

Statistical bulletin

# Electoral statistics, UK: December 2021

Electoral registrations for Parliamentary and local government elections as recorded in the electoral registers published on 1 December 2021 for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.



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# 1 . Main points

- In December 2021, there were 46,560,452 Parliamentary electoral registrations and 48,844,292 local government electoral registrations.
- The number of UK Parliamentary electoral registrations and local government electoral registrations fell by 345,818 (0.7%) and 219,415 (0.4%), respectively between December 2020 and December 2021.
- The number of Parliamentary and local government electoral registrations increased in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland but decreased in England between December 2020 and December 2021.
- Electoral registrations increased in 168 of the 650 UK Parliamentary constituencies and 122 out of 374 UK local authorities.

## 2 . Number of electoral registrations

These statistics do not reflect the changes to eligibility criteria for local government and Senedd elections in Wales since 2020. Consequently, local government electoral registrations for 16-year-old electors and 15-year-old attainers, in Wales, are missing from these statistics. See Strengths and limitations for more information.

The total number of Parliamentary and local government electoral registrations in the UK, England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland is shown in Table 1. The differences between the numbers registered for Parliamentary and local government elections reflect differences in the criteria governing eligibility to vote in Parliamentary and local government elections. [Further information on who can vote in different UK elections can be found on the GOV.UK website.](#)

Table 1: Parliamentary and local government electoral registrations, December 2021

<b>Country</b>	<b>Parliamentary electoral registrations</b>	<b>Local government electoral registrations</b>
<b>United Kingdom</b>	46,560,452	48,844,292
<b>England</b>	38,889,429	40,882,721
<b>Wales</b>	2,307,877	2,348,576
<b>Scotland</b>	4,028,717	4,245,217
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	1,334,429	1,367,778

Source: Office for National Statistics, National Records of Scotland, Electoral Office for Northern Ireland - Electoral Statistics

### Notes

1. Local government electoral registrations for Wales exclude attainers aged 15 years and electors aged 16 years.

### 3 . Change in the number of electoral registrations

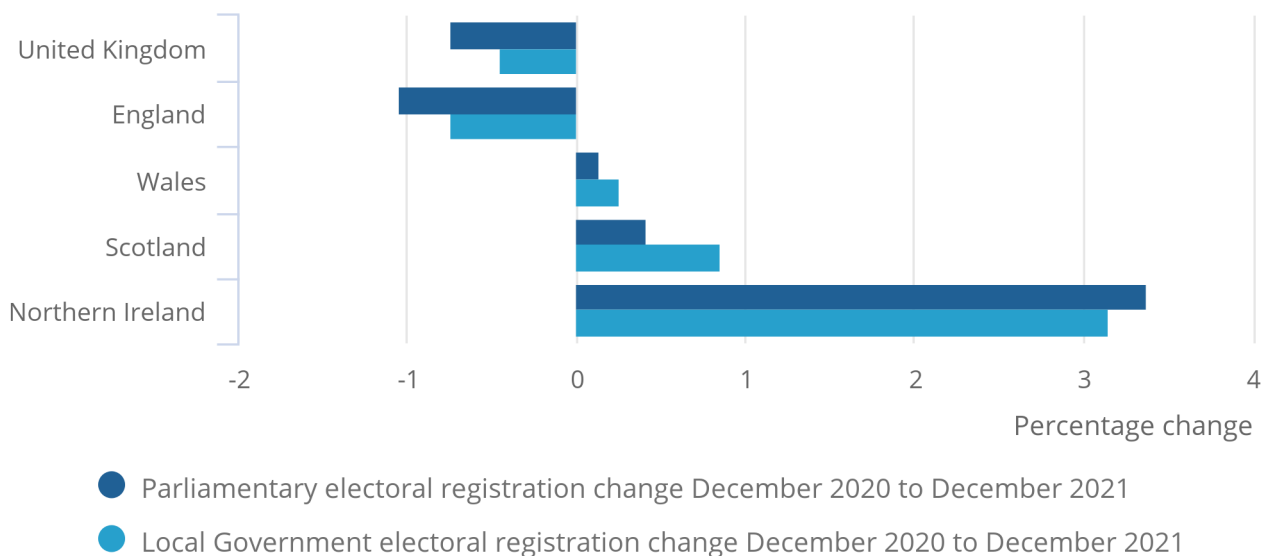
The number of Parliamentary electoral registrations and local government electoral registrations fell between December 2020 and December 2021. However, while the number of Parliamentary and local government electoral registrations decreased in England, the number increased in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: The number of electoral registrations increased in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales but decreased in England**

Percentage change in Parliamentary and local government electoral registrations, 2020 to 2021

Figure 1: The number of electoral registrations increased in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales but decreased in England

Percentage change in Parliamentary and local government electoral registrations, 2020 to 2021



Source: Office for National Statistics, National Records of Scotland, Electoral Office for Northern Ireland – Electoral Statistics

Notes:

1. Local government electoral registrations for Wales in December 2020 and December 2021 exclude attainees aged 15 years and electors aged 16 years.

Northern Ireland had the highest percentage increase in electoral registrations, as Figure 1 shows. This increase follows the [2021 Canvass](#), the first in Northern Ireland since 2013. At the close of the canvass, the register was the largest ever recorded in Northern Ireland.

The small decrease in electoral registrations for England is typical of years following a national election. In March 2020, shortly after the December 2019 General Election, electoral registrations were at their highest ever level. Despite decreases in electoral registrations since March 2020, the number of Parliamentary electoral registrations in England is still more than half a million higher than in 2018.

Between December 2020 and December 2021, 168 (26%) of the 650 Parliamentary constituencies in the UK had increases in the number of Parliamentary electoral registrations. Every constituency in Northern Ireland along with most constituencies in Scotland (73%) and Wales (63%) saw increases in electoral registrations in the year to December 2021. However, only 15% of constituencies in England had an increase in Parliamentary electoral registrations.

## **Local government electoral registrations change**

In 59% of local authorities in Wales, 84% of local authorities in Scotland and 100% of local authorities in Northern Ireland, there were increases in local government electoral registrations. The increase in Northern Ireland is related to the annual canvass while the increases in Scotland and Wales are probably related to the 2021 Scottish Parliament election, and the Senedd election in Wales.

In England, local government electoral registrations increased in only 23% of local authorities in the year to December 2021.

## 4 . Overseas electors

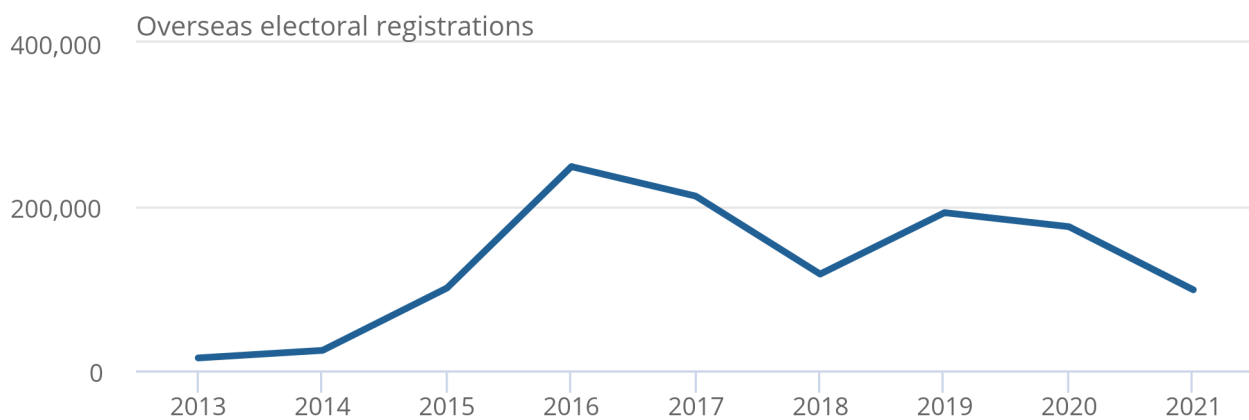
In December 2021, there were 98,351 overseas electors in England and Wales representing a decrease of 44% since December 2020. This decrease mirrors that of December 2018 and reflects the fact that overseas electors are only eligible to vote in general elections and some referendums. Consequently, the number of overseas electoral registrations tends to increase in years with general elections and decrease in years without them.

### Figure 2: The number of overseas electoral registrations is the lowest it has been since 2014

Number of overseas electoral registrations, England and Wales, 2013 to 2021

### Figure 2: The number of overseas electoral registrations is the lowest it has been since 2014

Number of overseas electoral registrations, England and Wales, 2013 to 2021



Source: Office for National Statistics

#### Notes:

1. The number of overseas electoral registrations was below 100,000 until 2015. The increase between 2015 and 2016 reflects publicity campaigns run by the [Electoral Commission and other organisations](#) in the lead up to the EU referendum in June 2016.

## 5 . European Union citizens

The number of European Union (EU) citizens on the electoral register in England and Wales increased by 1.5% between December 2020 and December 2021. In December 2021, 4.9% of those on the local government electoral register were EU citizens.

## 6 . Electoral statistics data

### [Electoral statistics, UK](#)

Dataset | Released 5 April 2022

Total number of local government and Parliamentary electoral registrations (including the number of attainers) registered to vote in the UK.

### [Overseas, anonymous, opted-out, European Union citizens and Parliamentary electors by local authority.](#)

Dataset | Released 5 April 2022

Annual data on certain sectors of the electoral system in the UK, including overseas and anonymous electors, those who have opted out of the electoral system, European Union citizens and Parliamentary electors by their local authority.

## 7 . Glossary

### Annual canvass

By law the register of electors is checked each year by sending a household enquiry form to every household in the council area. This is known as the annual canvass. The purpose of the canvass is to identify everyone who should be on the electoral register. This means identifying citizens who should be registered but are currently not, as well as identifying electors who are no longer at a property and should therefore be removed from the register. A revised version of the electoral register must be published by 1 December, following the conclusion of the annual canvass.

### Electoral register

The electoral register is a list of all people who are registered to vote in elections and referendums. The creation and maintenance of the electoral register is the responsibility of local electoral registration officers.

### Electoral registrations

The number of registrations on the electoral register. It should be noted that individuals who have more than one address may register in more than one place and that not everyone eligible to vote is registered to vote. Additionally, not everyone usually resident in the UK is entitled to vote.

### Parliamentary electors

The total number of Parliamentary electors consists of residential qualifiers, attainers and overseas electors.

[Further information on who can vote in different UK elections can be found on the GOV.UK website.](#)

### Local government electors

The total number of local government electors consists of residential qualifiers and attainers, including peers and European Union citizens. Local government areas are unitary authorities, London boroughs and district councils in England; unitary authorities in Wales and council areas in Scotland and Northern Ireland. [Further information on who can vote in different UK elections can be found on the GOV.UK website.](#)

### Attainer

#### England and Northern Ireland

Attainer is the term used to describe a person who attains the age of 18 years during the normal currency of the register (after 1 December 2021 but before 1 December 2022) and is entitled to vote at an election held on or after his or her 18th birthday.

## Wales

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill, which was passed by Welsh Parliament in 2020 means that 16- and 17-year-olds are now eligible to vote in Senedd Cymru and local government elections in Wales. Attainers, are therefore those who will reach the age of 16 during the currency of the Register.

## Scotland

As a result of the Scottish Elections (Reduction of Voting Age) Bill, which was passed by the Scottish Parliament in 2015, 16- and 17-year-olds are now eligible to vote in local government (and Scottish Parliament) elections in Scotland. The figures for attainers in the Scottish Parliamentary and Local Government electorate for 1 December 2015 to 1 December 2019 are therefore those who reached the age of 16 years during the currency of the Register. From December 2020, attainers include anyone old enough to register, which would also include 14- and 15-year-olds.

## Overseas Electors

A UK citizen living abroad who applied for a vote having been registered to vote as a resident in the UK in the last 15 years. To qualify as an overseas elector, the person should no longer be living in the UK but must previously have been resident here and included in the electoral register (unless they were too young to register). They are registered in the same Parliamentary constituency as before they went abroad.

## European Union citizens

European Union citizens (excluding British, Irish, Cypriot and Maltese citizens who are included in previous categories) are included in the local government electorate but are not eligible to vote in Westminster Parliamentary elections.

# 8 . Measuring the data

More quality and methodology information on strengths, limitations, appropriate uses, and how the data were created is available in our [Electoral statistics quality and methodology information \(QMI\)](#).

For England and Wales, electoral statistics are taken from data supplied to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) by local electoral registration officers. Data for Scotland are similarly collected by National Records of Scotland (NRS). Data for Northern Ireland are collected by the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland (EONI). ONS collates these statistics for the UK using the data supplied by NRS and EONI. The RPF29 form that underpins this publication does not collect data on electoral registrations by age, sex, citizenship, or any other characteristics.

There are at present 650 Westminster Parliamentary constituencies in the UK, made up of 533 in England, 59 in Scotland, 40 in Wales and 18 in Northern Ireland. These boundaries came into effect at the May 2010 General Election. The typical size of constituencies differs between the constituent countries of the UK. It is possible in certain circumstances for someone to be lawfully registered to vote at more than one address. This could include, for example, students who have different [home and term-time addresses](#).

Electoral statistics are available for the two main groups of voters:

- Parliamentary electors - those entitled to vote in Westminster Parliamentary elections
- local government electors - those entitled to vote in local government elections

The variation in who is entitled to vote at Parliamentary and local elections depends largely on residence and citizenship conditions. Local government electors, for example, include those European Union citizens resident in the UK who are not entitled to vote in Westminster Parliamentary elections, while Parliamentary electors include British citizens resident overseas who are not entitled to vote in local government elections.

## 9 . Strengths and limitations

### Quality

Electoral statistics represent the most accurate count possible of the number of people on electoral registers each year. They are subject to full quality assurance procedures, are reliable and provide comparable data across the UK constituent countries.

The electoral statistics the Office for National Statistics (ONS) publish are used by Boundary Commissions, the Electoral Commission and central government to help with the improvement of electoral policies and for statutory reviews of Parliamentary constituency boundaries. The statistics are also of interest to Members of Parliament and the general public.

### Changes to Local Government electoral registrations in Wales

The [Senedd and Elections Act 2020](#) and the [Local Government and Elections \(Wales\) Act 2021](#) allows 16- and 17-year-olds (and some other groups) to vote in local government and Senedd elections. The data for Wales presented in this release, for December 2020 and December 2021, excludes local government electoral registrations for attainers aged 15 years and electors aged 16 years. For December 2021, this means that the number of local government electoral registrations for Wales is probably around 20,000 to 50,000 too low (around 1 to 2% of the total). Changes are needed to our data collection method to allow this data to be included in future Electoral Statistics releases.



## 10 . Related links

### **The Electoral Commission**

The [Electoral Commission](#) conducts research on voter registration, as well as providing information and guidance to both electoral registration officers and the general public. Reports and results relating to past elections are available on their website.

Other electoral statistics produced for areas in the UK are as follows.

### **England**

Statistics for Parliamentary electors for electoral wards in England from 2010 to 2020 are available from the [Boundary Commission for England](#). These statistics are produced from data collected from electoral registration officers by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

### **Wales**

Statistics for Senedd Cymru for Wales electors by Assembly constituencies are published by the Welsh Government. Those electors who are eligible to vote in local government elections in Wales are eligible to vote in Senedd Cymru for Wales elections. These statistics are produced from data collected from electoral registration officers by the ONS.

The [data are available from StatsWales](#) (please note their explanation giving details of the impact of boundary changes in some areas).

### **Scotland**

Electoral statistics for Scotland are produced and published by National Records of Scotland (NRS) and cover Scottish Parliamentary constituencies, Scottish regions and electoral wards.

The data are available from the [electoral statistics section of the NRS website](#).

### **Northern Ireland**

Electoral statistics for Northern Ireland are produced and published by the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland (EONI) and cover Parliamentary and local government electorates at electoral ward level.

The data are available from the [electoral statistics section of the EONI website](#).