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Size of the electoral registers Effectiveness of the canvass Background Overview This
report looks at how the 2022 canvass in Great Britain was run and considers how the
electoral registers have been affected by the canvass reforms introduced in 2020.
Summary In 2020, new processes were introduced to make the annual canvass more
efficient. These processes involve comparing the electoral registers with other
public datasets so that Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) can identify
households where residents' details are most likely to have changed. EROs can then
target their resources at these households (by assigning them to different 'routes'
for follow up contacts). The 2022 canvass was the third using this approach. This
analysis sets out our latest insight into the impact that the canvass reforms are
having on the quality of the electoral registers. However, we cannot draw firm
conclusions on the basis of this analysis alone. In September 2023, we will publish
the findings from our next study into the accuracy and completeness of the registers.
This research involves interviewing several thousand households across the UK and
comparing their current details with their entries on the electoral register. It will
allow us to produce reliable estimates of the quality of the registers and thereby to
robustly evaluate the impact that the canvass reforms have had. The results of our
previous studies are available here. In the meantime, our analysis of data relating
to the 2022 canvass provides a snapshot of performance in a specific year. The data
suggests that the new processes may not be sufficient to ensure that the registers
keep pace with population movement and we can see clear patterns emerging: Some
households continue to be allocated to the 'wrong' route due to imperfections in the
data matching process and/or the lag between matching and canvassing. Almost a fifth
of responses from households allocated to Route 1 (where the data matching process
suggested there had been no change in household composition) reported significant
changes to electors' details. The response rate among Route 2 households suggests
that necessary changes to electors' details may not be reflected on the registers.
One third of Route 2 households (~2.4 million) did not respond to the canvass despite
the fact that the data matching process suggested there had been a change in
household composition. The number of registered attainers (i.e. those who will soon
reach voting age) continues to fall, possibly as a consequence of the reduction in
contact that EROs now make with Route 1 households. The decline in the number of
registered attainers began after the introduction of individual electoral
registration (IER) in 2014. It continued in 2022, although the number fell at a much
lower rate than in 2021 (-0.23% vs. -28.70%). While we know that new registration
applications are most readily driven by large scale electoral events, it is
nevertheless important that the canvass and other year-round registration activity
supports accurate and complete registers. This can help to reduce the large volumes
of registration applications received immediately in advance of major polls, when
EROs' staff capacity is already stretched. To help ensure that all eligible voters
can have their say at elections, the electoral registration system in Great Britain
should be further modernised. This modernisation should involve making better use of
public data, including data from other government services, so that registration is
as easy as possible for voters. Over 2023, we will continue to use the ERO
performance standards framework to build on the work we have carried out with EROs in
the past two years. We will support EROs to further develop and use key performance
indicators to help them better understand and report on the impact of their activity.

We will also once again ask EROs to complete a survey during the 2023 canvass, to help us build a picture of how the canvass is progressing, as well as supporting our engagement with individual EROs and their teams. Size of the electoral registers

Table 1 below shows the percentage change in the number of entries on the parliamentary registers in each nation of Great Britain between 2021 and 2022. Table 1. Change in the number of parliamentary entries 2021-22 Area 2021 2022 % change

Area	2021	2022	% change
England	38,889,429	38,834,540	-0.1%
Scotland	4,028,717	4,012,887	-0.4%
Wales	2,307,877	2,310,148	0.1%
Great Britain	45,226,023	45,157,575	-0.2%

In the West Midlands, the East of England, the South East, Scotland and Wales the number of local government register entries increased slightly between 2021 and 2022 (see Table 2). In the other regions, the number of local government entries fell slightly. Table 2. Change in the number of local government entries 2021-22 Area 2021 2022 %change

Area	2021	2022	%change
England	40,882,721	40,857,874	-0.1%
North East	1,946,010	1,943,955	-0.1%
North West	5,421,090	5,419,776	0.0%
Yorkshire and the Humber	4,009,237	3,986,561	-0.6%
East Midlands	3,554,099	3,553,180	0.0%
West Midlands	4,253,449	4,257,399	0.1%
East of England	4,633,193	4,636,054	0.1%
London	6,021,139	6,000,191	-0.3%
South East	6,775,409	6,796,943	0.3%
South West	4,269,095	4,263,815	-0.1%
Scotland	4,245,217	4,250,579	0.1%
Wales	2,348,576	2,362,964	0.6%
Great Britain	47,476,514	47,471,417	0.0%

Variations in levels of registration can be driven by changes in the size of the eligible population or by policy changes, such as extensions to the franchise. Changes can also be driven by reforms to the canvassing approaches used by EROs, as well as national and local voter registration campaigns. Our analysis below explores what the available data tells us about the effectiveness of the canvass. Attainers

People who will reach voting age and become eligible to vote during the lifetime of the register are known as attainers. Attainers can be included on the electoral registers. The number of attainers has been falling for several years. The number of attainers on the parliamentary registers in Great Britain fell by -0.23% between 2021 and 2022 (see Table 3 below). This marked a dramatic reduction in the rate of decline relative to 2020 and 2021. The introduction of individual registration in 2014 meant that attainers had to make their own application to register (rather than being added through a single household form) and this change coincided with a decline in numbers. The number of registered attainers in Great Britain has fallen every year since 2017, albeit by varying degrees (see Figure 1). In 2020 and 2021, the overall decrease across Great Britain as a whole was driven by large drops in the number of registered attainers in England (-25.9% and -40.6%, respectively). This trend was broken in 2022, when the number of attainers rose slightly (1.17%). Similarly, whereas Scotland saw a modest increase in registered attainers in both 2020 (0.9%) and 2021 (6.1%), this number fell in 2022 (-4.52%). In Wales, the number of registered attainers increased significantly in 2020 (11.6%) and 2021 (34.2%) and this upward trend continued in 2022, but the increase was much smaller (0.74%). The reformed annual canvass may be exacerbating the decline seen from 2014 onwards, as the need to add an attainer to the register will not be identified through the data matching process. For example, many households in Route 1 will have potential attainers but now receive fewer communications from EROs to encourage them to become registered. The different pattern in Scotland and Wales is likely to be connected to the extension of the devolved elections' franchise to 16 and 17 year olds (and associated increased registration activity). This seems to be offsetting a systematic problem with the registration of attainers evident in England. Our next accuracy and completeness research will give us an updated assessment of the registration rate for attainers, which was 25% in our 2018 study. Our engagement with EROs indicates that they

recognise that their attainer numbers are falling, despite efforts to engage widely with education institutions and use education data to support this work. South Norfolk and Peterborough have had some success engaging with schools around school elections, to help build relationships with them. North Hertfordshire also carried out targeted work to promote registration in schools during UK Parliament Week. However, overall, a lack of staff capacity to support this work and issues with the accuracy of education data were common reasons given for not being able to do more in this area. Despite numbers stabilising somewhat in 2022, attainer registration is unlikely to significantly increase through the existing registration and canvass processes alone. This is an area where a more automated registration process could be beneficial. Data from the education sector could help EROs identify and target attainers and other young people. Also, data from the Department for Work and Pensions could potentially be used by EROs to register young people to vote automatically when they are allocated their National Insurance number ahead of their 16th birthday.

Table 3. Number of attainers on the parliamentary registers in Great Britain 2013-22

Year	England	% change	Scotland	% change	Wales	% change	Great Britain	% change
2022	113,266	1.17%	39,025	-4.52%	19,517	0.74%	171,808	-0.23%
2021	111,958	-40.60%	40,871	6.10%	19,374	34.20%	172,203	-28.70%
2020	188,472	-25.90%	38,518	0.90%	14,437	11.60%	241,427	-21.00%
2019	254,384	-1.40%	38,171	-7.60%	12,942	0.00%	305,497	-2.10%
2018	257,938	-4.10%	41,296	-4.80%	12,948	1.20%	312,182	-4.00%
2017	269,092	-5.40%	43,357	4.30%	12,794	-6.30%	325,243	-4.30%
2016	284,522	19.00%	41,561	67.40%	13,651	10.60%	339,734	23.00%
2015	239,019	-6.20%	24,827	-36.30%	12,339	-12.30%	276,185	-10.30%
2014	254,836	-32.80%	38,963	-38.60%	14,065	-24.40%	307,864	-33.30%
2013	379,284	NA	63,471	NA	18,595	NA	461,350	NA

Other register statistics 16 and 17 year olds (Scotland and Wales)

In Scotland and Wales, 16 and 17 year-olds can vote in Scottish Parliament, Senedd and local council elections. This change was introduced in 2015 in Scotland and 2020 in Wales. In Scotland, 76,955 16 and 17 year-olds were registered on the local government registers at the conclusion of the 2022 canvass (see Table 4). This represents a -1.3% decrease on 2021. Taken with NRS population estimates, this indicates that roughly two thirds of 16 and 17 year-olds in Scotland are included on the local government registers. 1 EROs across Scotland continue to engage with 16 and 17 year-olds using a variety of methods including direct mailing, phone/text communications, contact with schools and universities, issuing press releases, social media activity, distributing newsletters, and local advertising, as well as local activity with partner organisations.

Case study – Lothian Valuation Joint Board

Lothian Valuation Joint Board – covering the City of Edinburgh, East Lothian, Midlothian and West Lothian Council areas – uses a combination of approaches to encourage 16 and 17 year-olds to register, including direct emails, attending events and data mining. In the days after they sent a targeted email, there was a spike in registration applications. Across four events attended, they reported directly registering 357 students and engaging with a great deal more. Data mining school lists and subsequent follow up activities were attributable to a 6.6% increase in registered school pupils over the age of 16 (equal to approximately 1,075 applications), and an overall increase of 18.9% for school pupils over the age of 14 (approximately 5,754 applications).

Table 4. Number of 16 and 17 year-olds on the local government registers in Scotland 2015-22

Year	16 and 17 year-olds
2015	48,962
2016	79,621
2017	83,536
2018	78,383
2019	73,777
2020	73,272
2021	77,958
2022	76,955

In Wales, 36,722 16 and 17 year-olds were on the local government registers on 1 December 2022. This represents a 10.5% increase on 2021, meaning the rate of growth

in the number of registered 16 and 17 year-olds has slowed since the previous canvass, which saw a 115.1% increase relative to 2020. Taken with the ONS mid-year population estimates for 2021, our canvass data suggests that just over half of 16 and 17 year-olds in Wales are currently included on the local government registers. 2 Across Wales, EROs carried out a range of activity to encourage registration amongst 16 and 17 year-olds. Using grant funding from Welsh Government, many authorities appointed temporary public engagement officers and there appears to have been an increase in the range of engagement that was undertaken in those areas. The strongly held opinion of the local authorities that we talked to was that this resource should continue to be made available to ensure that the foundations already laid are built upon and this important work can continue. In addition to more standard engagement activities such as direct mailing, phone/text communications, contact with schools, press releases, newsletters and social media, some authorities undertook additional activities such as: creating website banners and TikTok videos to share with schools working with youth councils and youth partnership groups sending 16th birthday cards advertising in bus shelters pop-up sessions in schools teacher training sessions using Electoral Commission resources Case study – Torfaen County Borough Council Alongside developing an advertising campaign targeted at 16-17 year olds, Torfaen Council undertook several activities to engage with young people in the area. This included recording several videos with school pupils on how to vote and what the local council does, working with schools to promote registration via pupil post and parent portals, and running assemblies and mock elections. This activity was led by the Engagement and Electoral Participation Officer. Torfaen saw a 9% increase in registration amongst 16-17 year olds. Overseas electors A UK citizen living abroad who has been registered to vote in the UK in the past 15 years can apply to be an overseas voter. These registrations currently need to be renewed annually. The total number of overseas electors on the 2022 registers in Great Britain was 79,665 (Table 5). Table 5. Number of overseas electors on the parliamentary registers in Great Britain 2015-22

Area	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
England	97,572	241,097	205,687	113,833	185,513	170,196	94,908	73,407
Scotland	7,729	15,230	12,790	6,679	11,587	9,617	6,799	4,259
Wales	2,940	7,567	6,995	3,678	6,969	5,169	2,958	1,999
Great Britain	108,241	263,894	225,472	124,190	204,069	184,982	104,665	79,665

This is a decrease of -23.9% since the publication of the registers in 2021. It marks a continuation in the decline of registered overseas electors that has been ongoing since 2019. This decline is likely a consequence of the fact that there has not been an election in which overseas electors can vote since the 2019 UK parliamentary general election. The Elections Act 2022 extends the number of overseas citizens who will be eligible to register and vote, and also changes the requirement to renew registration annually to every three years. The extension of eligibility could result in a high volume of applications close to the next UK parliamentary general election, which EROs will need to be prepared to manage. We will carry out targeted support and engagement activities with EROs ahead of the next UK parliamentary general election. Anonymous electors The number of anonymous electoral register entries on the parliamentary registers in Great Britain decreased from 3,097 in 2021 to 2,842 in 2022 (Table 6). Anonymous registration is available for people meeting certain requirements, whose safety, or the safety of someone in the same household, is at risk. People registered anonymously appear on the electoral register without their name and address. Table 6. Number of anonymous electors on the parliamentary registers in Great Britain 2015-22

Area	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
England	2,151	2,194	2,440	2,550	3,214	3,064	2,788	2,539
Scotland	111	117	116	130	194			

196 187 191 Wales 74 74 85 108 138 114 122 112 Great Britain 2,336 2,385 2,641 2,788 3,546 3,374 3,097 2,842

Effectiveness of the canvass

Route allocations

At the beginning of the canvass, all registers are matched against Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) data. The results are used by EROs to allocate properties to 'routes' which determine how many times they will contact a household to attempt to get a response (see Background section below for more detail). EROs can also carry out further matching using local data, such as council tax records. The majority of EROs carried out local data matching and, as in 2021, council tax records were the most popular datasets used. The local data matching step had a significant impact on the number of households allocated to each route, as shown in Table 7. As in 2021, when asked whether their approach to local data matching was the same as or different to last year's, a majority (87%) of those EROs who responded said that their approach was the same. For those that decided to take a different approach, the responses suggest that this predominantly involved using a wider range of data sources. In a small handful of cases, EROs used fewer datasets in 2022 relative to 2021. These EROs cited concerns around the quality of local data, the challenge of matching registers to council tax data where the latter does not contain unique property reference numbers (UPRNs), difficulty using the data matching function within their electoral management software (EMS) system, and resource shortages as reasons for using fewer datasets this year. Other changes that EROs made to the data matching process in 2022 included allowing more time to complete the data matching step and making better use of EMS systems to reduce the level of manual matching. In some cases, EROs opted to skip the local data matching step. For example, the London Borough of Barnet chose not to conduct local data matching so as to limit the number of properties allocated to Route 1. They cited some concerns over the accuracy of local data but also noted that this approach did lead to higher costs as a higher proportion of properties needed to be more frequently contacted via the Route 2 process. Across the board, those local authorities who did not conduct local data matching allocated fewer properties to Route 1 (68% vs 76%), and more properties to Route 2 (31% vs 23%).

Table 7. Number of properties allocated to each route after national and local data matching

Route No.	properties allocated after DWP match	No. properties allocated after local data match	% change
1	19,875,665	22,186,204	11.62%
2	9,406,384	7,341,172	-21.96%
3	NA	305,128	NA

The percentage of properties allocated to Route 2 was 24.6% (see Table 8). This is in line with the expectations set out in the statement of policy for canvass reform published by the UK, Scottish and Welsh governments in 2019, which predicted that approximately one quarter of properties would need to be allocated to Route 2 nationally.

3 The percentage of households allocated to Routes 1, 2 and 3 continues to be fairly consistent across Great Britain, with the exception of London (Table 8). As in previous years, the proportion of households allocated to Route 1 was lower (66.2%) in London than in other regions, while the proportion allocated to Route 2 was higher (32.8%). This reflects the higher rate of population movement in London: as the rate of change in household composition is higher in London, fewer properties are successfully matched against existing DWP and local data.

Table 8. Percentage of properties allocated to each route by nation and region

Area	Route 1	Route 2	Route 3
England	74.3%	24.7%	1.0%
North East	80.9%	18.9%	0.2%
North West	74.4%	24.9%	0.7%
Yorkshire and the Humber	74.3%	24.7%	1.1%
East Midlands	76.6%	21.6%	1.9%
West Midlands	74.2%	24.2%	1.6%
East of England	77.0%	22.3%	0.7%
London	66.2%	32.8%	1.0%
South East	75.1%	24.1%	0.8%
South West	76.7%	22.4%	0.9%
Scotland	73.9%	24.8%	1.3%
Wales	76.5%	22.4%	1.1%
Great Britain	74.4%	24.6%	1.0%

The changes to the annual canvass were designed to allow EROs to direct their resources

at households whose composition was most likely to have changed. The effectiveness of the new canvass, based on this targeting of activity, will therefore be strongly determined by two things: the accuracy of the data matching and the level of response achieved. We can draw some conclusions about both from an analysis of household response rates within the two allocated routes. Household response rates per route As expected, the response rate is significantly higher among Route 2 households, where changes are expected, than Route 1 households, where they are not (67.1% vs 22.9%) (see Table 9). In 2019, before the canvass process was reformed, 23.8 million household responses were received during the canvass. In 2022, only 10 million responses were received, which is higher than the level of responses received in 2020 and 2021 (~9 million). This drop in the number of household responses since the implementation of canvass reform can be partly explained by the lower response rate among Route 1 households, which comprise the vast majority of all households but which are not required to respond unless a change to the register is needed. However, as in 2021, almost a third of Route 2 households did not respond. These are households where the data suggests a change to the register may be needed. It is important for the accuracy and completeness of the registers that the response rate for Route 2 households is as high as possible. Several EROs suggested that funding pressures made it difficult to achieve a higher Route 2 response rate, in part because these pressures made it harder to recruit canvassers. Others were unable to run public awareness campaigns or were impacted by the increase in the cost of postage. A growing number of EROs are using e-communications and telephone canvassing as this represents better value for money. However, this does present some limitations as telephone data is not always complete and some respondents are wary of e-communications from the ERO and mistake them for spam. It continues to be a challenge to reach communities who have historically been reluctant to engage with canvassers. Densely populated urban areas with high rates of population movement appear to be the most challenging areas. Some EROs are choosing to target their door-knocking efforts only in these locations. However, data from previous years demonstrates that even that is not universally successful. Some EROs are using different methods in specific areas. For example, the team in Chelmsford have supported their canvassers in building relationships with their gated communities and caravan sites. This has involved the communications team developing resources to support canvassers in those areas. Their initial experience suggests this approach is working well. We will focus our analysis of the Route 2 data over the coming years to further develop our understanding of the challenges faced by EROs and to support the identification of actions to help mitigate against the risks to the accuracy and completeness of their electoral registers. We will also undertake work with smaller groups of EROs to facilitate the sharing of good practice between those facing similar challenges. Variations in response rate As in 2020 and 2021, the response rate among Route 2 households varied significantly in 2022. For the third year, Scotland reported the lowest response rate among Route 2 properties (50.7%) (see Table 10). It may be that the year-round registration activity in Scotland, supported by elections in May 2021 and 2022, will have mitigated any negative impact of this lower response rate on the registers. The results of our next accuracy and completeness study should allow us to draw clearer conclusions.

Table 9. Response rate for Routes 1 and 2 by nation and region 2022

Area	Route 1	Route 2
England	23.7%	69.0%
North East	10.9%	65.6%
North West	17.3%	61.7%
Yorkshire and the Humber	19.5%	65.6%
East Midlands	24.7%	76.0%
West Midlands	23.2%	70.3%
East of England	25.2%	73.9%
London	22.3%	64.3%
South East	31.9%	73.2%
South West	29.4%	75.4%
Scotland	17.0%	50.7%

Wales 21.2% 66.1% Great Britain 22.9% 67.1% Table 10. Route 2 response rates 2020-22
Area 2020 2021 2022 England 67.4% 70.1% 69.0% North East 59.3% 62.7% 65.6% North West
61.8% 63.2% 61.7% Yorkshire and the Humber 70.5% 67.3% 65.6% East Midlands 72.5%
75.6% 76.0% West Midlands 69.3% 71.2% 70.3% East of England 72.3% 75.8% 73.9% London
59.7% 65.9% 64.3% South East 71.5% 74.2% 73.2% South West 72.4% 75.4% 75.4% Scotland
50.0% 50.7% 50.7% Wales 63.6% 65.4% 66.1% Great Britain 65.5% 68.1% 67.1% Major and

minor changes per route The nature of the responses received can also give an indication of the efficacy of the reformed canvass process. Responding households can record a major change (e.g. reporting that a potential new elector is resident), a minor change (e.g. amending the name of an existing elector) or no change (i.e. confirming the existing details of household members). Understanding the distribution of these changes can tell us about the accuracy of the data matching process. Of the 10 million responses received across all routes, 2.8 million households reported a major change. Table 11 describes how these major changes were distributed across the three routes. The pattern is broadly in line with 2020 and 2021. Table 11.

Distribution of major changes across routes Route Number of households reporting a major change % of households reporting a major change Route 1 933,813 32.8% Route 2 1,860,570 65.4% Route 3 52,096 1.8% Total 2,846,479 100.0% Approximately two thirds of major changes were reported by Route 2 households – i.e., those identified during the data matching step as the households most likely to report changes to residents' registration details. However, as in both 2020 and 2021, nearly a third (32.8%) of the major changes reported relate to Route 1 households, where the DWP and/or local data had indicated no change should be needed. As in the previous two years, of the 22.2 million households allocated to Route 1, the percentage reporting a major change (4.2%) is small. However, as Figure 3 below shows, almost a fifth of those Route 1 households who responded to the canvass reported a major change. Importantly for the quality of the registers, it is also unlikely that all the Route 1 households that needed to report a major change have done so – particularly as they would have received limited contact from the ERO. We do not have comparative data on the number of major changes reported by households during the canvasses preceding the reforms. It is therefore not clear to what extent the 2020-22 canvasses are out of line with historic figures. However, it is clear that either the data matching process does not accurately identify all properties where changes will be needed and/or there is an impact from the lag time between the matching and the canvassing taking place.

Additions and deletions Canvassing households does not directly result in new registrations. When a household reports that a potential new elector is resident, that individual still needs to submit an application to be added to the register. Where a household reports that electors need to be removed from the registers, a second piece of evidence (e.g. locally held data) is needed before the ERO can confirm the deletion. Entries need to be added to, and deleted from, the registers for several reasons including migration, home movement and deaths. The level of these additions and deletions provides insight into whether registration activity is keeping pace with population change. As population mobility varies across the country, so does the scale of the challenge faced by EROs. As in 2020 and 2021, the distribution of additions and deletions across the routes is largely as expected, with Route 2 households accounting for the highest proportion of changes (see Table 12). However, approximately 40% of both additions and deletions came from households whose composition was presumed to be unchanged following the data matching. Again, this suggests either a degree of inaccuracy in the allocation of households to routes or an impact from population movement between matching and canvassing. Table 12.

Percentage of additions and deletions per route

	Additions	Deletions	Route 1	Route 2	Route 3
Additions	39.91%	56.50%	3.60%	39.02%	57.36%
Deletions	39.02%	57.36%	3.62%		

This data suggests that at least some population change is not being picked up on the registers. We cannot draw clear conclusions on the overall impact from this data alone – partly because of the variable impact of electoral events outside the canvass. However, our accuracy and completeness research will provide evidence on whether the quality of the registers has declined since 2018, before the introduction of the reformed canvass. Table 13 below shows the levels of additions and deletions in recent years (for the full year, not just the canvass period). In 2020, 2021 and 2022, additions and deletions have been slightly lower than in some previous years (e.g. 2013 and 2015). However, it is usual to see more change – and higher additions, in particular – in years with significant UK-wide electoral events, such as UK general elections and the EU referendum).

Table 13. Annual percentage of additions and deletions 2010-22

Year	Additions	Deletions
2010	13%	12%
2013	15%	15%
2015	15%	15%
2016	15%	13%
2017	13%	13%
2018	11%	12%
2019	13%	10%
2020	10%	10%
2021	11%	11%
2022	10%	10%

As Table 14 sets out, we also expect to see a higher proportion of changes being picked up during the canvass period, compared to the rest of the year, in years without UK-wide elections (e.g. 2018). This trend continued in 2022.

Table 14. Percentage of additions during and outside of canvass period 2015-22

Year	Additions During canvass	Additions Outside canvass	Deletions During canvass	Deletions Outside canvass
2015	40%	60%	58%	43%
2016	38%	64%	54%	47%
2017	39%	61%	56%	44%
2018	68%	32%	68%	32%
2019	62%	38%	61%	39%
2020	56%	44%	64%	36%
2021	61%	39%	61%	39%
2022	61%	39%	65%	35%

The 2022 data on the proportion of additions and deletions recorded during the canvass period also supports this point (see Table 15). The proportion of additions during the canvass was lowest in Wales (51.6%), followed by Scotland (52.4%) and then by England (62.2%). The proportion of deletions during the canvass was lowest in Scotland (58.9%), followed by Wales (61.4%), and then by England (66.2%). The fact that the proportion of both additions and deletions during the canvass were highest in England aligns with the fact that turnout in England at the May 2022 elections was lower than in both Scotland and Wales.

Table 15. Additions and deletions during full year and canvass period, per nation

Area	Additions Full year	Additions Canvass period	Deletions Full year	Deletions Canvass period	% during canvass period
England	4,184,944	2,602,740	62.2%	4,233,640	2,802,569
Scotland	397,080	208,263	52.4%	399,007	234,824
Wales	226,355	116,703	51.6%	218,729	134,293
Great Britain	4,808,379	2,927,706	60.9%	4,851,376	3,171,686

65.4%

Further reform of the annual canvass

An effective canvass process is an important tool to provide for a high-quality register at all times and to minimise the need for significant updates ahead of major polls. However, evidence from our analysis of canvass data in recent years suggests that the reformed canvass process is still not fully picking up ongoing population movement. This means that EROs will continue to face the challenge of processing large numbers of registration applications in the period immediately before major electoral events, from new electors or people who have changed address that were not picked up by the canvass. This continues to increase risks to the resilience of electoral administration teams in the pre-election period, when they are under significant resource pressures and have critical election deadlines to meet. We have highlighted significant concerns in successive reports on electoral registration that the registration system, including the annual canvass, is unlikely to be sustainable in the longer term. We continue to recommend that governments should further reform electoral registration so that registering and updating address details is as easy as possible for people who aren't correctly registered to vote,

and managing electoral registration is more efficient for EROs. We have highlighted how these reforms could be delivered in practice, including: Introducing more automated or automatic electoral registration options through other public service transactions that people already frequently use, for example applications for passports or changes to driving licence address details, or when new National Insurance numbers are issued to people turning 16. Giving EROs access to data from a wide range of public service organisations so that they can identify new electors who are not correctly registered. There is some evidence that canvass reform has addressed one aspect of sustainability, by reducing the resource consumed by unnecessarily chasing households where there has been no change. However, our analysis has highlighted some signs that it has not had a positive impact on the other key aspect, the system's ability to pick up population changes away from major electoral events. The results from our next accuracy and completeness study, in autumn 2023, will allow us to assess the overall impact on the registers of the reformed canvass in Great Britain.

Background Electoral registers

There is no national electoral register for the United Kingdom. Separate electoral registers are compiled and maintained by each Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) across Great Britain, and one register for Northern Ireland is compiled and maintained by the Chief Electoral Officer. Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) are required to maintain two electoral registers: Parliamentary register – used for UK Parliamentary elections Local government register – used for Scottish Parliamentary, Senedd, Northern Ireland Assembly, local government and Police and Crime Commissioner elections The electoral register is a property-based database, with register entries linked to a property. This means that the quality of its information is affected by ongoing population change and EROs need to add and delete records for home-movers, electors who have died and newly eligible electors. New registers are published annually and reviewed most months. In Great Britain, there is a process of auditing the register annually before a revised version is published, which is known as the annual canvass. Each ERO is required by law to conduct an annual canvass of all properties in their area to confirm their electoral register entries and to identify electors who have moved or were not previously registered. The reformed canvass

The 2022 canvass

The 2022 canvass was the third to take place under a new model which incorporates data matching between the electoral registers and a combination of national and local data at the outset of the process. This data matching informs the ERO which properties are likely to have an unchanged household composition to enable them to target their canvass activity accordingly. The ERO will then follow one of three routes for each property:

- Route 1: Properties are placed into Route 1 if the entries of registered electors match with other data, such as that held by the DWP, and the composition of the household is therefore assumed to be unchanged. The ERO will contact Route 1 households to invite them to provide information on any changes which have occurred. Where there are no changes to report, the household is not required to respond.
- Route 2: Properties are placed into Route 2 if any of the entries of registered electors do not match with other data, such as that held by the DWP, and the composition of the household is therefore assumed to have changed such that the electoral register needs to be updated. These households are required to respond to requests for information regardless of whether or not they do in fact need to report a change.
- Route 3: This route is available for those properties where the ERO thinks they can most effectively and efficiently obtain information on residents through a 'single responsible person' acting on behalf of all residents. Care homes and student halls of residence are examples of typical Route 3 properties. Should the ERO be unable to

successfully obtain information about the property from the 'single responsible person', the property is placed into Route 2. Engagement with EROs The Commission has the statutory power to set and monitor performance standards for EROs in Great Britain and has been doing so since 2008. In June 2021 we launched a new set of ERO standards. In December 2022 we updated these to reflect the changes being introduced by the Elections Act. We expect to consider further updates as electoral reform proposals from Welsh Government and Scottish Government are progressed. We will continue to use the performance standards framework over the course of this year to build on the work we carried out with EROs in 2022, supporting them to establish more formalised key performance indicators (KPIs) in order to help them better understand, and report on, the impact of their activity. This year we have seen a significant increase in the number of EROs that report having KPIs in place, from 45% in 2021 to 70% in 2022. In the coming year we will shift our emphasis to the content and quality of the KPIs that have been set and how these are being used to inform decision making locally. We are also working with a number of local authorities to develop tools and resources to help EROs make effective use of their data to identify areas where improvements could be made. The data we have gathered to date will help to inform and shape the engagement we carry out with individual EROs, with the aim of developing a deeper understanding of the impact of particular practices and approaches, which in turn can help us to identify and share examples of good practice. In 2023/24, in addition to the specific engagement with EROs during the canvass period, which will be similar to 2022, we will also take a year-round approach to engagement with EROs. As well as focussing on KPIs, this will also involve data collection and engagement around the Elections Act changes which impact on the role of EROs, including administering the Voter Authority Certificate process.

Download the electoral registration data 2020-2022 Electoral Registration and Annual Canvass Data 2020-22 1. NRS (2022) Mid-2021 Population Estimates Scotland ■ [Back to content at footnote 1](#) 2. ONS (2022) Estimates of the population for the UK, England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, Table MYE2 - Persons ■ [Back to content at footnote 2](#) 3. HM Government, Scottish Government and Welsh Government (2019) Reform of the Annual Canvass: Statement of Policy ■ [Back to content at footnote 3](#)

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