First published: 24 July 2019 Last updated: 24 July 2019 The May 2018 pilot schemes Voters at polling stations in Great Britain do not need to show any identification before they are allowed to vote. In 2014 we recommended that voters in Great Britain should be required to show a form of identification before they vote at polling stations in future. Voters in Northern Ireland have been required to show photographic identification at polling stations since elections in 2003. We have found little evidence to suggest that the scheme applied in Northern Ireland presents difficulties for people in terms of accessibility. In 2016, the UK Government said that it would ask local councils to run pilot schemes in May 2018 to test different ways of identifying voters at polling stations . It said that pilot schemes would help to see what the impact would be for voters and electoral administrators, and would help them to decide how to design a scheme that could be used for UK Parliament elections and local elections in England. Five local councils were selected to run voter identification pilot schemes at their elections on Thursday 3 May 2018: Bromley Gosport Swindon Watford Woking Each pilot scheme had specific rules for how they should work which were agreed between the UK Government and the local Returning Officer. Voters in some areas had to show identification with their photo on; in other areas, voters could show identification without their photo. The Returning Officer for each area ran the processes for the schemes. The Cabinet Office, which is part of the UK Government, oversaw all of the pilot schemes in May 2018. The law says that we have to independently evaluate each of the schemes within three months of the elections . This report This report sets out what we found when we looked at the results of the May 2018 pilot schemes. It also looks beyond these pilot schemes at the implications for the future, and what we think the UK Government should do next. To do this, we have looked at the impact of the pilot schemes on voters and on the administration of the elections. We have also looked at the impact of the pilot schemes on public confidence and on the security of the elections. We collected information from different sources to help us reach these findings, including: A survey asking people what they thought of the schemes A survey of people who worked in polling stations Data about what identification people showed when they voted, and the number of people who were turned away because they didn't have the right identification Inviting feedback from organisations that represent different groups of voters As well as this overall report, we have also written individual evaluations of each of the specific pilot schemes. These reports have looked at specific questions that the law says we have to consider which are: the turnout of voters was higher than it would have been if the scheme had not applied voters found the procedures provided for their assistance by the scheme easy to use the procedures provided for by the scheme led to any increase in personation or other electoral offences or in any other malpractice in connection with elections those procedures led to any increase in expenditure, or to any savings, by the authority We have also considered the UK Government's own objectives for the voter identification pilot schemes: That proposed 'ID at polling stations' policy measures are proportional to the policy objective of reducing the opportunity for electoral fraud That the proposed 'ID at polling stations' policy measures enhance public confidence in the security of the electoral system What we're not able to say in this report What we're not able to say in this report We can evaluate these schemes against the statutory criteria and the Government's objectives using the data and information we have

gathered. However, we are not able to draw definitive conclusions from these pilots on how a voter identification requirement would operate in the future across Great Britain, or at polls with higher levels of turnout. This is partly because the available evidence is drawn from only five local authority areas which are not representative of many other areas of Great Britain. There would be different challenges in areas with different demographics. These pilots also took place at local elections where turnout is significantly lower than other polls, such as UK Parliamentary general elections. Many people who do not normally vote at local elections will vote at a general election. These people also tend to have different demographic backgrounds to those who normally vote at local elections. Further pilot schemes at local elections are unlikely to provide more evidence about the impact of an identification requirement on voters and electoral administration at higher turnout elections. Returning Officers cannot run pilot schemes at UK Parliament elections, so the UK Government may need to look for other sources of evidence about the impact at elections where turnout is likely to be higher. This could include qualitative research with irregular voters and the less politically engaged to test likely reactions to an identification requirement. Related content Register to vote All you need to register to vote is 5 minutes and your National Insurance number. Our Commissioners Donations and loans Find out about donations and loans to a political party, individual or other organisation Report: How the 2017 UK general election was run Read our report about how the 2017 general election was run