

Completeness in Great Britain You are in the Accuracy and completeness of electoral registers section Home Our research Accuracy and completeness of electoral registers On this page Urban/rural Local authority type Length of residence Tenure Age Ethnicity Nationality Gender Disability status Socio-economic group Highest qualification Number of adults in household Attitudes towards registration and voting Turnout at recent national electoral events First published: 2 September 2019 Last updated: 26 September 2019 Key findings The local government registers in Great Britain were 83% complete, and the parliamentary registers were 85% complete The study found that the main drivers of lower completeness are being younger, recent home movement and whether someone rents their home from a private landlord. These drivers of lower registration are in line with our findings in previous accuracy and completeness studies Other factors associated with lower rates of registration include ethnicity, nationality and attitudes towards registration and voting Overview The parliamentary registers for Great Britain were found to be 85% complete, and the local government registers 83% complete overall. Except where stated, the figures outlined relate to the local government registers as these include the larger proportion of the electorate. Where comparisons made in the text are not statistically significant this is acknowledged. Urban/rural classification In Great Britain there is a slight difference (two percentage points) between levels of completeness in urban and rural areas. Registers in urban areas are now 83% complete (from 84% in 2015), while in rural areas completeness is 85% (86% in 2015). The changes from 2015 are not statistically significant. Local authority type The most notable change in completeness across local authority types has been in London boroughs, where completeness has fallen from 81% in 2015 to 76% in 2018. There has also been a decline in district authorities from 86% in 2015 to 84% in 2018. Completeness in unitary authorities (83%) has stayed at a similar level to 2015 (84%), while there has been a small increase in completeness for metropolitan boroughs (from 83% to 86%). The lower completeness in London boroughs is likely to be reflective of high population mobility, associated with the large private rented sector in London. Completeness of local government electoral registers by local authority type, 2015 and 2018

Local authority type	2015	2018
District	86%	84%
London borough	81%	76%
Metropolitan borough	83%	86%
Unitary authorities	84%	83%

Length of residence Previous research into the registers has found a connection between home movement and completeness. As registration is residence-based, 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 register. This pattern continues in the local government registers for Great Britain, with completeness at: 36% (an increase from 27% in 2015) among those who have lived at their address for up to a year 71% among those who have lived at their address for one to two years 84% among those who lived at their address for two to five years 90% for those who have lived at their address between five and 10 years 88% for those who have lived at their address for 10 to 16 years 92% among those who have lived at their address for more than 16 years This pattern is consistent throughout our research. That's why we want to see changes to allow EROs to access national-level public data. This will help them to focus resources on addresses where they know a change has occurred. We also want to see greater integration of electoral registration into other public sector transactions, such as applying for or updating a drivers' licence, in order to encourage voters to update their electoral registration as part of another administrative task associated with moving house.

Tenure Tenure is a variable that has previously been strongly associated with levels of completeness and this research reconfirms that finding. In Great Britain, homeowners are more likely to be registered than people in other types of tenure. There has been a small decline in completeness for those living in households owned outright (from 95% to 91%), and a similar-sized decline for those in households buying their home with a mortgage (from 89% to 86%). Over the same period, completeness for those who rent their homes in the social rented sector has increased. For those who rent their home from a local authority it has risen from 79% to 83%, while those renting from a housing association have seen completeness increase from 78% to 82%. Private renters remain the least likely to have complete register entries and have stayed at the same level recorded in 2015. The lower levels of completeness among private renters is associated with population mobility as private renters tend to move more frequently than those in other tenures. For example, the Housing Survey 2017-18 shows that in England 27% of private renters have lived in their home for less than one year compared to 6% of social renters and 4% of owner occupiers. A similar pattern exists in Scotland and Wales. The 2017 Scottish Household Survey found 35% of residents in the private rented sector have been resident less than a year (6% for owner occupiers and 9% in the social rented sector) and the 2017-18 National Survey of Wales found that 33% of private renters had been resident for less than a year (5% for owner occupiers and 10% for social renters). Completeness by tenure in December 2015 and December 2018 Age Levels of completeness were found to vary by age group, with older groups more likely to be registered. This is a finding that has been consistent throughout our research. In Great Britain, the highest level of completeness is seen for those aged 65+ (94%) and the lowest level is recorded for attainers (16 and 17 year olds, 25%), which has dropped from 45% in 2015. In England and Wales, the age at which citizens become entitled to vote is currently 18, but the electoral registers also include records of 'attainers' - 16 and 17 year olds who will turn 18 within the twelve month period starting on the 1 December after they make their application. In Scotland, the voting age for Scottish Parliamentary and local council elections is 16. This means that all 16 and 17 year olds in Scotland are entitled to be on the local government register and that attainers are 14 and 15 year olds who will turn 16 during the twelve month period starting on the 1 December after they make their application. However, entitlement for the parliamentary register in Scotland has not been affected by the change to the franchise so 16 and 17 year olds are attainers on the parliamentary register. Proposed franchise changes in Wales would mean that those aged 16 and 17 in Wales will have an equivalent entitlement as in Scotland. The number of attainers has fallen significantly over the last few years. Before 2015 attainers could be registered by a parent or guardian via a household canvass form. Individual electoral registration (IER) was introduced in 2014 and from this point attainers (and those of any age registering to vote for the first time) have been required to register themselves, providing 'identifying information', namely date of birth and national insurance number. This information is then verified before a name is added to the register. After the introduction of IER there was a significant decline in the number of attainers on both the parliamentary and local government registers. Our previous analysis in 2016 showed that there was a 40% drop in attainers on the local government registers between February/March 2014 and December 2015. Subsequently, between December 2015 and 2016, the number of attainers increased by 17% for local government registers and 22% for parliamentary registers. However the number of attainers on the electoral registers has yet to return to the same level as seen

under household registration. We have previously recommended that the registration of attainers presents an opportunity for the development of a more automatic approach to registration, for example, at the point when individuals receive their National Insurance number (NINo). NINos are allocated automatically just before eligible people turn 16, and a letter containing details of the NINo are sent to individuals at the address held by HM Revenue and Customs. This information could be shared with EROs, enabling 16 year olds who have been issued with a NINo to be added to electoral registers provided that the ERO is satisfied that the individual is eligible and meets the residence requirements for registration. The falling number of attainers emphasises the importance of exploring such reforms. We believe that reform in this area is important, particularly as proposed changes to the franchise in Wales will allow 16 and 17 year olds to vote on the same basis as electors of the same age in Scotland. In the interim, we believe that making data sets, such as the pupil database, available to EROs would help them to identify attainers more easily.

Register	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
England Local	387,292	260,715	244,781	293,430	279,388	268,396
England Parliamentary	379,284	254,838	239,019	284,522	269,092	257,938
Scotland Local	64,299	39,513	21,343	22,035	20,788	20,232
Scotland Parliamentary	63,471	38,963	24,827	41,561	43,357	41,296
Wales Local	18,807	14,223	12,462	13,810	13,001	13,127
Wales Parliamentary	18,595	14,065	12,339	13,651	12,794	12,948
Great Britain Local	470,398	314,451	278,586	329,275	313,177	301,755
Great Britain Parliamentary	461,350	307,864	276,185	339,734	325,243	312,182

The levels of completeness by age group have remained steady since 2015, with little to no change. The 35-44 age group are closest to the overall average of 83%, on 82%. Above this point all age groups have broadly similar levels of completeness (around 90%), while completeness drops with every age group before it. Completeness for 25-34 year olds is 74%, among 20-24 year olds it is 68%, and it is 66% among 18-19 year olds. Ethnicity Completeness is highest among those from a white ethnic background at 84%. The lowest level of completeness was observed among those from "other" ethnic backgrounds, at 62%. Those from Asian and Black ethnic backgrounds each have a similar level of completeness (76% and 75% respectively), while completeness stands at 69% among those from mixed backgrounds. All of the apparent declines in completeness from 2015 presented below were not statistically significant. This demonstrates that the same patterns of difference in registration by ethnicity persist in 2018. 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 remain most likely to have complete electoral register entries, at 86%, which is the same as in 2015. Completeness for Commonwealth nationals is 62% (61% in 2015), while it is 54% for those with EU nationalities (53% in 2015). None of the apparent changes since 2015 are statistically significant. Gender While past studies have noted that women are more likely to be registered than men, in this study we have found no difference by gender. Completeness is 83% for both men and women. Disability status People with a long standing physical condition or disability are more likely to be registered (92%) than those without a disability (82%), or those with a longstanding mental condition or disability (83%). Socio-economic group Levels of completeness are affected by social groupings: 86% for AB householders 85% for C1 households 80% for C2 households 80% for DE households Since 2015 there has been a decline in the level of completeness among those in C2 households (from 86%), meaning that this group are as likely to have complete register entries as those from social grades DE. The level of completeness in AB households has fallen from 88% in 2015 while there has been an

increase of two percentage points among those in C1 households (from 83%). Highest qualification Those with A Levels, Scottish Highers (81%) or GCSEs (81%) as their highest form of academic qualification are groups least likely to have complete register entries. Completeness is highest among those with degrees, or further qualifications such as BTECs, as well as those with other types of qualifications, or none at all (perhaps related to age). This reflects the pattern observed in 2015, when this question was first asked. Across other qualifications the levels of completeness do not vary much between highest level of attainment. Completeness of local government registers by education in Great Britain, 2015 and 2018

Qualification	2015	2018
Higher degree	87%	84%
Degree	86%	83%
BTEC	84%	86%
A level/Higher	80%	81%
GCSE	83%	81%
Other	83%	85%
None	87%	85%

Number of adults in household Completeness among single adult households has risen by four percentage points since 2015, to 86%, making this among the most likely household type to have a complete register entry alongside two-adult households (84%). Completeness for households with six or more adults is 78% (75% in 2015), while for households with between three and five adults it's 81% (83% in 2015). Attitudes towards registration and voting The person we spoke to in each household was also asked some questions around their attitudes to registering to vote and voting itself. While this means it is not a nationally representative sample of the population, the results provide another angle to consider the relationship between registration and attitudes towards elections. As in 2015, completeness is lower among participants with more negative views of registering to vote. Those who agree it is only worth registering to vote to secure better credit references have the lowest level of completeness, at 68%, while completeness stands at 72% among those who say it is not really worth registering to vote at all. While both these groups had the lowest levels in 2015, their order has switched (see figure below). Completeness stands at 79% among those who think people should only register to vote if they care who wins an election and 85% among those who say it is everyone's duty to register to vote. Attitudes towards voting show a similar pattern, with those who feel it's everyone's duty to vote having the highest level of completeness (84%) compared to those who feel it's not worth voting (78%) and those who say people should only vote if they care who wins an election (79%). Turnout at recent national electoral events Although the distance between the December 2018 electoral registers and the most recent national election (the 2017 UK Parliamentary general election) is greater than it was for the December 2015 registers, the same relationship can be observed. Those who reported voting at the most recent UK general election showed higher levels of completeness. In 2015 the level was 92%, and in 2018 it was 88%. Completeness was lower among those who said they did not vote (although eligible to do so), at 72%. Completeness for those who were not eligible to vote (predominantly EU citizens) stood at 50%. The 2016 referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union was notable for its higher turnout compared with the UK general election which preceded it. As this is the first survey of accuracy and completeness since the referendum occurred, we asked a question to understand the relationship between participating in that referendum and the completeness of the registers. It revealed a very similar pattern to participation in the 2017 UK general election, with completeness highest among those who said they voted in the referendum (88%). For those who did not vote, completeness stood at 71%, while among those not eligible the level of completeness was 53%.