Report: How the 2017 UK general election was run

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Summary

Nearly four in five (79%) people surveyed after the election reported they were either very or fairly confident the elections were well-run, and 89% of candidates were very or fairly satisfied with the administration of the election. The June 2017 UK Parliamentary general election was unexpectedly announced less than three weeks before polling day for the scheduled May 2017 local government elections. This presented significant challenges for Returning Officers (ROs) and their staff who were responsible for running the poll. They deserve great credit and thanks for ensuring that the May and June elections were well-run.

Risks to well-run elections

But this positive overall picture should not mask wider risks to the administration of well-run elections, which are becoming increasingly apparent. ROs and electoral administrators face reduced resources and a growing number of skilled professionals are leaving local authority elections teams. They are also increasingly reliant on a relatively small pool of specialist software and print management suppliers. Problems in some places meaning that some voters received inadequate service, and significant issues in Plymouth and Newcastle-under-Lyme illustrate that more action must be taken now to deal with the increasing challenges that ROs are facing in delivering well-run elections. We will continue to work with the UK's governments, Electoral Registration Officers and Returning Officers to collect and review evidence about the challenges to well-run elections and to identify changes which could help reduce these risks.

Recommendations

We also want to see progress by the UK's governments towards implementing recommendations that we and others have made, including: Implementing the UK Law Commissions' proposals to simplify electoral law and Sir Eric Pickles' recommendations on electoral fraud. Improving the rules for nominating candidates, appointing emergency proxies and making it easier for overseas voters to cast a vote. Making electoral registration more joined-up with other public services to make it simpler for the public and more efficient for EROs, and reducing the risk of people voting in more than one constituency.

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