

Report: How the 2016 National Assembly for Wales elections were run | Electoral Commission Search Report: How the 2016 National Assembly for Wales elections were run You are in the Senedd elections section Home Senedd elections On this page About the elections Registration and turnout The administration of the poll The voter experience Political parties and candidates Election results Recommendations: Legislation Recommendations: Wales Delivery Group Recommendations: Candidacy Recommendations: Campaign costs Recommendations: Party registration Recommendations: Candidate spending Recommendations: The Commission's powers Recommendations: Social media Recommendations: Electoral registration Download our full report First published: 9 July 2019 Last updated: 7 August 2019 About the elections On 5 May 2016 there were a number of different polls held across the UK. This report looks specifically at the administration of the elections to the National Assembly for Wales. These elections were combined with the Police and Crime Commissioner elections in Wales, and in Ogmores a UK Parliamentary by-election was held on the same day. Whilst there were some issues, which the report will look at in greater detail, overall, our assessment is that the National Assembly for Wales' elections were well-run with few problems. Voters were generally satisfied with the process of voter registration and of voting whether in person at a polling station or by post or proxy. Registration and turnout A total of 2.246 million people were registered to vote in the National Assembly for Wales elections on 5 May 2016. This was fewer than in 2011 and fractionally lower than in 2007. Over 1.02 million voted in the elections. Overall turnout at the elections was 45.6% in the constituency election and 45.4% in the regional election. The highest turnout was 56.8% in Cardiff North and the lowest 34.6% in Alyn and Deeside. This is the second highest recorded turnout at elections to the National Assembly for Wales. By comparison, turnout at the Scottish Parliamentary election was 55.6% and at the election to the Northern Ireland Assembly was 54.9%. Section 2.13 shows turnout for all the polls held on 5 May. In total, 17.6% of the electorate had a postal vote for this election. This compares to 17.0% in 2011, 12.2% in 2007 and 6.9% in 2003. 73.9% of postal votes in the constituency election and 73.8% of postal votes in the regional election were returned. Postal votes accounted for 27.6% of votes cast in the constituency election and 27.5% of votes in the regional election. The administration of the poll The National Assembly elections in Wales were held over 40 constituencies, which mirror UK Parliamentary constituencies, and five electoral regions, those being: North Wales Mid and West Wales South Wales West South Wales Central South Wales East The voter experience Our public opinion research suggests that most voters believed the elections were well-run and were satisfied with the process of registering to vote and voting. There remains a low level of awareness on how the registration process works however. Most notably, more than one in three (35%) people believe you are automatically registered if you are of voting age and almost one in three (27%) say you can register to vote until the day before the election. In terms of the election itself, the majority of respondents said that they knew a great or a fair amount about these elections with 81% agreeing that they had enough information on how to cast their vote. Political parties and candidates Table 1: Candidates and parties that took part in the 2016 elections as compared to 2011 2011 2016 Constituency candidates 176 248 Political Parties on regional lists 13 17 Independent candidates on regional lists 1 2 From the numbers of candidates and regional lists nominated by political parties, the following trends are apparent: Once again, the Welsh Labour Party, Welsh Conservative and Unionist Party, Plaid Cymru, and the Welsh Liberal Democrats, nominated candidates in all 40 Assembly constituencies and all five

electoral regions. The UK Independence Party (UKIP) stood candidates in 38 of the 40 constituencies, and in all five regions, compared to 2011 where they did not nominate any constituency candidates. The Welsh Green Party, Abolish the Welsh Assembly Party, and Freedom to Choose, nominated candidates in constituency and/or regional elections, but not in every constituency or region. A total of 12 parties nominated constituency candidates, and 17 parties contested regional seats. In addition, eight constituencies and two regions were contested by independent candidates. Our post-election survey of candidates suggests that the majority of candidates agreed that it was easy to find out what to do to become a candidate, and nearly half agreed that the rules on spending and donations are clear.

Election results

Political parties	Percentage of vote	Constituency seats	Regional seats	Total seats
Welsh Labour	33.1%	27	29	56
Plaid Cymru	20.7%	6	6	12
Welsh Conservatives	20%	6	5	11
UKIP	12.7%	0	7	7
Liberal Democrats	7.1%	1	0	1
Other	3.2%	0	0	0
Green Party	2.7%	0	0	0
Independent	0.5%	0	0	0

Recommendations:

**Legislation**

**Recommendation 1: Timely and accurate legislation in Welsh and English** To ensure greater accuracy, we recommend that a wider discussion is had on the most effective way to check draft regulations for elections in Wales before they are laid leading to establishing a user group to consider any Welsh language regulations during the drafting period. The group should include, but not be limited to, Electoral Commission staff, and representatives of the Wales electoral community. We would also re-emphasise that all legislation relating to electoral events, including funding legislation is clear (either by Royal Assent to primary legislation, or by laying secondary legislation for approval by the Assembly / Parliament) at least six months before it is required to be implemented or complied with— this would include accurate and timely prescribed forms in both English and Welsh. Any delay to the publication of Welsh language forms puts elections teams and voters in Wales at a significant disadvantage and can pose a risk to the relevant election.

**Recommendations: Wales Delivery Group**

**Recommendation 2: Wales Delivery Group** A permanent Wales Delivery Group should continue to meet in order to further improve and streamline planning for future electoral events, and to provide opportunities for discussing key areas of common concern. The Commission will draft terms of reference and seek views from all key partners, with this work beginning by the end of 2016.

**Recommendation 3: Colour of the ballot paper** For future elections the Wales Delivery Group should consider the colour of the ballot papers to be used for each election and issue an appropriate recommendation, thus providing ROs and their staff with clarity from an early stage.

**Recommendation 4: Regional and cross-authority working** Working on a regional level represents a significant challenge for Regional Returning Officers, Constituency Returning Officers and electoral administrators and it is important that there are strong communication networks and systems in place to facilitate the planning process. For future regional elections we will facilitate discussion, through the Wales Delivery Group, on how Returning Officers and electoral administrators could work on a cross-authority basis to improve decision making and operational effectiveness.

**Recommendations: Candidacy**

**Recommendation 5: Commencement of candidacy** The relevant Government should ensure that the date of publication of notice of election should fall on the same day as the dissolution of the Assembly, to avoid a period of time where spending is not regulated.

**Recommendations: Campaign costs**

**Recommendation 6: Costs relating to an individual's disability and translation from Welsh to English and vice versa** Governments with legislative competence over elections within the UK should amend the definitions of political party and candidate spending so that reasonable expenses that can be attributed to an individual's disability are exempt, (as was recently set out in the

revised Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 rules for non-party campaigners). As the PPERA non-party campaigner rules now exempt the costs associated with translating Welsh to and vice versa, we recommend that equivalent legal provisions should be introduced by the relevant Government/s into the election rules covering campaign spending by political parties and candidates. Recommendations: Party registration Recommendation 7: Registration of party names and descriptions for use on ballot papers We continue to recommend that where a candidate represents a political party on a ballot paper, it should be clear to voters which party the candidate represents. The legal provisions for registration of party descriptions present risks of confusion for voters and restrict the participation of political parties. The Welsh Government and other Governments of the UK should work with the Electoral Commission to reform the provisions on party descriptions. Recommendations: Candidate spending Recommendation 8: Transparency and accessibility of candidate spending To improve transparency and accessibility of candidate spending returns, we have previously recommended that Returning Officers should be required to publish spending returns online as well as through the existing methods of public inspection. We support recommendation 12-5 of the Law Commissions' review 12 of Electoral Law which proposes a method for implementing this change through legislation. 1 Recommendations: The Commission's powers Recommendation 9: Extending investigative and sanctioning powers We continue to recommend extending our investigative and sanctioning powers at major elections for offences relating to candidate spending and donations, including at National Assembly for Wales elections. It will be important for Governments and Parliaments across the UK to work together on introducing the Commission's new powers for different sets of elections. Recommendations: Social media Recommendation 10: Reporting use of social media at future elections We will give further consideration to how campaigners should report spend on social media at future elections. As spend in this area grows, there is the potential for less transparency if expenditure on social media is not easily identifiable within the spending returns, because social media is not a specific reporting category. This will need to be considered as part of reviewing all of the expenditure reporting categories to ensure that they remain proportionate and relevant to future trends in campaigning. In case any of these changes would need to be implemented through legislation, we recommend that the UK Government and Welsh Government and legislatures should consider the timing needed for implementing changes before the next major elections. 2 Recommendations: Electoral registration Recommendation 11: Providing an online registration status check Providing a way for electors to check their registration status at the beginning of the online registration application process would reduce the action required by voters to keep their register entry up to date, and would also reduce the impact on EROs of processing duplicate applications. The UK Government should develop an online service to allow people to check whether they are already correctly registered to vote before they complete a new application to register. Any such service would need to carefully manage and protect voters' personal information. Download our full report 2016 National Assembly for Wales election report 1. Law Commission's Review of Electoral Law, Recommendation 12-3, page 161 [http://www.lawcom.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/electoral\\_law\\_interim\\_report.pdf](http://www.lawcom.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/electoral_law_interim_report.pdf) and recommendation 37 of the Electoral Commission's Regulatory Review of Party and Election Finance 2013 [http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/157499/PEF-RegulatoryReview-2013.pdf](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/157499/PEF-RegulatoryReview-2013.pdf). ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. We made the same recommendation in relation to the UK Parliamentary Election spending categories, and

for Scottish Parliament and Northern Ireland Assembly elections in our post-election reports in 2015 and 2016. ■ [Back to content at footnote 2](#) Related content [Report on the May 2021 elections in Wales](#) [Read our report about how the 2021 elections in Wales were run](#) [Results and turnout at the 2016 National Assembly for Wales election](#) [View the results and turnout at the 2016 National Assembly for Wales election](#) [Report: How the 2011 National Assembly for Wales elections were run](#) [Read our report about how the 2011 National Assembly for Wales elections were run](#) [Results and turnout at the 2016 National Assembly for Wales election](#) [View the results and turnout at the 2016 National Assembly for Wales election](#)