

Electoral Statistics for Scotland

as at 1st December 2016

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A National Statistics publication for Scotland

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Table 1: Total number of electoral registrations, by electorate, 2006 to 2016

Table 2: UK Parliament electors on the Electoral Register by constituency, Scotland, 2006 to 2016

Table 3: Local Government and Scottish Parliament electors on the Electoral Register by council area, Scotland, 2008 to 2016

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Figure 1: Scottish Electorates since 2001

Introduction and background

This publication provides statistics on those included on the Electoral Register as at 1 December 2016.

The publication includes information on the number of people registered to vote in UK Parliament (59 constituencies), Scottish Parliament (73 constituencies and 8 regions), and Local Government (32 Council areas and 353 electoral wards) elections.

National Records of Scotland collate electoral statistics from data supplied by local electoral registration offices who are responsible for creating and maintaining the electoral register. Further information about the electoral register and definitions used are available in the [Background note to Electoral Register](#) on the NRS website.

References in this publication to electoral statistics for 2016 relate to the number of people on the Electoral Register as at the usual reference date of 1 December 2016. Please refer to the [background notes](#) for information about changes to the reference date and details on comparing electoral statistics for different years.

The statistics in this publication are used by the Electoral Commission and central government to inform electoral policy, in the work of the Boundary Commission for Scotland for constituency design, and by political parties and members of the UK and the Scottish Parliament. They are also of interest to local government, academics and members of the public with an interest in the political process.

This publication is structured as follows:

- [Key findings](#) of this report highlight some of the main points to emerge from the 2016 electoral statistics including some of changes between 2006 and 2016;
- [Background notes](#) contain important background information and details of the definitions used in the Electoral Statistics publication;
- [Notes on Statistical Publications](#) include general information about the process of producing National Statistics and contact details for enquiries.

Key findings

Between December 2015 and December 2016 ([Table 1](#)):

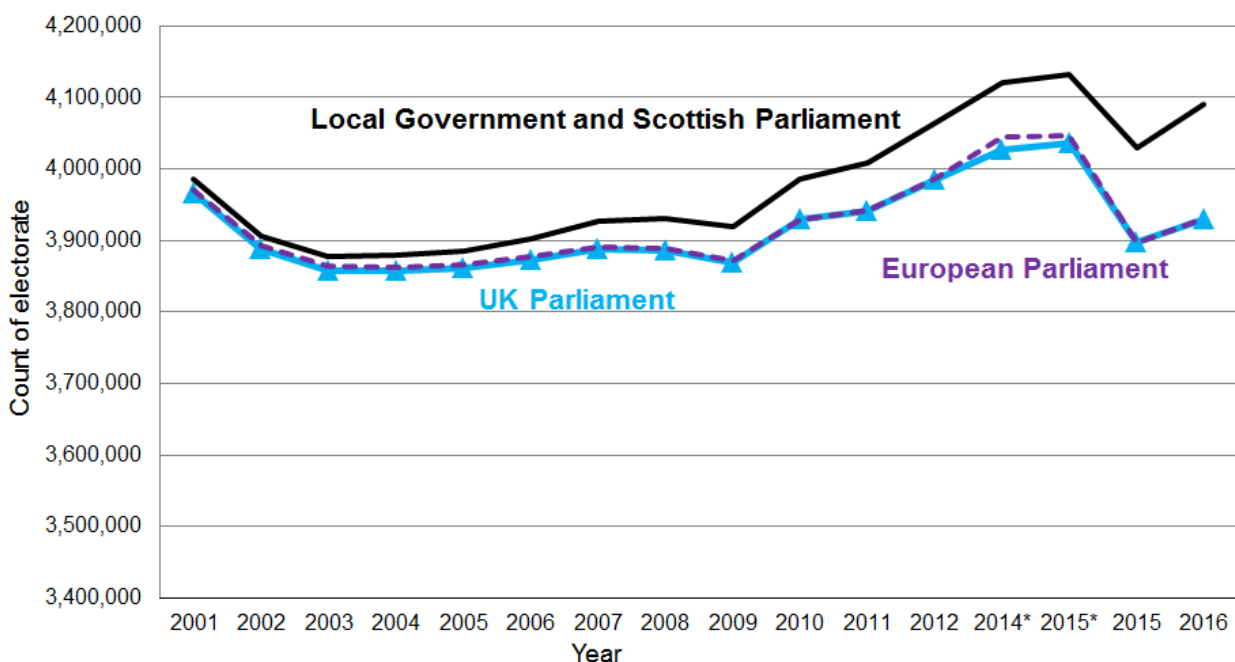
- The number of UK Parliamentary electors in Scotland rose by 33,111 (0.8 per cent) to 3,929,963.
- The number of registered Local Government and Scottish Parliament electors in Scotland rose by 59,519 (1.5 per cent) to 4,089,477.

[Figure 1](#) shows the patterns in Scottish electorates since 2001. There has been a general upward trend in the numbers of electorates. However, a drop in numbers is evident in 2015. This is mainly due to the introduction of [Individual Electoral Registration](#) (IER) in 2014, which affected the registration of students in particular. Prior to the introduction of IER, block registration was permitted particularly for students in halls of residence, but this practice has now been discontinued with individuals now responsible for their own registration.

Nevertheless, there has been an increase in electorate numbers over the year from December 2015 to December 2016. This could be attributed to the Scottish Parliament election taking place in May 2016, as well as an increased number of people registering to vote in the [EU Referendum](#) in June 2016. This increase is especially noticeable in the number of overseas electors which doubled to 15,230 (up 97 per cent) ([Table 1](#)).

An additional factor contributing to the increase in electorate numbers has been the introduction of a lower voting age of 16 and above for Local Government and Scottish Parliament elections in 2015. Due to the timing of this change in legislation, and the timing of the canvass, this had only a limited effect on the electorate in 2015. However, as expected, the number of 16 and 17 year old electors has increased by 62.6 per cent in 2016 ([Table 1](#)).

Figure 1: Scottish electorate since 2001



*Reference dates for the Electoral Register in these years were set to be in the March following the normal reference date of 1st December.

Table 1: Total number of electoral registrations, by electorate, 2006 to 2016

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2014	2015	2015	2016
	December	December	December	December	December	December	December	March ¹	March ¹	December	December
UK Parliament											
Total electorate	3,872,901	3,887,571	3,885,148	3,869,700	3,928,979	3,941,592	3,985,257	4,027,187	4,035,394	3,896,852	3,929,963
Attainers ²	47,665	47,295	43,970	45,902	44,100	43,940	46,200	63,471	38,963	24,827	41,561
Service voters	1,656	1,993	2,043	1,924	2,662	2,576	2,739	2,750	4,226	3,929	3,511
Overseas electors	787	924	792	874	1,876	1,186	1,168	868	2,588	7,729	15,230
Local Government and Scottish Parliament											
Total electorate	3,902,706	3,926,262	3,930,244	3,919,219	3,985,161	4,008,411	4,063,206	4,120,494	4,131,926	4,029,958	4,089,477
Attainers ³	47,810	47,484	44,204	46,186	44,415	44,341	46,726	64,299	39,513	21,343	22,035
Service voters	1,656	1,993	2,043	1,924	2,662	2,576	2,739	2,750	4,226	3,929	3,511
Peers	57	56	52	53	54	56	54	53	45	46	48
Citizens of the EU	30,535	39,559	45,836	50,340	58,004	67,949	79,063	94,122	88,688	95,946	113,185
16 and 17 year olds ⁴										48,962	79,621
European Parliament											
Total electorate	3,878,016	3,891,523	3,888,895	3,872,375	3,929,584	3,941,991	3,985,480	4,044,217	4,045,826	3,896,805	3,930,041
Attainers ²	47,665	47,303	44,001	45,916	44,100	43,941	46,200	63,572	38,982	24,827	41,561
Service voters	1,656	1,993	2,043	1,924	2,662	2,576	2,739	2,750	4,226	3,929	3,511
Peers	57	56	52	53	54	56	54	53	45	46	48
Overseas electors	787	924	792	874	1,876	1,186	1,168	868	2,588	7,729	15,230
Citizens of the EU	5,058	3,893	3,691	2,621	551	343	169	16,976	10,390	43	30

1) To accommodate major changes to the system of electoral registration, the reference dates for 2014 and 2015 were changed to 10 March and 2 March respectively. The reference date has now reverted to 1 December.

2) Attainers in the UK Parliamentary and European Parliamentary electorates are those who will reach the age of 18 during the currency of the Register. The 'Total electorate' figures in this table include these attainers.

3) As a result of the 'Scottish Elections (Reduction of Voting Age) Bill' which was passed by the Scottish Parliament on 18 June 2015, 16 and 17 year olds are now eligible to vote in both Scottish Parliament and local government elections. Therefore, attainers in the Scottish Parliamentary and Local Government electorates are those who will reach the age of 16 during the currency of the Register. The 'Total electorate' figures in this table include these attainers.

4) 16 and 17 year olds on the Register, as at 1 December.

UK Parliamentary electors

As at 1 December 2016 the largest UK Parliamentary constituency in Scotland is Linlithgow and East Falkirk with 85,156 people registered to vote, and the smallest was Na h-Eileanan an Iar with 21,163 people. The constituency with the smallest electorate on mainland Scotland is Caithness, Sutherland and Ross (46,464 electors). ([Table 2](#))

The largest increase in the last ten years since 2006 in the number of total electorate was in West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine (+10.4 per cent), while North East Fife saw the largest decrease of 9.5 per cent. Overall, the number on the UK Parliament electorate has increased by 1.5 per cent over the last ten years.

The next UK General Election is due in 2020.

Local Government and Scottish Parliament electors

Since 2008, the Local Government electorate has increased in most (in 25 out of 32) council areas in Scotland (with the exception of East Ayrshire (–1.6 per cent), Na h-Eileanan Siar (–1.2 per cent), North Ayrshire (–0.9 per cent), Fife (–0.8 per cent), Dumfries and Galloway (–0.4 per cent), Argyll and Bute (–0.3 per cent), and South Ayrshire (–0.1 per cent)). The areas where the electorate increased the most are Grampian and the Lothians, including West Lothian (+11.1 per cent), Aberdeenshire (+11 per cent), Midlothian (+10.8 per cent), City of Edinburgh (+9.9 per cent), Moray (+8.8 per cent), and East Lothian (+8.6 per cent). Overall, Local Government and the Scottish Parliament electorate has increased by 4.1 per cent over the last eight years. ([Table 3](#))

There has been an increase in the Local Government electorate across most council areas in Scotland since the last reference date (December 2015). The largest increase of 3.3 per cent is seen in North Ayrshire, Scottish Borders and Renfrewshire, followed by Highland with a three per cent increase. Overall, the most recent Local Government and Scottish Parliament electorate (4,089,477 electors) is higher than it was at the time of the last Scottish Parliamentary election in 2016 (4,029,958 electors) ([Table 3](#)). The next Local Government election in Scotland is due in May 2017.

The average number of electors in the 73 Scottish Parliamentary constituencies has risen by around 815 between December 2015 and December 2016 and the largest and smallest Constituencies are Linlithgow (71,917 electors) and the Orkney Islands (17,056 electors) respectively. The constituency with the smallest electorate on mainland Scotland is Cumbernauld and Kilsyth with 49,176 (refer to Table 4 and Table 5). The next Scottish Parliamentary election is in 2021.

[Table 6a](#) and [Table 6b](#) both contain data on Local Government electors and attainers. Due to changes in ward boundaries in 2017 (refer to [Background notes](#)) Table 6a shows the data for the latest electorate and attainers presented using either new (2017) or the previous (2007) electoral ward boundaries based on the latest data available from electoral registration offices. [Table 6b](#) shows the historic changes over time from 2007 to 2015 using 2007 ward boundaries.

Overall, the average electoral ward in Scotland had 11,585 electors (and 62 attainers), although the numbers vary widely according to the number of councillors representing

the ward, and other local considerations ([Table 6a](#)).

European Parliamentary electors

As at 1 December 2016, 3,930,041 people were registered to vote in European Parliamentary elections (this includes 41,561 attainers). The European Parliamentary electorate has fallen by 114,176 (2.8 per cent) since the last European election in 2014. The next European Parliamentary election will take place in 2019.

Background notes

1. Electoral statistics usually relate to registers published on 1 December each year. However, in 2014 and 2015 the reference date was changed to 10 March 2014 and 2 March 2015 respectively to facilitate the change to a system of Individual Electoral Registration. The reference date has now changed back to 1 December with statistics available as at 1 December 2015 and 1 December 2016. The different reference date in 2014 and 2015 should be considered when looking at time series of the electoral statistics.
2. Following the completion of the [Fifth Electoral Review](#) of council ward boundaries by the [Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland](#), ward boundaries have changed for 25 of Scotland's local authority areas. There will be 351 electoral wards with effect from 4 May 2017. The electoral registration offices (EROs) who supply the electoral data to the National Record of Scotland (NRS) are still in the process of adopting the required changes to ward boundaries. Hence, a number of EROs were able to submit the data using the new 2017 ward boundaries, while a number of EROs submitted the data using the 2007 ward boundaries. Thus, the electoral ward level data in this publication contains data on different ward boundaries and consideration should be applied when comparing the electoral ward level data over time.
 - The council areas that provided the data using the new (2017) ward boundaries include: Aberdeen City; Aberdeenshire; Angus; Argyll and Bute; City of Edinburgh; Clackmannanshire; Dundee City; East Dunbartonshire; East Lothian; Falkirk; Glasgow City; Highland; Midlothian; Moray; Na h-Eileanan Siar; North Lanarkshire; Perth and Kinross; Scottish Borders; South Lanarkshire; West Dunbartonshire; and West Lothian.
 - The council areas that provided the data using the previous (2007) ward boundaries include: Dumfries and Galloway; East Ayrshire; East Renfrewshire; Fife; Inverclyde; North Ayrshire; Orkney Islands; Renfrewshire; Shetland Islands; South Ayrshire; and Stirling.
3. Definitions of the various groups of electorate shown in the tables are as follows:
 - **Attainers:** For UK Parliament or European Parliament elections, eligibility to vote is conditional on the voter being aged 18 or over on the date of the relevant election or referendum. For Scottish Parliament or Local Government elections eligibility to vote is conditional on the voter being aged 16 or over on the date of the relevant election or referendum. The electoral register includes people who will attain the age of 16 or 18 (dependent on

the type of election) during the currency of the register (between 2nd December 2016 and 30th November 2017). They are called attainers. Note that in the published tables, whilst attainers are identified separately, they are also included as part of the total electorate figures.

- **Residents:** In order to be classed as 'resident' in a constituency the elector must be normally living at the address on the qualifying date. If the elector is temporarily absent (for example on holiday or away at university) this will not disqualify them from being classed as resident.
- **Overseas electors:** Those who are not resident in the UK, but have been resident here and included in the electoral register within a period of 15 years of the qualifying date for the current register (or resident here and too young to be registered at the time of residence). They are registered in the same parliamentary constituency as before they went abroad or, if they were too young to register, in the constituency where their parent or guardian was registered. Overseas electors cannot vote in Local Government elections or Scottish Parliament elections, but are entitled to vote in UK Parliamentary and European Parliamentary elections.
- **Service electors:** Service electors are members of HM Armed Forces and their spouses, plus Crown servants and British Council employees and their spouses residing abroad. They do not register in the same way as residents and may not necessarily reside in the area of registration. Armed Forces' spouses have the option of registering as residents while in the UK. This introduced new rules for service electors whereby service elector applications are required to be completed every three years rather than indefinitely as previously. This means that many service electors may not have renewed their application because they have now left the Services, or have opted to register as civilian electors, as they are entitled to do.
- **Prisoners:** Remand prisoners, unconvicted prisoners and civil prisoners can vote if they are on the electoral register. However, convicted persons detained in pursuance of their sentences are not eligible to vote.
- **Peers:** A Peer is a member of the House of Lords. Peers can vote in Local Government and European Parliament elections, however, do not vote in UK Parliamentary elections.

4. Changes in the electorate numbers mainly occur due to these reasons:

- A change in size of the population who are entitled to vote, for example, due to migration.
- A change in the proportion of the eligible population who actually register to vote as a result, for example, of better canvassing or an increased public interest in the political landscape.
- Changes in definitions of eligibility. For example, lowering of the voting age in Scotland to allow 16 and 17 year olds to vote in Local Government and Scottish Parliament elections in Scotland.

5. Information on previous elections held and a list of upcoming elections and

referendums are available from the [Electoral Commission](#).

6. Electoral statistics for each of the constituent countries in the UK are published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and available in the [Electoral registration](#) section of the ONS website.

Notes on statistical publications

National Statistics

The UK Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in line with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics (available on the [UK Statistics Authority](#) website).

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value.

All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

It is National Records of Scotland's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

Information on background and source data

Further details on data source(s), timeframe of data and timeliness, continuity of data, accuracy, etc. can be found in the About this Publication document that is published alongside this publication on the [National Records of Scotland](#) website.

National Records of Scotland

We, the National Records of Scotland, are a non-ministerial department of the devolved Scottish Administration. Our purpose is to collect, preserve and produce information about Scotland's people and history and make it available to inform current and future generations. We do this as follows:

- Preserving the past – We look after Scotland's national archives so that they are available for current and future generations, and we make available important information for family history.
- Recording the present – At our network of local offices, we register births, marriages, civil partnerships, deaths, divorces and adoptions in Scotland.

- Informing the future – We are responsible for the Census of Population in Scotland which we use, with other sources of information, to produce statistics on the population and households.

You can get other detailed statistics that we have produced from the [Statistics](#) section of our website. Scottish census statistics are available on the [Scotland's census](#) website.

We also provide information about [future publications](#) on our website. If you would like us to tell you about future statistical publications, you can register your interest on the Scottish Government [ScotStat website](#).

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Revisions and corrections

We, the National Records of Scotland, label any revisions and corrections that we have applied to any of our statistics. These revisions and corrections are clearly marked on the webpage of the publication as well on our [revisions and corrections](#) page available on the National Records of Scotland website.

Where applicable, revisions will also be carried out in accordance with the [revisions policy for population, migration and life events](#) statistics available on the Office for National Statistics website.

Enquiries and suggestions

Please contact our Statistics Customer Services if you need any further information. Email: statisticscustomerservices@nrscotland.gov.uk

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