

Electoral statistics

Electoral statistics are annual counts of the number of people in the UK who are registered on electoral rolls and are therefore entitled to vote.

Contact:

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1 . Information and guidance on European and UK electoral statistics

Electoral statistics are produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and published for the UK and its constituent countries, local government areas and parliamentary constituencies. They provide annual counts of the number of people who are registered on electoral rolls for the two main classifications of voters, the “parliamentary electorate” and the “European and local government electorate”.

2 . What are electoral statistics?

Electoral statistics are annual counts of the number of people in the UK who are registered on electoral rolls and are therefore entitled to vote.

3 . What statistics are included in the latest release (16 April 2015)?

This [release](#) contains counts of people registered on the electoral roll in the U.K as at 1 December 2014 (or 2 March 2015 in Scotland).

The data included are:

- the total number of electors and attainers registered to vote in local government and European elections, by local government area (Table 1)
- the total number of electors and attainers registered to vote in Westminster parliamentary elections, by parliamentary constituency (Table 2) (The definition of an attainer can be found in the 'Definitions' section below)

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4 . What geographic areas are the latest electoral statistics available for?

The 2014 electoral statistics are provided for the parliamentary constituencies that came into effect at the May 2010 General Election and the local authority boundaries in force at the reference date.

5 . What boundaries are the tables for parliamentary electors based on?

Electoral data is usually collected on the boundaries that are in place for the reference year. For 1 December 2008, data was collected on both the old and the new constituency boundaries for England and Northern Ireland that came into effect at the General Election in May 2010. From 1 December 2009 onwards, data was only collected on the new boundaries.

The new parliamentary constituency boundaries for Wales came into effect at the ordinary election to the Assembly on 3 May 2007.

6 . What is included in the 'unformatted' data table?

The 'unformatted' data table contains the same information as presented in Tables 1 and 2, but in a simple format that can be easily analysed or imported into statistical software.

7 . Is a time-series of data available?

Annual electoral statistics are [available](#) from the ONS website from 1999 onwards. However, this is not a consistent time-series due to boundary changes in both parliamentary constituencies and local government areas that have taken place since that date.

8 . What date do the electoral statistics refer to?

Annual electoral statistics usually have a reference date of 1 December each year, which reflects the publication date of electoral registers in the UK.

Exceptions to this occurred in 2012 and 2013:

- Electoral statistics for 2012 in England and Wales (excluding London) had a reference date of 16 October
- Electoral statistics for 2013 had a reference date of 17 February 2014 in England and 10 March 2014 in Wales and Scotland

See the questions below for explanations for why the electoral registers were published on different dates in 2012 and 2013/14.

9 . Why were some electoral registers published in October 2012?

Owing to the Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC) elections for England and Wales held in November 2012, the annual voter canvass was conducted early and new electoral registers published on 16 October 2012, rather than 1 December 2012.

This change was to ensure that the electoral register was as complete and accurate as possible prior to the elections. With no PCC elections in Scotland, Northern Ireland or London, the annual registers here were compiled to 1 December.

10 . Why were some electoral registers published in February /March 2014?

To make sure that the electoral register was as complete and accurate as possible ahead of the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration (IER) in summer 2014, the annual publication of electoral registers in Great Britain, normally due on 1 December 2013, was delayed until spring 2014.

Electoral registers were published on 17 February 2014 in England and on 10 March 2014 in Scotland and Wales. Registers for Northern Ireland were published as usual on 1 December 2013.

11 . Why were Scottish electoral registers published in March 2015?

Scottish electoral registers were published in March 2015 due to the introduction of the new Individual Electoral Registration (IER) system being delayed until after the conclusion of the Scottish Independence Referendum in September 2014.

12 . Are electoral statistics available by age, sex or citizenship?

Electoral statistics are not available broken down by age, sex, citizenship or any other characteristics.

13 . What is a parliamentary elector?

These are individuals who are entitled to vote in parliamentary elections for Westminster and who meet the residence qualification.

These include overseas electors but exclude Peers and European Union citizens.

Attainers are also included in these figures.

14 . What is a European/local Government elector?

These are individuals who are entitled to vote in European and local government elections and who meet the residence qualification.

These include Peers and European Union citizens.

Attainers are also included in these figures.

15 . What is an attainer?

This is the term used to describe a person who attains the age of 18 during the currency of the register (i.e. 1 December 2013 to 1 December 2014 for the latest register), and is entitled to vote at an election on or after his or her 18th birthday.

It should be noted that because of differing administrative practices, it is possible that the statistics for attainers may include some people who attain the age of 18 outside of the specified period.

16 . What is a Commonwealth citizen?

These are individuals who are nationals of any country within the Commonwealth of Nations. Only qualifying Commonwealth citizens are entitled to vote in UK elections; these are individuals who do not require leave to remain in the UK, or currently have valid leave to remain.

17 . What is the residence qualification?

For England, Wales and Scotland, the residence qualification requires a person to be normally living at the address on the qualifying date, even if temporarily absent.

People having more than one place of residence, such as students, may therefore be included on more than one register but are only entitled to vote in one constituency in a general election.

18 . What is an overseas elector?

Overseas electors are not resident in the UK but must previously have been resident in the UK and included on the electoral register (unless they were too young to register) within the last 15 years.

19 . What is a service elector?

These are members of HM Armed Forces and their spouses, plus Crown servants and British Council employees and their spouses residing abroad.

20 . Who is eligible to vote?

In general, there are two main classifications of voters, the 'parliamentary electorate' and the 'European/local government electorate' and eligibility criteria for the two classifications are different.

British citizens, Commonwealth citizens and citizens of the Republic of Ireland aged 18 or over are eligible to vote in any election if they also meet all other qualifying requirements. They are therefore included in both the 'Parliamentary Electorate' and the 'European and Local Government Electorate'.

European Union citizens (excluding British, Irish, Cypriot and Maltese citizens who are included above) aged 18 or over are included in the 'European and Local Government Electorate' but are not eligible to vote in Westminster parliamentary elections.

21 . Who is included on the electoral register?

In general, to be included in the electoral registers in Great Britain a person must be:

- resident at an address in Great Britain on the date of application
- a British citizen, qualifying Commonwealth citizen A qualifying Commonwealth citizen is a Commonwealth citizen who does not require leave to remain in the UK, or who currently has valid leave to remain, citizen of the Republic of Ireland or citizen of another member state of the European Union
- 18 years of age or older or attain voting age during the period of 12 months beginning next 1 December
- not subject to any legal incapacity to vote (which includes some prisoners and, for parliamentary elections only, peers who are members of the House of Lords).

In order to be included in the electoral register in Northern Ireland a person must be:

- resident in Northern Ireland for at least 3 months before application
- a British citizen, qualifying Commonwealth citizen, citizen of the Republic of Ireland or citizen of another member state of the European Union
- 17 years of age or older
- not subject to any legal incapacity to vote which includes some prisoners and, for parliamentary elections only, peers who are members of the House of Lords).

22 . Do the electoral statistics include information on the number of people not registered to vote?

No.

23 . Who is responsible for producing electoral statistics?

Electoral statistics for England and Wales are compiled from information provided by local electoral registration officers by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Statistics for Scotland and Northern Ireland are produced by National Records of Scotland (NRS) and the Electoral Office of Northern Ireland (EONI) respectively.

ONS collates all these figures to produce electoral statistics for the UK as a whole.

24 . What is Individual Electoral Registration (IER)?

Individual Electoral Registration (IER) is the new system that allows individuals to register to vote in England, Wales and Scotland. It replaced the former system of household level registration – where one person in the household returned a registration form on behalf of all eligible voters resident at that address – from June 2014 in England and Wales, and September 2014 in Scotland. The electoral registration system in Northern Ireland remained unchanged.

The introduction of IER allows individuals more control over the registration process and increases accuracy by ensuring that the identity of every applicant is verified (using information such as date of birth and National Insurance number) before their details are added to the electoral register.

The Electoral Commission are monitoring the transition to IER, conducting research on voter registration, and providing information and guidance to both electoral registration officers and the general public. More [information on their role](#) is available from their website.

Further information from Cabinet Office on the transition to IER is available from the [gov.uk website](#).

25 . What is rolling registration?

This was introduced in 2001 and means that electoral registration officers update registers on a continuous basis.

26 . What is continuous registration?

In Northern Ireland, a system of continuous registration was introduced in 2007 which provides monthly updates to the electoral register. A revised register, incorporating all the updates, is published each year on 1 December.

27 . Has legislation affected these numbers?

Yes, on 1 May 2004 the European Union was expanded from 15 to 25 countries. (However, citizens of Cyprus and Malta were already entitled to vote as Commonwealth citizens.) This increased the number of people eligible to vote in European/local elections.

Further expansions of the European Union in 2007 (Bulgaria and Romania) and 2013 (Croatia) may also have had some impact on the numbers.

28 . Can I calculate electoral registration rates using the ONS mid-year population estimates?

The electoral statistics are sometimes compared with the population estimates in order to provide an approximation for the percentage of people who are registered to vote. The following points should be noted when interpreting these percentages:

1. The resident population aged 18 and over is not the same as the number of people eligible to vote; not everyone who is usually resident is entitled to vote (foreign citizens from outside of the EU and Commonwealth, prisoners, etc. are not eligible).
2. There is inevitably some double-counting of the registered electorate as people who have more than one address may register to vote in more than one place. Also, electoral registration officers vary in how quickly they remove people from the registers after they have moved away from an area or after they have died.
3. These factors have a differential impact from area to area.

29 . Who do I contact if I have any queries about ONS electoral statistics?

Please contact the Population Estimates Unit via email (pop.info@ons.gsi.gov.uk) or call 01329 444661.

30 . Where can I go for further information on electoral statistics?

In the first place, <contact pop.info@ons.gsi.gov.uk> or call 01329 444661. Additional information on eligibility and electoral law can be found on [The Electoral Commission](#) website.

Information on the quality of the electoral statistics, including relevance, accuracy, timeliness and punctuality, accessibility and clarity, and comparability and coherence, can be found in the electoral statistics [“Quality and methodology” information paper](#) (202.3 Kb Pdf).