

Urgent reforms needed to fill the gaps in Scotland's electoral registers | Electoral Commission Search Urgent reforms needed to fill the gaps in Scotland's electoral registers You are in the section Home Posted: 18 September 2023 Intro Up to one million people in Scotland are either incorrectly registered to vote or missing completely, according to research published today by the Electoral Commission. The research found that young people, private renters and those who have recently moved home continue to be less likely to be correctly registered to vote. This means that nearly one fifth (19%) of the eligible voting population in Scotland may not be able to vote if an election was called now. The current electoral registration system does not work well for voters or those who administer it, and urgent reforms are needed so that public data can be used to facilitate voter registration, particularly for those less likely to be correctly registered. The Commission is calling on the Scottish and UK governments to pass legislation to create clear legal gateways for government departments and public bodies to share data on potentially eligible voters with electoral administrators. This would enable them to register voters directly, or to send them invitations to register. A consistent approach between both governments would ensure changes are developed and delivered in a way that voters can be accurately included in the registers for all types of elections they are eligible to vote in. Andy O'Neill, Head of Electoral Commission, Scotland, said: "Up to one million people in Scotland are not correctly registered to vote. While some may not want to participate in elections, for many people it is a consequence of an outdated registration system that disproportionately affects private renters and young people. "A more automated form of voter registration could see applications made at the same time as other tasks, such as updating the address on your driver's licence or when enrolling at university. "In its recent consultation on electoral reform the Scottish Government made clear its commitment to increasing levels of electoral registration. We stand ready to work with them and the wider electoral community to improve the system and make sure as many people as possible are registered to vote." In addition to improving the experience for voters, these changes would address the burdens faced by electoral administrators, who are currently required to use their limited resources and capacity at the most critical time ahead of major elections to manage high numbers of applications to register to vote. The full report shows the accuracy and completeness of the electoral registers across Scotland, including breakdowns by age and gender. It also sets out a range of options for how specific data sources could be used to improve the system. Ends For more information contact the Electoral Commission press office in Scotland on 0131 225 0211, out of office hours 07789 920 414 or press@electoralcommission.org.uk Notes to eds Notes to editors by: enabling the delivery of free and fair elections and referendums, focusing on the needs of electors and addressing the changing environment to ensure every vote remains secure and accessible regulating political finance – taking proactive steps to increase transparency, ensure compliance and pursue breaches using our expertise to make and advocate for changes to our democracy, aiming to improve fairness, transparency and efficiency The Commission was set up in 2000 and reports to the Scottish, UK and Welsh parliaments. The Commission runs accuracy and completeness studies to measure the quality of the electoral registers. The last time we carried out this research was in 2019, on the 2018 electoral registers. 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.

Fieldwork and data analysis was carried out by Ipsos on behalf of The Electoral Commission based on the December 2022 Electoral Registers. Fieldwork was conducted between 11 January and 19 May 2023. A total of 5,298 interviews were achieved across 127 local authority areas in Great Britain, and 1,015 interviews in 100 wards in Northern Ireland. Estimates are based on the local government registers and on incompleteness figures from the survey. They include the proportion of eligible residents who are currently not included on the register at their current address (e.g., the surveyed address) and entries found containing errors which would prevent an eligible elector from casting their vote (e.g., incorrect name or a recorded date of birth which is later than an attainer's birthday). A UK Parliamentary general election must take place before the end of January 2025. Everyone must be registered to vote in order to take part in elections. The Scottish Government's consultation on electoral reform was published on 14 December 2022

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