

Report: May 2019 European Parliamentary elections and local elections | Electoral Commission Search Report: May 2019 European Parliamentary elections and local elections You are in the European Parliamentary elections section Home European Parliamentary elections On this page Summary The experience of voters Delivering the elections – the experience of electoral administrators Campaigning at the elections First published: 8 October 2019 Last updated: 8 October 2019 Overview On 23 May 2019 people across the UK voted in elections to the European Parliament, which had remained scheduled in law, but had not been expected to take place. For people in Northern Ireland and parts of England, this poll closely followed scheduled local elections which took place on 2 May. Trusted election results rely on public confidence in the administration of the polls. Our research with the public shows that a majority of people were confident the May 2019 elections were well-run, and most voters were satisfied with the voting process. But overall levels of confidence about the European Parliamentary elections and the local government elections in England were lower than at other recent elections. Summary The impact on confidence in the elections Among issues which impacted on people's confidence in the elections, most notable and regrettable were the issues experienced by some citizens of other EU member states living in the UK who wanted to vote in the European Parliament elections in the UK. We highlighted similar difficulties to government after the 2014 European Parliamentary elections and made recommendations for change. It is unacceptable that people eligible to vote should be frustrated from doing so, and deeply regrettable that this was not acted on and resolved by the UK government. Any changes to the process would have required the Government to introduce legislation, but the law was not changed ahead of the 2019 election. The difficulties were also exacerbated by government not confirming the position on these elections proceeding until very late in the lead up to May 2019, which meant that Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) had not sent declaration forms to EU citizens in the months before the election, as would usually have been the case. Overseas electors also contacted us during and after the European Parliamentary elections to express concern that they had been unable to return postal votes in time to be counted. This is not a new issue and again the UK government has not addressed this problem by making changes in the law, so effectively denying numbers of UK citizens overseas who are entitled to vote a reasonably practical way to actually vote. We will continue to urge the Government to introduce new approaches to improving access to the voting process for overseas electors, as has been readily and successfully done in other comparable democracies. Digital campaigning Voters continued to receive information about election campaigns from a range of sources, and social media and other online campaigns were a significant source of information for voters at the May 2019 elections. The larger social media platforms took steps to improve transparency about political advertising for their users. Governments in the UK need to now make swift progress on legislation that would require campaigners to include imprints on their digital campaign material to show who has distributed it. We also want social media companies to continue to develop their political ad policies and libraries, and ensure they have them in place for the next set of national elections or any further referendums in the UK. This also requires us to have new electoral regulatory rules to ensure proper oversight and controls. Electoral law needs to be updated Many of the issues highlighted in our report are not new, and we have said for some time that the failure of governments and parliaments to properly maintain and update electoral law, and to address pressure on local authorities, has built up significant risks for well-run elections. The 2019 elections illustrate that electoral law is increasingly

complex and outdated, and presents real risks for voters, candidates and campaigners, and electoral administrators. The difficulties experienced by some EU citizens in the UK and British citizens living abroad at the May 2019 European Parliamentary elections have again shown the impact on elections of governments not acting on recommendations to prioritise the interests of voters. Delivering well-run elections

Effective electoral administration that supports voter confidence depends on good planning and management by EROs and Returning Officers (ROs). While ROs and EROs will always need to be prepared to respond to unanticipated political developments, governments should also ensure that their decisions support effective contingency planning. We will continue to strongly emphasise the need for governments to ensure there is clarity about the legal framework for elections at least six months before EROs and ROs need to deliver statutory processes. Given all of this, it is an immense credit to the ROs and other electoral staff across the country that they achieved what they did in the circumstances: largely well-run elections in the face of substantial challenges. We will continue to work with the electoral community to explore what more can be done within the current framework to address the challenges around resilience and capacity in local electoral services. The experience of voters

Confidence that the elections were well-run Trusted election results rely on public confidence in the administration of the polls. Our research with the public after elections aims to understand levels of confidence in how well elections are run, and how satisfied people are with the current voting process. When asked as part of our research, most people said they were confident that the May 2019 elections were well-run. A slightly smaller proportion of people (62%) said they were confident the May 2019 European Parliamentary elections were well-run, compared to just under two thirds (64%) of people in England who said they thought the local government elections were well-run. In Northern Ireland three quarters of people said they thought the local government elections there were well-run. Across all elections, people who voted were more likely to say they were confident that the elections were well-run than those who didn't vote. Levels of confidence were lower following the May 2019 elections than in previous years, including when elections have been called at short notice (for example, the Northern Ireland Assembly and UK Parliamentary general elections in 2017). Chart 1: Confidence that elections were well-run, 2014-19

More than a fifth (22%) of people we asked said they were not confident the European Parliamentary elections were well-run. The most common reason given (mentioned by 57% of those who said they were not confident the elections were well-run) was that 'some people did not have the opportunity to vote/had the opportunity taken away'. Only 7% of people mentioned this in relation to the local elections, and 16% in relation to the Northern Ireland local elections. Around two-fifths of people (42%) who were not confident the European Parliamentary elections were well-run also mentioned that 'some people had difficulties registering to vote'. Again, this was less commonly mentioned in relation to the local elections in England and Northern Ireland, by only 7% of people who were not confident the elections were well-run. Most people who voted in the May 2019 elections also said that they were satisfied with the process of voting: 85% of voters at the European Parliamentary elections 91% of voters at the local elections in England 95% of voters at the local elections in Northern Ireland

The reasons voters gave for not being satisfied were the same as why they were not confident that the elections were well run. Registration and voting by citizens of other EU countries

Citizens of EU Member States living in the UK can choose to cast their vote at the European Parliamentary elections here, rather than the elections in the state where they hold citizenship. If they prefer to cast their vote here, they

first need to be on the register to vote at local government elections in the UK, and they also have to complete and submit an additional declaration (citizens of the Republic of Ireland, Cyprus and Malta do not need to complete this declaration). This is in order to specify that they will not be voting in the same election in another country. In the weeks leading up to the May 2019 election, significant concerns were raised by and on behalf of some EU citizens in the UK, who said that they had experienced difficulty submitting their declaration before the legal deadline on 7 May 2019. Ultimately, this meant that some people who were entitled to vote and wanted to vote in the European Parliament elections in the UK were unable to do so. This is unacceptable in a modern democracy. Many of them rightly felt frustrated, disappointed that, and angry that they were unable to vote. We have collated information from the concerns raised with us by EU citizens and others before polling day, on polling day itself and in the days thereafter, as well as data provided by EROs. We have published a more detailed analysis of this evidence separately. In summary, the feedback and comments we received from EU citizens, their families and elected representatives highlighted three main areas of concern: that they had not been aware of the need to complete an additional declaration as well as an application to register to vote that they had not been able to submit a declaration in time before the deadline set in law that they thought they had submitted a declaration in time, but were still not included on the electoral register and were not able to vote. It is not possible to conclusively verify the numerical estimates of those affected. This is because there are no comprehensive data sources available to us or any other body that would tell us how many voters wanted to register and were unable to do so, or tell us how many attended a polling station on 23 May but were not able to be issued with a ballot paper. Data provided by Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) after the election shows that in the weeks leading up to the deadline more than 400,000 EU citizens submitted a declaration that was received and processed. This meant that they were able to vote in the UK at the 2019 European Parliament elections. In total, around 450,000 were registered to vote in these European Parliament elections as a result of returning a declaration (UC1 form). This represents just over a fifth of citizens of other EU Member States who had been included in the May 2019 local government register. Approximately four in five EU citizens (1.7 million) who had previously registered to vote did not submit an additional declaration in time to be registered to vote at the European Parliament elections in the UK. Some of these people may have wanted to vote in the UK but were not able to submit the declaration in time before the deadline, although we have no data that allows us to assess how many were in this position. Equally, it is not possible to assess how many of these people opted to vote in the EU Member State where they held citizenship, or actively decided not to vote in the election at all. This was not the first time that these types of issues had arisen at European Parliamentary elections in the UK. Our report on the 2014 European Parliament elections highlighted that citizens of other EU member states had raised similar concerns about the registration and declaration process for those elections. We said then that the UK Government needed to work with the Commission, electoral administrators, and groups representing EU citizens to find solutions in good time before the next European Parliamentary elections. Any changes to the process would have required the Government to introduce legislation, but the law was not changed ahead of the 2019 election. The UK Government indicated in February 2015 that it planned further discussions with us and other stakeholders on the registration process for EU citizens, but no such discussions were held. Immediately following the

May 2015 UK Parliamentary general election the Government introduced legislation to hold a referendum on the UK's membership of the EU, and the result of the June 2016 referendum meant that it was widely expected that European Parliamentary elections would no longer take place in the UK. The difficulties that we had identified in 2014 were exacerbated by the circumstances leading up to the 2019 European Parliamentary elections. Given that the UK had been expected to leave the European Union on 29 March 2019, the UK Government had made clear its position that the UK would not be required to take part in the 2019 European Parliamentary elections. In the event, that proved to be wrong, and government had not properly contingency planned for these scheduled elections having to proceed. One direct and harmful impact was that EROs were not in a position to send declaration forms to EU citizens who were already registered as local government electors after the annual electoral registration canvass in December 2018, as they had usually done before European Parliamentary elections in previous years. On 29 March 2019, we wrote to Cabinet Minister David Lidington highlighting the ongoing uncertainty about whether the European Parliamentary elections would be held in the UK, and on the need for assurances to Returning Officers that they would be reimbursed for any reasonable spending on contingency preparations. It was not until 8 April that the Government made the legislation confirming that polling day for the European Parliamentary elections in the UK would be 23 May 2019. EROs were then in a position to commit resources to begin sending declaration forms to EU citizens who were already registered as local government electors, including using email where they held addresses. Many EROs faced significant logistical challenges, however, given that electoral administrators and their printing and despatch suppliers in many areas of England and across Northern Ireland were also delivering the scheduled early May local government elections. The experience of EU citizens at the May 2019 European Parliamentary elections in the UK illustrates the impact of making significant decisions about elections without thinking through all the possible contingencies and making sure the interests of voters are always put first. By not taking steps to proactively identify alternative solutions soon after the 2014 election, and then simply assuming there was no chance of European elections happening again, the UK Government missed the opportunity to legislate for improvements to the process for future elections. Moreover, while the political circumstances leading up to the 2019 elections were exceptional, the continued uncertainty about whether the election would go ahead meant that EU citizens received less timely information about what they needed to do to be able to vote than in previous years. More widely, our research with the public suggests that the experience of EU citizens may have had an impact on overall levels of confidence in the 2019 European Parliamentary elections in the UK. Public confidence could again be harmed if significant decisions about whether or how elections will take place are made so close to polling day in future. Effective electoral administration that supports voter confidence depends on good planning and management by EROs and ROs. While they will always need to be prepared to respond to unanticipated political developments – such as an early UK Parliamentary general election, for example – governments should ensure that their decisions support effective contingency planning. We will continue to strongly emphasise the need for governments to ensure there is clarity about the legal framework for elections at least six months before EROs and ROs need to deliver statutory processes. Voting by British citizens living abroad British citizens living abroad were entitled to vote in the European Parliamentary elections, and more than 16,000 British citizens applied and were registered ahead of the May 2019 elections. Overseas electors were not entitled to

vote in the local government elections in England and Northern Ireland. Overseas electors contacted us during and after the election to express concern that they had been unable to return postal votes in time to be counted. We reported on the same concerns from overseas electors after the 2015 and 2017 UK Parliamentary general elections and the 2016 EU referendum. There is only a limited period for postal ballot packs to be sent by post, received by overseas electors and returned before the end of polling day. Returning Officers cannot print ballot papers until after the end of the period for nominating parties and candidates, which closed just under a month before polling day for the European Parliamentary elections. To minimise the impact of these challenges, our guidance recommends that Returning Officers should issue postal ballot packs to overseas electors as early as practicable in the election timetable. However, Returning Officers still need time to secure printers and to ensure that ballot papers and postal vote packs are checked for accuracy, which impacts on how quickly they can despatch postal votes. We also recommend that they should use an international business response licence for return envelopes to help ensure postal votes can be returned as quickly as possible from outside the UK. Returning Officers also told us that there were specific pressures at the 2019 election which meant it was even harder to ensure overseas electors received their postal ballot packs in time to return them before the close of poll. Late confirmation that the election would be held meant that Returning Officers had much less time than usual to plan and arrange postal ballot pack print and delivery contracts. Also, Returning Officers in many parts of England and in Northern Ireland were involved in delivering scheduled local government elections at the same time. Additionally, postal services outside the UK are not always reliable enough for all overseas electors to receive and return their postal votes in time to be counted. Without action by the Government to identify and legislate for realistic alternatives, Returning Officers will continue to be faced with these challenges, and overseas electors will face these problems again at the next UK Parliamentary election. Now that ROs are routinely using international business response licence for the return of overseas postal votes, the UK Government, Returning Officers and the Electoral Commission should work with Royal Mail to explore whether there are any other options to help ensure that postal votes are sent out as quickly as possible to addresses outside the UK, within the constraints of the current legislative framework. The Government has previously indicated that it intends to extend the right to vote in UK Parliamentary elections to all British citizens abroad, rather than to just those who have lived in the UK in the last 15 years. As part of any future legislation on overseas electors, we will continue to urge the Government to consider new approaches to improving access to the voting process. This could include voting at embassies and consulates, or the ability to download and print postal ballot papers. Both of these means are successfully used in other comparable democracies enabling overseas electors to readily and efficiently vote. Delivering the elections – the experience of electoral administrators While most people were confident that the May 2019 elections were well-run, and were satisfied with the voting process, we identified problems which could have had an impact on people's confidence in the elections. These issues must, however, be considered in the context that elections continue to be run against a challenging resource backdrop. Both financial pressures and a decreasing availability of expertise in the sector, with skilled administrators leaving the profession and not always able to be replaced, mean that the risks to the successful delivery of elections continue to increase. Administrators are reliant on a relatively small pool of specialist software and

print management suppliers, which can also impact on their ability to ensure that voters receive a high quality service. Furthermore, for these elections, until 1 April 2019 there was no guarantee from the UK Government that any reasonable spending on contingency preparations would be reimbursed for the European Parliamentary elections. This had a significant impact on the ability of administrators to make necessary preparations and effective contingency plans for these elections. Where administrators were also facing local elections in early May, this meant that a lot of activity for the two different polls needed to be carried out at the same time, significantly stretching already thin resources. Fundamentally, the evidence below further illustrates that current electoral law is increasingly complex, outdated and not fit for purpose, and contributes to issues which impact directly on voters, candidates and campaigners. Fundamental electoral reform is needed to ensure elections can be administered more efficiently, and that voters and candidates can have a better experience of the electoral process. In the meantime, we will continue to work with the electoral community – including with the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers, the Society of Local Authority Lawyers & Administrators in Scotland, the Association of s, the Scottish Assessors Association and the Electoral Management Board for Scotland – to look at what more we can all do to address the immediate challenges of capacity and resilience within local authority electoral services. Delivering the elections – the experience of electoral administrators

Preparing to deliver the elections We asked electoral administrators to tell us about their own experiences of delivering the elections and the practical difficulties they faced. Administrators told us that the late confirmation of the European Parliamentary elections, coupled with the overlapping timetables with the scheduled local government elections, presented difficulties in booking places to be used as polling stations and count venues and securing polling station staff. Some staff were no longer available as they had not anticipated being needed to work. Many suppliers and printers were also at full capacity which meant that administrators had little flexibility to control the timing of the printing of poll cards and postal ballot packs to ensure the earliest possible delivery to electors. The impact of this was particularly notable in Northern Ireland where the deadline to apply for an absent vote for the European Parliamentary elections fell on polling day for the local elections. This put additional pressure on electoral staff and caused confusion for voters. Given the volume of stationery which had to be printed for the local elections, the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) was unable to print and issue poll cards until after the absent voting deadlines. This had an adverse impact on voters in Northern Ireland as they received this important information too late to apply for an absent vote. Contingency preparations in Northern Ireland

In Great Britain, as independent statutory office holders who are typically also senior officers within local authorities, most RROs and ROs had sufficient flexibility to begin some appropriate contingency planning before it was formally confirmed that the European Parliamentary elections would take place. However, the structure of electoral management in Northern Ireland is different in that the CEO is directly appointed by and reports to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. In this context, we believe the CEO was restricted in what contingency arrangements she could put in place to manage the potential risks for voters caused by this lack of clarity. In 2011, we recommended that the UK Government should consult stakeholders in Northern Ireland on the accountability arrangements in place for the CEO's decision making. Although the context is different than in 2011, in our view this supports the continued importance of undertaking such a review. The nomination process

In February

2019, ahead of the May elections, the law was changed to allow candidates at local government elections in England to choose not to have their home address printed on the statement of persons nominated and the ballot papers. We welcomed these changes, which should help to reduce the risk of abuse and intimidation of local election candidates and their families; however, candidates and ROs would have benefited from this new legislation being in place earlier. At the 2 May 2019 local elections in England, ROs told us that some candidates and agents found it difficult to understand the new nominations process, and found it harder to accurately complete the forms they needed to in order to stand for election. If the legislation had been in place earlier, there would have been more time available for the development and testing of the new nomination pack before it needed to be made available, and to provide updated guidance and template briefings sooner, which would have better supported electoral administrators and candidates to fully understand the new process. This reinforces the importance of legislation being clear six months before it needs to be complied with. We accept that the nomination packs we made available could be improved, and we are taking active steps to do so ahead of the next scheduled local elections, and will work with administrators and parties in doing this. Additionally, some candidates did not realise that their address would appear on the statutory notice of election agents if they nominated themselves as their own election agent and did not specify a different address. This would also be the case if the candidate did not appoint someone to be their agent, in which case they would automatically become the agent. Although the new rules helped candidates to protect their home address by not including it on ballot papers – where the information is not essential to enable voters to identify candidates – there are still some circumstances in which details of an address need to be made publicly available. As election agents are responsible for ensuring candidates comply with election law, details of a physical address are necessary so that any legal notices can be delivered. Removing addresses from the notice of election agents could make it harder to monitor and enforce the law. At the local government elections in England, we are aware of two instances where a candidate's address was published on the Statement of Persons nominated when it should have been withheld. This could have compromised a candidate's safety if this was the reason why they did not want their address made public. As a result, these ROs 1 were assessed as not fully meeting our performance standards. Equivalent changes were not made for the local government elections in Northern Ireland. When nominations opened, a high profile councillor, who has a restraining order in place to protect her, announced that she would not be contesting the election because her home address would appear on the ballot paper. We welcome the Northern Ireland Office's commitment to change the law on this issue. Errors in delivering the election During the weeks leading up to polling day for the local government elections in England we became aware of several errors on election materials in a small number of local authorities. These included: errors on postal ballot papers (for example, missing off the name of a candidate) postal ballot packs sent with incorrect instructions about completing the ballot paper incorrect details on poll cards that were sent to electors Errors like these have the potential to cause confusion for voters, and may have meant that some voters were unable to have their votes counted in the way they intended. Although the ROs in all cases responded quickly to mitigate the impact of these errors, such issues can affect people's confidence in well run elections and their satisfaction with the voting process. As a result, a total of five ROs 2 were assessed as not fully meeting our performance standards. Errors at election counts It is important that voters, candidates and

political parties have confidence in the accuracy of the election counting process. We became aware of mistakes made in counting and totalling the number of votes in three local government elections in England in May 2019. In one local authority, a spreadsheet error in the calculation of votes meant that the wrong number of votes were allocated to some candidates in one ward. In the second and third authority, the RO declared the wrong candidate elected. The ROs accepted that they had made errors, but the law does not allow ROs to recount ballot papers or correct errors once they have declared a result. Election petitions were lodged in two to challenge the results of the elections, both of these have been upheld. All of these ROs 3 were assessed as not fully meeting our performance standards. We continue to recommend that electoral law reform is required to simplify the legal process for challenging elections, particularly so that mistakes made by ROs can be rectified more quickly without recourse to the election petition process. Campaigning at the elections

Appropriate campaigns that communicate effectively with voters are central to well-run elections and referendums. When campaigners clearly explain their policies and political views, voters are better able to exercise their right to vote in a meaningful and informed way. Our research with the public after the May 2019 elections asked people if they had enough information about the candidates and parties standing for election. After the European Parliamentary elections 49% of people said they had enough information, but 44% said they would have liked more. These figures were similar in relation to the local elections in England, but lower than those saying they had enough information for the local elections in Northern Ireland (64%). We also asked people where they got their information from. Of those who said they saw information, the most common source across all the May elections was a leaflet or flyer from a candidate/political party. Other sources of information, including social media, are shown below. Table 1: Most common sources of information about candidates and parties standing for election

| Most commonly mentioned | 2nd most common | 3rd most common | 4th most common | 5th most common |
|---|---------------------------|--|------------------------------------|---|
| European Parliamentary Leaflet or flyer from a candidate/political party (54%) | The press (38%) | Social media (26%) | Word of mouth/friend/ family (18%) | Candidate/ party's web-site and another website (16%) |
| Local Government – England Leaflet or flyer from a candidate/political party (48%) | Social media (12%) | Leaflet or flyer from another source (11%) | My local council website (9%) | Word of mouth/friend/ family (8%) |
| Local Government – Northern Ireland Leaflet or flyer from a candidate/political party (70%) | Poster or billboard (36%) | Word of mouth/friend/ family (26%) | Social media (25%) | Leaflet or flyer from another source (17%) |

Campaigning at the elections Transparency about election material online s are increasingly making use of digital campaign tools to influence voters during elections, including using social media and other online advertising tools. Evidence from our research with the public highlighted above shows use of social media and other online platforms as sources of information about the candidates and political parties standing in elections. Labelling and imprints for online election material Facebook, Twitter and Google all launched new advert labelling or 'Paid for by' disclaimers for some political advertising on their platforms and channels during the European Parliamentary election campaign. These new 'Paid for by' disclaimers increased transparency about who was spending money to influence voters at the European Parliamentary elections. But these disclaimers were not the same as the imprint (a short piece of text on election material that identifies who is behind it) that is required by law for printed election material, because they did not include the name and address of the campaigner. Currently, imprints are a legal requirement for any printed election material, but there are no

legal requirements for digital material. We are pleased that the UK Government has committed to implementing an imprint requirement for digital election material, and to publish legislative proposals by the end of this year. The social media companies' initiatives at the European elections have demonstrated that it is possible to add extra labelling to adverts on their platforms. They show that it should be possible for digital platforms and channels to facilitate campaigners to put imprints on digital election material if campaigners are legally required to include them in future. New imprint rules for digital election material should cover all non-printed election campaign material, not just social media advertising. They should also cover search and website advertising, campaigners' websites and emails, and any other form of online campaigning even if it is not paid-for advertising. There should be an exemption to make clear that they would not apply to individual citizens who are not 'campaigning' but only expressing personal opinions about elections or referendums online. Social media companies' advert libraries and reports Facebook, Google and Twitter voluntarily published advert libraries which contained the election advertising that ran on their platforms and channels ahead of the May 2019 European Parliamentary election. Facebook and Google published reports on the contents of their libraries. The reports listed who was campaigning, and gave summary information about how many adverts campaigners had taken out and how much they had spent. The libraries and reports helped us identify who was paying to advertise on these platforms, meaning we could advise campaigners during the campaign and giving us a new source of information to support our checks on reported spending after the poll. The ad libraries are now a way voters and others can get information about who viewed the adverts, but they do not yet provide meaningful information about how adverts were targeted. For example, they provide breakdowns of the very wide geographical areas targeted, such as England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, but not to the more detailed level of the specific constituencies targeted. The libraries will give more useful transparency if the companies increase the amount of information that they publish about targeting of advertising. Social media companies that operate in the UK should continue to develop their ad policies and libraries, and ensure that they have them in place for the next set of national level elections or any future referendums in the UK, and thereafter. It should be legally required for social media companies and other platforms that provide advertising services to run these kinds of libraries and reports, which could be enforced as appropriate, possibly through the Government's proposed Online Harms regulator. This would ensure voters can access a consistent level of information about election or referendum advertising across different platforms online. Social media companies' advertising policies Facebook, Google and Twitter all adopted policies for political advertising that ran on their platforms and channels during the European Parliamentary election campaign. But those policies did not completely align with the definitions in electoral law. Where their policies did not do this for the May 2019 European Parliamentary elections, some platforms failed to label certain types of campaigning, such as issue based campaigns, paid for by non-party campaigners. For future elections, social media companies should ensure that their election advertising policies fit the definitions of election campaigning in electoral law. This may need to become a legal requirement. Registering political parties at the European Parliamentary elections Late confirmation that the European Parliamentary elections would go ahead in the UK also meant there was not much time for new political parties to register or for existing parties to update their party identifiers before nominations opened. This was exacerbated by applications for the local elections already being processed. As a

result of the late confirmation of the European Parliamentary elections proceeding, some parties were not able to register and stand candidates at the European Parliamentary elections. Parties and campaigners deliver their reports of election spending after the poll. We will publish these as soon as possible after they are delivered. More information This report We have a statutory duty to report on the administration of the European Parliamentary election held in the UK in May 2019. We have also highlighted issues from the local government elections that were held in some parts of England earlier in May 2019. We separately wrote to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to highlight issues from the local government elections that were held across Northern Ireland on 2 May 2019. We have also produced a report on our enquiry into the registration process for citizens of other Member States of the EU in relation to European Parliamentary elections and the experience of some citizens of other EU Member States at the 2019 election, which has informed the conclusions in this report. The May elections On 2 May 2019 elections were held for 248 local councils in England, and all 11 local councils in Northern Ireland. There were also elections for five directly elected local authority Mayors, in Bedford, Mansfield, Leicester, Copeland and Middlesbrough, and an election for the Mayor of the North of Tyne Combined Authority. The electorate for local government elections in England was 27.9 million and approximately 9 million votes were cast. The overall turnout was 32.8%. Postal votes were issued to around 4.6 million electors in England and 2.9 million postal votes were included in the count. In Northern Ireland, where postal voting is not available on demand, 15,464 postal votes were issued. The European Parliamentary elections took place in the UK on 23 May, with voters choosing 73 MEPs in 12 electoral regions. A total of 46.5 million people were registered to vote in the European Parliamentary elections on 23 May 2019. Some 17.3 million votes were included in the count, representing an overall turnout of 37.2%. ■Local government elections 2019 data ■ European Parliamentary electoral data and information from EROs about citizens of other EU Member States Our evidence for this report We collected information from different sources to help ensure that our review of the May elections is thorough and robust. This included: a survey asking people what they thought about the May elections a survey of electoral administrators to understand their experience of running the elections electoral data including numbers about turnout, registration of EU citizens, postal voting and spoilt ballot papers Local Elections 2019 Post Poll Topline_FINAL Local government post poll topline data 2019 - technical report Local Elections 2019 Post poll_England_weighted tables_FINAL Local Elections 2019 Post poll_NI_weighted_tables_FINAL YouGov- Electoral Commission - Post-EU Elections 2019_report Electoral Commission- YouGov- Post_European_Election_Poll data tables 2019 1. Newcastle City Council and North Lincolnshire Council ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Arun District Council, Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council, Sedgemoor District Council, Thanet District Council, Winchester City Council ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. Allerdale Borough Council, Swindon Borough Council, Milton Keynes Council ■ Back to content at footnote 3 Related content Inquiry report: the voting registration process for EU citizens resident in the UK for the 2019 European Parliamentary elections held in the UK Read our inquiry report about the voting registration process for the 2019 European Parliamentary election Results and turnout at the 2014 European Parliamentary elections View the results and turnout at the 2014 European Parliamentary elections Past elections and referendums Read our reports and view data about past elections and referendums Results and turnout at the EU referendum View the results and turnout at the EU referendum