

2015 ELECTORATES

1. The 2015 electoral register was published on 1 December 2014 in England. For the second year running, the total number of electors in England has fallen. The number of electors decreased by 765,584 (1.98%). This follows a decrease of 240,207 (0.62%) on last year’s register. The table below shows the total number of electors in England in each of the last five years. The 2011 register was the one used for the previous (2013) review, which was terminated by Parliament.

| | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | Change 2011-2015 |
|---------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------------|
| England | 38,443,481 | 38,654,024 | 38,837,344 | 38,597,137 | 37,831,553 | -611,928 (-1.59%) |

2. The 2015 electoral register was the first to be compiled using Individual Elector Registration (IER). Under IER, electors have to take responsibility for their own registration, whereas in previous years this task fell to the “head of the household”. During 2014, the names and addresses of electors on the register were matched with data held by the Department for Work and Pensions. Approximately 87% of all existing electors were matched and transferred to the new register. Whilst some names have been removed from the register, for example due to death or having moved, local authorities were encouraged to retain electors on the register this year, so the decrease was not as marked as it was feared that it could have been. Particular areas of decrease have been noted in wards that contain large numbers of university students. A student living away at university is entitled to register at their home and at their term-time addresses, and as the responsibility to register is now on the individual, universities are not able to register them on their behalf. The number of “attainers” – those aged 17, who will attain the age of 18 during the currency of the register – has also dropped significantly. There were 379,284 attainers on the 2014 register, but this fell to 254,836 on the 2015 register. It should be noted that in England, since the electoral register was published, just under a million people registered to vote by the deadline of 20 April 2015.

3. Of the 326 local authorities in England, 55 (16.87%) had an increase in their electorate and 271 (83.13%) had a decrease in their electorate. In those that increased their electorate, it is notable that these had all experienced a decrease the previous year in preparation for IER. The ten local authorities with the most change are shown in the table below.

| District | 2014 | 2015 | Change |
|-----------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Wellingborough | 50,165 | 52,872 | +5.40% |
| East Devon | 96,974 | 102,056 | +5.24% |
| Tonbridge and Malling | 84,991 | 88,590 | +4.23% |
| Ashfield | 86,925 | 89,567 | +3.04% |
| Allerdale | 68,633 | 70,353 | +2.51% |
| Haringey | 150,479 | 138,463 | -7.99% |
| Blackpool | 109,362 | 100,358 | -8.23% |
| Newcastle upon Tyne | 196,986 | 180,481 | -8.38% |
| Reading | 110,047 | 99,868 | - 9.25% |
| Oxford | 101,952 | 91,551 | -10.20% |

4. There were also slight decreases in the number of electors in Northern Ireland and Wales, but there was an increase in Scotland, probably due to the interest created by the independence referendum. When the effect of the exempted areas is taken into account, the table below shows the change in electorate between 2011 and 2015 and the effect on the electoral quota.

| | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | Change 2011-2015 |
|---------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------------|
| England | 38,322,557 | 38,543,124 | 38,726,235 | 38,485,337 | 37,831,553 | 491,004 (-1.28%) |
| Northern Ireland | 1,190,635 | 1,212,967 | 1,230,197 | 1,218,366 | 1,232,382 | 41,747 (+3.51%) |
| Scotland | 3,873,387 | 3,885,432 | 3,928,845 | 3,970,180 | 3,979,097 | 105,710 (+2.73%) |
| Wales | 2,281,596 | 2,298,569 | 2,301,073 | 2,297,250 | 2,225,749 | 55,847 (-2.45%) |
| United Kingdom | 45,678,175 | 45,940,092 | 46,186,350 | 45,971,763 | 45,161,209 | 516,966 (-1.13%) |
| Electoral Quota | 76,641 | 77,081 | 77,494 | 77,134 | 75,774 | 867 (-1.13%) |

5. If a review of parliamentary constituencies had started in 2015, there would have been a different allocation of constituencies between the four countries, with England being allocated 498 constituencies (excluding the two Isle of Wight constituencies), instead of 500 as in the 2013 review. Scotland would be allocated 53 constituencies (excluding the two Island constituencies), instead of 50 as in the 2013 review. Wales would have been allocated 29 constituencies, instead of the 30 as in the 2013 review. One reason for this is that the Ste Laguë distribution favours the smaller units at the expense of the larger units. In England there would have been a different allocation in four of the nine regions, with the Eastern gaining a constituency (57 up from 56), and the East Midlands (43 down from 44), North East (25 down from 26) and West Midlands (53 down from 54) regions each losing a constituency. The table at Appendix A shows the number of electors in each local authority in England.

6. In England, on the 2015 electoral register, just 190 (35%) of the 533 existing constituencies had an electorate within 5% of the electoral quota (71,986 to 79,562). The largest constituency continued to be Isle of Wight CC (107,572). The smallest constituency continued to be Wirral West CC (53,877). The disparity between the two electorates was reduced to 53,695. The second largest constituency is now North West Cambridgeshire (90,993). The decrease in the total number of electors has reduced the number of very large constituencies, with only two (down from three) constituencies with an electorate in excess of 90,000, but there are now twenty-four (up from eight) constituencies with an electorate below 60,000. The number of electors in each constituency is shown on the table at Appendix B. The table below shows the range of existing constituency electorates over the period 2011 to 2015.

| | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|
| Greater than EQ - More than 20% | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| Greater than EQ - More than 15% up to 20% | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Greater than EQ - More than 10% up to 15% | 7 | 8 | 10 | 9 | 8 |

| | | | | | |
|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Greater than EQ - More than 5% up to 10% | 26 | 26 | 23 | 27 | 30 |
| Within 5% of EQ | 200 | 197 | 192 | 193 | 190 |
| Less than EQ - More than 5% up to 10% | 133 | 133 | 136 | 125 | 126 |
| Less than EQ - More than 10% up to 15% | 103 | 96 | 104 | 101 | 93 |
| Less than EQ - More than 15% up to 20% | 47 | 56 | 47 | 47 | 51 |
| Less than EQ - More than 20% | 13 | 13 | 17 | 26 | 30 |

7. The Commission are asked to note the 2015 electoral data.