

European Parliament elections May 2014

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September 2014

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Summary

- Thirty different parties fielded a total of 119 lists across Great Britain. There were ten individual party candidates in Northern Ireland.
- UKIP topped the poll in Great Britain and won the largest number of seats. A total of seven parties won at least one seat. There was no change in party representation in Northern Ireland.
- The 2014 European Parliament elections gave nearly 46.5 million registered UK electors the opportunity to vote.
- Some 16.55 million votes were counted in the ballot box, making the overall turnout 35.6%. This was nearly a full percentage point increase on the 2009 contests.
- Turnout was higher than in 2009 in every country in the UK. In England and Wales the increase was modest; in Scotland and in Northern Ireland it was more considerable.
- The proportion of ballots that are rejected at the official count continues to be small. At the 2014 EP contests it was about one in every two hundred votes cast. There is though evidence of the rejection rate being somewhat higher where voters are faced with an additional election operating under a different electoral system (e.g.: in areas with combined local elections).
- Over 7.23 million postal votes were issued -15.6% of the total UK electorate. In 12 local authority counting areas more than 25% of the electorate had a postal vote; in another 14 fewer than 10% did so.
- More than two thirds (69.1%) of those with a postal ballot returned it. In contrast turnout among those required to vote 'in person' was 30.1%.
- The proportion of postal votes rejected or otherwise not included in the count was 4.4% ranging from a high of 7.3% in Northern Ireland to a low of 2.9% in Scotland.
- Postal vote rejection following a mismatch of signature and/or date of birth was much more common than rejection for incomplete information.
- In up to a third of cases of postal vote rejection voters returned their postal voting envelopes but failed to include either the ballot paper itself or the verification statement or both.
- About three fifths of one percent of electors with a postal vote were granted a waiver to use their date of birth as their sole identifier.
- Some 54,500 electors (0.12% of the total electorate) appointed proxies to act on their behalf.
- Areas which had local as well as European elections appear to have attracted a greater proportion of their electorate to vote. In particular turnout was up in local authorities where there were local contests this time but not in 2009.

Introduction

Elections to choose members of the European Parliament (EP) took place in Great Britain and Northern Ireland on May 22nd 2014. This was the eighth occasion that such elections had been held, and the fourth on which a regional party list system was used in Great Britain. England was divided into nine electoral regions coinciding with the Government Office Regions (GORs), with Scotland and Wales forming a 'region' each for electoral purposes. As at all previous contests, Northern Ireland formed a single constituency region with its three MEPs being elected using the Single Transferable Vote system. As in 2004 and 2009, simultaneous elections were held to choose local council representatives in some parts of England. In 2014 these contests covered 36 London and 32 metropolitan boroughs, 19 unitary authorities, and 74 district councils.

Number and distribution of elected representatives

The United Kingdom's allocation of European Parliament seats in 2014 (73) was one more than in 2009. An additional seat was added to the West Midlands region in November 2011 under the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty.

Table 1. Distribution of MEP seats 2014 and 2009

Region	2014	2009	change
East Midlands	5	5	-
East of England	7	7	-
London	8	8	-
North East	3	3	-
North West	8	8	-
South East	10	10	-
South West (including Gibraltar)	6	6	-
West Midlands	7	6	+1
Yorkshire and the Humber	6	6	-
Wales	4	4	-
Scotland	6	6	-
Northern Ireland	3	3	-
Total	73	72	+1

Contestation

There were a total of 119 lists across Great Britain. In England there were 99 lists -eight parties had lists in every region and 18 other parties fielded candidates/lists in one or more regions. 53 lists lost their deposit by failing to record at least 2.5% of the total vote in a region. In Scotland there were nine lists and three lost deposits; in Wales, 11 and five respectively. Three of the 10 individual party candidates in Northern Ireland polled less than 2.5% of the vote. There were no Independent candidates.

Results

Although the votes are counted and the seats allocated within each region, most public and media interest in the European Parliament contests naturally centred on the overall result. Across Great Britain the United Kingdom Independence Party topped the poll with Labour in second place and the Conservatives third –see Table 2. The Green Party came fourth ahead of the Liberal Democrats. As in 2004 and 2009 the combined share of the vote for the two largest political parties at Westminster was less than 50%.

Table 2. Summary EP election result in Great Britain

Party	Votes	%share of vote	seats	% share of seats
UKIP	4,352,051	27.49	24	34.3
Labour	4,020,646	25.40	20	28.6
Conservative	3,788,405	23.93	19	27.1
Green	1,244,975	7.87	3	4.3
Liberal Democrat	1,087,632	6.87	1	1.4
Scottish National Party	389,503	2.46	2	2.9
Plaid Cymru	111,864	0.71	1	1.4
Others	833,464	5.27	0	-

UKIP came first in six of the nine English regions, with Labour on top in the other three. The Scottish National Party and Plaid Cymru each won representation based on their support in Scotland and Wales respectively. The SNP was first in Scotland, but Plaid was fourth behind Labour, UKIP and the Conservatives in Wales.

In Northern Ireland, Sinn Fein topped the poll ahead of the Democratic Unionist Party as it had done at both the 2009 European Parliament and 2010 general elections. There was no change to party representation in Northern Ireland –see Table 3.

Table 3. Summary EP election result in Northern Ireland

Party	1 st preference votes	% share of vote	seats
Sinn Fein	159,813	25.52	1
Democratic Unionist	131,163	20.95	1
Ulster Unionist	83,438	13.33	1
Social Democratic and Labour	81,594	13.31	
Traditional Unionist Voice	75,806	12.11	
Alliance	44,432	7.10	
UKIP	24,584	3.93	
Others	25,295	4.04	

Quota for election = 156,532. Calculated as: (No. of valid votes cast) ÷ (No. of seats to be filled + 1)

Turnout

The European Parliament election is the only regular contest other than the general election at which all voters in the United Kingdom have an opportunity to vote on the same occasion. In 2014, nearly 46.5 million electors were registered and some 16.45 million of them cast valid votes at the election. At least a further 50,000 people tried to register after the closing date and over 5,000 were recorded as trying to vote on election day itself despite not being registered. Votes were cast at some 39,000 polling stations as well as by post.

Across the country some 16.55 million local votes were counted at the ballot box, making the overall aggregate turnout 35.6%. Taking into account those who tried to vote but had their postal vote returns rejected, the level of participation rises to 36.1%. This compares with 34.7% and 35.1% respectively at the 2009 European Parliament elections.

Tables 4, 5, and 6 use various measures of turnout to make comparisons with previous EP contests. The term 'valid vote turnout' refers to calculations based simply on the number of valid votes cast; 'ballot box turnout' refers to calculations taking into account valid votes plus those which were considered but rejected at the count; and 'total turnout' refers to calculations which take into account valid votes, those rejected at the count *and* those rejected at the postal ballot verification stage. The evidence from the Tables confirms that only a small fraction of voters try to vote but fail to do so successfully.

Turnout was higher than in 2009 in every country in the UK. In England and Wales the increase was modest; in Scotland (where the Independence Referendum campaign may have sharpened political debate) and in Northern Ireland (where there were coincident local elections) it was more considerable.

Table 4. Valid vote turnout at European Parliament elections 1979-2014 (valid votes as a % of the electorate)

	2014	2009	2004	1999	1994	1989	1984	1979
United Kingdom	35.4	34.5	38.5	24.0	36.5	36.8	32.9	32.7
Great Britain	35.0	34.3	38.2	23.1	36.2	36.5	32.1	32.1
England	35.3	35.1	38.8	22.7	35.5	35.8	31.6	31.8
Wales	32.0	30.4	41.4	28.1	43.1	41.1	39.7	34.4
Scotland	33.4	28.5	30.6	24.7	38.2	40.8	33.1	33.6
Northern Ireland	51.0	42.4	51.2	57.0	48.7	48.3	64.4	55.6

Table 5. Ballot box turnout at European Parliament elections 1999-2014 (papers at count as a % of electorate)

	2014	2009	2004	1999
United Kingdom	35.6	34.7	38.8	24.0
Great Britain	35.2	34.5	38.5	23.1
England	35.5	35.3	39.1	22.7
Wales	32.1	30.5	41.9	28.2
Scotland	33.5	28.6	30.6	24.7
Northern Ireland	51.9	42.8	51.7	57.1

Table 6. Total turnout at European Parliament elections 1999-2014 (papers at count + rejected postal ballots as a % of electorate)

	2014	2009	2004	1999
United Kingdom	36.1	35.1	39.2	24.1
Great Britain	35.6	34.9	38.9	23.2
England	36.0	35.7	39.5	22.7
Wales	32.4	30.9	42.1	28.3
Scotland	33.8	28.9	30.8	24.8
Northern Ireland	51.9	42.9	51.8	57.3

Turnout also varied among the regions of England –see Table 7. In four cases it was higher and in five lower than in 2009. One clue to this may be whether or not local elections were also being held. Borough council contests were held across London this year; there were no such elections in 2009. More local authorities in the North East, North West, and Yorkshire and the Humber regions held local elections than was case four years ago. On the other hand, in the five regions registering a reduction in turnout, there were fewer coincident local elections this time. We deal with this issue in greater detail in an Annex on the effect of ‘combined’ elections.

Table 7. Valid vote and total turnout 2004-2014 by English electoral region

	Total turnout			Valid vote turnout		
	2014	2009	2004	2014	2009	2004
All postal voting in 2004						
East Midlands	33.8	38.0	44.7	33.2	37.1	43.7
North East	31.6	31.1	42.5	30.9	30.4	41.0
North West	34.1	32.3	42.3	33.3	31.7	41.1
Yorkshire & Humber	34.3	32.9	43.7	33.5	32.4	42.3
Conventional elections in 2004						
East of England	36.6	38.4	36.9	36.0	37.7	36.5
London*	41.1	33.9	37.9	40.1	33.3	37.3
South East	36.8	38.2	36.9	36.3	37.5	36.6
South West	37.4	39.4	38.0	36.9	38.8	37.7
West Midlands	33.8	35.4	36.8	33.1	34.8	36.3

*London wide local elections in 2004 and 2014

Naturally, there are even greater variations from the mean when turnout is examined at the local authority level as set out in Table 8. The highest turnouts were all in England – two in London and one in a district council (South Lakeland) which regularly appears in a league table of high turnouts and where a good part of the area had council contests. In just three council areas across Great Britain did less than a quarter of the eligible electorate vote. In no such case were there also local elections.

Table 8. Highest and lowest % ‘ballot box’ turnouts by local authority in Great Britain, EP elections 2014

Local authority	Highest	Lowest	
England			
Tower Hamlets	50.9	Middlesbrough	24.2
Richmond upon Thames	47.7	Barrow in Furness	23.6
South Lakeland	44.7	Stoke on Trent	23.3
Scotland			
East Renfrewshire	43.1	East Ayrshire	29.3
Edinburgh	41.6	Glasgow	28.2
Argyll and Bute	40.6	North Lanarkshire	28.1
Wales			
Isle of Anglesey –Ynys Mon	37.9	Caerphilly	29.4
Ceredigion	36.8	Merthyr Tydfil	27.2
Powys	36.7	Blaenau Gwent	27.0

Rejected ballots

As suggested by the modest differences between the turnout measures set out earlier, only a small fraction of electors who tried to vote had their ballot papers rejected. This can happen at one of two stages. Under the provisions of the Electoral Administration Act 2006, postal voters must first meet the statutory requirements for the documentation they return by supplying personal identifiers in the form of their date of birth and signature both when they apply for a postal vote and when they return a ballot paper. Votes submitted by those whose details are deemed to match are then added at the count to those of electors who have voted in person. At this stage votes are checked against four criteria to determine their validity. The voter’s intention should be clear; they should not have voted for more candidates or parties than allowed at that election; they should not mark the ballot paper in such a way that they can be personally identified; and the ballot paper itself should contain the official mark.

Table 9 shows that the overall proportion of ballot papers examined at the count and subsequently rejected has been less than 1% at every European Parliament election. Only in Northern Ireland does the figure exceed 1% on more than a single occasion. Some 80,000 voters in Great Britain, plus

another 10,000 in Northern Ireland, cast ballots that were deemed invalid. The proportion of rejected papers is slightly lower than in 2009 everywhere except Northern Ireland and London. In those cases voters were also faced with local elections offering them the use of multiple votes. The more complex the ballot paper, and the more electors are asked to vote in different ways on different ballot papers, the more likely they are to make a mistake. Although an unmarked or unclear ballot paper –‘void for uncertainty’ in the technical language– is by far the most common reason for rejection, 4 in 10 of those rejected in Northern Ireland and London (compared with just a quarter of cases elsewhere) were set aside because more than the allowable one vote had been marked. However, we cannot of course know what proportion of these and other forms of rejection are the result of deliberate as opposed to accidental actions by voters.

Table 9. Rejected ballots as proportion of total included at count, 1979-2014

	2014	2009	2004	1999	1994	1989	1984	1979
United Kingdom	0.5	0.7	0.8	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.4
Great Britain	0.5	0.6	0.8	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.3
England	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.3
Wales	0.3	0.5	1.2	0.4	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.4
Scotland	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2
Northern Ireland	1.6	0.9	1.0	0.3	1.6	1.0	1.7	2.4

English regions 2009-14

	2014	2009	2004
East Midlands	0.3	0.8	0.5
East of England	0.4	0.8	0.6
London	1.1	0.6	0.9
North East	0.3	0.4	1.4
North West	0.5	0.6	1.0
South East	0.4	0.8	0.5
South West	0.3	0.8	0.4
West Midlands	0.6	0.6	0.9
Yorkshire & Humber	0.5	0.5	1.5

Postal voting –uptake and turnout

A sizeable number of electors continue to take advantage of the opportunity to apply for and cast a postal vote. At these elections a record 7.23 million postal votes were issued -15.6% of the eligible electorate (Tables 10 and 11). This compares with 15.3% at the 2010 general election and 13.9% at the previous EP elections in 2009. The increase in Scotland alone was more than a third (4.2 percentage points). Excluding Northern Ireland, where different rules apply, nearly one in six electors now have a postal vote. Most local authorities aimed to have postal voting ballot papers delivered some two weeks to 10 days before polling. However, in about 50 cases documentation was despatched up to three weeks in advance of the election.

Table 10. Postal votes as % of electorate EP elections 1979-2014

	2014	2009	2004*	1999	1994	1989	1984	1979
United Kingdom	15.6	13.9	8.3	1.3	1.2	1.1	1.4	2.0
Great Britain	15.9	14.2	8.6	1.2	1.1	1.1	1.3	2.0
England	15.9	14.4	9.0	1.3	1.2	1.1	1.3	1.9
Wales	16.9	15.0	10.1	1.7	1.6	1.5	1.8	2.7
Scotland	15.9	11.7	4.7	1.2	0.9	0.8	1.1	2.0
Northern Ireland	1.5	1.2	1.9	2.2	2.2	2.5	3.0	3.9

**In electoral regions without all-postal voting*

Table 11. Postal electors and votes at the 2014 EP elections—overall and by country

UK

Number of postal ballot papers issued	7,231,353	as % of electorate	15.6
Number returned	4,996,892	as % of issued	69.1
Number included 'in count'	4,775,238	as % of votes at count	28.9
Rejected or otherwise not included in count	221,654	as % of those returned	4.4

GB

Number of postal ballot papers issued	7,212,971	as % of electorate	15.9
Number returned	4,982,031	as % of issued	69.1
Number included 'in count'	4,761,456	as % of votes at count	29.9
Rejected or otherwise not included in count	220,575	as % of those returned	4.4

England

Number of postal ballot papers issued	6,186,895	as % of electorate	15.9
Number returned	4,283,122	as % of issued	69.2
Number included 'in count'	4,083,944	as % of votes at count	29.5
Rejected or otherwise not included in count	199,178	as % of those returned	4.7

Scotland

Number of postal ballot papers issued	638,339	as % of electorate	15.9
Number returned	442,127	as % of issued	69.3
Number included 'in count'	429,230	as % of votes at count	31.9
Rejected or otherwise not included in count	12,897	as % of those returned	2.9

Wales

Number of postal ballot papers issued	387,737	as % of electorate	16.9
Number returned	256,782	as % of issued	66.2
Number included 'in count'	248,282	as % of votes at count	33.8
Rejected or otherwise not included in count	8,500	as % of those returned	3.3

Northern Ireland

Number of postal ballot papers issued	18,382	as % of electorate	1.5
Number returned	14,861	as % of issued	80.8
Number included 'in count'	13,782	as % of votes at count	2.2
Rejected or otherwise not included in count	1,079	as % of those returned	7.3

With the sole exception of the North East, each of the English regions also registered an increase in the proportion of postal electors compared with five years ago (Table 12). Nonetheless the North East, which was the region with the widest experience of all-postal voting pilots, still tops the table and some legacy from 2004 is also retained in East Midlands, North West, and Yorkshire and the Humber. In three council areas more than a third of the electorate had a postal vote and in nine more over 25% did so –see Table 13. These councils make a regular appearance on this list and each has conducted all postal pilots in the past. At the other extreme (and excluding the special cases of the Isles of Scilly and Gibraltar), there were 14 authorities (again familiar names) where fewer than 10% of electors had a postal vote.

Table 12. Postal votes as % of electorate by English region 2004-14

	2014	2009	2004
Eastern	14.7	13.0	8.9
London	14.5	12.4	8.4
South East	14.9	13.1	9.1
South West	16.3	13.8	10.5
West Midlands	12.6	11.6	8.6
All postal voting 2004			
East Midlands	16.3	14.8	100
North East	24.2	25.5	100
North West	17.5	16.2	100
Yorkshire and the Humber	17.2	16.6	100

Table 13. Largest and smallest take up of postal votes - % electorate by local authority area, EP elections 2014

Local authority

Largest

Sunderland	39.7
Stevenage	35.4
South Tyneside	33.7

Smallest

Kingston upon Hull	7.7
Halton	7.1
Barrow in Furness	6.4

The proportion of postal voters returning their ballot papers always exceeds the turnout among ‘in person’ voters. To an extent this can be explained by the fact that applying for such a vote in the first place often indicates a higher than average level of interest in and engagement with political events. More than two in three postal electors used their vote, the largest such proportion since EP elections began in 1979 (Table 14). By contrast the turnout among those obliged to visit a polling station was less than 30% everywhere except in Northern Ireland. This was lower than in 2009 in England, but higher in both Scotland and Wales.

This phenomenon also means that postal votes form a disproportionate number of those at the count. In 2014 almost three in ten of all votes counted in Great Britain (29.9%) were cast by post, with the figure in Wales exceeding one in three -see Table 11. Indeed some argue that the success of postal voting serves to disguise a continuing problem of low electoral participation among those who choose not to take advantage of this facility.

Table 14. Postal and ‘in person’ turnout at EP elections 1999-2014*

	2014		2009		2004		1999	
	Postal	Other	Postal	Other	Postal	Other	Postal	Other
United Kingdom	69.1	30.1	61.6	30.4	64.8	34.0	55.2	23.6
Great Britain	69.1	29.4	61.6	30.0	64.6	33.7	54.1	22.7
England	69.2	29.9	61.8	30.9	65.5	34.0	53.8	22.2
Wales	66.2	25.6	59.2	25.5	56.3	39.7	52.8	27.7
Scotland	69.3	27.1	60.8	24.4	64.9	28.9	58.5	24.2
Northern Ireland	80.8	51.5	61.7	42.6	80.6	50.6	79.7	55.9

*Calculation based on ballot papers included in the count. In 2004 only electoral regions without all-postal voting are included in summaries.

Postal vote rejection

As outlined earlier some electors who try to vote by post are found to have completed the documentation incorrectly and their ballot papers never reach the count. The level of such rejections this year was in line with previous experience, amounting to just over four in every hundred postal ballots overall (Table 15).

We have noted in the past evidence that where electoral events are combined, the rejection rate of postal ballots is somewhat higher. That may help to account for some of the increase in rejections in the London and Yorkshire and the Humber regions compared with 2009, for example, and for the reduction in the East Midlands and South East where there were many fewer coincident local elections. We address this issue in greater detail in an Annex on the effect of ‘combined’ elections.

Table 15. % Ballot papers returned by post but rejected at verification 1999-2014

	2014	2009	2004	1999	1994	1989	1984	1979
United Kingdom	4.4	4.4	2.1	3.3	3.9	5.7	5.2	3.1
Great Britain	4.4	4.4	2.1	3.1	4.0	6.1	5.3	3.1
England	4.7	4.4	2.1	3.0	3.7	5.6	5.1	3.0
Wales	3.3	4.0	4.3	4.5	6.0	10.5	8.8	4.6
Scotland	2.9	4.0	2.1	2.6	5.7	7.2	3.7	2.8
Northern Ireland	7.3	10.4	5.7	6.3	2.4	2.2	4.1	2.7

English regions 2004 and 2009

	2014	2009	2004
East Midlands	4.6	6.4	1.8
East of England	4.5	4.3	2.8
London	5.9	4.5	3.9
North East	4.4	3.7	2.3
North West	4.8	4.4	1.9
South East	3.6	4.6	2.3
South West	3.4	4.0	2.2
West Midlands	5.6	4.5	3.0
Yorkshire & Humber	5.3	3.5	1.9

In order to obtain more information on the reasons for postal vote rejection than the statutory forms allow and to try to overcome inconsistencies in the recording of answers, each returning officer was asked to compile and submit additional data on the outcomes of their verification process. Table 16 makes clear that rejection following a mismatch of signature and/or date of birth was much more common than rejection for incomplete or missing information. The former accounts for up to a half of all rejections in each country.

In other cases, about a third of 'votes' were rejected because electors returned their postal voting envelopes but failed to include either the ballot paper itself or the verification statement or both. However, this represents only about 1.3% of all returned postal votes, with the vast majority correctly filing their returns complete with matching signature and date of birth. There is no comparable data for the 2009 EP elections, but these figures are in line with data from recent local elections.

Table 16. Reasons for rejection of postal votes at verification by % of total rejected at 2014 EP elections

	England	Scotland	Wales	GB
PV statement rejected (No signature)	8	7	16	8
PV statement rejected (No DoB)	5	3	6	5
PV statement rejected (Both)	9	11	3	9
Proportion rejected (incomplete information)	22	21	25	22
PV statement mismatched signature	20	23	15	20
PV statement mismatched DoB	17	21	25	17
PV statement mismatched both	8	6	7	8
Proportion rejected (mismatching)	44	50	47	44
Prop rejected (ballot paper or statement missing)	34	29	27	34

Waivers

A concession granted under the terms of the EAA 2006 was that postal electors who either had a disability, or were illiterate, or were unable to furnish a consistent signature could apply for a waiver to use their date of birth as their sole identifier. This year more than 42,500 people were granted such a waiver – 0.59% of the postal electorate (Table 17). In three authorities (Glasgow, Scottish Borders, and Arun) waivers were granted to more than 3%

of such electors; in five more the figure was above 2%. On the other hand, in 6 areas for which we have information, fewer than 10 individuals were granted waivers. Several of these councils occupied a similar rank on this measure in previous reports suggesting -as with postal vote take up in general- that differences are at least in part attributable to how far the local authority publicises the availability of such a waiver.

Table 17: Postal electors granted ‘waivers’ at the 2014 EP elections

	As proportion of postal electors	Average per local authority
Great Britain	0.59	545
England	0.52	99
Wales	0.79	139
Scotland	1.14	227

Proxy votes

The introduction of postal voting on demand initially had a downward impact on the number of electors appointing proxies, especially when there is no concurrent general election –see Table 18. This year some 54,500 electors across the United Kingdom (0.12% of the total electorate) appointed a proxy and over 1,300 emergency proxies were issued. Proxy voting now appears to have stabilised at about one in every 1,000 electors in Great Britain.

Table 18. Proxy votes 1999-2014

	2014	2009	2004	1999
United Kingdom	0.12	0.09	0.17	0.42
Great Britain	0.11	0.09	0.16	0.41
England	0.11	0.10	0.16	0.40
Wales	0.10	0.08	0.19	0.48
Scotland	0.11	0.08	0.15	0.50
Northern Ireland	0.33	0.13	0.36	0.62

Annex 1. Impact of combined elections

Local elections took place in 161 local authorities in England on the same day as the UK-wide elections to the European Parliament. In 2009 there had been coincident elections in 27 county councils (encompassing 201 shire districts) and 7 unitary authorities in England. Table A1 shows the change in turnout between 2009 and 2014 depending on whether or not a local authority also had local elections. It is striking that an overall increase in turnout in 2014 is only to be found in those cases where there were local elections this year but not in 2009, including all of London. The largest reduction is in councils which had local contests five years ago, but not on this occasion. These data would appear to confirm evidence found in both 2009 and 2004 that local elections play a key role in boosting turnout at EP contests, and justify the government's decision once again to schedule both sets of election on the same day.

Table A1. Ballot box turnout change at European Parliament elections in England 2009-2014

	Mean 2014	change 2009-14
Locals 2014 only (n=81)	36.5	+4.6
Locals both years (n=78)	36.6	-1.1
Locals neither year (n=34)	32.8	-1.0
Locals 2009 only (n=132)	35.4	-4.5
England	35.5	+0.2

In Northern Ireland, where there were inaugural local elections for 11 new council areas, turnout was nine percentage points higher than in 2009.

Combination also has an impact on the number of ballots rejected both at the count and at postal vote verification. It appears that twice as many rejections can occur where voters are faced with two ballot papers and often a different voting rubric –see Table A2. We have already noted that in London, where almost every local ward offers a multiple vote, the level of rejections was 1.1%. Similarly, it was postal voters with combined Euro and local elections who were more likely to fall foul of the postal voting regulations so that their return was rejected at the verification stage.

Table A2. Rejected ballots and combined elections in England 2014

	% votes rejected	%postal ballots rejected
Locals 2014 only (n=81)	0.84	7.8
Locals both years (n=78)	0.55	4.6
Locals neither year (n=34)	0.31	4.3
Locals 2009 only (n=132)	0.27	3.2
England mean	0.55	4.4