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 this report This report looks at how the 2021 canvass in Great Britain was run and
 considers the ongoing impact on the electoral registers of the changes to the annual
 canvass process introduced in 2020. The 2021 canvass was the second using the new
 processes introduced in 2020. These changes involve comparing the registers with
 other public data in order to give EROs information they can use to target their
 resources at households where residents' details are most likely to have changed.
 While we cannot yet draw conclusions on the impact of the new process on the accuracy
 and completeness of the registers, our analysis of available data suggests potential
 issues with the effectiveness of the reformed canvass in keeping pace with population
 movement: The data matching process and/or the lag between matching and canvassing
 means some households are being allocated to the 'wrong' route – nearly a fifth of
 responses from households allocated to Route 1 (where no change in household
 composition was expected) reported significant changes to electors' details.
 Necessary changes to electors' details may not be reflected on the registers – 2.4
 million households, one third of those allocated to Route 2 (where a change in
 household composition was expected), did not respond to the canvass. The reduction in
 the frequency of communication with Route 1 households may be contributing to the
 under-registration of attainers (those who will soon reach voting age) – the decline
 in the number of registered attainers, which began following the introduction of
 individual electoral registration (IER) in 2014, continued in 2021. The number of
 registered attainers dropped by 28.7% relative to 2020. 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
 Electoral Registration Officers' (EROs) staff capacity is already stretched. Our
 research studies into the accuracy and completeness of the registers are the
 definitive assessments of their overall quality. The next study, planned for the
 December 2022 registers, will allow us to fully assess the overall impact of the new
 canvass processes. Over the next year we will continue to support and challenge EROs
 using the performance standards framework , and work with them to ensure we all make
 full use of the data that is available. This should help to provide a better
 understanding of the impact of particular practices within the current framework and
 support us with identifying and sharing good practice. We also continue to recommend
 that the electoral registration system in Great Britain should be further modernised,
 to provide the best possible opportunity for ensuring that as many people as possible
 are correctly registered. This should include better use of public data, for example
 from other government services, to make registration easier for voters, and a more
 joined-up electoral registration system to reduce duplicate registrations and
 encourage registration all year round. 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 2020 and 2021. Table 1. Change in the number
 of parliamentary entries 2020-21

Area	2020	2021	% change
England	39,298,264	38,889,429	-1.0%
Scotland	4,012,429	4,028,717	0.4%
Wales	2,304,640	2,307,877	0.1%
Great Britain	45,615,333	45,226,023	-0.9%

Scotland and Wales were the only areas to see an increase in the number of local government register entries relative to 2020.

In each of the regions, the number of local government entries declined, albeit by varying degrees. The largest decrease was in London (-1.6%). Table 2. Change in the number of local government register entries 2020-21

Area	2020	2021	% change
England	41,186,293	40,882,721	-0.7%
North East	1,956,275	1,946,010	-0.5%
North West	5,461,941	5,421,090	-0.7%
Yorkshire and the Humber	4,025,884	4,009,237	-0.4%
East Midlands	3,583,548	3,554,099	-0.8%
West Midlands	4,276,920	4,253,449	-0.5%
East of England	4,653,094	4,633,193	-0.4%
London	6,116,260	6,021,139	-1.6%
South East	6,813,201	6,775,409	-0.6%
South West	4,299,170	4,269,095	-0.7%
Scotland	4,208,923	4,245,217	0.9%
Wales	2,342,478	2,348,576	0.3%
Great Britain	47,737,694	47,476,514	-0.5%

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 changes to the canvassing approaches used by EROs as well as national and local voter registration campaigns. Our analysis below looks at this and 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. On the parliamentary registers in Great Britain the number fell by -28.7% between 2020 and 2021 (see Table 3 below). In percentage terms, this marked the steepest year-on-year decline since 2014. 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. In 2014 and 2015, the number of attainers dropped by 33.3% and 10.3%, respectively. Numbers rose again by 23.0% in 2016 but fell slightly each year between 2017 and 2019. This more stable trend was broken in 2020, when the number of attainers on the parliamentary registers in Great Britain fell by 21.0%. As was the case in 2020, the overall decrease in 2021 was driven by the change in England (-40.6%). This marks a considerably steeper decline in the number of registered attainers than seen in England in 2020 (approximately -26%). In contrast, in Scotland and Wales, the number of attainers increased in 2021 (as in 2020). This is likely to be the result of increased registration activity among younger people following the extension of the franchise for devolved elections to 16 and 17 year olds. This increased activity may therefore be offsetting a systematic problem with the registration of attainers which is evident in England. 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. Our forthcoming accuracy and completeness research will give us an updated assessment of the registration rate for attainers, which was 25% in our 2018 study. Attainer numbers are unlikely to increase through the existing registration and canvass processes alone. This is an area where more automated registration process could be beneficial. Data from the education sector – such as information held by the Education and Skills Funding Agency Learning Records Service, which collects data relating to learners in England, Wales and Northern Ireland registering for relevant post-14 qualifications, and the Scottish Qualifications Authority – could help EROs identify 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 2013-21

Area	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
England	1,116,260	1,021,139	945,210	1,162,260	1,021,139	945,210	813,201	775,409	733,193
Scotland	4,208,923	4,245,217	4,208,923	4,245,217	4,208,923	4,245,217	4,208,923	4,245,217	4,208,923
Wales	2,342,478	2,348,576	2,342,478	2,348,576	2,342,478	2,348,576	2,342,478	2,348,576	2,342,478
Great Britain	47,737,694	47,476,514	47,737,694	47,476,514	47,737,694	47,476,514	47,737,694	47,476,514	47,737,694

Britain Attainers % change Attainers % change Attainers % change Attainers % change
 2021 111,958 -40.6% 40,871 6.1% 19,374 34.2% 172,203 -28.7% 2020 188,472 -25.9%
 38,518 0.9% 14,437 11.6% 241,427 -21.0% 2019 254,384 -1.4% 38,171 -7.6% 12,942 0.0%
 305,497 -2.1% 2018 257,938 -4.1% 41,296 -4.8% 12,948 1.2% 312,182 -4.0% 2017 269,092
 -5.4% 43,357 4.3% 12,794 -6.3% 325,243 -4.3% 2016 284,522 19.0% 41,561 67.4% 13,651
 10.6% 339,734 23.0% 2015 239,019 -6.2% 24,827 -36.3% 12,339 -12.3% 276,185 -10.3%
 2014 254,836 -32.8% 38,963 -38.6% 14,065 -24.4% 307,864 -33.3% 2013 379,284 NA 63,471
 NA 18,595 NA 461,350 NA Other register statistics 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. Figures here relate to the annual registers
 published on conclusion of the 2021 canvass. The data does not, therefore, include
 those 16 and 17 year olds who may have registered to vote in the run up to the May
 2022 local elections in Scotland and Wales. Data on the numbers of 16 and 17 year
 olds registered for the May 2022 elections will be published alongside the
 Commission's reports on those polls. In Scotland, at the publication of the annual
 registers in 2021, 77,958 16 and 17 year olds were registered on the local government
 registers (see Table 4). This represents a 6.4% increase on 2020. Taken with ONS
 population estimates, this indicates that roughly two thirds of 16 and 17 year olds
 are on the local government registers in Scotland. 1 EROs across Scotland continued
 to engage with 16 and 17 year olds after publication of the revised registers to
 ensure they were registered ahead of the May 2022 polls. This work included
 undertaking engagement activities such as direct mailing, phone/text, contact with
 schools and universities, press releases, social media, newsletters and local
 advertising, as well as local activity with partner organisations. Table 4. Number of
 16 and 17 year olds on the local government registers in Scotland 2015-21 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 In Wales, 33,241 16 and 17 year olds were on the local government
 registers on 1 December 2021 (a 115.1% increase on 2020). Comparison with the ONS
 population estimates suggests that just under half of 16 and 17 year olds in Wales
 are 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, in those areas, there appears to have been an increase in the range of
 engagement that was undertaken. In addition to more standard engagement activities
 such as direct mailing, phone/text, 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,
 youth partnership groups and Young Farmers Wales sending 16th birthday cards
 advertising in bus shelters pop-up sessions in city centres teacher training sessions
 using Electoral Commission resources After the publication of the registers but ahead
 of the May 2022 polls, the majority of authorities sent out a household notification
 letter, with funding provided by Welsh Government, and many of these included extra
 information promoting the extension of the franchise and some also highlighted
 answers to FAQs. Case study: Vale of Glamorgan Council - outreach with 16/17 year
 olds The Vale's Electoral Registration Public Awareness Officer delivered
 presentations to a school that held a Personal and Social Education day. Teaming up
 with a member of the council's youth service, they produced a comprehensive package
 on registering to vote, how to vote and why we vote. The package also included
 information on elections and politics to try to demonstrate the importance of these

to a young person. It covered a who's who in politics and what politicians do, what elections they stand in and also how this links back to the things that young people might find important, so that they had a broader understanding of the whole voting process. A few simple tasks were set for them to do during the session to help keep them engaged. This outreach work helped to increase voter registration rates in the area amongst 14 and 15 year olds in the space of a year by 31.4% (1,263 to 1,660).

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 2021 registers in Great Britain was 104,665. Table 5. Number of overseas electors on the parliamentary registers in Great Britain 2015-21

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

This is a decrease of 43.4% since the publication of the annual register in 2020.

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. **Anonymous electors** The number of anonymous electoral register entries on the parliamentary registers in Great Britain decreased from 3,374 in 2020 to 3,097 in 2021. 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 2015-21

Area	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
England	2,151	2,194	2,440	2,550	3,214	3,064	2,788
Scotland	111	117	116	130	194	196	187
Wales	74	74	85	108	138	114	122
Great Britain	2,336	2,385	2,641	2,788	3,546	3,374	3,097

Effectiveness of the reformed 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 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 2020, council tax records were the most popular datasets used, followed by housing benefit data. The local data matching step had a significant impact on the number of households allocated to each route, as shown in Table 7. When asked whether their approach to local data matching was the same as or different to last year: a majority (87%) of those EROs who responded said that their approach was the same as last year. For those that decided to take a different approach, the responses suggest that they used a broader range of data sources and allowed more time to do data matching, earlier on in the process. Table 7. Number of properties allocated to each route after national and local data matching

Route	Number of properties allocated after DWP match	Number of properties allocated after local data match	% change
1	19,639,236	21,752,578	10.8%
2	9,281,876	7,397,346	-20.3%
3	NA	310,910	NA

As in 2020, the proportion of properties allocated to Route 2 (25.1%) 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. 1 The proportion of households allocated to Routes 1, 2 and 3 is also fairly stable across Great Britain, although London continues to allocate a lower percentage of households to Route 1 (66.3%) and a higher proportion to Route 2 (32.7%). This reflects 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

Region	Route 1	Route 2	Route 3
England	73.6%	25.4%	1.0%
North East	80.2%	19.5%	0.3%
North West	74.0%	25.2%	0.7%
Yorkshire and the Humber	72.9%	25.7%	1.4%
East Midlands	76.2%	22.1%	1.8%
West Midlands	73.9%	24.5%	1.6%
East of England	76.3%	22.8%	0.8%
London	66.3%	32.7%	1.0%
South East	73.9%	25.3%	0.8%
South West	75.4%	23.7%	0.9%
Scotland	74.8%	23.9%	1.3%
Wales	76.1%	22.9%	1.1%
Great Britain	73.8%	25.1%	1.1%

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 within the two allocated routes. Household response rates per route As expected, the proportion of responses is significantly higher among Route 2 households, where changes are expected, than Route 1 households, where they are not (68.1% vs. 18.3%). The lower response rate among Route 1 households (the vast majority of all households) partly explains the smaller number of total responses under the reformed canvass. In 2019, before the changes to the canvass, 23.8 million household responses were received. This compares to 9 million responses during the 2021 canvass, a similar number to that received in 2020. However, almost a third of households in Route 2 also did not respond. These are households where the data suggests a change 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. We asked EROs about the sorts of barriers that canvassers may face when trying to encourage Route 2 households to respond. Many highlighted that the increasing rate of COVID-19 infections in the latter months of 2021 reduced the opportunities for canvassers to visit Route 2 properties, and in several cases local authorities were limited by area-wide policies that prohibited door knocking. Several EROs described the challenges associated with reaching communities who have historically been reluctant to engage with canvassers; and a number suggested that a loss of staff experienced in engaging with local residents may have affected the response rate among Route 2 properties. We will continue to monitor the response rates in future years and work with EROs in the meantime to help them use their local data to mitigate against the risks to the accuracy and completeness of their electoral registers. Variations in response rate Variations in response rate The Route 2 response rate continued to vary significantly in 2021 (see Table 9), as it had done in 2020. For the second year, Scotland reported the lowest response rate among Route 2 properties (50.7%) and England reported the highest (70.1%). Table 9. Response rate for Routes 1 and 2, by nation and region 2021

Region	Route 1	Route 2
England	19.0%	70.1%
North East	7.0%	62.7%
North West	15.3%	63.2%
Yorkshire and the Humber	14.0%	67.3%
East Midlands	18.8%	75.6%
West Midlands	17.8%	71.2%
East of England	19.9%	75.8%
London	20.4%	65.9%
South East	26.0%	74.2%
South West	22.6%	75.4%
Scotland	13.6%	50.7%
Wales	15.6%	65.4%
Great Britain	18.3%	68.1%

Major and minor changes per route Major and minor changes per route The nature of the responses received is also important. 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. Of the 9 million responses received across all routes, 2.7 million households reported a major change (30.4%). Table 10 shows how these major changes were distributed across the three routes. The pattern is broadly in line with 2020.

Route	Number of major changes	% of major changes across all routes
Route 1	830,743	30.4%
Route 2	1,856,309	67.8%
Route 3	49,339	1.8%
Total	2,736,391	100.0%

The highest proportion 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 2020, nearly a third of the major changes reported relate to Route 1 households, where the DWP and/or local data had indicated no change was likely to be needed. As in 2020, of all the households allocated to Route 1 (21.7 million) the proportion reporting a major change (830,743) is small (3.8%). However, as Figure 1 below shows, of those that did respond, a fifth reported a major change. Importantly for the quality of the registers, it is also unlikely that all of 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 and 2021 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.

Figure 1. Percentage of responding households in Routes 1 and 2 who reported major / minor / no change (data collected from 4/5 LAs where a revised data specification was implemented)

1 As part of our work with EROs throughout the 2021 canvass, we have sought to understand the potential reasons for the proportion of changes reported for route 1 households. Many of those we spoke to highlighted potential reasons such as house moves within areas, marriages, attainers and deaths. It could also be a product of data accuracy, for example, with records used for matching not being up to date. We will continue to build on this over the 2022 canvass, to develop a deeper understanding of the data and how the process is working in practice.

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) would be needed before the ERO could 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, 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 11). However, as with the household major changes, more than a third of both additions and deletions came from households whose composition was assumed 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 11.

Percentage of additions and deletions per route

	Route 1	Route 2	Route 3
Additions	37.1%	59.6%	3.4%
Deletions	39.4%	57.3%	3.3%

This data suggests that at least some population change is not being picked up by the registers. However we cannot draw clear conclusions on the overall impact – partly because of the variable impact of electoral events outside the canvass. Table 12 below shows the levels of additions and deletions in recent years (for the full year, not just the canvass). Both 2020 and 2021 have recorded lower figures than many previous years. However, it is usual to see higher levels, of additions in particular, in years with significant UK-wide electoral events (such as UK general elections and the EU referendum). The lower figures in 2020 may relate directly to the effects of the pandemic – both on EROs' ability to canvass and through depressing levels of population movement.

Table 12. Percentage of additions and deletions 2010-21

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%

As Table 13 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) – a trend that continues in 2020 and 2021.

Table 13. Percentage of additions during and outside of canvass period 2015-21

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%

This point is also supported by the 2021 data on the proportion of additions and deletions recorded during the canvass period across the three nations of Great Britain (see Table 14). The proportion of additions and deletions during the canvass were lowest in Scotland (39.0% and 55.0%, respectively), followed by Wales and then by England. This is in line with the level of engagement at the May 2021 elections where turnout was highest in Scotland, then in Wales and lowest across England.

Table 14. Additions and deletions during full year and canvass period per nation

	Additions Full year	Additions Canvass period % during canvass	Deletions Full year	Deletions Canvass period % during canvass
England	4,308,807	2,777,863 64.5%	4,674,707	2,875,974 61.5%
Scotland	455,341	177,552 39.0%	415,722	228,843 55.0%
Wales	245,670	112,310 45.7%	232,649	137,629 59.2%
Great Britain	5,009,818	3,067,725 61.2%	5,323,078	3,242,446 60.9%

It is important that the canvass and other year-round registration activity continues to provide a high quality register at all times in order to avoid significant updates needing to be made in advance of major polls. We have previously highlighted our concern that the registration system, including the canvass, is unlikely to be sustainable in the longer term and have recommended that governments should explore more automated registration processes. For example, regular access to reliable data from a wider range of public services about people who have recently updated their address details would allow EROs to make contact directly with them at their new address to encourage them to register to vote. Integrating electoral registration applications into other public service transactions could also make it easier for individuals to keep their registration details up to date and accurate. While canvass reform has addressed one aspect of sustainability – the resource and capacity taken up through unnecessarily chasing households where there has been no change – it is not yet clear what its impact is on the other key aspect – the system's ability to pick up population changes away from major electoral events. Our next accuracy and completeness study will allow us to more clearly assess the overall impact on the registers, as it will take place after three years of the reformed canvass in Great Britain.

Background Electoral registers

There is no national electoral register for the United Kingdom. 368 separate electoral registers are compiled and maintained by Electoral

Registration Officers (EROs) 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 2021 canvass was the second 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 January 2020 we began a consultation on a new set of standards for EROs. However, as a consequence of the coronavirus pandemic, we deferred finalising the standards before the 2020 canvass. We did, however, make the draft standards and accompanying tools available to EROs, and these formed a key part of our guidance, support and challenge package relating to the delivery of the first reformed canvass in Great Britain. The new standards were then finalised and laid before the UK, Scottish and Welsh Parliaments in June 2021. Over 2020 and 2021 we have used the standards to inform our engagement with EROs about electoral registration, and to support and challenge them in their work to maintain the electoral registers in their area. We have placed a significant focus in our engagement with EROs on supporting them to develop relevant and appropriate KPIs, helping them establish a baseline of their own performance and set targets which take into account their own specific circumstances, and supporting them with using available data to identify areas where

improvements may be made. Now that the standards have been in operation for two years, we can use the data and information gathered to identify potential patterns that are emerging. We will continue to use the performance standards framework over the course of this year to build on the work we have carried out with EROs in 2021, continuing to support them to better understand and report on the impact of their activity using the data available to them. In particular we have identified areas of practice and key pieces of data that we want to focus on in our engagement with EROs during the 2022 canvass – for example, where there are a high number of major changes reported from properties allocated to Route 1 and non-responses from households in Route 2. The data we have gathered to date will help to inform and shape that engagement 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.

[Download the electoral registration data 2021](#) [Electoral registration data 2021](#) [1. ONS \(2021\) Analysis of population estimates tool for UK](#) [Back to content at footnote 1](#) [2. ibid.](#) [Back to content at footnote 2](#) [1. HM Government, Scottish Government and Welsh Government \(2019\) Reform of the Annual Canvass: Statement of Policy](#) [Back to content at footnote 1](#) [1. In 2021, we implemented a slightly revised data specification. In previous years, data on changes to household composition were broken down into two metrics: the number of households reporting a major change and the number of households reporting a minor or no change. This year, we disaggregated the second metric so that we could report separately on the number of households reporting a minor change vs the number reporting no change. However, only about four in five local authorities were able to implement this change within their electoral management software \(EMS\).](#) [Back to content at footnote 1](#)

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