

# The Electoral Commission

## May 2018 voter identification pilot schemes

Findings and recommendations

July 2018

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# Summary of key findings

Overall, the voter identification requirements trialled in May 2018 worked well. Nearly everyone in the five pilot scheme areas who went to vote in their polling station was able to show identification without difficulty. The number of people who did not vote because they couldn't show identification was very small.

People in the areas where the pilot schemes took place were significantly less likely to think that electoral fraud took place than people in other areas with elections in May 2018. Returning Officers and their staff in polling stations were able to run the new processes well and without any significant problems.

These pilot schemes have provided useful and important initial evidence about how a voter identification requirement in Great Britain might work in practice. They have also highlighted areas where further work is needed, because there is not yet enough evidence to fully address concerns and answer questions about the impact of identification requirements on voters.

The authorities in England that took part in the 2018 pilot schemes were not sufficiently varied to be representative of the different areas and groups of people across the rest of Great Britain. This means that we can't be sure whether people in other areas would have problems showing identification.

We also know from previous analysis and feedback from other organisations such as Mencap and RNIB that some groups of people may find it harder than others to show a passport, driving licence or travel card as part of a photo identification scheme. We have some limited evidence from these pilots that younger people and those who don't always vote were less likely to say that they would find it easy to show identification. More work is needed to make sure these people can easily get the right kind of identification to be able to vote.

## **Further work and future pilot schemes**

When the UK Government invited local councils to run pilot schemes in May 2018, it also said that it was open to looking at piloting in future elections. We agree that it would be helpful to collect more evidence from further pilot schemes at elections in 2019.

These pilots have shown that there may be several different ways of delivering a voter identification scheme in Great Britain. The UK Government should now focus on what further evidence they need to answer questions and address concerns about the more detailed impact of a voter identification requirement, and how the design of future pilot schemes will help to provide that evidence.

We have identified some important lessons from the 2018 pilot schemes in this report and made recommendations for further work and future pilot schemes. These recommendations, listed on pp 19-21 below, would help

provide the best possible evidence base for any decisions about identification requirements for voters at polling stations in Great Britain.

Our main recommendation is that the UK Government should encourage a wider range of local councils to run pilot schemes in May 2019. These should include a mixture of rural areas and large urban areas, and areas with different demographic profiles. This would help make sure there is more detailed evidence about the impact of voter identification on different groups of people.

## Background

### The May 2018 pilot schemes

1.1 Voters at polling stations in Great Britain do not need to show any identification before they are allowed to vote. In 2014 we recommended that voters in Great Britain should be required to show a form of identification before they vote at polling stations in future.<sup>1</sup> Voters in Northern Ireland have been required to show photographic identification at polling stations since elections in 2003. We have found little evidence to suggest that the scheme applied in Northern Ireland presents difficulties for people in terms of accessibility.

1.2 In 2016, the UK Government said that it would ask local councils to run pilot schemes in May 2018 to test different ways of identifying voters at polling stations.<sup>2</sup> It said that pilot schemes would help to see what the impact would be for voters and electoral administrators, and would help them to decide how to design a scheme that could be used for UK Parliament elections and local elections in England.

1.3 Five local councils were selected to run voter identification pilot schemes at their elections on Thursday 3 May 2018:

- Bromley
- Swindon
- Woking
- Gosport
- Watford

1.4 Each pilot scheme had specific rules for how they should work which were agreed between the UK Government and the local Returning Officer. Voters in some areas had to show identification with their photo on; in other

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<sup>1</sup> We explained our views in this report: [Electoral Commission \(2014\) \*Electoral fraud in the UK: Final report and recommendations\*](#)

<sup>2</sup> The Government explained its views in this report: [Cabinet Office \(2016\) \*A Democracy that Works for Everyone: A Clear and Secure Democracy – Government response to Sir Eric Pickles' review of electoral fraud\*](#)

areas, voters could show identification without their photo. The Returning Officer for each area ran the processes for the schemes.

1.5 The Cabinet Office, which is part of the UK Government, oversaw all of the pilot schemes in May 2018. The law says that we have to independently evaluate each of the schemes within three months of the elections.<sup>3</sup>

## This report

1.6 This report sets out what we found when we looked at the results of the May 2018 pilot schemes. It also looks beyond these pilot schemes at the implications for the future, and what we think the UK Government should do next.

1.7 To do this, we have looked at the impact of the pilot schemes on voters and on the administration of the elections. We have also looked at the impact of the pilot schemes on public confidence and on the security of the elections.

1.8 We collected information from different sources to help us reach these findings, including:

- A survey asking people what they thought of the schemes.
- A survey of people who worked in polling stations.
- Data about what identification people showed when they voted, and the number of people who were turned away because they didn't have the right identification.
- Inviting feedback from organisations that represent different groups of voters.

1.9 As well as this overall report, we have also written individual evaluations of each of the [specific pilot schemes](#).<sup>4</sup> These reports have looked at specific questions that the law says we have to consider which are:

- the turnout of voters was higher than it would have been if the scheme had not applied
- voters found the procedures provided for their assistance by the scheme easy to use
- the procedures provided for by the scheme led to any increase in personation or other electoral offences or in any other malpractice in connection with elections
- those procedures led to any increase in expenditure, or to any savings, by the authority

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<sup>3</sup> The rules for the pilot schemes are set out in Section 10 of this law: [The Representation of the People Act 2000](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Read these reports and look at the detailed information we collected to help us evaluate the 2018 pilot schemes.](#)

1.10 We have also considered the UK Government's own objectives for the voter identification pilot schemes:

- That proposed 'ID at polling stations' policy measures are proportional to the policy objective of reducing the opportunity for electoral fraud.
- That the proposed 'ID at polling stations' policy measures enhance public confidence in the security of the electoral system.<sup>5</sup>

### **What we're not able to say in this report**

1.11 We can evaluate these schemes against the statutory criteria and the Government's objectives using the data and information we have gathered. However, we are not able to draw definitive conclusions from these pilots on how a voter identification requirement would operate in the future across Great Britain, or at polls with higher levels of turnout.

1.12 This is partly because the available evidence is drawn from only five local authority areas which are not representative of many other areas of Great Britain. There would be different challenges in areas with different demographics.

1.13 These pilots also took place at local elections where turnout is significantly lower than other polls, such as UK Parliamentary general elections. Many people who do not normally vote at local elections will vote at a general election. These people also tend to have different demographic backgrounds to those who normally vote at local elections.

1.14 Further pilot schemes at local elections are unlikely to provide more evidence about the impact of an identification requirement on voters and electoral administration at higher turnout elections. Returning Officers cannot run pilot schemes at UK Parliament elections, so the UK Government may need to look for other sources of evidence about the impact at elections where turnout is likely to be higher. This could include qualitative research with irregular voters and the less politically engaged to test likely reactions to an identification requirement.

## **Impact on voters**

1.15 The evidence we have collected suggests that nearly everyone who wanted to was able to vote in the pilot scheme areas:

- Nearly nine in ten of people who voted in polling stations were aware that they had to take identification with them to the polling station to vote.
- Nearly everyone who went to vote at their polling station was able to show the right identification.

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<sup>5</sup> The Government explained these questions in this document: [Cabinet Office \(2017\) \*Electoral Integrity Pilots: Prospectus\*](#)

- The number of people who wanted to vote at their polling station who did not have the right identification was very small; many of them came back with the right identification, but some did not.
- There is no evidence that levels of turnout in the pilot scheme areas were significantly affected by the requirement for polling station voters to show identification.

1.16 There were a small number of people who were unable to vote because they did not have, or did not bring with them, the right type of identification. It was not possible to collect demographic data on these people and so we have no evidence to suggest particular demographics were more affected than others. More work is needed to make sure that an identification requirement doesn't stop people who are eligible and want to vote in future elections.

## Overall findings from the pilot schemes

### Awareness of the identification requirements

1.17 Most people in the pilot scheme areas knew about the identification requirements. Our research found that nearly nine out of ten (86%) of people who voted at polling stations said they were aware beforehand that they had to show identification to vote at their polling station.

1.18 Some groups of people were less likely to say they knew about the identification requirements. Polling station voters in the C2DE social grade were less likely to say they knew beforehand (18% said they did not know about the requirement compared to 9% of ABC1s). In the population as a whole, some groups were less likely to say they had heard something about the pilot. This included people aged under 35, C2DEs, those who said they were generally less politically active, and those who said that they didn't vote in the elections.

1.19 People in Swindon and Watford were also less likely to say they were aware that they needed to show identification. This may be because they didn't consider the requirement to show a poll card as 'identification', although we cannot confirm this from the available data.

1.20 Returning Officers in the pilot scheme areas ran public awareness campaigns before the elections, and awareness about the identification requirements improved between January and May 2018. In January, 36% of people in the pilot scheme areas said they had seen or heard something about the requirement, and by May this had risen to 55%.

### Types of identification that voters used

1.21 In Bromley, Gosport and Woking most voters were able to show either their passport or photo driving licence to vote at their polling station. Local travel passes were the third most frequently shown type of identification.

1.22 In Swindon and Watford, the vast majority of voters showed their poll card to vote at their polling station. A small proportion of people showed their photo driving licence, passport, debit or credit card instead of their poll card.

**Table 1: Most frequently shown types of identification in each pilot area<sup>6</sup>**

	<b>Most frequently shown</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> most frequently shown</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> most frequently shown</b>
<b>Bromley</b>	Photo driving licence (54%)	Passport (24%)	Freedom pass (15%)
<b>Gosport</b>	Photo driving licence (55%)	Passport (21%)	Concessionary travel card (17%)
<b>Swindon</b>	Poll card (95%)	Photo driving licence (4%)	Passport (1%)
<b>Watford</b>	Poll card (87%)	Photo driving licence (8%)	Debit card (3%)
<b>Woking</b>	Photo driving licence (60%)	Passport (25%)	Surrey Senior travel card (12%)

1.23 Very few people applied to use the alternative options provided for those who did not have the required identification. No one in Bromley and Gosport applied for a Certificate of Identity or Electoral Identity Letter. Feedback from the Returning Officers in both these areas suggests that most people who contacted them to ask about the alternative option found that they did actually have one of the acceptable forms of identification.

1.24 In Woking, 64 people applied for a Local Elector Card before polling day and 43 voters showed their card as identification at their polling station.

1.25 Voters in Swindon and Watford could show their poll card as part of the required identification, and they were able to apply for a replacement poll card before polling day. Returning Officers issued 66 replacements to voters in Swindon and 3 to voters in Watford. Voters in Swindon could also ask another elector at the same polling station to 'attest' their identity, and 107 voters used this option.

1.26 Although all of the pilot schemes allowed voters to show their identification in private (for example because they were registered to vote anonymously or if they normally covered their face for religious reasons), we are not aware that anyone used this facility. We therefore cannot draw any conclusions about how this process would work in practice.

### **Impact on turnout and participation**

1.27 Although nearly everyone in the pilot scheme areas who went to their polling station to vote was able to show the required identification, a small number did not have the right identification with them and were not given a

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<sup>6</sup> Appendix A sets out the full list of identification requirements for each pilot scheme. [View the full datasets on the identification used at electoral ward level.](#)



ballot paper. Many of these people returned later with the right identification, but some did not.

**Table 2: People who did not return to their polling station to vote**

<b>Bromley</b>	<b>Gosport</b>	<b>Swindon</b>	<b>Watford</b>	<b>Woking</b>
<b>569</b> without right identification	<b>120</b> without right identification	<b>64</b> without right identification	<b>194</b> without right identification	<b>89</b> without right identification
<b>154</b> did not return	<b>54</b> did not return	<b>25</b> did not return	<b>42-66</b> did not return	<b>51</b> did not return
<b>0.2%</b> of all polling station voters did not return	<b>0.4%</b> of all polling station voters did not return	<b>0.06%</b> of all polling station voters did not return	<b>0.2%</b> of all polling station voters did not return	<b>0.3%</b> of all polling station voters did not return

1.28 There is little evidence that the voter identification requirements had a direct impact on turnout in the May 2018 pilot scheme areas. In three areas turnout at the local authority level was no more than 1 percentage point lower than the most recent comparable elections. Turnout in the other two areas was higher than, including in Swindon where turnout was 5 percentage points higher. Overall turnout across England in 2018 was the same, at 36%<sup>7</sup>, as at the last comparable set of elections in 2014.

1.29 There were some larger changes in turnout at the individual ward level in the pilot scheme areas. These ranged from an increase of 12 percentage points in one ward in Swindon to a decrease of 8 percentage points in one ward in Bromley.

1.30 The data on turnout and participation cannot tell us much about people who may have decided not to go to their polling station at all because of the identification requirement. However, our research with people in the pilot scheme areas found that 2% of those who didn't vote in May 2018 said it was because they didn't have the right identification. Many more people said they didn't vote because they were too busy (27%), didn't know who to vote for (13%), were away on holiday (12%) or were not interested (10%).

1.31 Most people in the pilot areas (79%) said the requirement to show identification made no difference to whether or not they voted in May 2018, and overall 3% of people said it made them less likely to vote. However, our research did confirm that non-voters were more likely than voters to say that it had made them less likely to vote: 5% of non-voters said it made them less

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<sup>7</sup> Based on turnout from 1,161 wards

likely to vote, and 2% said that they wouldn't have been able to vote because they didn't have any identification.

1.32 Before the May 2018 pilot schemes, accessibility organisations raised concerns that some groups of people would find it harder to vote because they would not easily be able to access the right types of identification. This included concerns about disabled people and people from black and minority ethnic communities, who are also less likely to participate in elections in general.

1.33 Overall, we found no clear pattern of decreased turnout based on the different demographic profiles of specific wards in the May 2018 pilot scheme areas. The relatively small size of the May 2018 pilot schemes, the level of turnout and the limited demographic variation across wards of the pilot schemes means that it is difficult to systematically identify examples of a negative impact for particular groups of people. The limitations of sample-based surveying also mean that we did not get enough responses from specific groups of people to be able to report experiences or views across those groups.

1.34 In Watford we did find a correlation between the proportion of a ward's population that is Asian/British Asian and the number of electors both initially turning up without identification and not returning.<sup>8</sup> We need to be cautious in drawing conclusions from this analysis as it is based on a small number of data points (only 12 wards in one local authority area). However, this does show that it would be helpful to have more pilots with more diverse populations in order to explore this further.

## Beyond the pilots: implications for voters at future elections

1.35 Although we have found that most people who wanted to were able to vote in the pilot scheme areas in May 2018, we have also seen some evidence that particular groups of voters might find it harder to show identification at future elections.

1.36 Our research with people across all elections that took place in May 2018 found that most people (88%) said they would find it easy or very easy to show identification if they had to at future elections. However, we did find that younger people aged 34 and below were slightly less likely (83%) to say they would find it easy. There were no notable differences in responses based on other demographic factors, including social grade, disability or ethnicity.

1.37 We know that more people vote at other types of elections: some people who don't normally vote at local elections often vote at UK Parliament elections, for example. This means, that at other kinds of elections in the

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<sup>8</sup> [Read our evaluation report on the Watford pilot scheme.](#)

future, more people who want to vote could find it difficult to show identification.

### **Accessibility and equality implications**

1.38 Organisations representing the interests of different groups of people raised concerns with us about whether they would have easy access to the right identification if this requirement was applied at more elections in the future.<sup>9</sup> For example, Mencap, RNIB and Stonewall highlighted the following concerns:

*“People with learning disability often do not have ID such as a passport as they are unable to travel abroad or cannot afford it. Almost none will have a driving licence and in some cases will not even have access to utility bills or other forms of ID.”*

**Mencap submission**

*“The lack of driving licenses amongst blind and partially sighted people, meaning that they had fewer options of what they could provide at the polling station.”*

**RNIB submission**

*“Trans and non-binary people may have been particularly vulnerable to these ID requirements as the photo on their ID may not reflect their gender expression or identity.”*

**Stonewall submission**

1.39 Several organisations also raised concerns with us about the public awareness campaigns that Returning Officers ran in the pilot scheme areas. They were concerned about whether the campaigns did enough to target people from groups that were less likely to have the right identification. For example, both Mencap and RNIB felt that activities to raise awareness with the people they represent did not begin early enough in the May 2018 pilot scheme areas.

1.40 This wider evidence suggests that further work is needed to make sure that an identification requirement doesn't stop people who are eligible and want to vote in future elections. More research and analysis is needed to identify which types of identification will be easiest for people to show, and how those who do not currently have identification can get it.

1.41 This is particularly important for people who may find it harder to show the more common forms of photo identification such as passport, photo driving licence or travel card. We have previously recommended that any photographic voter identification scheme should include a free of charge photographic elector card for people who do not have any other acceptable form of identification.

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<sup>9</sup> [Read all the views sent to us from organisations representing different groups of people.](#)

1.42 More work is also needed to find further ways to tell people about any identification requirement. Again, this should focus on how best to communicate any new requirement to people who are less likely to vote often and those who may find it harder to show one of the more common forms of identification.

## Impact on electoral administration

1.43 The Returning Officers and their staff who were responsible for the May 2018 elections successfully ran the pilot schemes in all of the five pilot areas:

- Polling station staff told us that they had no difficulty checking people's identification.
- They were confident that they could do this again at a future election.
- Across all areas, additional staffing and training were required for the pilot.

1.44 These schemes were run at polls with a low turnout, with fewer people voting and showing identification in polling stations. As shown below there are clear lessons that can be learned for future polls where turnout is higher with more people voting in polling stations.

1.45 Delivering the identification requirement has specific implications for the administration of the poll and these are set out in more detail in our individual reports on each pilot scheme. We have considered the administrative impact across four aspects of delivery of the polls below.

### Overall findings from the pilot schemes

#### Staffing and training

1.46 All of the areas increased their staffing in order to deliver the pilot. There were varying approaches to this, ranging from employing ten extra polling station inspectors in Swindon to using one third more polling station staff in Bromley. Clearly there were also additional costs associated with increased staffing. For example, across the pilots the additional staff and training costs ranged from very little to a third of the usual costs at local elections.

1.47 However, in feedback after polling day the pilot areas told us that this increase in staffing would not be required to administer voter identification at future local elections. This is because additional pilot elements, such as the collection of data on polling day (required to inform the evaluation), would not need to take place. A few areas also did not think they would need additional staff at every polling day, even for a higher turnout poll such as a UK parliamentary general election.

1.48 More and/or longer training sessions were also required to support staff in delivering the pilot. However, feedback from electoral administrators in the pilot areas indicated that, while this training required planning and preparation, it did not present a significant challenge for them in running the pilot. We also know that the training was delivered well. Our survey of polling stations staff found that, on average, 94% rated the training they received as good or excellent. Close to 100% of polling staff also told us they were confident about the process they had to follow in order to check voters' identification.

### **Local identification**

1.49 The 2018 pilots offered a limited test of the process and cost of issuing local identification to electors. Three pilots (Bromley, Gosport and Woking) offered a form of local identification but only Woking needed to issue any. This is likely to be because Woking had a narrower identification requirement where electors were slightly more likely to need to use a local option.

1.50 Woking issued 63 local elector cards and their feedback indicates that this process was manageable for them to deliver. However it did incur some additional costs associated with the production and delivery (where needed) of the cards. Gosport did raise a concern in their feedback about their ability to resource the local identification route if it had been significantly used. This was mainly because, as a small local authority, they would have limited flexibility in drawing on resources from other teams.

### **The impact of IT**

1.51 Swindon and Watford both used IT in the polling stations to scan QR codes on electors' poll cards. In both pilots the systems worked well and there were no notable issues on polling day related to the IT. Also, the systems provided Returning Officers with useful, live information on turnout at polling stations that they would not normally have access to.

1.52 However, planning and setting up these IT systems required a significant amount of time and resource commitment from the electoral administration teams, the software suppliers and Cabinet Office. This commitment of time and resource stems largely from the level of security needed to run these systems, which hold significant personal data, as well as the level of assurance and resilience needed to ensure no problems arise on polling day.

1.53 While much of the work was associated with the development of the software, and would not necessarily be needed in the future, there would still be a sizeable level of commitment needed from software suppliers to support any local authorities sites using these systems at future polls. There would also be ongoing costs which local authorities would need to meet in order to use these systems. These include software licensing, hardware (tablets/scanners) and additional staff training.

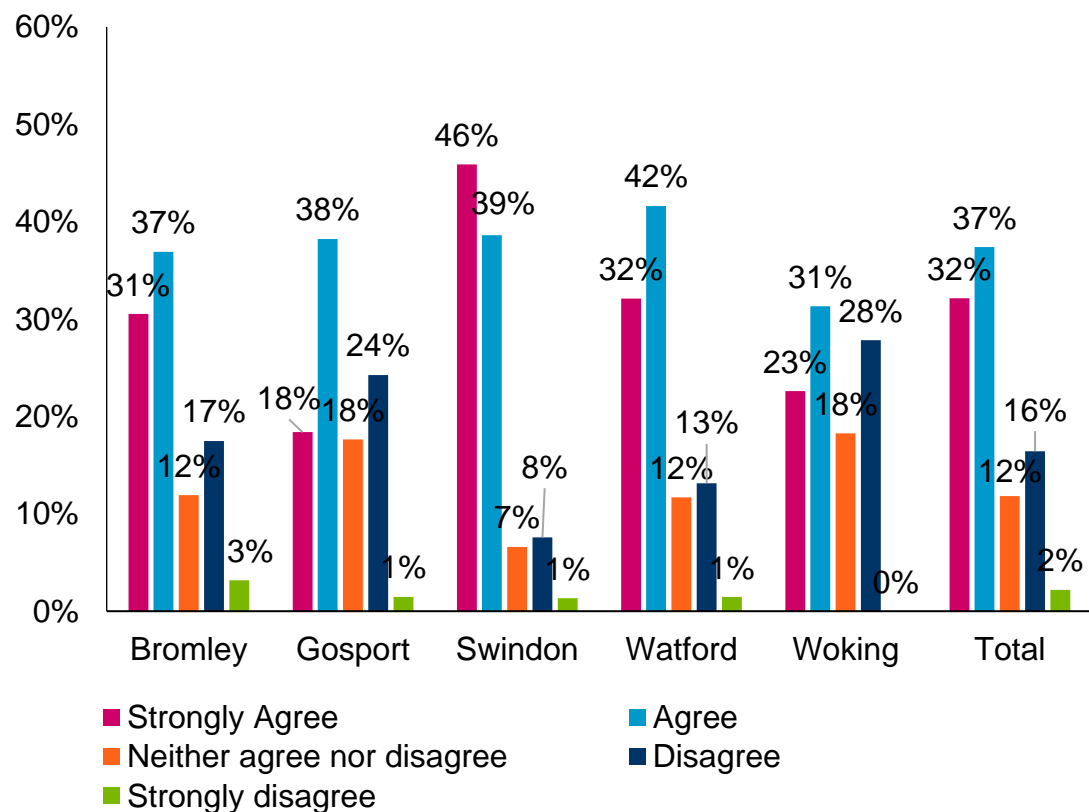
1.54 Given the cost and time needed to support the use of these systems, the merits of including any IT-enabled pilots in future schemes needs to be weighed against the ability to scale up these systems across Great Britain. It

is also not clear from these pilot schemes that additional IT in polling stations (for example to scan barcodes or QR codes) is absolutely necessary to support the use of the poll card as a form of identification.

### Polling day

1.55 Feedback from Returning Officers and their staff indicate that delivering the identification requirement on 3 May did not present significant challenges. In response to our survey, 77% of polling station staff said they were very satisfied with how polling day went. This agrees with the feedback we received from Returning Officers which said that few issues had arisen on polling day and that they had received few or no negative responses from the public. These findings also agree with the observations made by Electoral Commission staff on polling day across the five areas. We saw few issues and largely observed processes working well.

**Chart 1: Thinking back to your experiences.....asking voters to prove their identity had little or no impact on our work on polling day**



1.56 A high proportion of staff (69%) also agreed with the statement that asking voters to prove their identity had little or no impact on their work on polling day. This also suggests that the variation in identification requirements did not make the task in polling stations notably easier or more difficult. Staff in Swindon and Watford (using poll card scanning) were more likely to agree there was little impact but there was little difference across the other areas. The difference in the quantity of different acceptable identification types

between Bromley/Gosport and Woking do not, for example, appear to have made a significant difference to staff.

1.57 We also asked polling station staff if they would feel confident about replicating the requirement to show identification at a future poll and 97% said they would be confident in doing so.

## Beyond the pilots: the impact on administration at future elections

1.58 The evidence we have gathered shows that the polls in the pilot areas on 3 May were well run and that the administrative challenges presented by the voter identification requirement were met by the Returning Officers and their staff. Looking beyond the pilots, there could be different administrative challenges which these pilots have not tested, including the need to process and deliver significant volumes of local electoral identification cards/letters.

1.59 The impact and risks for people running the elections could be different at elections with higher turnout with more people voting and showing identification in polling stations, such as a general election.

1.60 Turnout at the May 2018 elections, as is usually the case for local government elections, was relatively low, meaning that the pilots were run on a different scale than might be the case at a UK parliamentary general election. At these local elections between 20-30% of the electorate voted at a polling station whereas at a UK parliamentary election over 50% often vote at a polling station.

1.61 For example, staff in some polling stations in Watford said that scanning the poll card caused delays and queues which could be longer with more people voting. In areas such as Woking, which had a more limited choice of identification, more local elector cards may need to be processed and issued putting pressure on local authority election teams.

1.62 No applications were made in Bromley for the certificate of identity or in Gosport for the electoral identity letter, which means that the pilot did not test the resources required to process applications and issue certificates or letters.

1.63 The Returning Officers and their staff in Bromley and Gosport told us that if the list of acceptable identification was reduced they would expect the number of applications for certificates and letters to increase. They had some concerns about the pressure this could put on an already stretched elections team. This was particularly true for Gosport which, as a smaller authority, has less flexibility in the size of the elections team and their ability to draw on resources from elsewhere in the council.

1.64 One particular issue which the pilots in 2018 were ready to test was how to ensure privacy for voters who show photo identification but need to remove, for example, a head scarf to allow polling station staff to confirm their identity.

1.65 However, several of the pilot areas do not have significant British Asian populations. In Woking, which does have a significant Asian or British Asian population, no-one requested to show their identification in private. In Watford, where some wards also have a significant British Asian population, the availability of poll cards as part of the identification requirement meant that people may have been less likely to need to use this facility. Ensuring voters have the privacy they need could be a more significant administrative challenge in some areas and that should be a consideration for future testing.

## Impact on public confidence

1.66 There is some evidence to suggest that requiring voters to show identification had a positive impact on public confidence in the May 2018 elections:

- People in areas where the pilot schemes took place were less likely to think that electoral fraud took place at the May polls than those in other areas where elections were also held in May 2018.
- Across the pilot areas as a whole people were more likely to say they thought electoral fraud was not a problem than they were in January 2018.
- People who voted in polling stations in the pilot scheme areas, and therefore experienced the process of showing identification, were more confident in the security of the voting system than non-voters in those areas.

1.67 However, this picture is not consistent within the individual pilot areas and there is evidence that wider local circumstances also have an impact.

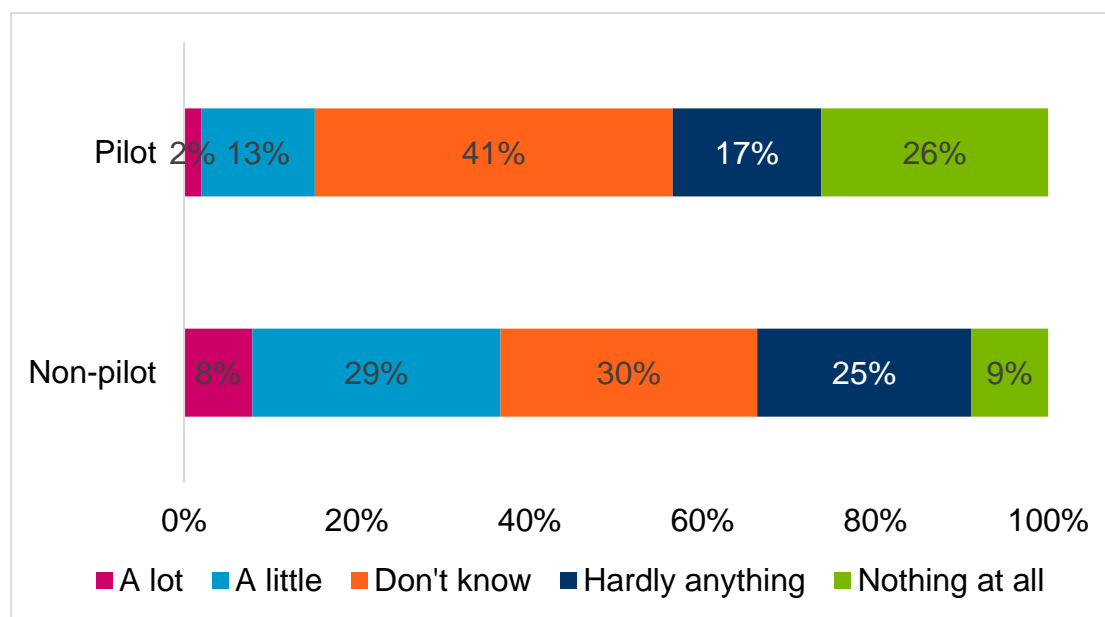
## Overall findings from the pilot schemes

### Perceptions of electoral fraud

1.68 People in the pilot scheme areas were significantly less likely than those in other areas with elections in May 2018 to say that fraud took place at the elections.



**Chart 2: How much electoral fraud or abuse, if any, do you think took place at the 3rd May elections?<sup>10</sup>**



1.69 Our research also showed that in the pilot scheme areas there was a notable increase in the proportion of respondents saying that electoral fraud was not a problem between January and May 2018 (24% compared with 42%). At the same time, fewer people saw it as a serious problem (19% compared with 9%).

1.70 This significant change in views between before and after polling day was not seen in other areas with elections in May 2018. In these areas the number of people who thought that electoral fraud was not a problem remained broadly consistent between January and May (37% compared with 33%). This was also the case for people who thought that electoral fraud was a problem (24% compared with 29%).

1.71 The extent to which people’s views about electoral fraud changed between before and after polling day also varied by individual pilot areas. People in Bromley and Watford were significantly more likely to say that electoral fraud was not a problem after polling day than before (increasing from 21% to 57% in Bromley and 34% to 57% in Watford). In the other three areas there was only a small increase in the proportion who said electoral fraud was not a problem.

1.72 There is some evidence to suggest that local circumstances may affect the changes we can see in these surveys. For example, in our January survey, out of the five pilot scheme areas, people living in Woking were much more likely to say that they thought that electoral fraud was a problem than in

<sup>10</sup> Source: GfK Social and Strategic Research for The Electoral Commission: *Public opinion surveys 2018*. Base (unweighted) Pilot (663), Non-pilot (1000).

the other areas. This could reflect relatively recent high profile cases of electoral fraud in Woking.

### **Perceptions of voting in polling stations being safe from fraud and abuse**

1.73 The proportion of people in the pilot scheme areas saying that voting in polling stations was safe from fraud and abuse did not change significantly between January and May 2018 (90% and 86%).<sup>11</sup> Across the pilot areas as a whole, the strength of confidence did increase between January and May: the proportion of people saying it was very safe increased from 43% to 57%.

1.74 There was no evidence of a similar change in the other areas with elections in May 2018, which suggests some effect from the pilots. However, it is worth noting that we did not find this increase in Watford either, where the proportion saying that voting in a polling station is very safe from fraud and abuse fell between January and May 2018.

1.75 Our survey results also show that people who voted in the pilot areas, and therefore experienced showing their identification, were more likely to say voting in a polling station was very safe from fraud and abuse than those who didn't vote (64% compared with 43%).

### **Overall impact of an identification requirement**

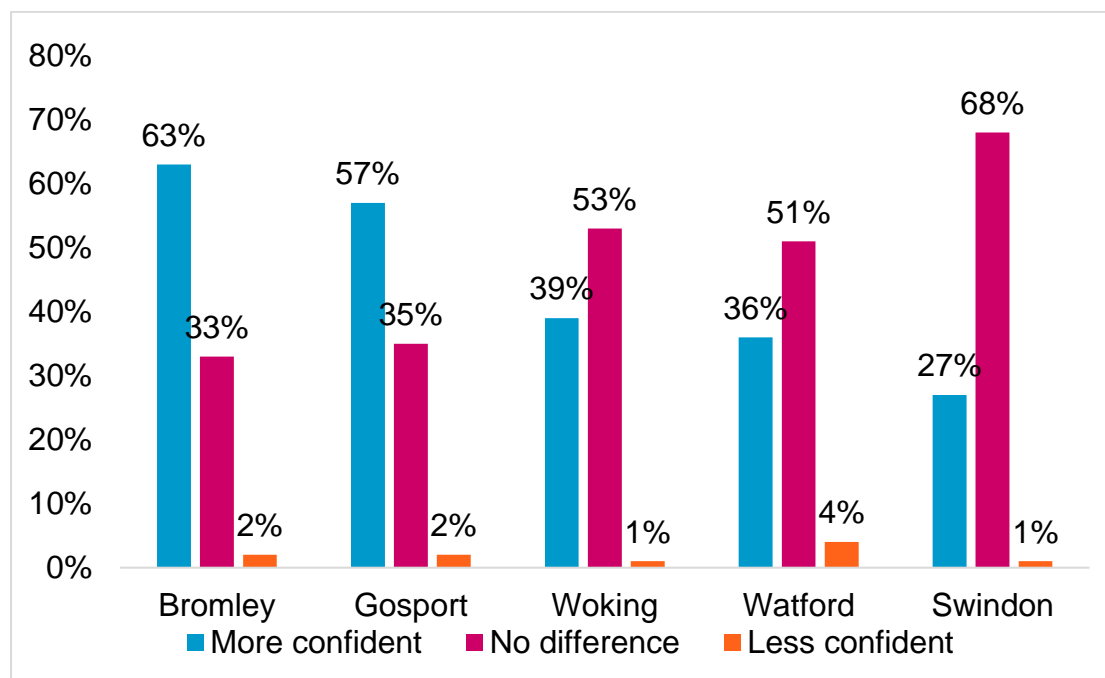
1.76 There is inconsistent evidence from the May 2018 pilot schemes about whether a requirement to show identification at polling stations in Great Britain would improve confidence in the security of the voting system overall.

1.77 There were some significant differences between the pilot scheme areas. A majority of people in Bromley (63%) and Gosport (57%) said that an identification requirement would make them more confident in the security of the voting system. In the other three areas a majority of people said it would make no difference, although around a third of people did say it would make them more confident.

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<sup>11</sup> This difference is not statistically significant.

**Chart 3: Would a requirement to show identification at polling stations make you more or less confident in the security of the voting system, or no difference?<sup>12</sup>**



1.78 The experience of showing identification may have had a positive effect on levels of public confidence. People who voted in polling stations in pilot areas were more likely than those who didn't vote to say that the requirement to show identification would make them more confident in the security of the voting system (52% compared with 37%).

1.79 Forty seven per cent of people in the pilot scheme areas thought that a requirement to show identification would make them feel more confident in the security of the voting system, and 62% thought this in the other areas where there were elections in May 2018.

## Beyond the pilots: the impact on public confidence at future elections

1.80 The evidence from the pilot schemes suggests that showing identification in polling stations may have had some positive impact on the level of public confidence in the security of the system. Overall, however, the evidence is mixed as the impact was not consistent across all of the pilot areas.

1.81 It is worth noting again the impact of the relatively low levels of engagement with local elections. As set out above, voters who engaged with

<sup>12</sup> Source: GfK Social and Strategic Research for The Electoral Commission: *Public opinion surveys 2018*. Base (unweighted) Bromley (129), Gosport (138), Woking (131), Watford (131), Swindon (134).

the election were more likely to be more confident than non-voters and it may be that any potential impact on confidence from an identification requirement is limited when turnout at polling stations is low.

1.82 Further work, including in future pilot schemes, would be needed to help the Government and Returning Officers better understand any connection between a voter identification requirement and public confidence in the election.

## Impact on security

1.83 There is very limited evidence from the May 2018 pilot schemes about whether the identification requirement had a direct impact on the security of election procedures. In particular, it is not possible to evaluate whether the requirements actually prevented attempts to commit electoral fraud at elections.

### Overall findings from the pilot schemes

1.84 In the areas where the pilot schemes took place, the local police forces have told us that there were no complaints about electoral fraud at polling stations for the May 2018 elections. However, it is not possible to assess whether the identification requirement prevented any actual attempts to commit impersonation fraud.

1.85 In other areas where elections took place in May 2018 there were three complaints about electoral fraud taking place at polling stations. The police forces for those areas told us that they have investigated two of these cases but they did not need to take any further action. They are still investigating the other case.

1.86 There is no direct evidence to suggest that this difference was because of the identification requirements in areas where pilot schemes took place.

1.87 However, the pilot scheme requirements did introduce new identification checks where there have previously been no checks. Because of this, we can conclude that the pilot scheme requirements are likely to have had some positive impact on reducing the **potential** for electoral fraud by impersonation at polling stations.

1.88 We cannot make any assessment from the available data about the nature or extent of this impact, however. Nor can we make any assessment from the data from these pilot schemes about whether there was any difference in the impact on security between the different requirements in each of the pilot scheme areas.

## Beyond the pilots: the impact on security at future elections

1.89 Further pilot schemes may not help to provide more robust evidence about the impact of an identification requirement on the security of future elections. This is because it is not possible to evaluate whether the requirements actually prevented attempts to commit electoral fraud at elections.

1.90 However, more work should be carried out before any further pilot schemes to further assess the relative security of different approaches to checking the identity of voters. It would be particularly useful to gather more evidence on the levels of assurance about someone's identity provided by different types of documents.

1.91 For example, the security of different types of identification documents needs to be balanced against the availability of those forms of identification. This balance should be considered further before future pilot schemes and any decision to implement a voter identification requirement in Great Britain.

## Our recommendations

1.92 When the UK Government invited local councils to run voter identification pilot schemes in May 2018, it also said that it was open to looking at further piloting in future elections.

1.93 We agree that it would be helpful to collect more evidence from further pilot schemes at elections in 2019. This will help the Government and Parliament to decide whether or not to introduce an identification requirement for future elections, and how any such requirement should be designed.

1.94 This first round of pilots has shown that there could be several different ways of delivering a voter identification scheme in Great Britain. It is right that the Government should now focus on the detail of what further evidence they need, and how the design of future pilot schemes will help to provide that evidence.

1.95 We have some limited evidence from these pilots that younger people and those who don't always vote were less likely to say that they would find it easy to show identification. We think that more work is needed to look at evidence about the impact of different schemes on these people, and to identify what additional steps can be taken to minimise the risk that they are not able to vote in future.

1.96 We have identified some important lessons from the 2018 pilot schemes in this report and we have set out our recommendations for further work and future pilot schemes below. These recommendations would help provide the

best possible evidence base for any decisions about identification requirements for voters at polling stations in Great Britain in the future.

**Recommendation 1: The UK Government should ensure that a wider range of local councils run pilot schemes in May 2019**

These should include a mixture of rural and urban areas, and areas with different demographic profiles. This would help make sure there is more evidence about the impact of voter identification requirements on different groups of people.

**Recommendation 2: The UK Government should set out more specifically how pilot schemes in May 2019 should be designed and run**

The Government should take a stronger role in setting the design of pilot schemes in 2019, instead of allowing Returning Officers as much flexibility to design their own schemes as in 2018. This would help to make sure there is a good range of evidence to test the impact of different options in different parts of England. Too many different schemes will make it harder to identify the impact of requirements on different groups of people.

**Recommendation 3: The UK Government and Returning Officers should work with the Equality and Human Rights Commission and organisations that represent people with different needs to carry out robust Equality Impact Assessments for future pilot schemes**

This would help to make sure that the Government and Returning Officers think carefully about the potential impact of different voter identification requirements for different groups of people. It would also help Returning Officers to identify the most effective ways to communicate the requirements to different groups of people in their areas.

**Recommendation 4: Future pilot schemes should continue to include options for people who don't have any of the required forms of identification**

This will make sure that no-one who is eligible is prevented from voting because they don't have the right identification. Although only a small number of people in the 2018 pilot schemes used alternative options, it will still be important to offer these or similar options in future pilot schemes. It will also be important to promote these options more widely and to test the practical impact if they are used by larger numbers of voters.

**Recommendation 5: The UK Government should carry out further work to identify what kinds of alternative identification are available for people who would find it harder to show their passport, driving licence**

**or travel pass, particularly people with protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act**

Most voters in the 2018 pilot schemes that required either photo or non-photo identification were able to show their passport, driving licence or travel card, but some groups of people are less likely to have these documents. Further work, which could include research as well as more pilot schemes, should look at whether these groups in particular would find it helpful to show other types of identification, and should also look at the impact on polling station staff.

**Recommendation 6: The UK Government should carry out further work to gather more evidence on the levels of identity assurance provided by different types of documents**

This would help the Government and Parliament to assess the relative security benefits of different types of identification, and consider those against the potential impact on voters.

**Recommendation 7: The UK Government should carry out further work to establish whether poll cards could be included as acceptable identification without needing scanning technology in polling stations**

This would help to establish whether this could be a cost-effective and affordable part of a future identification scheme. The pilot schemes in Swindon and Watford were significantly more expensive than those in Bromley, Gosport and Woking. This was because of the extra cost of the scanners and technology that staff used in the polling stations. Further work, which could include more pilot schemes, should explore whether it would be possible to check poll cards without using such expensive technology.

# Appendix A: Summary of identification requirements

## Bromley

Voters in Bromley had to take either one piece of photo identification or two pieces of non-photo identification to be able to vote at their polling station.

### Photo identification

- a passport issued by the United Kingdom, a Commonwealth country or a member state of the European Union
- a photocard driving licence (including a provisional licence) issued in the United Kingdom or by a Crown Dependency, or by a member State of the European Union
- an electoral identity card issued under section 13C (electoral identity card: Northern Ireland) of the Representation of the People Act 1983
- a biometric immigration document issued in the United Kingdom in accordance with regulations made under section 5 of the UK Borders Act 2007
- an identity card issued in the European Economic Area
- an Oyster 60+ London Pass
- a Freedom Pass (London)
- a PASS scheme card (national proof of age standards scheme)

### Non-photo identification

- a valid bank or building society debit card or credit card
- a poll card for the poll
- a driving licence (including a provisional licence) which is not in the form of a photocard.
- a birth certificate
- a marriage or civil partnership certificate
- an adoption certificate
- a firearms certificate granted under the Firearms Act 1968
- the record of a decision on bail made in respect of the voter in accordance with section 5(1) of the Bail Act 1976
- a bank or building society cheque book
- a mortgage statement dated within 3 months of the date of the poll
- a bank or building society statement dated within 3 months of the date of the poll
- a credit card statement dated within 3 months of the date of the poll
- a utility bill dated within 3 months of the date of the poll
- a council tax demand letter or statement dated within 12 months of the date of the poll
- a Form P45 or Form P60 dated within 12 months of the date of the poll



People in Bromley who did not have any of the identification listed above could apply to the Returning Officer for a Certificate of Identity which could be shown to vote at their polling station.

## Gosport

Voters in Gosport had to take either one piece of photo identification or two pieces of non-photo identification to be able to vote at their polling station.

### Photo identification

- UK or EU passport (UK, Commonwealth, EEA)
- photocard driving licence, full or provisional (UK, crown dependency or EU)
- Northern Ireland electoral identity card
- biometric immigration document
- European Economic Area identity card
- Disclosure and Barring Service certificate showing your registered address
- MoD photographic identification card
- MoD Defence Privilege Card
- photo bus/travel pass from any Hampshire council

### Non-photo identification

- driving licence without photo
- birth certificate
- adoption certificate
- marriage or civil partnership certificate
- bank or building society debit/credit card

Non-photo identification issued within 12 months of voting day:

- financial statement, such as a bank or mortgage statement
- council tax demand letter or statement
- utility bill
- P2, P6, P9, P45 or P60
- statement of benefits or entitlement to benefits

People in Gosport who did not have any of the identification listed above could apply to the Returning Officer for an Electoral Identity Letter which could be shown to vote at their polling station.

## Swindon

### Poll card

Voters in Swindon had to take their poll card to be able to vote at their polling station.

## Photo identification

Voters who had lost their poll card or did not take it with them to the polling station could show one piece of photo identification:

- Passport (UK, EU, Commonwealth) (can be expired or unexpired)
- Photocard driving licence including a provisional licence (UK, Crown Dependency or EU)
- Northern Ireland Electoral Identity Card
- Biometric Immigration Document
- EEA Identity Card

## Attestation

People in Swindon who did not have any of the identification listed above could bring someone with them to their polling station to confirm who they were. This person had to be registered to vote at the same polling station and have already voted themselves or could vote by showing their poll card or other form of identification.

## Watford

### Poll card

Voters in Watford had to take their poll card to be able to vote at their polling station.

If someone lost their poll card or forgot to bring it with them to the polling station they could show:

- Valid British, European or Commonwealth passport
- UK or EU photo-card driving licence (full or provisional)
- Valid credit or debit card
- Biometric Residence Permit
- EEA Identity Card
- Northern Ireland Electoral Identity Card

## Woking

Voters in Woking had to take one of the following types of photo identification to be able to vote at their polling station.

- Passport (UK, EU, Commonwealth)
- UK Photo Driver's Licence (full or provisional)
- EU Driver's Licence
- European Economic Area photographic identification card
- UK Biometric Residence Permit
- Northern Ireland Electoral Identity Card
- Surrey Senior Bus Pass
- Surrey Disabled People's Bus Pass

- Surrey Student Fare Card
- 16 - 25 Railcard
- Rail Season Ticket Photocard

People in Woking who did not have any of the identification listed above could apply to the Returning Officer to be issued with a photographic Local Elector Card.