

Report overview: 2019 UK Parliamentary general election | Electoral Commission Search

Report overview: 2019 UK Parliamentary general election

You are in the UK general elections section Home UK general elections In this section In depth: delivering the 2019 general election In depth: campaigning at the 2019 general election Overview This is a summary of our report on the 2019 UK general election. The report continues in two in-depth sections, covering delivering the election and campaigning at the election . Download the full report as a PDF Jump to The election was well-run Challenges faced in running elections, and by new campaign techniques Actions and recommendations The election in depth Overview More than 40 million people were registered to vote in the 2019 general election. The turnout of registered voters was 67% The election was generally well-run, but there is new evidence showing challenges for the future The 2019 UK Parliamentary general election was held on Thursday 12 December. More than 40 million people were registered to vote, and the turnout of registered voters was 67%. There were high levels of satisfaction with the processes of registering to vote and voting. These were similar to other recent elections in the UK. Beneath this generally positive picture, however, we have also seen evidence about concerns and problems at this election. Some people did not receive the service they should be able to expect, and many were not confident that the election was well run. Although more than two thirds of people said they were confident the election was well-run, a significant minority of nearly one in five people told us they were not confident. Many of these people selected reasons related to concerns about campaigning, or the media, to explain why they were not confident. Some people also selected concerns that related to the way the registration or voting process worked. Our report describes how the UK's electoral administration structures are operating under significant strain, and shows that people have growing concerns about some aspects of election campaigns. The report makes recommendations about how the running of elections may be improved. It precedes consideration of the full impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is only beginning to be felt at the time of publication. There may be further recommendations to ensure the effective delivery of future elections. Challenges of delivering elections Challenges of delivering elections Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) were under pressure from large numbers of applications to register to vote made close to the deadline. They had to spend time and effort at a critical point dealing with many duplicate applications Some overseas electors did not have enough time to receive and return postal votes before polling day, as has happened before, which meant their votes could not be counted The December timing brought specific challenges for Returning Officers (ROs), who found it harder to recruit staff and secure polling stations and counting venues Challenges from changing election campaign techniques Challenges from changing election campaign techniques Misleading content and presentation techniques are undermining voters' trust in election campaigns It is too often unclear who is behind digital election campaign material. Significant public concerns about the transparency of digital election campaigns risk overshadowing their benefits Some candidates experienced significant and unacceptable levels of threats, abuse or intimidation Addressing these challenges ahead of the next UK general election Many of the challenges described in this report are not new. We have seen similar issues arise at other recent elections in the UK. But the evidence we have seen after this election shows significant concerns from the public and electoral administrators. Opportunities There is an opportunity between now and the next scheduled general election to make real change. This will protect confidence in how elections are run and increase trust in campaigns. Action needs to begin now

to ensure confidence is not further damaged at future elections. Areas for improvement There are areas where governments, EROs, ROs, political parties, campaigners, social media companies, and regulators need to work together to agree new laws, processes or standards of conduct. We will support this work to ensure changes are workable, will benefit voters, and improve public confidence. Action needed Supporting EROs and ROs to meet voters' expectations The UK Government needs to identify improvements to the online register to vote service, electoral management software systems and the funding model for elections, to help EROs effectively manage large numbers of registration applications (including duplicate applications) ahead of major electoral events The UK Government should also explore reforms that would make it easier for people to register or update their details throughout the year, such as by integrating registration applications into other public service contacts The UK Government needs to consider innovative new approaches to improve voting for overseas electors, using evidence from other countries, particularly given its plans to increase the number of British citizens living abroad who are eligible to vote The UK's three governments need to set out how they will simplify and modernise electoral law, building on the comprehensive and well-supported recommendations by the Law Commissions Supporting trust and confidence in election campaigns s, candidates and political parties need to take greater responsibility for the presentation and content of campaigns they run and the impact of their activities on public confidence in elections The UK Government needs to make progress on its planned consultation on legislation to ensure campaigners have to include information about themselves on digital campaign material Social media companies need to provide more detailed and accurate data about election campaigns and spending in ad libraries on their platforms so we and voters can see more information about who is campaigning Supporting people who want to stand as candidates Political parties and other campaigners, the UK Government and social media companies should continue to take steps to tackle intimidation so that people are not discouraged from standing for election or campaigning because of the risk of abuse, threats or intimidation The election in depth Take an in depth look at the top issues faced at this election: How electoral registration officers and returning officers found delivering the election The challenges posed by campaigning Supporting evidence Supporting evidence Supporting evidence: main data tables for the 2019 UK Parliamentary general election Electoral data: 2019 UK Parliamentary general election Related content Report: Voting in 2017 Read our report about voting at the general election in 2017 Results and turnout at the 2017 UK general election View the results and turnout at the 2017 general election Report: Political finance regulation at the June 2017 UK general election Read our report about political finance regulation at the 2017 general election Report: Electoral registration at the June 2017 UK general election Read our report about electoral registration at the 2017 general election