

The
Electoral
Commission

UK Parliamentary General Election, June 2017

October 2017

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The Electoral Commission is the independent body which oversees elections and regulates political finance in the UK. We work to promote public confidence in the democratic process and ensure its integrity.

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1 Introduction

1.1 The Electoral Commission is the independent body which oversees elections and regulates political finance in the UK. We undertake the collection and analysis of electoral data after all elections and referendums.

1.2 This report provides analysis on participation in and the administration of the UK Parliamentary general election (UKPGE) held on 8 June 2017. For this, data was collected from Returning Officers and Electoral Registration Officers across Great Britain and the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland (EONI). This comprised the Declaration of Result of Poll, the statutory Form K 'Statement as to Postal Ballot Papers' and an additional data form, specified by the Commission, which included data relating to electoral registration, turnout, absent voting and rejected ballots.

1.3 The election resulted in a hung parliament, with no party winning an overall majority. The Conservatives won 317 seats (42.2% of votes) compared with 262 seats (40.0% of votes) for Labour, 35 seats for the SNP (3.1% of votes), 12 seats (7.4% of votes) for The Liberal Democrats and 10 seats (0.9% of votes) for The DUP.

Table 1.1: Summary

	Electorate	Postal voters	Turnout	Postal vote turnout	In-person turnout	Rejected ballots	Postal votes rejected
England	39.3 m	18.2%	69.3%	85.3%	66.2%	0.2%	2.4%
South East	6.5 m	17.8%	71.4%	85.5%	68.7%	0.3%	2.0%
W Midlands	4.1 m	15.0%	67.1%	86.0%	64.4%	0.3%	3.7%
North West	5.3 m	19.5%	68.0%	84.3%	64.6%	0.2%	2.7%
E Midlands	3.4 m	18.2%	69.4%	86.6%	66.0%	0.2%	2.5%
London	5.5 m	16.7%	70.2%	83.0%	68.1%	0.3%	2.4%
Y & H	3.9 m	19.3%	66.5%	85.8%	62.4%	0.2%	2.4%
East	4.4 m	17.1%	69.9%	85.8%	67.0%	0.2%	1.9%
South West	4.2 m	18.9%	72.1%	86.9%	69.0%	0.2%	2.2%
North East	1.9 m	26.6%	66.1%	84.9%	60.0%	0.2%	2.2%
Scotland	4.0 m	19.4%	66.8%	82.9%	63.3%	0.1%	2.0%
Wales	2.3 m	19.4%	68.7%	84.4%	65.3%	0.2%	2.2%
NI	1.2 m	1.9%	65.6%	89.0%	65.2%	0.4%	4.0%
UK	46.8 m	18.0%	69.0%	85.1%	65.9%	0.2%	2.4%

2 Electorate

2.1 The election gave 46.8 million registered electors the opportunity to vote. Despite a small decrease (2.7%) in Scotland from the 2015 UK general election, this was the largest ever electorate for a UK-wide poll.

Table 2.1: Electorate, 2010 - 2017

	2010	2015	% change 2010-15	2017	% change 2015-17
England	38.3 m	38.7 m	1.1%	39.3 m	1.4%
Scotland	3.9 m	4.1 m	6.1%	4.0 m	-2.7%
Wales	2.3 m	2.3 m	0.7%	2.3 m	0.8%
Northern Ireland	1.2 m	1.2 m	5.8%	1.2 m	0.5%
UK	45.6 m	46.4 m	1.7%	46.8 m	1.0%

2.2 Across the UK, an estimated 1.3 million electors (2.7% of the electorate) were added to the electoral register during the weeks leading up to the election.¹

2.3 Across Great Britain, an estimated 2.4 million applications to register were received in the weeks leading up to the election. More than a third (36.9%) of these were recorded as duplicates² and an estimated 226,565 individuals applied to register after the registration deadline.

2.4 Returning Officers reported that approximately 10,500 individuals tried to vote on election day despite not being registered. This data is inconsistently reported and we did not receive a complete data return from all constituencies.³

Overseas voters

2.5 Across Great Britain, there were approximately 285,000 registered overseas voters (0.6% of the electorate). This ranged from 0.1% in 20 constituencies to 6.0% in two London constituencies (Dulwich and West Norwood, and Streatham).⁴

¹ Data provided for 63.5% of electoral register entries in GB capturing additions between the second and third notices of alteration. NI estimate based on data provided for 3 May – 1 June.

² Data provided for 62.2% of electoral register entries in GB capturing applications between the second and third notices of alteration.

³ Data received from 449 constituencies across the UK.

⁴ Data received from 612 constituencies across Great Britain.

Table 2.2: Overseas voters

Region	Overseas voters	% of electorate
England	260,987	0.7%
South East	56,208	0.9%
West Midlands	17,162	0.4%
North West	24,916	0.5%
East Midlands	18,269	0.5%
London	60,386	1.1%
Yorkshire & Humber	17,156	0.4%
Eastern	28,218	0.6%
South West	31,182	0.7%
North East	7,490	0.4%
Scotland	15,731	0.4%
Wales	8,480	0.4%
Great Britain	285,198	0.6%

3 Turnout

3.1 The measure of turnout referred to in this report, 'ballot box turnout', includes all valid votes cast ('valid vote turnout') and votes rejected at the count. Total turnout refers to valid votes cast, votes rejected at the count, and those rejected at the postal ballot verification stage before the count.

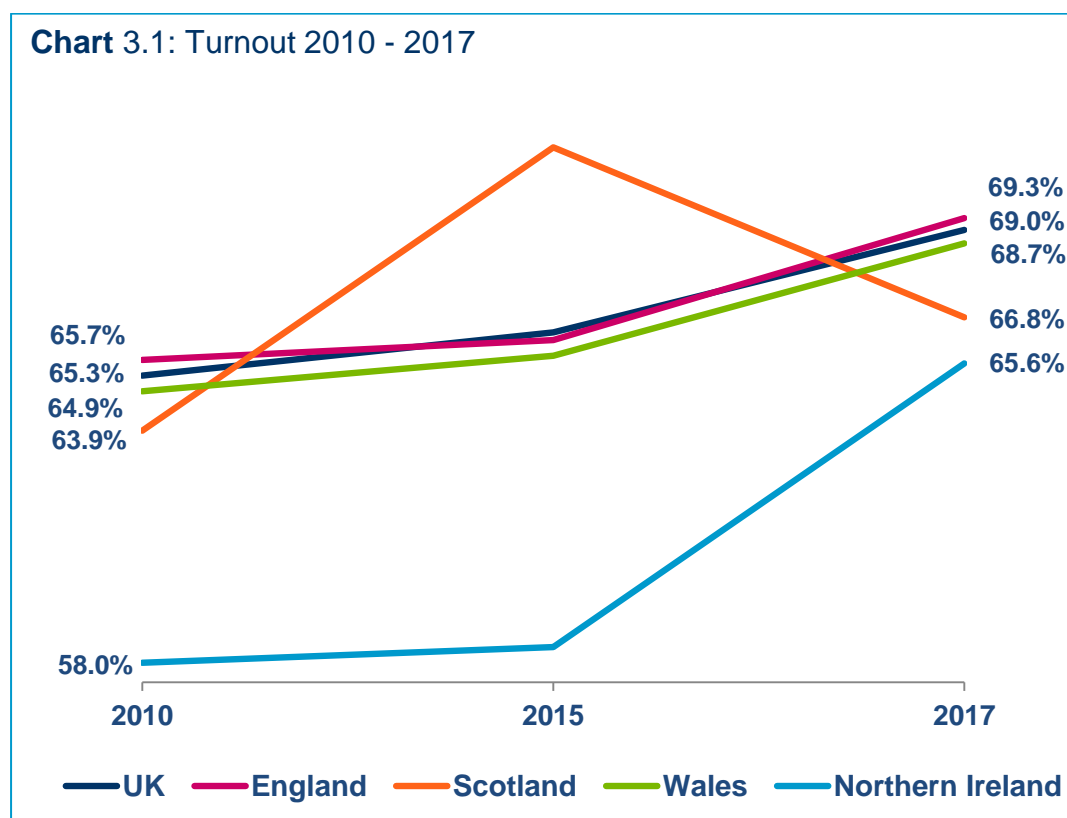
3.2 Table 3.1 confirms that only a small fraction of votes cast are not allocated to candidates standing for election. This figure has decreased slightly from 2015 and 2010.

Table 3.1: Turnout

	Electorate	Valid vote turnout	Ballot box turnout	Total turnout	Difference valid vote – total (pp)
2017					
UK	46.8 m	68.8%	69.0%	69.3%	0.5
England	39.3 m	69.1%	69.3%	69.7%	0.5
Scotland	4.0 m	66.7%	66.8%	67.1%	0.4
Wales	2.3 m	68.5%	68.7%	69.0%	0.5
NI	1.2 m	65.4%	65.6%	65.7%	0.5
2015					
UK	46.4 m	66.2%	66.4%	66.9%	0.7
England	38.7 m	66.0%	66.2%	66.7%	0.7

Scotland	4.1 m	71.0%	71.1%	71.5%	0.5
Wales	2.3 m	65.7%	65.8%	66.3%	0.6
NI	1.2 m	58.1%	58.4%	58.5%	0.4
2010					
UK	45.6 m	65.1%	65.3%	65.8%	0.7

3.3 Ballot box turnout across the UK was 69.0%, which is higher than turnout at the 2015 and 2010 elections.



3.4 At a constituency level, turnout ranged from 53.5% in Glasgow North East to 79.9% in Twickenham. The largest increase from 2015 was in Foyle, where turnout increased by 12.0%.

Table 3.2: Constituencies with lowest and highest turnout

Lowest turnout	
Glasgow North East	53.5%
Leeds Central	53.8%
Glasgow East	55.0%
West Bromwich West	55.2%
Manchester Central	55.6%
Highest turnout	
St Albans	79.3%
Winchester	79.3%

Oxford West and Abingdon	79.5%
Richmond Park	79.5%
Twickenham	79.9%

Rejected ballot papers

3.5 The proportion of ballots rejected at counts was 0.2%. This compares with 0.3% in 2015.

Table 3.3: Rejected ballots at the count, 2015 - 2017

	2015	2017	Change (pp)
England	0.4%	0.2%	-0.1
Scotland	0.1%	0.1%	0.0
Wales	0.2%	0.2%	0.0
NI	0.7%	0.4%	-0.3
UK	0.3%	0.2%	-0.1

3.6 The highest level of rejected ballots was in Northern Ireland (0.4%) and the lowest in Scotland (0.1%). At a constituency level, 81 constituencies rejected 0.1% of ballots. As was the case in 2015, the highest rejection rate was seen in the seat of the Speaker of the House of Commons, Buckingham, where 3.6% of ballots were rejected.

3.7 Across the UK, the majority of rejected ballots (71.9%) were rejected due to being unmarked or wholly void for uncertainty. Almost a quarter (24.9%) were rejected due to voting for more than one candidate.

Table 3.4: Reasons for rejected ballots, 2017

	No official mark	Voting more than once	Writing or mark by which the voter could be identified	Unmarked or wholly void for uncertainty	Rejected in part
England	0.9%	24.0%	1.8%	72.8%	0.5%
Scotland	0.1%	21.7%	1.0%	77.3%	0.0%
Wales	0.1%	25.3%	1.9%	72.7%	0.0%
NI	0.6%	50.0%	4.3%	45.1%	0.0%
UK	0.8%	24.9%	1.9%	71.9%	0.4%

4 Postal voting

4.1 The total number of postal votes issued for the general election was 8.4 million, representing 18.0% of all electors. This compares with 16.4% in 2015 and 15.3% in 2010.

4.2 At a constituency level, postal voters ranged from 1.0% in Belfast West to 44.3% in Newcastle upon Tyne North.

4.3 As was the case in 2015, the biggest increase from the previous election was in Scotland, where postal voting increased by 1.8pp from 17.6% to 19.4%. Postal voting remains much less common in Northern Ireland (1.9%) where different rules are in force.

Table 4.1: Postal voting 2015 - 2017

	2015	2017	Change (pp)
England	16.7%	18.2%	1.5%
Scotland	17.6%	19.4%	1.8%
Wales	17.7%	19.4%	1.7%
NI	1.4%	1.9%	0.5%
UK	16.4%	18.0%	1.6%

4.4 The proportion of postal voters returning their ballot papers always exceeds the turnout among 'in person' voters: this year, 85.1% postal electors used their postal vote compared with 65.9% who turned up to vote in person.

4.5 Postal votes accounted for 21.6% of all votes included at the count. This compares with 20.5% in 2015 and 18.8% in 2009.

Table 4.2: Postal vote vs in-person turnout⁵

	Postal vote turnout	In-person turnout
2017	85.1%	65.9%
2015	85.8%	63.2%
2010	83.2%	62.6%

⁵ See Appendix A, 6.6

Rejected postal ballots

4.6 Postal voting packs (PV) require voters to provide their signature and date of birth (DOB). These identifiers are then matched against those provided at the time of application. If the signature or date of birth is missing or does not match, the postal vote is rejected and is not included at the count.

4.7 Since 2014, Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) have been required to notify electors if their postal vote has been rejected and give the reason(s) for rejection. They can also request the elector to provide an up-to-date signature.

Table 4.3: Rejected postal ballots

	Rejected ballots as % of envelopes returned
2017	2.4%
2015	3.3%
2010	3.8%

4.8 The rate of rejection of postal votes has decreased to 2.4% from 3.3% in 2015 and 3.8% in 2010. This trend was consistent across the UK, ranging from a decrease of 0.9 percentage points in England and Scotland to a decrease of 1.8 percentage points in Northern Ireland. This trend mirrors decreases across local elections in 2017 and suggests that the new policy may be having a positive impact.

4.9 Almost half (48.5%) of all rejected ballots are rejected due to mismatched information. In a third of cases (33.2%), postal ballots were rejected because voters returned their postal voting envelopes but failed to include either the ballot paper itself or the verification statement or both.

Table 4.4: Reasons for postal vote statement rejection

		2015	2017	Change (pp)
Missing information	Signature	5.5%	5.4%	-0.1
	DoB	4.4%	5.0%	0.6
	Both	10.7%	7.9%	-2.8
Mismatched information	Signature	25.0%	19.9%	-5.1
	DoB	20.4%	21.3%	1.0
	Both	9.0%	7.3%	-1.7
Missing forms	Ballot paper	10.1%	24.0%	13.9
	PV statement	14.9%	9.2%	-5.7

4.10 It is worth noting that these percentages represent very small numbers of postal votes. For example, although 48.5% of rejected postal votes were

rejected due to mismatched information, this represents 1.2% of covering envelopes received and 0.3% of all votes cast. The vast majority of postal voters did correctly file their returns.

5 Proxies and waivers

5.1 A total of 283,928 electors appointed a proxy (0.6% of the electorate). This compares with 0.3% in 2015.

5.2 The number of emergency proxies issued across Great Britain was 14,096. This is considerably higher than in 2015 when 8,901 emergencies were issued.

5.3 A concession granted under the terms of the Electoral Administration Act 2006 was that postal electors in Great Britain 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.

5.4 In 2017, 51,452 waivers were granted, representing 0.1% of the electorate. This is consistent with 2015. At a constituency level, the proportion of waivers granted ranged 0.01% in four constituencies in England,⁶ to 0.7% in Bassetlaw.

6 Appendix A

6.1 There remain inconsistencies in the ways in which local authorities record and report information.

6.2 We continue to notice differences in the coding of information by different electoral management software. For example, customers of one electoral management software supplier consistently report a higher proportion of 'mismatching' than others.

6.3 Inconsistencies relating to the reasons for and total number of postal vote rejections on the Form K appear to result from the potential for differences in interpretation and treatment. For example, in the treatment of the numbers of covering envelopes and ballot papers returned, covering envelopes may be sent in without the A envelope or postal voting statement enclosed, while the missing document may or may not be sent in a separate covering envelope later, or multiple ballots may be returned in one envelope.

⁶ Hornsey and Wood Green, South West Hertfordshire, Tottenham, and York Central

6.4 When local authorities are contacted about such anomalies they are often unable to provide revised figures or clarify why the data were coded in that way. In practice, we use a calculation of field B6 minus field C18 as a surrogate for the total number of postal votes rejected regardless of whether or not it is the same as recorded in field C19.

6.5 The different breakdown of reasons for rejection collected on the additional data form does not always match this B6 minus C18 calculation. However, the discrepancies seem less severe and the categories have the advantage of being embedded in software and of having greater ‘common sense’ meaning. It would seem sensible to consider replacing fields B15-17 on Form K with three other aggregated categories: rejections for mismatching; rejections for missing identifier information; rejections for absent documentation. As it is, field B15 is largely redundant given that almost all authorities now verify 100% of postal vote returns.

6.6 There is no field that captures the number of postal voting statements received by the Returning Officer or at a polling station before the close of poll. In practice, we use field B6, ‘Number of covering envelopes received by the Returning Officer or at a polling station before the close of poll’ as a surrogate but we know that, as mentioned, electors can return multiple postal ballots in one envelope or return envelopes without any ballots.

7 Appendix B

Please fill out one Form K for every constituency
Form K: STATEMENT AS TO POSTAL BALLOT PAPERS
REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE ACTS
Parliamentary Election

Constituency:
Date of Poll:

A. Issue of postal ballot papers
1. Total number of postal ballot papers issued under regulation 71
2. Total number of postal ballot papers issued under regulation 77 (spoilt and returned for cancellation), regulation 78 (lost or not received) and regulation 78A (cancelled due to change of address)
3. Total number of postal ballot papers cancelled under regulation 86A (where the first ballot paper was cancelled and retrieved)
4. Total number of postal ballot papers issued (1 to 3)
5. Total number of ballot papers cancelled under regulation 78A

B (1). Receipt of and replacement postal ballot papers

6. Number of covering envelopes received by the Returning Officer or at a polling station before the close of poll (excluding any undelivered or returned under regulation 77(1) (spoilt), regulation 78(1) (lost) and regulation 86A (cancelled ballot papers))

7. Number of covering envelopes received by the returning officer after the close of poll, excluding any returned as undelivered

8. Number of postal ballot papers returned spoilt for cancellation in time for another ballot paper to be issued

9. Number of postal ballot papers identified as lost or not received in time for another ballot paper to be issued

10. Number of ballot papers cancelled and retrieved in time for another ballot paper to be issued

11. Number of postal ballot papers returned as spoilt too late for another ballot paper to be issued

12. Number of covering envelopes returned as undelivered (up to the 25th day after the date of poll)

13. Number of covering envelopes not received by the Returning Officer (by the 25th day after the date of poll)

14. Total numbers 6 to 13 (this should be the same as that in 4 above)

B (2). Receipt of postal ballot papers – Personal Identifiers

15. Number of covering envelopes set aside for the verification of personal identifiers on postal voting statements

16. Number of postal voting statements subject to verification procedure rejected as not completed (excluding prior cancellations)

17. Number of postal voting statements rejected following verification procedures due to the personal identifiers on the postal voting statement not matching those in the personal identifiers record (excluding prior cancellations)

C. Count of postal ballot papers

18. Number of ballot papers returned by postal voters which were included in the count of ballot papers

19. Number of cases in which a covering envelope or its contents were marked "Rejected" (cancellations under regulations 77, 78, 78A and 86A are not rejections and should be included in items 2, 3, 5, 8, 9 and 10 above)

Date:

Signed:
Returning Officer

Authority:

Additional data form
1) How many proxies were appointed for these elections?
2) How many emergency proxies were appointed for these elections?
3) How many waivers were granted for these elections?
4) How many postal votes were rejected for:
a) Want of a signature
b) Want of a date of birth
c) Want of both
d) Mismatched signature
e) Mismatched DoB
f) Both mismatched
g) Ballot paper unreturned
h) Postal voting statement unreturned
5) What was the total number of polling stations used?
6) How many covering envelopes were returned on polling day before 10pm?
7) How many covering envelopes were returned on the day after polling day before 10pm?
8) Total number of new electors added to the register via the first interim notice of alteration (11.05.17).
9) Total number of new electors added to the register via the second and final notices of alteration.
10) Total number of applications to register received after the registration deadline (22.05.17).
11) Total number of applications received in time to be processed for the first interim notice of alteration (02.05.17)
12) Total number of duplicate applications received in time to be processed for the first interim notice of alteration (02.05.17).
13) Total number of applications received between the last date for applications for the first interim notice of alteration (02.05.17) and last date for applications for the final notice of alteration (22.05.17)
14) Total number of duplicate applications received between the last date for applications for the first notice of alteration (02.05.17) and last date for applications for the final notice of alteration (22.05.17)
15) How many people tried to vote on polling day and were found not to be registered?