

Electoral Statistics for Scotland

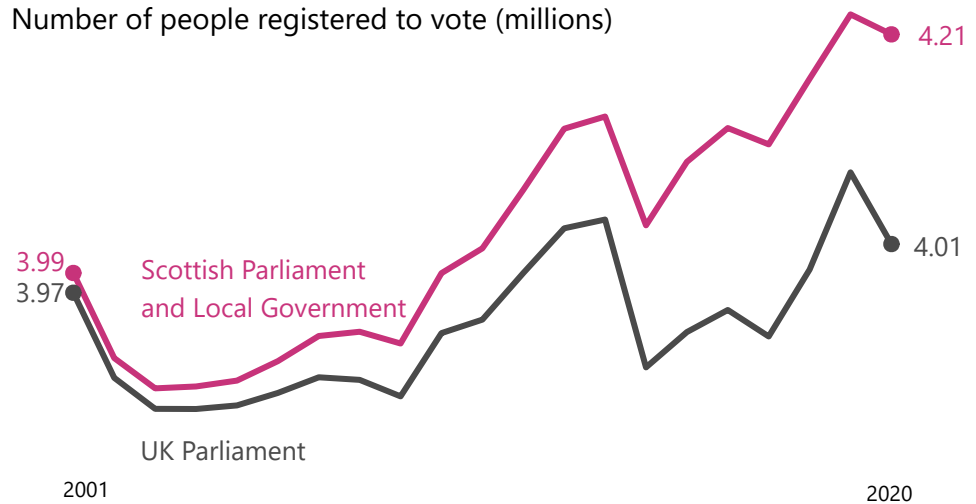
as at 1 December 2020



Published on 30 March 2021

Electorates in Scotland have increased in 2020

Compared to 2019 the electorate for UK Parliament elections increased by 0.6% and the electorate for Scottish Parliament and local government elections by 1.0%. The decrease in 2015 was caused by the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration (IER).

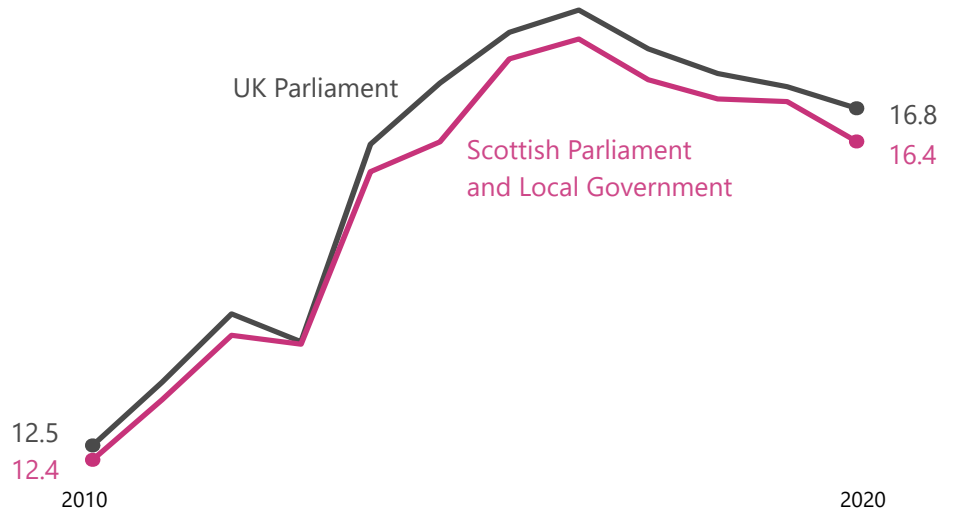


In 2015 the voting age for Scottish Parliament and local government elections was lowered to 16.

A sixth of the electorate is registered for a postal vote

The proportion of the electorate registered for a postal vote has decreased slightly since December 2019. It is still well above the level a decade ago which was around 12.5% for both the UK Parliament and Scottish Parliament and Local Government electorates.

The proportion of the Scottish electorate registered for postal voting (%)



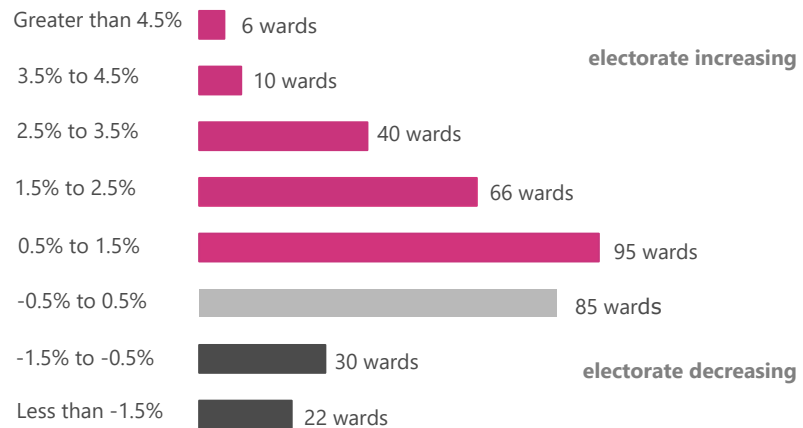
It is anticipated that opting to register for a postal vote in the 6 May elections to the Scottish Parliament may be more popular in response to Covid-19.

Most electoral wards see an increase compared to their electorate in 2019

Between December 2019 and December 2020, the electorate increased in 75% (264) of the 354 electoral wards in Scotland.

Electoral wards are the sub-council level areas that are used to elect councillors for local government elections.

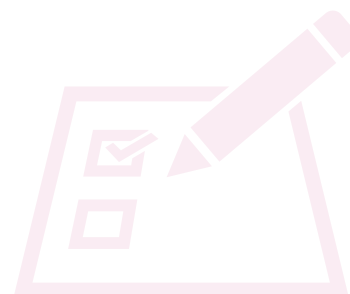
Change in electorate over previous year



Summary of main points

Between December 2019 and December 2020:

- The total number of **UK Parliament electors** in Scotland increased to **4,012,400**. This is an increase of 23,900 (0.6%).
- The number of registered **Scottish Parliament and Local Government electors** also increased to **4,208,900**. This is an increase of 41,600 (1.0%) on the previous year.
- At 1 December 2020, there were **73,300 young people aged 16 or 17** registered to vote at Scottish Parliament and Local Government elections, accounting for 1.7% of the total electorate. This is a decrease of around 500 (0.7%) on the previous year.
- 16.8% of the Scottish electorate was registered for **postal voting** at 1 December 2020 for UK Parliament elections and 16.4% for Scottish Parliament and Local Government elections. Both these proportions represent a slight decrease compared with December 2019 (17.3% and 16.9% respectively).



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1. Introduction

This publication provides statistics on the number of people included on the Electoral Register as at 1 December 2020¹, and therefore registered to vote at parliamentary and local elections.

This publication is about how many people have registered to vote. Statistics and analysis of the actual turnout at elections are published by the [Electoral Commission](#).

Key Terms

Electoral register	An official list of people in an area who are entitled to vote in an election
Electorate	All the people in a country or area who are registered to vote in an election
Elector	A person who has the right to vote in a parliamentary or local government election
Postal vote	A vote in an election sent in by post rather than cast in person
Overseas voter	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
Services voter	Members of HM Armed Forces and their spouses, plus Crown servants and British Council employees and their spouses residing abroad
Anonymous voter	An elector who thinks their name and address being on the electoral register could affect their personal safety
Constituency	An electoral area that elects one Member of (the UK) Parliament, or one Member of the Scottish Parliament. (There are 59 UK Parliamentary and 73 Scottish Parliamentary constituencies in Scotland, with different sets of boundaries.)
Ward	A local government electoral area. Council areas are divided into ward for electoral purposes, with 3 or 4 councillors elected for each ward

¹ All Electoral Registration Offices apart from Glasgow have a reference date of 1 December 2020; the reference data for Glasgow was 1 February 2021.

Who can vote?

This depends on your age, where you live, and your citizenship:

		Type of election		
		Local Government ¹	Scottish Parliament ¹	UK Parliament
Electorate	Main Electorate (Resident in Scotland on qualifying date)	✓	✓	✓
	Service Personnel (and spouses, Crown Servants and British Council employees)	✓	✓	✓
	Peers	✓	✓	X
	Foreign nationals (Resident in Scotland on the qualifying date)	✓	✓	X
	Prisoners (Serving 12 months or less)	✓	✓	X
	Overseas Electors (Have been on the electoral register within the last 15 years)	X	X	✓

Note: The Scottish Elections (Franchise and Representation) Act 2020, which came into force on 1 April 2020, extended the right to vote in Scottish Parliament and local government elections to a) convicted prisoners sentenced to prison terms of 12 months or less, and b) all qualifying foreign nationals.

For example, British citizens resident overseas are entitled to vote at UK Parliament elections but not at Scottish Parliament or local government elections. The minimum voting age for UK Parliament elections is 18, while 16 and 17-year-olds are eligible to vote at Scottish Parliament and local government elections. Further background information about the Electoral Register, and the definitions and eligibility criteria that apply, is available in the [Background note to Electoral Register](#) on the NRS website.

Why does the electorate change in size?

There are three main reasons:

- **The population changes.** People move to or from an area. The number of people old enough to vote changes. People die in smaller or greater numbers.
- **More people get interested in politics.** This could be because of a significant vote, a specific political campaign or a current social issue.
- **The rules on who can vote change.** For example, in 2015 Scotland lowered the minimum voting age to 16 for Scottish Parliament and local government elections.

Who uses these figures?

Electoral Commission	Administering elections Research and analysis on the electoral process
Central government	Informing policy on elections Quality assuring population estimates between censuses
Boundary Commission for Scotland	The design of constituencies and electoral areas
Political parties UK Parliament Scottish Parliament	Background information on the political and electoral process
Local government Academics Members of the public	Research and analysis of the political and electoral process

Where do the figures come from?

Each year National Records of Scotland (NRS) compiles summary electoral statistics from data supplied by the 15 Electoral Registration Offices (EROs) in Scotland. The EROs are responsible for creating and maintaining the Electoral Register in their area and publish two versions of it – the full register and the ‘open register’ – generally as at 1 December each year. NRS carries out quality checks on the data provided and then publishes an analytical summary of the information.

2. Overview

[Figure 1](#) shows a generally upward overall trend between 2010 and December 2020 in the number of people registered to vote in parliamentary and local elections in Scotland. This is broadly consistent with the increase in the size of the population aged 18 and over, which rose by around 5% over this period.

A drop in the number of registered electors is evident in December 2015. This was mainly due to the introduction of [Individual Electoral Registration](#) (IER) in September 2014, which affected the registration of students. 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. The lowering of the voting age to 16 for Scottish Parliamentary elections can also be seen in the data for that year.

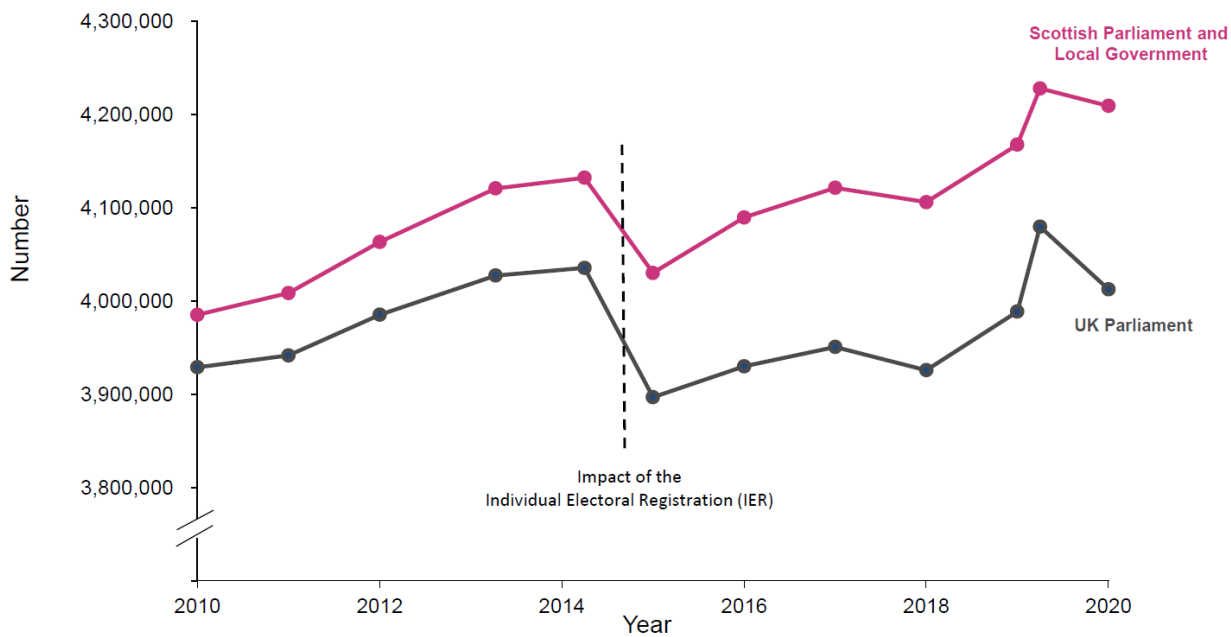
After the drop in 2015, electorates in Scotland increased in both 2016 and 2017. This can be attributed to the heightened period of electoral activity seen in those years with voters going to the polls on four occasions: [Scottish Parliament election](#) in May 2016, the [EU Referendum](#) in June 2016, the [Local Government elections](#) in May 2017 and the [UK General Election](#) in June 2017.

Following a slight decrease between 2017 and 2018, increases between 2018 and 2019 were recorded for both the UK Parliament electorate (up 1.6% to 3,989,000) and in the Scottish Parliament and local government electorate (up by 1.5% to 4,167,000). This is thought in part to reflect an increase in the number of people aged 18 and over in the population and also some of the uplift in registrations following the calling of the General Election for December 2019. The statistics for March 2020 captured the full effect of this latter uplift in voter registration. While the total numbers of people on the electoral registers then fell back a little by December 2020, it was still higher than at December 2019 (up by 0.6% to 4,012,400 for the UK Parliament electorate, and by 1.0% to 4,208,900 for the Scottish Parliament and local government electorate).

[Figure 2](#) and [Figure 3](#) place the trends in the size of the Scottish electorates over the last ten years in the context of when key election events occurred in that period. An increase in electoral registrations is a feature often seen in the lead-up to elections and referendums, as people register to ensure they can vote. The total electorate figure can then subsequently fall back a little as Electoral Registration Offices carry out their annual canvas each autumn to maintain and update the registers, eg to take account of deaths and changes of address. For example, the number of people in the UK Parliamentary electorate at 1 December 2016 was 57,100 lower than at the June 2016 EU referendum and 41,100 lower than at the May 2017 General Election. By 1 December 2017, it had fallen again, by 20,700.

Similar patterns are generally seen for the Scottish Parliament and local government electorate ([Figure 3](#)). The highest recorded level for this electorate was at the time of the Scottish independence referendum in September 2014, when 4.28 million people were registered to vote.

Figure 1: Scottish electorates, 2010 to 2020



Note

- 1) From December 2012 to December 2015, the reference point for these statistics was 1 March. All other reference points are 1 December. Two reference points occurred during 2015 and 2020 - March and December for both years.
- 2) The IER was introduced in September 2014 but the impact would have occurred in September 2015 (start of the new academic year)

Figure 2: UK Parliament electorate in Scotland, correlated to key votes, 2010 to 2020

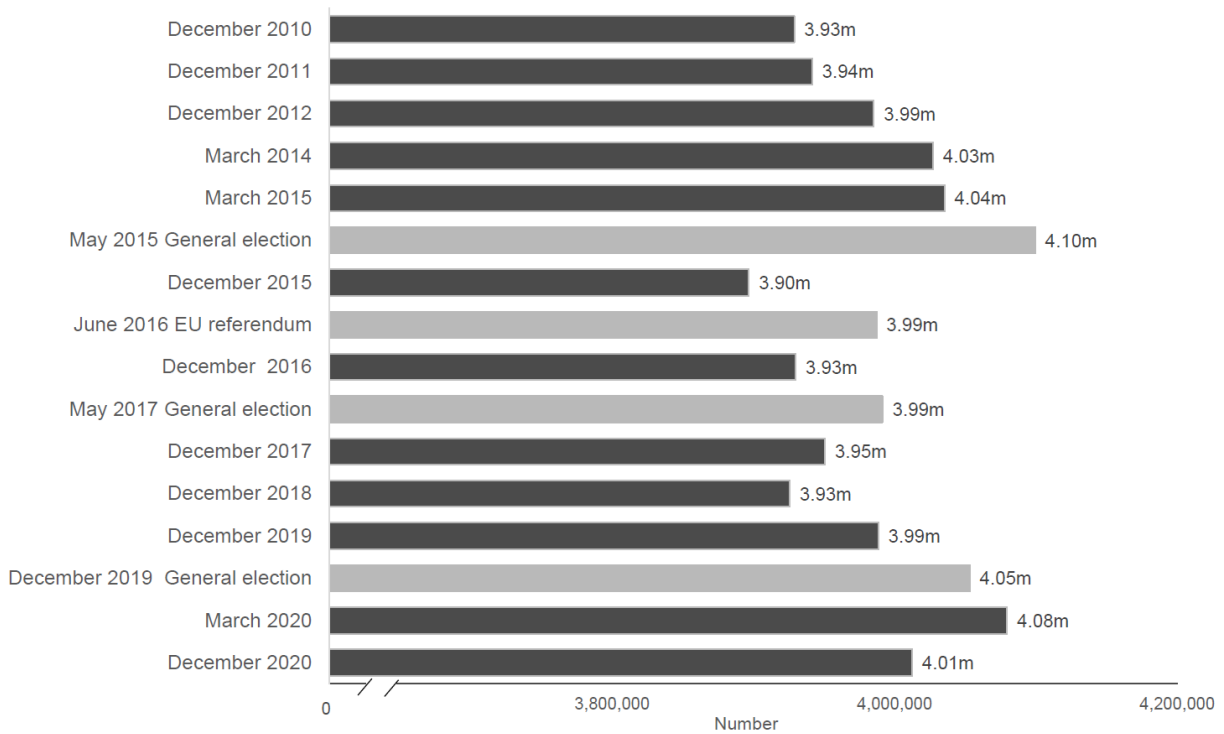
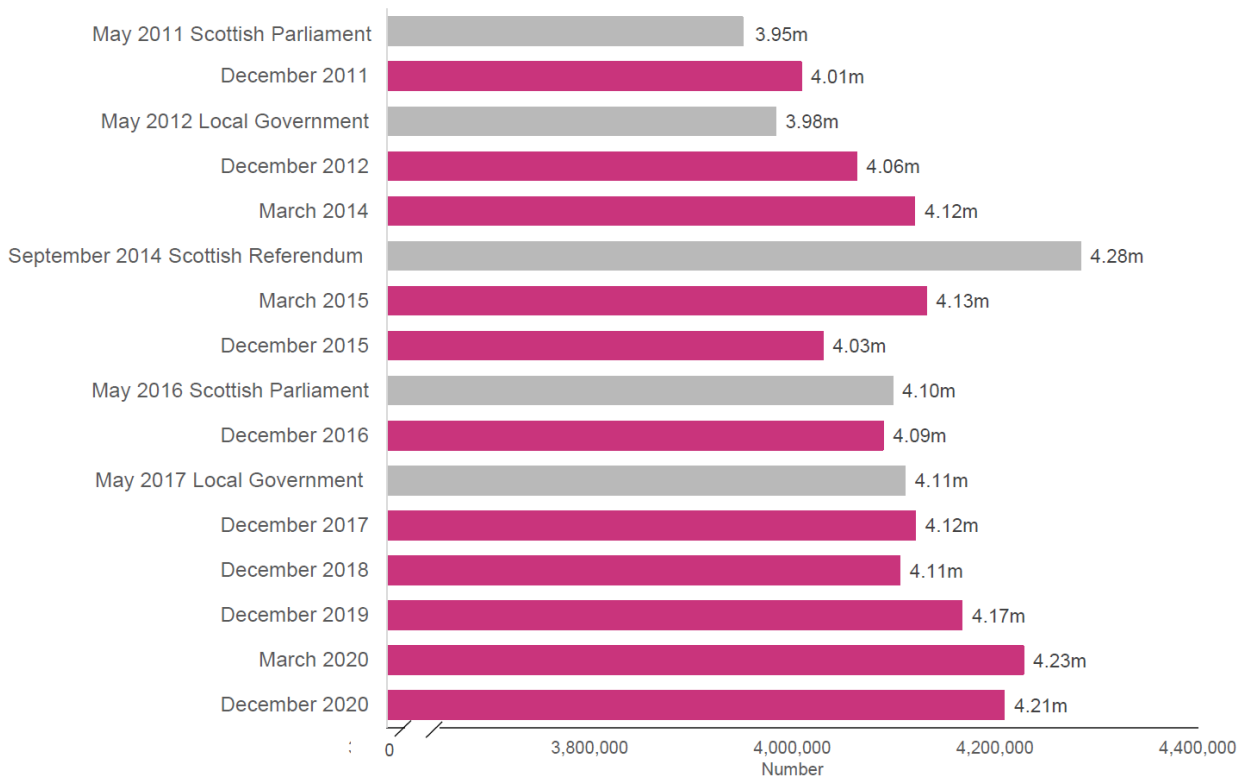


Figure 3: Scottish Parliament and local government electorate, correlated to key votes, 2010 to 2020



3. UK Parliament electors

The number of UK parliamentary electors in Scotland totalled 4,012,400 as at 1 December 2020. This was 23,900 (0.6%) higher than the number of registered electors at 1 December 2019, but a decrease of 67,200 (1.6%) compared with the number registered at 2 March 2020. The figure for March 2020 was the highest ever recorded and captured the uplift in voter registrations resulting from the December 2019 General Election. The total fell back a little by December 2020, as electoral registers were updated through the year. The reason for these fluctuating figures is that although 1 December 2019 reference date is nearer to the December election date, the electoral registration officers (EROs) published their registers between November 2019 and March 2020. The earlier the EROs published their register the less likely they capture the late electorates who had up until 26 November to register to vote in the general election. In the absence of an election, the range of publication dates by the EROs would have made little difference to the numbers reported. This is apparent in the differences between December 2019 and December 2020 registers, where there is a smaller increase in numbers.

Table 1: Total electorate for UK parliament elections, December 2019 to December 2020

1 December 2019	12 December 2019	2 March 2020 ²	1 December 2020
3,988,550	4,053,140	4,079,612	4,012,429

Of the 59 UK parliamentary constituencies in Scotland, 41 saw increases in their electorate between December 2019 and December 2020. The largest percentage increases were in Rutherglen and Hamilton West (up by 2.7%), East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow (up by 2.4%) and Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East (up by 2.3%). The largest percentage decrease in the electorate was in Dumfries and Galloway (down by 3.2%) and Aberdeen North (down by 2.3%). For the other sixteen constituencies which recorded a decrease, the percentage decreases were all below 1.3%.

At December 2020, the average number of electors per UK Parliamentary constituency was 68,000. The constituency with the most people registered to vote was Linlithgow and East Falkirk (86,900), followed by the neighbouring constituencies of Falkirk (84,000) and Livingston (82,200). The constituencies with the smallest electorate were Na h-Eileanan an Iar (21,200) and Orkney and Shetland (34,400); the mainland constituency with the smallest electorate was Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross with 46,800.

Between December 2010 and December 2020, the constituencies with the largest percentage increase in their electorate were Midlothian (up by 13.4%) and Edinburgh North and Leith (up by 11.4%). The constituencies with the largest percentage decreases in their electorates over the same period were Glasgow North East (down by 8.3%), Aberdeen North (down by 5.6%) and North East Fife (down by 5.0%) – largely reflecting, in the latter two instances, the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration in 2014 and its impact on the registration of the student population in these areas.

² [Report overview: 2019 UK Parliamentary general election | Electoral Commission](#)

4. Scottish Parliament and Local Government electors

The total number of Scottish Parliament and local government electors as at 1 December 2020 was 4,208,900. This was 41,600 (1.0%) higher than the number of registered electors at 1 December 2019, but a decrease of 18,700 (0.4%) compared with the number registered at 2 March 2020.

Table 2: Total electorate for Scottish Parliament and local government, December 2019 to December 2020

1 December 2019	2 March 2020	1 December 2020
4,167,361	4,227,659	4,208,923

Between December 2019 and December 2020, the local government electorate increased in all but four of the 32 council areas. The largest percentage increase was in South Lanarkshire (up by 3.1%) and the largest percentage decrease in Dumfries and Galloway (down by 4.1%).

By council area, the number of these electors was highest in Glasgow City (466,900), City of Edinburgh (388,500) and Fife (283,400). It was lowest in Orkney (17,500), Shetland (18,000) and Na h-Eileanan Siar (21,800).

At December 2020, the average number of electors per Scottish Parliamentary constituency was 57,700. The constituency with the most people registered to vote was Linlithgow, with 74,600. The smallest Scottish Parliamentary constituency electorate was the Orkney Islands (17,500), with the smallest on the mainland being Argyll and Bute (49,300)³.

Of the 73 Scottish Parliamentary constituencies, 59 saw an increase in their electorate between December 2019 and December 2020. The largest percentage increases were in the following constituencies:

- Rutherglen (3.6%)
- Clydesdale (3.1%)
- Edinburgh Eastern (3.1%)
- Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse (3.0%)

The largest percentage decreases in the electorate were in:

- Galloway and West Dumfries (4.3%)
- Dumfriesshire (4.0%)
- North East Fife (1.8%)
- Mid Fife and Glenrothes (1.4%)

For the purpose of local government elections, council areas are split into electoral wards, with each ward having either three or four elected councillors. At December

³ Although it does have areas that are not on the Scottish mainland, the Argyll and Bute constituency is not protected by the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011 (PVSaCA). As such, Argyll and Bute was held to the same standards as the rest of the mainland when constituency boundaries were re-drawn. More information on the PVSaCA is included in the [background notes](#).

2020, there was a total of 354 electoral wards, with an average of 11,900 electors per ward. However, this varied depending on the number of elected members and other local considerations. The 189 three-member wards each had 9,900 electors on average, ranging from 1,825 in North Isles (Orkney Islands) up to 19,400 in Corstorphine/ Murrayfield (City of Edinburgh). The 165 four-member wards each had an average of 14,200 electors, ranging from 2,500 in Barraigh, Bhatarsaigh, Eirisgeigh agus Uibhist a Deas (Barra, Vatersay, Eriskay and South Uist)(Na h-Eileanan Siar) to 27,500 in Liberton/ Gilmerton (City of Edinburgh).

5. 16 and 17 year old electors

Since the voting age was lowered in 2015, the number of 16 and 17 year olds registered to vote increased until 2017 before falling back in the latest two years. At December 2020, a total of 73,300 people aged 16 or 17 were registered to vote in Scottish Parliament and Local Government elections, a decrease of 500 (0.7%) compared with December 2019. They accounted for 1.7% of the total electorate. The council area where 16 and 17 year olds made up the highest proportion of the electorate was West Lothian (2.5%). This proportion was lowest in Glasgow City (1.2%).

6. Postal voters

At December 2020, the proportion of the Scottish electorate registered for postal voting was 16.8% (675,100 people) for UK Parliament elections and 16.4% (690,400 people) for Scottish Parliament and Local Government elections. This means that a sixth of voters in Scotland can cast their ballot earlier than polling day. Both these proportions represent a slight decrease compared with December 2019 (17.3% and 16.9% respectively), but were still well above the level around a decade ago – it was around 12.5% in 2010 for both the UK Parliament and Scottish Parliament and Local Government electorates.

The proportion of the electorate registered for postal voting was generally higher in more rural or remote constituencies, and lower in more urban ones. For example⁴, the highest proportion for Scottish Parliamentary constituencies was Orkney Islands (24.6%) while the lowest was Coatbridge and Chryston (11.4%).

It is anticipated that opting to register for a postal vote in the 6 May 2021 elections to the Scottish Parliament may be more popular in response to Covid-19. However, the extent of this cannot be gauged from the statistics published here, as voters have until 6 April to register for a postal vote in these elections.

7. Overseas electors

A total of 9,600 British citizens resident overseas were on the Electoral Register for UK Parliamentary elections as at 1 December 2020, 0.2% of the total electorate. This was a decrease of just under 2,000 (17%) on December 2019. The number of these overseas registered voters tends to be higher in years where a referendum or General Election is staged. So for instance it was relatively high in 2016 (15,200), 2017 (12,800) and 2019 (11,600). The figure for March 2020 (15,400) was the highest ever recorded and

⁴ [See table 7 and 8](#)

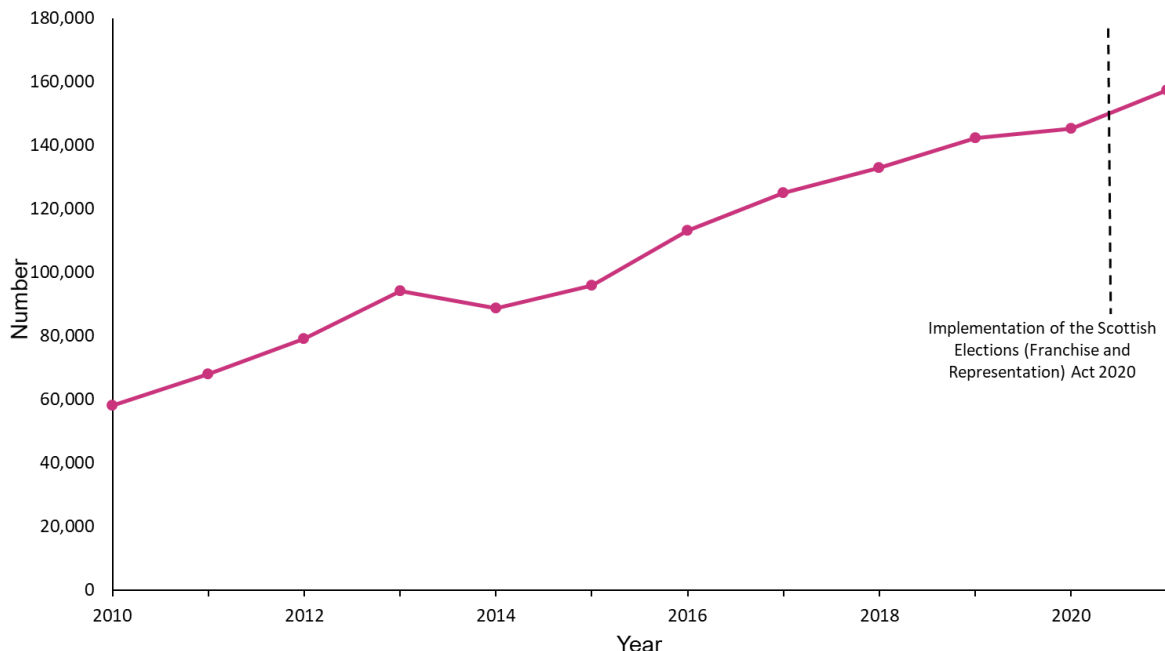
captured the uplift in voter registrations resulting from the December 2019 General Election. See [section 3](#) for more detail.

8. Foreign nationals on the electoral register

At December 2020, there were 157,400 foreign nationals⁵ registered to vote in Scottish Parliament and Local Government elections. This represented 3.7% of the total electorate, and is the highest number ever recorded. It was an increase of 15,000 (10.5%) compared with December 2019, and was nearly three times higher than the 58,000 recorded in 2010. Part of the increase in the latest year is likely to reflect the extension of the entitlement to vote in these elections - as a result of the Scottish Elections (Franchise and Representation) Act 2020 - to citizens of all countries, provided they are resident in Scotland and have leave to remain in the UK. Previously only EU citizens were entitled to vote in these elections. (Citizens of the Republic of Ireland and qualifying Commonwealth citizens resident in the UK are entitled to vote in all parliamentary and local government elections in the UK, and are not included as 'foreign nationals' in these statistics.) See [background note 4](#) for further details.

The council⁶ areas with the highest proportion of foreign nationals in the electorate for Scottish Parliament and local government elections at December 2020 were Aberdeen City (9.5%), City of Edinburgh (9.4%) and Glasgow City (5.7%). This proportion was also relatively high in West Lothian (4.7%) and Dundee City (4.5%). In 23 council areas it was 3% or less.

Figure 4: Number of foreign nationals registered to vote in Scottish Parliament and Local Government elections, 2010 to 2020



Note: Two reference points occurred during 2015 and 2020 - March and December for both years. Dotted line indicates the extension of the electorate franchise to qualifying residents from all countries following the implementation of the [Scottish Elections \(Franchise and Representation\) Act 2020](#).

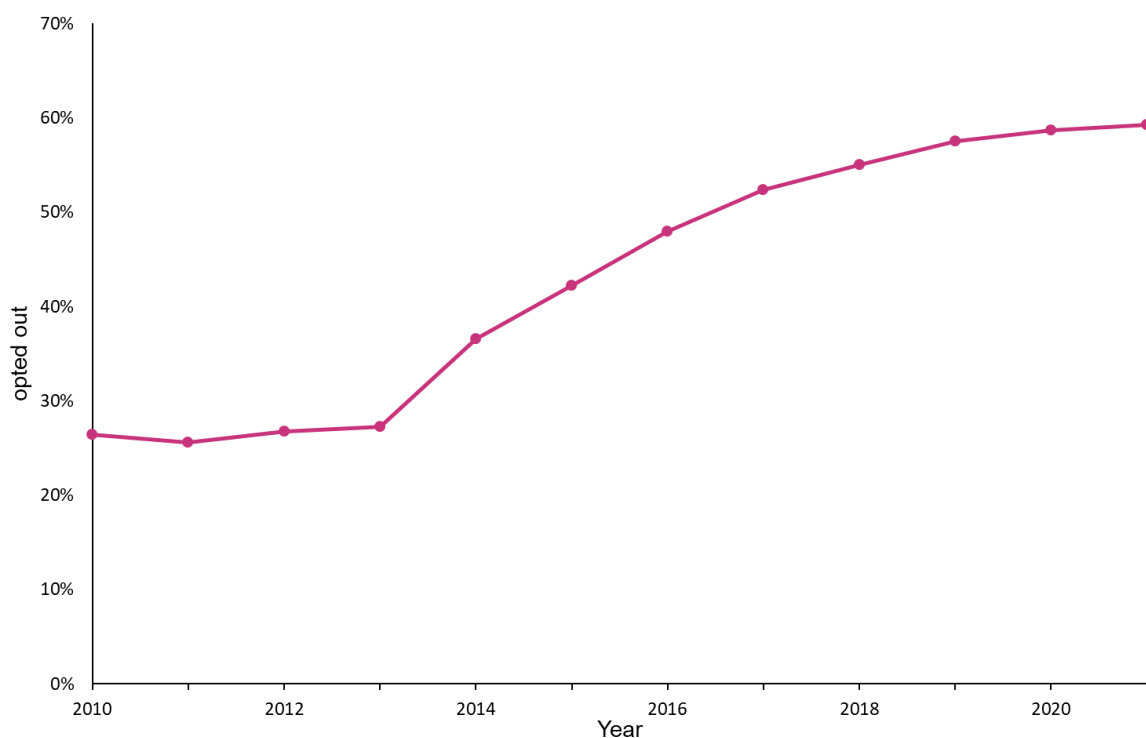
⁵ Excludes citizens of the Republic of Ireland and qualifying Commonwealth citizens.

⁶ See [table 9](#)

9. Opted out voters

There are two versions of the electoral register – the full register and the ‘open register’. The full register is used only for elections and for certain other purposes which are specified in legislation, for example preventing and detecting crime. The open register is available to anyone who wants to buy a copy, for example marketing companies. Electors can opt out of the open register. The proportion of people opted out of the open register for Scottish Parliament and local government elections was fairly stable at around a quarter prior to 2015. However, since then it has risen markedly, and by December 2020 had reached a high of 59%.

Figure 5: Percentage of Scottish Parliament electors opted out of the open register, 2010 to December 2020



Note: Two reference points occurred during 2015 and 2020 - March and December for both years.

10. Service voters

The number of service voters registered at December 2020 to vote in parliamentary and local elections in Scotland was 1,500, representing 0.04% of the total electorate for both the UK parliamentary and the Scottish Parliament and local Government electorates. This is less than half the 3,900 service voters registered at December 2015.

11. Anonymous voters

Individuals can register anonymously if they can demonstrate a good reason for this, for example concerns about their personal safety or the safety of someone in their

household. Their name and address will not then appear on either the full or open versions of the electoral register, although they are still able to cast their vote. The number of such electors in Scotland is small - at 1 December 2020 a total of 188 people were included as anonymous electors on the electoral register for UK Parliament elections, and 193 were on the electoral register for Scottish Parliament and local government elections.

Table 3: Total number of anonymous voters, 2017 to 2020

	December 2017	December 2018	December 2019	March 2020	December 2020
UK Parliament	116	130	194	215	188
Scottish Parliament	127	137	207	223	193

12. Links to related statistics

Electoral statistics for each of the constituent countries in the UK are published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and are available in the electoral registration section of the [ONS website](#). The next ONS publication, Electoral Statistics, UK: 2020, is scheduled for publication in [May 2021](#).

Table 4: Total number of electoral registrations, by electorate, 2010 to 2020

Reference date		2010	2011	2012	2014	2015	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2020
		(1 December)	(1 December)	(1 December)	(10 March) ¹	(2 March) ¹	(1 December)	(1 December)	(1 December)	(1 December)	(1 December) ²	(2 March)	(1 December) ³
UK Parliament electorate	Total electorate⁴	3,928,979	3,941,592	3,985,257	4,027,187	4,035,394	3,896,852	3,929,963	3,950,643	3,925,820	3,988,550	4,079,612	4,012,429
	Attainers ^{4,5}	44,100	43,940	46,200	63,471	38,963	24,827	41,561	43,357	41,296	38,171	54,015	38,518
	Service voters	2,662	2,576	2,739	2,750	4,226	3,929	3,511	3,127	2,738	2,016	1,891	1,502
	Overseas electors	1,876	1,186	1,168	868	2,588	7,729	15,230	12,790	6,679	11,587	15,369	9,617
	Postal voters	492,514	525,793	566,262	557,927	660,472	668,118	699,186	714,060	690,207	688,710	697,585	675,085
Scottish Parliament and Local Government electorate	Total electorate	3,985,161	4,008,411	4,063,206	4,120,494	4,131,926	4,029,958	4,089,477	4,121,140	4,105,824	4,167,361	4,227,659	4,208,923
	Attainers ⁶	44,415	44,341	46,726	64,299	39,513	21,343	22,035	20,788	20,232	14,577	19,780	29,599
	Service voters	2,662	2,576	2,739	2,750	4,226	3,929	3,511	3,133	2,746	2,019	1,891	1,504
	Peers	54	56	54	53	45	46	48	47	43	43	43	39
	Foreign nationals ⁷	58,004	67,949	79,063	94,122	88,688	95,946	113,185	124,973	132,767	142,353	145,271	157,367
	Postal voters	492,255	525,772	566,264	569,583	661,844	660,809	713,734	729,690	705,705	706,099	714,900	690,373
	16 and 17 year olds ⁶	-	-	-	-	-	48,962	79,621	83,536	78,383	73,777	73,106	73,272

Note: See [table 1](#) for full list of footnote references

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, to facilitate the change to a system of Individual Electoral Registration. Also for the purposes of the data collection to inform the next review of UK parliamentary constituency boundaries, the [Parliamentary Constituencies Act 2020](#) provided for a one-off data collection of electoral register data, with a reference date of 2 March 2020. This was to mitigate the potential impact of Covid-19 on the [annual electoral register canvass](#). The reference date has since reverted to 1 December. The different reference dates in 2014, 2015 and 2020 should be borne in mind when looking at time series of the electoral statistics.
2. Due to the priority given to administering the December 2019 General Election, ten Electoral Registration Offices published their electoral registers in the first few weeks of November and one in December, while the other four delayed doing so until the start of February 2020. The electoral statistics for 2019 included in this publication therefore only nominally relate to a reference date of 1 December 2019. The publication date for each ERO is shown below:

Electoral Registration Office	Publication date of electoral register
Ayrshire	1 November 2019
Central Scotland	8 November 2019
Dumfries and Galloway	5 December 2019
Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute	11 November 2019
Dundee	5 November 2019
Fife	1 February 2020
Glasgow	1 February 2021
Grampian	1 February 2020
Highland and Western Isles	1 February 2020
Lanarkshire	12 November 2019
Lothian	14 November 2019
Orkney and Shetland	1 February 2020
Renfrewshire	4 November 2019
Scottish Borders	6 November 2019
Tayside	7 November 2019

3. 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 most of Scotland's local authority areas. There are now 354 electoral wards with effect from 4 May 2017. For the 2016 publication, the Electoral Registration Offices (EROs), who supply the electoral data to the National Record of Scotland (NRS), were 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 previous 2007 ward boundaries. To allow for a continuous time series to be created for the new wards, estimates from the full Electoral Register were calculated for the new wards using postcode information. Due to attainers not being available in the full Electoral Register, the distribution of 16 and 17 year old electors was used to distribute attainers to the new wards. For the December 2017 statistics and later publications, all EROs submitted data on the basis of the new (2017) electoral ward boundaries.
4. Definitions of the various groups of electorate shown in the tables are as follows:

Attainers: For UK 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 is made up of the Parliamentary Register and the Local Government Register. An attainer on the Parliamentary Register is an elector who will attain the age of 18 during the currency of the register (between 2 December 2020 and 30 November 2021). With the introduction of the Scottish Elections (Reform) Bill: child rights and wellbeing impact assessment, children aged 14 are now eligible to register as attainers ahead of becoming able to vote at the age of 16. An attainer on the local government register is now anyone aged 14 or 15. From 1 December 2020, statistics on attainers registered to vote in Scottish Parliament or Local Government elections are all those on the register who are 14 or 15 as at 1 December 2020. Note that in the published tables, whilst attainers are identified separately, they are also included as part of the total electorate figures. The calling of the December 2019 General Election resulted in some delays in the registration process for attainers, particularly for Scottish Parliament and Local Government elections, which means that the 2019 figures shown for attainers in this publication will be underestimates.

Residents: In order to be classed as 'resident' in a constituency the elector must be normally living at an address within the constituency area 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 at Scottish Parliament or Local

Government elections, but are entitled to vote at UK Parliament and European Parliament 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. Spouses of members of the Armed Forces have the option of registering as residents while in the UK. New rules for Service electors were introduced in January 2007, whereby Service elector applications are required to be completed every three years (later extended to five years in March 2010) 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. Further background on armed forces voting is available [here](#).

Foreign nationals: The [Scottish Elections \(Franchise and Representation\) Act 2020](#), which came into effect on 1 April 2020, extended the electoral franchise for local government elections in Scotland and Scottish Parliament elections to citizens of all countries who are resident in Scotland and have leave (or do not require leave) to remain in the UK. Citizens of the Republic of Ireland, qualifying Commonwealth citizens and EU citizens were already entitled to vote in these elections. The statistics on 'Foreign nationals' category as at 1 December 2020 which are included in this publication comprise EU citizens and other qualifying foreign nationals; for previous time points it comprises just EU citizens. Citizens of the Republic of Ireland and qualifying Commonwealth citizens are not included in the 'foreign nationals' statistics in this publication.

Prisoners: Prior to the implementation of the [Scottish Elections \(Franchise and Representation\) Act 2020](#) on 1 April 2020, remand prisoners, unconvicted prisoners and civil prisoners could vote if they were on the Electoral Register. Convicted persons detained in pursuance of their sentences were not eligible to vote. However, following the implementation of the 2020 Act the right to vote in local government elections in Scotland and in Scottish Parliament elections was extended to convicted prisoners sentenced to prison terms of 12 months or less. Separate statistics on such prisoners have not been included in this report, as they cannot be separately identified in the data collected. However, their number is believed to be relatively small.

Peers: A Peer is a member of the House of Lords. Peers can vote in Scottish Parliament and Local Government elections, At 1 December 2020, there were 39 Peers on the Electoral Register for these elections. Peers do not have the right to vote at UK Parliamentary elections.

5. Information on previous elections held and a list of upcoming elections and referendums is available from the [Electoral Commission](#).
6. The boundaries and electorates of some constituencies in Scotland are protected. The [Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011\(PVSA\)](#) stated that the electorate of almost all constituencies must be within 5% of the national average. This requirement would override considerations of local geographical and political boundaries, with a few exceptions:

- The island constituencies of Orkney and Shetland and Na h-Eileanan an Iar are explicitly protected.
- Constituencies covering more than 12,000 km² do not have to comply with the above requirement (this applies to Ross, Skye and Lochaber).

Notes on statistical publications

National Statistics

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority (UKSA) 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 [UKSA](#) 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.

The continued designation of these statistics as National Statistics was confirmed in May 2011.

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 NRS website.

National Records of Scotland

We, the National Records of Scotland, are a non-ministerial department of the devolved Scottish Administration. Our aim is to provide relevant and reliable information, analysis and advice that meets the needs of government, business and the people of Scotland. 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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Enquiries and suggestions

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