May 2019 voter identification pilot schemes – our evaluation

Summary

At the local elections, people in ten areas had to show proof of who they were (ID) before they could vote in a polling station. We looked at what happened in these areas and have explained what we found.

We found that a large majority of people already have access to the forms of ID used in these pilots. We also found indications that some groups of people can find it harder than others to show ID. There were no significant issues in any pilot area with the administration of the election. The experience of taking part in the pilot scheme appears to have had a positive impact on people's perception of the security of the polling station process.

The pilots have provided further evidence, but they do not allow for definitive conclusions to be drawn in all areas; several important questions remain about how an ID requirement would work in practice, particularly at a national poll with higher levels of turnout. Before introducing a requirement for elections in Great Britain, the Government and Parliament should consider carefully the available evidence about the impact and proportionality of different approaches on the accessibility and security of polling station voting.

This evaluation

Voters at polling stations in Great Britain do not need to show ID to vote. At the May 2019 local elections, the UK Government asked for volunteers amongst Returning Officers, to run pilots to test requiring people to show ID at polling stations. Ten areas agreed to run pilots: in two areas people had to show a specified form of photo ID; in five areas they could choose to show either a specified form of photo ID or two pieces of specified non-photo ID; and in three areas people could show either their poll card or a specified form of photo ID.

This is the Electoral Commission's independent evaluation of the 2019 pilot scheme. It explains what we found to be the impact of asking people to show ID in these elections. Our evaluation follows a smaller scale voluntary pilot scheme at the 2018 local elections, which we also evaluated, and the existence of a photo ID requirement for voters at polling stations in Northern Ireland since 2003. Further background information on these is provided at the end of this report.

Our findings

The ten pilots in May 2019 have provided more evidence about what it would mean for people to show ID at polling stations in Great Britain, building on the five pilots held in 2018.

More local areas took part this year. There was a wider range of rural areas and urban areas, and they included a better mixture of people: different areas have different populations, with varying socioeconomic profiles. There were also fewer differences between the pilots using each model, which meant that the evidence from this pilot scheme is more robust. However, as was the case with the five 2018 pilots, the ten areas piloting in 2019 are not fully representative, in socio-demographic terms, of many areas of Great Britain.

Looking at this evidence and our previous research, we can say that:

- A large majority of people already have access to an acceptable form of officially issued photo ID from the lists used in these pilots. These people would not have a problem showing it in a polling station if they had to do so.

- Allowing only existing forms of officially issued photo ID would not be accessible for everyone. Some groups of people would find it harder than others to show photo ID in a polling station, although this could be mitigated if locally issued photo voter cards were easily available for all.

- Locally issued ID that includes a photo – like the electoral identity card currently provided in Northern Ireland – would be more secure than locally issued ID without a photo.

- Asking people to show two pieces of non-photo ID would not necessarily be more secure than showing their poll card. It would be more secure if one piece of ID had to be an official document like a birth certificate, but that would make it less accessible.

- Asking people to show their poll card would be less secure than a locally issued photo ID. The poll card could be made more secure, for example through changes to the form of the poll card with the addition of printed security features, and by reviewing the process for checking them in polling stations. These would still be accessible for everyone, but could be more complicated for Returning Officers to produce.

- Using scanners or other technology to check the validity of poll cards in polling stations would be much more complicated and costly for Returning Officers and polling station staff to deliver. These checks would not necessarily add more security than visual checks by polling station staff.

- The experience of taking part in the pilot scheme appears to have had a positive impact on people's perception of the security of the polling station process, and on their confidence in it. This varied within each pilot model, across individual local authority areas.

- Returning Officers and their staff ran the elections successfully in the pilot scheme areas, and there were no significant administrative issues in any pilot area. Polling station staff were satisfied with how polling day went and were confident that they could manage the process of people showing voter identification at future elections.

Like last year, these pilots were held at local elections, where turnout is much lower than other elections. The demographic profile of local election voters also tends to be different from that of UK general election voters. For example, local election voters tend to be older, on average, than UK general election voters. This means that it is not possible to

know how some groups of people would be affected by showing ID at other elections in the future, such as a UK general election.

Introducing a voter ID requirement

The data and findings presented in our evaluation build on the evidence base provided by the 2018 pilot scheme. This evidence further clarifies the way in which a voter ID scheme could be delivered in Great Britain. However, we are not able to draw definitive conclusions, from these pilots, about how an ID requirement would work in practice, particularly at a national poll with higher levels of turnout or in areas with different socio-demographic profiles not fully represented in the pilot scheme.

If the policy is to be developed further, Government and Parliament should consider carefully the available evidence about the impact of different approaches on the accessibility and security of polling station voting in Great Britain. This should include evidence from the experience of polling station voters in Northern Ireland, who have been required to show ID since 1985 (including requiring photo ID since 2003), as well as the evidence from the local pilot schemes in both 2018 and 2019.

We have identified three key areas for further consideration:

- **Any ID requirement should deliver clear improvements to current security levels.** A photo ID requirement would provide the greatest level of security, but each of the models that have been piloted in 2018 and 2019 would provide some level of improved security compared with the current rules. Government and Parliament should consider what level of security is proportionate to the risk of personation fraud in polling stations.

- **Any ID requirement should ensure accessibility for all voters.** While a large majority of people already have access to an acceptable form of photo ID, allowing only existing forms of officially issued photo ID would not be accessible for everyone. To make sure voting at polling stations remains accessible, there would need to be other options for people who do not already have an acceptable form of photo ID. This could involve providing free of charge locally issued photo ID, as currently provided for electors in Northern Ireland. Alternatively, it could involve allowing voters to use their poll card – on the current model or a different model – as the primary or secondary route to proving identity, depending on the level of security required.

- **Any ID requirement should be realistically deliverable, taking into account the resources required to administer it.** The pilot scheme has shown that some ID options would be more complicated for Returning Officers and polling station staff to deliver. The relative security benefits of these options would need to be considered alongside the impact on the administration of election procedures, particularly polling station processes.

Impact on voters – experience

Key findings

- Nearly everyone in these pilots who went to their polling station to vote was able to show ID without difficulty, as in 2018. Out of all those who went to their polling station, the proportion who couldn't show ID and who did not return to vote ranged from 0.03% to 0.7%.

- Some groups of people may find it harder than others to show ID, particularly photo ID. This includes people with protected characteristics as well as other less frequent voters who did not attempt to vote on 2 May but are more likely to do so at a UK general election.

Impact on voters on 2 May

The number of people who were not able to show ID

Nearly everyone who came to their polling station and wanted to vote in each of the pilots was able to show the right identification and be issued with a ballot paper.

Some people did, initially, go to their polling station without the right identification and could not be issued with a ballot paper. Many of these people came back later with the right identification. The proportion of people who did not return ranged from 0.03% of all polling station voters in one local authority to 0.7% in two other areas. We cannot speculate or draw any conclusions about the reasons why these people did not return, because it was not possible for polling station staff to collect information from them.

Table 1: Number of people who were not able to show ID

		Number of people initially refused ballot paper	Number of people who didn't return with ID	People who didn't return, as a percentage of those who voted in the polling station
Mixed model pilots	**Braintree**	203	73	0.3%
	Broxtowe	231	69	0.3%
	Craven	129	49	0.7%
	Derby	514	256	0.6%
	North Kesteven	145	68	0.4%
	Mid Sussex	15	8	0.03%

		Number of people initially refused ballot paper	Number of people who didn't return with ID	People who didn't return, as a percentage of those who voted in the polling station
Poll card pilots	**NW Leicestershire**	266	61	0.4%
	Watford	94-209	33-51	0.2%
Photo ID only pilots	**Pendle**	284	101	0.7%
	Woking	87	22	0.1%

For the photo and mixed ID pilot models, the average proportion not issued with a ballot paper was the same at 0.4%. The poll card model saw a smaller proportion not being able to vote at 0.2%.

Polling station staff were not asked to collect demographic data about the people who did not come back, owing to the practical challenges involved in carrying out that data collection exercise. That means we have no direct evidence to tell us whether people from particular backgrounds were more likely than others to find it hard to show ID.

However, it is possible to look at the numbers not issued with a ballot paper at a ward level within each pilot, compared with demographic data for the ward. Derby, Pendle, Watford and Woking are the only pilots with sufficient diversity in ethnic background to allow for this analysis. Having made this assessment, there is no clear picture across these pilots but we do see noteworthy findings in some areas:

- In Derby there is a strong correlation between the proportion of each ward's population from an Asian background and the number of people not issued with a ballot paper.

- In Pendle there is a weak correlation between the proportion of each ward's population from an Asian background and the number initially arriving at a polling station with no ID or the wrong ID.

In the 2019 data we do not see any such correlation in Woking and Watford, although in the 2018 pilot in Watford there was a strong relationship between the proportion of Asian residents and the number not issued with a ballot paper.

The evidence is therefore mixed and it is important to be clear that this correlation analysis does not definitively suggest that Asian voters were disproportionately affected by the requirement to show ID. However, this does emphasise the importance of ensuring that the ID requirements are suitable for all and that any public awareness activities are genuinely effective across all communities.

Awareness of the ID requirement – voters

In line with the data above, we found that most of those who voted in the pilots knew that they would need to show ID to be able to vote. Our public opinion research after the

election found that 85% of people who voted at a polling station said they were aware beforehand that they would have to show ID.

However, some groups of polling station voters were less likely to say that they knew they would need to show ID. Awareness was lower among first time voters (73%) compared to people who had voted before (87%), and among 35-54 year olds (80%) compared to those aged 55+ (89%).

Awareness was consistent across the photo and mixed ID pilots and lower in the poll card pilots. However, as with the 2018 pilot scheme, we think this is not due to poor public awareness in the poll card pilots but because of respondents' interpretation of the question we asked – some people may not see needing to take a poll card as the same as needing to 'show some identification in order to vote'.

The types of identification that voters showed

In addition to those in the photo ID pilots, nearly nine in ten voters in the mixed ID pilots also chose to use a type of photo ID – most commonly their photo driving licence.

Nearly six out of ten voters across both the photo and mixed ID pilots showed their photo driving licence, which was similar to the proportion in the three photo ID only and mixed model pilots in 2018.

The vast majority of voters in the poll card pilots chose to show their poll card. A small proportion of people showed their photo driving licence (5%) or passport instead (1%).

Table 2: Most frequently shown types of identification in each pilot model

	Most frequently shown	2nd most frequently shown	3rd most frequently shown
Photo ID only pilots	Photo driving licence (62%)	Passport (25%)	Travel pass (11%)
Mixed model pilots	Photo driving licence (55%)	Passport (19%)	Travel pass (14%)
Poll card pilots	Poll card (93%)	Photo driving licence (5%)	Passport (1%)

Roughly 10% of voters in the mixed ID pilots used non-photo ID. Of these, the majority of people used a combination of their poll card and a bank card. No-one used one of the locally issued IDs (intended for people who did not have any of the listed forms of ID).

A small number of people did apply for these locally issued IDs in the two photo pilots and in two of the mixed ID pilots:

- 70 people in Pendle (63 voters showed it in the polling station)
- 24 people in Woking (37 voters showed it in the polling station, which included some issued in the 2018 pilot)
- Two people in Broxtowe (none shown in the polling station)
- One person in Braintree (none shown in the polling station)

All of the pilots allowed voters to show their identification in private (for example, because they were registered to vote anonymously or if they normally cover their face for religious reasons). Electoral Commission staff who were observing across the pilot scheme areas saw that this arrangement was in place in almost all of the polling stations they visited. The arrangements in place varied between polling stations with some planning to use a separate room while others had a screen, curtain or purposely designed polling booth that voters could go behind. Almost all of the polling stations that Commission staff observed had at least one female member of staff who would be able to view ID of female voters in private.

From our observations on polling day, we are only aware of this facility being used by a small number of electors in Derby and Pendle. We therefore cannot draw any firm conclusions about how this process would work in practice across Great Britain. However, if the requirement to show ID to vote is introduced, it is important that the needs of these electors are considered alongside the administrative implications for Returning Officers of providing appropriate facilities and staffing arrangements to allow voters to show their ID in private in polling stations.

Turnout

Year-on-year turnout comparisons are difficult owing to the local government electoral cycle. For example five of the pilots have not held local elections since 2015, when they were held in combination with a UK general election. This means we cannot usefully look at differences by pilot model.

For the pilots with comparable figures, turnout was down by 2-6 percentage points compared to the 2018 elections.

For Watford and Woking, both in the second year of piloting voter ID, turnout was lower than in their 2018 pilot and the previous elections in 2016. In two of the other pilots (Craven and Pendle) turnout was also down on 2018 and 2016. However, in Derby, while 2019 turnout was lower than in 2018 it was higher compared to 2016. Overall, across England, local election turnout in 2019 was around two percentage points lower compared to 2018.

As in our evaluation of the 2018 pilots, it is not possible to draw a clear connection between the pilot scheme and any changes in turnout. Limited data is available and where it is available, the pattern is not consistent. We also know that turnout is volatile and dependent on a number of factors.

Why people didn't vote and impact on the likelihood of voting

As well as assessing the impact on those that tried to vote on 2 May, we have also looked for evidence of whether a voter ID requirement could deter electors from voting.

We used our public opinion survey to ask non-voters why they did not vote. The main reasons given were in line with previous surveys (too busy - 30%, away on holiday - 9%, forgot - 6%). However, 1% of people who didn't vote in the pilots said it was because they didn't have the right ID and less than 1% said it was because they disagreed with the requirement.

The limitations of sample-based surveying mean that we do not have enough responses from specific groups of people or within specific pilot models to be able to report experiences or views across those groups. This is because the samples are designed to

provide data that is representative of areas as a whole. This means that for some demographic groups, that are small relative to the overall population, the number of people surveyed can be too few to analyse.

We also asked respondents whether the requirement to show ID made them more or less likely to vote. Most people in the pilot scheme said it made no difference or made them more likely to vote (90%). However, a notable minority said it made them less likely to vote (3%), that they didn't have ID (1%) or that they didn't know (6%). Non-voters on 2 May were more likely than voters to say that they would be negatively affected or that they were unsure.

Implications for accessibility and equality

Our evaluation has also considered whether the identification requirements might have disproportionately affected particular groups of people. We asked 165 national and local organisations, including those representing people with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, to provide us with evidence of how the pilots affected the specific groups they represent. A total of 29 organisations responded, with 16 providing more detailed feedback.

None of the organisations that contacted us provided any direct evidence about people who were unable to vote in the pilot scheme because they couldn't show ID. However, almost all of them gave us more general views and raised concerns about the possible impact of an ID requirement for the people they represent. Building on our evaluation of the 2018 pilot scheme, these have increased our understanding about the specific challenges that some groups of people might face.

Key themes from the responses were:

- Charities representing people with learning disabilities, the BAME, LGBT+, gypsy and traveller communities and people without a fixed address raised general concerns that some of the people they represent are already less likely to register and vote, and they are also less likely to have ID.

- Many of the responses highlighted existing difficulties their users face in accessing services requiring proof of identity, including barriers faced by people who don't have easy access to the internet.

- People without a fixed address would be less likely to have forms of non-photo ID such as utility bills.

- A transgender or non-binary person's ID may not reflect their gender expression or identity.

- People with learning disabilities would need accessible information to ensure they knew about an ID requirement and were able to access ID.

- The cost, inconvenience and time required to obtain ID may be prohibitive for some people.

Impact on potential voters – beyond the pilots

The findings above, about accessibility concerns and the impact of an ID requirement on people's likelihood to vote, raise questions about the effects of an ID requirement at future

elections, where previous research suggests that the demographic profile of likely voters is different (e.g. local election voters tend to be, on average, older).

Varying levels of awareness

Returning Officers in the pilot schemes ran public information campaigns before the elections and we know these raised overall levels of awareness; people knew more about the need to show ID by May 2019, compared with earlier in the year. In January 2019, 17% of people said they had seen or heard something about the requirement, increasing to 45% in May 2019.

Our research did find variations in levels of awareness, however, particularly among those who did not vote. For example, 57% of voters told us they had heard something compared to 31% of non-voters. This pattern is then also reflected by demographic groups where one is more likely to have voted, for example:

- Those aged 55+ were more likely to have heard something – 54% compared to 31% of 18-34s

- White respondents were more likely to have heard something than BAME respondents – 46% compared to 27%

These findings tell us something about the potential for a negative impact at other polls with higher turnout. If there were to be a disproportionate impact on particular groups of voters this could also have a negative impact on public confidence; we know that problems at elections can affect voters' and non-voters' overall perceptions of the poll.

Of course, it is possible that groups reporting lower levels of awareness in relation to the 2 May elections, where they were less likely to vote, would have higher levels of awareness around an election in which they intended to vote, such as a UK general election. However, we cannot assume that would happen automatically. It is likely to depend, to some extent, on the nature of the public awareness activities used.

These findings on awareness therefore emphasise the importance of ensuring that public awareness activities around any national rollout are genuinely effective across all communities and groups, particularly more infrequent voters.

Ease of showing ID

When we ask about how easy people think it would be to show ID, if it was required at future polls, we see similar results. Most people (91%) say that they would find it easy to show ID if they had to; however:

- Voters were more likely to say it would be easy (95%), compared to 88% for non-voters

- Those aged below 34 were slightly less likely to say they would find it easy than their older counterparts (84% compared to 93% for 35-44s and 94% for those aged 55+)

- BAME respondents were less likely to say it would be easy compared to white electors (87% compared to 92%)

Impact on voters – confidence

Key findings

- Evidence from the pilot scheme indicates that there was a headline increase in voter confidence and in perceptions of the safety of voting in the pilots. We do not see the same change in non-pilot areas with May elections.

- However, we should be cautious in drawing clear conclusions about what the impact on confidence of a Great Britain-wide scheme (based on any of these models) would be. This is partly because the ten pilots are not representative of Great Britain as a whole and partly because the changes in attitude are not consistent within each pilot model.

- People who voted in polling stations in the pilot scheme, and therefore experienced the process of showing identification, were more confident in the security of the voting system than non-voters in those areas.

Overall perceptions of electoral fraud

People in the pilot scheme were significantly less likely to say that fraud took place at the elections than those in other areas with elections in England in May 2019.

Chart 1: How much electoral fraud or abuse, if any, do you think took place at the 2 May elections? (NB. Figures may not equal 100% due to rounding)
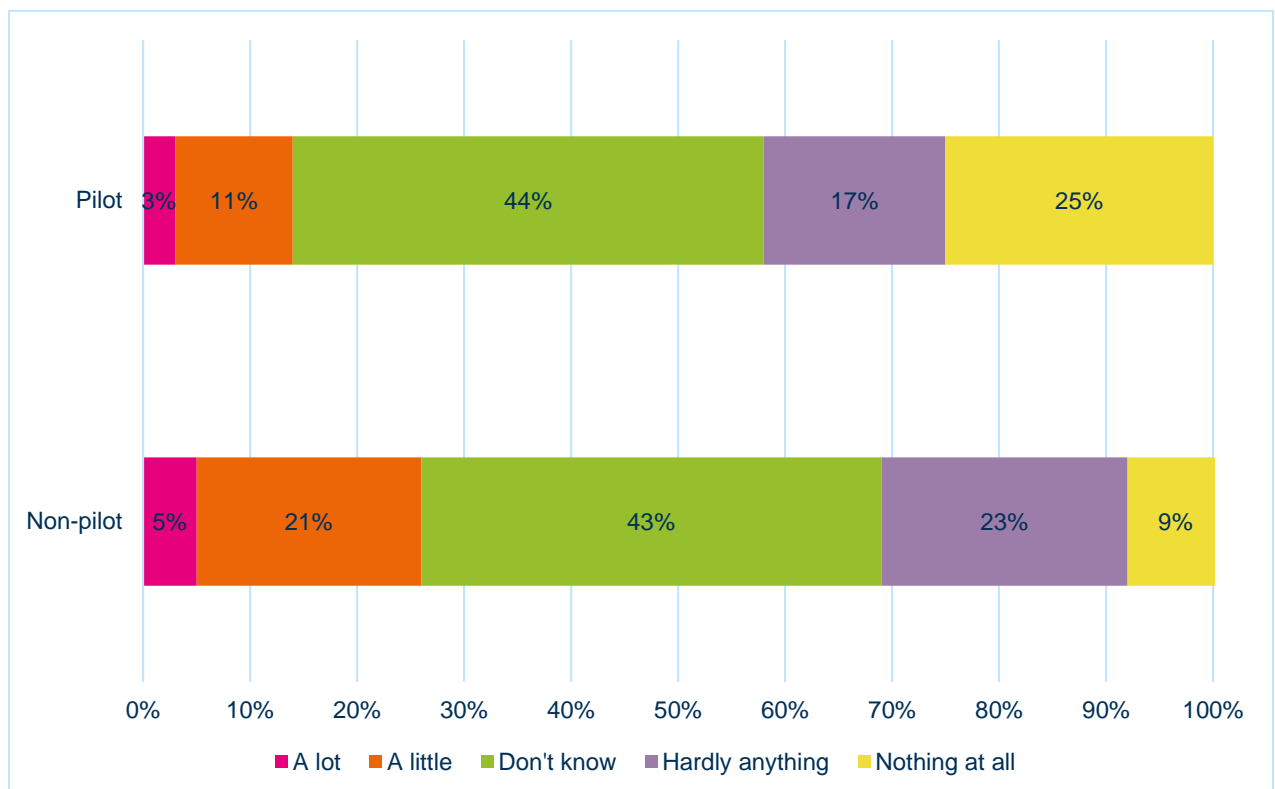
However, this is only a snapshot of opinion and we have also considered how opinions may have changed before and after 2 May in both pilots and those areas with elections but no pilots.

We asked respondents to say how much of a problem they think electoral fraud is on a scale of 1-5 (with 1 being not a problem and 5 being a serious problem). In the pilot scheme there was a notable increase in the proportion of respondents saying that electoral fraud is not a problem between January and May 2019 (30% compared with 39%). This change was not seen in non-pilot areas, where the number of people who thought that electoral fraud is not a problem remained relatively stable at 27% pre poll and 26% post-poll.

The clearest increase was in the photo only pilot model (moving from 13% to 32% saying it was not a problem) and in the mixed model (13% to 27%), while in the poll card model the change was more polarised with increases in both those saying it is not a problem and those saying it is a serious problem.

However, we should be cautious in drawing clear conclusions about how the experience of a specific pilot model may have affected levels of confidence. Although this data appears to present a clear pattern, the changes between before and after polling day are not always consistent across the individual pilots. This is particularly the case for the mixed model. For example:

- In the photo model, in both Pendle and Woking there were increases in the proportion of people after polling day saying fraud is not a problem, and a decrease in those saying that it is. The change was significantly more pronounced in Woking.

- In the mixed model, we only have data for four of the five pilots (because Craven joined the pilot scheme too late to be included in the January public opinion fieldwork). In two pilots (Braintree and North Kesteven) there was an increase after polling day in the proportion saying 'not a problem' and a decrease in 'a problem'. However, in the other two pilots (Broxtowe and Derby) the results were closer to the poll card pilot (a polarisation to each end of the scale).

- In the poll card model, one pilot (Mid Sussex) showed no change in attitudes at all after polling day. Data for the two other pilots showed, to varying levels, a polarisation of attitudes towards either end of the 1-5 scale.

The data does not help us to explain why we see these variations across pilots. We cannot know if we have seen genuine effects from the pilot models, or if the shifts are due to particular issues or concerns in each individual pilot.

Voting in a polling station

We asked respondents how safe from fraud and abuse they thought it was to vote at a polling station. Overall, in the pilot scheme, the proportion of people saying it is safe did not change significantly between January and May 2019. However, the strength of confidence increased slightly between January and May; the proportion of people saying it was very safe increased from 48% to 55%. This change varied in scale across the individual pilots but was seen to some extent in all but two (Derby and Mid Sussex). Respondents living in non-pilot areas were less likely to say that voting in a polling station was very safe (39%).

Our research also found that people who voted in the pilots, and therefore experienced showing their identification, were more likely to say voting in a polling station was very safe from fraud and abuse than those who didn't vote (61% compared with 50%).

Confidence in the voting system

We asked respondents if the requirement to show identification at the polling station made them more or less confident in the security of the voting system. Across all pilot models the majority of respondents said it would make them more confident or make no difference, although the balance between the two varied by model.

In the poll card model, a majority (57%) said that an identification requirement would make them more confident in the security of the voting system, in the mixed model, results were evenly split (46% each) and in the photo only model the majority said it would make no difference (51%). However, in each case a substantial proportion felt it would improve their confidence in the security of the system.

Chart 2: Did the requirement for voters to show identification at the polling station make you more or less confident in the security of the voting system, or did it make no difference?
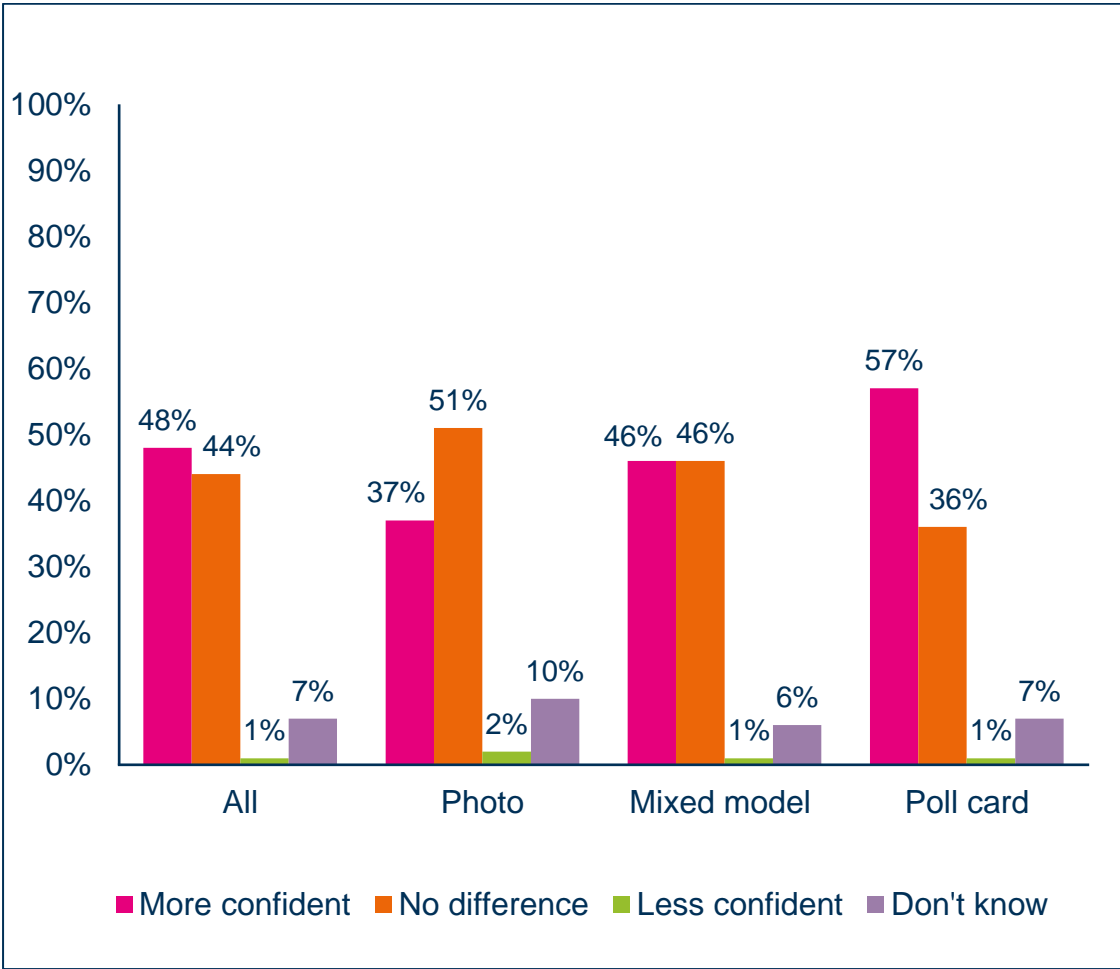
Impact on security

Key findings

- There were no allegations of electoral fraud at polling stations in the pilot scheme at the May 2019 elections.

- Each of the 2019 pilot models had security strengths and weaknesses, but the photo ID only model has the greatest security strengths compared with the other models.

- The security of the mixed and poll card models could be further improved with some changes to the process and requirements.

Allegations of electoral fraud at polling stations

The local police forces covering the pilots informed us that there were no allegations of electoral fraud at polling stations for the May 2019 elections. In other areas where local elections took place in May 2019, police forces have informed us that there were a total of nine allegations of electoral fraud at polling stations. Eight of these were still under investigation at the time we published this evaluation, and one needed no further action following police investigation as there was no evidence an offence had been committed.

It is not possible to assess whether the identification requirement prevented any actual attempts to commit impersonation fraud. There is no evidence to suggest that the absence of allegations in the pilots was because of the ID requirements.

Security assessment

We asked an experienced identity verification expert to review the three ID models that were piloted in 2019. This review looked at the strengths and weaknesses of the security of each model, using well-established common standards and guidance for identity verification. It took into account the processes for issuing ID documents and how polling station staff could check the documents that voters showed.

Table 3: Key findings from security evaluation of acceptable ID documents

Photo ID only model	Strengths:	• Includes only documents considered high or medium strength, including locally issued photo ID
		• Officially issued documents with security features that uniquely identify the individual
		• Both high and medium strength documents can be reasonably checked by non-experts in polling station
		• Documents can be checked by non-experts in a polling station for a reasonable photo likeness and obvious signs of tampering as well as the registered name
		• Locally issued ID with a photo would provide strong evidence that it was issued to the person showing it
	Weaknesses:	• Polling station staff would not be able to carry out specialist document checking
Mixed photo and non-photo ID model	Strengths:	• Includes the same high or medium strength documents, as in photo ID only model
		• Some documents may show voter's current registered address

- Officially issued non-photo documents are harder to forge than other paper documents

	Weaknesses:	• Other non-photo documents (not officially issued) are considered low strength unless presented together with an officially issued document
		• Polling station staff would not be able to carry out specialist document checking
		• Difficult for polling station staff to differentiate between original and home-printed documents
		• Bank cards or national insurance number cards cannot be validated or verified by polling station staff
Poll card model	Strengths:	• Returning Officers control the issuing process, linked to individually verified identities through the electoral registration process
		• Poll card shows the voter's current address
		• Additional security features (e.g. scannable QR code or other printed features) could make it harder to forge
	Weaknesses:	• Poll card is a non-photo document, which is normally considered low strength unless presented together with an officially issued document

The review also indicated that the security of the mixed and poll card models could be further improved with some changes to the process and requirements. This could include, for example: requiring locally-issued ID or poll cards to include the holder's photo; requiring at least one officially-issued non-photo document to be presented in the mixed model; adding printed security features to make it harder to forge poll cards; improving polling station processes to require all voters to state their full name and address without referring to their ID.

Impact on administration of the polls

Key findings

- As in 2018, Returning Officers and their staff who were responsible for the May elections ran their pilots successfully. There were no significant administrative issues in any pilot on 2 May.

- Polling station staff told us that they were satisfied with how polling day went and were confident that they could manage the process of people showing voter identification at a future election.

- Additional staffing and training across all pilots was needed to run the pilot.

- The IT-enabled pilots worked well but any Great Britain-wide roll out would need a significant level of resourcing to ensure a smooth implementation.

Returning Officers (ROs) and their staff were responsible for running the elections and the pilot processes. We have considered how the requirements of the pilots affected their ability to do so.

Public awareness

For these pilots, as in 2018, ROs were responsible for delivering the public awareness activity. This was funded by the UK Government but delivered by each local authority. Significant time and cost, in each pilot, was devoted to making sure voters were aware of the ID requirement. ROs used information gathered through equality impact assessments to help identify the most effective ways to communicate the requirements to different groups of people in their areas.

This is likely to be different if the requirement to show ID were rolled out nationally, when the Electoral Commission would assume responsibility for a national public awareness campaign. However, in that event it is likely that ROs would still carry out smaller scale public awareness activities locally, as they do currently to encourage people to register to vote.

Issuing local ID/replacement poll cards

In each pilot, ROs ensured the provision of a free and universally available acceptable ID. In the photo only and mixed model, electors could apply for a local identity document (until 5pm on the day before polling day). In the mixed and poll card model they could apply for a replacement poll card (up to 5pm and 9pm on polling day respectively).

The 2019 pilot scheme offered a limited test of the process and cost of issuing local ID to electors as there was limited take up of this route. In the photo only pilots, Woking issued 24 and Pendle issued 70 photo ID cards. Feedback from Pendle indicated that additional staffing was used to manage these applications and that they were not evenly spread over time; most applications came in and needed to be processed in the two weeks before polling day.

However, in the mixed model pilots very few local identity documents were applied for or issued; Broxtowe issued two and Braintree issued one. This lower take-up is likely to be partly a result of the wider ID requirement which offered greater choice for voters, compared to the photo only pilots, and partly because electors could also apply for a replacement poll card (between 4% and 9% of electors used a poll card as a form of non-photo ID). The number of replacement poll cards ranged from one in Broxtowe to 300 in Derby. Replacement poll cards were also issued to 69 electors in Watford and 40-50 in Mid Sussex. We have heard no significant concerns about this process beyond the additional costs of keeping the council building open for electors until 9pm on polling day.

Overall the feedback suggests this was a manageable process if appropriately resourced. However, some ROs and their staff did express concerns about the challenge presented by the potential for a much greater volume of either local ID applications or replacement poll cards ahead of a UK general election, particularly with a high volume of applications coming close to the deadlines. These challenges could also have a significant impact on

those people who apply for replacement poll cards close to the deadline, and their ability to show ID on polling day.

Staffing and training

ROs in each of the pilots made changes to staffing in order to deliver their pilot, although this varied significantly. The approaches ranged from a limited increase in central elections team resources (to support public awareness work or issue local ID) to deploying additional polling station staff on 2 May. For example:

- In Craven, the RO employed one additional presiding officer (out of a total of 30), seven additional poll clerks (out of 45) and three additional polling station inspectors (out of six)

- In Broxtowe, the RO added 12 poll clerks (out of a total of 103), two additional polling station inspectors (out of a total of eight) and two further staff in the central elections team

- In Watford, the RO (as they did in 2018) added two polling station inspectors (out of a total of six)

- In Pendle, the RO added two polling station inspectors (out of a total of seven) and three temporary, part-time staff in the central elections team

There were no consistent patterns of how staffing was changed across the different pilot models; mostly changes were made based on the individual RO's assessment of the risk and issues locally.

There was also no overall consensus on whether any increase in staffing at all would be required to administer voter identification at future elections with higher turnout. Some ROs expected that they would need additional staff in polling stations but others felt that it would be manageable at existing levels. Some areas that used additional staffing on 2 May said they would not anticipate using it again, even at elections with higher turnout.

More and longer training sessions were required to support staff in delivering the pilots. To manage the additional training, some areas replaced online training with face-to-face sessions while others reduced the number of attendees per session. Our survey found that polling station staff thought that the training was delivered well across the pilot scheme. The majority of staff agreed that their training prepared them well for polling day and that the instructions on the types of ID that could be accepted were clear.

Feedback from ROs again suggests that this was a manageable increase in work but highlighted that there was an additional resource requirement (e.g. in training fees for longer sessions).
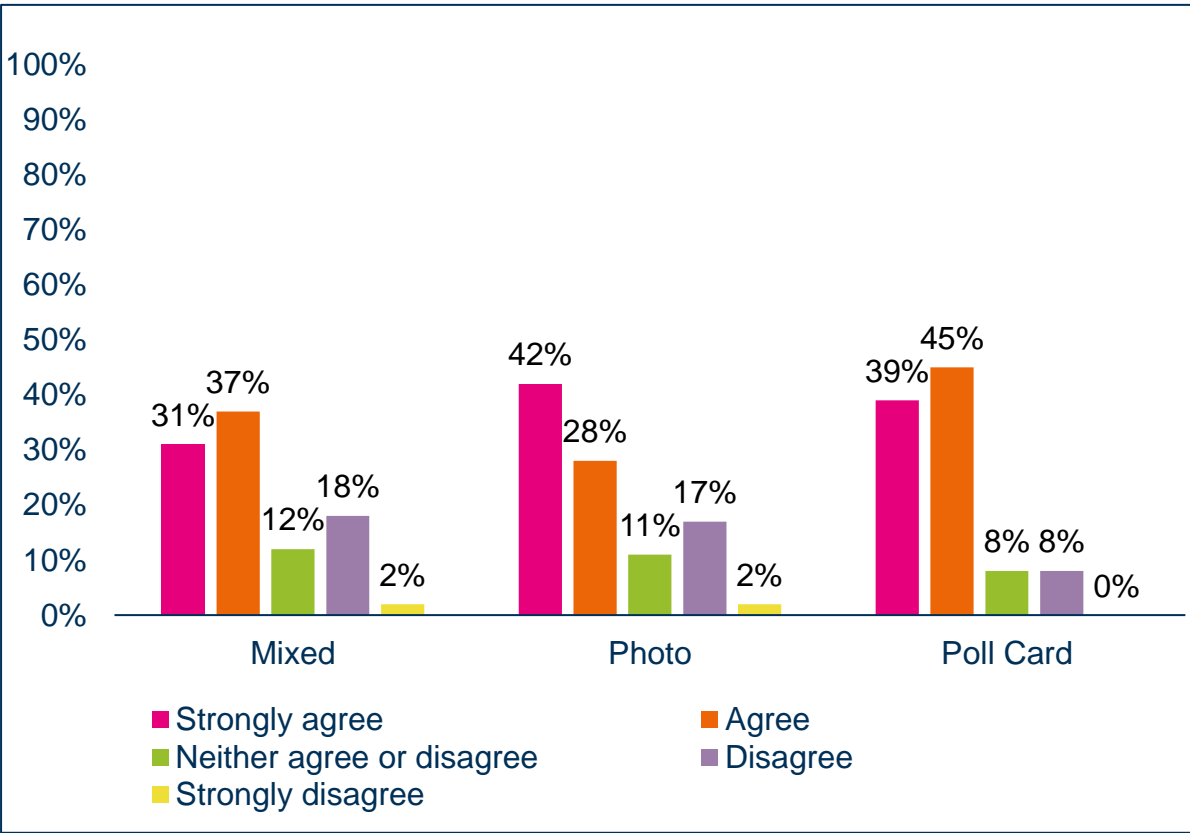
This variation in evidence from the pilot scheme means that, in the event of Great Britain-wide implementation, the UK Government would need to carry out a further, careful assessment of what the resourcing impact would be for ROs.

Polling day

Feedback from ROs and their staff indicate that they delivered their pilot on 2 May without significant problems. Across the pilot scheme, polling station staff were satisfied with how

polling day went. In photo pilots 80% of staff were very satisfied, increasing to 81% in poll card pilots and 86% in mixed model pilots. This also reflects the experiences of Electoral Commission staff observers, who largely saw the process working well.

A high proportion of all polling station staff agreed that asking voters to prove their identity had little or no impact on their work, although the extent to which they agreed varied

Chart showing bar chart with the following values:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Mixed	31%	37%	12%	18%	2%
Photo	42%	28%	11%	17%	2%
Poll Card	39%	45%	8%	8%	0%

across the pilots.

Chart 3: Do you agree or disagree that asking voters to prove their identity had little or no impact on your work on polling day?

Staff in poll card pilots were more likely to agree that it had little or no impact, while staff in photo and mixed pilots were more likely to disagree than those in poll card pilots. This could be due to the quantity of the different acceptable identification types in these pilots or the additional work involved in recording information for the evaluation in the non-IT enabled pilots.

The majority of polling station staff said that they would be confident in replicating the process at another election, with almost three quarters across the pilots saying they were very confident.

IT-enabled pilots

Mid Sussex and Watford both used IT in the polling stations to scan QR codes on electors' poll cards. In both, the system worked well and there were no notable issues on polling day related to the IT. Electoral Commission staff who observed in these pilots also saw this on polling day, with staff appearing confident in using the tablets to scan poll cards and being able to resolve any issues.

However, the planning and setting up of these systems did require a significant amount of time and resource commitment from the electoral administration teams, the software suppliers and Cabinet Office. The commitment of time and resource largely stems from the development of a system to provide the necessary level of assurance and resilience to ensure no problems arise on polling day, such as ensuring there were no issues as a result of connectivity problems in polling stations. ROs raised some concerns about whether the level of individual support provided for the pilots by the software supplier would be possible if a system was being used across Great Britain.

We have not had access to final data on the overall cost of delivering this element of the pilots, which is likely to have been significant. As an indication, IT equipment costs for similar activity at the 2018 pilots were estimated at £332 - £659 per polling station, though anecdotal evidence suggests that relative savings were made for 2019. While the pilot costs do not necessarily translate easily into a cost if implemented across Great Britain, it is highly likely that a notable level of resourcing would be required to ensure a smooth implementation.

Background to our evaluation

Previous pilot scheme

In 2017 the UK Government asked local councils in England to test different ways of identifying voters at polling stations. At the local elections in May 2018, people in five areas had to show ID before they could vote in a polling station.

We published our independent evaluation of the 2018 pilot scheme in July 2018. Overall we found that the scheme worked well, but we said that a wider range of local authorities should run more pilots in 2019.

The May 2019 pilot scheme

The Government decided to run more pilots at the May 2019 local elections. People in ten areas had to show ID before they could vote in a polling station:

Photo ID only	Pendle and Woking
Photo or non-photo ID	Braintree, Broxtowe, Craven, Derby and North Kesteven
Poll card	Mid Sussex, North West Leicestershire and Watford

Local Returning Officers ran the processes in each area, and the Cabinet Office oversaw the pilot scheme as a whole.

The legislation that allowed the pilot scheme to take place was published in March 2019.

Northern Ireland

At elections held between 1985 and 2002, voters at polling stations in Northern Ireland had to show one of a number of specified pieces of ID before they could be issued with

their ballot paper. The list of specified ID included a number of non-photographic identity documents. This requirement had been introduced to address concerns about electoral fraud, which at the time were widely perceived to be a problem in Northern Ireland.

The list of specified ID was changed in 2002, and in elections since 2003 voters at polling stations in Northern Ireland have been required to show specified photo ID. The Government said this change was needed because of the ease with which identity documents could be falsified and the fact that non-photographic documents were regarded as providing insufficient proof of identity.

The ID does not need to be current, but the Presiding Officer must be satisfied that the photograph is of a good enough likeness before issuing a ballot paper. The list of acceptable photo ID includes an Electoral Identity Card, which an elector can apply for free of charge from the Electoral Office.

When the photo ID requirement was first introduced in Northern Ireland we found that the uptake of the electoral identity card varied between areas, and also that a number of disadvantaged groups were less likely to have eligible identification. However, our public opinion research after subsequent elections since 2003 suggests that voters in Northern Ireland have not experienced any difficulties in meeting the photo ID requirement.

Other areas of the electoral system

This evaluation has only looked at the process of voting at a polling station and the potential impact of ID to reduce the risk of fraud at polling stations. It does not look at other areas of the electoral system where further strengthening might also be needed, such as improving protections for postal voters.

We have made other recommendations for improvements to strengthen postal voting. The UK government also needs to make progress on implementing these recommendations and others that were highlighted in 2016 by Sir Eric Pickles in his review of electoral fraud.

Aims of this report

The law says that we have to publish an independent review of the pilot scheme within three months of the election, and there are specific questions that we have to consider:

- Whether the turnout of voters was higher than it would have been if the scheme had not applied.

- Whether voters found the procedures provided for their assistance by the scheme easy to use.

- Whether the procedures provided for by the scheme led to any increase in personation or other electoral offences or in any other malpractice in connection with elections.

- Whether those procedures led to any increase in expenditure, or to any savings, by the authority.

We collected information from different sources to make sure that our review of the 2019 voter ID pilot scheme is thorough and robust. This included:

- A survey asking people in each local area what they thought of the scheme

- A survey of people who worked in polling stations

- Data about what ID people showed to vote, and the number of people who were turned away for not having the right ID

- Views and evidence from organisations that represent different groups of voters, including local groups in each area

- Information about how much it cost to run the pilot scheme

- An expert review of the security of the different voter ID models

Alongside this report we have also published factsheets about each of the ten local authority areas that ran pilots in May 2019.