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published: 20 June 2019 Last updated: 30 July 2019 About this report This report  
provides our assessment of how well the May 2014 European Parliamentary elections and  
the local government elections in England and Northern Ireland, were run. Our  
analysis reflects the experience of voters, based on public opinion research;  
electoral data; and feedback provided by Regional and Local Returning Officers and  
candidates and agents. It provides a forward look to future elections, highlighting  
the issues which the Commission considers need to be addressed to make sure that the  
interests of voters continue to be put first at future elections. About the elections  
On 22 May 2014 elections were held for the United Kingdom's 72 members of the  
European Parliament, for local councillors in approximately one third of local  
authority areas and for the 11 new councils in Northern Ireland. There were also  
elections for directly-elected Mayors in five local authorities (Hackney, Lewisham,  
Newham, Tower Hamlets, and Watford), one local referendum on proposals to introduce a  
directly elected mayoral system in Copeland (Cumbria) and neighbourhood planning  
referendums in Much Wenlock (Shropshire), Woburn Sands (Milton Keynes), and Strumpshaw  
(Norfolk). The voting system, number of candidates and parties standing and the  
number of seats contested at the elections on 22 May Election Voting system Number of  
candidates/parties Number of seats contested European Parliamentary elections – Great  
Britain Closed-list proportional representation 31 parties 70 European Parliamentary  
elections – Northern Ireland Single transferable vote 10 parties 3 Local government  
elections - England 'First-past-the-post' majoritarian c. 17,000 c. 2,400 Local  
government elections – Northern Ireland Single transferable vote 905 464 Mayoral  
elections Supplementary vote preferential 34 5 Neighbourhood planning referendum  
Majoritarian n/a n/a The highest number of parties standing in the European election  
was 17 in London. Roles and responsibilities for managing and delivering the  
elections For the European Parliamentary elections, a Regional Returning Officer  
(RRO) is appointed for each of the European electoral regions. The Deputy Prime  
Minister, as Lord President of the Council, was responsible in law for appointing  
RROs for each of the 11 electoral regions in Great Britain, while in Northern Ireland  
the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) fulfils the responsibility of Returning Officer at  
all elections, including RRO for the European Parliamentary elections. RROs have  
overall responsibility for the conduct of the European Parliamentary election within  
their electoral region. The running of the European Parliamentary election at a local  
level in Great Britain is the responsibility of Local Returning Officers (LROs). RROs  
can direct LROs to undertake certain functions and LROs have a duty to comply with  
such directions Where the polls for more than one election are combined the Returning  
Officer responsible for running the local government election will take on the  
majority of the functions of the LRO at the European Parliamentary election At local  
council elections in Northern Ireland each council has its own Deputy Returning  
Officer (DRO). Normally this is the Chief Executive but on this occasion a DRO was  
appointed prior to the elections for each of the 11 new council areas. The Commission  
sets, monitors and reports on performance standards for ROs in Great Britain.  
Building on the lessons we have learned from monitoring the performance of ROs over  
the last five years and taking account of the feedback we have received, we published  
a new performance standards framework in November 2013. The May 2014 polls were the

first at which we applied this framework, which was designed to support ROs in delivering a consistent high-quality service for voters and those standing for election. The new framework reflects what we and the UK Electoral Advisory Board agree that ROs need to do to prepare for and deliver well-run elections. The standards focus on the key outcomes from the perspective of voters and those who want to stand for election, and in particular whether ROs are taking the necessary steps to deliver the following outcomes: Voters are able to vote easily and know that their vote will be counted in the way they intended. It is easy for people who want to stand for election to find out how to get involved, what the rules are, and what they have to do to comply with these rules, and they can have confidence in the management of the process and the result. The standards cover the range of activities carried out by ROs in preparing for and delivering well-run elections including, for example, setting up and staffing polling stations, and delivering timely and accurate verification and count processes. A sample of 20% of ROs were selected for detailed monitoring at the May 2014 polls. The selection of this sample was principally risk-based, taking into account factors such as the experience of the RO and any previous issues as well as any other available information. The selection of the risk-based sample was made in consultation with the RROs. Additionally, the sample for monitoring included a random selection of ROs to mitigate the risks which could arise from only monitoring a known sample of ROs. Also, for the first time, we also monitored the performance of all RROs in carrying out their role in co-ordinating and managing the delivery of the polls. As for previous elections we provided guidance, tools and templates to support ROs in planning for and delivering the elections. The Cabinet Office established the Elections Policy Coordination Group (EPCG) to enable RROs to come together to: shape the legislative framework share and identify good practice discuss issues of common concern. The Cabinet Office should evaluate how this group worked in practice, and consider, what if any, role it might have for ensuring the effective coordination of the 2015 elections. The Commission's Elections, Referendum and Registration Working Group (ERRWG) continued to be a valuable forum for informing our approach to guidance and standards, and for discussions on practical issues relating to the delivery and coordination of the polls. Prior to the elections we identified 16 local authority areas where there could be a higher risk of allegations of electoral fraud. We worked closely with the relevant EROs and ROs, as well as the local police in the lead up to the election period to ensure that: The risk of electoral fraud had been robustly assessed locally. Appropriate preventative measures were in place in advance of the polls. Local elections staff and the police were equipped to respond quickly to any allegations of criminal activity. Our monitoring before and during the election period meant that we were confident that ROs and police forces in all 16 areas had appropriate plans in place to minimise the risk of electoral fraud and to respond effectively to any cases of alleged electoral fraud which might be reported. Some ROs sought to agree local codes and protocols with campaigners, although not all local parties and campaigners agreed to sign up to them. We will continue to share information about good practice that has been adopted with other ROs and EROs to help them plan for future elections. The Commission's role in encouraging voter registration Ahead of the elections we ran a UK-wide media campaign which aimed to increase public awareness of the need to register to vote by 6 May in order to take part in the elections. In Great Britain, our campaign ran from 1 April-5 May on TV, radio and online. In Northern Ireland our campaign ran from 14-30 April on TV, radio, online, press and outdoor (posters and billboards) As British citizens living

overseas are eligible to vote in the European Parliamentary elections, we ran an online registration campaign aimed at British expatriates in the top 10-20 countries with a high British expatriate population. The campaign ran from 24 February - 18 April in non-European countries and until 27 April in Europe. We also created radio fillers (non-date specific radio adverts) for expatriate radio stations, and worked in partnership with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, expatriate groups such as Votes for Expat Brits, and parties' overseas networks. We supplied template PR materials to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and asked them to distribute these via consulates and embassies to gain media coverage in countries with the highest numbers of British expatriates. Many consulates and embassies used these materials, which resulted in a number of pieces of coverage to support the campaign. In addition, we held an Overseas Registration Day on 26 February 2014. This was used as a hook for media releases. It was highlighted by our partners, and generated numerous pieces of coverage, both domestically and overseas. To support Overseas Registration Day Greg Clark MP (Minister of State, Cities and Constitution) also recorded a video message to expatriates urging them to register to vote ahead of the 22 May 2014 elections. In Northern Ireland we also ran a 'voter information' media campaign to remind voters to take their photographic ID with them to the polling station and to inform them that the Single Transferable Vote voting system would be used for both the local government and European elections. Our campaign ran from 7-22 May on radio, online, press and outdoor (posters and billboards). As with previous campaigns, all advertising across the UK directed people to the Commission's [www.aboutmyvote.co.uk](http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk) website where they could download registration forms and find out further information about the elections taking place in their area. We also set up a telephone helpline for the public awareness campaign period, allowing people to call for more information or to request a registration form. In Great Britain, 207,8157 registration forms were downloaded from our website, which exceeded both the number in 2009 (131,194) and our target of 140,000 forms. In Northern Ireland, 6,059 registration forms were downloaded from our website. This was lower than 2009 (7,007) and also fell short of our target of 10,000 forms. This may be due to our campaign going live shortly after the autumn 2013 canvass, which had seen an increase in registration levels. Due to their dispersed nature and the lack of reliable data on their numbers, British expatriates are a particularly difficult audience to target. This year we did a number of things differently for this aspect of the campaign, including working more closely with partners and holding an Overseas Registration Day. We achieved a total of 7,079 overseas registration form downloads from our website, which exceeded the number of forms downloaded during the campaigns undertaken prior to the European Parliamentary elections in 2009 (5,566) but fell well short of our target of 25,000 forms. Although we were disappointed not to hit our target, we recognise that expatriates at these elections may have chosen to register to vote in their EU countries of residence. For example, according to official figures from Spain, 82,000 out of 336,586 foreigners registered to vote ahead of the European elections were British nationals. Despite not hitting our target for this element of campaign, we did receive a very positive reaction to our adverts, with over 87,000 clicks on our online advertising being recorded during the course of the campaign. It is possible that many of these individuals felt the process of downloading, printing - and then having another British passport holder countersign - the form was too onerous a task. The introduction of online registration will make this process a great deal more straightforward in future. We will be reviewing our approach and looking to build on successes as we plan for the

UK Parliamentary general election. We intend to again set a stretching target and will report on the impact that online registration has had on this audience in our report following the general election. To evaluate the effectiveness of our UK-wide registration campaign, we carried out tracking research in two stages – before the campaign launched and just after the campaign ended. In Northern Ireland, we also carried out tracking research after the ‘voter information’ campaign. In both cases, we met our target of reaching 60-70% of the target population. Sixty nine per cent of the population in Great Britain, and 78% of the population in Northern Ireland, reported seeing at least one element of our registration campaign. We also met our target of 95-98% of people in Northern Ireland knowing they needed to bring ID with them to the polling station: 95% of the population were aware of the requirement to take a valid form of photographic ID with them to vote. Bite the Ballot held a “National Voter Registration Day” on 5 February. To support this, we provided them with a link to the public awareness resources on our website. Key facts and figures

Registration	Turnout
46.55 million people were eligible to vote in the European Parliamentary elections	21.7 million
1.2 million in the local government elections in England and Northern Ireland respectively	Turnout at the elections on 22 May
Number of ballot papers included in the count	Turnout European Parliamentary elections (UK) 16.54 million
35.6 Local government elections - England	7.95 million
36.0 Local government elections – Northern Ireland	638,332
51.3	The chart below shows the variation in turnout since the 2010 UK Parliamentary General election.

Turnout at the European Parliamentary election was similar in 2014 to that in 2009. Turnout at elections between 2009 and 2014 At the European Parliamentary elections, 11.5 million people in Great Britain and 12.1 million people across the UK cast their vote in their local polling station, accounting for 70% of all votes cast. This represents a turnout of 30% in Great Britain and 30.5% in the UK. Postal votes were issued to around 6.65 million electors (16% of the eligible electorate in the UK) with a turnout rate of 69.5% among postal voters. The majority of these were issued across Great Britain where postal voting is available on demand: England, 16%, Scotland, 15.9%, Wales 16.9%. By comparison, 1.5% of the electorate were issued with a postal vote in Northern Ireland. For the European Parliamentary elections approximately 51,690 electors were appointed as a proxy for another elector, representing 0.1% of the total electorate. 1,013 were emergency proxies (Great Britain). For the local government elections in England there were approximately 19,500 proxy voters and 430 emergency proxy voters. 70 were proxies appointed as a result of medical emergencies for the local government elections in 2013. Download our full report European parliamentary and local elections report May 2014 Related content Report: Campaign spending at the 2014 European Parliamentary elections Read our report about campaign spending at the 2014 European Parliamentary elections Results and turnout at the 2014 European Parliamentary elections View the results and turnout at the 2014 European Parliamentary elections Report: May 2019 European Parliamentary elections and local elections Read our report about the 2019 European Parliamentary elections and local elections Inquiry report: the voting registration process for EU citizens resident in the UK for the 2019 European Parliamentary elections held in the UK Read our inquiry report about the voting registration process for the 2019 European Parliamentary election