# Accuracy and completeness of the electoral registers

We run accuracy and completeness studies to measure the quality of the electoral registers, and assess how this changes in response to legislative developments and administrative and population changes.

The results of this study on the December 2022 registers finds that levels of completeness are broadly stable across the UK with the notable exceptions of Northern Ireland which has seen a significant increase in registration levels since 2018 and, to a lesser extent, Wales where we also see a positive change. The accuracy of the registers is also stable, again with the exception of Northern Ireland where there has been an improvement.

The changes in Northern Ireland bring levels of accuracy and completeness broadly into line with England, Scotland and Wales; both are at the highest levels we have recorded through these research studies. These improvements are the direct result of the recent 2021 canvass in Northern Ireland, something we also saw following the previous canvass in 2013. However, in our earlier studies we have seen declines between canvasses when the continuous registration system is operating.

In Great Britain, both accuracy and completeness are largely stable. The annual canvass process was reformed in 2019 by the UK, Scottish and Welsh governments with the aim of reducing the burden on Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) while maintaining levels of accuracy and completeness. There is no evidence of any significant negative impact on either measure as a result of canvass reform but there has also been no significant improvement.

Across the UK, potentially as many as 8 million people are not correctly registered at their current address (the research estimated a range of around 7-8 million people not correctly registered on the local government registers in December 2022). This matters because, while people can register ahead of each set of elections, it increases the chances that people will think they are registered when they are not and therefore be unable to vote come election day. Also, the more updates that are required to the registers in the short period before a poll, the more pressure is placed on the delivery of the service for voters.

The Commission plays an important part in addressing under-registration through our continuing public awareness campaigning work, which we update regularly to ensure we are in-line with the latest insights about both voter attitudes and the demographic patterns of under-registered groups.

However, there is little evidence to suggest that levels of accuracy and completeness are likely to significantly improve without major changes to the current electoral registration system. We have highlighted since 2019 how the UK's governments could support EROs to improve the accuracy and completeness of electoral registers – and improve efficiency to alleviate resource burdens, by introducing modern registration approaches to supplement the current annual canvass and year-round online registration.

These would involve utilising data from the many millions of transactions that voters already have with major public sector organisations. Depending on the quality and coverage of the data sets, and the specific data fields that are available, changes could support different levels and forms of modernisation, ranging from automatic registration to forms of integrated or assisted registration where voters would need to provide some information directly themselves.

We have set out a range of options for how specific data sources could be used to improve the accuracy and completeness of electoral registers, and in particular how registration rates of attainers and other young people, private renters and other recent home-movers could be improved. Further exploratory work would be needed to confirm the detailed feasibility and delivery implications of these options.

The electoral community needs a clear plan to ensure that electoral registration processes are modernised so that people are registered and able to exercise their right to vote. As part of this plan we recommend that the UK's governments should pass legislation to create clear legal gateways for government departments and public sector bodies to share data on potentially eligible individuals with EROs. They should also require relevant departments and other public bodies to work with EROs to facilitate electoral registration using their data. We also recommend that the UK Government should develop the existing Individual Electoral Registration digital service so that it can support secure and efficient data sharing between data source organisations and EROs, to enable modern registration processes to be delivered.

# Summary findings

The results of our most recent study across the UK show that for the local government registers[1]:

|  | 2022 | Change from 2018 |
|---|---|---|

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[1] The franchise for local elections in Scotland and Wales includes those aged 16 and 17 and, in those nations, residents aged 14 or 15 at the time of fieldwork (who turn 16 during the lifetime of the registers) are counted as attainers on the local government registers. However, legally, registration data on 14 and 15 year olds cannot be shared by Electoral Registration Officers so this group was excluded from the research and any measure of accuracy and completeness. All findings should be read with this in mind.

| Completeness | Great Britain | 86% | +3 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | England | 86% | +3 |
| | Scotland | 81% | -2 |
| | Wales | 87% | +6 |
| | Northern Ireland | 83% | +10 |
| Accuracy | Great Britain | 88% | -1 |
| | England | 88% | -1 |
| | Scotland | 88% | +2 |
| | Wales | 89% | 0 |
| | Northern Ireland | 86% | +6 |

The table above shows the percentage point change in accuracy and completeness compared to our last study in 2018. However, as these are survey results and subject to margins of error, not all of these changes are likely to be statistically significant.

Overall across Great Britain, the completeness of the local government registers has increased slightly, while accuracy has stayed the same. The increase in completeness in Wales is likely to be a real improvement since 2018 while the apparent decline in Scotland is within the margin of error and should be treated as no change. In Northern Ireland, there has been a notable improvement in both the accuracy and completeness of the registers.

Figures for the parliamentary registers are not shown but closely mirror the findings for the local government registers.

Underneath these headline figures, the accuracy and completeness of the registers is expected to vary considerably across local authority areas due to the demographics of the local population as well as registration practices.
Detailed results by part of the UK are available in factsheets:

- England

- Scotland

- Wales

- Northern Ireland

The completeness of the registers varies for different socio-demographic groups. These patterns are largely consistent with the findings of our previous studies. Across the UK, age and duration at address were the variables most strongly associated with differences in completeness. Older people and those who have lived at their address longer are more likely to be correctly registered.

Variations in accuracy are more difficult to analyse because characteristics can only be collected for current residents. However, as in previous studies, we see that households where the existing residents have lived there for less time are more likely to have inaccurate register entries linked to them.
You can also explore the data by headline demographics using our interactive tool.

## Quantifying accuracy and completeness

Using the percentage figures produced from this research, it is possible to estimate the number of people in the population who are not correctly registered, or who have inaccuracies in their register entries.

| | Not correctly registered | Inaccurate register entries |
|---|---|---|
| **United Kingdom** | 7,000,000 - 8,000,000 | |
| Great Britain | 6,700,000 - 7,800,000 | 5,100,000 - 6,000,000 |
| England | 5,600,000 - 6,600,000 | |
| Scotland | 650,000 - 1,000,000 | 390,000 - 640,000 |
| Wales | 275,000 - 400,000 | 200,000 - 300,000 |
| Northern Ireland | 230,000 - 280,000 | 170,000 - 210,000 |

These can only be estimates for the following reasons:

- Both the accuracy and completeness estimates are subject to **confidence intervals** (for example, +/- 1.1% for completeness in Great Britain and 1.9% in Northern Ireland; +/- 1% for accuracy in Great Britain and 1.5% for Northern Ireland). These margins will also apply to any quantification of the estimates.

- The overall population figures on which these are based, sourced from the Office for National Statistics, are mid-year estimates derived from the 2021 census. While these provide a reasonably accurate estimate of the UK population, they do not include nationality figures. As eligibility to vote differs by election and is determined by age and nationality, this means that it is not possible to definitively determine the size of the population which is eligible to vote.

## Trends in the quality of the registers

The Commission has measured the accuracy and completeness of the registers in England and Wales since 2001, and before that studies were carried out by other organisations following each census.

In Great Britain, the completeness of the registers was at its highest (around 95%) in the 1950s and 1960s and started declining in the 1980s. It decreased up to 2011 (82%) but has stabilised since, with successive studies findings levels between 83-86%.

In Northern Ireland, the completeness is now at its highest level since the Commission began measuring it in 2012.

**Completeness of local government electoral registers, Great Britain and Northern Ireland,**
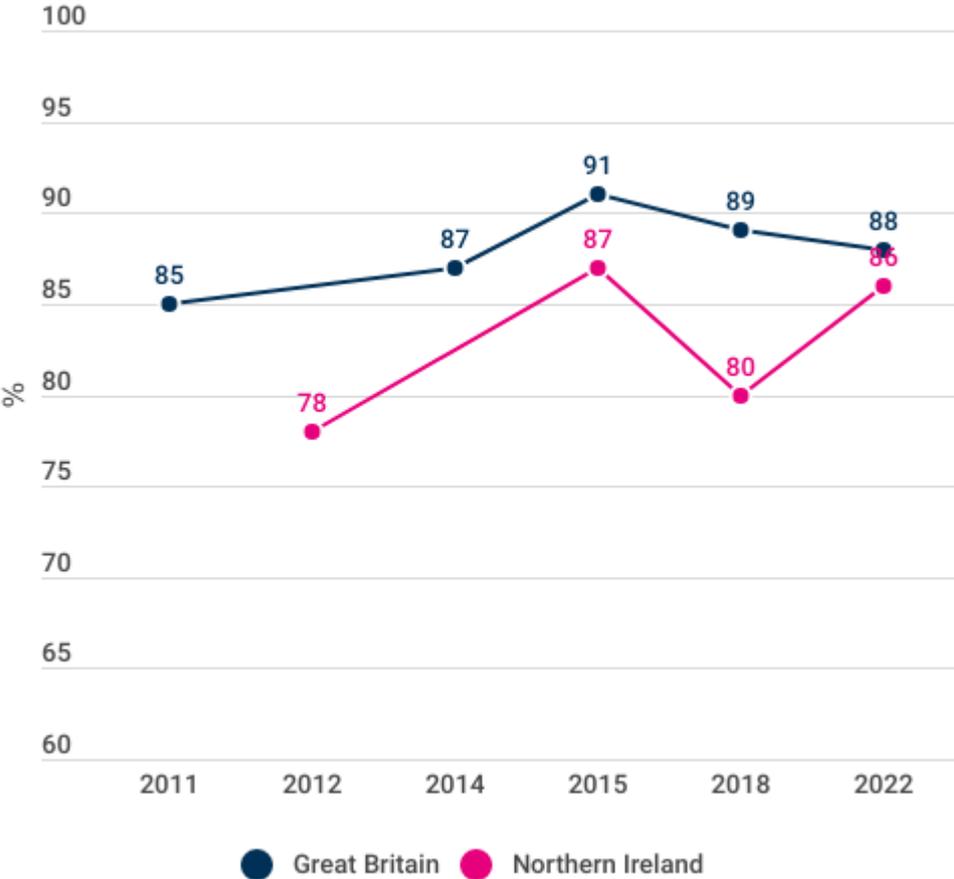
**2011 - 2022**
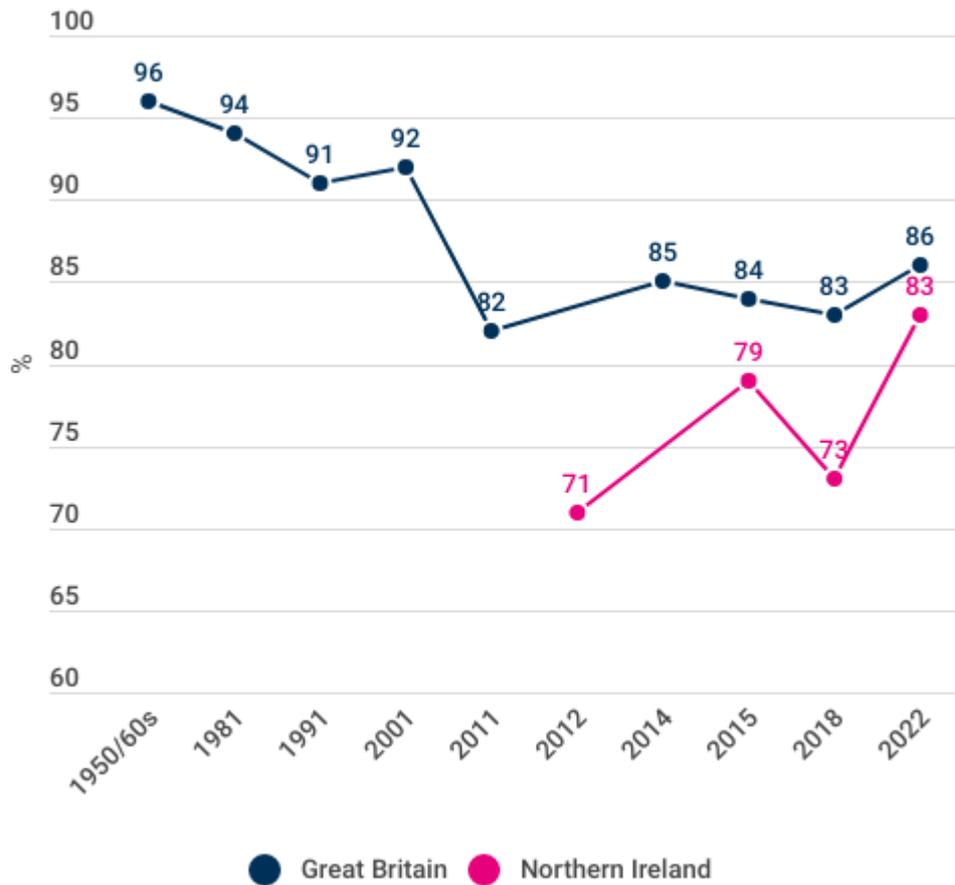


Accuracy has not been consistently measured over as long a period as completeness. In Great Britain levels have remained relatively stable over the last decade. In Northern Ireland the picture is more volatile, reflecting similar changes in completeness.

**Accuracy of local government electoral registers, Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 2011 –**

**2022**



Chart showing percentages from 2011 to 2022 for Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Great Britain: 2011: 85, 2014: 87, 2015: 91, 2018: 89, 2022: 88

Northern Ireland: 2012: 78, 2015: 87, 2018: 80, 2022: 86

Legend: ● Great Britain ● Northern Ireland

# Completeness

| | 2011 | 2012 | 2014 | 2015 | 2018 | 2022 | Change from 2018 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Great Britain** | 82% | - | 85% | 84% | 83% | 86% | +3 |
| England | - | - | - | 84% | 83% | 86% | +3 |
| Scotland | - | - | - | 85% | 83% | 81% | -2 |
| Wales | - | - | - | 84% | 81% | 87% | +6 |
| Northern Ireland | - | 71% | - | 79% | 73% | 83% | +10 |

The completeness of the registers varies for different socio-demographic groups. These patterns are largely consistent with the findings of our previous studies. Where reliable data is available for each part of the UK it is shown. In some cases the size of samples means it is not possible to show a demographic breakdown for each of England, Scotland Wales and Northern Ireland. In that case the most detailed breakdown available is included.

Additional analysis was carried out, for Great Britain as a whole and separately for Northern Ireland, to identify the demographic characteristics which are associated with higher or lower levels of accuracy and completeness (once other factors are controlled for), as well as the strength and statistical significance of these relationships.

In Great Britain, age and duration at address were the variables most strongly associated with differences in completeness. Tenure, ethnic group, social grade and the number of adults in the household were also significant factors, and there were also significant differences between urban and rural areas and between the regions of England which remain even after controlling for demographic factors.

In Northern Ireland, age and duration at address were also the main drivers of completeness. Although levels of completeness have similar socio-demographic patterns compared to Great Britain, when other factors are controlled for, no other demographics, beyond age and length of residence, were found to have a significant relationship with completeness.

## Population mobility

**Length of residence**

Previous research into the registers, which are property-based databases, has found a connection between home movement and completeness: greater mobility is associated with lower levels of completeness, while the longer an individual has been resident at their property, the more likely they are to appear on the electoral registers.

This pattern continues in this latest research, with completeness lowest among those who have lived at their address for less than a year and increasing by length of residence.

Since 2018 in Northern Ireland, completeness has increased most significantly for those who have lived at their address for less than five years. This is likely to be a direct result of the 2021 canvass.

**Completeness of local government registers by length of residence, 2018 vs 2022**

| | Great Britain | England | Scotland | Wales | Northern Ireland |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

| | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Up to one year | 36% | 39% | 36% | 40% | 32% | 33% | 45% | 53% | 11% | 20% |
| More than one, up to two years | 71% | 72% | 70% | 73% | 65% | 63% | | | 29% | 44% |
| More than two, up to five years | 84% | 82% | 83% | 82% | 84% | 81% | 83% | 83% | 61% | 76% |
| More than five, up to 10 years | 90% | 91% | 90% | 92% | 91% | 83% | 83% | 86% | 78% | 82% |
| More than 10, up to 16 years | 88% | 92% | 88% | 92% | 95% | 89% | 88% | 91% | 80% | 92% |
| Over 16 years | 92% | 95% | 92% | 95% | 94% | 92% | 91% | 95% | 90% | 92% |

*Bases (unweighted): Great Britain 2018 8,699, Great Britain 2022 9,495, Northern Ireland 2018 1,713, Northern Ireland 2022 1,948*

## Demographic characteristics

**Age**

Levels of completeness continue to increase with age.

As in 2018, completeness is highest for those aged 65+. It also remains lowest for attainers aged 16-17. In Great Britain completeness for this group has dropped further from 45% in 2015, to 25% in 2018, to 16% in 2022. In Northern Ireland the level for attainer registration has increased, albeit from virtually zero in 2018 and to a lower level than in Great Britain.

Otherwise the pattern of completeness by age group has not changed dramatically since 2018.

**Completeness of local government registers by age group, 2018 v s 2022**

| | Great Britain | | England | | Scotland | | Wales | | Northern Ireland | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 |
| 16-17 | 25% | 16% | - | - | - | - | - | - | 0% | 12% |
| 18-19 | 66% | 60% | | | | | | | 31% | 45% |
| 20-24 | 68% | 67% | 72% | 70% | 68% | 68% | 66% | 79% | 61% | 76% |
| 25-34 | 74% | 74% | | | | | | | 50% | 69% |
| 35-44 | 82% | 84% | 83% | 84% | 78% | 76% | 78% | 82% | 70% | 83% |
| 45-54 | 90% | 91% | 90% | 91% | 91% | 88% | 85% | 90% | 81% | 87% |
| 55-64 | 90% | 94% | 90% | 94% | 95% | 93% | 92% | 91% | 85% | 90% |
| 65+ | 94% | 96% | 95% | 97% | 95% | 92% | 92% | 97% | 94% | 95% |

### Gender

In 2018, for Great Britain and Northern Ireland there was little or no difference in the likelihood that men and women would be correctly registered. In 2022, however, women were marginally more likely to be correctly registered than men. The differences in Scotland and Wales are not statistically significant.

| | Great Britain | | England | | Scotland | | Wales | | Northern Ireland | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **2018** | **2022** | **2018** | **2022** | **2018** | **2022** | **2018** | **2022** | **2018** | **2022** |
| **Male** | 83% | 85% | 82% | 85% | 85% | 82% | 80% | 86% | 72% | 81% |
| **Female** | 83% | 87% | 83% | 87% | 82% | 81% | 82% | 87% | 73% | 84% |

*Base (unweighted): Great Britain 2022 9,490, Northern Ireland 2022 1,947, Great Britain 2018 8,215, Northern Ireland 2018 1,447*

### Nationality

Findings corroborate previous research which show that registration rates are lower among eligible non-UK nationals than among UK or Irish nationals.

UK and Irish citizens continue to be the most likely to have complete electoral register entries. However, in Great Britain, EU citizens have seen an increase in their registration levels and are slightly more likely to be registered than Commonwealth citizens. Small base sizes do not allow for separate analyses of EU and Commonwealth citizens in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.

### Completeness of local government registers by nationality, 2015 vs 2018

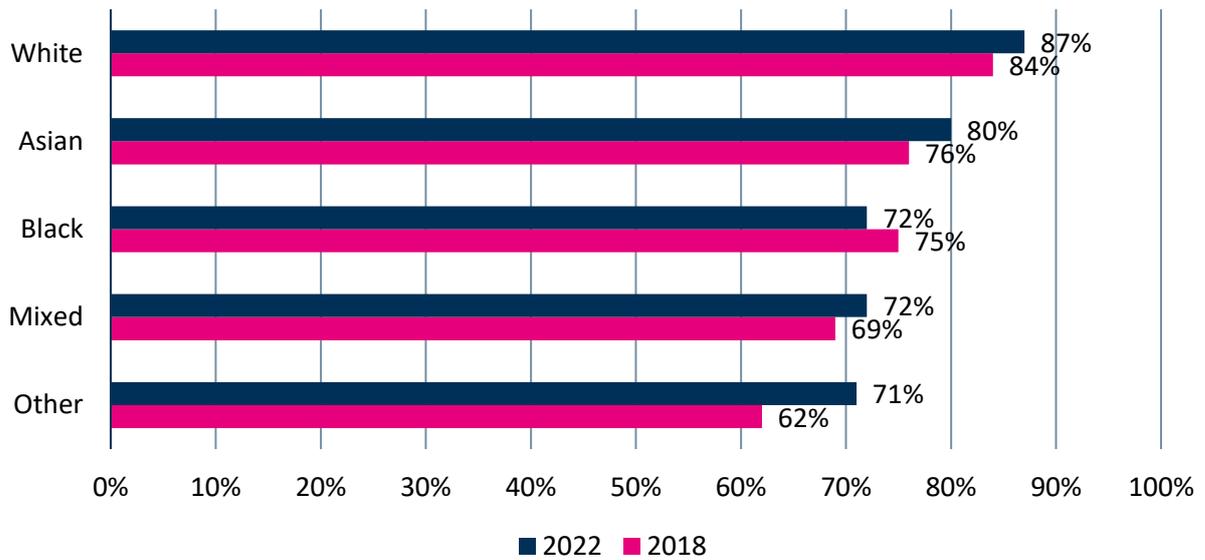| | Great Britain | | England | | Scotland | | Wales | | Northern Ireland | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **2018** | **2022** | **2018** | **2022** | **2018** | **2022** | **2018** | **2022** | **2018** | **2022** |
| United Kingdom/Irish | 86% | 87% | 85% | 88% | 85% | 84% | 82% | 88% | 74% | 84% |
| Non-UK/ROI | 55% | 68% | 55% | 68% | 58% | 44% | 58% | 70% | 45% | 41% |
| European Union | 54% | 70% | 54% | 71% | - | - | - | - | 42% | - |
| Commonwealth | 62% | 66% | 62% | 67% | - | - | - | - | 80% | - |

*Bases (unweighted): Great Britain 2018 8,186, Great Britain 2022 10,045, Northern Ireland 2018 1,437, Northern Ireland 2022 2,018*

### Ethnicity

As in previous studies, completeness in Great Britain is highest among those from a white ethnic background. Small base sizes mean we cannot analyse variation in levels of completeness for different ethnic groups in Northern Ireland.

Since 2018, completeness rates have increased for every group except those from Black ethnic backgrounds where it has fallen from 75% to 72%.

**Completeness of local government electoral registers in Great Britain by ethnicity, 2018 vs 2022**



*Base (unweighted): 2022 9,404, 2018 8,157*

**Disability status**

As in previous years, completeness is higher among those with a disability than among those without. Of those with a disability, completeness was highest among those with a physical condition and lowest among those with a mental disability.

**Completeness of local government registers by disability status, 2018 vs 2022**

|  | Great Britain | | Northern Ireland | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | *2018* | 2022 | *2018* | 2022 |
| Mental disability | 83% | 84% | 71% | 79% |
| Physical disability | 92% | 92% | 83% | 88% |
| Other type of disability | 93% | 89% | - | 84% |
| No disability | 82% | 85% | 72% | 82% |

*Bases (unweighted): Great Britain 2018 8,091, Great Britain 2022 9,447, Northern Ireland 2018 1,444, Northern Ireland 2022 1,935*

# Social and economic conditions

**Socio-economic group**

Levels of completeness are also affected by socio-economic status. With the exception of Scotland, completeness is highest among those in AB households, followed by those in C1 and C2 households. Completeness is lowest among those in DE households. The unusually high level of completeness in Scotland for C2 households is an outlier and may be a distortion caused by a relatively small base size.

**Completeness of local government registers by socio-economic group, 2018 vs 2022**

| | Great Britain | | England | | Scotland | | Wales | | Northern Ireland | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 |
| AB | 86% | 89% | 86% | 89% | 88% | 86% | 87% | 87% | 80% | 88% |
| C1 | 85% | 86% | 84% | 87% | 85% | 76% | 82% | 86% | 72% | 82% |
| C2 | 80% | 86% | 80% | 85% | 80% | 88% | 82% | 89% | 76% | 83% |
| DE | 80% | 81% | 79% | 81% | 78% | 78% | 76% | 85% | 63% | 78% |

*Base (unweighted): Great Britain 2022 9,472, Great Britain 2018 8,782, Norther Ireland 2022 1,942, Northern Ireland 2018 1,718*

## Tenure

In previous years, tenure has been strongly associated with levels of completeness and this relationship continues in 2022. Outright homeowners are more likely to be registered than people in other types of tenure.

Private renters again had the lowest level of completeness.

**Completeness of local government registers by tenure, 2018 vs 2022**

| | Great Britain | | England | | Scotland | | Wales | | Northern Ireland | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 |
| Owner occupier | 91% | 95% | 91% | 95% | 95% | 91% | 91% | 94% | 88% | 91% |
| Buying on mortgage/ shared ownership | 86% | 88% | 86% | 88% | 87% | 84% | 78% | 84% | 72% | 82% |
| Private renter | 58% | 65% | 59% | 66% | 49% | 45% | 60% | 73% | 38% | 46% |
| Local Authority renter | 83% | 79% | 83% | 79% | 87% | 84% | 86% | 73% | 64% | 78% |
| Housing Association renter | 82% | 79% | 84% | 80% | 73% | 72% | 76% | 82% | | |

*Bases (unweighted): Great Britain 2018 8,790, Great Britain 2022 9,259, Northern Ireland 2018 1,718, Northern Ireland 2022 1,930*

## Number of adults in the household

Levels of completeness are lower for larger households. In Great Britain overall levels of completeness for one or two person households are notably higher than three to five person households. The pattern is flatter in Northern Ireland with limited differences although the base size for households with six or more residents is very small.

**Completeness of local government electoral registers by number of adults in household, 2018 vs 2022**

| | Great Britain | England | Scotland | Wales | Northern Ireland |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

|  | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| One | 86% | 88% | 86% | 86% | 79% | 79% | 82% | 90% | 72% | 80% |
| Two | 84% | 88% | 84% | 89% | 84% | 83% | 83% | 87% | 73% | 83% |
| Three to five | 81% | 82% | 81% | 82% | 85% | 80% | 77% | 85% | 72% | 83% |
| Six or more | 78% | 79% | 79% | 80% | | | | | 96% | 81% |

*Base (unweighted): Great Britain 2022 9,495, Great Britain 2018 8,791, Northern Ireland 2022 1,948, Northern Ireland 2018 1,718*

# Geographic variables

**English regions**

There continues to be some variation in levels of completeness among the regions in England. However, the confidence intervals on the results mean that most differences are not statistically significant. The East Midlands does record significantly higher completeness levels compared to London.

**Completeness of local government electoral registers by English region 2018 vs 2022**

| Region | 2018 | 2022 |
|---|---|---|
| Eastern | 79% | 86% |
| East Midlands | 83% | 91% |
| London | 81% | 82% |
| North East | 83% | 88% |
| North West | 85% | 84% |
| South East | 84% | 88% |
| South West | 84% | 86% |
| West Midlands | 86% | 87% |
| Yorkshire and Humber | 87% | 86% |

**Urban/rural classification**

In both Great Britain as a whole and in Northern Ireland, completeness remains slightly higher in rural areas as compared with urban areas. There is little or no difference between the categories in Scotland and Wales.

**Completeness of local government electoral registers by urban/rural classification, 2018 vs 2022**

| | Great Britain | | England | | Scotland | | Wales | | Northern Ireland | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 |
| Urban | 83% | 85% | 83% | 86% | 84% | 88% | 81% | 87% | 70% | 81% |
| Rural | 85% | 89% | 84% | 90% | 91% | 88% | 81% | 86% | 76% | 85% |

*Bases (unweighted): Great Britain 9,474, Northern Ireland 1,943*

**Local authority type**

In England, among different types of local authority area, the most notable change in completeness has been among London boroughs with an increase from 76% in 2018 to 82% in 2022.

**Completeness of local government registers by local authority type, 2018 vs 2022**

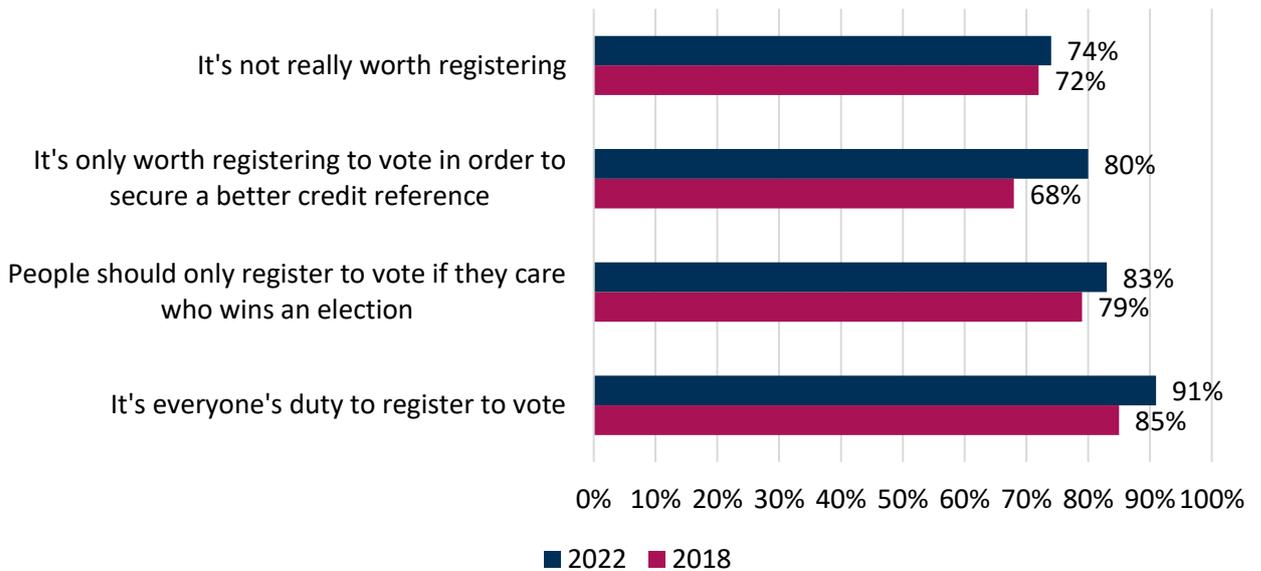|  | 2018 | 2022 |
|---|---|---|
| District | 84% | 89% |
| London borough | 76% | 82% |
| Metropolitan borough | 86% | 85% |
| Unitary authorities | 83% | 84% |
| Scottish unitary | 83% | 81% |
| Welsh unitary | 81% | 87% |
| Northern Ireland | 73% | 83% |

*Bases (unweighted): Great Britain, 9,495, Northern Ireland 1,943*

# Attitudinal and behavioural characteristics

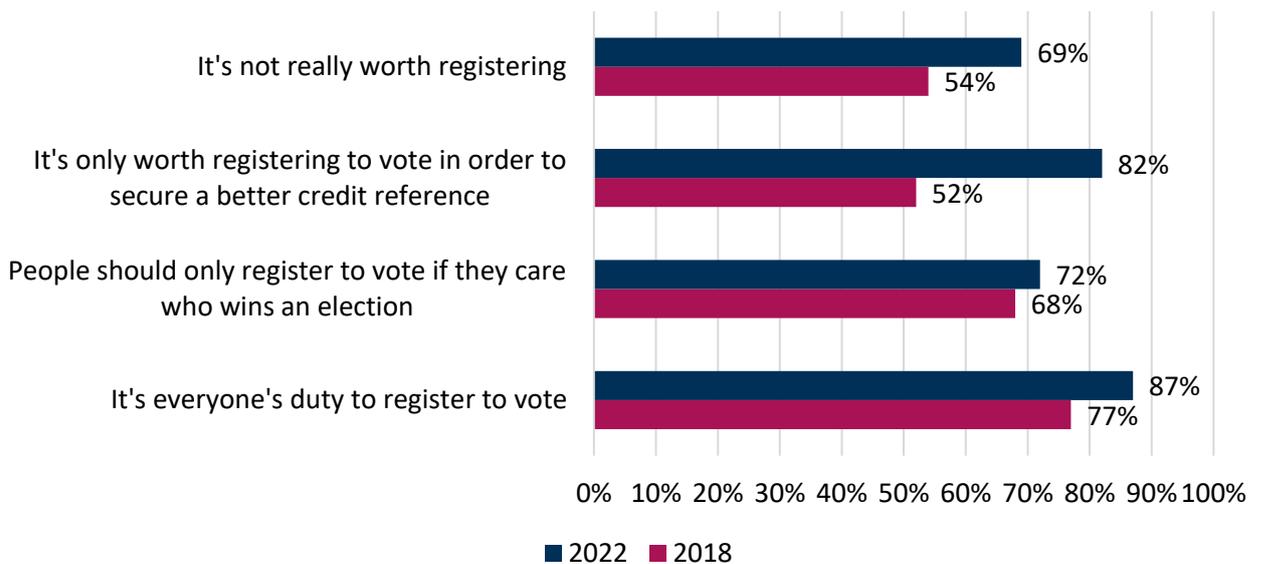**Attitudes towards registration and voting**

Completeness is lowest among people who believe that 'it is not really worth registering' and is highest among those who think it is 'everyone's duty to register to vote'.

**Local government register completeness in Great Britain by attitude towards registration, 2018 vs 2022**

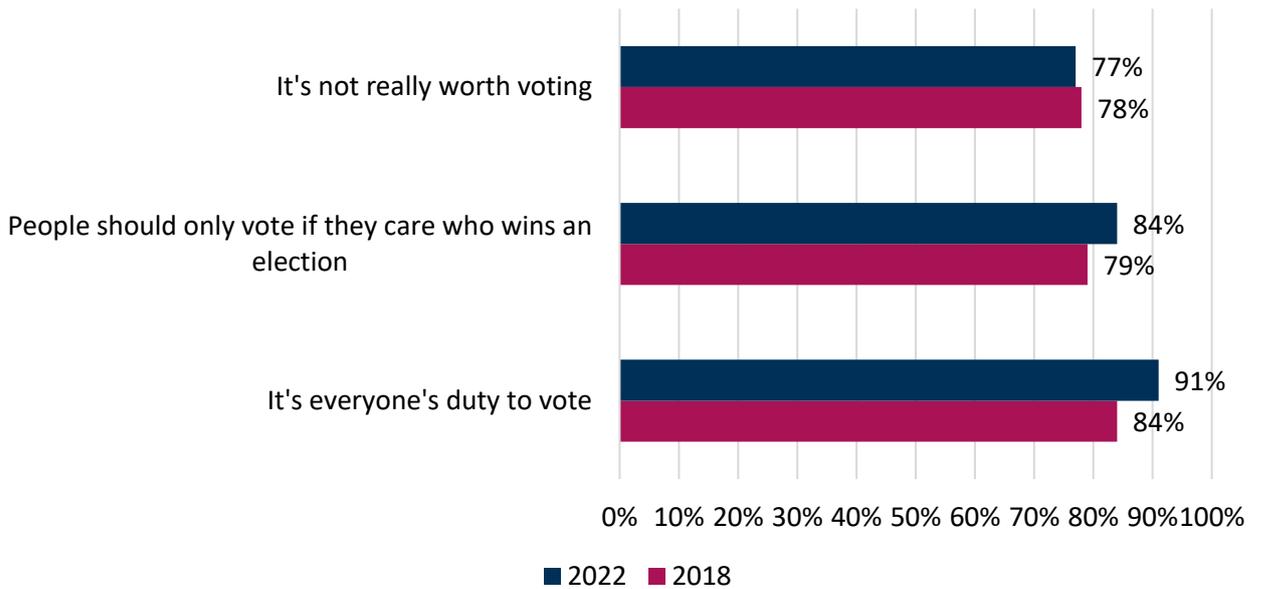| Attitude | 2022 | 2018 |
|---|---|---|
| It's not really worth registering | 74% | 72% |
| It's only worth registering to vote in order to secure a better credit reference | 80% | 68% |
| People should only register to vote if they care who wins an election | 83% | 79% |
| It's everyone's duty to register to vote | 91% | 85% |

*Base (unweighted): 2022, 4,692, 2018 4,679*

**Local government register completeness in Northern Ireland by attitude towards registration, 2018 and 2022**

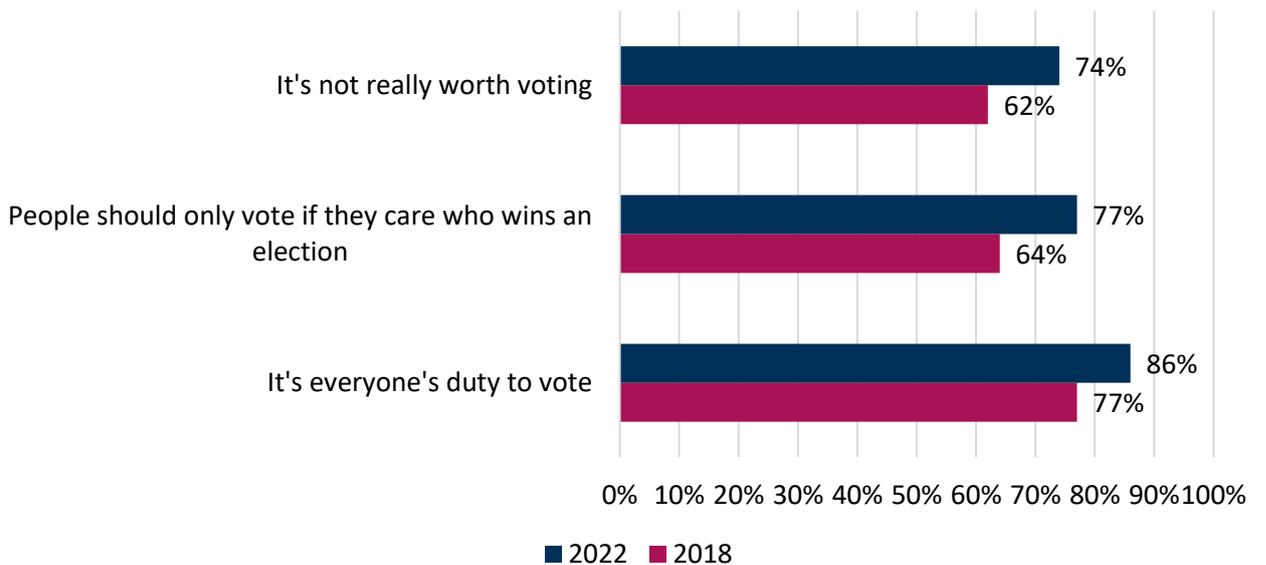| Attitude | 2022 | 2018 |
|---|---|---|
| It's not really worth registering | 69% | 54% |
| It's only worth registering to vote in order to secure a better credit reference | 82% | 52% |
| People should only register to vote if they care who wins an election | 72% | 68% |
| It's everyone's duty to register to vote | 87% | 77% |

*Base (unweighted): 2022 935, 2018 945*

Attitudes towards voting show a similar pattern, with completeness lowest among those who believe it is not really worth voting and highest among people who believe it is everyone's duty to vote (91%).

**Local government register completeness in Great Britain by attitude towards voting, 2018 vs 2022**

| Attitude | 2022 | 2018 |
|---|---|---|
| It's not really worth voting | 77% | 78% |
| People should only vote if they care who wins an election | 84% | 79% |
| It's everyone's duty to vote | 91% | 84% |

■ 2022  ■ 2018

*Base (unweighted): 2022 4,664, 2018 4,679*

**Local government register completeness in Northern Ireland by attitude towards voting, 2018 vs 2022**

| Attitude | 2022 | 2018 |
|---|---|---|
| It's not really worth voting | 74% | 62% |
| People should only vote if they care who wins an election | 77% | 64% |
| It's everyone's duty to vote | 86% | 77% |

■ 2022  ■ 2018

*Base (unweighted): 2022 919, 2018 945*

**Northern Ireland – political affiliation**

Additional questions were asked in Northern Ireland to explore how completeness here might vary according to citizens' political affiliation. Completeness is higher among than those who identify as Nationalist or Unionist than it is among those who do not hold any of the listed political identities (Unionist, Loyalist, Republican, Nationalist).

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**Local government register completeness in Northern Ireland by political affiliation, 2018 vs 2022**
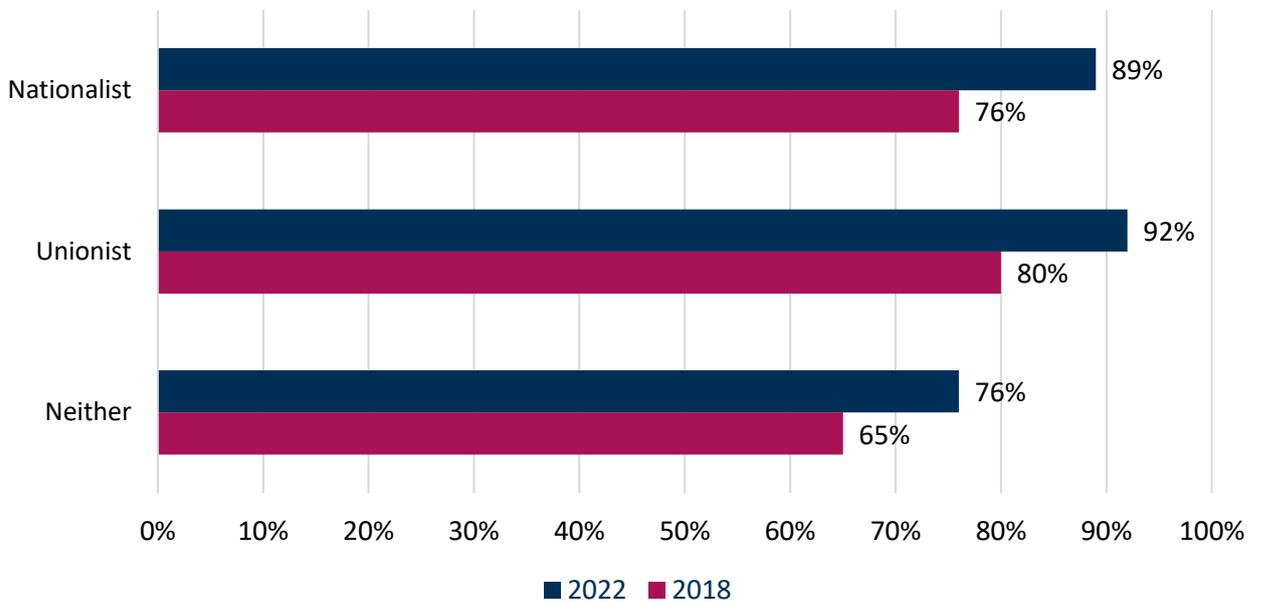


*Base (unweighted): 2022 899, 2018 945*

# Accuracy

| | 2011 | 2012 | 2014 | 2015 | 2018 | 2022 | Change from 2018 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Great Britain** | 85% | - | 87% | 91% | 89% | 88% | -1 |
| **England** | - | - | - | 90% | 89% | 88% | -1 |
| **Scotland** | - | - | - | 91% | 86% | 88% | +2 |
| **Wales** | - | - | - | 93% | 89% | 89% | 0 |
| **Northern Ireland** | - | 78% | - | 87% | 80% | 86% | +6 |

Accuracy has remained stable since 2018 in England, Scotland and Wales but has seen a notable increase in Northern Ireland, bringing it into line with the figures for Great Britain. Households where the current residents have lived at the address for less time, and those renting from a private landlord, continue to be more likely to have inaccurate register entries linked to them.

## Type of errors

In analysing the accuracy of the electoral registers, a number of different types of error can be identified. These errors are then categorised as either a 'major' or 'minor' error:
A minor error would not prevent someone from casting their vote (e.g. a misspelt name). A major error is any of the following:

- entries which refer to individuals who no longer live at the given address

- entries which may prevent an individual casting their vote at a polling station (e.g. an incorrect name)

- errors that would enable an ineligible person to vote (e.g. an incorrect date of birth for someone under the age of 18)

A breakdown of the types of errors used to calculate the accuracy of the registers can be found in the table below.

**Types of error on the December 2018 and December 2022 local government registers for Great Britain and Northern Ireland**

| | Great Britain | | England | | Scotland | | Wales | | Northern Ireland | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **2018** | **2022** | **2018** | **2022** | **2018** | **2022** | **2018** | **2022** | **2018** | **2022** |
| **Major errors total** | 11.2% | 11.7% | 8.7% | 11.7% | 10.9% | 12.1% | 8.8% | 10.8% | 20.1% | 14.1% |
| **Major errors – (a)** | | | | | | | | | | |
| No corresponding name taken at address | **10.4%** | **9.8%** | **7.7%** | **9.8%** | **10.0%** | **9.7%** | **8.2%** | **9.3%** | **18.7%** | **13.0%** |
| **Major errors – (b)** | **0.7%** | **1.1%** | **0.6%** | **1.2%** | **0.5%** | **0.8%** | **0.2%** | **0.6%** | **0.7%** | **0.7%** |
| First name and/or surname wrong on register | 0.4% | 0.7% | 0.3% | 0.7% | 0.2% | 0.5% | 0.2% | 0.3% | 0.5% | 0.5% |
| First name and/or surname missing on register | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| UK/Irish/ Commonwealth marker present | 0.3% | 0.5% | 0.3% | 0.5% | 0.3% | 0.4% | 0.0% | 0.3% | 0.2% | 0.2% |
| **Major errors – (c)** | **0.5%** | **0.7%** | **0.4%** | **0.7%** | **0.4%** | **1.6%** | **0.4%** | **0.9%** | **0.6%** | **0.2%** |
| Name on register corresponds to ineligible name on survey | 0.2% | 0.3% | 0.1% | 0.3% | 0.1% | 0.0% | 0.2% | 0.0% | 0.5% | 0.2% |
| Attainers - DOB missing or wrong | 0.1% | 0.2% | 0.1% | 0.1% | 0.2% | 1.6% | 0.0% | 0.8% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| EU citizens marker missing | 0.2% | 0.2% | 0.2% | 0.2% | 0.1% | 0.1% | 0.2% | 0.1% | 0.1% | 0.0% |
| **Accurate with minor errors** | **9.1%** | **8.8%** | **7.9%** | **8.9%** | **9.6%** | **14.3%** | **7.9%** | **9.0%** | **5.6%** | **7.6%** |
| First name /surname on register misspelled | 1.2% | 0.7% | 1.0% | 0.7% | 0.7% | 0.4% | 0.6% | 0.9% | 0.9% | 0.7% |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| First name /surname on register incomplete | 0.5% | 0.3% | 0.4% | 0.3% | 0.2% | 0.4% | 0.4% | 0.3% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Middle name missing from register | 6.4% | 6.6% | 4.6% | 6.1% | 7.1% | 12.2% | 6.1% | 6.6% | 2.8% | 6.0% |
| Middle name or initials misspelled or incomplete on register | 0.0% | 0.2% | 0.0% | 0.2% | 0.0% | 0.1% | 0.0% | 0.5% | 0.5% | 0.5% |
| Middle name or initial wrong on register | 0.1% | 0.2% | 0.1% | 0.2% | 0.0% | 0.3% | 0.0% | 0.2% | 0.5% | 0.1% |
| Person does not have a middle name but middle name on registers (respondents only) | 1.3% | 1.1% | 1.3% | 1.2% | 1.3% | 0.6% | 0.6% | 0.6% | 0.0% | 0.6% |
| Surname is/ assumed to be previous surname | 0.5% | 0.3% | 0.4% | 0.2% | 0.3% | 0.3% | 0.2% | 0.5% | 0.5% | 0.1% |
| First/middle/surname in different order on register | 0.1% | 0.0% | 0.1% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.1% |
| DoB earlier on register for attainer | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |

*Bases (unweighted): Great Britain 2018 9,155, Great Britain 2022 9,478, Northern Ireland 2018 1,783, Northern Ireland 2022 1,975*

# Demographic characteristics

Examining demographic variation of inaccuracies on the electoral registers is challenging. This is because we cannot record demographic details for an individual who is registered but no longer lives at the address. The analysis below takes into account household data where a resident was interviewed. However, this data still only presents a limited picture and so must be treated with caution.

**Tenure**

Accuracy by tenure follows a similar pattern to completeness. In Great Britain owner-occupier households are the most likely to have accurate register entries (96%). In Northern Ireland, 89% of those who own their home outright have accurate register entries, as do 90% of those who have a mortgage or shared ownership.

**Accuracy of local government electoral registers by tenure**

| | Great Britain | | England | | Scotland | | Wales | | Northern Ireland | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 |
| Owner occupier | 95% | 96% | 96% | 96% | 90% | 94% | 94% | 95% | 86% | 89% |
| Buying on mortgage/ shared ownership | 95% | 91% | 95% | 91% | 94% | 89% | 93% | 92% | 86% | 90% |
| Private renter | 81% | 77% | 81% | 78% | 79% | 58% | 82% | 78% | 61% | 75% |
| Local Authority renter | 92% | 88% | 92% | 87% | 91% | 94% | 91% | 88% | 82% | 83% |
| Housing Association renter | 91% | 90% | 91% | 90% | 86% | 91% | 91% | 85% | | |

*Bases (unweighted): Great Britain 8,816, Northern Ireland 1,881*

**Socio-economic group**

Social grade is also calculated at the household level, based on the occupation of the chief income earner. Whereas in 2018, there was a slight negative correlation between social grade and accuracy, in 2022 accuracy was almost entirely flat across the social grades in both Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

**Accuracy of local government registers by socio-economic group**

| | Great Britain | | England | | Scotland | | Wales | | Northern Ireland | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 | 2018 | 2022 |
| **AB** | 94% | 97% | 95% | 91% | 89% | 91% | 93% | 92% | 86% | 99% |
| **C1** | 93% | 98% | 93% | 91% | 93% | 87% | 96% | 93% | 85% | 98% |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **C2** | 93% | 98% | 94% | 93% | 90% | 90% | 95% | 93% | 82% | 98% |
| **DE** | 89% | 98% | 89% | 89% | 88% | 92% | 86% | 88% | 78% | 98% |

*Bases (unweighted): Great Britain 8,449, Northern Ireland 1,708*

## Length of time at address

Accuracy in both Great Britain and Northern Ireland follows the same pattern as completeness when looking at how long households have occupied their accommodation, with higher levels of inaccuracy at households with a more recent change in residency.

### Accuracy of local government registers by duration at address

| | Great Britain | | England | | Scotland | | Wales | | Northern Ireland | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **2018** | **2022** | **2018** | **2022** | **2018** | **2022** | **2018** | **2022** | **2018** | **2022** |
| Up to one year | 56% | 54% | 57% | 54% | 71% | 67% | 73% | 69% | 22% | 38% |
| More than one, up to two years | 93% | 84% | 93% | 84% | | | | | 58% | 85% |
| More than two, up to five years | 94% | 91% | 94% | 91% | 97% | 88% | 92% | 93% | 84% | 87% |
| More than five, up to 10 years | 96% | 94% | 96% | 94% | 98% | 91% | 93% | 91% | 90% | 91% |
| More than 10, up to 16 years | 95% | 94% | 95% | 94% | 92% | 94% | 96% | 92% | 90% | 93% |
| Over 16 years | 95% | 95% | 96% | 95% | 91% | 93% | 95% | 96% | 87% | 89% |

*Bases (unweighted): Great Britain 8,342, Northern Ireland 1,685*

# Looking ahead: addressing the challenges of accuracy and completeness

The evidence from this research shows that although there have been improvements in some areas since our previous analysis of the 2018 electoral registers, as many as 8 million people across the UK are still not correctly registered to vote.

This means they may not be able to vote when elections take place, and they are not counted at all when constituency boundaries are set. It also means that at the most critical time ahead of major elections, Electoral Registration Officers are required to use their limited resources and capacity to respond to applications that are needed so that registers can catch up with population movement and eligible voters are able to participate.

This evidence continues to highlight the need to develop new approaches to electoral registration that will bring sustained long-term improvements. This will require governments to bring forward legislation. We set out below the case for change, and explain our own proposals for how EROs can benefit from access to information from other public service organisations.

## The current system of electoral registration is not working well for voters or Electoral Registration Officers

We and many others – including Parliamentary committees, professional associations and academics – have repeatedly highlighted evidence that illustrates the impact of the current failing systems of electoral registration in the UK:

- Evidence from our programme of electoral registration research over more than a decade continues to show that up to 8 million people across the UK are either missing from the registers or incorrectly registered, meaning they are unable to have their say. We have consistently found that some specific groups of people are significantly less likely to be correctly registered, particularly young people, people who live in private rented accommodation, and those who have recently changed address. The number of people it is estimated are not correctly registered is more than the combined adult population of Scotland and Wales, and would be equivalent to more than 100 UK Parliament constituencies.

- Although changes to the annual canvass in Great Britain have helped to reduce the resource and capacity taken up through unnecessarily chasing households with no change, there is evidence from the most recent annual canvass in 2022 to suggest that it is a significantly less effective mechanism for identifying 16- and 17-year-olds who are newly eligible to register, compared with older people. There is no evidence from our most recent research on the 2022 registers that canvass reform has led to any significant improvement in the accuracy or completeness of the registers for Great Britain.

- Our analysis of the most recent canvass in Northern Ireland in 2021 highlighted that, in its current format, the canvass is not an efficient tool for helping to maintain an accurate and complete electoral register, both for the Chief Electoral Officer and for voters. Although the improvements in the accuracy and completeness of the 2022 registers highlighted in this research are the result of the 2021 canvass, we have previously seen subsequent declines between canvasses when the continuous registration system is operating. The registration system continues to struggle to capture population movement in the period between each canvass, and the canvass process itself requires the Electoral Office to contact and receive a response from all eligible electors, even if they were registered before the canvass and their details had not changed.

- Our recent research on attitudes to registration has highlighted that people continue to face both practical and knowledge barriers to registering to vote under the current system. These include misunderstanding about the registration process and incorrect assumptions about whether people are already registered, and low levels of urgency or priority to register to vote. Some people don't realise that they need to actively apply to register to vote, don't know how to apply, and don't view registration as a priority when they change address.

- An accessible online registration process means it is easy for people to apply to register, update or confirm their registration throughout the year, and to do so close to the deadline for an election. But, as we highlighted in our report on the 2019 UK Parliamentary general election, this means that large volumes of electoral registration activity are focused in the weeks leading up to major electoral events, which significantly increases risks to well-run elections.

## Levels of accuracy and completeness are unlikely to improve without significant changes to the registration system

Evidence from our programme of electoral registration research over more than a decade shows that a large number of people remain incorrectly registered. There is little evidence to suggest that levels of accuracy and completeness are likely to significantly improve without major changes to the current electoral registration system.

The introduction of online registration since 2014 (and since 2018 in Northern Ireland) has improved access and made it easier for people to register to vote ahead of specific electoral events, but there is no evidence that it has had a lasting significant positive impact on overall levels of accuracy or completeness. The most recent data from the 2022 registers shows no significant improvement in Great Britain in the proportion of people who are correctly registered, even if the decline in rates of accuracy and completeness identified in previous studies appears to have at least paused.

We have highlighted since 2019 feasibility studies which showed how the UK's governments could support EROs to improve accuracy and completeness of electoral registers – and improve efficiency to alleviate resource burdens – by giving them access to high-quality data from other public service organisations. This would allow EROs to take advantage of the many millions of transactions that voters already have with major public sector organisations, and could sit alongside and enhance existing annual canvass and year-round online registration activities.

The Welsh Government has already highlighted its intention to work with local authorities to design and pilot automatic voter registration for devolved elections, and we will continue to work with EROs and the Welsh Government to support further development of this important area of work.

## The electoral community needs a clear plan to modernise electoral registration processes

Changes to the way elections and electoral registers are run should be considered in consultation with the whole electoral community. The experiences of voters, electoral administrators, and political parties and campaigners are important considerations in building a registration system that works well for everyone, and to ensure all eligible voters can have their say at elections.

Developing specific detailed proposals to move towards more automatic or automated systems of electoral registration would need to involve a broad range of partners:

- Data source organisations (for example, the DVLA/DVA, HMRC or HMPO) would bring their detailed understanding of the data and transactions that they currently manage, and would

need reassurance that data sharing is operationally straightforward, secure and legally compliant.

- Technical partners, including electoral management software suppliers and the IER digital service which is managed by officials at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) supported by the Government Digital Service, would need to work together with the data source organisations to ensure the secure and efficient management of data and transfer to individual EROs.

- EROs themselves would need to consider any changes to their teams and processes, so that they are able to integrate automatic or automated registration alongside the existing annual canvass and year-round online registration.

- Governments would need to legislate to create the necessary legal gateways for data sharing by data source organisations, and to specify the powers and duties of EROs to determine registration applications created using automatic or automated processes.

- The Information Commissioner's Office would need to provide advice and guidance on how to manage information risks relating to data sharing.

Making electoral registration more joined-up with other public services and citizen transactions raises particularly important questions relating to data protection and cyber security. In its February 2023 written evidence to the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (LUHC) Committee inquiry on electoral registration, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities highlighted measures already put in place to improve the robustness and security of the IER digital service alongside further recommendations for improvements – for example, in relation to cyber incident reporting in the local government sector. Similar or equivalent protections would also be needed for any systems established to manage the provision and use of data for automatic or automated electoral registration processes.

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**Recommendations: Delivering modern registration processes**

The electoral community needs a clear plan to ensure that electoral registration processes are modernised so that people are registered and able to exercise their right to vote.

As part of this plan the UK, Scottish and Welsh governments should pass legislation that creates clear legal gateways for government departments and public sector bodies to share data on potentially eligible individuals with Electoral Registration Officers. This is needed to enable EROs to register them to vote directly, or to send them targeted invitations to register.

All three governments should require relevant departments and other public bodies to work with EROs to facilitate electoral registration using their data. A consistent approach between governments would ensure that changes are developed and delivered in a way which makes it as straightforward as possible for EROs and data source organisations, and ensures that voters are accurately included in the registers for all types of elections they are eligible to vote in.

The UK Government should develop the existing Individual Electoral Registration (IER) digital service so that it can support secure and efficient data sharing between data source organisations and EROs and their electoral management software systems, to enable modern registration processes to be delivered.

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## Case studies show how registration could be modernised

We have spoken to several UK Government departments, public bodies, universities and tenancy deposit schemes about the data they hold. We discussed whether and how data could be used to improve the accuracy and completeness of electoral registers. We particularly focused on how new approaches could improve registration rates for those groups of people who our research has

consistently shown are less likely to be registered correctly: attainers and other young people; people who live in private rented accommodation; and recent home-movers.

Depending on the quality and coverage of the data sets, and the specific data fields that are available, we have identified changes that could support different levels and forms of modernisation, ranging from automatic registration to forms of integrated or assisted registration where voters would still need to provide some information directly themselves.

The information that is currently required to register to vote includes the individual's name, address, date of birth, nationality and National Insurance number. An application must also state whether the voter wants to be included in the open register which is available to anyone who wants to buy a copy. Nationality information is required given the different franchises for different types of election, and in some cases – for example for Commonwealth citizens – applicants must also confirm that they have leave to enter or remain in the UK or that they don't require that leave. The National Insurance number is currently used as a way of verifying an individual's identity using Department for Work and Pensions records.

We have outlined below a range of options for new registration processes, which have been informed by our discussions with the above-mentioned departments and organisations. These case studies were not proposed by or formally agreed with the organisations involved.

One of the case studies – integrating electoral registration into the university student enrolment process – describes the current model operated by Cardiff University and Cardiff City Council to boost student registration levels. A further case study – the use of tenancy deposit scheme data to improve registration among private renters through signposting – is based on our discussions with representatives of the schemes, who have indicated their willingness to explore ways of taking this idea forward together with us. The other case studies, namely HM Passport Office, the Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency/Driver & Vehicle Agency and HM Revenue & Customs, are more speculative and reflect our views as to what might work in practice.

Further exploratory work would be needed to confirm the feasibility and delivery implications of these options.

**Automatic registration**

Automatic registration means that a data source organisation would provide EROs with the names and addresses of people who meet the eligibility criteria for registration. Because of the specific information required to register to vote, it is likely that very few data sources would be able to support fully automatic registration. The case study below highlights how the information required to be provided by British citizens as part of the passport application process could meet these requirements.

The ERO would contact these people at their home address to inform them that they will be added to the register, giving them the opportunity to request to be registered as an anonymous elector if their safety would be at risk from being registered as an ordinary elector. There would also be an opportunity for anyone else living at the address to provide evidence that the person is not in fact eligible to be registered there.

Subject to any further evidence that the person was not eligible to register, the ERO would add them directly to the register.

The data source organisation could limit the information it provided to EROs to include only new or recently updated records. This would give EROs reassurance that the data was current and should reduce the risk of duplicating registration activity with people who have already applied to register.

A centralised data processing service, similar to the current IER digital service, could be used to simplify the process of transferring data between data source organisations and EROs. This could also be used to screen potential new electors against current electoral registers, to minimise duplicate registrations.

Automatic registration of voters is common around the world. The Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust published a report in 2020 called _Is it time for Automatic Voter Registration in the UK?_. According to the report, 40 countries considered to be liberal democracies have automatic registration. More recent international comparative research has shown that automatic registration not only increases the completeness of electoral registers, but also has a positive impact on accuracy.

According to the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), in Argentina, Austria, Chile, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Japan, Italy, Spain, and South Korea (among others), the national electoral register is extracted from the population/civil registry.

The Australian Electoral Commission operates the Federal Direct Enrolment and Update program. It uses trusted data from other government agencies to add some individuals to the electoral roll or to update their electoral registration. It writes to individuals to inform them of the addition or update.

In five American states, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures, when an individual applies for a driving licence and/or engages with another state agency, the data from the transaction is used to register them to vote. The voter receives a notification informing them that they will be registered unless they respond to it and decline the registration.

In Canada the National Register of Electors is updated using data from provincial and territorial drivers' licence, statistics and electoral agencies. Elections Nova Scotia updates the voters' list data from a variety of sources including the Registry of Motor Vehicles, the Nova Scotia Civic Address File and Elections Canada.

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**Automatic registration case study: using HM Passport Office data to improve registration among young people and recent home-movers**

HM Passport Office (HMPO) is an agency of the Home Office which issues passports to British citizens. HMPO carries out identity checks to verify an applicant's identity, including with the Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency. Passport data is already shared with around 80 government departments and public sector bodies to carry out around 25 million identity checks each year.

HMPO forecasts that it will receive around 7.4 million passport applications in the next year. These applications will cover the full range of age groups, including applications from young people aged 16 and over applying for adult passports, and people who have recently moved home.

When someone applies for a passport, they must provide their name, date of birth, evidence of British citizenship, and home address for delivery of the passport. Although HMPO does not collect National Insurance numbers from applicants, it does undertake rigorous checks to verify applicants' identities, which could provide a sufficient level of assurance for an electoral registration application (equivalent to the assurance currently provided by checking National Insurance numbers).

Once HMPO has verified the identity of an applicant, this data could be transferred to EROs to automatically register them to vote. To do this, the ERO would write to the individual, informing them that they are going to be placed on the register, giving them the opportunity to correct any mistakes and to request to be registered anonymously if their safety would be at risk from being registered as an ordinary elector.

There would also be an opportunity for anyone else living at the address to provide evidence that the person is not eligible to be registered there.

Sharing HMPO data for electoral registration would require identifying an appropriate legal

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gateway. Legislative changes are likely to be required to create a gateway.

**Integrated registration applications**

An integrated registration model means that registering to vote would be integrated within another public service transaction. At the end of those transactions, people would be asked whether they also want to register to vote.

If the individual confirms that they do, relevant data would be transferred to an electoral registration application. The individual would be provided with information about eligibility to vote and asked to confirm their eligibility in the same way they are currently required to when applying using the online electoral registration service. They would also provide any missing data, such as National Insurance number and nationality.

Once complete, this data would be transferred to the relevant ERO via the IER digital service. The ERO would process the application, add them to the register and write to confirm their addition.

As the individual would have recently updated their details as part of that public service transaction and provided the remaining data required for registration, EROs could be sure that their data, in particular their address, was up to date.

A number of countries and territories integrate electoral registration into other public service transactions.

In Canada citizens can agree to share their data with Elections Canada on their federal income tax return. New citizens can agree to share their data with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada on their citizenship applications.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, in 17 American states and Washington DC, people are asked if they want to register when applying for a driving licence from the state's Department of Motor Vehicles and/or when interacting with another government agency. If they agree, their details are added to the state voter registration database.

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**Integrated registration case study: using university student enrolment to improve registration among young people**

Cardiff University has integrated an electoral registration module into its online process for enrolling students. Enrolment tasks open in September and students have until the third week of October to complete them, including the electoral registration task.

The university holds name, address, date of birth and nationality data about students. It has developed a coding system for rooms in its halls of residence to assist the Electoral Services Team at Cardiff City Council to match the addresses with the council's systems.

Students are asked if they want to register to vote. If they do, the university asks them to provide the additional data needed to complete the registration application. This includes their National Insurance number and whether they want to be on the open/full register.

Once the university has the data needed for registration applications, it sends it to the Electoral Services Team at Cardiff City Council, which registers the students. Over 8,000 students' details are sent to Cardiff City Council annually and around 90% of these students are registered each year. Once the information is sent to the Council, Cardiff University deletes from its student record system any data relating to this process that it does not use internally.

**Integrated registration case study: using the driving licence application or renewal process to improve registration among recent movers and young people**

The Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) is the executive agency responsible for issuing driving licences in Great Britain. The Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA) is the Northern Ireland Executive agency responsible for issuing driving licences in Northern Ireland.

Individuals interact with the agencies when they apply for a provisional driving licence, renew or reapply for their photocard driving licence at the end of the 10-year validity period, and when they move address. Both agencies hold name, address and date of birth data but not nationality data or National Insurance numbers.

DVLA receives around 1 million applications for provisional driving licences and around 4 million address change notifications each year. DVA processed just over 29,000 applications for provisional driving licences and around 26,000 name and address change notifications from April 2022 to March 2023.

An electoral registration prompt asking drivers if they want to register to vote could be integrated into these transactions. The data that DVLA or DVA already hold could be used to prepopulate an electoral registration application, with the driver filling in any missing data. The completed applications would then be sent to the relevant Electoral Registration Officer via the IER digital service, who would determine the application and register them. DVLA is currently developing an online account for new licences. A prompt could be integrated into users' accounts asking if they want to register to vote.

## Assisted registration

Assisted registration means that a data source organisation would provide EROs with the names and addresses of people who may be eligible to vote, taking into account relevant information about the qualification criteria. The ERO would then write to those individuals inviting them to register. The invitation would ask them to provide any missing information needed to complete their registration (such as their nationality or their national insurance number), and give them the opportunity to request to be registered as an anonymous elector.

As with automatic registration, transferring only recent transactional data to the specific EROs would ensure that the data is current. A centralised data processing service, similar to the current IER digital service, could be used to simplify the process of transferring data and to reduce the potential for large numbers of records being shared with EROs.

It is common around the world for public bodies to share data to assist with voter registration, as shown in the examples in the automatic registration section above.

Elections New Brunswick (ENB) in Canada receives information on a regular basis about name and address changes from drivers' licence information. ENB carries out automated and manual checks to attempt to match that data with information on the Register of Electors. If a match is not found, ENB sends the individual a certification form and return envelope. The individual must complete the certification to confirm they meet the eligibility requirements to register and return it to ENB. They are then added to the register.

**Assisted registration case study: using National Insurance data to improve registration of attainers**

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) holds data about children whose parents or carers have claimed child benefit and/or tax-free childcare/thirty free hours of childcare. This includes the child's name and date of birth. When a child reaches the age of 15 years and 9 months, HMRC issues a National Insurance number (NINO) to them which is sent in the post to their parent or carer's address. It issues around 700,000 each year.

HMRC does not keep a record of children's nationalities, and NINOs are issued regardless of nationality. HMRC does not have a record for every child in the UK as not every parent or carer makes a claim for child benefit or tax-free childcare/thirty free hours. HMRC is also dependent on claimants to keep their address details up-to-date.

Nonetheless, the name, address and date of birth of those young people issued with NINOs could be shared with EROs, who could then send an Invitation to Register to those young people, prepopulated with this data. They would be invited to provide their nationality information, sign the declaration and post the completed application to the ERO.

A further option would be to develop an online process for providing the missing information, with the individual scanning a QR code included in the Invitation to Register letter. This could provide immediate online access to a pre-populated application on the register to vote digital service, which could then be completed by the individual and processed electronically through the existing IER infrastructure.

Sharing a child's name, date of birth and NINO for electoral registration purposes would require the identification of an appropriate legal gateway and need to adhere to data protection legislation. It would require consideration and agreement by HMRC and the Department for Work and Pensions. It may also require legislative change to create a legal gateway for data sharing for this specific purpose.

## Signposting registration

Signposting registration means that an individual would be provided with information about registering to vote during a transaction with, or in a communication from, an organisation or public body.

This could include a prompt at the end of a transaction or in a communication directing the individual to the UK Government's Register to Vote website. The individual would then complete the usual steps in that process to apply to register and their data would be sent to the Electoral Registration Officer for their area via the IER Digital Service. This process of signposting could work in a number of scenarios – for example, at the end of a transaction when applying for a driving licence or a new passport, or when an individual is updating their details or in communication with a government department or agency.

Such an approach does not require legal change. It should therefore be explored now, even if the other innovations discussed above follow in the future.

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**Signposting registration case study: using tenancy deposit scheme data to improve registration among private renters**

Landlords in the private rented sector are required to protect tenants' deposits with a government approved tenancy deposit scheme. There are three authorised tenancy deposit schemes which operate in England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, protecting around 4.5 million deposits and representing around 6 million tenants. Around half of all deposits are protected through custodial schemes which hold the deposit for the duration of the tenancy. The balance of protected deposits are held and managed by the landlord or letting agent via insured-backed schemes and where schemes have far less interaction with the tenant.

The schemes communicate with tenants via email at the start of the tenancy to confirm that their deposit is protected, and then at various points throughout the tenancy, but mainly when the tenant is seeking to gain return of their deposit from the scheme (custodial scheme), or the scheme has unprotected the deposit (insured scheme). Prompts with information about

registering and a link to the Register to Vote website could be embedded into these communications, and on scheme websites or mobile apps.

All schemes have indicated that they are open to exploring ways in which they could work with the Commission to improve registration rates among private renters.