



AEA response to the Electoral Commission reports on accuracy and completeness of the electoral registers in Great Britain and Northern Ireland

We welcome the Electoral Commission's research and reports and applaud the work of Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) and their teams who, since the previous study, have maintained the completeness of the electoral register.

We agree with the Commission that electoral registration requires modernisation and have called for a range of improvements in our recently published post-election report. Plans to reform the yearly review of each electoral register, known as the annual canvass, are a good first step and will enable EROs to concentrate their limited resources on hard-to-reach and under-registered groups.

More needs to be done to give EROs access to data to improve the completeness and accuracy of the register. At an AEA meeting of 500 electoral administrators earlier this month, 65% said they were struggling to access data sources. Better access to local data such as Council Tax records, co-operation from universities to help register students and information exchanges with national bodies such as the DVLA, HMRC, Passport Office and Department of Education would help to boost the numbers of potential electors being invited to register to vote.

Register accuracy may have fallen slightly, but it must be remembered that administrators have managed unprecedented electoral events since the last study. The EU referendum and unscheduled 2017 general election were delivered alongside scheduled local elections and voter registration services, all to a backdrop of continuing local authority funding reductions and the final transition to Individual Electoral Registration.

We would also suggest that future reports be timed to coincide with national elections when registers are likely to be most complete. Elections are important drivers of electoral registration, and figures used in this report will have been impacted by only 150 English local authority areas running scheduled elections in 2018, with none held in Scotland and Wales. It must also be remembered that the 2015 figures would have been affected by the scheduled general election held that year.
