

Public attitudes towards voting in Scotland in the context of COVID-19 | Electoral Commission Search Public attitudes towards voting in Scotland in the context of COVID-19 You are in the Public attitudes towards voting in the context of COVID-19 section Home Our research Public attitudes towards voting in the context of COVID-19 On this page Introduction Key findings Polling station voting Postal voting Other findings Background notes First published: 25 August 2020 Last updated: 26 November 2020 Introduction In February 2021, we asked a representative sample of eligible voters in Scotland about their attitudes towards voting during the pandemic. The questions covered attitudes towards postal voting and other options for the safe running of the election in 2021. This is a repeat of the work carried out in August 2020 and November 2020. In both August and November this research was requested by the Scottish Government under Section 10 of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000. This page provides a summary of the findings from the latest of these surveys conducted in February, making comparisons with the other surveys throughout. Key findings The key findings are consistent across August, November 2020 and February 2021 with voting in a polling place remaining the preferred option amongst a majority of voters although the results also indicate a likely increase in the proportion of voters opting to use a postal vote at the 2021 Scottish Parliament election compared to previous polls. Polling station voting Over three quarters (76%) of eligible electors and 82% of those who say they ordinarily vote in a polling station would feel safe voting there. This is not significantly different from what we saw when we asked these questions previously. When we explain the planned Covid safety measures for polling stations, based on Electoral Commission guidance, there is an increase in the proportion who see in-person voting as safe (84%). Among those who typically vote in a polling station 88% said they would feel safe. Of those who said they would not feel safe voting in polling stations, just under 9/10 (87%) said there was no measure that could be introduced to make them feel safe voting in person. While we are not able, from this research, to report specifically on BAME respondents in Scotland we can report for Great Britain as a whole. 61% of BAME respondents said voting in person was safe compared to 75% of White respondents. Once told about the Electoral Commission guidance around safety measures 73% of BAME respondents said they would feel safe voting in person compared with 84% of white respondents. Postal voting The same proportion of people, compared to November, said they would vote by post (38%) if an election were held now. The proportion of people who say they ordinarily vote at a polling station and would now choose to vote by post has remained consistent too with 22% saying they would vote by post (23% in November). While this should not be taken as a reliable indicator of the number of people who will actually vote by mail this does indicate that there could be a significant uplift in the number of postal votes compared with previous polls. Other findings There has been an increase in the willingness to vote if an election were to take place now. 90% said they would vote in February compared to 83% in November. Given a number of different options around how the May elections should be conducted the most popular option expressed was, again, for the Scottish Parliament election to be run with the same methods of voting as usual (42%). 28% would prefer polling stations to be open for more than one day, 10% wanted the election to be held as an all postal ballot and 12% preferred a short postponement. The proportion who thought the election should be postponed (by not more than 6 months) has increased from 5% in November to 12% in February. Those who were more inclined to think the elections should be delayed were also more likely to say that they think the elections would not be safe. They were also more likely to be

older. Just under a third of those who intend to vote in person (31%) said they would not know anybody who could vote by proxy for them if their household had to isolate due to covid-19. Just over half were sure they did know somebody who could vote for them (57%). 12% were unsure. Respondents from social grade ABC1 are more likely to know people in their local area who could act as a proxy for them (67%) compared to C2DE (46%). As in the previous research, around a half (50%) of all those surveyed would vote by post if encouraged to (including 58% of polling place voters). Once those already registered to vote by post are included this would mean around two-thirds of electors who would vote by post. When asked why they would not apply for a postal vote, the majority (65%) said they would prefer to vote in person at a polling station.

Background notes

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from work done for the Commission by YouGov Plc. For the February fieldwork, total sample size was 504 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 29th January and 20th February. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all adults in Scotland (aged 16+). For the August fieldwork, total sample size was 1,145 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 3rd and 7th August 2020. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all adults in Scotland (aged 16+). For the November fieldwork, total sample size was 1,089 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 6th and 10th November 2020. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all adults in Scotland (aged 16+).

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