

electoral administration bulletin

The
Electoral
Commission



Issue 300 (England) – 20 January 2021

May 2021 elections: public attitudes towards voting in England and Wales in the context of COVID-19

In December 2020, the Commission undertook research in England and Wales to better understand attitudes to voting in the context of COVID-19. This research follows two such surveys carried out in August and November 2020 with [voters in Scotland](#).

The [research](#) shows that a majority of voters in both England and Wales would feel safe voting in person at a polling station, with appropriate hygiene measures and physical distancing in place. However, the research also indicates a likely increase in postal voting at the elections in May 2021.

These findings reflect attitudes at the time of fieldwork. While they are helpful in highlighting the potential impact of COVID-19 on resourcing and processes for delivery of the 2021 elections, they should be treated as an indicative snapshot of views, rather than a predictor of voter behaviour. Also, the views expressed may be weakly held and subject to change depending on the wider context since this work was carried out.

May 2021 elections: ordering polling station handbooks and quick guides - reminder

As set out in [Bulletin 298](#), we are now collecting orders for hard copies of polling station handbooks and quick guides for use at the May 2021 elections.

If you haven't already done so, the deadline for completing the [online order form](#) is 5pm, Friday 22 January 2021. We will be printing to order so it is important that you provide us with your figures by the deadline.

Please note that once you have submitted your order form, you will not be able to amend your order yourself. If you need to make any changes to your order, please contact [your local Commission team](#).

Contents

May 2021 elections: public attitudes towards voting in England and Wales in the context of COVID-19

Information on and a link to our research in England and Wales into public attitudes to voting in the context of COVID-19.

May 2021 elections: ordering polling station handbooks and quick guides - reminder

Reminder and link to order hard copies of polling station handbooks and quick guides.

May 2021 elections: FAQs for local authorities

FAQs to support local authorities with responding to queries from the media and the public on the 6 May polls.

EA Bulletins are issued on a regular basis. They are one of our key channels for communicating with Returning Officers, Electoral Registration Officers and their staff. Past issues of Bulletins for England, Scotland and Wales are available [here](#). You can also [subscribe to the EA Bulletins](#).

Please [keep us informed](#) of any staff changes within your team. This will help us to keep our mailing lists up-to-date.

We are sending you this newsletter as it contains important information about the Electoral Commission's work which is relevant to you. The newsletter forms part of the Electoral Commission's public

We expect that the despatch of polling station handbooks and quick guides to those who have ordered them will commence in mid-March. We will confirm the timing of the delivery, and provide links to the updated handbooks and quick guides, in a future Bulletin.

May 2021 elections: FAQs for local authorities

Preparations continue for elections across Great Britain in May. Since the New Year, and given the developments in the public health situation, there has been speculation in the media and elsewhere about whether the polls will go ahead in May.

We are liaising with the UK's governments and with the electoral community on these issues. In the meantime, to assist local authorities with communicating the current situation to the media and voters, we have developed some FAQs, which you can find below. We have also shared, for your information, our current press line.

We recommend the lines below should only be used reactively, to answer any questions from journalists or members of the public. The information below is accurate as of Tuesday 19 January, however this is an evolving situation. We will share any further information, as needed, via Roll Call and the Bulletin.

Current Electoral Commission statement

"It is an important democratic principle that elections should proceed as scheduled whenever possible. To ensure they can do so this May, we continue to work with the electoral community, informed by the latest public health advice.

"Voters should be able to participate in the polls, campaigners and parties be able to put their case to the electorate, and electoral administration staff be able to run the polling stations and count centres, safely and confidently.

"As preparations for the polls continue, we are working closely with the electoral community to provide support, and to understand the impacts of the pandemic on their complex and important work. We will be communicating with voters to ensure they understand how to participate in the polls safely."

FAQs

Are the elections on 6 May being postponed?

The elections are scheduled to go ahead as planned on 6 May. We are working hard to ensure that they can proceed effectively, including that polling stations will be safe places to vote.

Who makes the decision to postpone the elections?

Any decision to postpone the polls would be for the UK Government to make, and be subject to parliamentary approval.

Do you think they can go ahead in the current circumstances?

The Electoral Commission has developed [a set of election objectives](#) with the UK's governments, political parties and electoral administrators, to ensure the elections can be delivered safely and successfully.

We are working with the UK's governments, the Electoral Commission, the wider electoral community and public health

task which has its basis in the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000. We will manage your personal information and contact details in line with the General Data Protection Regulation and UK data protection legislation as outlined in our privacy notice (<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/privacy-notice>)

If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, you may [unsubscribe](#) at any time.

authorities to ensure that voters can cast their votes safely at the elections on 6 May 2021.

These preparations allow for a range of restriction levels in May.

We are also putting arrangements in place to help ensure polling stations are safe places to vote. Voters can expect many of the measures they've become used to over recent months, such as the use of hand sanitiser, floor markings and face coverings.

.....
The Electoral Commission
3 Bunhill Row, London EC1Y 8YZ
Tel England: 0333 103 1928
Textphone: 18001 020 7271 0500
infoengland@electoralcommission.org.uk
www.electoralcommission.org.uk
© The Electoral Commission 2021