

## Voter ID demographic analysis research

The vast majority of polling station voters were able to show an accepted form of photographic ID at the May 2023 English local elections. However, some were unable to vote because of the ID requirement. We have conducted additional research and found that the demographic distribution of those turned away was not random. In particular, individuals in more deprived areas were more likely to find the ID requirement an additional barrier to voting.

### Objectives

The primary aim of this research was to identify patterns in the areas where a higher or lower proportion of people were turned away from polling stations due to the new voter ID requirement.

### Methodology

As set out in the legislation, councils were required to report to us local authority level data on the number of voters turned away at polling stations as a result of the ID requirement. To gain deeper insights into the relationship between different areas' characteristics and the number of people turned away from polling stations, we also gathered additional data at electoral ward level and compared it with ward-level census data.

Our selection of local authorities was constrained by those which could provide the data for wards (this was not a legal requirement) and which had not undergone boundary changes since the 2021 census (in order to allow for comparisons with census data for the same wards). In addition, we also identified authorities with more variation across wards in the selected independent variables (unemployment, ethnic diversity, and deprivation). Local authorities with incomplete or missing Voter ID Evaluation Form data were excluded.

The 18 local authorities included in our ward analysis were: Burnley, Calderdale, Coventry, Crawley, Hartlepool, Hertsmere, Knowsley, Leeds, Leicester, Nottingham, Oadby & Wigston, Oldham, Preston, Sandwell, Sheffield, South Tyneside, Swindon, Watford.

### Exploratory factors and rationale

We know, from our [tracking research](#), that people from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to have photo ID than other groups. Those who are unemployed (14%), those who rent from their local authority (17%) or from a housing association (10%) are all less likely to have photo ID than the average person (4%).

Our campaign tracking research also suggests that there is a below average level of awareness among people who do not identify as White British (82% aware compared with 93% for white respondents).

### **Independent variables**

To use these factors in our analysis, it was necessary to find measures that are a suitable proxy for them in the census data. We identified the following suitable proxy variables:

- **unemployment:** census table TS062 (National Statistics Socio-economic Classification/NS-SeC: Never worked and long-term unemployed)
- **ethnicity:** census table TS021 (Non-White British). All usual residents excluding those who identified as White English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British
- **household deprivation:** census table TS011 (Households by deprivation dimensions). Proportion of households that were deprived in at least two dimensions
- **social renters:** census table TS054 (Tenure). All those who rent from the council or local authority

### **Dependent variable**

For this analysis, we used the number of voters initially turned away as the dependent variable, regardless of whether or not they later returned to vote. We chose this variable as it represents a measure of the people directly affected by the voter ID policy and allowed for a larger base size for the analysis, given that it is likely that many of those initially turned away will not have returned later with an accepted form of photo ID.

### **Limitations of data on those turned away**

The polling station data on the number of people turned away underestimates the impact of the new ID requirement on voters for two reasons:

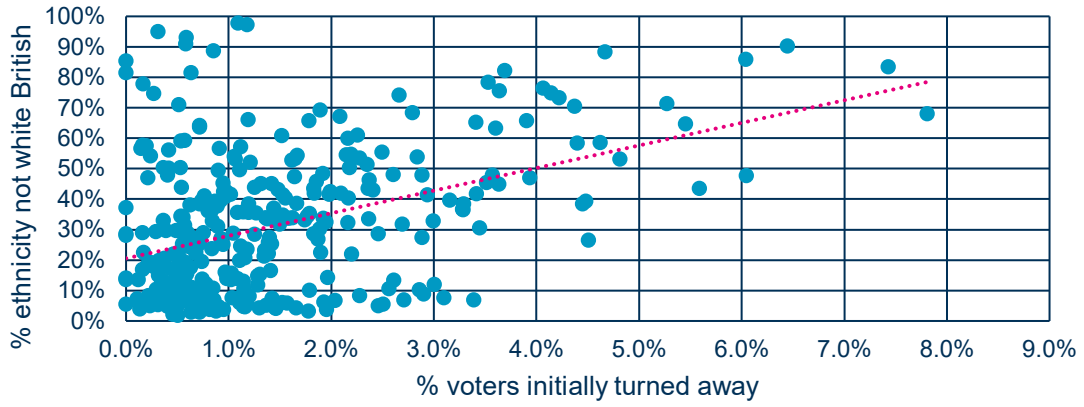
- people may not have reached the ballot issuing desk before realising they lacked accepted ID, and would therefore not have been recorded by polling station staff
- some of the data returned to the Commission was incomplete or inaccurate. This included errors in data completion, missing information on reasons for rejection, missing returns from stations, and unclear blank returns

These errors, across thousands of polling stations and staff, resulted in an overall underestimation of the impact of the voter ID requirement.

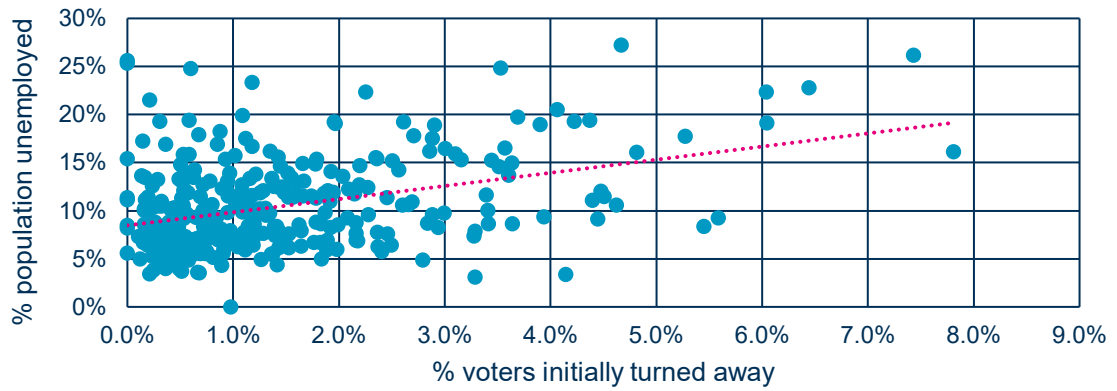
## **Results of the additional analysis**

The initial step in understanding the relationships among the independent variables was to plot these on a scatter graph to determine if a relationship existed and whether it was linear. The results of this analysis suggest that there is a potential linear relationship.

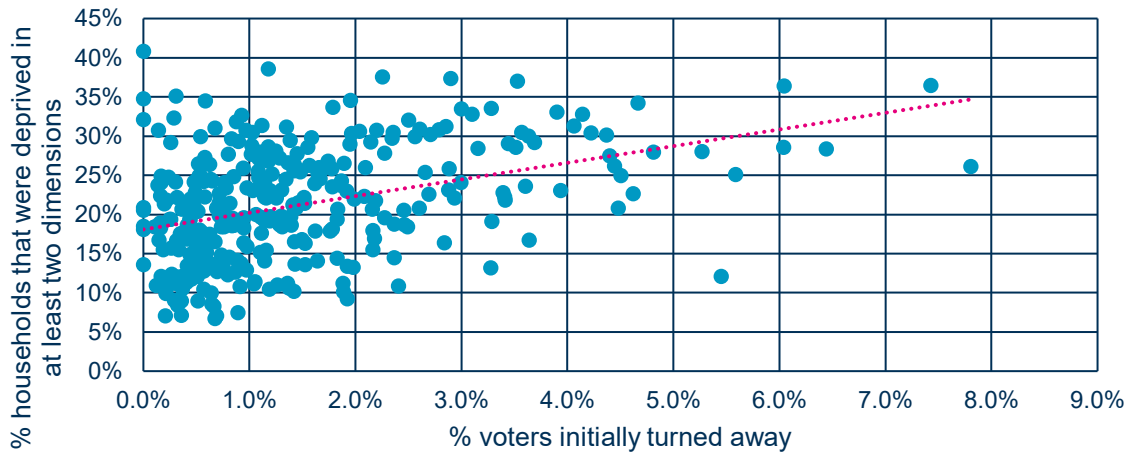
### Ethnicity



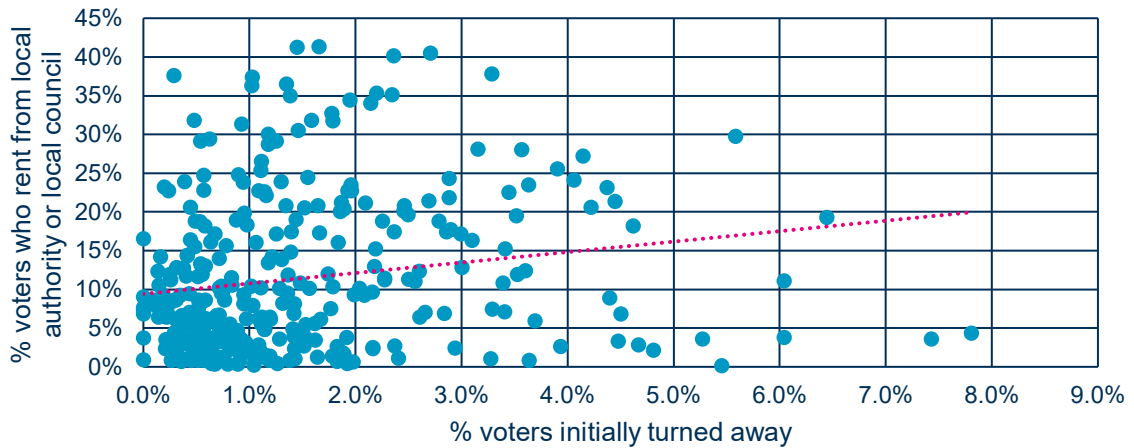
### Unemployment



### Household deprivation



### Social renters



Below are the correlation scores between the individual factors and the proportion of voters initially turned away and those who did not return to vote:

	Proportion turned away initially	Social renters	Ethnicity	Unemployment	Household deprivation
<b>Proportion</b>	n/a				
Social renters	<b>0.18 (very weak relationship)</b>	n/a			
Ethnicity	<b>0.42 (moderate relationship)</b>	0.00	n/a		
Unemployment	<b>0.38 (weak/moderate relationship)</b>	0.34	0.36	n/a	
Household deprivation	<b>0.39 (weak/moderate relationship)</b>	0.59	0.28	0.73	n/a
<b>Proportion never returned</b>	n/a				
Social renters	<b>0.30 (weak relationship)</b>	n/a			
Ethnicity	<b>0.21 (weak relationship)</b>	0.00	n/a		
Unemployment	<b>0.33 (weak relationship)</b>	0.34	0.36	n/a	
Household deprivation	<b>0.39 (weak/moderate relationship)</b>	0.59	0.28	0.73	n/a

These scores indicate weak to moderate relationships between each of the factors we identified and whether people were initially turned away or did not return to vote. Some of

the factors we used in the analysis are interlinked - for example, household deprivation and unemployment – which led to correlations among them.

We conducted regression statistics to identify whether these relationships were significant. A p-value below 0.05 indicates significance. All relationships were found to be significant.

### Variability across local authorities and independent variables

The table below illustrates how the correlation coefficients vary across local authorities and each of the independent variables in relation to the proportion of voters initially turned away.

**Green** = Strong relationship

**Dark Orange** = medium strength relationship

**Light Orange** = weak relationship

**Pink** = no relationship

The numbers in **bold** indicate the strongest correlation for each local authority.

	% initially turned away	Ethnicity	Unemployment	Household deprivation	Social renters
Sandwell	3.1%	0.67	<b>0.73</b>	0.22	0.01
Crawley	2.6%	0.41	0.68	<b>0.73</b>	0.57
Preston	2.4%	<b>0.51</b>	0.38	0.28	0.10
Watford	2.2%	0.14	<b>0.49</b>	0.44	0.15
Knowsley	2.0%	0.18	<b>0.56</b>	0.48	<b>0.56</b>
South Tyneside	1.5%	0.25	<b>0.48</b>	0.07	0.28
Calderdale	1.5%	<b>0.96</b>	0.84	0.49	0.01
Hertsmere	1.5%	<b>0.31</b>	0.00	0.00	0.00
Burnley	1.5%	<b>0.71</b>	0.69	0.45	-0.07
Oadby & Wigston	1.4%	0.11	0.02	0.03	0.10
Nottingham	1.3%	0.08	0.06	<b>0.28</b>	0.06
Coventry	1.2%	0.61	<b>0.74</b>	0.61	0.16
Swindon	1.1%	0.45	<b>0.57</b>	0.49	0.22
Hartlepool	1.0%	<b>0.52</b>	0.31	0.26	0.07
Leeds	0.8%	<b>0.77</b>	0.65	0.45	0.30
Sheffield	0.8%	<b>0.56</b>	0.16	0.48	0.35
Leicester	0.6%	0.23	<b>0.28</b>	0.13	0.01
Oldham	0.6%	0.14	0.19	0.17	<b>0.27</b>

From this analysis, we find that:

- 13 of the 18 local authorities showed at least a moderate relationship between the independent variables and the proportion of voters initially turned away

- six of the 18 local authorities exhibited strong relationships between one or more independent variables
- only Oadby and Wigston lacked any discernible relationship with the independent variables
- the proportion of the population who rents from the council or local authority has a very low correlation across most local authorities

### **Detailed findings**

A significant relationship was observed between the number turned of voters away in an area and all four independent variables.

The correlation between variables and the number of those turned away was generally weak to moderate. The correlation with the proportion renting from the council or local authority was particularly weak.

For the proportion initially turned away, the strongest correlation was with areas having a higher proportion of non-white British individuals (0.42), higher deprivation (0.39), and higher unemployment (0.38).

Comparing correlations between the proportion of voters initially turned away and those who never returned to vote, we find that:

- results remained consistent for areas with a high proportion of households experiencing multiple dimensions of deprivation
- the correlation with unemployment was slightly lower for those who never returned (0.33) compared to those initially turned away (0.38)
- the correlation with non-white British individuals was lower (0.21) for those who never returned compared to the correlation for those who were initially turned away. This discrepancy could be attributed to lower levels of awareness of the ID requirement among those who do not identify as white British but a greater likelihood of returning with an accepted form of ID because they were not among the groups less likely to possess the required photo ID

It is important to note that, while relationships have been identified, these may not necessarily be causal. However, even if the causes differ from the analysed factors, it is highly likely that the identified groups are overrepresented among those who were turned away for not having accepted ID.

The poor data quality is likely to lessen the strength of any relationship detected in this analysis, as it adds additional 'noise' to the analysis which makes it harder to detect patterns.