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Results and turnout at the 2017 UK general election You are in the UK general  
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Postal voting Proxies and waivers First published: 28 June 2019 Last updated: 28 June  
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file) Overview This report provides analysis on participation in and the

administration of the UK Parliamentary general election (UKPGE) held on 8 June 2017.  
For this, data was collected from Returning Officers and Electoral Registration  
Officers across Great Britain and the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland (EONI).

This comprised the Declaration of Result of Poll, the statutory Form K 'Statement as  
to Postal Ballot Papers' and an additional data form, specified by the Commission,  
which included data relating to electoral registration, turnout, absent voting and  
rejected ballots. The election resulted in a hung parliament, with no party winning  
an overall majority. The Conservatives won 317 seats (42.2% of votes) compared with  
262 seats (40.0% of votes) for Labour, 35 seats for the SNP (3.1% of votes), 12 seats  
(7.4% of votes) for The Liberal Democrats and 10 seats (0.9% of votes) for The DUP.

Table 1.1: Summary Electorate Postal voters Turnout Postal vote turnout In-person  
turnout Rejected ballots Postal votes rejected England 39.3 m 18.2% 69.3% 85.3% 66.2%  
0.2% 2.4% South East 6.5 m 17.8% 71.4% 85.5% 68.7% 0.3% 2.0% West Midlands 4.1 m  
15.0% 67.1% 86.0% 64.4% 0.3% 3.7% North West 5.3 m 19.5% 68.0% 84.3% 64.6% 0.2% 2.7%  
East Midlands 3.4 m 18.2% 69.4% 86.6% 66.0% 0.2% 2.5% London 5.5 m 16.7% 70.2% 83.0%  
68.1% 0.3% 2.4% Yorkshire & Humber 3.9 m 19.3% 66.5% 85.8% 62.4% 0.2% 2.4% East 4.4 m  
17.1% 69.9% 85.8% 67.0% 0.2% 1.9% South West 4.2 m 18.9% 72.1% 86.9% 69.0% 0.2% 2.2%  
North East 1.9 m 26.6% 66.1% 84.9% 60.0% 0.2% 2.2% Scotland 4.0 m 19.4% 66.8% 82.9%  
63.3% 0.1% 2.0% Wales 2.3 m 19.4% 68.7% 84.4% 65.3% 0.2% 2.2% Northern Ireland 1.2 m  
1.9% 65.6% 89.0% 65.2% 0.4% 4.0% UK 46.8 m 18.0% 69.0% 85.1% 65.9% 0.2% 2.4%

Electorate The election gave 46.8 million registered electors the opportunity to  
vote. Despite a small decrease (2.7%) in Scotland from the 2015 UK general election,  
this was the largest ever electorate for a UK-wide poll. Table 2.1: Electorate, 2010  
- 2017 2010 2015 % change 2010-15 2017 % change 2015-17 England 38.3 m 38.7 m 1.1%  
39.3 m 1.4% Scotland 3.9 m 4.1 m 6.1% 4.0 m -2.7% Wales 2.3 m 2.3 m 0.7% 2.3 m 0.8%  
Northern Ireland 1.2 m 1.2 m 5.8% 1.2 m 0.5% UK 45.6 m 46.4 m 1.7% 46.8 m 1.0% Across  
the UK, an estimated 1.3 million electors (2.7% of the electorate) were added to the

electoral register during the weeks leading up to the election. 1 Across Great  
Britain, an estimated 2.4 million applications to register were received in the weeks  
leading up to the election. More than a third (36.9%) of these were recorded as  
duplicates 2 and an estimated 226,565 individuals applied to register after the  
registration deadline. Returning Officers reported that approximately 10,500  
individuals tried to vote on election day despite not being registered. This data is  
inconsistently reported and we did not receive a complete data return from all  
constituencies. 3 Overseas voters Across Great Britain, there were approximately  
285,000 registered overseas voters (0.6% of the electorate). This ranged from 0.1% in  
20 constituencies to 6.0% in two London constituencies (Dulwich and West Norwood, and  
Streatham). 4 Table 2.2: Overseas voters Region Overseas voters % of electorate

England 260,987 0.7% South East 56,208 0.9% West Midlands 17,162 0.4% North West  
24,916 0.5% East Midlands 18,269 0.5% London 60,386 1.1% Yorkshire & Humber 17,156  
0.4% Eastern 28,218 0.6% South West 31,182 0.7% North East 7,490 0.4% Scotland 15,731  
0.4% Wales 8,480 0.4% Great Britain 285,198 0.6% Turnout The measure of turnout  
referred to in this report, 'ballot box turnout', includes all valid votes cast  
(‘valid vote turnout’) and votes rejected at the count. Total turnout refers to valid

votes cast, votes rejected at the count, and those rejected at the postal ballot verification stage before the count. Table 3.1 confirms that only a small fraction of votes cast are not allocated to candidates standing for election. This figure has decreased slightly from 2015 and 2010.

Table 3.1: Turnout

	Valid vote turnout	Ballot box turnout	Total turnout	Difference valid vote - turnout (pp)
2017 UK	46.8 m	68.8%	69.0%	69.3%
England	39.3 m	69.1%	69.3%	69.7%
Scotland	4.0 m	66.7%	66.8%	67.1%
Wales	2.3 m	68.5%	68.7%	69.0%
Northern Ireland	1.2 m	65.4%	65.6%	65.7%
2015 UK	46.4 m	66.2%	66.4%	66.9%
England	38.7 m	66.0%	66.2%	66.7%
Scotland	4.1 m	71.0%	71.1%	71.5%
Wales	2.3 m	65.7%	65.8%	66.3%
Northern Ireland	1.2 m	58.1%	58.4%	58.5%
2010 UK	45.6 m	65.1%	65.3%	65.8%

Ballot box turnout across the UK was 69.0%, which is higher than turnout at the 2015 and 2010 elections. At a constituency level, turnout ranged from 53.5% in Glasgow North East to 79.9% in Twickenham. The largest increase from 2015 was in Foyle, where turnout increased by 12.0%.

Table 3.2: Constituencies with lowest and highest turnout

Lowest turnout	Highest turnout
Glasgow North East 53.5%	St Albans 79.3%
Leeds Central 53.8%	Winchester 79.3%
Glasgow East 55.0%	Oxford West and Abingdon 79.5%
West Bromwich West 55.2%	Richmond Park 79.5%
Manchester Central 55.6%	Twickenham 79.9%

Rejected ballot papers The proportion of ballots rejected at counts was 0.2%. This compares with 0.3% in 2015.

Table 3.3: Rejected ballots at the count, 2015 - 2017

	2015	2017	Change (pp)
England	0.4%	0.2%	-0.1
Scotland	0.1%	0.1%	0.0
Wales	0.2%	0.2%	0.0
Northern Ireland	0.7%	0.4%	-0.3
UK	0.3%	0.2%	-0.1

The highest level of rejected ballots was in Northern Ireland (0.4%) and the lowest in Scotland (0.1%). At a constituency level, 81 constituencies rejected 0.1% of ballots. As was the case in 2015, the highest rejection rate was seen in the seat of the Speaker of the House of Commons, Buckingham, where 3.6% of ballots were rejected. Across the UK, the majority of rejected ballots (71.9%) were rejected due to being unmarked or wholly void for uncertainty. Almost a quarter (24.9%) were rejected due to voting for more than one candidate.

Table 3.4: Reasons for rejected ballots, 2017

	No official mark	Voting more than once	Writing or mark by which the voter could be identified	Unmarked or wholly void for uncertainty	Rejected in part
England	0.9%	24.0%	1.8%	72.8%	0.5%
Scotland	0.1%	21.7%	1.0%	77.3%	0.0%
Wales	0.1%	25.3%	1.9%	72.7%	0.0%
Northern Ireland	0.6%	50.0%	4.3%	45.1%	0.0%
UK	0.8%	24.9%	1.9%	71.9%	0.4%

Postal voting The total number of postal votes issued for the general election was 8.4 million, representing 18.0% of all electors. This compares with 16.4% in 2015 and 15.3% in 2010. At a constituency level, postal voters ranged from 1.0% in Belfast West to 44.3% in Newcastle upon Tyne North. As was the case in 2015, the biggest increase from the previous election was in Scotland, where postal voting increased by 1.8pp from 17.6% to 19.4%. Postal voting remains much less common in Northern Ireland (1.9%) where different rules are in force.

Table 4.1: Postal voting 2015 - 2017

	2015	2017	Change (pp)
England	16.7%	18.2%	1.5%
Scotland	17.6%	19.4%	1.8%
Wales	17.7%	19.4%	1.7%
Northern Ireland	1.4%	1.9%	0.5%
UK	16.4%	18.0%	1.6%

The proportion of postal voters returning their ballot papers always exceeds the turnout among 'in person' voters: this year, 85.1% postal electors used their postal vote compared with 65.9% who turned up to vote in person. Postal votes accounted for 21.6% of all votes included at the count. This compares with 20.5% in 2015 and 18.8% in 2009.

Table 4.2: Postal vote vs in-person turnout

	Postal vote turnout	In-person turnout
2017	85.1%	65.9%
2015	85.8%	63.2%
2010	83.2%	62.6%

Rejected postal ballots Postal voting packs (PV) require voters to provide their signature and date of birth (DOB). These identifiers are then matched against those provided at the time of application. If the signature or date of birth is missing or does not match, the postal vote is rejected and is not included at the

count. Since 2014, Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) have been required to notify electors if their postal vote has been rejected and give the reason(s) for rejection. They can also request the elector to provide an up-to-date signature.

Table 4.3: Rejected postal ballots Rejected ballots as % of envelopes returned 2017 2.4% 2015 3.3% 2010 3.8% The rate of rejection of postal votes has decreased to 2.4% from 3.3% in 2015 and 3.8% in 2010. This trend was consistent across the UK, ranging from a decrease of 0.9 percentage points in England and Scotland to a decrease of 1.8 percentage points in Northern Ireland. This trend mirrors decreases across local elections in 2017 and suggests that the new policy may be having a positive impact. Almost half (48.5%) of all rejected ballots are rejected due to mismatched information. In a third of cases (33.2%), postal ballots were rejected because voters returned their postal voting envelopes but failed to include either the ballot paper itself or the verification statement or both.

Table 4.4: Reasons for postal vote statement rejection 2015 2017 Change (pp) Missing information Signature 5.5% 5.4% -0.1 Date of birth 4.4% 5.0% 0.6 Both 10.7% 7.9% -2.8 Mismatched information Signature 25.0% 19.9% -5.1 Date of birth 20.4% 21.3% 1.0 Both 9.0% 7.3% -1.7 Missing forms Ballot paper 10.1% 24.0% 13.9 PV statement 14.9% 9.2% -5.7

It is worth noting that these percentages represent very small numbers of postal votes. For example, although 48.5% of rejected postal votes were rejected due to mismatched information, this represents 1.2% of covering envelopes received and 0.3% of all votes cast. The vast majority of postal voters did correctly file their returns. Proxies and waivers A total of 283,928 electors appointed a proxy (0.6% of the electorate). This compares with 0.3% in 2015. The number of emergency proxies issued across Great Britain was 14,096. This is considerably higher than in 2015 when a concession granted under the terms of the Electoral Administration Act 2006 was that postal electors in Great Britain who either had a disability, or were illiterate, or were unable to furnish a consistent signature could apply for a waiver to use their date of birth as their sole identifier. In 2017, 51,452 waivers were granted, representing 0.1% of the electorate. This is consistent with 2015. At a constituency level, the proportion of waivers granted ranged from 0.01% in four constituencies in England, to 0.7% in Bassetlaw.

Appendices Appendix A There remain inconsistencies in the ways in which local authorities record and report information. We continue to notice differences in the coding of information by different electoral management software. For example, customers of one electoral management software supplier consistently report a higher proportion of 'mismatching' than others. Inconsistencies relating to the reasons for and total number of postal vote rejections on the Form K appear to result from the potential for differences in interpretation and treatment. For example, in the treatment of the numbers of covering envelopes and ballot papers returned, covering envelopes may be sent in without the A envelope or postal voting statement enclosed, while the missing document may or may not be sent in a separate covering envelope later, or multiple ballots may be returned in one envelope. When local authorities are contacted about such anomalies they are often unable to provide revised figures or clarify why the data were coded in that way. In practice, we use a calculation of field B6 minus field C18 as a surrogate for the total number of postal votes rejected regardless of whether or not it is the same as recorded in field C19. The different breakdown of reasons for rejection collected on the additional data form does not always match this B6 minus C18 calculation. However, the discrepancies seem less severe and the categories have the advantage of being embedded in software and of having greater 'common sense' meaning. It would seem sensible to consider replacing fields B15-17 on

Form K with three other aggregated categories: rejections for mismatching; rejections for missing identifier information; rejections for absent documentation. As it is, field B15 is largely redundant given that almost all authorities now verify 100% of postal vote returns. There is no field that captures the number of postal voting statements received by the Returning Officer or at a polling station before the close of poll. In practice, we use field B6, 'Number of covering envelopes received by the Returning Officer or at a polling station before the close of poll' as a surrogate but we know that, as mentioned, electors can return multiple postal ballots in one envelope or return envelopes without any ballots. Appendix B Please fill out one Form K for every constituency Form K: STATEMENT AS TO POSTAL BALLOT PAPERS REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE ACTS Parliamentary Election Constituency: Date of Poll: A. Issue of postal ballot papers 1. Total number of postal ballot papers issued under regulation 71 2. Total number of postal ballot papers issued under regulation 77 (spoilt and returned for cancellation), regulation 78 (lost or not received) and regulation 78A (cancelled due to change of address) 3. Total number of postal ballot papers cancelled under regulation 86A (where the first ballot paper was cancelled and retrieved) 4. Total number of postal ballot papers issued (1 to 3) 5. Total number of ballot papers cancelled under regulation 78A B (1). Receipt of and replacement postal ballot papers 6. Number of covering envelopes received by the Returning Officer or at a polling station before the close of poll (excluding any undelivered or returned under regulation 77(1) (spoilt), regulation 78(1) (lost) and regulation 86A (cancelled ballot papers)) 7. Number of covering envelopes received by the returning officer after the close of poll, excluding any returned as undelivered 8. Number of postal ballot papers returned spoilt for cancellation in time for another ballot paper to be issued 9. Number of postal ballot papers identified as lost or not received in time for another ballot paper to be issued 10. Number of ballot papers cancelled and retrieved in time for another ballot paper to be issued 11. Number of postal ballot papers returned as spoilt too late for another ballot paper to be issued 12. Number of covering envelopes returned as undelivered (up to the 25th day after the date of poll) 13. Number of covering envelopes not received by the Returning Officer (by the 25th day after the date of poll) 14. Total numbers 6 to 13 (this should be the same as that in 4 above) B (2). Receipt of postal ballot papers – Personal Identifiers 15. Number of covering envelopes set aside for the verification of personal identifiers on postal voting statements 16. Number of postal voting statements subject to verification procedure rejected as not completed (excluding prior cancellations) 17. Number of postal voting statements rejected following verification procedures due to the personal identifiers on the postal voting statement not matching those in the personal identifiers record (excluding prior cancellations) C. Count of postal ballot papers 18. Number of ballot papers returned by postal voters which were included in the count of ballot papers 19. Number of cases in which a covering envelope or its contents were marked "Rejected" (cancellations under regulations 77, 78, 78A and 86A are not rejections and should be included in items 2, 3, 5, 8, 9 and 10 above) Date: Signed: Returning Officer Authority: Additional data form 1) How many proxies were appointed for these elections? 2) How many emergency proxies were appointed for these elections? 3) How many waivers were granted for these elections? 4) How many postal votes were rejected for: a) Want of a signature b) Want of a date of birth c) Want of both d) Mismatched signature e) Mismatched DoB f) Both mismatched g) Ballot paper unreturned h) Postal voting statement unreturned 5) What was the total number of polling stations used? 6) How many covering envelopes were returned on polling day before 10pm? 7) How many

covering envelopes were returned on the day after polling day before 10pm? 8) Total number of new electors added to the register via the first interim notice of alteration (11.05.17). 9) Total number of new electors added to the register via the second and final notices of alteration. 10) Total number of applications to register received after the registration deadline (22.05.17). 11) Total number of applications received in time to be processed for the first interim notice of alteration (02.05.17) 12) Total number of duplicate applications received in time to be processed for the first interim notice of alteration (02.05.17). 13) Total number of applications received between the last date for applications for the first interim notice of alteration (02.05.17) and last date for applications for the final notice of alteration (22.05.17) 14) Total number of duplicate applications received between the last date for applications for the first notice of alteration (02.05.17) and last date for applications for the final notice of alteration (22.05.17) 15) How many people tried to vote on polling day and were found not to be registered? 1. Data provided for 63.5% of electoral register entries in GB capturing additions between the second and third notices of alteration. NI estimate based on data provided for 3 May – 1 June. ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Data provided for 62.2% of electoral register entries in GB capturing applications between the second and third notices of alteration. ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. Data received from 449 constituencies across the UK. ■ Back to content at footnote 3 4. Data received from 612 constituencies across Great Britain. ■ Back to content at footnote 4 Related content Report: How the 2017 UK general election was run Read our report about how the 2017 general election was run Report: Electoral registration at the June 2017 UK general election Read our report about electoral registration at the 2017 general election Report: Political finance regulation at the June 2017 UK general election Read our report about political finance regulation at the 2017 general election Report: Voting in 2017 Read our report about voting at the general election in 2017