

Reforms needed to get thousands of people registered to vote | Electoral Commission Search

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Almost 400,000 people across Wales 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 house continue to be less likely to be correctly registered to vote. The findings show that the current electoral registration system does not work well for voters or those who administer it. Urgent reforms are needed to enable public data to be used to facilitate voter registration, particularly for those less likely to be correctly registered. The Welsh Government has already outlined proposals to modernise electoral registration in a white paper on electoral reform published last year. The Commission is now calling on the Welsh and UK governments to work together to pass legislation to create clear legal gateways for government departments and public bodies to share data on potentially eligible voters with electoral administrators. A consistent approach between both governments would ensure changes are developed and delivered in a way which ensures that voters are accurately included in the registers for all types of elections they are eligible to vote in.

Rhydian Thomas, Head of the Electoral Commission, Wales said: "Thousands of people across Wales are not registered to vote or are registered incorrectly. While some may not want to participate in elections, for many people it is a consequence of an outdated registration system that disproportionately affects private renters and young people. This is particularly significant in Wales where our voting franchise includes 16-17 year olds for Senedd and local elections. "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. "The Welsh Government has already highlighted its intention to work with local authorities to pilot automatic voter registration for devolved elections. We welcome these proposals and stand ready to work with them and the wider electoral community to support further development of this important area of work." 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 Wales, 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 Ella Downing, Senior Communications Adviser on 029 2034 6824, out of office hours 07789 920 414 or [edowning@electoralcommission.org.uk](mailto:edowning@electoralcommission.org.uk). 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 Welsh, UK and Scottish 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. 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. Police and Crime Commissioner elections are scheduled to take place across Wales in May 2024. A UK parliamentary general election must also take place before the end of January 2025. Everyone must be registered to vote in order to take part in elections. Related content Our Commissioners Donations and loans Find out about donations and loans to a political party, individual or other organisation Our Executive Team Meet our Executive Team, and find out more about them Donations accepted View data about donations accepted by parties and campaigners