

and April 2011, as well as the April 2011 registers in Scotland.<sup>69</sup> This analysis confirms the findings from our previous research published in 2011 and is summarised below:

- **England and Wales:** 1 December 2010 parliamentary registers were estimated to be 85.6% complete (the local government registers were estimated to be 84.9% complete). The 1 April 2011 registers were found to be 84.2% complete (83.2% in the case of the local government registers)
- **Scotland:** the April 2011 parliamentary registers were found to be 88.5% complete and the local government registers 86.2% complete.<sup>70</sup>

3.13 The findings from both the Commission's house-to-house survey and the analysis of census data indicate that non-registration increased significantly between 2001 and 2011 and it has now stabilised. This will be further discussed later in this chapter.

3.14 The figure below shows the crudely-calculated registration rate for 1991–2013 with the findings from census research also marked.<sup>71</sup> While this is crude it nonetheless supports the data that indicates that there has been a decline in the registration rate since the levels recorded in the 1950s and 1960s. In line with the figure above, the most notable declines are in the late 1990s and the early 2000s. The rate falls from a level of around 95% for much of the 1990s to below 90% by 2013.

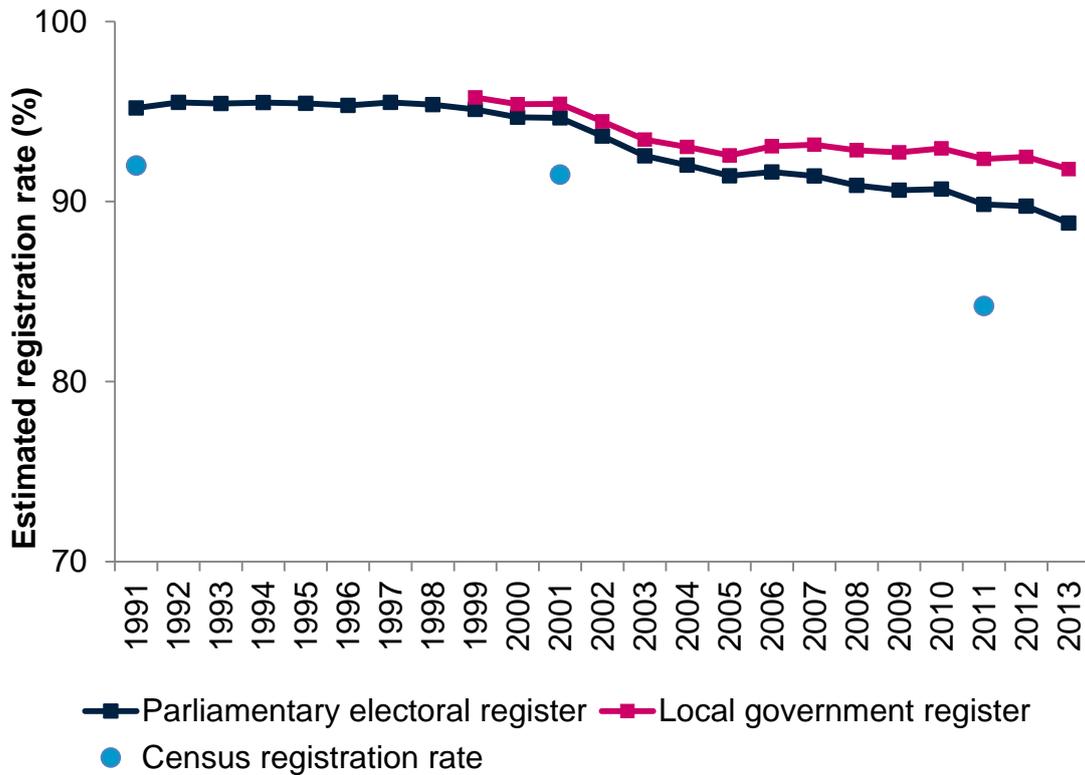
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<sup>69</sup> Although this study focused on the same registers as our 2011 study the Commission considered it useful to also fund the census-based study as it allows for more detailed findings by various demographic and socio-economic characteristics.

<sup>70</sup> The figures for England and Wales (combined) and Scotland were produced through two separate studies – one conducted by the Office for National Statistics and one by the National Record of Scotland. These studies used similar but different methodologies. Full details can be found in the report on our website: <http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/our-work/our-research/electoral-registration-research>

<sup>71</sup> 'Registration rate' is calculated by using the estimated 18+ population for Great Britain produced annually by the ONS and the number of entries on the registers. However, the population estimate is not a measure of the population eligible to register (that data is not available). And the number of entries on the registers is not a direct measure of the number of correctly registered people as it will include inaccurate entries. See Appendix C for more information on this calculation.

**Figure 18: Estimated registration rate and decennial estimates using census data in Great Britain, 1991-2013.**



Source: ONS statistics and mid-year population.

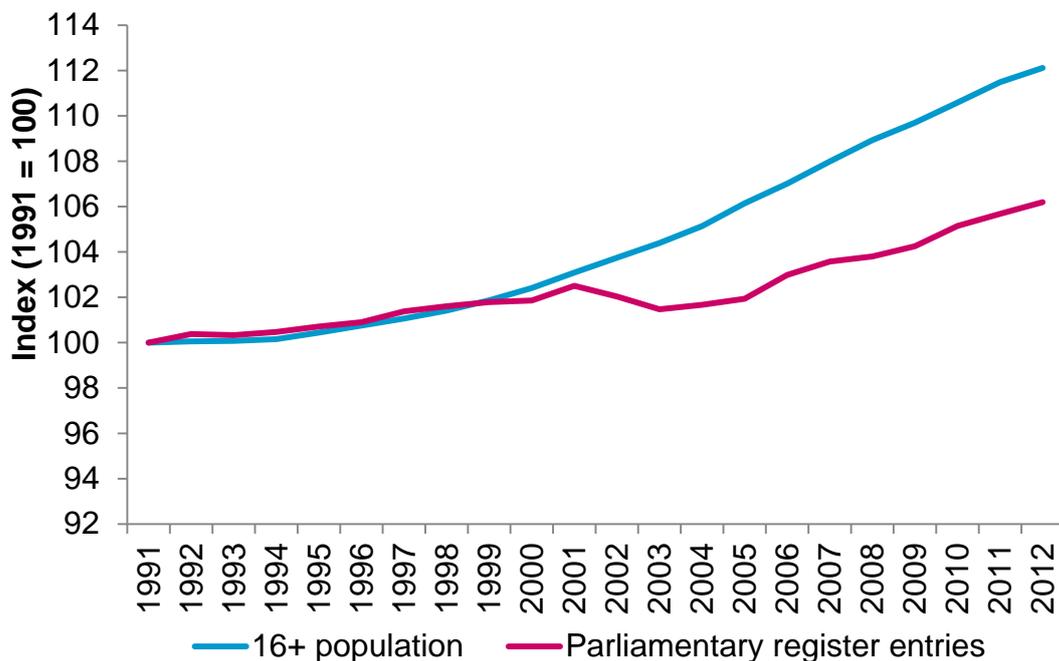
Notes: Registration rate for parliamentary registers from 1991-2013, plus local government registers 1999-2013. Figures for the local government registers are available from 1999 when EU citizens could vote for the first time for the European Parliament from another EU country.

3.15 Similarly, while the total number of entries on the parliamentary registers in Great Britain grew from 42,423,972 in 1991 to 44,921,574 in 2014 registration levels have not kept pace with a rising population.<sup>72</sup>

3.16 The parliamentary registers have grown by 5.5% in 20 years while the local government registers have grown by 6.3% since they were first introduced in 1999. However, despite this growth (please see figure 19 below), the 5.5% increase in the size of the parliamentary registers between 1991 and 2013 is half the rate of increase in the estimated 18+ population (11%).

<sup>72</sup> Note: the registers which would normally have been published in December 2013, at the conclusion of the annual canvass, were published in February and March 2014 instead. This change was made as part of the planning for the transition to IER. ONS continues to refer to these registers as the December 2013 registers in keeping with previous years.

**Figure 19: Growth in the estimated population aged 16 and above and growth in entries on the parliamentary electoral registers, Great Britain, 1991-2012 (1191=100 indexed).**



Source: ONS Electoral Statistics Registration rate for Parliamentary registers from 1991–2012, ONS mid-year population estimates 1991-2012.

Note: This figure shows the change in both the population aged 16 and above and in the number of register entries from 1991 onwards. It does this using a common scale based in indexed numbers. The indexed numbers are calculated by using 1991 as a 'base year', at which both of the two variables are set at a value of 100. The data for each subsequent year then measures the percentage change in each variable against the base year.

## Factors affecting registration

### Electoral registration practices

3.17 In our 2011 report *Great Britain's electoral registers*, we argued that previous declines in completeness could to some extent be linked to electoral registration practices: the way these change and the way people interact with them.<sup>73</sup>

3.18 One of these is the **annual canvass** and the fall in the average canvass response rates across Great Britain in the early 2000s. Data on electoral registration was collected sporadically between 1996 and 2007 so it is not

<sup>73</sup> The Electoral Commission, *The completeness and accuracy of electoral registers in Great Britain* (March 2010); The Electoral Commission, *Great Britain electoral registers 2011* (December 2011).

possible to draw a complete picture.<sup>74</sup> However, data available shows that canvass response rate was 97% in 1994-96 while for the period 2007-10 it was 93%.

3.19 Canvass response rate is affected by the demographics of the population of the area, but also by key canvass processes and practices such as:

- **Use of personal canvassers:** from the early to mid-2000s there was an increased use of all-postal reminders and reduced personal canvassing in the period showing the greatest decline in completeness. In 2010, approximately 23% of EROs used door-knocking at the first reminder stage compared with 26% in 1996 and 48% in 1987.
- **The number of reminder stages:** the prevalence of the third reminder stage declined significantly between 1996 and the Commission's survey conducted in 2010. In 1996, 92% of EROs had a third reminder stage while in 2010 only 48% had one.

3.20 Figures available also show that canvass was particularly effective in the mid-1990s: for example, in 1994-96 only 6-8% of local authorities recorded canvass response rates below 90% while in 2003-04 and in 2007-10 that figure was 20% or higher.

3.21 More encouragingly, and one possible factor in the stabilisation of registration levels, the proportion of EROs reporting response rates below 90% has fallen since 2010 and has been between 15-18% in 2011-2013.<sup>75</sup> The numbers of EROs failing the Commission's performance standard 3 on conducting house to house enquiries has also fallen in this period.

### **Satisfaction with and understanding of registration**

3.22 If the system of registering to vote was considered unsatisfactory or difficult to use, or if people did not know how to register, this would be a possible contributing factor to the decline observed in completeness.

3.23 We regularly ask members of the public whether they are satisfied with the process for registering to vote through public opinion surveys. In general, we usually find relatively high levels of satisfaction with the system although more limited detailed knowledge about how the system works.

3.24 In December 2013, more than four in five respondents to our survey (82%) were **satisfied with the system of registering to vote** (up from 76%

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<sup>74</sup> The Electoral Commission has gathered detailed registration data from Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) across Great Britain since 2007. Until 1996, similar information was collected annually by the forerunner of the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the Office for Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS). In the period between 1996 and 2007, data was collected only sporadically.

<sup>75</sup> <http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/find-information-by-subject/performance-standards/performance-in-running-electoral-registration>

in 2012) while dissatisfaction was at its lowest level since the survey began (2% in 2013 against 11% in May 2003).<sup>76</sup>

3.25 Notably, satisfaction with registering to vote increases with age as 73% of 18-34 year olds were satisfied against 89% of those aged 55+. It is hard to tell to what extent this finding suggests that young people are genuinely less satisfied with the system (and therefore access it less) or if they access it less frequently and therefore have less experience on which to base their answers (we see this in other areas where non-voters are generally less likely to be satisfied with elements of the voting process such as polling stations).

3.26 If the system has had any negative impact on the registration rates of younger people, we would expect the new availability of online registration (set up as part of the transition to IER) to help to mitigate that problem.

3.27 Our public opinion data does suggest that electoral registration is a low salience topic for most people. For example, there is a general **lack of awareness** about what information is required when registering to vote: half (53%) of respondents knew that a National Insurance Number was not (at the time) needed to register; 65% of respondents knew that they could register to vote throughout the year (up from 59% in 2012); just over half correctly said that a utility bill as proof of address is not currently required to register (53%).

3.28 However, while in isolation these results might raise some concerns, in the same survey, we also asked respondents how **confident they are to go and register to vote**. Nine in ten (89%) were confident they know how to register (in-line with previous surveys). As with satisfaction, this figure increases with age with 95% of those aged 55+ confident against 80% of those in the 18-34 age band.

3.29 There is therefore limited evidence that issues associated with satisfaction or knowledge are significant factors in the recent decline in completeness. However, the introduction of online registration should hopefully be seen as a positive development particularly among younger age groups and the Commission will continue to monitor these trends during the IER transition period and beyond.

## Home movement and immigration

3.30 The findings presented in Chapter 2 have shown how individuals featuring characteristics associated with **population mobility** are less likely to be correctly registered.

3.31 This is because the electoral register is a property-based database on which each entry links an individual to an address. As population mobility has been rising since the 1950s and 1960s, there has been a corresponding

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<sup>76</sup> The Electoral Commission, *2013 Winter Tracker* (January 2014).

decline in levels of registration (which are a snapshot of the state of the registers at a particular point in time).

3.32 Table 3.2 below shows that over the last 30 years there has been a modest but steady increase in the proportion of the population who moved during the previous year. As a result, other demographics associated with mobility have changed over the last ten years. For example, census data on tenure for England and Wales shows that the percentage of people who own their home decreased from 69% in 2001 to 64% in 2011, the first fall in homeownership since records began in 1918. On the other hand, renters now represent 36% of the overall population (up 5% since 2011) and the percentage of private renters, for the first time since 1918, equalled the one of social renters (18%).<sup>77</sup>

**Table 3.2: Percentage of the population who changed address at least once in the previous 12 months – Census data.**

Year (of census)	Home-movers over the last 12 months
1981	9.6%
1991	10.2%
2001	12.1%
2011	Figure not yet available

Source: Office for National Statistics.

3.33 Mobility is higher among certain groups such as students, young people and private renters. For example, as noted above, the 2012-13 English housing survey shows that among all private renters, 34% have resided at their property for less than one year and 67% for less than three. The corresponding figures for owner occupiers are 4% and 12%. These are the same groups that consistently present the lowest level of completeness.

3.34 Our 2011 report also suggested that increasing levels of **immigration** could have had a negative impact on the completeness of the registers. The population of the United Kingdom has grown considerably since the late 1990s and it is estimated that between mid-1991 and mid-2012 net migration accounted for just over half (54%) of the UK population growth.<sup>78</sup> As seen in Chapter 2, recent immigrants are more likely to not be correctly registered and EU citizens (whose volume in Great Britain has risen significantly following the EU enlargement in 2004) are consistently found to have lower registration rates than people born in the UK.

<sup>77</sup> The Office for National Statistics, *A century of home ownership and renting in England and Wales* (April 2013).

<sup>78</sup> The Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford, *The impact of migration on UK population growth* (February 2014).

3.35 The difference in the size of the two registers is now over 1.5 million electors, reflecting, in part the different franchises (See Table 1, Chapter 1) and the growth in the population of EU citizens who are resident in Great Britain.

3.36 However, our analysis, using census data, of the relationship between population changes and electoral registration presented in '*Electoral registration in 2011*' concluded that despite the low level of registration, EU citizens could only account for a drop in completeness of around 1% with immigration from non-EU countries having a similar impact – an overall negative impact on completeness from Immigration of approximately 2-3%.<sup>79</sup>

3.37 The analysis of non-registration and population characteristics conducted by the ONS concluded that the drop seen between 2001 and 2011 is mainly accounted for by a lower registration rate amongst people born in the UK. The most significant change, in terms of impact on overall rate, is in younger age groups with those aged 18 to 34 showing a notable drop in completeness between 2001 and 2011 of 7% to 9%.<sup>80</sup>

3.38 The analysis of population mobility presented in *Electoral registration in 2011* shows that younger people are more likely to move. However, mobility alone does not explain their low registration as they are under-registered right after the annual canvass and less likely to register the move following a change of address than people in older age groups.<sup>81</sup>

3.39 Mobility does not explain the low levels of completeness among young people which is likely to be due to lower level of engagement with politics and voting.

## Electoral Participation

3.40 There is an obvious link between levels of registration and levels of interest in politics and turnout at elections. The issue of public engagement with politics, especially among young people, has been the subject of extensive research and debate. In this section we will limit our analysis to the relationship between electoral participation and registration.

3.41 In the previous chapter, we have also seen how those who think that registering to vote and voting is a duty, are significantly more likely to appear on the register than those who think 'it is not worth it'.

3.42 Our public opinion surveys have consistently found that people mainly register for reasons associated with a desire or civic duty to vote. In our survey conducted immediately following the UK Parliamentary General Election, around 40% of people said they registered because they want to

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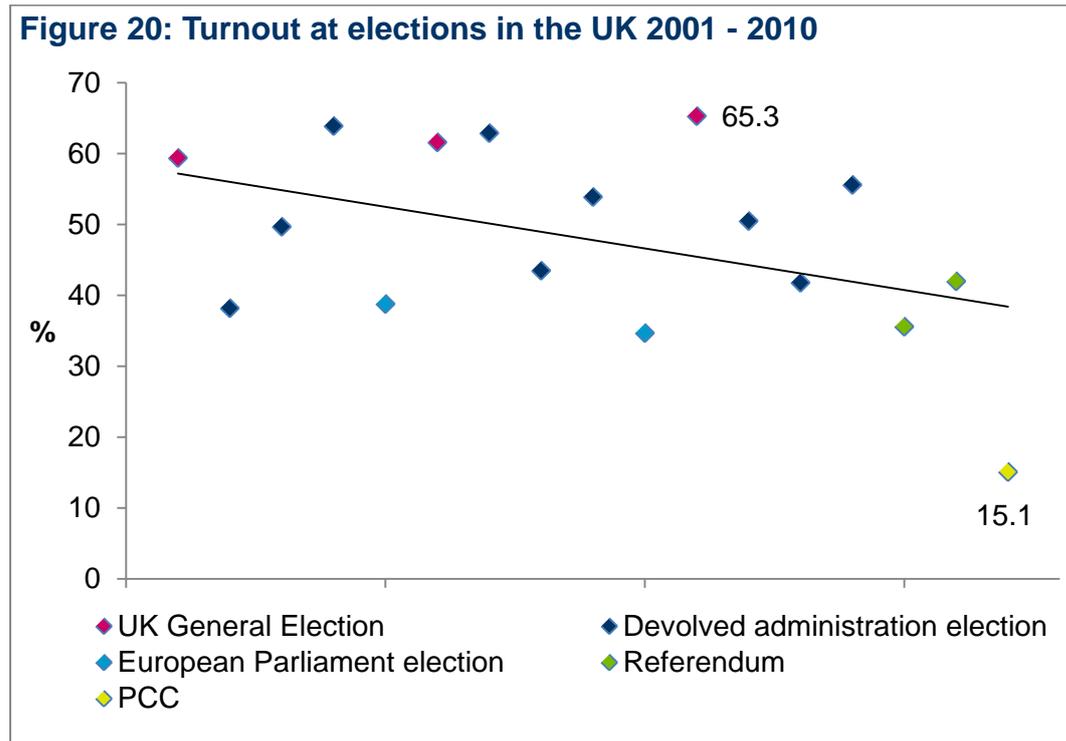
<sup>79</sup> The Electoral Commission, *Electoral registration in 2011* (July 2014).

<sup>80</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>81</sup> The Electoral Commission, *Electoral registration in 2011* (July 2014).

have a say or felt it was important or simply wanted to vote, while 20% registered because they felt it was their right or 'civic duty' to vote.<sup>82</sup>

3.43 However, electoral turnout has been in broad decline, across all elections, for many years. Turnout at the 1992 UK Parliamentary general election was 78%. This had fallen to 59% by 2001 before rising slightly again to 65% in 2010. These declines correspond closely to the drop in levels of completeness observed from the late 1990s. Figure 19 below shows a pattern of low turnout across different types of election in the period 2001 – 2010.

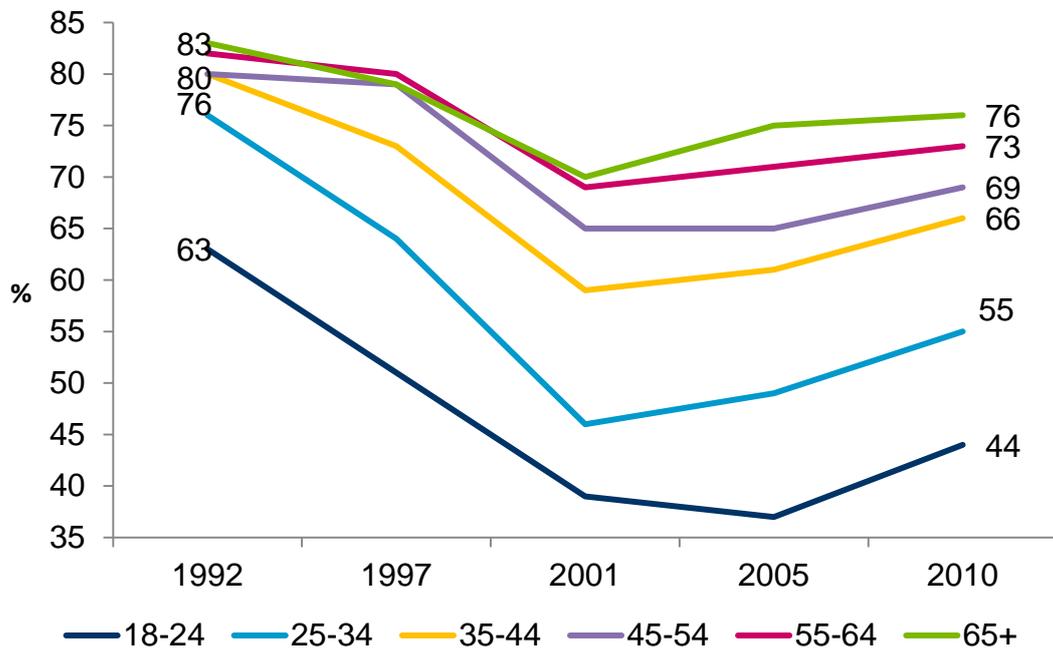


3.44 The similarity between changes in levels of registration and turnout is also seen in the demographics of those who do not vote and are not registered. Although the secrecy of the ballot does not allow for straightforward profiling of voters and non-voters, surveys and research have shown that the likelihood to vote increases with age. Aggregated survey results from Ipsos MORI, conducted around general elections found that 44% of people aged 18-24 and 55% of 25-34 voted at the 2010 UK Parliament elections against 73% of those aged 55-64 and 76% of the 65+.<sup>83</sup> As figure 20 below shows, this represents a significant change from the 1992 election.

<sup>82</sup> The Electoral Commission, Post-election survey (May 2010). The Electoral Commission, *Great Britain's electoral registers 2011* (December 2011).

<sup>83</sup> Ipsos MORI, *How Britain Voted in 2010* (May 2010): <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/poll.aspx?oltemId=2613&view=wide>

**Figure 20: Turnout at UK Parliamentary general elections since 1992 by age**

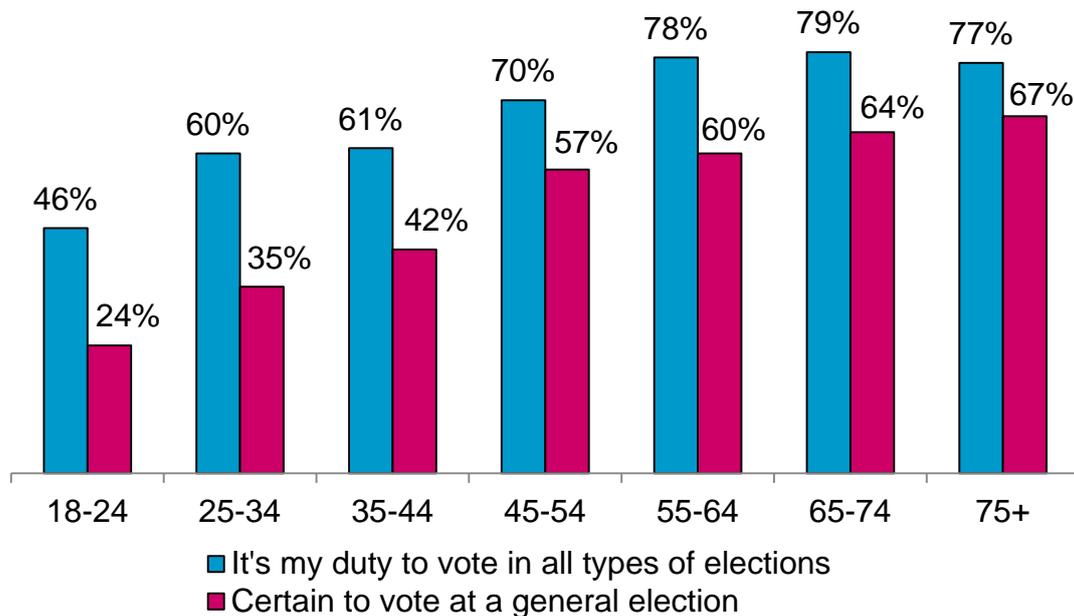


Source: Ipsos Mori, How Britain voted.

3.45 Similarly, the Hansard Society 2014 Audit of Political Engagement found that younger people are less likely to see voting as a civic duty and less likely to vote at general elections. The figure on 'voting is a civic duty' for the overall population in 2014 was 67%, 7 percentage point lower than in 2004 when the Audit series began (although the question used most recently was slightly different).<sup>84</sup>

<sup>84</sup> Hansard Society, *Audit of Political Engagement* 2004 and 2014.

**Figure 21: Duty to vote and certainty to vote at general election.**



Source: Hansard Society, Audit of Political engagement 11, May 2014.  
Base: 1,286 GB adults 18+. Fieldwork dates: 6-12 December 2013.

## Conclusions

3.46 The registers are growing in size but the registration rate has fallen since its post-war peak in the 1950s. In particular, there has been a significant fall in levels of completeness between the early-2000s and 2011: during this period under-registration almost doubled.

3.47 The findings from this study, in line with the ones on the 2011 registers, confirm that completeness has stabilize at around 85% for the registers published after the annual canvass.

3.48 The fall in completeness is likely to be due to a number of factors: population changes, increased population mobility, registration practices and public engagement with politics.

3.49 A significant factor affecting the electoral register, a property-based database, is population mobility which has increased notably in the last 30 years.

3.50 In addition, participating in the electoral process remains a key reason why people register to vote and disengagement with politics and elections – especially among young people – is also likely to be a significant factor in the decline in completeness. As turnout has decreased since the 1990s and especially in the early/mid-2000s, so has the completeness of the registers.

3.51 Public opinion data shows that the public is generally satisfied with the registration process. Younger people are less satisfied and less likely to say they know how to register to vote. The introduction of online registration will hopefully have a positive impact although it is likely to be the motivation to turn out and vote at elections that remains key to increasing levels of registration.

## 4 Conclusions and recommendations

4.1 This report sets out the findings from a national survey conducted across Great Britain to measure the quality of the electoral registers which were published in February 2014 (England) and March 2014 (Wales and Scotland).

4.2 The February/March 2014 registers are the last which have been produced under the old household-based electoral registration system in Great Britain, and the measures of accuracy and completeness identified by this research will provide a baseline to assess the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration (IER).

### The registers before IER

4.3 This study found the February/March 2014 parliamentary registers to be between 85-86% complete and 86% accurate.

4.4 These results show that **the level of completeness of the registers has remained stable since our previous assessments.**

4.5 Any attempt to calculate the number of people not registered at their current address can only be a rough estimate. Mid-year population estimates from the Office for National Statistics do not provide information on nationality or passport and it is therefore not possible to determine with certainty the size of the eligible population of Great Britain.

4.6 Our previous estimate for December 2010, published in *Great Britain's electoral registers 2011*, suggested that at least 6 million people were not registered. This figure was a rough estimate, calculated from the higher end of the range of the completeness estimate of the December 2010 registers (85-87%) and based on the population data available at the time.<sup>85</sup> This estimate has been used as shorthand to refer to the state of the register to indicate that 6 million was the minimum number not correctly registered.

4.7 A new study published alongside this report, *Electoral registration in 2011*, provide a more exact completeness estimate for December 2010.<sup>86</sup> This study is based on the 2011 Census data and provides the most accurate and comprehensive picture of the state of the electoral registers today. It

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<sup>85</sup> The completeness estimates for December 2010 were extrapolated from the main results of that project which focused on the April 2011 registers. The calculation on the number of people not correctly registered was based on the 2010 mid-year population estimates which were then revised following the publication of the 2011 Census data.

<sup>86</sup> The Electoral Commission, *Electoral registration in 2011* (July 2014).

found that levels of completeness were at the lower end of our previously published range – at 84.9%.<sup>87</sup> The number of individuals not correctly registered at their current address in December 2010 was therefore around 7.5 million.<sup>88</sup>

4.8 The results for accuracy presented in this report are slightly higher than those found in our previous house-to-house survey on the April 2011 registers (85.5% for the parliamentary and 85.4% for local government). This is what we would expect as the April 2011 registers were published a few months after the conclusion of the canvass.

4.9 However, our research using census data produced an accuracy assessment of the register published in December 2010 immediately after the annual canvass, although there are some differences in methodology between that study and this and the figure relates to England and Wales only. This found that the December 2010 registers were between 89-91% accurate.<sup>89</sup> Taking into account the margins of error on both sets of findings **we believe there has been no significant change in levels of accuracy since 2010.**

**Table 4.1 Accuracy and completeness assessment results**

	Completeness		Accuracy	
	Parliamentary	Local government	Parliamentary	Local government
<b>Feb/Mar 2014</b>	85.9%	84.7%	86.1%	86.3%
<b>April 2011</b>	82.3%	82%	85.5%	85.4%
<b>December 2010</b>	85.6%	84.9%	89 – 91%	
	85 – 87%		-	

<sup>87</sup> This is an estimate for England and Wales and not for Great Britain. However, while separate data for Scotland suggests a slightly higher level of completeness, the relative size of the population of Scotland means that the combined Great Britain wide figure would not be substantially different from that for England and Wales.

<sup>88</sup> The estimates of the numbers not correctly registered are based on population estimates and are not therefore precise figures. The population estimates will include people ineligible to register as they do not take account of nationality.

<sup>89</sup> Accuracy estimates in ‘*Electoral registration 2011*’ have been calculated following formatting work conducted by the Office for National Statistics. Prior to matching, they removed punctuation characters, spacing and capitalisation were standardised and in some cases, electoral register entries were found to include name data in the incorrect order, with forename and surnames swapped around. This data cleansing is likely to have increased the accuracy of the registers and the estimates derived from this study were in fact higher than the ones from previous research.

4.10 The findings, presented in this report, for levels of completeness by selected demographics and the more detailed demographic breakdowns presented in our separate study, based on a comparison with census data, are largely in line with our previous research into electoral registration.

4.11 Younger people, people living in privately rented accommodation and those who move home more frequently are less likely to be registered at their current address. The study with census data finds that people from specific ethnic backgrounds are also less likely to be registered correctly – Black African, Bangladeshi, Pakistani and mixed ethnicity.

## Implications for IER

4.12 The successful implementation of IER in Great Britain will depend on effective partnerships: EROs working with local groups including political parties and campaigners to encourage people to take the action they need to be registered under IER, supported by public awareness campaigns developed and delivered by the Electoral Commission.

4.13 All that vital work relies on good quality analysis and intelligence about the scale of the challenge in ensuring complete and accurate electoral registers under IER, and also to identify where more effort is required to increase registration rates among currently under-registered groups.

4.14 Current plans and strategies have been informed by the findings from the Commission's previous registration research about which groups are less likely to be correctly registered. The findings from the research presented in this report do not suggest that any significant changes are required to the under-registered groups which need to be targeted during the transition to IER. The overall pattern of under-registration among specific demographic and social groups has remained consistent with our previous research.

4.15 Our monitoring work has already shown that EROs across Great Britain have good plans in place for the transition to IER. They have been supported by a mass-media public awareness campaign which launched in England and Wales in July 2014, and by the development of an online registration system which is available for the first time.

4.16 While it is important to recognise and welcome these successful foundations for the transition to IER, the findings presented in this research report highlight the scale of the significant challenge facing all of us who care about participation in our electoral processes: roughly one in seven people eligible to vote at elections in Great Britain are not registered correctly, and that proportion is significantly higher among some social and demographic groups. The evidence suggests that the trend towards increasing under-registration has not yet begun to be reversed, even if it may have stabilised.

4.17 The challenge now is to ensure that good plans are translated into effective action which has a real impact on levels of registration. We will continue to monitor closely the work of EROs as they manage the transition to

IER, and we will provide both support and challenge where we think they are needed. We will continue to report on the performance of EROs across Great Britain, including highlighting clearly if we are concerned that any ERO is at risk of not delivering effective registration activities, focusing particularly on those who we think may need more targeted support.

4.18 We will also use the evidence from this research to shape the work we do to help EROs deliver improvements in levels of registration. We will use the information this report gives us to help ensure that our public awareness campaigns in advance of the next UK Parliamentary General Election in May 2015 have the widest possible reach, including refining the key messages that will best encourage those who need to take action to join the new register. We will also continue to refine the range of resources that we make available for EROs to use to support public awareness locally.

4.19 We have also started work with a range of partner organisations to help us reach these under-registered groups more effectively, from the National Union of Students, Citizen's Advice and others. We will continue to identify and build new partnerships over the next 12 months to help support the work that EROs are delivering locally.

4.20 It is also important for campaigners who are actively engaged in the electoral system to continue to do their part to raise awareness. The introduction of online registration means that candidates, political parties, campaigners and elected representatives including Members of Parliament local councillors can not only encourage people to register to vote but also provide a simple link to a website which will allow people to complete their application in minutes. Many already do this, and we will continue to encourage campaigners to direct people to the online registration website.

## Monitoring the transition to IER

4.21 As set out in Chapter 1, the Commission will continue to monitor closely the transition to IER through regular data collection exercises which will allow us to build up a picture of how the transition is affecting the registers at a local authority level.

4.22 We will continue to share data about electoral registration with all those who are interested in monitoring the transition to IER, and we intend to publish further reports analysing data on the transition to IER at the following points:

- Autumn 2014 – the results of the confirmation process, at ward level, across Great Britain.
- Spring 2015 – the result of the write out, following the confirmation process, to those electors not confirmed and those missing from the registers.
- June 2015 – the results of additional activities undertaken by EROs between the publication of the December registers and the UK Parliamentary general election in May 2015. This report will form our

advice to the relevant minister on whether the end date for IER transition can be brought forward from December 2016 to December 2016.

- July 2016 or July 2017 – our assessment of the accuracy and completeness of the first full IER registers. The timing for this research will depend on the end date for the transition to IER.

# Appendix A: Our approach

The research presented in this report was conducted together with ICM Research.

The table below provides an overview of the different stages of the project.

**Table A1: Phases of the research project.**

Dates	Research task	Lead agency	Research objectives
January 2014	Methodology set-up.	Electoral Commission/ ICM	To set up sample strategy and design materials.
February-March 2014	Obtaining February/March 2014 electoral registers from local authorities in selected sample areas.	Electoral Commission	To obtain the full list of registered electors in the selected sample areas.
March – June 2014	House-to-house interviews taking place in selected local authorities.	ICM	To collect data for producing estimates of accuracy and completeness of the registers.
May/June 2011	Despatch of postal questionnaire to non-responders.	ICM	To receive responses from those households that interviewers were unable to receive a response from.
June -July 2014	Data processing and data analysis.	ICM	To check the information gathered from the interviews against the entries on the electoral register and use this to produce accuracy and completeness estimates.

## Methodology

The approach taken to delivering this research builds on two previous research studies on the electoral registers: *The completeness and accuracy of electoral registers in Great Britain*, published in March 2010 and *Great Britain's electoral registers 2011*. A study based on the same methodology was also conducted in Northern Ireland in 2012 (*Continuous Electoral registration in Northern Ireland*, November 2012). The 2011 study was the first one that used a nationally representative sample to provide an overall

estimate of the accuracy and completeness of the registers across Great Britain.

The study presented in this report aimed to produce estimates of accuracy and completeness immediately before the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration (IER).

This study presents the outcomes from a large survey exercise that took place across Great Britain from March to June 2014. Research agency ICM collected information across 100 randomly selected local authority areas, cumulating information from 5,080 addresses also selected at random from within each local authority area.

The survey required a fully representative sample of the adult population (aged 17+) across Great Britain. The survey employed a pure random probability (pre-selection) survey design coupled with face-to-face interviewing in respondents' homes. This was due to the importance of ensuring confidence in the productive sample in order to have reliability around the accuracy and completeness scores and to mitigate against sampling error or bias (and other forms of error).

## Sampling

The survey requirement was for a minimum of 5,000 interviews with a representative sample of the 17+ population of Great Britain population, being those people currently eligible to vote plus attainers, 16 and 17 years-old who will turn 18 during the lifetime of the register.

ICM sought a high quality sample to have statistical confidence to cross-match survey data to the electoral register. The data collection approach combined random probability techniques with in-home interviewing methods using Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) technology.

The survey design was premised on a multi-stage, random pre-selection sampling approach, with probability of address selection proportional to population distribution.

Britain's geography is split at the lowest level into Output Areas (OAs) - the base units of Census (2011) about which complete socio-demographic data is known. OAs were constructed with size equality in mind (there are 181,408 OAs in England and Wales, plus a further 46,351 in Scotland), with an average of 125 households (309 people) estimated to reside in each. Output Areas are grouped by full postcode and fit within the boundaries of electoral wards – which is helpful to us in this case as wards were selected as a stratification variable. This was a key technical advantage as wards are an important electoral role marker criterion, whereas Output Areas are not. This approach offered less clustering of address selection within a ward, while benefiting from the detail associated with the multiple selection of different OAs within that ward. ICM was therefore able to introduce greater sampling heterogeneity at ward level while benefiting from the homogeneity of OA

based classification. This is partly because there is a perceived social uniformity about the occupants of each OA, which implies that an ACORN code associated with each one is an excellent random indicator (strata) variable that can be incorporated into the construction of the multi-stage sampling frame to ensure double-lock representative coverage.

By adopting the Output Area approach, ICM could sample effectively and efficiently, employing a traditional random sampling approach in selecting the specific areas where they wanted interviewers to work. By definition, however, this still implied a necessary level of address clustering within the sampling frame.

The survey selected 100 local authorities - with 5 wards selected in each. Ten interviews were generated from each ward. This implied ICM selected an average of 2.5 OAs per ward based on 4 interviews per OA. This aggregated up to 50 interviews per local authority and allowed ICM to reach their minimum base sample size of 5,000 interviews.

The precise sampling approach taken by ICM was as follows:

Stage 1: Select 100 local authorities stratified by nation (England, Wales, Scotland) and by English region, local authority type, and population density.

- a. Extract all Local Authorities based on the 18+ population.
- b. Based on the distribution of 18+ population throughout Government Office Regions (GOR), calculate the appropriate number of sample points (LAs) that should be chosen from within each GOR.
- c. Calculate the proportion of the 18+ population in each GOR that live in each Unitary Authority (UA) or District, and using this proportion, work out the appropriate number of sample points from each GOR that should be UAs or districts.
- d. Stratify the list of UAs and districts by GOR and select 100 LAs proportional to the 18+ population.

Stage 2: Randomly select 5 wards from within each local authority.

- a. Extract all wards that fall within each of the 100 selected LAs.
- b. Match wards to electorate data based on latest Electoral Commission provided information. (In seven cases out of two thousand where the data were not available, 18+ population was used as a proxy).
- c. Order wards by Local Authority (LA) and electorate
- d. Stratify the list of wards by LA and select 5 wards per LA system using the systematic sampling method.

Stage 3: Select an average of 2.5 Output Areas per ward based on the achievement of 4 interviews per OA.

- a. Extract all OAs within 500 selected wards with 18+ population, rural-urban classification and Acorn.
- b. Order OAs by LA, Ward, Rural-Urban and Acorn
- c. Select OAs systematically based upon 3 output areas for the first OA, and then 2 for the second OA, and then 3 for the 3rd etc. This resulted in 13 OAs in half of LAs, and 12 in the other half.

Stage 4: Draw 8 addresses at random per OA to supply to the interviewer. The first 6 addresses were 'main' addresses, and the extra 2 were to be reserve addresses.

In summary, for the base survey of interviews at 5,000 addresses, survey design was premised on the selection of 100 local authorities (n = 50 per LA), 500 wards within them (n = 10 per ward, or 1,250 Output Areas in total (n = 4 per OA)).

At this point in the survey process, ICM by necessity departed from the pursuit of a fully random sample of people. ICM's prior experience informed them to seek the head of the household in the first instance but should interview another household member if the head is unavailable. This was on the basis that all household members should be aware and able to communicate basic personal information about other household members, such as name, date of birth etc.

The ability to interview anyone in each household meant that those people both more likely to be at home, and those more pre-disposed to market research interviewing were interviewed. However uniquely, this does not necessarily matter given the purpose of this survey. What we sought was a representative sample of addresses, and material information on all residents within a property – not in this case a classic representative sample of respondents.

## House-to-house survey

In order to cross-check (during interviews) the details of persons living at selected addresses against the electoral register, ICM had to first check the electoral register records for persons associated with that address and associate them with their address record.

Where persons were found on the registers at every address, their register entries were added to the master sample file. All details of persons registered to vote at selected addresses were then linked to the interviewing software on the CAPI machines. At a specific point during the conduct of the interview, details of such persons were automatically pulled through to facilitate the interview questions.

Prior to interviewers commencing fieldwork, a number of protocols were adopted to help facilitate a high response rate and smooth survey progress.

1. A letter was sent to every household informing household members that their property had been selected to participate, the purpose of the survey and contact details should they not wish to be contacted. As a result of communication, ICM received a total of 10 requests for their property to be withdrawn from the process.
2. All interviewers were given a one day training session on use of the CAPI machine and its software, in addition to survey purpose, questionnaire rationale and general requirements.

3. Interviewers were required to make one plus five re-visits to each address in order to maximise the response rate. Rules for visiting were defined as:
  - a. Visit 1 had to be on a Saturday or a Sunday (with sensitivities around Sunday interviewing is unwise and worship taken into account);
  - b. At least one further visit had to be on a Saturday or a Sunday;
  - c. At least one visit had to be on a weekday evening, after 6pm;
  - d. No more than 2 visits were permitted during workday hours;
  - e. The time, date and outcome of every visit had to be recorded on a contact sheet. This formed part of the process for assessing rule compliance;
  - f. Appointment making was encouraged at every opportunity. Contact with any household member brings the opportunity to obtain contact phone numbers for eligible household heads etc. Interviewer details were also posted through letterboxes where no contact was made;
  - g. Addresses where 'soft' contact was made but no interview achieved were re-issued to a different interviewer. ICM's expectation was that 88% of completed interviews would result from 'first' issue contact, but the remaining 12% would be achieved where a different interviewer successfully makes contact;
  - h. No incentive was offered to respondents to participate on the survey;
  
4. All households where an interview did not take place, but where no refusal was received (365 addresses) were sent a post-fieldwork abridged version of the questionnaire. ICM received a total of 57 self-completed postal questionnaires, each of which were then manually entered as an interview record and thus included in the full and final dataset.

Table A2 shows the outcomes at all the addresses that ICM interviewers visited, and the associated implications.

**Table A2: Interview outcomes**

Original Addresses visited	7,500
Extra addresses visited	652
<b>Total addresses visited</b>	<b>8152</b>
Property vacant	176
Property does not exist	117
Property under construction	11
Property demolished	6
Business address	52
Holiday home	44
Institution	7
No contact	1,207
Some contact, no interview after 6 calls	313
Occupation unsure	38
Away during fieldwork	23
Refusal – head of household	692
Refusal – other household member	151
Refusal – illness	36

Refused name - terminated	27
Warden controlled entrance refusal	28
Foreign language refusal	7
Other reason	85
Quit interview	50
Address withdrawn by head office	2
<b>Failed addresses total</b>	<b>3,072</b>
Completed interviews at address	5,023
Completed interviews by post	57
<b>Total interviews</b>	<b>5,080</b>
<b>Response rate</b>	<b>62.3%</b>

The total number of achieved interviews (5,080) yielded data on 9,601 people (a number which corresponds to the “Completeness base”).

Field interviews were conducted on 1<sup>st</sup> March – 10<sup>th</sup> June 2012. Additional postal returns were accepted until 13<sup>th</sup> June 2014.

## Confidence intervals and weighting of the data

All results are subject to sampling tolerances, which mean that not all differences are statistically significant.

We can, however, predict the variation between the sample results and the ‘true’ values (if everyone in the population had been interviewed) from knowledge of the size of the samples on which the results are based and the number of times answers are given. The confidence with which we can make this prediction is chosen to be 95% - that is, the chances are 95 times out of 100 that the ‘true’ value will fall within a specified range. The table below illustrates the predicted ranges for different sample sizes and the percentage results at the 95% confidence level.

**Table A3: Sampling tolerances.**

Sample size	Sampling tolerances applicable to %'S at or near		
	10% OR 90% + / - (percentage points)	30% OR 70% + / - (percentage points)	50% + / - (percentage points)
100 interviews	5.9	9.0	9.8
250 interviews	3.7	5.7	6.2
500 interviews	2.6	4.0	4.4
1,000 interviews	1.9	2.8	3.1
2,500 interviews	1.2	1.8	2.0
5,080 interviews	0.8	1.3	1.4

For example, with a sample size of 5,080 interviews where 50% (the worst case scenario as far as tolerances are concerned) give a particular

answer, we can be 95% certain that the ‘true’ value will fall within the range of 1.4 percentage points from the sample result.

When results are compared between separate groups within a sample (say, between men and women), different results may be obtained. The difference may be ‘real’ or it may occur by chance (because a sample rather than the entire population has been interviewed). To test if the difference is a real one, i.e. if it is ‘statistically significant’, we again have to know the size of the samples, the % giving a certain answer and the degree of confidence chosen. At the 95% confidence level again, the differences between the results of two separate groups must be greater than the values given in the table below:

**Table A4: Differences required to be statistically significant at or near.**

SAMPLE SIZES TO BE COMPARED	Differences required to be statistically significant at or near		
	10% OR 90% + / - (percentage points)	30% OR 70% + / - (percentage points)	50% + / - (percentage points)
100 and 100	8.3	12.7	13.9
200 and 200	5.9	8.9	9.8
500 and 500	3.7	5.7	6.2
1000 and 1000	2.6	4.0	4.4

While these confidence intervals apply to simple random samples, the sample in Great Britain was clustered by strata, and weighting was also required to bring sample profiles into line with population profiles. Both of these factors imply there a necessity to revisit confidence intervals in order to take account of *Design Effects* in the survey process, meaning that the *effective* sample size becomes lower than the *actual* sample size.

The confidence intervals associated with the main accuracy and completeness findings are as follows:

**Table A5: Confidence intervals for accuracy and completeness estimates.**

	Completeness		Accuracy	
	Local Gov't Register +/-%	Parliamentary Register +/-%	Local Gov't Register +/-%	Parliamentary Register +/-%
<b>Overall</b>	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.0
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	1.4	1.4	1.2	1.2
Female	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.2
<b>Age</b>				

16-17	6.0	6.2	5.9	5.8
18-19	5.9	6.1	5.5	5.6
20-24	3.7	3.9	3.4	3.4
25-34	2.6	2.7	2.6	2.6
35-44	2.2	2.3	2.1	2.1
45-54	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.2
55-64	2.1	2.1	2.0	2.0
65+	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5
<b>Tenure</b>				
Owned Outright	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.4
Buying with mortgage	1.6	1.7	1.7	1.7
Rent from council	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.8
Rent from landlord	2.6	2.8	2.9	3.0
Rent free/other	5.8	5.9	6.1	6.1
<b>Social grade</b>				
AB	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.1
C1	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7
C2	1.9	1.9	1.9	2.0
DE	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.3
<b>Persons in household</b>				
1	2.3	2.4	2.5	2.6
2	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.4
3	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.8
4+	5.9	5.9	5.7	5.8
<b>Length of residence</b>				
Up to 1 year	3.1	3.4	4.6	4.7
1-2 years	3.8	4.1	3.9	3.9
2-5 years	2.6	2.7	2.6	2.6
5-10 years	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.2
11-16 years	2.2	2.2	2.1	2.1
16+ years	1.2	1.3	1.2	1.2
<b>Nationality</b>				
UK/ROI	0.9	1.0	0.9	0.9
Non-UK/RO	5.4	6.7	6.7	5.8
<b>Urbanisation level:</b>				
Urban	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1
Rural	2.5	2.6	2.6	2.7
<b>Region</b>				
East Midlands	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Eastern	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
London	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.4

North East	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
North West	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
Scotland	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
South East	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4
South West	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
Wales	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
West Midlands	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
Yorkshire & the Humber	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
<b>Council area type</b>				
District Council	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.4
London Borough	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.4
Metropolitan borough	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7
English unitary	1.6	1.7	1.7	1.7
Scottish Unitary	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
Welsh unitary	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2

## Weighting

Nearly all population surveys require some form of data weighting. This is often necessary to ensure that there is a match between the geo-demographic profile of the sample and that of the target population as a whole. Other considerations apply, but the uniqueness of this survey design limited weighing requirements.

The sample is a probability sample of households in which all household members are enumerated. It is thus, in effect, a clustered probability sample of individuals. The Electoral Commission wished to make inferences about the incidence of phenomena about individuals (completeness) and register entries (accuracy – which itself is defined as individuals currently on the register), the dataset in reality becomes a close approximation of individuals currently resident at sampled addresses rather than households.

Moreover, the sampling method did not require the selection of a specified individual within each household, which should imply that all individuals had an equal probability of selection. As such, there was no reason to expect sampling bias (as opposed to variance) in the sample composition at the individual level. (In contrast, in surveys where we only acquire information about one person per household those living in large households are less likely to be included, and thus weights have to be applied accordingly).

Two layers of weights were applied – one for basic household level characteristics (urbanisation, household size and tenure for which updated

Census information was available) which were applied to each person about whom full information was collected, and individual level weights for age, gender and region based on Great Britain Census 2011 source data.

The effect of the weighting schemes were marginal, as indicated in table A6.

**Table A6: Weighting variables in the dataset.**

	<b>Unweighted base</b>	<b>Weighted base</b>
Male	4,615	4,676
Female	4,986	4,925
16-17	339	322
18-19	322	306
20-24	814	774
25-34	1,438	1,586
35-44	1,441	1,653
45-54	1,624	1,624
55-64	1,329	1,384
65+	2,294	1,951
1 adult in household	1,652	1,608
2 adults in household	4,909	4,934
3+ adults in household	3,040	3,059
Own outright	3,484	3,286
Mortgaged property	2,878	3,010
Council rent	1,442	1,452
Private rent	1,597	1,655
Rent free/other	200	198
Urban	7,750	7,779
Rural	1,851	1,822
North East	374	369
North West	1,055	1,056
Yorkshire & the Humber	902	906
East Midlands	652	653
West Midlands	864	861
Eastern	1,034	1,027
London	1,221	1,237
South East	1,460	1,463
South West	901	893
Wales	334	328
Scotland	804	807

## Statistical modelling

Part of this report includes findings of some multivariate analysis of the social and demographic characteristics that are associated with a higher or lower

level of accuracy and completeness. The purpose in so doing is to identify which characteristics are associated with a particularly (and statistically significant) high or low level of incidence after taking into account the impact of all of the other associations accounted for in the model, and thereby help pinpoint the circumstances which give rise to a particularly high incidence of incomplete or inaccurate entries on the electoral register.

The approach to this task has been an inclusive one; ICM included in its models any variable for which information was collected as part of the research that might reasonably be thought on *a priori* grounds to be associated with a higher level of incompleteness or inaccuracy. While this means that some models are quite complex, it has the advantage that we are more likely to identify accurately the particular circumstances that give rise to incompleteness or inaccuracy.

The analysis of the two phenomena does, however, have to be approached somewhat differently. The survey questionnaire sought an extensive range of information from and about the person in each household who responded, but a more limited range of information was collected about other household members. As a result we have for each household member - irrespective of whether or not they are on the electoral register - information on their age, gender and citizenship. We also know how long they have lived at their current address. Also, we have information on the housing tenure of that address, the number of persons living there, and the character of its geographical location (that is how urban or rural it is). We can thus analyse for all household members living at a sampled address how far failure to appear on the register (that is incompleteness) is associated with this particular mixture of both personal characteristics and household characteristics. However, information on other personal characteristics that might be thought to be of interest, such as social grade and religious denomination, was not collected for every household member but only for the person who responded to the survey - and thus these possible influences cannot be analysed in the same way.

While the details of the personal characteristics of all household members that are available may be limited, we do at least have some such information for virtually everyone whose name should currently be on the electoral register at each sampled address. In contrast, apart from a few cases, by necessity, no such information is available for those persons whose names do appear on the register at a sampled address but who are not currently living there. Thus the only analysis we can undertake of the variation in the accuracy of the register is to examine how far the characteristics of each sampled address and those of its current occupants (much of which is only available for the household member who responded) is associated with the appearance of inaccurate entries.

However, even that range of information is unavailable for those addresses that were found to be derelict or vacant but for which one or more names still appear on the register, and the analysis thus excludes these cases throughout.

In each case we have run the same or a similar analysis of both the parliamentary and the local government register. For the most part we have aimed to minimize the exclusion of cases from the analysis as a result of missing data. Consequently it will be found that often cases where data is missing constitute one of the categories of an independent variable. In some instances two or more categories have been combined in order to avoid the inclusion of categories with very few cases. In so doing we have aimed to avoid combining a category where there is good reason to anticipate a particularly high or level of completeness or inaccuracy with one where that is not the case.

The modelling is undertaken using logistic regression, which is the appropriate regression technique to use where the dependent variable consists of just two possible outcomes. **Thus in the case of the analysis of completeness we are analysing whether an eligible person is or is not on the register at the sampled address, while in the case of inaccuracy we are analysing whether a person whose name appears on the register is or is not an eligible person currently living at that address.** All of the independent variables are regarded as categorical variables. In the case of completeness the coefficients for each category show the impact of being in that category as opposed to the baseline category (indicated in the tables in brackets) on the probability that an eligible person is on the register. In the case of accuracy the coefficients show the impact on the probability that an entry in the register is that of an eligible person currently living at that address. A positive coefficient indicates that membership of that category is associated with a higher level of completeness/accuracy while a negative coefficient indicates a lower level. To aid the readability of the tables, those coefficients that are statistically significantly different from zero at the 5% level of probability are emboldened.

## Social Class Definitions

Most market research projects classify the population into social grades, usually on the basis of the Market Research Society occupational groupings (MRS, 1991). Data tables associated with this report contain cross-breaks that segment the population by their approximated social grade, which are defined as follows:

A.	Professionals such as doctors, solicitors or dentists, chartered people like architects; fully qualified people with a large degree of responsibility such as senior civil servants, senior business executives and high ranking grades within the armed forces. Retired people, previously grade A, and their widows.
B.	People with very senior jobs such as university lecturers, heads of local government departments, middle management in business organizations, bank managers, police inspectors, and upper grades in the armed forces.

<b>C1.</b>	All others doing non-manual jobs, including nurses, technicians, pharmacists, salesmen, publicans, clerical workers, police sergeants and middle ranks of the armed forces.
<b>C2.</b>	Skilled manual workers, foremen, manual workers with special qualifications such as lorry drivers, security officers and lower grades of the armed forces.
<b>D.</b>	Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers, including labourers and those serving apprenticeships. Machine minders, farm labourers, lab assistants and postmen.
<b>E.</b>	Those on the lowest levels of subsistence including all those dependent upon the state long-term. Casual workers, and those without a regular income.

# Appendix B: Measuring accuracy and completeness

This section sets out our definitions of accuracy and completeness of the registers and outlines how the research has classified various forms of entries on the registers. The section considers the impact that population movement can have on the accuracy and completeness of the registers, as well as the different approaches used for producing estimates of accuracy and completeness.

## Completeness

Our definition of completeness is that: ‘every person who is entitled to have an entry in an electoral register is registered’.

A person is thus considered to count towards completeness if they are eligible to be registered at the address they are currently resident (or are resident for at least 3-4 days a week in the case of a second home).

A person is considered to count towards incompleteness if they are eligible and not registered at their current address (even if they are registered at a previous address).

To measure completeness the starting base was all people whose details were collected at addresses where an interview took place *i.e respondent provided data about currently resident (and eligible) household members*. Such people include:

- Those holding UK, Irish, Commonwealth or EU passports;
- Permanently resident at the address;
- And who are aged 17+.

Completeness errors are defined as “major” and “minor”. In the case of any major error identified, the interview record in question counts towards incompleteness. Minor errors are recorded as such, but they do not count towards incompleteness.

Major completeness errors include:

- a. A person found to be living at the address but is not named on the register;
- b. A person’s first name and/or surname is wrong on the register;
- c. A person’s first name and/or surname is missing on the register;
- d. A person’s middle name is missing on the register;
- e. A person’s nationality marker incorrectly excludes them from the register;
- f. A date of birth for an Attainer is later than their actual date of birth.

Minor completeness errors include:

- a. A person's first name and/or surname is misspelled on the register;
- b. A person's first name and/or surname is incomplete on the register;
- c. A person's middle name is missing on the register;
- d. A person's middle name is misspelled on the register.

## Accuracy

Our definition of accuracy is that 'there are no false entries on the electoral register'.

A person is thus considered to count towards accuracy if they are:

- Eligible to be registered and found to be registered at the address at which they are currently resident (or are resident for at least 3-4 days a week in the case of a second home).

A person is considered to count towards inaccuracy if they are:

- Ineligible and registered anywhere;
- Eligible and registered at an address where they are no longer resident;
- Eligible and registered more than once at an address (i.e a duplication);
- Eligible and registered at a second home where they do not reside for 3-4 days a week;
- Registered at an address which is a holiday home;

In order to (accurately) calculate accuracy then, ICM included in the base *all register entries at addresses with completed interviews, plus register entries at addresses found to be derelict or unoccupied at the time of fieldwork*. Such entries included all those which match an eligible name gathered through the survey process (including those with minor errors).

Accuracy errors are defined as "major" and "minor". In the case of any major error identified, the register record in question counts towards inaccuracy. Minor errors are recorded as such, but they do not count towards inaccuracy.

Major accuracy errors include:

- a. The register contains a name that a respondent does not give as resident at the address;
- b. First name and/or surname are wrong;
- c. First name and/or surname are missing;
- d. The register contains a name that designated as ineligible by a survey respondent;
- e. An "Attainer's" (someone aged 17 who is about to become eligible) date of birth is wrong or missing on the register;

- f.** For EU citizens (excluding UK, Ireland and dual nationality UK, Ireland or Commonwealth) there is no G or K franchise marker present on the register<sup>90</sup>;
- g.** For UK, Irish or Commonwealth citizens a G or a K marker is present.

Minor accuracy errors include:

- a.** First name and/or surname are misspelled;
- b.** First name and/or surname are incomplete (e.g. only an initial/part of the name is shown on the register);
- c.** Middle name is wrong on the register;
- d.** Middle name is missing on the register;
- e.** Middle name is misspelled on the register;

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<sup>90</sup> No marker – UK, Irish or Commonwealth citizen who can vote in all elections.

G marker – an EU citizen who can vote in local elections only.

K marker – an EU citizen who can vote in local government and EU Parliament elections in this country)

F – An overseas elector who can only vote in European and UK Parliament elections.