

Technical Report

Local Elections 2019: Post Poll Technical Report

Prepared for: Electoral Commission

Prepared by: BMG Research

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Overview

The Electoral Commission is an independent public body established under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000. The Electoral Commission's aim is to ensure integrity and public confidence in the democratic process, as well as regulate party and election finance, and set standards for well-run elections.

On Thursday 2nd May 2019 local elections were held in parts of the United Kingdom. Elections took place in wards falling within 248 local authority areas in England and all 11 local councils in Northern Ireland. There were no elections in Scotland, Wales and in various parts of England (including London, Birmingham and Cornwall). A full list of Local Authorities holding local elections on 2nd May can be found in the appendix.

In order to understand public attitudes, after each set of elections, the Electoral Commission conducts a survey representative of the population where elections have taken place. This research is referred to as the 'post poll' survey.

The Electoral Commission commissioned BMG Research to conduct their 2019 post poll survey. The survey explores various electoral issues including:

- Satisfaction with the process of registration and voting;
- Knowledge of voting laws and attitudes towards potential reforms;
- The extent to which electors feel they had access to information about the election;
- Attitudes and perceptions around issues such as towards party and election finances and electoral integrity.

Fieldwork

Fieldwork commenced on 3rd May and closed on 17th May 2019.

The survey used an online methodology with invites sent to members of BMG's online access panel network. To ensure the study was accessible for respondents, the survey was fielded on software that allowed respondents to complete on a range of device types including smartphones.

1,517 interviews were conducted in total. 1,011 interviews were conducted with electors in election areas in England and 506 interviews with electors in Northern Ireland.

Postcode based screening questions were used to identify whether or not an individual was living in an election area. Respondents living in a postcode where no local elections had been held were unable to participate. Postcode matching was also used to identify whether or not an individual was living in an area where ID pilots were being conducted (see discussion on ID pilots below).

Quota and weighting targets were calculated separately for election areas within England and election areas in Northern Ireland, with results in each country also analysed separately.

Sampling

To ensure a representative sample of electors aged 18+, quotas were applied at a country level (i.e. separate targets for election areas in England and Northern Ireland). Using ONS census statistics, quotas were calculated for the following variables:

- Age¹
- Gender
- Social economic grade
- Ethnicity
- Government Office Region (election areas within England only)
- Local Authority (Northern Ireland only)

To ensure that targets for election areas in England were an accurate representation of election areas, population counts were calculated for only those local authorities where elections were taking place.

For each of the targets above, weights were applied at the analysis stage to correct for any additional demographic differences between the interviewed sample and known population profiles taken from the census population data.

The effective sample sizes are outlined in Table 1 below:²

Table 1: Effective base size

Country	Effective sample size
England	951
Northern Ireland	383

¹ Age quotas and targets for election areas in England were calculated for six categories (18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, & 65+). Given the smaller sample size, weights and quotas for age in Northern Ireland were calculated using targets for three slightly broader categories (18-34, 35-54 & 55+).

² The effective sample size is a measure of sampling and weighting efficiency.

The weighted and unweighted sample profiles are presented in Tables 2 and Table 3 below.

Table 2: Sample profile of election areas in England

	Unweighted base	Weighted base
Gender		
Male	499	496
Female	511	514
Age		
18-24	109	118
25-34	159	158
35-44	173	177
45-54	178	180
55-64	163	156
65+	229	222
SEG		
AB	261	308
C1	282	228
C2	182	221
DE	286	254
Ethnicity		
White	932	905
BAME	71	97
Government Office Region		
East of England	160	119
East Midlands	134	144
North East	41	47
North West	172	179
South East	187	208
South West	100	93
West Midlands	115	103
Yorkshire & The Humber	102	119

Table 3: Sample profile of Northern Ireland

	Unweighted base	Weighted base
Gender		
Male	216	243
Female	287	259
Age		
18-34	181	147
35-54	184	178
55+	141	181
SEG		
AB	145	103
C1	157	150
C2	79	140
DE	125	113
Ethnicity		
White	490	490
BAME	10	9
Local Government Districts		
Antrim and Newtownabbey	64	38
Ards and North Down	54	44
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	52	57
Belfast	112	93
Causeway Coast and Glens	51	39
Derry City and Strabane	34	40
Fermanagh and Omagh	22	31
Lisburn and Castlereagh	38	39
Mid and East Antrim	32	38
Mid Ulster	20	39
Newry, Mourne and Down	27	47

ID Pilot

Ten local authorities took part in the voter ID pilot during the local government elections. Electors in Braintree, Broxtowe, Craven, Derby, Mid Sussex, North Kesteven, North West Leicestershire, Pendle, Watford and Woking were required to show some form of ID before being able to vote in polling stations. The forms of ID required varied by local authority, with some requiring poll cards, some photo identification and others accepting a mix of photo and non-photo. Electors in Watford and Woking were also required to show ID to vote in polling stations in the local elections in May 2018.

While the focus of the post-poll is not related to the ID pilot, it is worth noting that 27 respondents have been identified as living in these local authorities using postcode

matching. These respondents would have been required to show some form of identification before voting in polling stations at the May 2019 local election.

Coding & Cleaning

Responses from fully open-ended questions were collated and code frames created to reflect all key themes in the responses. Responses from questions with an 'other – specify' option were analysed and, if appropriate, back-coded into one of the pre-coded categories. If the response could not be assigned to an existing code but gained a sufficient number of mentions, a new code was created which all relevant responses were assigned to. Coding was carried out by the BMG in-house coding team.

All coders who worked on the study were briefed and a written set of instructions was made available. Pre-existing code frames for a number of the open questions (created using previous post poll waves) were provided by the Electoral Commission, with coders making small additions where necessary.

A total of eight responses were removed post-fieldwork for quality purposes (all in England). This was where the postcode provided by the respondent did not match the Government Office Region specified.³

Question 40

During fieldwork, an error in the survey script was spotted with the text shown to respondents at question 40, which was asked to respondents in England only. Question 40 briefly detailed the ID requirements and asked respondents whether, if the requirement to provide a form of identification was introduced, whether it would make them more or less likely to vote (or whether it did or did not make them more likely to vote in the case of those living in ID pilot areas).

The question text was designed to change slightly depending on whether or not respondents had voted and whether or not the respondent was living in an ID pilot area. Due to a scripting error, part of the question text was not shown to those living in non-pilot areas (affecting both voters and non-voters).

A total of 916 cases were affected. To address the issue, BMG re-contacted all respondents where this issue was identified to re-ask question 40. A total of 817 respondents completed the recontact survey, making for a response rate of 89%. The base size for this question is slightly lower than intended (904 versus 1011).

Response rates to the recontact question were fairly consistent across all demographic groups. The only notable group where the response rate was slightly lower was amongst younger respondents aged between 18 and 24. To account for the slightly different profile of

³ Allowances were made for respondents living in postcodes near to Government Office Region boundaries. Where this was the case the postcode provided was used to determine Government Office Region.

respondents who responded to the recontact, weights were re-calculated for this question on the basis of only those respondents who responded to the recontact.⁴

⁴ BMG also conducted an imputation to model the responses for the missing cases by identifying key predictors from other questions. Comparing the distribution of responses for the data which includes the imputed cases against that which does not include the imputed cases, we find only very marginal differences between the two sets of results (no more than one percentage point for each of the response options). Thus, had the recontact rate been 100%, it is very unlikely that the additional responses would have significantly changed the results at an aggregate level to any meaningful extent.

Appendix

1.1 English Election Areas

Allerdale	Amber Valley	Arun
Ashfield	Ashford	Babergh
Barnsley	Barrow-in-Furness	Basildon
Basingstoke & Deane	Bassetlaw	Bath & North East Somerset
Bedford	Blaby	Blackburn with Darwen
Blackpool	Bolsover	Bolton
Boston	Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole	Bracknell Forest
Bradford	Braintree	Breckland
Brentwood	Brighton & Hove	Broadland
Bromsgrove	Broxbourne	Broxtowe
Burnley	Bury	Calderdale
Cambridge	Cannock Chase	Canterbury
Carlisle	Castle Point	Central Bedfordshire
Charnwood	Chelmsford	Cherwell
Cheshire East	Cheshire West & Chester	Chesterfield
Chichester	Chorley	Colchester
Copeland	Cotswold	Coventry
Craven	Crawley	Dacorum
Darlington	Dartford	Derby
Derbyshire Dales	Dorset	Dover
Dudley	East Cambridgeshire	East Devon
East Hampshire	East Hertfordshire	East Lindsey
East Riding of Yorkshire	East Staffordshire	East Suffolk
Eastbourne	Eastleigh	Eden

Elmbridge	Epping Forest	Epsom & Ewell
Erewash	Exeter	Fenland
Folkestone & Hythe	Forest of Dean	Fylde
Gateshead	Gedling	Gravesham
Great Yarmouth	Guildford	Halton
Hambleton	Harborough	Harlow
Hart	Hartlepool	Havant
Herefordshire	Hertsmere	High Peak
Hinckley & Bosworth	Horsham	Hyndburn
Ipswich	King's Lynn & West Norfolk	Kingston-upon-Hull
Kirklees	Knowsley	Lancaster
Leeds	Leicester	Lewes
Lichfield	Lincoln	Liverpool
Luton	Maidstone	Maldon
Malvern Hills	Manchester	Mansfield
Medway	Melton	Mendip
Mid Devon	Mid Suffolk	Mid Sussex
Middlesbrough	Milton Keynes	Mole Valley
New Forest	Newark & Sherwood	Newcastle-upon-Tyne
North Devon	North East Derbyshire	North East Lincolnshire
North Hertfordshire	North Kesteven	North Lincolnshire
North Norfolk	North Somerset	North Tyneside
North Warwickshire	North West Leicestershire	Norwich
Nottingham	Oadby & Wigston	Oldham
Pendle	Peterborough	Plymouth
Portsmouth	Preston	Reading
Redcar & Cleveland	Redditch	Reigate & Banstead

Ribble Valley	Richmondshire	Rochdale
Rochford	Rossendale	Rother
Rugby	Runnymede	Rushcliffe
Rushmoor	Rutland	Ryedale
Salford	Sandwell	Scarborough
Sedgemoor	Sefton	Selby
Sevenoaks	Sheffield	Slough
Solihull	Somerset West & Taunton	South Derbyshire
South Gloucestershire	South Hams	South Holland
South Kesteven	South Lakeland	South Norfolk
South Oxfordshire	South Ribble	South Somerset
South Staffordshire	South Tyneside	Southampton
Southend-on-Sea	Spelthorne	St Albans
St Helens	Stafford	Staffordshire Moorlands
Stevenage	Stockport	Stockton-on-Tees
Stoke-on-Trent	Stratford-on-Avon	Sunderland
Surrey Heath	Swale	Swindon
Tameside	Tamworth	Tandridge
Teignbridge	Telford & Wrekin	Tendring
Test Valley	Tewkesbury	Thanet
Three Rivers	Thurrock	Tonbridge & Malling
Torbay	Torridge	Trafford
Tunbridge Wells	Uttlesford	Vale of White Horse
Wakefield	Walsall	Warwick
Watford	Waverley	Wealden
Welwyn Hatfield	West Berkshire	West Devon
West Lancashire	West Lindsey	West Oxfordshire

West Suffolk	Wigan	Winchester
Windsor & Maidenhead Royal	Wirral	Woking
Wokingham	Wolverhampton	Worcester
Worthing	Wychavon	Wyre
Wyre Forest	York	

1.2 Question 40

The requirement to provide a form of identification was trialled in [IF IN PILOT AREA: your, IF IN NON-PILOT AREA: some] areas in England at the 2nd May elections.

Acceptable identification included: passport, photo driving licence, ID card, your poll card or two recent official proofs of address (e.g. bank statement, utility bill).

VOTERS: You already told us that you voted on 2 May, but [IF IN PILOT AREA; did, IF IN NON-PILOT AREA; would] the requirement to take identification to the polling station make you **more or less likely to vote** or [IF IN PILOT AREA; did, IF IN NON-PILOT AREA; would] it make no difference?

NON VOTERS: You already told us that you did not vote on 2nd May, but [IF IN PILOT AREA; did, IF IN NON-PILOT AREA; would] the requirement to take identification to the polling station make you **more or less likely to vote** or [IF IN PILOT AREA; did, IF IN NON-PILOT AREA; would] it make no difference?

Select one answer only

1. A lot more likely
2. A little more likely
3. I [made / would make] no difference
4. A little less likely
5. A lot less likely
6. A don't have any ID / I wouldn't be able to vote#

1.3 Statement of terms

Compliance with International Standards

BMG complies with the International Standard for Quality Management Systems requirements (ISO 9001:2015) and the International Standard for Market, opinion and social research service requirements (ISO 20252:2012) and The International Standard for Information Security Management (ISO 27001:2013).

Interpretation and publication of results

The interpretation of the results as reported in this document pertain to the research problem and are supported by the empirical findings of this research project and, where applicable, by

other data. These interpretations and recommendations are based on empirical findings and are distinguishable from personal views and opinions.

BMG will not publish any part of these results without the written and informed consent of the client.

Ethical practice

BMG promotes ethical practice in research: We conduct our work responsibly and in light of the legal and moral codes of society.

We have a responsibility to maintain high scientific standards in the methods employed in the collection and dissemination of data, in the impartial assessment and dissemination of findings and in the maintenance of standards commensurate with professional integrity.

We recognise we have a duty of care to all those undertaking and participating in research and strive to protect subjects from undue harm arising as a consequence of their participation in research. This requires that subjects' participation should be as fully informed as possible and no group should be disadvantaged by routinely being excluded from consideration. All adequate steps shall be taken by both agency and client to ensure that the identity of each respondent participating in the research is protected.

With more than 25 years' experience, BMG Research has established a strong reputation for delivering high quality research and consultancy.

BMG serves both the public and the private sector, providing market and customer insight which is vital in the development of plans, the support of campaigns and the evaluation of performance.

Innovation and development is very much at the heart of our business, and considerable attention is paid to the utilisation of the most up to date technologies and information systems to ensure that market and customer intelligence is widely shared.

