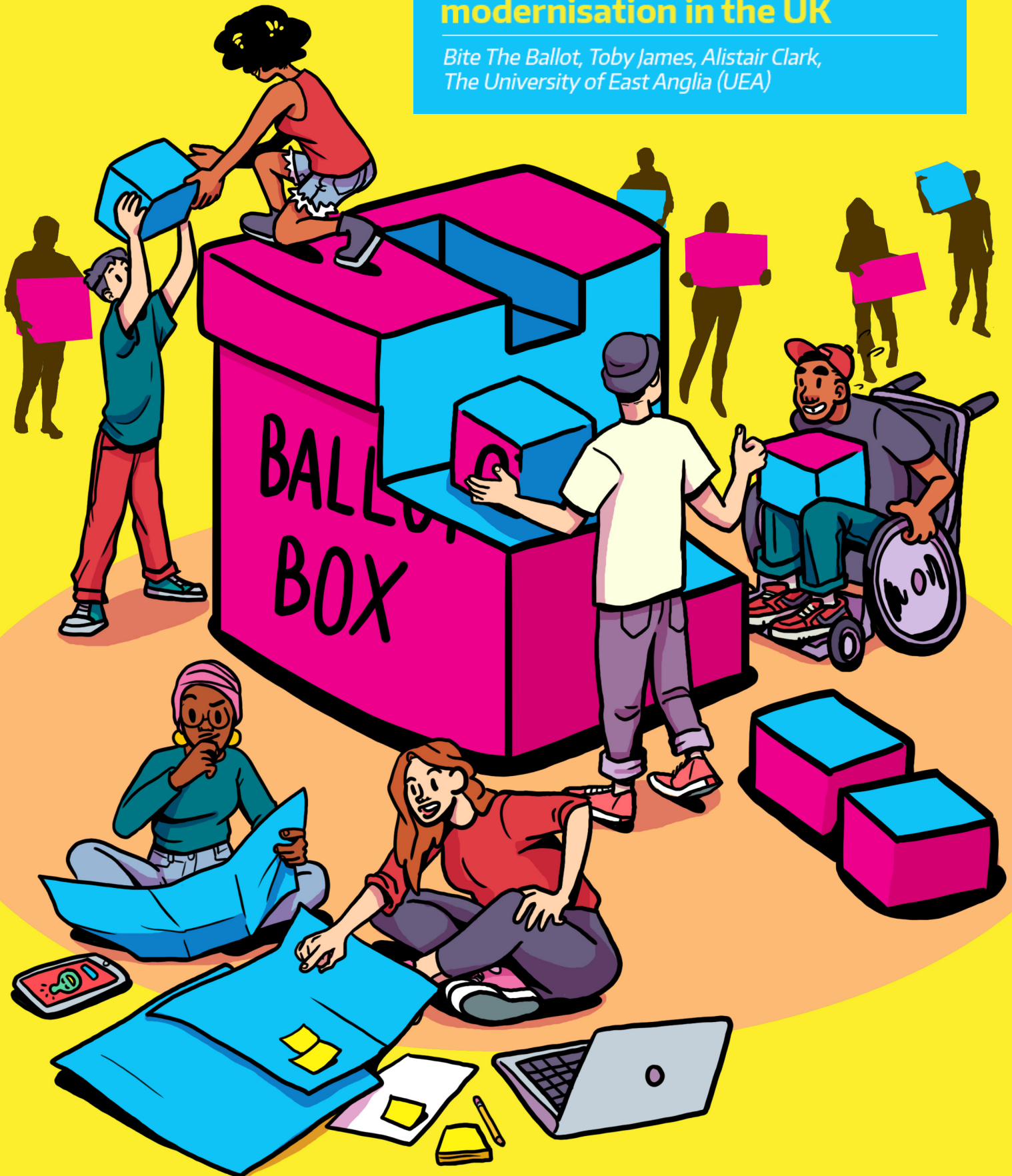


MISSING MILLIONS STILL MISSING

**A vision for electoral
modernisation in the UK**

*Bite The Ballot, Toby James, Alistair Clark,
The University of East Anglia (UEA)*



FORWARD

We find ourselves at a crucial time for trust in our democracy and our political institutions, adding to the challenges faced by those within civil society who are working to ensure the fabric of our democracy thrives. The essence of those collaborative efforts have been captured in this report to provide recommendations that seek to tackle the root causes of poor civic engagement. It is now hoped that parliamentarians, civil servants and all key stakeholders use the expertise of civil society in order to support the modernisation of our elections and electoral processes so the ‘motherhood of all parliaments can set sail again’. The authors and contributors intend for this report to serve as a resource for conversation, policy considerations and legislation, a union of those on the ground and those who shape the legislative process. Democracy expresses no ideology, no left or right leaning, no bias or preference but instead the open invitation for everyone to participate, with respect and empathy, to ensure we can all play a role in building the society we want to be part of. So together, let's remove some of the barriers, divide the responsibility and collectively move things forward. On behalf of the APPG on Democratic Participation and all our supporters we urge everyone to build a cross party, long term plan to deliver our democratic potential.

- MICHAEL SANI
CEO OF BITE THE BALLOT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2019 European Parliamentary Elections saw voters across the UK #DeniedMyVote because of registration and administrative issues. This was not an unusual event, however, because the bureaucratic aspects of elections means that there are many missing from the register, unable to vote on the day or denied the highest quality service.

Three years since the APPG's critically acclaimed report on the Missing Millions much has changed. Major reforms have been undertaken to improve voter registration based on the Missing Millions report. However, there remains much to be done. The report shows that millions of eligible voters are still missing from the electoral register, with completeness improving for the elderly, but declining for younger generations. Citizens are regularly turned away from polling stations for not being on the register, archaic Victorian practices remain, and the electoral process is shrouded by an absence transparency.

This report therefore revisits the earlier recommendations from the APPG, provides an audit of progress to date, and issues an urgent call for action for further reforms to be taken forward before 2025.

ENDORSEMENTS

“Electoral administrators should not be delivering elections and electoral registration in spite of the system. We should be developing processes that work for all citizens; are safe, secure and respected; are accessible; and are administratively achievable. The recommendations made by the APPG offer much food for thought and we encourage Government to work with key stakeholders in embracing such principles as part of the wider modernisation of electoral processes



- PETER STANYON

CEO ASSOCIATION OF ELECTORAL ADMINISTRATORS

“Voting is integral to democracy. The UK's system, however, is under undue pressure and urgent action is needed. This report sets out a clear, research-led vision for parliamentarians of all parties to rally around to modernise the electoral process.

A clear vision is needed for elections for everyone in the twenty-first century. This is it.



- PAUL MASTERTON MP

CHAIR, APPG ON DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION

1. VOTING MATTERS

There are many ways in which citizens make their voice heard in the democratic system. Voting at elections and referendums remains the central one. It is at elections that citizens get the chance to choose who represents them in Parliament and elect the government of the day. Critical decisions about the future of the UK are made at referendums, that will have lasting consequences for generations.

There is a golden rule in politics: decisions are made by those who are in the room. If individuals or groups are less likely to vote – they are less likely to have their voice heard and our democracy loses the cognitive diversity essential for exploring solutions to the issues facing our society.

Despite talk of a 'Youthquake' in the 2017 General Election, young people are much less likely to vote than older voters, as figure 1 demonstrates. There are many reasons for this which include interest and engagement in politics. But one factor why young (and old) people don't vote, is because registration and voting processes were designed in the 19th and 20th century.

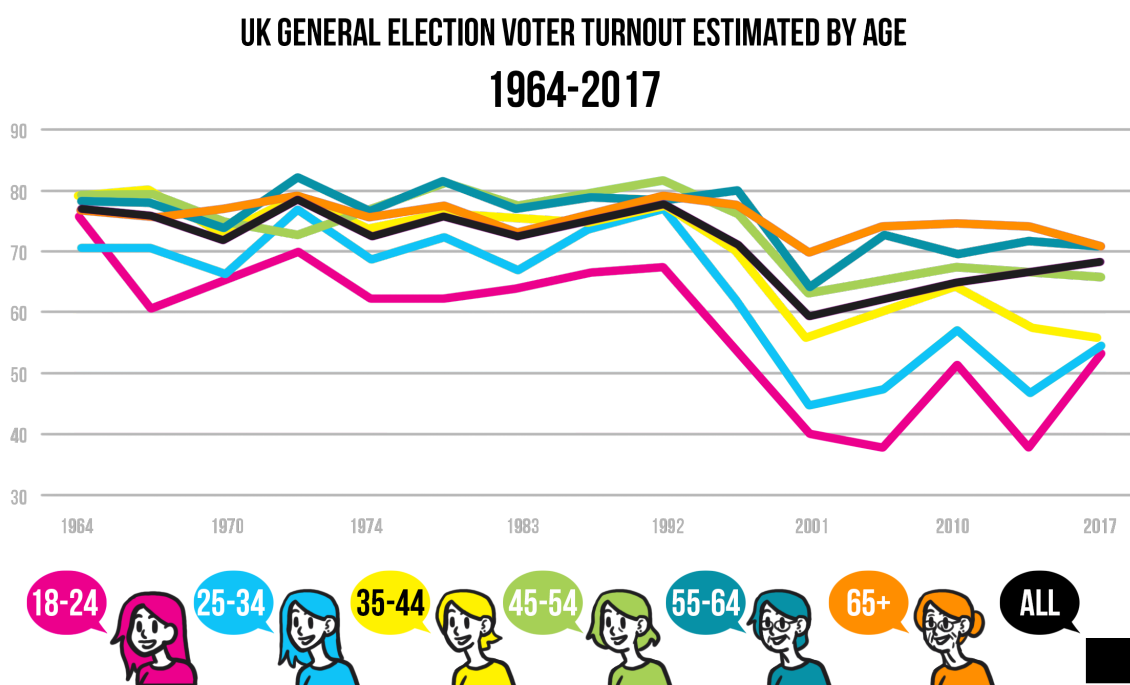
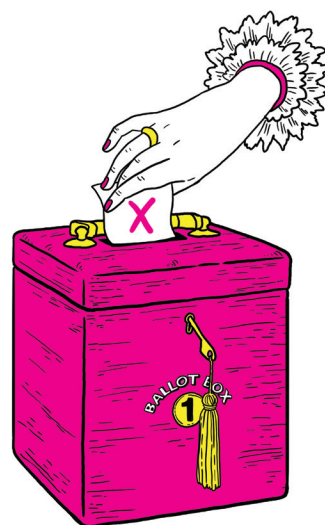
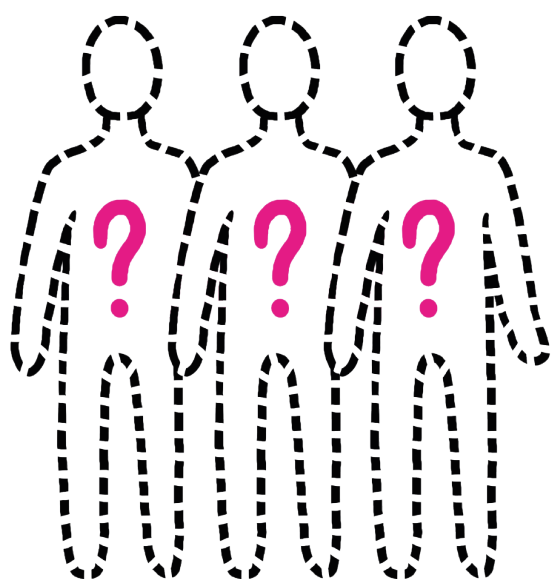


Figure 1: Trends in levels of voter turnout by at UK general elections.¹

¹Toby S. James. 2018. Are UK elections conducted with integrity, with sufficient turnout? In Patrick Dunleavy (eds) Democratic Audit of 2018. London School of Economics Press: London. <http://www.democraticaudit.com/2018/08/15/audit2018-are-uk-elections-conducted-with-integrity-with-sufficient-turnout/>

The All Party Parliamentary Group on Democratic Participation was setup in 2015 'To serve as a platform to inspire democratic participation and innovation.'² 'It is a cross-party group which has had co-chairs from every single political party and is currently chaired by Paul Masterton MP. In 2016 it published recommendations on how electoral modernisation could be achieved.

This report begins by reviewing the progress made since the Missing Millions report. Successful reforms have now been implemented by the government, following the recommendations from the APPG. The report then continues to look at the old problems that remain and the new problems that have emerged. The report shows that millions of eligible voters are still missing from the register, people are still turned away from polling stations unable to vote, elections are increasingly underfunded and Victorian practices remain.

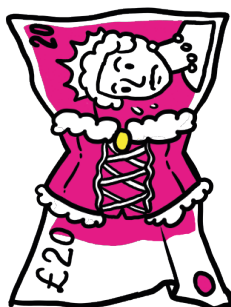


**MILLIONS STILL
MISSING**



**COMPLETENESS IS
DECLINING FOR
YOUNG PEOPLE**

**PEOPLE NOT ON THE
REGISTER ARE TURNED
AWAY AT POLLING STATIONS**



**ELECTIONS ARE
UNDERFUNDED & ARCHAIC
PRACTICES REMAIN**

² <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmallparty/151223/democratic-participation.htm>

³ <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2016-05-25/38458/>

2. OUR EARLIER WORK: THE MISSING MILLIONS REPORT 1.0 IN ACTION

In April 2016, the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Democratic Participation published the report *Getting the 'Missing Millions' on to the Electoral Register: A Vision for Voter Registration Reform in the UK*. The report came at a time when major changes had been made in the way that which the electoral register had been compiled. The Victorian system of household registration had been replaced with a system of individual electoral registration. Voters were also now being asked for National Insurance numbers and their date of birth at the point of registration. In addition, online electoral registration has just been introduced. Noting that the move had had some advantages, it also set drew attention to the 7.5 million of citizens who were estimated to not be registered to vote. The report set out 25 evidence-based reforms that could redress the problem.

The report was a major success. Members of the APPG used the report to ask questions in parliament and order debates. The government responded very positively with it Minister John Penrose stated on 25th May 2016 that:



'We welcome the views of the All- Party Parliamentary Group and Bite the Ballot set out in their report which is helping inform our plans for a programme of work aimed at realising this vision.'³



Meanwhile, the Minister for the Constitution, Chris Skidmore singled it out by saying that:



4

The policy impact of the report was recognised by the research council ESRC in their 2018 impact awards.⁵

The government responded by publishing a Democratic Engagement Strategy recognising the importance of a proactive approach to democratic participation and political parties have developed new pledges on electoral modernisation.

Above all, two core recommendations from the report were taken up in policy:

⁴ <https://esrc.ukri.org/news-events-and-publications/impact-case-studies/helping-the-uks-missing-millions-to-vote/>

⁵ <https://esrc.ukri.org/news-events-and-publications/impact-case-studies/helping-the-uks-missing-millions-to-vote/>

#3

"Prompt students to register when they annually enrol in college or university" was addressed with an amendment to the Higher Education and Research Act 2017; and

#10

"Government funding and support for National Voter Registration Drive" was addressed with the announcement of the National Democracy Week.

There was progress towards:

#15

'Incorporate registration into a re-evaluated national programme of citizenship education' when the APPG successfully advocated for a provision in the National Citizen Service Act 2017 to 'encouraging participants to take an interest in debate on matters of local or national political interest, and promoting their understanding of how to participate in national and

The Greater London Authority also issued a tender in 2017 to introduce political literacy resources into schools, referring to the Missing Millions report as one of the reasons why political literacy in schools is essential.

There has also been substantial progress towards recommendations 7, 8 and 25 which recommended that

#7

'Commission and publish a detailed evaluation of innovations in Local Authorities designed to improve the completeness of the register.'

#8

'Data sets from the private sector, such as those maintained by credit reference agencies, could also be a useful resource for EROs. The expanded use of both public and private data sets as a short-term boost to registration levels is an option that could be explored further'

#25

'Introduce an automatic system of electoral registration for all eligible citizens'

Progress has been made here because Bite The Ballot have worked with Experian and the Electoral Commission to bring about new data-sharing arrangements. In addition, the Electoral Commission have undertaken feasibility studies on different forms of automated electoral registration in line with the *Missing Millions* recommendations.⁷ The government has also published plans to reform the annual canvass that could bring about a form of automatic re-registration.⁸

There has also been substantial progress in Scotland and Wales where respective administrations have taken forward the spirit of the report. The Finance Committee of the National Assembly for Wales, for example, has supported automatic registration for 16 year olds.⁹

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-government-has-published-an-updated-national-citizen-service-trust-draft-royal-charter-to-accompany-the-national-citizen-service-ncs-bill-in-its>

MORE TO BE DONE:

3. THE MILLIONS STILL MISSING FROM THE REGISTER

Despite all of this progress, there remains much more to be done. Following the completion of the introduction of individual electoral registration, the Electoral Commission estimated that 8 million people were missing from the electoral register.¹⁰ While the accuracy of the electoral register increased over this time, completeness dropped.¹¹ Moreover, this drop predominantly hit younger people. Completeness declined by 11 percentage points for 18-19 year olds, while it remained even or increased in the over 55 age categories.¹²



It is often suggested that the electoral register is in improved health because there are a record number of entries.¹³ The rise in entries can be explained, however, by three factors. Firstly, the UK has seen major electoral contests in 2015-2017 with two general elections and a nationwide referendum which would have boosted registration rates. Secondly, the APPG has been proactively working to raise awareness of the electoral registration deadlines which has fed into increased media coverage. Thirdly, although the number of registrations has increased, this is to be expected as the population in the UK rises. Figure 2 therefore demonstrates the growing gap between estimates of the number of eligible citizens and entries on local electoral register.

⁷ <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/our-work/our-research/electoral-registration-research2/modernising-electoral-registration-feasibility-studies>

⁸ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/744501/Canvass_Reform_Policy_Statement.pdf

⁹ <https://www.assembly.wales/laid%20documents/cr-ld12611/cr-ld12611-e.pdf>

THE GAP BETWEEN THE ESTIMATED ELIGIBLE ELECTORATE AND REGISTERED VOTERS

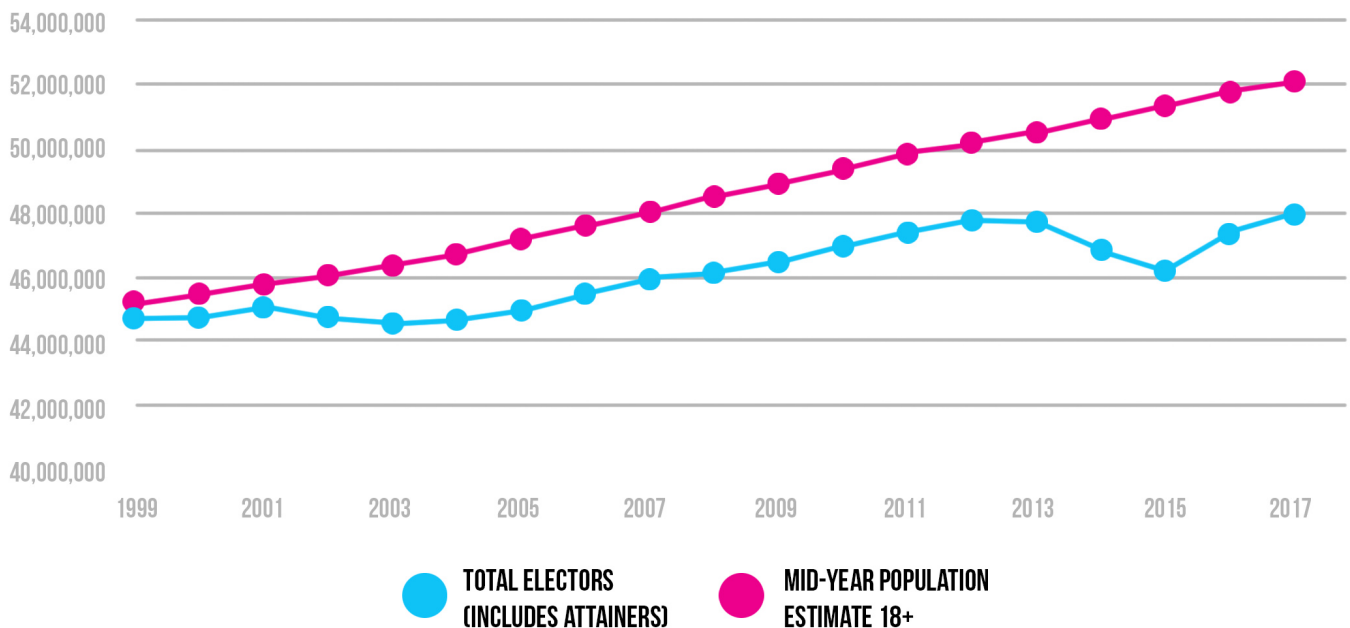


Figure 2: The local electoral register is used because it has the higher franchise.¹⁴

The Electoral Commission concluded that there had been no statistically significant overall drop – but that their estimates did suggest that there was a drop amongst some groups. Evidence in James (2019) also suggests that this drop has occurred.

4. PEOPLE STILL TURNED AWAY FROM THE POLL

We know from previous studies¹⁵ that voters are commonly turned away from polling stations because they are not on the electoral register. New research demonstrates that this problem persists. A survey of poll workers was run at the 2018 English local elections. This asked the staff who ran the polls about their first-hand experience of problems that take place. Table 1 illustrates that the greatest problem, affecting over half of polling stations, was people asking to vote but not having their name on the electoral register. Suspected cases of electoral fraud was bottom of the list.

¹⁰https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/213377/The-December-2015-electoral-registers-in-Great-Britain-REPORT.pdf

¹¹ The Electoral Commission concluded that there had been no statistically significant overall drop – but that their estimates did suggest that there was a drop amongst some groups. Evidence in James (2019) also suggests that this drop has occurred.

¹²<http://fabians.org.uk/missing-millions/>

¹³<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/election-uk-turnout-voters-registration-labour-tories-record-numbers-a7777931.html>

POTENTIAL PROBLEM	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS REPORTING AT LEAST 1 PROBLEM
PEOPLE ASKING TO VOTE BUT NOT ON REGISTER	52%
DISABLED VOTERS HAVING PROBLEMS COMPLETING BALLOT PAPERS	14%
MEMBERS OF PARTIES BEING WHERE THEY SHOULDN'T BE	9%
DISABLED VOTERS HAVING PROBLEMS WITH ACCESS TO THE POLLING STATION	9%
PEOPLE TAKING PHOTOS OF BALLOT/POLLING STATIONS	8%
MEMBERS OF PARTIES INTIMIDATING PUBLIC	8%
PEOPLE ASK TO VOTE WHOSE IDENTITY I WAS UNSURE OF	5%
SUSPECTED CASES OF ELECTORAL FRAUD	1%

Table 1: Problems reported at the Polls in the English local elections 2018. ¹⁶

The 2019 European Parliamentary Elections saw the problem of voters being denied the chance to vote because of administrative issues. The #DeniedMyVote hashtag was trending on election day as EU citizens were finding that they could not vote because they had not completed a second piece of paperwork, transferring their voting rights from their home Member State to the UK. Many had not been sent this paperwork in time because of the short timeframe within which the election was called. The government had also not simplified the procedure after problems were reported at the 2014 parliamentary elections; or introduced a website to check whether citizens were registered.¹⁷

¹⁴Toby S.James. 2018. 'Are UK elections conducted with integrity, with sufficient turnout?' in Patrick Dunleavy (eds) Democratic Audit 2018. London: LSE University Press.

¹⁵Alistair Clark and Toby S. James. 2017. 'Poll Workers' in Pippa Norris and Alessandro Nai (eds), Watchdog Elections: Transparency, Accountability, Compliance and Integrity. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.

5. ELECTIONS ARE INCREASINGLY UNDERFUNDED



**LOCAL AUTHORITIES LACK
BUDGET & RESOURCES**

**ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES
LESS LIKELY TO HAPPEN**

**LACK OF TRANSPARENCY
HINDERS RESEARCH &
CONFIDENCE IN ELECTIONS**

The public sector has had a sustained period during which resources are limited. This has become increasingly apparent in the area of elections, where there are signs of under-funding and the quality of elections being put under strain. Although funding for elections is provided by central government, local authorities are required to provide the necessary resources to Electoral Registration Officers. Academic research from Newcastle University has provided evidence that increased spending on electoral registration leads to higher quality elections.¹⁸

A report from the University of East Anglia and ClearView research demonstrated that although their budgets had increased overall between 2010-11 and 2015-16, there was huge variation – and a fall in a 43 per cent authorities. These falls were often very significant. There was also evidence to suggest that local authorities lack resources since they are increasingly over-budget. During 2015-16, electoral services were running 129 per cent over budget on average. The areas that have seen more cuts to funding on elections are less likely to undertake a public engagement strategy and marginally less likely to undertake school outreach activities. This suggests that democratic engagement activities are less likely to be pursued when electoral services are underfunded and under resourced.¹⁹

Meanwhile, in an evaluation of the administration of the EU referendum, researchers found that 43 per cent disagreed or strongly disagreed that they had sufficient funding available.²⁰

¹⁶ Alistair Clark and Toby S. James. 2018. 'Voter ID: our first results suggest local election pilot was unnecessary and ineffective', The Conversation, 1st August 2018 <https://theconversation.com/voter-id-our-first-results-suggest-local-election-pilot-was-unnecessary-and-ineffective-100859>.

¹⁷ Toby S. James. 2019. '#DeniedMyVote – why many EU citizens were unable to vote in the European Parliament elections' Democratic Audit, 30th May 2019.

There are concerns about the allocation of resources with elections. The Scottish Parliament Local Government and Communities Committee has raised concerns that too much of the budget is being given to senior electoral officials as pay.²¹

The issue of financial transparency in elections has also been raised. Electoral Registration Officers and Returning Officers are exempt from Freedom of Information requests and this has hindered research and confidence in the electoral process.²²

6. VICTORIAN PRACTICES REMAIN

The availability of online electoral registration was a huge step forward in the modernisation of the electoral process. But Victorian and bureaucratic practices remain.

- Rather than having a single national electoral register, where changes can be more readily made, we have a patchwork of 372 local electoral registers.
- Electoral officials are required to issue Household Enquiry Forms to every household each July. Under individual electoral registration this has become more costly because individual requests to register then have to be issued.²³



WE HAVE A PATCH WORK OF
372 **LOCAL ELECTORAL**
REGISTER

¹⁸ Alistair Clark. 2014. 'Investing in Electoral Management' in P. Norris, R. Frank & F. Martinez I Coma (eds.) Advancing Electoral Integrity, New York: Oxford University Press, pp165-188.

¹⁹ Toby S. James and Tyrone Jervier. 2017. The Cost of Elections: Funding Electoral Services in England and Wales. ClearView Research: London.

²⁰ Alistair Clark and Toby S. James. 2016. An Evaluation of Electoral Administration at the EU Referendum. London: Electoral Commission.

²¹ https://www.parliament.scot/S5_Local_Gov/Reports/LGCS052017R01.pdf

²² Toby S. James and Tyrone Jervier. 2017. The Cost of Elections: Funding Electoral Services in England and Wales. ClearView Research: London.

²³ Toby S. James. 2019. Comparative Electoral Management: Performance, Networks Instruments. New York: Routledge.

The Electoral Commission has recently evaluated pilots of new ways of undertaking the annual canvass. This has included different letters, email canvassing, telephone canvassing and data-led canvassing²⁴ and undertaken feasibility studies for automatic voter registration – thereby largely achieving Missing Million recommendation 7. The further use of innovative pilots to make canvassing more cost efficient, modern and able to improve completeness rates remains important.

Given that public bodies such as local government bodies and private sector organisations such as credit reference agencies hold vast volumes of data, it is imperative that EROs are provided with this through data-sharing agreements.

At the same time, public sector austerity should not be used to justify changes to the electoral process which might damage the completeness of the electoral register. Ceasing to undertake annual canvasses to save money, for example, could negatively affect the inclusiveness of our democracy.

There is also a problematic complaints system for citizens, with citizens encouraged to submit any grievances to Returning and Registration Officers locally. Justice for voters, candidates and parties are reliant on a slow, expensive and antiquated system. A simple, one-stop shop, centralised complaints system is needed which is often available in other democracies.²⁵

7. A WORKFORCE IN NEED

The staff that run elections are the unsung heroes of the democratic process. Poll workers are often employed on short-term contracts with relatively low pay, working long hours. Meanwhile, the permanent workforces in local authority authorities have been under sustained pressure.

Research has shown how electoral officials have been under severe levels of stress and have worked long hours at key electoral events such as the EU Referendum.²⁶

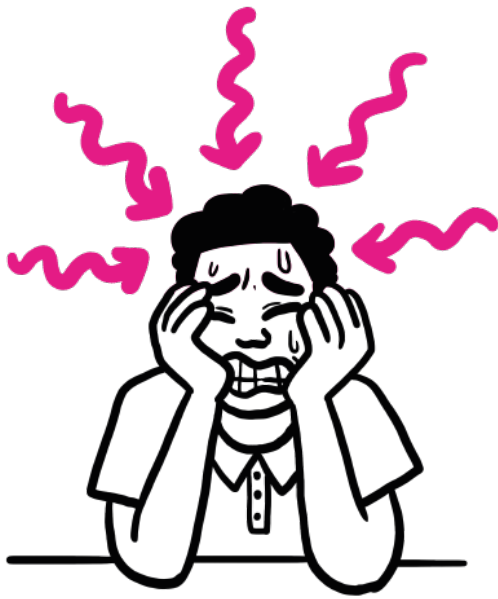
Reforms such as the introduction of individual electoral registration, which involved the use of different IT systems and working practice, led to many considering quitting the profession creating lost knowledge.²⁷

²⁴ Electoral Commission. 2018. Annual canvass reform: pilot scheme evaluation. Electoral Commission: London. https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/244608/Annual-canvass-reform-pilot-scheme-evaluation.pdf

²⁵ Alistair Clark and Toby S. James. 2016. An Evaluation of Electoral Administration at the EU Referendum. London: Electoral Commission.

²⁶ Toby S. James. 2019. Comparative Electoral Management: Performance, Networks Instruments. New York: Routledge.

Comparative research shows that the UK permanent staff have amongst the highest workloads and levels of stress in the world.²⁸



UK PERMANENT ELECTORAL STAFF HAVE
AMONGST THE
**HIGHEST WORKLOADS
AND STRESS LEVELS
IN THE WORLD**

8. GOVERNMENT POLICY SO FAR

There has been some major progress towards the implementation of the Missing Millions objectives, most notably with the publication of the Democratic Engagement Strategy,²⁹ and plans to reform the annual canvass³⁰ which could introduce a form of automatic re-registration for which the government should be commended. Government policy has switched to focusing on two other areas.

Firstly, the government has introduced pilots for voter identification requirements at polling stations. Pilots took place at the May 2018 and 2019 local elections. Secondly, the government is seeking to make a major change to the franchise by extending the right to vote to all overseas electors.

²⁷ Toby S. James. 2019. Comparative Electoral Management: Performance, Networks Instruments. New York: Routledge

²⁸ Toby S. James. 2019. 'Better Workers, Better Elections? Electoral Management Body Workforces and Electoral Integrity Worldwide,' International Political Science Review, 40 (3) 370-390

²⁹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/669130/democratic_engagement_strategy_2017.PDF

³⁰ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/744501/Canvass_Reform_Policy_Statement.pdf

Whatever the merits of the changes, they will have major consequences on the functioning of elections, and by implication, democratic engagement. The introduction of voter identification requirements risk deterring people from casting their vote, if they don't have the available identification to hand on the day of the poll. Meanwhile, extending the franchise will involve considerable costs in terms of posting ballots and processing applications.

There are also concerns about the implementation of Democracy Week. It is a project that has the full support of the APPG and is an important way in which the goals can be achieved. However, there should be careful, independent evaluation of the week with clear performance markers, such as the number of new registrations, so that achievements can be identified and changes made. Key to achieving this is the involvement of stakeholder organisations in the design of the week in the future and if they are expected to lead activities and events then they should be properly resourced to do so.

9. A CALL TO ACTION FOR 2025

WITH THE NUMBER OF CHANGES THAT HAVE BEEN MADE, IT IS IMPORTANT TO TAKE STOCK AND SET OUT A LONGER TERM VISION FOR THE REFORM OF ELECTIONS. THIS VISION SHOULD BE:



CROSS-PARTY

SO THAT IT IS NOT DEPENDENT ON THE GOVERNMENT OF THE DAY
AND CAN BRING CONFIDENCE AND CONSENSUS

EVIDENCE BASED

BY ACADEMIC RESEARCH SO THAT CERTAINTY AND
CONSENSUS CAN BE FORMED



INCLUSIVE

SO THAT IT IS DESIGNED TO ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION AMONGST
ALL INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS, ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO ARE
UNDER-REPRESENTED ON THE REGISTER AND AT THE BALLOT BOX

DELIVERABLE

SO THAT THEY ARE WITHIN THE RESOURCE
AND CAPACITY OF STAKEHOLDERS



WE THINK THAT THE FOLLOWING SHOULD BE THE KEY REFORMS PURSUED IN TIME FOR ELECTIONS THAT TAKE PLACE AFTER 2025:



1. VOTER REGISTRATION IN SCHOOLS:

Where local authorities have the resources and ability then the Northern Ireland Electoral Office's 'Schools Initiative' should be across Great Britain so that voter registration can be incorporated into school life. We should aspire to introduce a national programme of education in schools, colleges and sixth-forms regarding the benefits of voter registration alongside citizenship education. This should be incorporated into Ofsted inspection criteria and best practice to ensure it is taken



2. SUPPORT NATIONAL DEMOCRACY WEEK:

Following the inaugural National Democracy Week, further support and resources should be made available for future weeks, which could include a voter registration drives for attainers and young people. However, there should be clearly defined KPIs for the week and financial resources for stakeholders to be



3. THE SHEFFIELD MODEL:

Universities should be encouraged to follow the 'Sheffield Model', in which registers students to vote, when they enrol at their university. The evaluation of efforts to improve student registration rates in universities as a result of the passage of the Higher Education Act should be undertaken to inform best practices in the future. Should sufficient progress not be made towards the registration of students then the 'sunrise clause' should be enacted so that universities are obliged to provide registration opportunities at the point of enrolment on their course.



4. REGISTERING ATTAINERS:

Encourage recipients of National Insurance number notification letters to register to vote online as a short term measure. In the longer term, attainers could be automatically registered when they receive their first information from government.



5. A 'BIG TENT' APPROACH:

The inclusion of civil society groups and academics in government reviews, consultations and working groups relating to registration is an important step for improved decision-making. Future Electoral Summits should include civil society and academics to enable knowledge sharing and learning.



6. FUNDING:

Strengthening the short and long-term funding of electoral registration services, so that they are sufficiently resourced to provide high quality services to citizens



7. LEGAL CONSOLIDATION

The Law Commissions have produced detailed proposals on how and why electoral law can be consolidated. A modern legislative framework for the conduct of elections would ensure that electoral officials are not slowed down in their effort to provide high quality services to voters



8. AUDITABLE ELECTIONS.

Electoral results and ballot papers should be auditable as they are in many other countries. A simple way of reversing incorrectly declared results should be introduced that does not require expensive, long-winded legal proceedings.



9. CAUTION WITH VOTER ID:

The government should assess whether any reforms designed to reduce fraud will impact negatively on the completeness of the register or turnout and cost. They should also consider the evidence about the need for such measures given the exceptionally low level of electoral fraud.



10. ELECTORAL REGISTRATION WITH OTHER PUBLIC SERVICES:

Citizens could be nudged to register to vote online when they access government services such as the National Citizen Service, paying Council tax, renewing car taxes or registering for benefits.



11. 'AM I REGISTERED?' WEBSITE:

Introducing a national website so that citizens can check their own registration status online would save them making calls to busy electoral officials at peak time.



12. CARING FOR THE ELECTORAL WORKFORCE:

Workloads and stress levels should be monitored in election teams across the country and best practices should be introduced to ensure the well being of staff.



13. ELECTION-DAY REGISTRATION:

Election-day registration, where a citizen can register at a polling station could be trialled in the UK. This practice is common in other countries.



14. A SINGLE REGISTER:

Rather than having a patchwork quilt of hundreds of local electoral registers, the case for a single national electoral register should be reviewed. This would allow duplicate registrations and missing citizens to be picked up more easily. It would enable greater economies of scale in the updating process.



15. ELECTRONIC POLL-BOOKS AND POLL CARDS:

Rather than having Victorian, paper copies of the electoral register in polling station, electronic versions could be used on tablets. This would allow real time monitoring of polling station traffic and citizens to vote at any polling station rather than the one where they live. There should also be a move to exploring electronic poll cards to reduce the money spent by local authorities - and providing a more convenient service to the citizen.'



16. DATA USAGE:

Information from public records and credit referencing agencies should be made available to electoral registration officers so that can maximise the completeness of the register.



17. SIMPLIFYING EU REGISTRATION:

In case future European Parliamentary elections do occur (Brexit remains uncertain), the requirement to complete an UC1 form should be changed to minimise the bureaucratic burden for EU citizens.



18. CENTRALISED COMPLAINTS SYSTEM.

There is often public confusion about who to complain to when there are problems at polling stations. There should be a centralised complaints system



19. TRANSPARENCY:

Remove ERO and RO exemptions from Freedom of Information will enable greater transparency, research and the allocation of resources.

20. VOTER INFORMATION.



Create a system for publishing open data on procedural (what, when, where) and factual (who, which party) information on elections. Create or support a one-stop-shop website for accessing this information. This information could generate the e-poll cards discussed at #15. Such a platform could also give every candidate the opportunity to provide a contact address and election address, as with the candidate booklets for PCC or mayors.



21. AUTOMATIC REGISTRATION AND RE-REGISTRATION:

There should be a move to make electoral registration automatic for all eligible citizens.





Bite The Ballot is an international social enterprise that specialises in civic and community engagement.

Our social enterprise has grown from an idea in a classroom to coordinating world-record breaking voter registration campaigns, changing laws and rebranding politics among young and socially-excluded communities. Since establishing in 2010 BTB has always been strictly party neutral - we do not champion any individual politicians or parties. We simply want to invite citizens to join a national conversation, debating the issues that matter most to them and play an active role in the solutions. As more and more people become socially conscious, our methodology acts as a catalyst for them to become positive changemakers. BTB established the APPG on Democratic Participation and acted as Secretariat since its inception, moving activities away from 'direct service' to collective advocacy and systemic change in order to tackle the root causes of why the social enterprise exists.

We only believe in one type of engagement - meaningful and purpose driven



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Professor Toby S. James is Head of Politics at the University of East Anglia. His books include *Elite Statecraft* and *Election Administration*, and *Comparative Electoral Management*. He is co-convenor of the Electoral Management Network and co-founder of the APPG with Bite the Ballot.

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The University of East Anglia (UEA) is a UK Top 15 university. Known for its world-leading research and outstanding student experience, it was awarded Gold in the Teaching Excellence Framework. It is ranked in the Top 200 of the world's universities and is in the Top 50 for research citations.

The Electoral Management Research Network is a network of academics researching electoral management around the world based at the University of East Anglia.

