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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Welsh Government
Consultation – Summary of Responses

Electoral administration and reform White Paper

March 2023

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Electoral Administration and Reform White Paper was published on 11 October 2022 and consulted on our proposals for electoral reform and modernisation of electoral administration in Wales. It built on the framework for electoral reform announced by the Counsel General and Minister for the Constitution in a Written Statement on 15 July 2021.
- 1.2 Youth Friendly, Easy Read and British Sign Language versions of the consultation were published alongside the main document.
- 1.3 The White Paper set out the longer-term vision for electoral reform and sought views on what changes may be desirable in the future and should be considered further by the Welsh Government. It also proposed more immediate reform:
 - to simplify electoral registration and more clearly state the Welsh electoral franchise,
 - to improve the administration of devolved elections,
 - to support voter and candidate participation in elections,
 - to modernise elections taking account of new technology and citizen demands,
 - and broader improvements to how local democracy operates beyond elections.
- 1.4 As part of the consultation process ten engagement events were held with key stakeholders, including Returning Officers, electoral service managers, and the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales (the Commission). They were designed to seek views from stakeholders and test the practical application of the proposals contained within the consultation.
- 1.5 This document contains a summary of the responses to the different forms of the consultation paper and a summary of the views expressed at the engagement events (at Section 5).

2. Overview of Responses

2.1 A total of 137 responses were received from organisations and individuals across all of the survey formats available.

Table 1: The number of respondents by type across all survey formats

Type of Respondent	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Member of the Public	29	21.2
Elected Member	8	5.8
Local Authority	10	7.3
Returning Officer	4	2.9
Town / Community Council	14	10.2
Third Sector	11	8.0
Representative body / Professional Body or Association	6	4.4
Government Agency / Other Public Sector Body	7	5.1
Other	48 ¹	35.0
Total	137	100

2.2 A list of all respondents is included at Section 6.

2.3 A summary of responses to questions asked in the consultation is provided in Section 3.

¹ 39 of which responded to the Youth Friendly survey, which did not request any personal identifying data.

3. Summary of Responses to Consultation Questions

Methodology

3.1 The consultation paper can be viewed [here](#) and contains background information and the context for each of the questions asked.

3.2 No responses were received to the British Sign Language format. Analysis of responses to consultation questions is structured as follows:

- Question - main consultation format
 - Graphs where applicable
 - Textual analysis of responses to main consultation question
- Question - Youth Friendly format
 - Graphs where applicable
 - Textual analysis of responses to Youth Friendly question
- Question - Easy Read format
 - Textual analysis of responses to Easy Read question.

3.3 Graphs within this report show responses as percentages for the main consultation response, stakeholders against members of the public that responded to the main consultation, and youth friendly consultation responses. No graphs have been included for responses to the Easy Read format of the consultation as the questions did not require definitive yes/no answers and allowed respondents to respond in open text format.

3.4 Where in the analysis we have compared responses from stakeholder groups and members of the public we have taken member of the public to be those people who responded to the consultation in an individual capacity, and stakeholders to be those responding either in a professional capacity or on behalf of an organisation. Where an individual withheld their name, it was assumed they were responding as a member of the public.

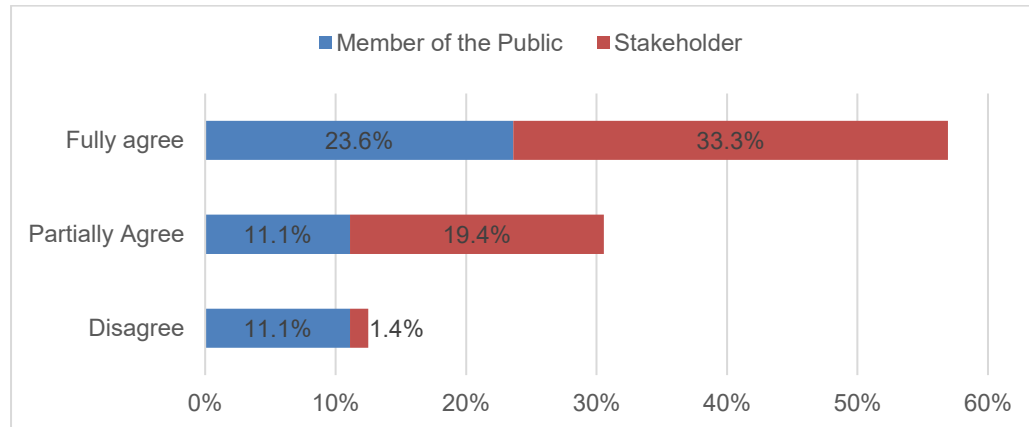
3.5 Where 'key stakeholders' are referred to, this means those involved in the administration of elections in Wales and those that regularly contribute to Welsh Government policy development, such as the Electoral Commission, Association of Electoral Administrators (AEA), and Returning Officers.

3.6 Officials analysing the responses to the consultation have used their judgement when categorising open text or uncertain responses and as such figures in the narrative may present views differently to how they are presented in the Smart Survey headline graphs. Percentages within the graphs have been rounded to one decimal place and therefore there may be some slight differences when calculating totals in the graphs.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Q1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the six principles for electoral reform of equity, accessibility, participation, improving citizen experience, simplicity, integrity?

Total number of responses: 72



Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

There was strong support for the six principles for electoral reform with 87% of those who responded to this question either fully or partially agreeing with them. While welcoming the principles, electoral administrators raised concerns about the interaction between the principles and practical delivery of electoral reform given the increasing divergence in administration between reserved and devolved elections. Local Authorities stressed the importance of adequate resourcing and support for electoral services teams. Integrity, proportionality, value for money, deliverability and resourcing were suggested as additional important principles to underpin our approach to reform.

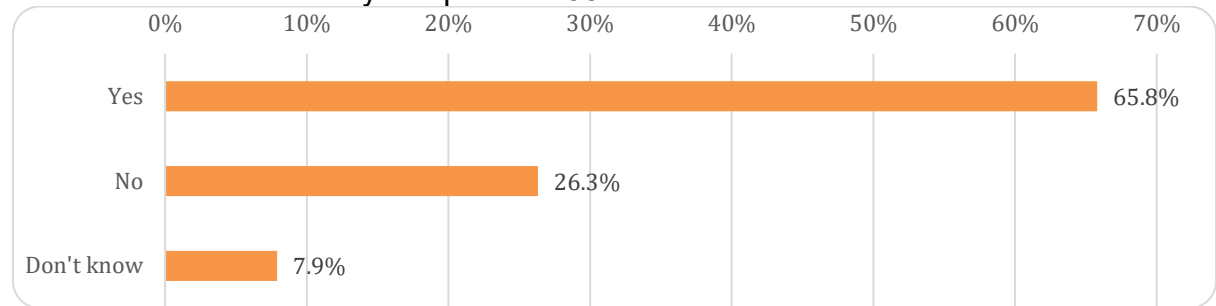
Easy Read Q1. What do you think about our six principles?

Number of Easy Read responses: 6

Five respondents were supportive of the six principles. One respondent said they wanted a requirement for voter identification to be included within the principles.

Youth friendly Q1. Do you agree with the six principles?

Number of Youth Friendly Responses: 38

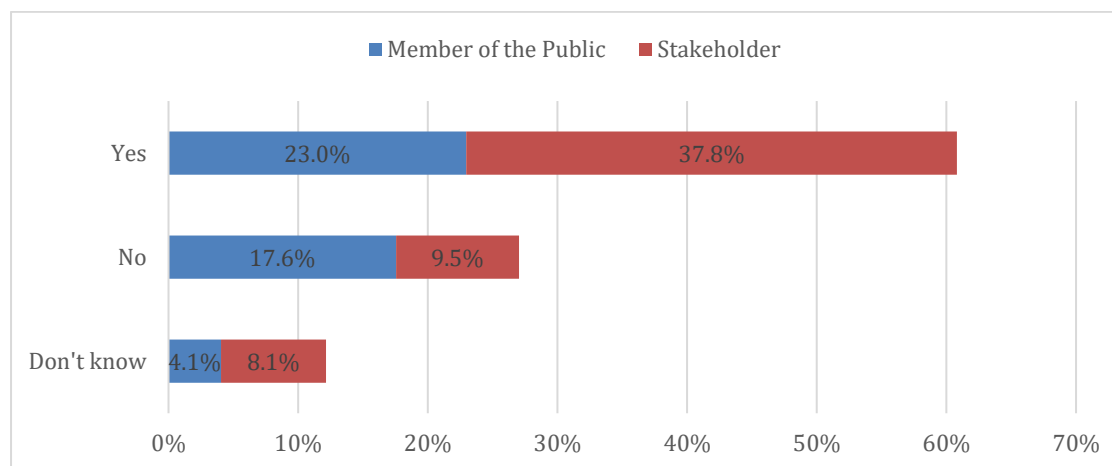


Almost 66% of respondents said they agreed with the six principles.

Chapter 2: long term vision for devolved elections

Q2. Should the Welsh Government commit resource to considering how electronic remote voting could operate for devolved elections?

Total number of responses: 74



Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

More than 60% of respondents to this question supported the Welsh Government exploring how electronic remote voting could operate for devolved elections in the longer term. They considered digital innovation could help increase democratic engagement and turnout, particularly by young voters, voters with accessibility issues and voters in rural communities. There was broad support across all respondent groups.

Concerns raised related to the security of online voting, maintaining public confidence in the integrity of elections, cost and value for money, increased divergence in practice between devolved and reserved elections, and digital exclusion for voters without access to electronic equipment. Several respondents stressed the need for electronic voting to operate alongside other forms of voting to ensure inclusion.

Easy Read Q2: Should the Welsh Government spend time and money looking into online voting?

Number of Easy Read responses: 6

Two-thirds of those responding to the easy read consultation were not in favour of the Welsh Government committing resource to explore online voting raising cost and security as the primary concerns.

Those in favour considered online voting would encourage greater engagement and participation in elections, particularly amongst young voters.

Youth Friendly Q2. Do you think online voting is a good idea?

Number of Youth Friendly responses: 37

49% of those responding to this question thought that online voting was a good idea and would make voting more accessible and encourage greater participation in the democratic process, provided that systems were secure. 43% did not think it was a good idea whilst 8% were unsure.

Security was the most significant concern for those opposed to online voting. Other concerns included the risk of digital exclusion, particularly amongst elderly voters, and the reliability of the IT infrastructure. Two respondents were of the view that current voting arrangements were sufficient.

Q3. What impacts, if any, do you think the proposed introduction of an all-Wales database of electoral registration data would have on the electoral process (such as registration and electoral services)? Please consider the potentially positive and negative impacts and provide evidence to support your response, where available. Please comment on each characteristic individually.

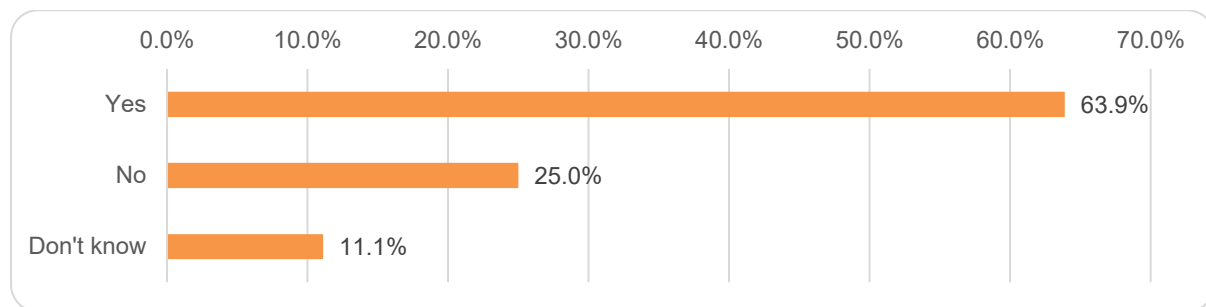
Total number of responses: 65

38% of respondents did not support the introduction of an All-Wales Database of electoral registration data. Respondents were concerned at the overall cost of such a system and noted that the benefits did not justify these costs. The significant impact of hacking or data fraud and the potential of this to deter registration was also raised. The administrative complications of managing the database alongside the existing registration system required for reserved elections was also a concern.

34% of respondents were supportive of the database, citing the potential for improved security, efficiency, and cost savings. Specific benefits noted included simplifying data transfers between wards and greater data accuracy. It could support the introduction of greater flexibility in how people vote in the future.

Youth Friendly Q3. Do you think an All-Wales Database is a good idea?

Total Number of Youth Friendly Responses: 36



63.9% of respondents to the Youth Friendly White Paper thought an All-Wales database was a good idea. Respondents noted that there could be benefits for data accuracy, reducing duplicate registrations and maintaining data integrity.

25% were against, noting concerns around trust and the perception of Ministers controlling who would be able to vote. Respondents were also concerned it would take responsibility for the register away from the local level.

Q4. What are your views on (a) the application of Elections Act 2022 provisions on digital imprints for digital campaign material, and (b) online nominations?

Total number of responses: 51

Digital Imprints

We asked for views on the digital imprints regime in the Elections Act 2022 which requires digital political material to show who had produced or paid for it.

Respondents noted the increasing volume and importance of digital campaigning in elections and 65% of respondents were supportive of the introduction of a digital imprints regime. Respondents also noted the importance of a consistent system across the UK and devolved and reserved elections. Respondents did note that they felt the digital imprint requirements could go further.

15% did not support the application of a digital imprints regime, considering it an increase of government control, a burden that would stifle debate and incur a cost.

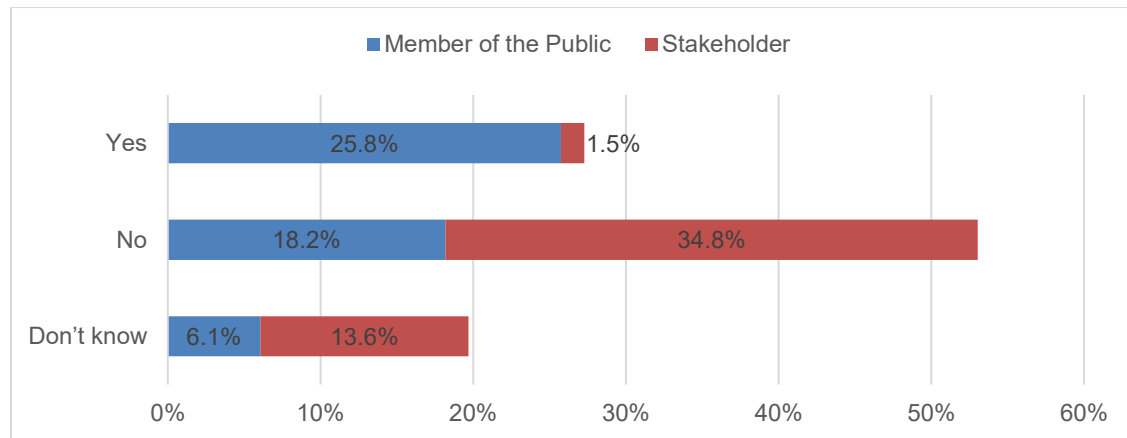
Online Nominations

We invited views on digital innovation enabling nominations for candidacy in devolved elections to be filed online. 42% of respondents were supportive, noting that an online system could save time for electoral services officers and improve accuracy and accessibility for candidates. It was suggested an online system should manage candidate deposits.

15% of respondents were against an online nominations system, noting that it could deter candidates and risk fraud and potential disenfranchisement.

Q5. Should principal and town and community councils revert to four-year terms?

Total number of responses: 66



Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

There were a number of views expressed on both sides of the debate. Of the respondents that expressed a preference 53% said they did not support reversion to four-year terms. 27% supported four-year terms, with almost 20% of respondents not expressing a preference.

Respondents in support of reverting to four-year terms expressed views that four years is a long enough term for the council to demonstrate its capability, while providing the public with more regular points of accountability; and the confidence they will have more frequent opportunities to remove councillors through the ballot box if unhappy with their performance. Respondents also expressed a view that more frequent elections serve to focus the attention of the opposition on council business, encouraging greater scrutiny in support of the point that good government benefits from a strong opposition.

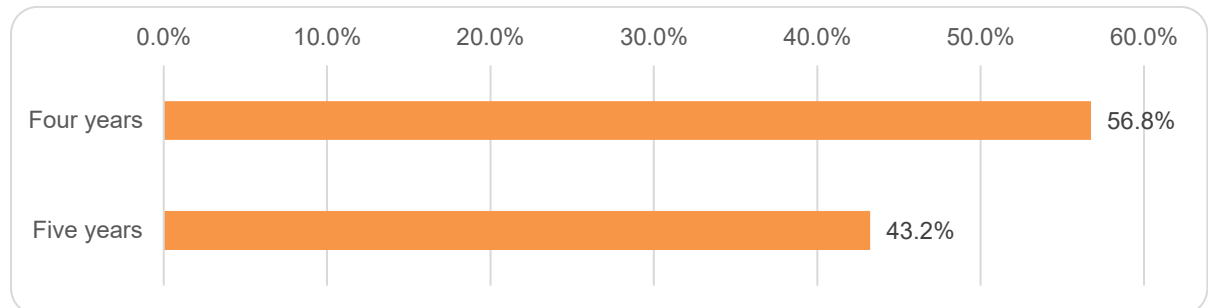
Respondents in favour of retaining five-year terms noted that they avoid confusion for electors on polling day, by avoiding multiple elections being held at the same time which was considered a key point for continuity. Respondents also considered this approach to yield cost savings in the long term. It was also suggested that a five-year term provides sufficient time for councils to make appropriate plans to deliver manifesto commitments, noting that in the fifth term focus inevitably moves in part to the next election. Respondents also consider it allows greater opportunities for new members to become familiar with their roles and build relationships with the broad range of their constituents.

Overall, individuals, including those who did not express a preference, expressed significant concern about the need to avoid confusion within the electorate which could potentially impact on the experience of voters and their participation in local democracy as a result.

Some respondents suggested all tiers of government should be based on the same length of terms for all elections.

Youth Friendly Q4. Do you think term length should be four or five years?

Number of Youth Friendly responses: 37

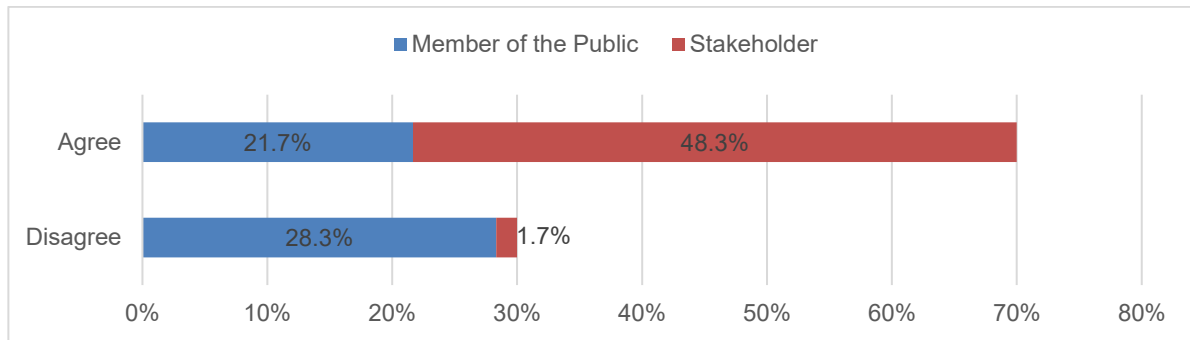


Of the respondents to the Youth Friendly consultation who expressed a preference almost 57% supported four-year terms, with just over 43% supporting five-year terms. The comments made in support of the responses reflected the comments set out above.

Chapter 3: Simplifying Electoral Registration in Wales

Q6. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the franchise for devolved elections should be restated in one bi-lingual Welsh Act?

Total number of responses: 62



Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

Overall, respondents to this question were supportive of restating the franchise in one bilingual Welsh Act. 42 respondents were supportive, and 13 respondents were not supportive.

All 26 stakeholders, apart from 1, were completely in favour of restating the franchise in one bilingual act. Members of the public were divided; 12 respondents were supportive while 11 were unsupportive.

Easy Read Q3. Do you think changes to the law should be made to make it clearer who is allowed to vote?

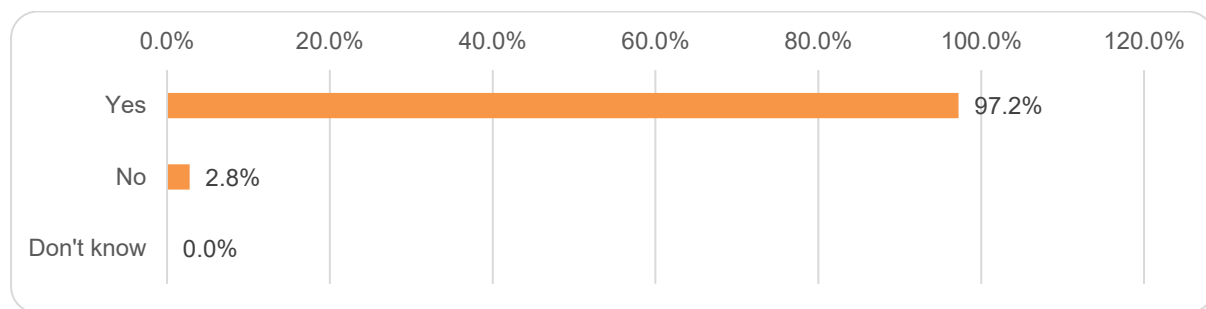
Number of Easy Read responses: Six

Respondents were divided on this issue. Of the six responses, three disagreed with the proposal whilst only two agreed. For the remaining response, we could not conclude their preference from the response provided.

All respondents bar one could be classified as stakeholder organisations.

Youth friendly Q5. Do you think making it clear who can vote is a good idea?

Number of Youth Friendly responses: 39



Respondents were overwhelmingly supportive. 35 respondents agreed whilst only one disagreed. For the remaining responses, we could not ascertain the respondents' preference from their comments.

Q7. From your perspective, should the franchise reflect the changes in the status of EU citizens now the UK has left the EU?

Total number of responses: 61

Overall, respondents overwhelmingly supported changes to the franchise in relation to EU citizen voting rights. 34 respondents agreed with this proposal whilst only seven disagreed.

From a stakeholder perspective, respondents overwhelmingly supported the proposal. 17 stakeholders were supportive while only four stakeholders were not. From a public perspective, 16 respondents were supportive while three were not.

Several stakeholders (including the AEA and Ceredigion Council) raised communication concerns regarding confusion that could be caused by changes to EU citizen voting rights. Stakeholders requested that any changes to the franchise should be made well in advance of elections to allow the electoral community and members of the public to understand the changes well in advance of casting a vote.

Several stakeholders emphasised the importance of addressing any divergence between UK administrations on EU voting rights and also offered opinions on how this could be addressed. Whilst the vast majority of stakeholders shared the view that devolved and UK Governments should seek to standardise their policies on the treatment of EU citizens, there were differing views on how this could be achieved.

For example, several stakeholders (including a Returning Officer and NUS Wales) called for the Welsh Government to replicate the steps taken by Scottish Government to reflect the changes in the status of EU citizens.

Q8. How can we best help people understand they have been automatically registered and feel confident that their data is protected, especially for people who may be vulnerable or wish to register anonymously?

Total number of responses: 63

Overall, nearly half of those responding to the consultation did not answer this question but the majority of those that did, were supportive of the concept of automatic registration.

Respondents focussed on the need for good communication campaigns to help people best understand they had been automatically registered to vote in devolved elections. Suggestions on ways of ensuring clear communication with electors included written communication directed at the elector along with national information campaigns, social media and television advertising and working in conjunction with the Electoral Commission.

Most stakeholders who responded to this question highlighted the need to ensure that vulnerable electors were able to inform local authorities if their situation meant that being on the electoral register could cause them harm. This would allow them time to register anonymously with the support of the local authority. This issue was stressed in the most serious of terms by a number of respondents and will be key to the piloting stages of the automatic registration policy development.

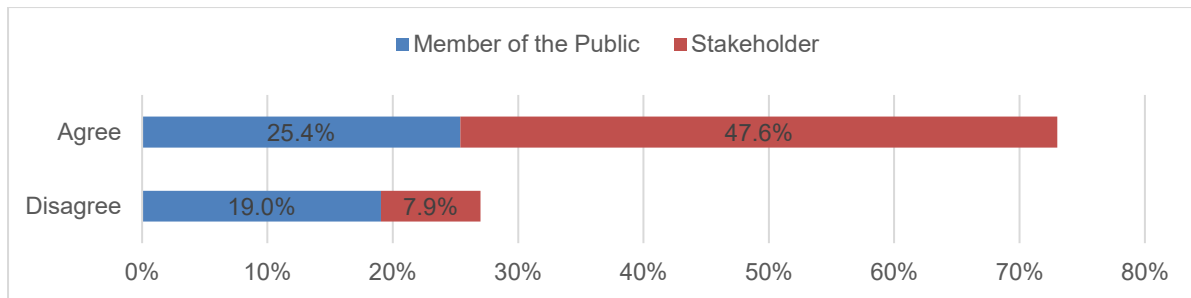
One concern raised by a small number of key stakeholders was the divergence from the current system of registration between reserved and devolved elections and that electors will still need to register to vote at Parliamentary elections. It was highlighted that steps would need to be taken to ensure electors fully understood these different requirements to avoid disenfranchisement of some electors.

Some respondents did not want the introduction of automatic registration. Reasons for this were varied and included the view that electors should be required to register to vote in order to show engagement with the process, and concerns about elector confusion as a result of divergence.

A common theme across all respondents to this question was the need to safeguard data and to ensure electors feel their data is being used for a clear purpose and that GDPR requirements are being met. Ensuring the confidence of electors in the data handling, storing and use will be critical to the next stages of this work.

Q9. To what extent do you agree with the removal of the open register in relation to devolved elections?

Total number of responses: 63



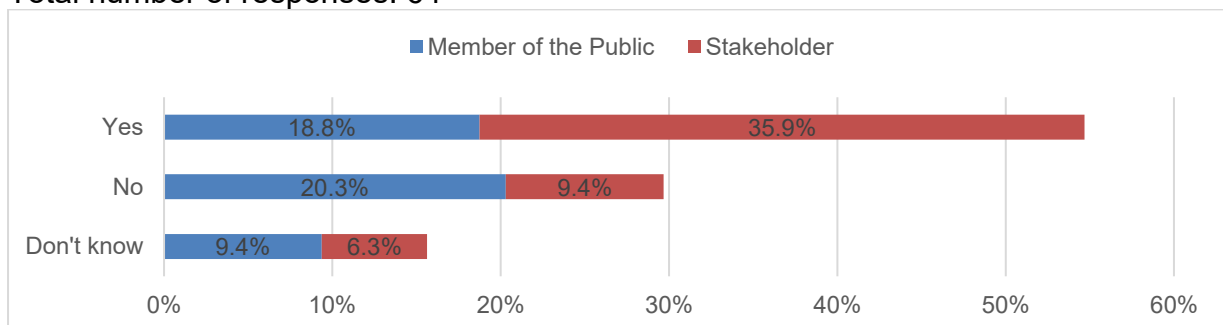
Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

70% of respondents to this question agreed that the open register should be removed for devolved elections in Wales. While the majority of key stakeholders were supportive of the move, highlighting the open register did not serve any public purpose, they did emphasise the open Parliamentary electoral register would remain in place. They considered the open register should be removed for the Parliamentary register too and unless that happened the removal of the open register for devolved elections would not have the fullest possible impact and would only benefit young people, aged 16 and 17, and qualifying foreign citizens.

Of those disagreeing with the removal of the open register for devolved elections some believed that the exercise had little value as the Parliamentary open register would remain in place. Others felt that electoral data should not be used for any other purpose than administering elections and should not be shared more widely than the local authority at all. It was clear that for a number of respondents the current use of electoral data (beyond that of administering elections) was not understood. Supporting electors to understand how their data is collected, kept and used should be an integral part of the communication work as part of the automatic registration pilots.

Q10. Should the Welsh Government place a duty on local authorities to have data sharing agreements within the authority itself, and where applicable, with other authorities or organisations?

Total number of responses: 64



Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

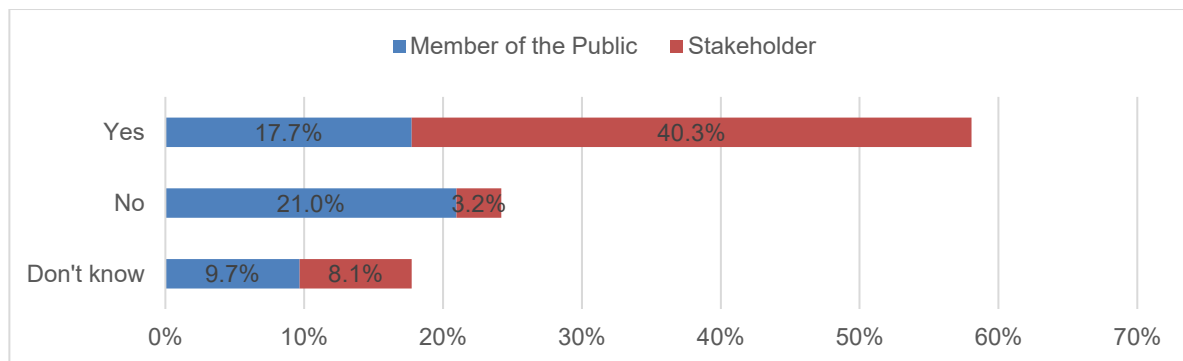
Almost 55% of respondents to this question were supportive of the Welsh Government placing a duty on local authorities to have data sharing agreements in place to prevent electors being missed from automatic registration. Respondents noted that there is evidence of successful data sharing agreements between local authorities and universities (particularly in England) and that it could increase voter registration and participation.

Around 30% of those providing a response to this question disagreed with the proposal. Some felt that this would place too heavy a burden on local authorities and would require them to undertake unnecessary administrative tasks. Others raised the powers of the Electoral Registration Officer under existing law to gather data on potential electors, noting that an additional duty on the local authority would be redundant as existing provisions allow for the appropriate collection of electoral data.

A common theme across a number of responses was ensuring the safety of electors' data. Some respondents highlighted that confidence in the collection, storage and use of electoral data was of paramount importance. Others felt that perceived current flaws in the system needed to be addressed before consideration was given to the wider sharing of data.

Q11. Are there any specific aspects of automatic registration that should be piloted before we move to an all Wales roll out?

Total number of responses: 62



Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

36 respondents provided additional information as to what aspects of automatic registration needed to be piloted before a Wales wide roll out. Specific suggestions were made around ensuring young people and those aged 70 years were engaged in the process. Others suggested that understanding the best sources of data to match the highest possible number of electors was an essential part of the piloting process. Security was of concern to a number of those responding to this question. In particular the security of data and protection of vulnerable electors were highlighted as important aspects of any piloted activity.

Stakeholders with experience of working within the elections field were keen to ensure that any pilots focused on how the existing canvass process would interact with automatic registration for the local government register. Piloting activity should

establish clear ways of ensuring electoral administrators and electors are able to navigate two different systems.

Easy Read Q4. How can we explain to people they have been registered to vote with Automatic Registration? And how can we make sure people know their information is kept safe?

Number of Easy Read Responses: 6

Respondents to this question provided a range of suggestions around ensuring people were aware they had been registered to vote. This included the production of step-by-step guides, direct mailing to electors, advertising and also the use of digital media. There was also a suggestion that any future all-Wales database could be used to successfully ensure electors are registered and informed of this.

Two respondents indicated they were not supportive of automatic registration.

Easy Read Q5. Do you think we should remove the open register for elections we control?

Number of Easy Read responses: 6

Half of those responding to this question agreed with the proposal to remove the open register for elections we control. One of these respondents felt that personal data of electors should never be sold to third parties under any circumstances and that electoral data should be entirely confidential. Half of those responding disagreed with the proposal.

Youth Friendly Q6. How would you want to be told you have been registered to vote automatically and that your personal data is safe?

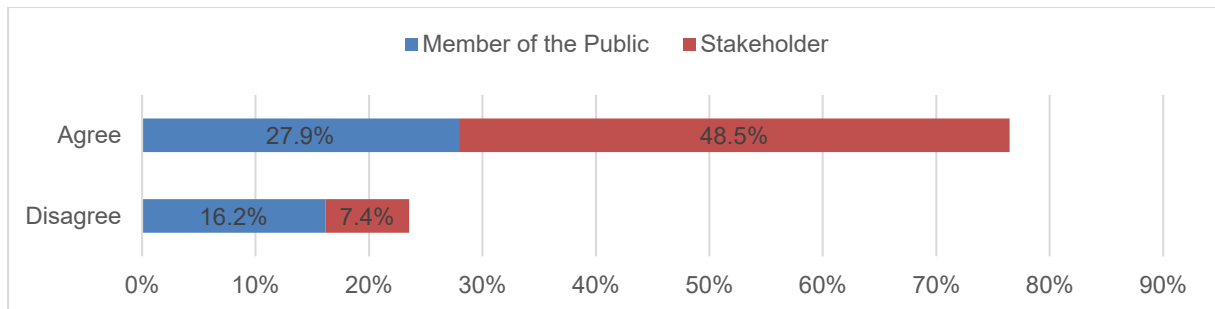
Number of Youth Friendly responses: 27

Most respondents were keen to ensure that anyone registered to vote was informed via letter directly to the elector. Some respondents also felt that email and text message could be used to ensure electors understood the registration process. One respondent suggested that letters should be followed up by additional means of communication to ensure messages were received by the elector.

Four respondents did not support the principle of automatic registration.

Q12. To what extent do you agree or disagree that students should have the option to register to vote whilst enrolling at university?

Total number of responses: 68



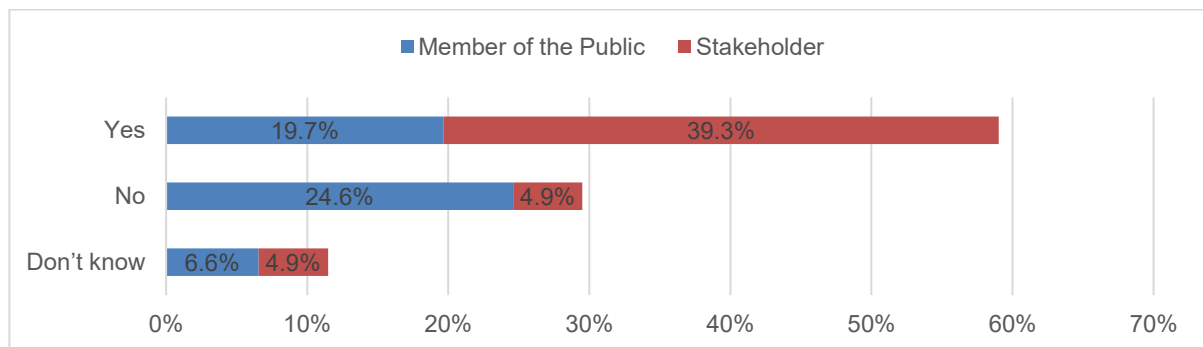
Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

Most responses supported the aim to increase student voter registration rates by creating Information Sharing Protocols between Local Authorities and universities.

The main concerns highlighted in responses were focused on the importance of ensuring data is protected accordingly, as well as encouraging students to register to vote in an area that may not be their permanent residence.

Q12a. Should any data that is provided be subsequently shared, via a data sharing agreement, with the relevant Local Authority's Electoral Services Team?

Total number of responses: 61



Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

Of the 61 responses, 32 supported the proposal for Local Authorities and universities to share student data, via an Information Sharing Protocol, following the completion of a registration form. 18 responses, however, did not and highlighted the following concerns:

- Data protection and concerns a local authority may sell data
- Risk of fraud and duplication on the electoral register
- No trust in this approach

Of those who indicated they did not know, ensuring there was no duplication of votes and avoiding electoral fraud was noted.

Easy Read Q6. Do you think students should be able to register to vote when they are at university?

Number of Easy Read responses: Seven

Of the seven responses, five agreed that students should be able to register to vote when they are at university. The concerns of the two responses who did not support the question focused on the short period of time a student resides in the area (and therefore should have a postal vote at their home address) and ensuring there is a robust approach to avoid duplication on the electoral register if they have already registered elsewhere.

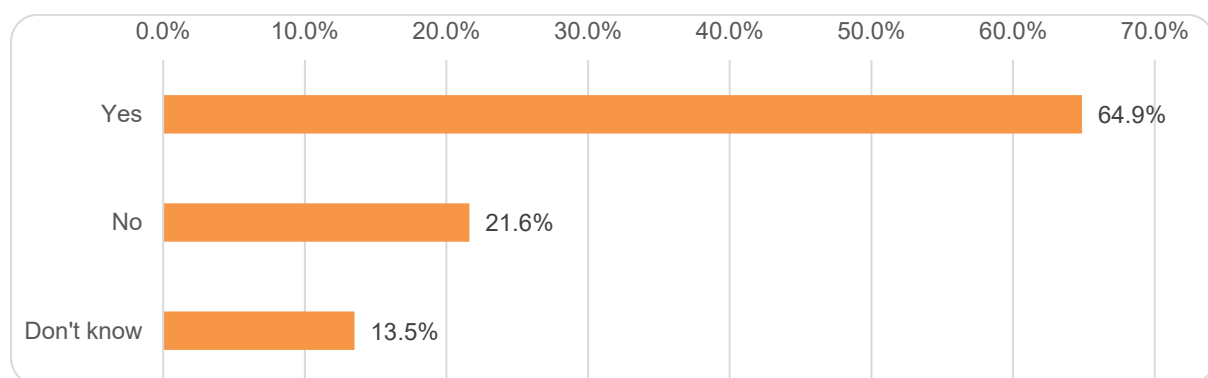
Easy Read Q7. Should information about university students then be shared with the Local Authorities they are living in?

Number of Easy Read responses: Seven

Of the seven respondents, four supported the proposal of creating an Information Sharing Protocol between Local Authorities and universities to share student data following the completion of a register to vote form. The concerns raised were similar to those raised under Question 6 of the Easy Read Consultation.

Youth Friendly Q7. Do you think improving student registration rates is a good idea?

Number of Youth Friendly responses: 37

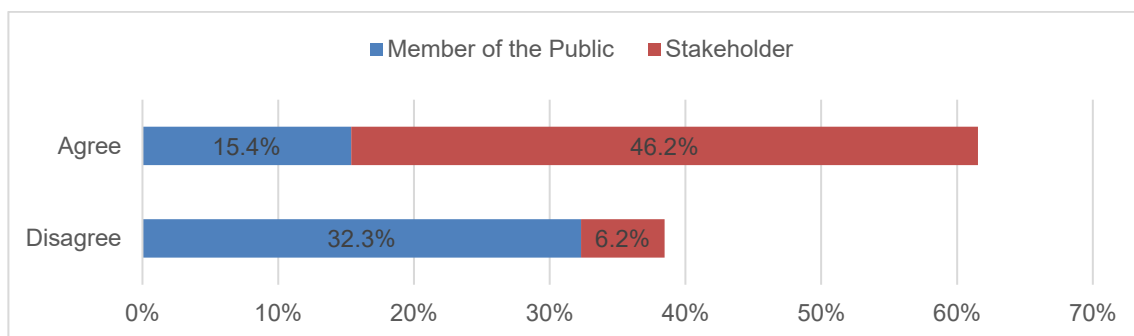


27 respondents agreed improving student registration rates was a good idea, empowering students to feel a sense of belonging to the area in which they are studying. It was noted that this would help close gaps in registration rates of young people who do not (or cannot) register when they are 16 and 17.

Chapter 4: Strengthening Electoral Administration

Q13. Do you agree that a statutory Electoral Management Board (EMB) for Wales should be established?

Total number of Responses: 65



Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

There were 65 responses to this question, of whom 40 were supportive, nine members of the public and 31 organisations or public bodies. Of the 25 responses which were not supportive, 20 were from members of the public with the remaining five being from organisations or public bodies.

The main reasons cited for not supporting an EMB for Wales included the potential cost and a perceived increase in bureaucracy. Another objection was a concern that the EMB could challenge the independence of Returning Officers and interfere with their ability to manage elections in line with identified local need. However, the potential benefits and advantages of an EMB in supporting Returning Officers and Electoral Registration Officers (particularly when inexperienced) were also cited by those who supported the proposal.

The perceived success of the EMB for Scotland was also considered to be a justification for establishing an equivalent board in Wales, which, it was pointed out, could take on the existing functions of the non-statutory Wales Electoral Co-ordination Board (WECB). A particular benefit of an EMB for Wales highlighted in responses was to provide support for Returning Officers and Electoral Registration Officers at a time of great change in electoral administration with increasing divergence between devolved and reserved elections.

Q14. If answered Strongly Agree or Agree to Question 13, what should its functions be?

Total number of responses: 38

Responses identified a wide variety of potential functions which the EMB for Wales should undertake. Unsurprisingly, the most common theme which underpinned the majority of responses was the principle of ensuring that elections in Wales were well managed and the roles played by the EMB for Scotland and the WECB in Wales were put forward. Two responses actually suggested that the board should adopt the

same functions as the EMB for Scotland and three indicated that the EMB for Wales should have functions based on the current terms of reference of the WECB. Eight respondents indicated that the EMB could help ensure a co-ordinated approach of electoral activity whilst nine indicated that the EMB should help bring about consistency of electoral management and five mentioned the promotion of good practice. Supporting Returning Officers, Electoral Registration Officers and electoral administrators, particularly those newly appointed or inexperienced, was a key cross-cutting theme. Closely allied to this was training and guidance for electoral officers, each suggested in seven responses.

The EMB playing a key role in the hosting and provision of electoral information was put forward by six respondents, with the caveat that care should be taken not to overlap with existing functions of the Electoral Commission.

Q15. Should the Electoral Management Board have powers to issue directions to Returning Officers and Electoral Registration Officers?

Total number of responses: 51

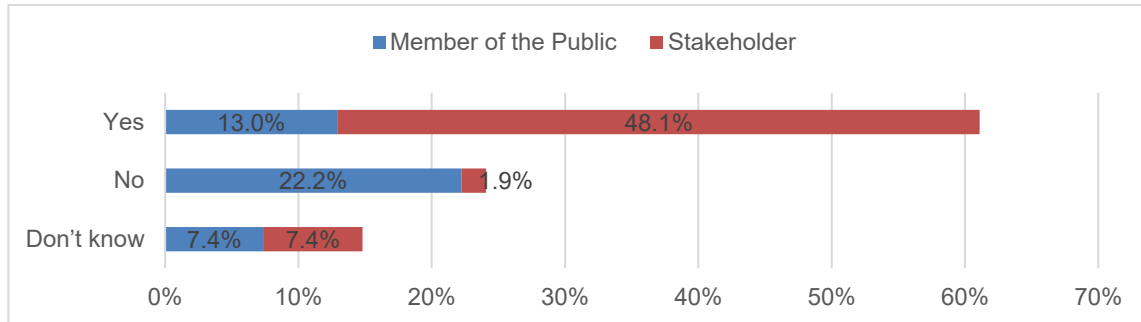
Of the 51 responses to this question, 33 agreed, 17 disagreed and one respondent had no view. Of those who disagreed, 13 were members of the public and four were organisations or public bodies. Of those who agreed, seven were members of the public and 26 were organisations or public bodies.

Respondents who agreed with the proposal offered practical suggestions such as any direction should be preceded by consultation or should be co-produced with Returning Officers and Electoral Registration Officers or that they should be allowed some discretion. It was also pointed out that a direction was an opportunity to ensure consistent good practice. However, concerns were raised that EMB members should have sufficient knowledge and experience to enable them to make appropriate decisions when issuing directions and guidance.

Of those who were not supportive, two suggested directions could be a challenge to local decision making and Returning Officer ability to determine what works best in their own area. One respondent suggested that there should be a power of direction for regional, but not for local elections.

Q16. Should the Electoral Management Board have the power to issue advice to Returning Officers and Electoral Registration Officers on the carrying out of their functions?

Total number of responses: 54



Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

33 agreed that the EMB should have the power to issue advice, 13 disagreed and eight indicated that they didn't know or didn't have a view on the subject. Of those who agreed, six were members of the public, 27 were organisations or public bodies. Of the 13 respondents who disagreed, 12 were members of the public and one was an organisation/public body.

The potential for advice given by the EMB to promote and support a consistent approach to electoral administration was noted, but three respondents shared concerns that care should be taken to ensure that EMB members were sufficiently knowledgeable and experienced to advise in ways which were not counterproductive. Three respondents also cautioned against issuing advice which potentially duplicated or contradicted advice given by the Electoral Commission.

Q17. What are your views on who should be members of the Electoral Management Board (EMB) and how they should be appointed?

Total number of responses: 57

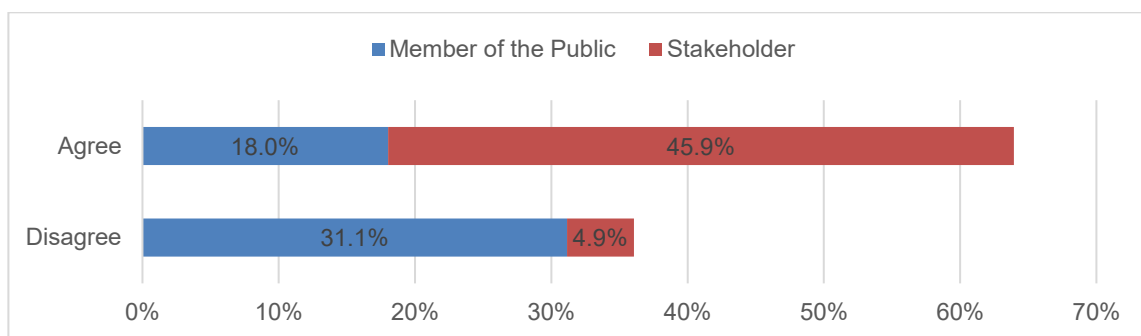
16 responses suggested the appointment of electoral officials (either Returning Officers, Electoral Returning Officers or electoral administrators) to the EMB for Wales or advocated that its membership should mirror that of the EMB for Scotland or the WECB which have significant electoral official membership. Five respondents made particular reference to the appointments process being transparent and ensuring that members had sufficient knowledge and experience to undertake their roles. The experience of the individuals appointed was a consistent theme in responses to this question with one noting that members of the board needed to be able to inspire confidence in both Returning Officers and electoral candidates/agents and so would require extensive experience not only of the relevant legislation but also the practicalities electoral management.

Three respondents raised the issue of ensuring a diverse membership and there were also calls for EMB membership to include Third Sector representation and members of the public. In all, a broad range of representatives were suggested

including local and national governments, academics, members of the legal profession and politicians. Another three respondents gave a contrasting opinion about the inclusion of politicians and called for the EMB to be non-political or to not include politicians. A further three called for specific conditions around the appointment of politicians and only one suggesting membership from political parties.

Q18. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposals to provide for greater electoral certainty by extending the statutory time during which no final electoral review reports can be published and no electoral review orders may be made?

Total number of responses: 61



Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

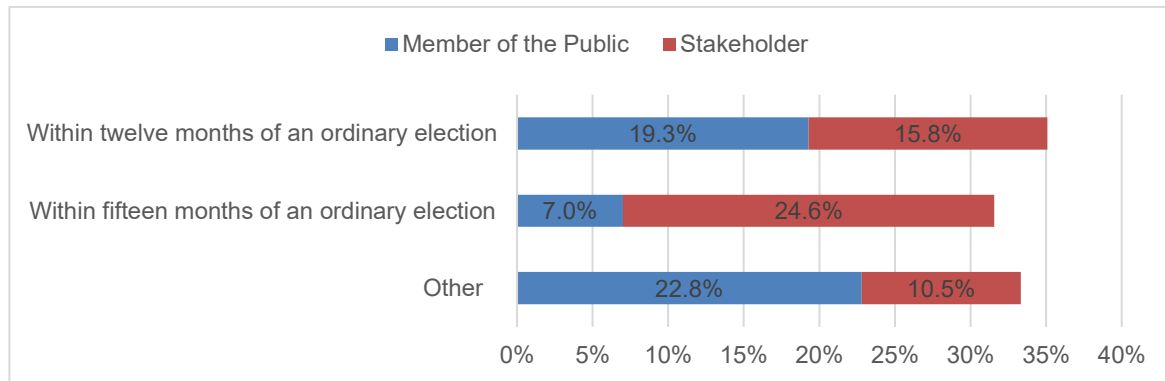
Overall, respondents were supportive of the proposals to extend the statutory time in which no final electoral review reports can be published and no electoral review orders can be made. 64% of respondents agreed with the proposed changes, with 36% disagreeing with the proposal.

Respondents considered this approach will provide clarity and a clear process to follow. Other comments received suggested it would allow systems to be set up earlier before each election and will provide greater certainty for electoral administrators and campaigners ahead of scheduled local government elections.

However, one respondent suggested this approach could make it significantly more difficult to implement electoral reviews which are vital lifelines for accountability, whilst another commented that consideration should also be given to the implementation date of the changes and the effect on elections.

Q19a. At which point in the electoral cycle should the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales (the Commission) be prevented from publishing electoral review reports?

Total number of responses: 57



Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

The response to this question was inconclusive. 35% expressed a preference that the Commission should be prevented from publishing electoral review reports within twelve months of an election, with 31% of respondents expressing a preference for 15 months and 33% expressing no preference.

Comments received included the view that 12 months would enable all those potentially affected by the changes to manage the change process effectively and efficiently and in compliance with statutory requirements. Whereas the longer proposed period of 15 months could significantly constrain the time available for the Commission to conduct all 22 principal area electoral reviews, which the Commission is currently required to complete in each 10-year review period.

Q19b. Do you agree the Commission should, as far as possible, be required to schedule electoral reviews within two years of a community review being completed?

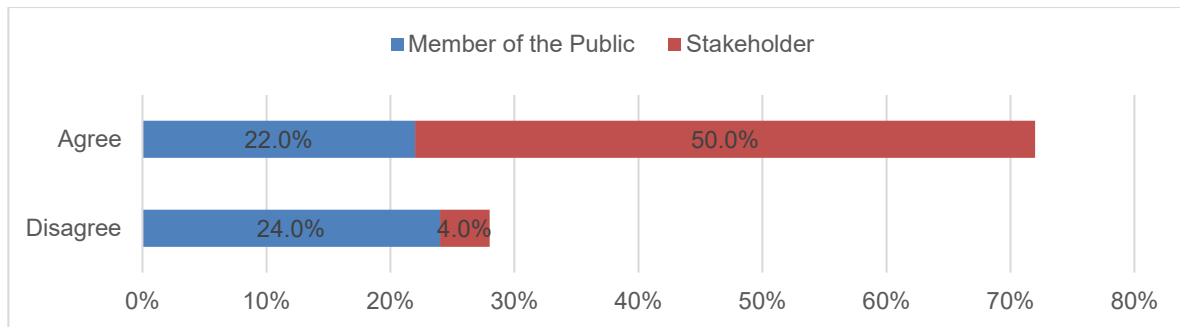
Total number of responses: 49

There was overall agreement with this proposal with more than half of respondents who provided a definitive answer, agreeing that electoral reviews should be scheduled within two years of a community review being completed. Respondents agreed it is logical to have a community review in advance of an electoral review and sensible to schedule electoral reviews within two years of a community review.

Some individuals suggested it would be helpful if there was greater clarity around what is considered at an electoral review. One respondent asked how this requirement would fit in with the Commission’s ten-year programme, with another respondent suggesting two years is too long a period for undertaking a community review and proposed a maximum period of six months. One respondent urged the Welsh Government to consider the views of Returning Officers ahead of any changes.

Q20. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the suggested proposals for setting maximum review and decision making periods?

Total number of responses: 50



Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

Overall, respondents were supportive of setting maximum review and decision-making periods with 72% agreeing with the proposal. Of these 50% were stakeholders, with 22% members of the public. Of those who disagreed with the proposal, 24% were members of the public and only 4% stakeholders.

Those in favour commented that it maintains a clear timetable and that the implementation of maximum review periods allows sufficient time for administrators and political parties to prepare effectively ahead of an election. Respondents suggested this will ensure that data used at the start of a review process is still relevant through the process.

However, some respondents thought that strict timeframes could reduce the Commission’s flexibility in how they conduct reviews. Some respondents were clear consideration needs to be given to the timing of unscheduled electoral events.

Q21. What are your views on whether a power to pause the conduct of electoral reviews should be included in legislation?

Total number of responses: 43

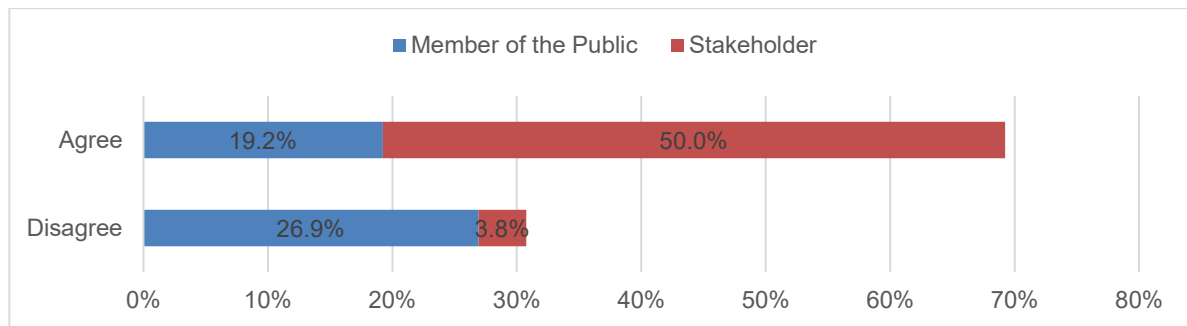
Nearly half of respondents to this question neither agreed nor disagreed. Of those that did select a preference the majority supported a power to pause the conduct of electoral reviews.

Those in favour considered this a sensible option and suggested pausing reviews should not be limited to just public health emergencies. However, a number of respondents proposed that when a review is paused and restarted, the completion of that review should not be subject to the time constraints of the maximum review period. A number of respondents commented this approach would bring much needed resilience, and capacity for elections teams to deal with situations such as a snap election.

However, some respondents suggested the Government should not intervene with the independence and impartiality of such processes with effective electronic consultation processes to ensure maximum public participation.

Q.22 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the principle of a common, extended list of mandatory consultees for all parts of the electoral review process?

Total number of responses: 52



Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

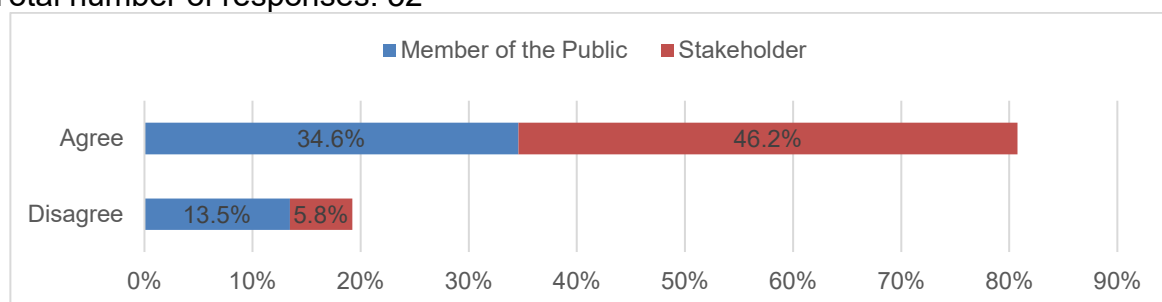
More than half of the respondents to this question, almost 70%, agreed with the creation of a common, extended list of mandatory consultees. Of these 50% of the responses were from stakeholders with 19% from members of the public. Of the almost 31% who disagreed, 27% were from members of the public and 4% from stakeholders.

Those in agreement suggested it would provide a balance of opinion, whilst others thought it could provide insightful information and ensure the process reaches as many stakeholders as possible, which should be an essential part of any democracy.

Those who disagreed with the principle suggested the inclusion of mandatory consultees could lead to a more onerous process.

Q23. To what extent do you agree or disagree that requirements to engage with eligible voters as part of the electoral review process should be strengthened, including in respect of ward names?

Total number of responses: 52



Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

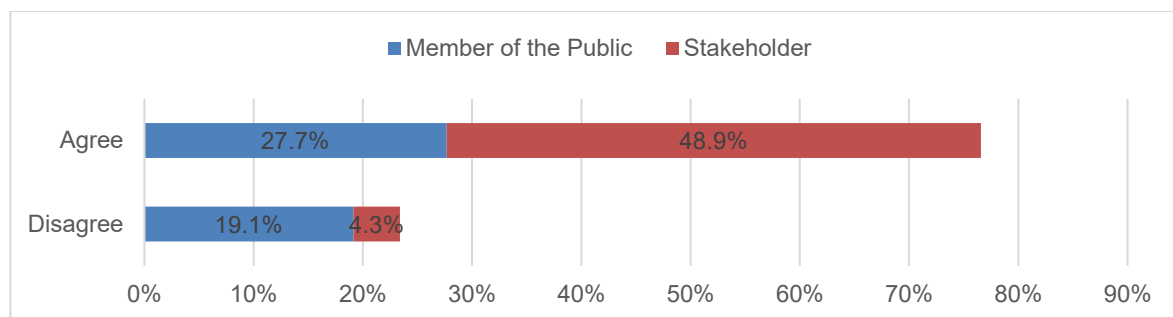
Of the respondents who agreed or disagreed with this proposal 81% agreed arrangements should be strengthened, while 19% disagreed.

Those in support felt people need to be kept informed and encouraged to engage with the electoral process. Others suggested recent changes had resulted in confusion and commented elector views should be taken into account when considering changes to electoral and boundary arrangements, agreeing the proposed approach will allow this. Respondents also included the need for a public information and awareness raising campaign.

However, one respondent considered the current measures to be sufficient and mathematically proportionate, which they considered to be important, while another respondent thought it was expensive and unnecessary.

Q24. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposals to amend and extend the considerations the Commission must take into account when determining electoral arrangements which maximise effective and convenient local government?

Total number of responses: 47



Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

77% of respondents agreed with the proposal to amend and extend the considerations the Commission must take into account when determining electoral arrangements.

Respondents thought this could provide more robust boundaries, but they did not consider it to be the most important factor. Other responses highlighted the current emphasis on the ratio of local government electors to the number of members of the council and suggested it was outdated and the inclusion of other factors could result in reviews better reflecting communities.

Some respondents suggested this approach would not make a difference, whilst others highlighted a cost element.

Q25. Do you agree with our proposals requiring the Commission to undertake a further consultation where a recommendation in its proposed final review report is not one of the options it consulted upon in its draft report?

Total number of responses: 50

50% of the respondents who answered this question agreed a further consultation should be undertaken, 20% disagreed and 30% did not answer.

One respondent suggested that adding another stage of consultation could prove difficult in terms of the overarching review timetable. One respondent suggested it should be a matter for the Commission to decide whether a supplementary consultation is required.

Some respondents suggested the report should simply include an explanation setting out the rationale for including any recommendation which had not been the subject of consultation. One respondent highlighted the cost implication of further consultation.

Q26. Do you agree with our proposals to enable Welsh Ministers to require the Commission to revisit a part of an electoral review before they make an electoral review order?

Total number of responses: 48

Less than 50% of respondents to this consultation expressed a definitive view in respect of this question, with the remaining respondents electing not to answer or commenting that they did not know. Of those that did provide a definitive response 40% agreed with the proposal, while 60% disagreed.

Those in support of the proposal commented that there could be circumstances where this approach would be appropriate, for example, where data provided about the electorate or future populations for a review proved to be inaccurate.

Those that disagreed with the proposal felt that to maintain the independence of the Commission, Welsh Ministers should not intervene and have limited involvement as it could reduce the impartiality, objectivity and independence of the boundary reviews.

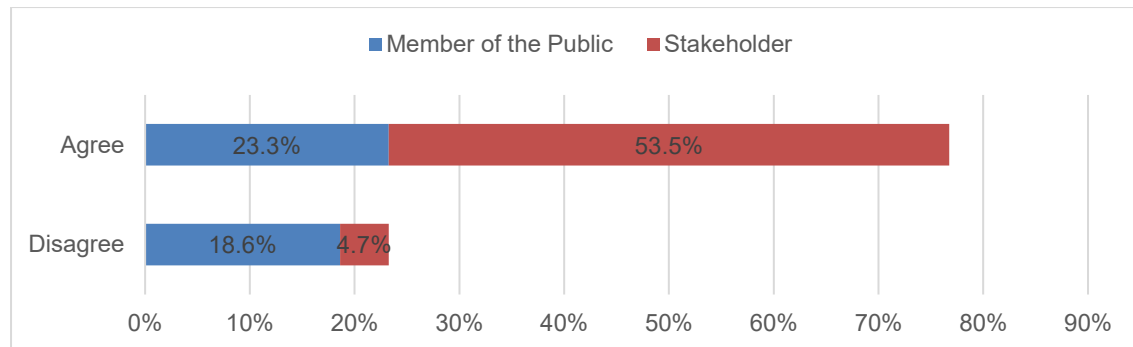
Q27. Are there any further changes to the electoral review process that should be considered?

Total number of responses: 35

A number of respondents proposed outreach work to target school leavers, to ensure a wider pool of voters and to encourage younger people to engage in democracy. Another suggested holding webinars so that members of the public understood the intention of the review and how it can be responded to. One respondent recommended aligning with processes in England.

Q28. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the purpose of the six-week representation period should be clarified in the legislation?

Total number of responses: 43



Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

There was overall support for this proposal with almost 77% of respondents who answered this question agreeing that clarification of the six-week period should be included in legislation.

Supportive comments included that this approach is welcomed and will provide clarity of guidance and consistency in the review process. It was also considered the approach would provide a clear timetable to follow as part of the review process.

Some respondents commented about the duration of the period itself, suggesting it was too short and that a ten-week representation would better assist stakeholders and provide sufficient time to respond to the recommendations.

Q29. Do you agree that Welsh Ministers should be required to consider any representations received during this period before taking any action to direct the Commission to undertake further work or implement, modify or not implement the recommendations set out in the final recommendations report?

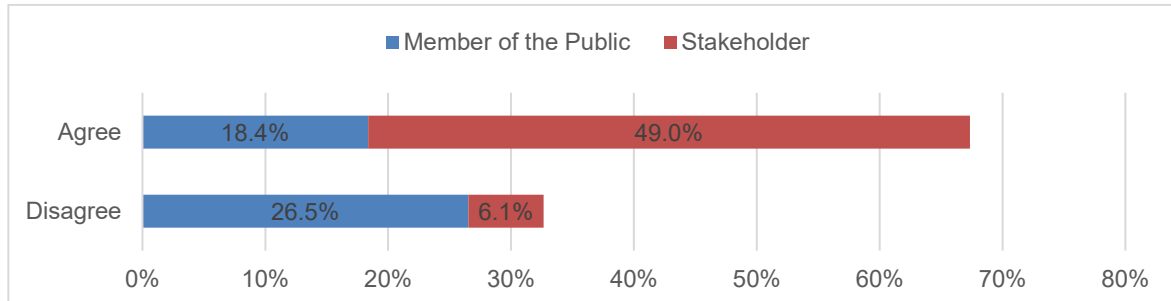
Total number of responses: 41

Just under half of respondents either agreed or disagreed with this question. Of these, the majority agreed with this proposal. Respondents suggested Ministers should be required to consider all representations that raise new points and concerns regarding recommendations received as a result of the review process.

Some respondents felt allowing Ministers to intervene may reduce the impartiality and objectivity of reviews with others saying that as the Commission is an independent body, it should be free from any political interference.

Q30. To what extent do you agree or disagree that legal requirements on the Commission to provide hard copies of documentation should be removed, except for when they are requested?

Total number of responses: 49



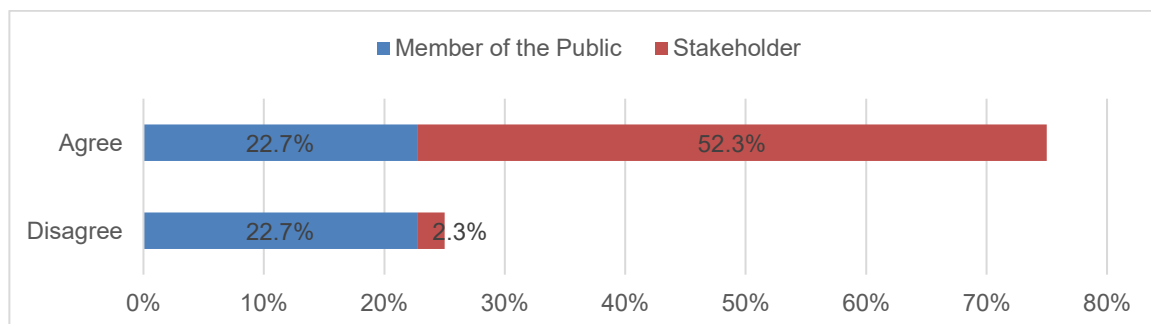
Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

67% of respondents who expressed a view agreed to the removal of the requirement for the Commission to provide hard copies of documentation. Respondents commented this will save time, costs, and support the carbon neutral strategy. They also suggested there would be a reduction in distributing reports to council buildings and libraries. Other respondents commented that consideration should be given to where electronic copies are stored.

33% of respondents disagreed with the proposal, highlighting accessibility issues, and digital exclusion. They suggested electronic versions could be modified and could marginalise a section of the electoral group.

Q31. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposals for legislative change in relation to community reviews?

Total number of responses: 44



Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

Three quarters of the respondents who expressed a preference to this question agreed with this proposal, with some emphasising the need for communities to be fully involved and for their opinions to be actively considered. It was felt a procedure and methodology to follow would support effective and appropriate management of reviews and bring consistency to the process.

Respondents who disagreed highlighted the impact of reviews, reflecting that it takes time for small teams to carry out a community review.

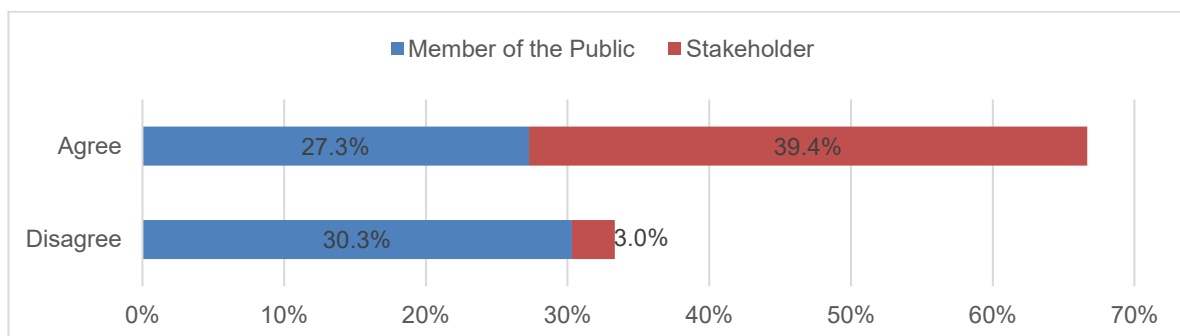
Q32. Please provide any further comments on how you think the process of conducting community reviews could be improved.

Total number of responses: 23

Of those who answered this question, respondents proposed that standardisation was necessary together with better engagement. Other suggestions were to consider urban/rural communities, geographical location and issues affecting the community, together with the provision of clear guidance and direction, including a timetable or plan to follow. Respondents also suggested Community Reviews deserve more attention directed at the economic and social geography of the area.

Q33. To what extent do you agree or disagree that seaward boundary review arrangements should be revised to include the ability for the Commission to undertake reviews relating to multiple local government areas and the expansion and contraction of seaward boundaries in a single review process? Should those arrangements to be included in the same review order?

Total number of responses: 33



Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

Less than 50% of respondents expressed a firm view to this question. Of those that did, 67% agreed the arrangements should be revised. These respondents were supportive of any cross boundary seaward review process being undertaken as a single review process, and that this should be underpinned through suitable statutory provision.

Of the 34% who disagreed, some were in favour of retaining the current arrangements, where each area is subject to its own review, rather than undertaking one single review for all areas.

Q34. Do you agree with our proposals to transfer the functions of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales to the Commission?

Total number of responses: 50

Of the respondents who expressed a view, just over half agreed the functions of the IRPW should be transferred to the Commission as it would result in more streamlined working with local authorities and provide greater transparency in the functions around remuneration.

Those that disagreed, highlighted the separate responsibilities of both bodies and suggested the retention of both would ensure greater accountability and avoid conflicts of interest.

Q35. Do you agree that functions relating to the determination of the salaries of chief executives should be abolished and not transferred?

Total number of responses: 43

54% of respondents to this survey did not provide a definitive answer to this question. Of those that did 38% agreed this function should be abolished with some stating Councils should be trusted to set their own pay structure and that it should be a matter for local determination. 27% of the answers did not have a particular view on this and other responses stated that it was a matter for the Welsh Government, with no specific comment. One comment highlighted that there should be a lead time between the enactment of any new legislation and its entry into force, whilst another supported this change on the basis that statutory requirements regarding pay policy and CEO pay are already in place to ensure propriety and political scrutiny.

35% disagreed with the proposal and considered there were benefits in an independent body setting the Chief Executive salary.

Q36. What do you think about the idea that new powers should be created to enable determinations to be made about parachute payments for councillors?

Total number of responses: 49

More than half of those responding to this consultation did not answer this question or considered they would need further information in order to make an informed decision.

Of those who selected a preference, they were similar in numbers. 38% opposed these payments with some supporting their position with commentary on the value of councillors. In addition, a number of comments were received about the scope of any future scheme and its applicability to community and town councillors.

35% supported these payments. Some of the views put forward suggestions about the duration of the payments, when payments should commence, and the contribution this approach could have on encouraging diversity in democracy. Other comments suggested more detail was to be included relating to this question before

an informed answer could be given. Another response highlighted that such provisions should be made or negotiated in a contract of employment at the start and renegotiated upon any change of circumstance. One comment proposed that funding of these arrangements for principal authorities needs to be in place before they take effect or Welsh Government/IRPW/LDBCW take responsibility for those arrangements and payments to former councillors. Another response recognised that there should be consistency across all levels of public representation.

Q37. Do you agree with our proposal for Wales to maintain a single regulatory framework on political finance for reserved and devolved elections in Wales, where appropriate?

Total number of responses: 38

Our proposal to largely replicate the changes to the campaign finance rules introduced by the Elections Act 2022 was supported by respondents to the consultation. Members of the public were split, with the 18 responses divided almost in half – 50% were in favour, 34% saying they were opposed and the remainder not giving a view on these proposals. Of the seven respondents saying they were opposed, two commented that Wales should follow the UK approach, supporting our proposal.

Of the 20 stakeholders that responded to this question, the 18 that expressed an opinion were all in favour of our proposal. Two respondents qualified their support by proposing further rule changes or referring to the Welsh Government's ability to disagree with UK measures.

Q38. Please provide any further comments on the specific measures under consideration regarding political finance.

Total number of responses: 18

Comments in response to this question are included in the text under Question 37.

Q39. What types of innovation in electoral administration would you like to see piloted in the future?

Total number of responses: 45

Around 40% of consultees provided a response to the question on future pilots. The vast majority focused on increasing use of digital solutions to facilitate better voter engagement. Where this was referenced, the suggestions were made to pilot:

- Electronic voting
- Electronic counting
- Digital registers
- Online voting
- Better digital information to help voters understand who they can vote for.

Other respondents focused on piloting activity targeted at either encouraging greater participation or making elections more accessible to specific voters. In particular there was an emphasis on supporting young people to engage with democracy as well as ensuring voters with disabilities were able to access information along with any polling places. It was also suggested that improved digitally accessible information was made available to support better understanding of electoral processes and the candidates at specific elections.

A small number of respondents suggested piloting activity around electoral systems and electoral administration. In these cases, the pilots suggested were:

- Using proportional representation to return elected members
- Use other alternative voting systems to return elected members
- Automatically registering electors
- Advanced or early voting
- Having polling places in locations other than polling stations e.g. supermarkets
- Allowing registration on polling day
- All postal ballot elections
- The expansion of emergency proxy provisions.

Q40. How could we facilitate a more varied mix of local authorities participating in future pilots?

Total number of responses: 39

A smaller number of respondents, around 35%, provided suggestions on how to encourage a more varied mix of local authorities to take part in future pilots. These were largely focused on ensuring that there were long lead in times to any piloted activity and that the Welsh Government engaged early with authorities to allow for adequate preparation. One respondent suggested the current system for proposing pilots should be made more straightforward and not necessarily subject to Welsh Minister's approval.

Other proposals centred on ensuring there was enough funding for local authorities to undertake the pilots and, in some cases, that incentives could be used. One respondent recommended engaging with community councils, while another felt legislating for pilots may be a more appropriate option.

Q41. What are your views on a power of direction for Welsh Ministers which would enable them to compel a local authority to pilot electoral innovations?

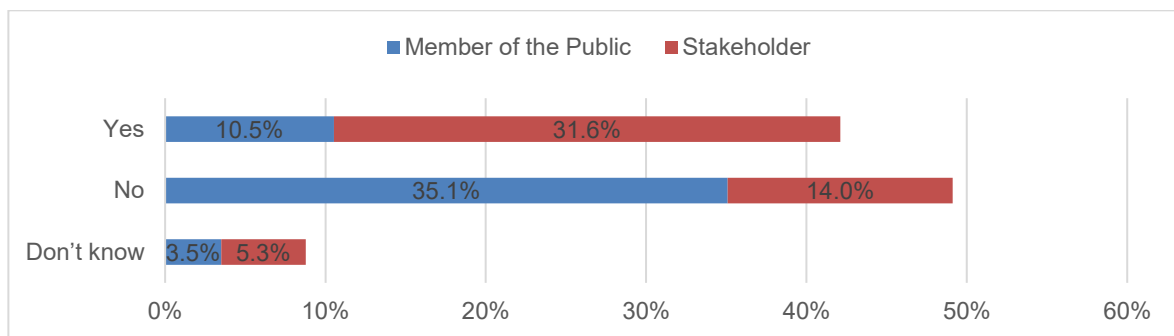
Total number of responses: 47

A similar number of respondents provided views on Welsh Ministers powers to compel pilots as did on the ways to facilitate a more diverse range of local authorities participating in pilots. Of those responding 47% were against the proposal while 19% were in favour.

On the whole, respondents felt that compelling pilots should not be necessary, and a number of key stakeholders raised concerns regarding the integrity of an election where a local authority had been compelled to pilot activity given the pressures Returning Officers and their staff are under. Lack of resources were also cited as a reason that compulsion of pilots was not a good idea, along with the level of experience required within electoral teams. Of those in favour of the proposal, few reasons were provided other than it would facilitate a better range of authorities taking part.

Q42. Should Returning Officers be subject to specific Welsh language requirements when elections take place?

Total number of responses: 57



Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

Responses were fairly evenly split, but with more unsupportive than supportive of placing Welsh language requirements on Returning Officers, particularly from members of the public. 24 respondents were supportive and 28 were unsupportive. Five were uncertain. Of those in support, nine were individuals and 15 were stakeholder organisations. Of those not in support, 17 were individuals, six were organisations and five were anonymous.

The main feedback was focussed on equality and feasibility. The majority of respondents agreed with the importance of the equal treatment of the Welsh language, however, did not support new Welsh language requirements for Returning Officers in law. This was due to the view that Returning Officers were already operating to the spirit of Welsh language requirements in line with local authorities, and due to the resistance of additional burdens on Returning Officers. Some suggested a flexible approach when delivering bilingual elections. Respondents echoed that there should be support for Returning officers, for instance an interpreter/translator, when Returning Officers cannot deliver services bilingually themselves, for instance, at the declaration of the results.

Q43. Are there any types of services you would like to see Returning Officers providing in Welsh?

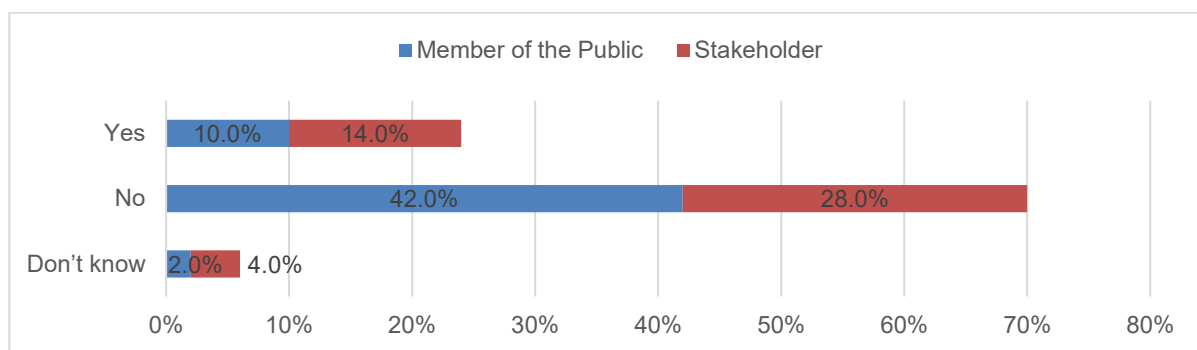
Total number of responses: 32

Broadly, respondents supported Returning Officers delivering services in Welsh. 17 respondents were supportive, 12 were unsupportive and three were uncertain. In support were four members of the public and 13 organisations. Not in support, there were eight individuals and one organisation.

Feedback was again focussed on equality and feasibility. Respondents reiterated the equal treatment of Welsh language when delivering electoral services. They restated that documentation must be bilingual, when feasible. Written and verbal correspondence, and the declaration of results were seen as examples of services expected to be delivered through the medium of Welsh.

Q44. Have you ever experienced any issue related to the Welsh language during elections?

Total number of responses: 50



Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

The majority of respondents stated that they had not experienced any issues relating to the Welsh language at elections.

Feedback focussed on accessibility of services in Welsh, for instance the Electoral Management Systems not currently being bilingual. Issues were raised around the lack of standardised templates in Welsh to ensure in both languages. It was also reported that training is not always delivered bilingually.

Respondents also focussed on feasibility, and again as in question 42, a flexible approach was suggested when services must be provided bilingually. For instance, it was reported by electoral staff that the recruitment of Welsh-speaking polling staff is often challenging in certain areas.

Easy Read Q8. Do you think Returning Officers should have to follow certain rules about using the Welsh language?

Number of Easy Read responses: 6

Respondents were of the view that this was unnecessary, but Returning Officers should be supported by Welsh speakers and translators when required.

Easy Read Q9. Are there any services you think Returning Officers should be providing in Welsh?

Number of Easy Read responses: Six

Respondents did not refer to any specific service, but they reiterated that services should be bilingual. Six responses were received, three of which were unsupportive, one respondent mentioned that the question was not relevant in a non-Welsh speaking area.

Easy Read Q10. Have you ever experienced any problems when using the Welsh language during elections?

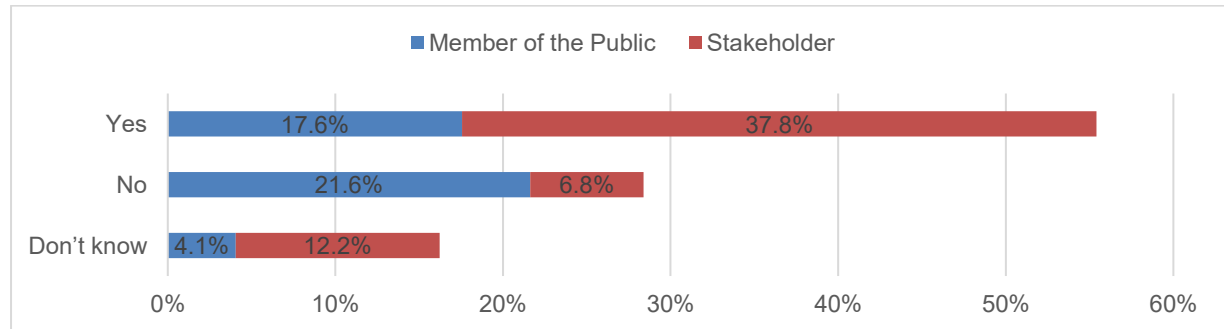
Number of Easy Read responses: Six

Respondents did not report any problems when using the Welsh language at elections. We had six responses, three of which mentioned that the question was not relevant as respondents did not live in a Welsh speaking area or they were not Welsh speakers.

Chapter 5: Building Democratic Health

Q45. Should the Welsh Government consider making provision for an online voter information platform? What information should be provided on the platform and who should host it?

Total number of responses: 74



Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

Of those responding to this question, over 55% were supportive of the provision of an online voter information platform by the Welsh Government. Respondents who were not supportive were made up predominantly by members of the public (11 out of 20) and cited concerns about cost and the need for more responsibility on candidates themselves to ensure electors have the information they need to make informed decisions.

Those respondents who were supportive included 13 members of the public, ten third sector organisations and academics and organisations with a special interest in this space. Support for the provision falls in line with the principles of electoral reform with simplicity and accessibility of information being key drivers. Responses highlighted the platform as a way to provide better candidate information but also to provide information on the voting system and associated processes, for instance what to expect at a polling station.

In terms of responses relating to who should host the platform, respondents involved in electoral administration were clear and firm in their view that Returning Officers and election teams should not be involved in the process relating to additional candidate information, and that they should not host the platform. Aside from this, twelve of 16 respondents who addressed this point specifically were largely in favour of an independent body, such as an Electoral Management Board, or the Electoral Commission as a host for an information platform.

Q46. Who would need to provide information to an online voter information platform and how could they be supported to do so?

Total number of responses: 46

A range of responses highlighted broadly similar ideas regarding who would need to provide information to any platform including candidates and political parties, local authorities including Returning Officers and election teams.

Responses also pointed to existing providers of information such as the Electoral Commission, Democracy Club, and Senedd Commission and the need to utilise existing resources where possible. A number of stakeholders highlighted the need for the platform to be co-produced with young people, disabled people and others.

In terms of support, some respondents felt that the process relating to candidate information should be prescribed in legislation including timeframe, content rules, photo requirements, online/paper submission requirements and language requirements. Clear standardised guidelines on the format information should be input, advice as to how it can be provided in accessible formats such as Easy Read and British Sign Language, as well as guidance from the Electoral Commission were listed as things to be considered. Electoral stakeholders signposted to large amounts of official data that already exists that could be tapped into and built upon.

Q47. What should be done to encourage political parties to produce accessible materials?

Total number of responses: 44

On the whole, respondents to this question acknowledged the need for more accessible information to be provided by political parties and candidates.

Many felt that clear guidelines and information on how to produce accessible materials from an organisation like the Electoral Commission would be a positive step. The need to work co-productively with key representative organisations to identify best practice and produce guidelines was highlighted.

A small number of respondents suggested that the production of accessible materials by political parties should be mandated by law.

Easy Read Q11. Should there be information online to help people with voting? If so, what should it be and who should be in charge of it?

Number of Easy Read responses: Six

Five of the six responses were from town and community councils who were supportive of the proposal, three of the five suggested principal councils should host the information.

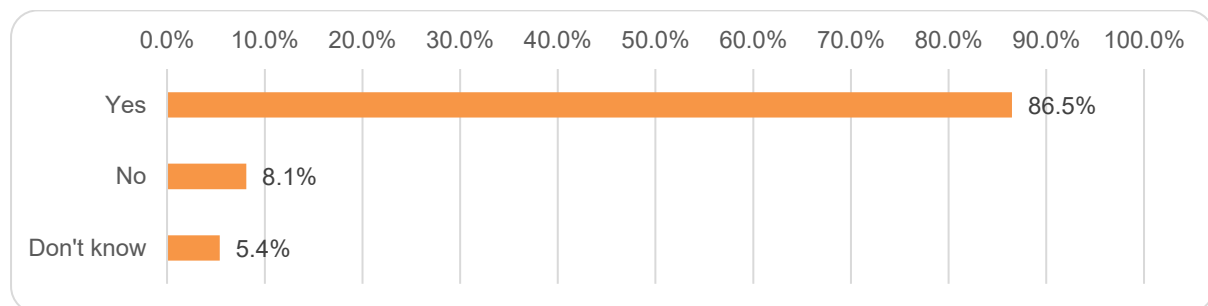
Easy Read Q12. What should be done to make sure political parties provide information in ways more people can understand? For example, in Easy Read.

Number of Easy Read responses: Six

Responses to this varied however ensuring easy read is available and setting clear guidelines for accessibility were highlighted.

Youth Friendly Q8. We want to improve information for everyone, including disabled people and people with learning disabilities to have one online place where people can find what they need to develop guidelines, so information is easy to read and understand. Do you think these are good ideas?

Number of Youth Friendly Responses: 37



Respondents to the youth friendly version were overwhelmingly supportive of this proposal, with 32 supporting the proposal. Reasons cited for the support include improving the accessibility of information and making things easier to find being good for the democratic process.

Q48. To what extent do you agree or disagree that that the Returning Officer at devolved elections should be under a duty to provide such equipment as it is reasonable to provide for the purposes of making it easier for disabled people to vote?

Total number of responses: 54

Of the 54 who answered this question 45 agreed, four disagreed and five commented but did not agree or disagree. Of those who agreed, 15 were members of the public and 30 were stakeholders. Three members of the public disagreed as

did one stakeholder. Four members of the public and one organisation neither agreed nor disagreed.

Seven of the supportive responses noted that this proposal was in line with provisions made in the Elections Act 2022 with regard to reserved polls. These seven responses all came from public bodies or organisations operating within the sphere of electoral administration who considered that it would be beneficial to have a consistent approach across devolved and reserved polls. Focusing on the operational aspects, two respondents pointed out the challenges associated with meeting the needs of a wide range of disabled voters across a large number of polling stations.

Two Third Sector organisations offered a contrasting viewpoint and expressed concerns that this proposal did not go far enough in ensuring that disabled people were able to exercise their right to vote independently and in secret. The RNIB in particular expressed concerns that the proposal offered no guarantee that audio support would be available even if it was requested by blind or partially sighted voters.

Q49. What support should be put in place to ensure the Returning Officer is able to effectively discharge that role?

Total number of responses: 41

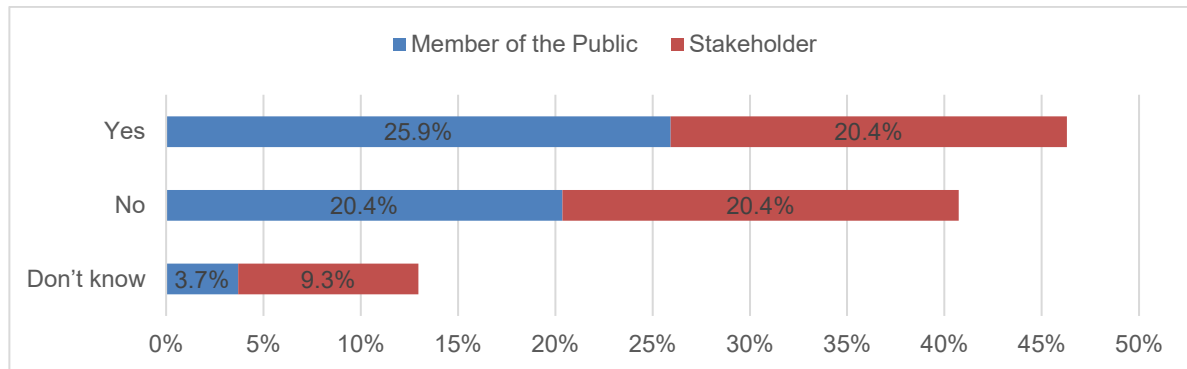
There were three consistent themes in the answers to this question – guidance, funding and training. A total of nine respondents cited guidance as a requirement. Four specified that the Electoral Commission should provide guidance, three of whom noted that it should be in line with the provisions in the Elections Act 2022 with regard to reserved elections. The same three also specified that a duty should be placed on Returning Officers to have regard to this guidance. One respondent commented specifically that this guidance should be co-produced with disabled people. It should be noted that the Electoral Commission, in its response, has indicated that *“If the Welsh Government were to introduce a requirement for Returning Officers to provide reasonable equipment at polling stations for devolved elections, we would provide guidance and examples of good practice to support them in discharging this duty.”*

In all, 20 responses mentioned funding, finance or resources. The majority of responses did not state how the funding could be used but others were more specific - that it would be required for purchasing, storing and maintaining equipment as well as for additional training and staff time required. It was pointed out that as a result of similar provisions in the Elections Act 2022, the UK Government would be providing funding to support Returning Officers in meeting the new accessibility requirements for reserved polls.

The need for training was mentioned by 12 respondents, with four specifying that this should be for electoral administrators, Returning Officers and for polling station staff.

Q50. Do you think the Welsh Government should specify in regulations the type of assistance which must be offered to disabled voters in polling stations?

Total number of responses: 54



Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

Of those who agreed, 14 were members of the public and 11 were stakeholders. Ten members of the public and 12 stakeholders disagreed. Two members of the public and five stakeholders didn't know.

Two respondents stated that disabled people need to know what assistance and reasonable adjustments they can expect or request when voting, and that they are going to be able to exercise their right to vote at the polling station.

Five respondents who disagreed with this proposal did so on the basis that there should be consistency of approach between reserved and devolved polls regarding equipment provision for disabled electors. They favoured the approach taken by the UK Government in respect of reserved elections whereby a duty is placed on Returning Officers to provide such equipment as it is reasonable to provide. One respondent who disagreed was concerned that regulations may result in closure of polling stations which fail to meet minimum standards.

Q51. What sort of assistance do you think should be offered to disabled voters in polling stations?

Total number of responses: 45

17 responses specified the type of assistance which should be offered to disabled voters in polling stations. Seven of these said that the assistance offered should follow Electoral Commission guidance with regard to reserved polls. Others cited specific items of equipment like ramps, polling booths at the correct height for wheelchair users and audio provision for blind and partially sighted voters. The RNIB in particular called for audio provision in every polling station as well as tactile provision as they did not consider it possible to know the order of the candidates listed using the tactile voting device alone. They also called for blind and partially sighted people to be able to bring their own magnifiers and mobile phones into polling stations.

Three respondents stated that the Welsh Government needs to engage with organisations representing disabled people in order to determine the appropriate assistance which should be offered in polling stations.

Three respondents highlighted that the option of postal and proxy voting offered a viable alternative to voting in person at a polling station. One respondent suggested online voting.

Easy Read Q13. Do you think the Returning Officers should have to make sure the right equipment is available to help disabled people to vote?

Number of Easy Read responses: Six

Five out of six respondents agreed, and one was unsure.

Easy Read Q14. Do you think the Welsh Government should say in the law what support should be given for disabled people to vote?

Number of Easy Read responses: Six

There were six responses, two agreed and four disagreed.

Easy Read Q15. What kind of support do you think disabled people need when they go to the polling station to vote?

Number of Easy Read responses: Five

Three responses focused on physical access requirements (both getting to and movement within polling stations) and help with reading. One respondent recommended engaging with disabled voters, a view that was shared by three respondents to the main consultation. One response highlighted the specific needs of blind voters.

Youth Friendly Q9. How can disabled voters be supported to vote secretly and independently?

Number of Youth Friendly Responses: 25

Four respondents considered that discussions with disabled people and their representative organisations were an important part of ensuring disabled voters can vote independently. Nine respondents suggested the development of online/electronic voting and six respondents mentioned postal voting, one suggesting a simplified postal voting system.

The issue of voters being able to understand the information they are provided with and the role of carers, parents, and others in providing support was raised in five responses. In particular, two respondents raised concerns relating to postal and proxy voting, where individuals assisting disabled voters could potentially vote in what they determine to be the best interests of the voter, not necessarily casting the vote as the disabled person might choose to if they could vote independently.

Q52. In addition to provisions in the Curriculum for Wales, are there any other measures that the Welsh Government should put in place through the education system to ensure that learners in Wales can confidently take part in Welsh elections?

Total number of responses: 48

A range of views were represented in answer to this question. Key themes included a recognition that the Curriculum for Wales is a positive development and should be allowed time to bed in. Several stakeholders highlighted the utility of working with partners such as the Electoral Commission, local authorities, and political parties outside of schools to increase understanding and awareness of politics to learners. The need for practical lessons (e.g., how to register, how to cast your ballot) was mentioned.

Some respondents suggested the need for civic education to extend beyond schools and into community groups and in settings with adult learners.

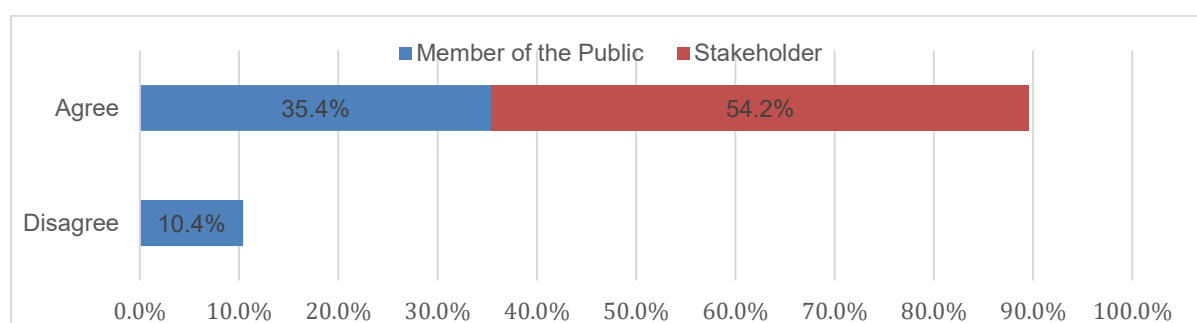
Youth Friendly Q10. What else could we do to support young people to vote?

Number of Youth Friendly Responses: 24

The majority of responses to this question focused on the need to provide better political education in schools. Some responses pointed towards the need for better voter information and clearer mandates from politicians.

Q53. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the definition of the electoral offence of Undue Influence provided by section 114A of the Representation of the People Act 1983 be used for devolved elections?

Total number of responses: 48



Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

There was strong support for modernising the language of the undue influence offence. 44 respondents were supportive while only four were unsupportive.

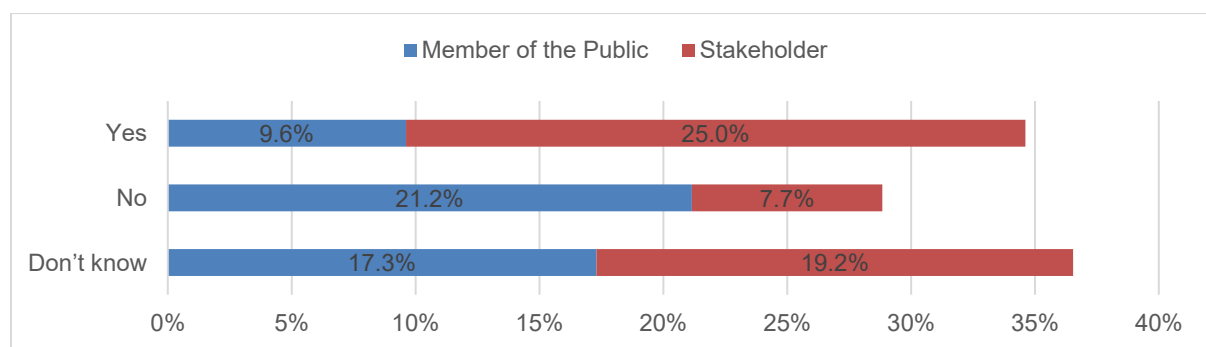
Key stakeholders who support the proposal include the AEA, the Electoral Commission, One Voice Wales, the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), the Electoral Reform Society and the WECB. The Electoral Commission's response

suggested the updated offence should be in line with the changes set out in the Elections Act 2022. Several respondents, including the WLGA and the AEA also highlighted the importance of ensuring electoral administrators and Returning Officers are afforded specific protection from intimidation and abuse.

The majority of the respondents who disagreed were either members of the public or declined to provide a category. Typical arguments for those not in favour were related to an objection to devolution or cost implications.

Q54. Do you think some or all of these proposed actions described in the White Paper will help to contribute to reducing instances of abuse of candidates?

Total number of responses: 52



Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

Of the responses to this question the majority of responses were unable to provide a view as to whether the suite of proposals to reduce abuse of candidates would be successful. However, there was also moderate support for the proposals with a lesser number of respondents who did not support the proposals.

The majority of those who supported the proposals were major stakeholders (WEN Wales, Electoral Commission, Electoral Reform Society). One stakeholder response expressed the view that as abuse of candidates is exacerbated by oppressive views and language, the proposals for collection of better evidence should incorporate those issues. A further stakeholder response suggested that although more focussed evidence is required, action should not be held back until that information can be collected.

In addition to overall agreement to the proposals, two responses specifically referred to the need for campaign pledges in advance of major elections with one suggesting an evaluation of the WLGA’s Fair and Respectful Pledge before committing to action. Training and advice for candidates was highlighted as an important aspect of safety for candidates.

The Electoral Commission highlighted action they would be taking to support police authorities’ Single Point of Contact officers to create guidance for candidates and campaigners on the expectations for the campaign. This information should be made available to candidates on nomination. The WLGA also highlighted the need for

adoption of codes of practice by political parties and candidates. The WLGA and two other stakeholders highlighted that the powers of Returning Officers and local authorities are limited in this area.

The majority of respondents who did not support the proposals were members of the public with some from key stakeholders. Of those responses, one suggested that behaviour of this kind is considered a part of being a candidate.

This view that abusive behaviour is being seen as a normalised part of being a candidate (and an elected member) was also shared in workshops held to discuss the proposals. The views expressed at the workshops broadly supported the proposals and reflected themes of the written consultation responses. Additional points were made about the importance of local resolution and leadership to resolve issues as they emerge. Workshop participants also suggested the work should incorporate the Anti Racist Wales Action Plan.

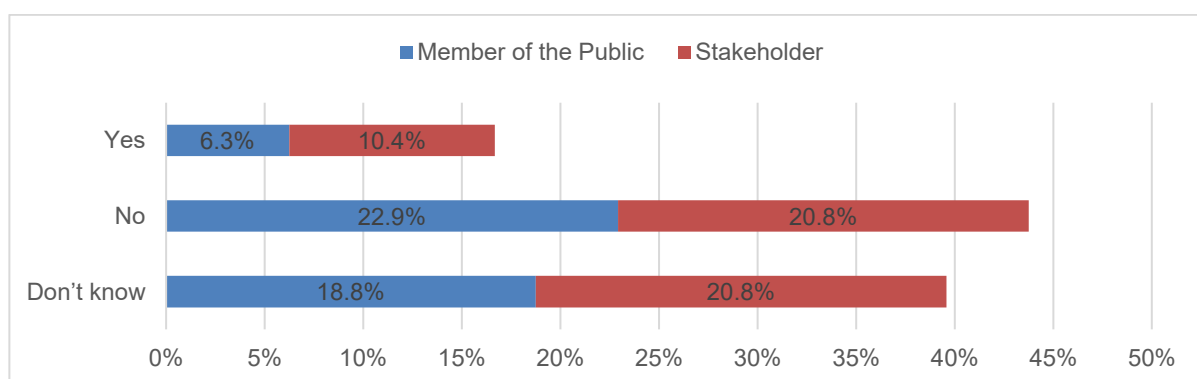
Q55. If an exemption from candidates' spending limits for security related spending is sought, what activities should be included in that exemption?

Total number of responses: 30

Respondents' suggestions included personal alarms, home security and video doorbells, security for attending events and campaigning, technology-based security as well as safety training. The Electoral Commission proposed that the Welsh Government should initially look at the similar exemption provided for Scottish elections.

Q56. Will the proposed addition to the standard wording included in the Statement of Persons Nominated form have the desired effect of reducing occurrences of abuse or would different measures be more effective?

Total number of responses: 48



Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

There was clear disagreement with this proposal. 21 respondents were not supportive and 19 were unable to offer a view (including key stakeholders such as the Electoral Commission). Only 8 responses supported the proposal.

Responses which rejected this proposal included the AEA, which noted that few people view the Statements of Persons Nominated forms. This point was also supported by four other responses. The AEA also suggested that the information already required to be included on the Statement either provides sufficient information to electors regarding candidates and, in respect of Senedd elections, the inclusion of standard wording would have little effect as the only geographical qualification is to be resident in the United Kingdom. Other respondents also highlighted that introducing more information into the form would make the already crowded form more difficult to read and understand.

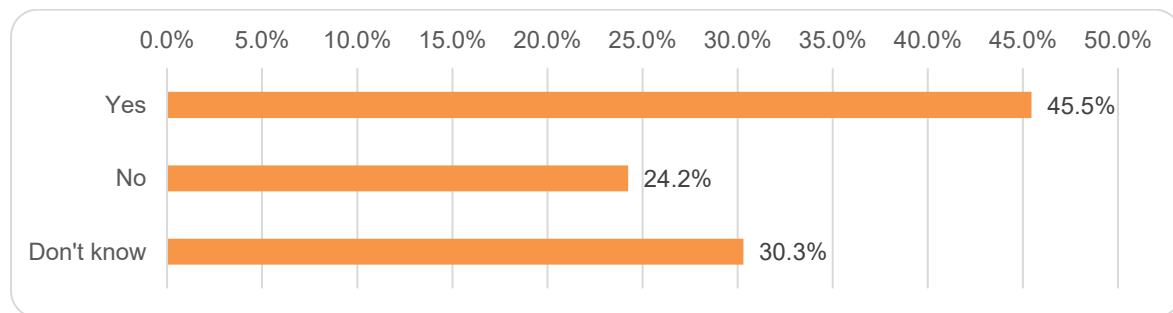
Q57. What other actions would contribute to reducing instances of abuse of candidates?

Total number of responses: 31

Common themes emerging included three responses suggesting tougher consequences for online abuse. The availability for training and information was also further supported in this answer with six responses highlighting the importance of ensuring candidates had access to information and training on addressing and reporting issues that might arise. One response suggested that consideration should be given to how the Access to Elected Office Fund could be extended to fund safety necessities for people with protected characteristics. Four responses highlighted the importance of cross-party campaign pledges in advance of major elections.

Youth Friendly Q11. Do you think these actions will reduce abuse and make candidates safer?

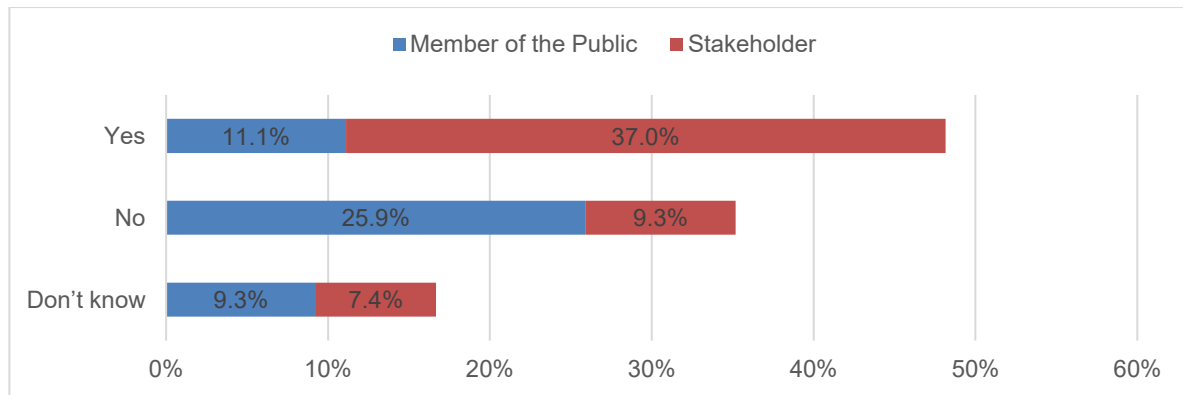
Number of Youth Friendly Responses: 33



The responses to the Youth Friendly consultation paper broadly reflected those provided to the main version of the consultation paper. Of the 33 responses, 15 agreed with the proposals, ten did not know and eight did not agree with the proposals.

Q58. Should Welsh Ministers legislate to require the establishment and maintenance of an ‘Access to Elected Office Fund’?

Total number of responses: 54



Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

48% of respondents agreed that legislation should be made to require the establishment and maintenance of an Access to Elected Office Fund. 35% disagreed with this proposal and 17% were unsure.

A number of those in favour of the proposal felt it could increase the number of disabled people putting themselves forward as candidates for election.

Others felt it would not be of benefit and needed greater transparency, whilst other respondents agreed that the fund should be expanded to support other underrepresented groups.

Q59. Should this Fund be available to support candidates from under-represented groups for all devolved Welsh ordinary and by-elections?

Total number of responses: 42

More than half of respondents either did not answer this question or did not give a definitive answer. Of those that expressed a preference, the majority agreed there should be no distinction between Welsh elections.

Comments received included the fund should be for independent candidates only and that the fund should be sufficiently flexible to adapt to offer support to other relevant under-represented groups and that following the pilot arrangements there was an expectation that this fund would be available for future elections.

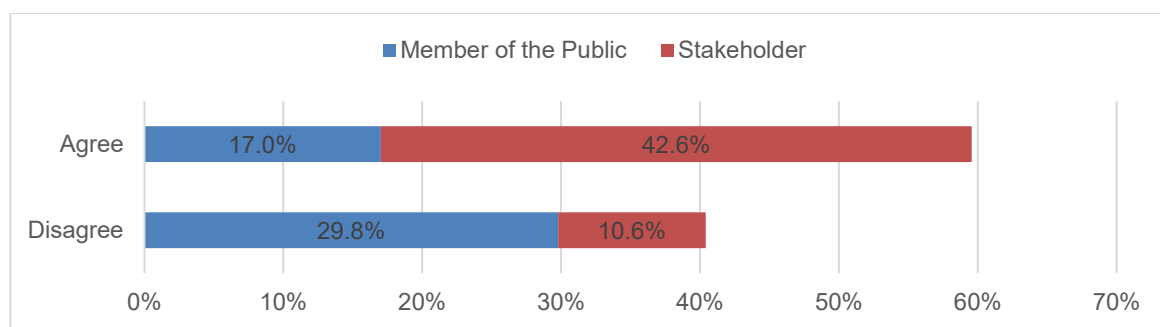
Q60. If you agree the Fund should be a requirement set out in primary legislation, what should be the parameters within which the Fund should operate?

Total number of responses: 26

There was limited response to this question. Some respondents suggested the fund should be available to people with protected characteristics and who meet positive action criteria, whilst others thought elements of the Fund should be co-produced, and awards granted by panels made up of people representing the relevant community. Another respondent suggested the parameters would be best defined by those individuals or organisation supporting under-represented groups or prospective candidates.

Q61. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the requirement to set out the Local Government Candidates' Survey questions in regulations should be removed?

Total number of responses: 47



Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

More than half of respondents agreed that the requirement to set out the questions in regulations should be removed. Supporters of this position commented that this would enable flexibility in the questionnaire process moving forward, whilst others stated that having the survey in the regulations did not allow it to be quickly adjusted as a result of changing circumstances.

One respondent highlighted that information in respect of equality characteristics evolve and that the regulations should have flexibility to reflect this.

The importance of the survey and the need for it to continue, with all views considered in a transparent and open manner was emphasised.

Q61a. If Strongly Agree or Agree, should the survey be updated through a formal review process involving key partners?

Total number of responses: 28

Those respondents who agreed to the previous question highlighted it was logical that future surveys should be updated by some form of consultation review process.

Other responses stated that it should be managed through advisory groups or representatives of equality groups and coproduced with bodies representing those communities with protected characteristics.

Q62. Do you agree there should be flexibility for local authorities to ask questions about local widening participation measures?

Total number of responses: 41

There was overall agreement to this proposal. Respondents agreed it would be better to have one consolidated survey and a collaborative revision process, while others commented that questions should reflect the social model language. Other recommendations included a more simplified candidate survey which would be easier for candidates to complete and for local authorities to administer.

Q63. Do you agree questions should be included in the survey about candidates' experiences of abuse and harassment (see the section on "other measures we are taking to ensure candidates safety")?

Total number of responses: 45

There was a strong support for this proposal, with nearly 70% agreeing that abuse and experience should be included in the survey. Respondents commented that by including this, it would support measures to provide funding to support candidate safety and could help to build an improved understanding of issues relating to candidate safety in Wales. Other respondents stated the survey should include whether any abuse or harassment was specifically directed at a person from a protected characteristic group and highlighted the importance of understanding candidates' experiences.

Q64. Do you think Welsh Ministers should approve the full set of questions or only the core all-Wales questions?

Total number of responses: 38

Fewer than half of respondents answered this question. Of those the majority thought Ministers should approve the core all-Wales questions. Comments received welcomed the flexibility for local authorities to include questions relevant to their local circumstances, however one respondent also suggested it may be useful to gather additional information regarding candidates experience in general.

Chapter 6: Modernising Welsh Elections

Question 65: What are your views on the impact of maintaining the current renewal time of 5 years in light of the Elections Act 2022 changes?

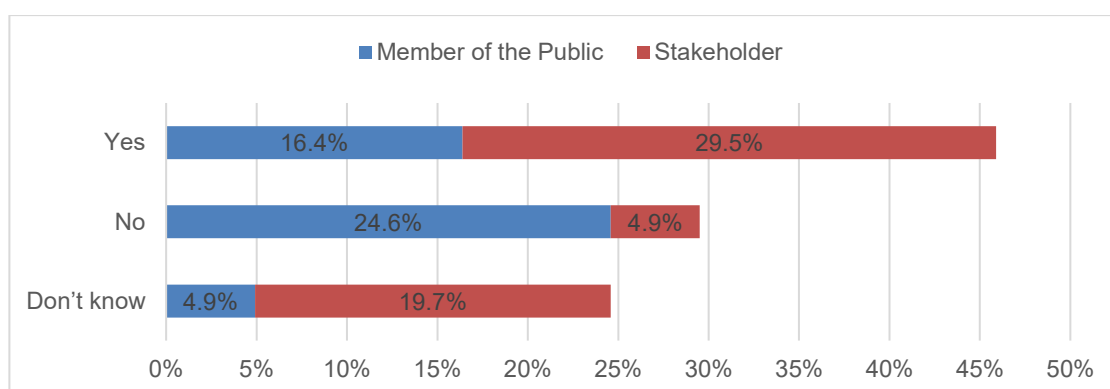
Total number of responses: 38

68% of respondents supported changing the postal vote renewal requirement to three years. Respondents noted there was the potential for confusion amongst electors who would not know if they were registered for a postal vote where there were differences between reserved and devolved elections. The potential costs and additional administrative burden stemming from this divergence were also noted.

18% of respondents supported maintaining the current 5-year renewal system, some felt there had been too much change recently.

Question 66: Would you like to see advance voting and /or voting in a range of venues offered for devolved elections across Wales?

Total number of responses: 61



Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

While the majority of respondents were broadly supportive of the principles of improving participation and accessibility, there were mixed views on the practical value of schemes offering greater flexibility on where and when people can vote. Respondents said that the underlying causes of non-participation were complex and while increased choice over the location and time of voting could be helpful for some people the evidence to date indicated flexible voting schemes do not have a significant impact on overall voting patterns. There were concerns around cost and value for money as well as the complexities of administration.

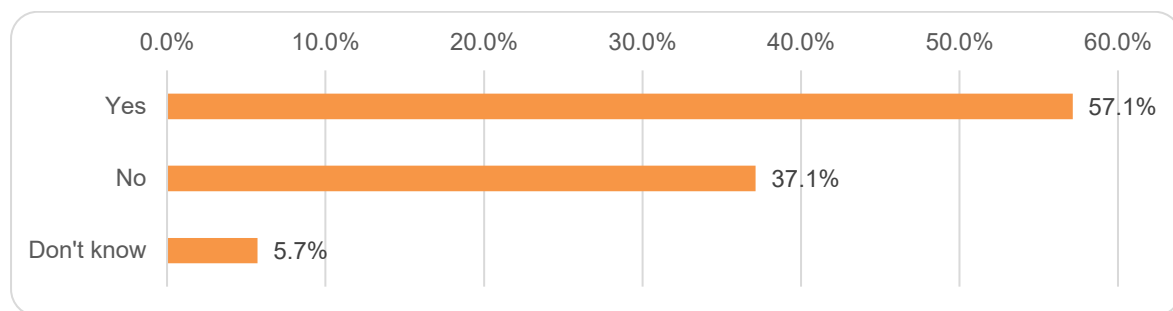
Campaign groups were the most supportive along with people responding to the parallel question in the Youth Friendly consultation. Respondents in these two groups pointed to accessibility barriers faced by many people and considered greater flexibility may help some people vote, especially disabled people and students. However, it was less clear what model of flexibility would be most valued with a number of respondents in this category wanting to see digital /online voting offered alongside traditional voting models.

Fewer than 20% of members of the public who answered this question were supportive of flexible voting schemes and those who commented were concerned about cost and value for money. There was no consensus on the preferred model of polling station provision and a number of respondents said the question was difficult to answer unless further detail was provided on how this would work in practice.

Local Authority respondents were enthusiastic about modernisation of the electoral system but noted the inconclusive evidence from the Electoral Commission evaluation of the advance voting pilots carried out at the 2022 local elections suggesting further analysis was needed on the costs and benefits of this model of voting. They raised a number of concerns including those already highlighted by the Electoral Commission such as low take up, operational complexity, cost, and value for money. They noted in particular the challenges for local authorities of delivering flexible voting schemes against a backdrop of increasing divergence between devolved and reserved elections, cost of offering greater choice - particularly in large rural authorities, and the pressure for electoral service teams from the volume and complexity of change over the next few years.

Youth Friendly Q12. Do you think advance voting is a good idea?

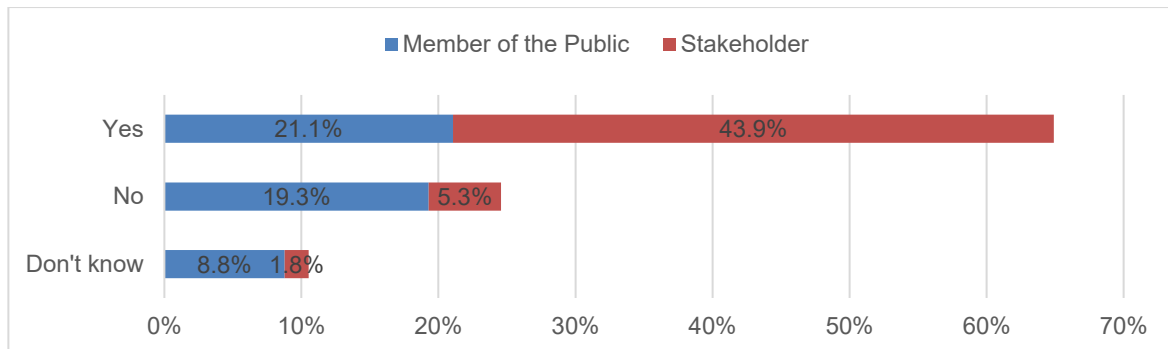
Number of Youth Friendly responses: 35



Respondents to the Youth Friendly consultation were the most supportive with 57% considering advance voting to be a good idea. One respondent noted elections often happen at a busy time in the academic year and considered greater flexibility over where or when people vote may make it easier for some students to participate. Conversely a number of respondents considered there was already sufficient flexibility in the way people vote and reasons for non-participation were the result of a range of factors including low levels of understanding, interest and trust in politics.

Question 67: Do you support the introduction of an online absent voting application system in Wales? If yes, what would you like to see in place?

Total number of responses: 59



Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

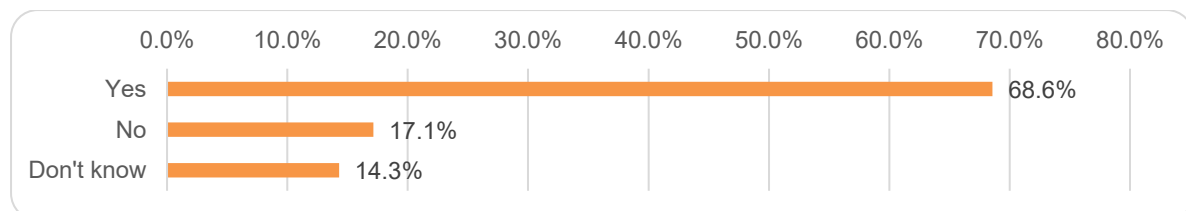
65% of respondents supported the introduction of an Online Absent Voting Application system. Respondents felt this would appeal to a wider audience and improve accessibility. A number of respondents did caveat that this system should be part of the wider UK Digital Service, they felt that the additional administrative burden of maintaining two systems would be significant. Respondents also noted that the system should support Welsh Language and that the current paper application system should still be maintained.

Several respondents commented on the additional ID verification that should be considered for an online system. There was a mix of views. Some considered that there should be no additional requirements, some thought that asking for a National Insurance number was appropriate, and another that ID should be confirmed in person.

24% of respondents were against an online application system. Concerns were raised that around the increased potential for fraud and data security. The possibility of digital disenfranchisement was also raised.

Youth Friendly Q13. Do you think this change to applying for a postal vote is a good idea?

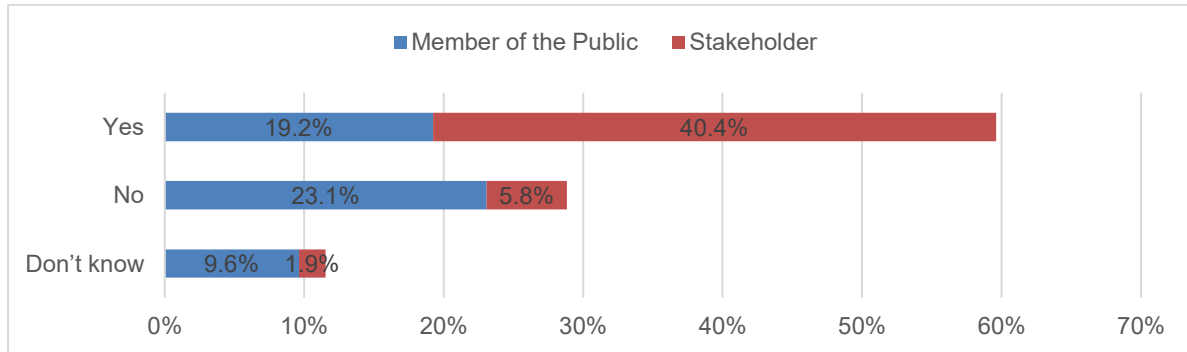
Number of Youth Friendly Responses: 35



68.6% of respondents to the Youth Friendly version supported this change while 17.1% did not.

Question 68a: Do you think that such a system would help to reduce the number of postal votes rejected due to errors on PVS' and help raise public confidence in the postal voting system?

Total number of responses: 52



Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

It should be noted that issues with the order of questions under chapter 6 of the main consultation led to a number responding to question 68a and 68b in the context of the online absent voting application system (OAVA) rather than the postal vote tracking system as had been intended.

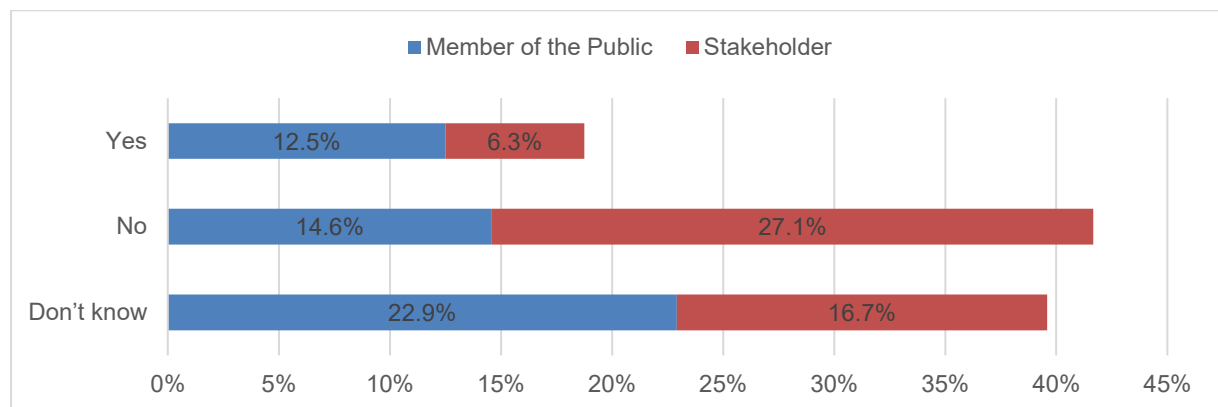
A significant proportion of responses to question 68a focused on OAVA rather than a postal vote ballot tracking system. For others it was not obvious to which system their response related. Only three responses made clear reference to a postal vote tracking system.

For those responses that related to the OAVA, there was general support that such a system could help to reduce the number of postal votes that are rejected. In particular, these respondents were of the view that an OAVA could prevent common errors at the application stage which might later lead to rejected postal votes. They also thought that an OAVA could be used to more effectively promote the postal vote signature waiver option to voters, which could in turn help to reduce rejection rates. Respondents also thought that an OAVA could allow for the collection of e-mail addresses which would help to facilitate more timely communication between Returning Officers and postal voters should any postal vote tracking and correction processes be introduced.

Respondents that focused on a postal vote ballot tracking system were of the view that this type of system would have benefits. One respondent commented that a postal vote tracking system would help to provide clarity on reasons for the rejection of postal votes and subsequently raise public confidence in the system.

Question 68b: Could a manual system be used to do this?

Total number of responses: 48



Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

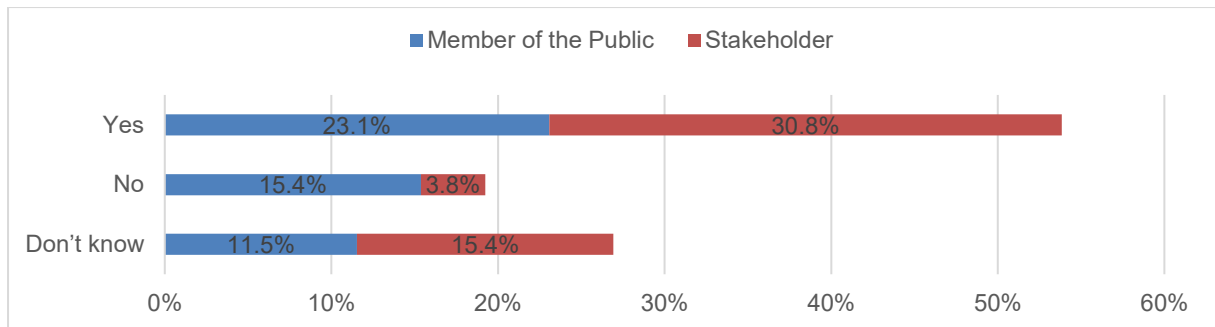
As with question 68a, the majority that responded to this question did so in the context of the OAVA or it was not clear to which system their comments referred.

For those that responded in the context of an OAVA, the overwhelming view was that these processes could not be undertaken manually. In particular, respondents thought that it would be impractical to add validation checks into a manual system. They noted that manual checks of absent vote applications do currently take place, but these do not guarantee that all errors will be identified. Divergence in the postal vote application process as a result of the Elections Act 2022 was also raised as an issue.

Amongst respondents in the electoral community, there was support for the inclusion of additional messaging on paper application forms in respect of the postal vote signature waiver option. Three respondents suggested that consideration be given to making the provision of e-mail or contact numbers compulsory on application forms as this would assist Returning Officers to make more timely contact with voters where errors had been identified. One respondent commented that an online system would be quicker than the current manual processes and could lower the rejection rate for applications, particularly for those applications that are received close to the deadline.

Question 69: Would the introduction of a postal ballot tracking system create a significant administrative burden on local authority electoral teams?

Total number of responses: 52



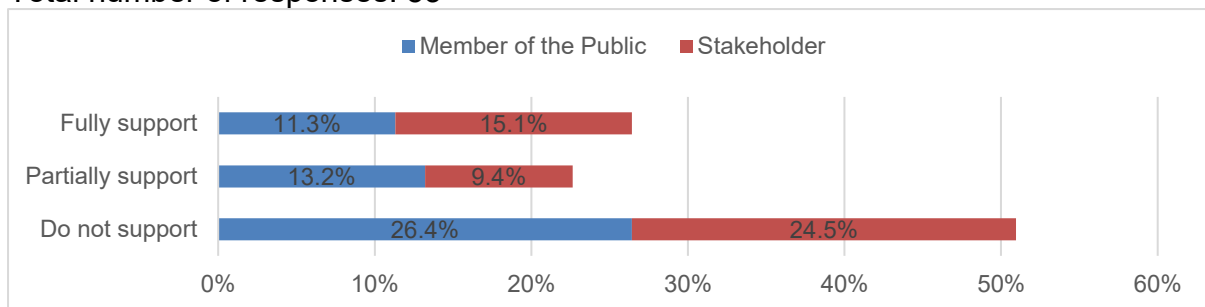
Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

Nearly 54% of those responding to this question thought that the introduction of postal vote tracking and error correction processes would increase the administrative burden on electoral teams. In particular, concerns were raised about the extra resources that would be needed and the additional workload for electoral teams at a crucial time in the election timetable.

Respondents identified measures which they considered could help limit the additional administrative burden. Four respondents were of the view that requiring e-mail or telephone contact details from postal vote applicants would make it easier for electoral teams to contact electors whose votes had been rejected. Five thought that the impact could be lessened if the elector, rather than electoral teams, was responsible for checking the status of their postal vote using some form of e-tracking portal and for initiating the process for correcting errors in a similar way to existing arrangements for spoilt postal ballot papers. Six respondents were opposed to placing a duty on Returning Officers requiring them to contact voters whose postal votes had been rejected. One respondent commented that an electronic tracking system could negate the need to contact electors after the election if reasons for rejecting postal votes were included on the system.

Question 70: Do you support the introduction of a postal vote e-tracking system in Wales?

Total number of responses: 53



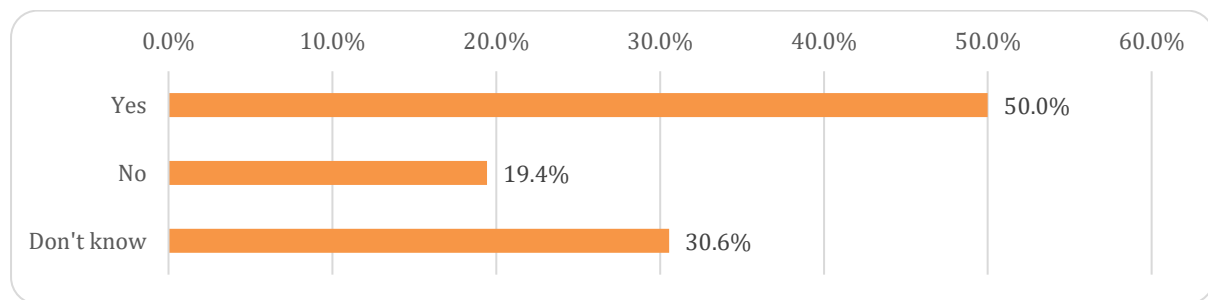
Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

There was a mixed response to this question. Just under half of those that responded fully or partially supported the introduction of a postal vote tracking system as a way to reduce rejected postal votes, increase public confidence in the postal voting system and encourage greater democratic engagement. Security, cost and value for money considerations were the most frequently raised concerns.

Respondents that opposed the introduction of tracking and correction processes, cited concerns about the extra resources that would be needed to facilitate these processes and the additional workload that would be placed on electoral teams. They also raised questions about the operation of these processes, particularly in relation to the timing and frequency of postal vote opening sessions, ensuring that a consistent approach is in place for all electors and how the processes would work for combined elections. Three respondents called for funding to be made available by the Welsh Government should postal vote tracking and correction processes be introduced. Four supported the piloting of any system being introduced before it is fully rolled out.

Youth Friendly Q14. Do you think an electronic tracking system is a good idea?

Number of Youth Friendly responses: 36



50% of those responding to the Youth Friendly consultation thought that an electronic postal vote tracking system was a good idea, whilst 19% did not. The remaining 31% were unsure.

Respondents supporting a tracking system commented that it would ensure votes are not lost, it would address voter fears that their postal vote had been mislaid and provide a way for them to know that their vote had been recorded and counted. It would enhance visibility, support greater engagement in the electoral process, and would help prevent electoral fraud. Other respondents did not see the benefits of the system or thought that the benefits did not warrant the resource requirements that would be needed.

Question 71: Do you support the wider introduction and use of Digital Registers for non-reserved elections in Wales? What are the benefits or detriments of doing so?

Total number of responses: 46

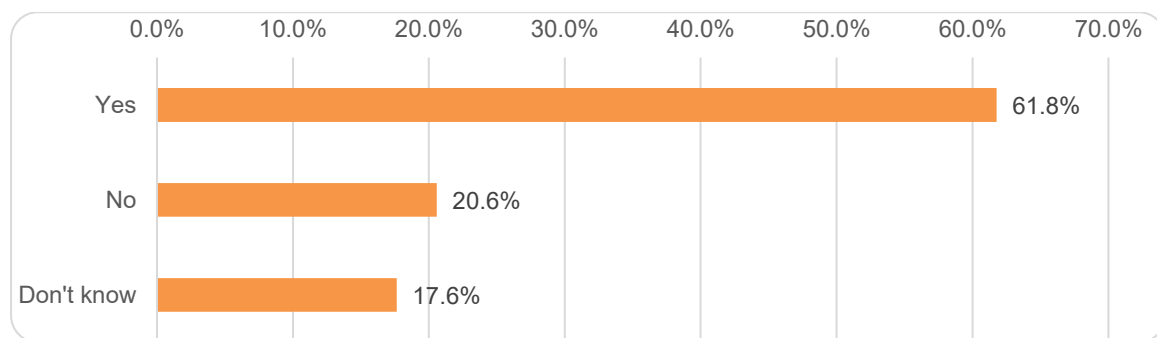
67% supported the wider introduction of Digital Registers. Respondents noted they were more efficient to use and prepare ahead of the election. They reduced paper wastage and staffing needs. Respondents who had used the system noted the useful data feeds they provided on polling day. Several noted that they were essential for introducing different types of voting (such as flexible voting, advanced voting or regional hubs). Providing them on a larger scale could reduce the cost of implementing the system.

Respondents did note that a hard copy of the documentation should be retained. The system would require good data security and would need additional reliability in rural areas. The potential cost of the system was noted and should be funded centrally. Respondents also noted that the system would need to support the Welsh Language. Respondents were concerned that the full benefits of the system would not be reached if it was not adopted for reserved elections.

20% of respondents did not support the wider introduction of Digital Registers. They raised concerns around accidental data breaches, fraud and data security. Hacking and the potential for the data to be copied were raised. The lack of transparency the system would introduce was also noted along with the potential for digital exclusion.

Youth Friendly Q15. Do you think Digital Registers are a good idea?

Number of youth Friendly responses: 34

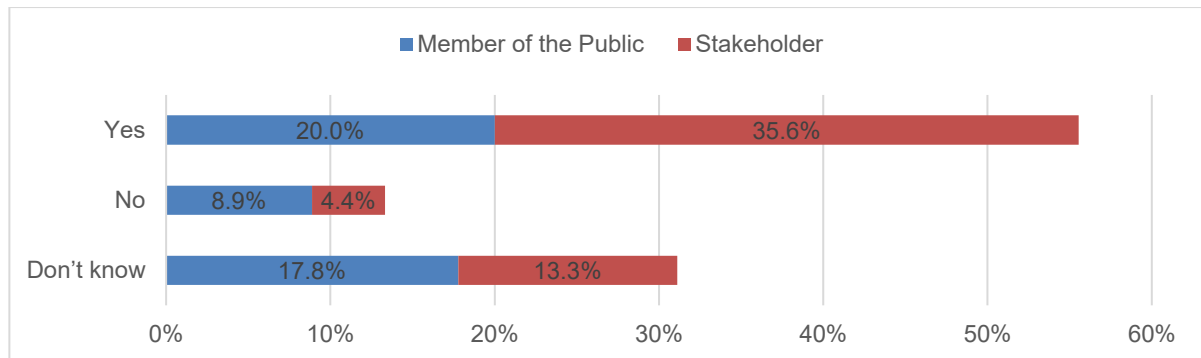


61.8% of respondents to the Youth Friendly version of the White Paper supported the introduction of Digital Registers, noting they would be a more effective, efficient and reliable means of capturing and maintaining electoral roll data.

20.6% of respondents did not support their introduction, with concerns around the protection of the data and not considering there to be any issues with the current process.

Question 72: Are there any potential barriers to a wider introduction of Digital Registers?

Total number of responses: 45



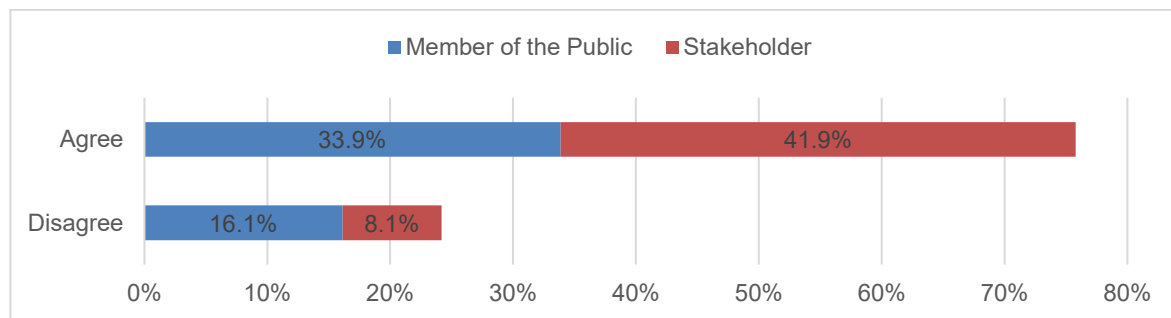
Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

55.6% of those that responded to this question thought there were potential barriers to a wider introduction of digital registers in Wales. The most frequently raised concerns related to implementation costs, security, reliability and connectivity (particularly in rural areas). Divergence between reserved and devolved elections was also raised as a potential issue.

Chapter 7: Improving Our Democracy

Question 73: To what extent do you agree or disagree that there should be mandatory training and development for councillors?

Total number of responses: 62



Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

There was strong support in favour of mandatory training for councillors, with 76% agreeing. Those who were in support stated professional development was essential, whilst others thought it shouldn't be too onerous but understood there was a need for individuals to have a clear understanding of the expectation of the role and the necessary knowledge, information, and skills to enable them to undertake it effectively.

However, 24% of respondents disagreed and cited that as some training is already mandated locally, the remaining training should be optional. Some respondents compared being a councillor with other types of public office and noted that mandatory training is not required for those roles.

Question 74: If Strongly Agree or Agree to question 73, should this mandatory training and development for councillors include principal councils and town and community councils?

Total number of responses: 44

More than half of respondents did not answer this question. Of this that did, almost three quarters of the respondents agreed mandatory training should include both. Comments included that training should be essential due to more powers being devolved to community council level. Other responses explained that the same standards of behaviour should be expected at both levels.

However, some disagreed and commented that town and community councillors have a different role, that Councillors are voluntary, and that training should be tailored accordingly due to the difference in responsibilities and decision making.

Question 75: If Strongly Agree or Agree to question 74, should the expectations for mandatory training be different between principal councils and town and community councils?

Total number of responses: 40

13 respondents to this question agreed that the training should be different due to the different levels of responsibility and be tailored to the needs of the differing roles of a County and Community Councillor. However, some respondents thought that training should be consistent across all groups which would enhance movement between organisations.

Question 76: If Strongly Agree or Agree to question 75, what proposals would you make for areas to be included in mandatory training?

Total number of responses: 34

A total of eighteen respondents to this question proposed the following be included in any mandatory training for councillors: Code of Conduct, online behaviours, people skills, finance, equality and diversity and planning.

Question 77: If Strongly Agree or Agree that there should be mandatory training, do you consider candidates should be asked to confirm their willingness to undertake it as part of the nomination of candidates' process?

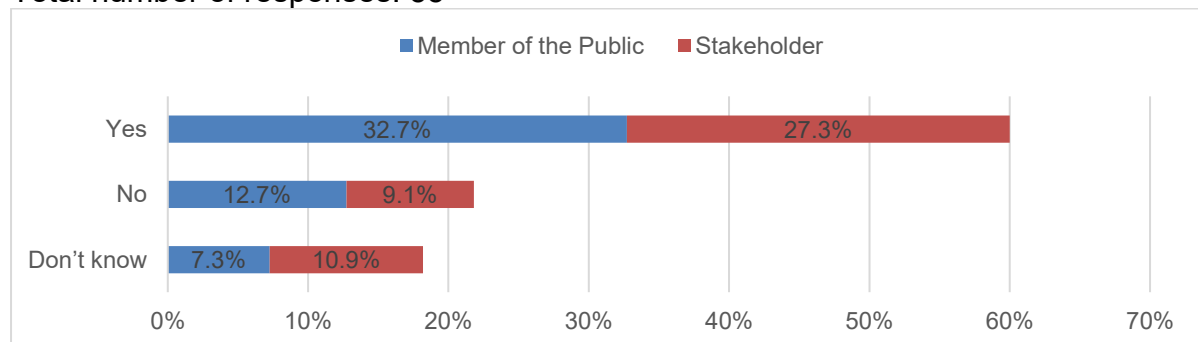
Total number of responses: 43

Respondents were supportive of this proposal. Some responses stated it was important for democracy going forward whilst others thought it should be made clear what is expected of the candidate and should be included in any nomination papers, together with the training undertaken being available on the Councillor webpage.

However, some respondents suggested that required training is already included in timetables at the nomination stage.

Question 78: Should there then be sanctions for candidates who do not confirm they are prepared to undertake mandatory training?

Total number of responses: 55



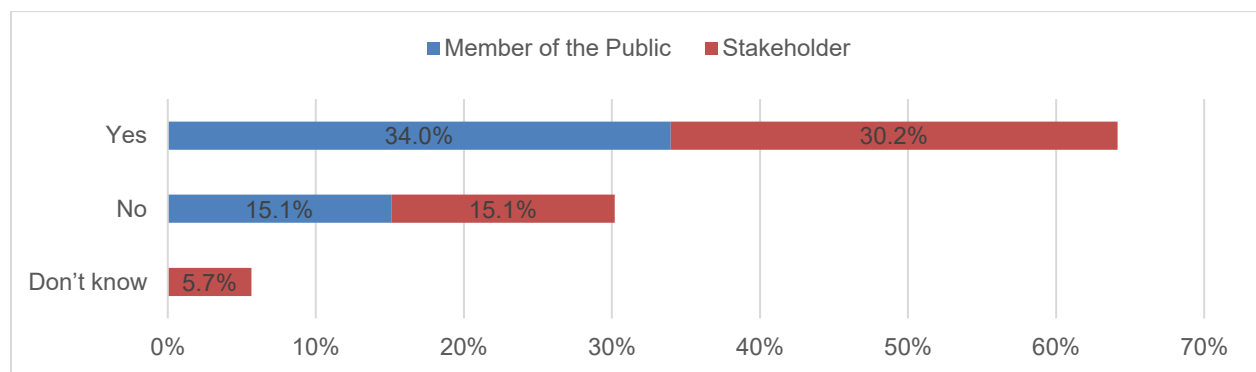
Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

Over half of the respondents agreed there should be sanctions, however 18% were unsure. Some respondents felt training would be necessary to understand the requirements of the role and council, with others suggesting decisions by individuals should be recorded on the public record.

Those who did not agree thought that this should not be a requirement to stand for office and that there was no benefit in this position as it might be a barrier to standing due to the nature and commitment required for training.

Question 79: Should a commitment to undertake mandatory training and development form part of the oath successful candidates must take before being able to take up their office?

Total number of responses: 53



Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

There was a strong support for this approach, with over 60% agreeing. Those who agreed said that the commitment should be clearly described for candidates and that training should be mandatory, with one respondent suggesting this would emphasise the commitment to the role.

There were opposing views, with answers highlighting that if this was mandatory it might not attract individuals to seek election as some individuals opt out of receiving remuneration for the role, seeing themselves as volunteers.

Question 80: If Yes at Q79 what sanctions should apply to elected members for then not undertaking mandatory training and development?

Total number of responses: 39

25 respondents to this question proposed that elected members should be removed from office, disqualified until the training has been undertaken and have their expenses allowance withheld. Other suggestions included the inability to vote on decisions at committees where mandatory training is linked and a proportion of their salary not paid if the training has not been undertaken within a certain period.

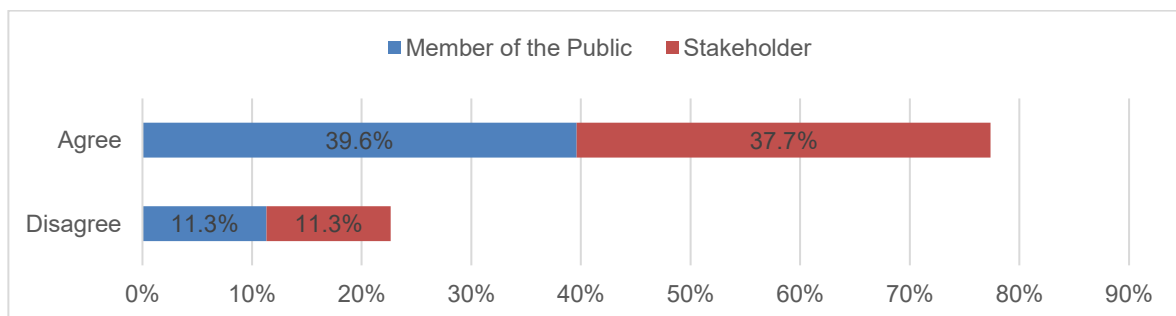
Easy Read Q16. Do you think that all councillors should have training in some important areas?

Easy Read Responses: 6

Of the responses to the easy read question, one respondent thought that there should be mandatory training for all councillors (including town and community councillors) so that they were provided with the level of understanding that was required of them whilst they were in this role. Another thought that training should be voluntary whilst another commented that training should be mandatory once elected. However, one respondent highlighted that not all councillors would be involved in all areas covered by training and therefore training should be for just those actively involved to save on cost and expense.

Question 81: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the policy proposal to bring arrangements for Town and Community councillors into line with the disqualification regime for principal council members in Wales, so that members of Town and Community councils are disqualified from becoming a member of the Senedd?

Total number of responses: 53



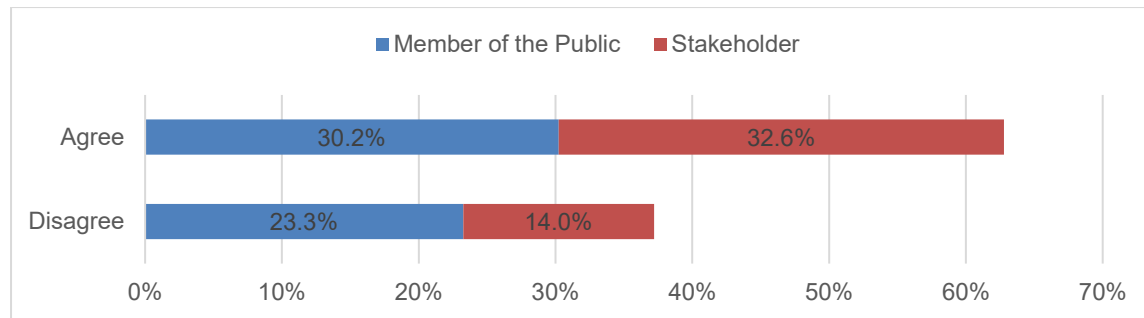
Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

On the whole, respondents support this proposal. 41 respondents were supportive and 12 were unsupportive. Of those in support, 20 were individuals and 18 were organisations. Of those not in support seven were individuals and three were organisations.

Feedback was focussed on feasibility. Supportive respondents reported conflict of interest and time management in dual-hatted roles being areas of concern, which the proposal would address. Some unsupportive respondents suggested dual-hatted roles could raise the sector's profile while eliminating dual-hatted roles could negatively impact on the recruitment of Town and Community councillors, which was challenging.

Question 82: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the grace period for all councillors elected to the Senedd should be retained?

Total number of responses: 43



Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

Respondents supported retaining the grace period for all councillors elected to the Senedd.

27 respondents were supportive and 16 were not supportive. In the supportive group there were 15 individuals and 11 organisations, one not identified, while in the unsupportive group there were seven individuals and four organisations and four not identified.

Supporters commented that the grace period should be retained in the event that the current electoral cycles remain the same, but others argued that the grace period could be lowered to six months and that members could automatically stand down from their previous role when elected to a new one.

Unsupportive respondents argued that holding two or more elected offices could limit the opportunity to broaden the pool of experience and talent in local decision making. They also suggested that the issues of conflict of interest and time management would not be fully addressed if there was a grace period.

The main feedback was structured around the financial matters of the cost of running a by-election and the remuneration of councillors.

a) Cost of running a by-election

Unsupportive respondents reported that retaining the grace period would avoid the cost of running by-elections, whereas supportive respondents argued that the cost of by-elections should not impede democracy.

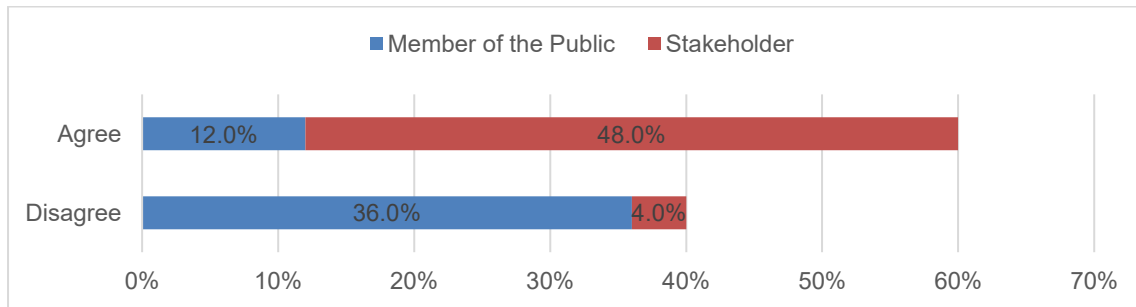
b) Remuneration

Respondents reported that remuneration of dual hatted members during that period however should be reviewed and brought in line with similar rules the other public bodies have in place for principal authority councillors, who are only entitled to a single senior salary allowance to prevent multiple payments for the different roles they undertake.

Final Questions

Question 83: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the approach to assessing the impacts of the proposals set out in the draft Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)? Do you have any comments?

Total number of responses: 25



Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

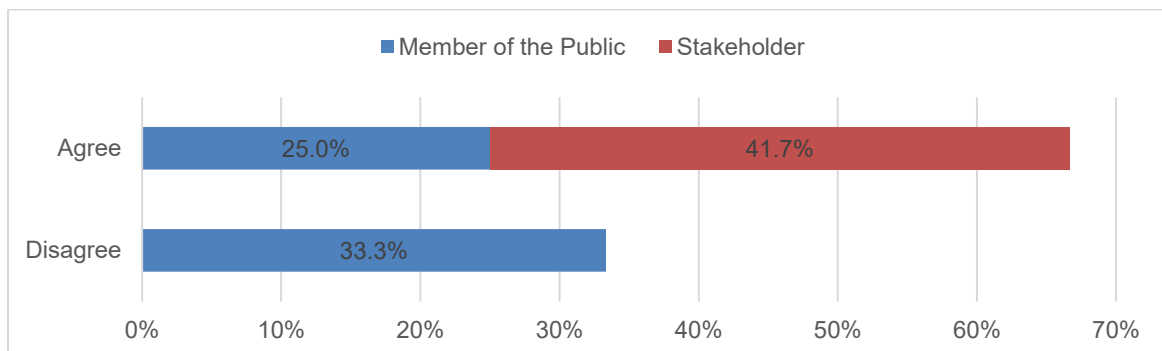
15 responses agreed with the approach to assessing the impacts of the proposals and ten disagreed. In support there were three individuals and 12 organisations. Not in support, there were nine individuals and one organisation. Comments raised included:

- Welcoming the statement that any additional burdens for local authorities would be met by the Welsh Government
- The potential for additional costs for the Electoral Commission
- Agreement with the initial assessment in the draft IIA regarding positive impacts for the Welsh language
- The need to complete an Equality Impact Assessment

Of those who did not agree with the approach, the majority were individuals, with some citing reasons such as the cost and perceptions of the IIA being a box-ticking exercise.

Question 84: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the approach to assessing the costs and benefits of the legislative proposals set out in the draft Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA)?

Total number of responses: 24



Values shown as percentage of total of those responding to the question.

16 respondents agreed, six individuals and ten organisations. Eight responses disagreed (all individuals). Another response commented welcoming the commitment to fund any new burdens. A Returning Officer suggested they would like opportunity to review the RIA and IIA again before the introduction of any legislation.

Those who disagreed with the approach cited costs and the perception that the IIA is a box ticking exercise.

Question 85: Are there other areas that should be considered as we develop the IIA and RIA further?

Total number of responses: 17

Nine of the responses offered suggestions, which included:

- Engaging directly with electors and stakeholders
- The costs and benefits of online voting
- The need to complete a Children's Rights Impact Assessment
- The risk of unforeseen costs in implementation of these proposals, including recurrent annual costs

Question 86: Please identify any other sources of data and information that we should consider in the IIA and RIA?

Total number of responses: 11

Three of the responses offered suggestions:

- The Electoral Reform Society
- Direct engagement with electors and stakeholders
- The need to cover the socio-economic duty and UN conventions.

Question 87: We would like to know your views on the effects that our proposals for electoral reform would have on the Welsh language, specifically on opportunities for people to use Welsh, and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English. What effects do you think there would be? How could positive effects be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?

Total number of responses: 33

Question 88: Please also explain how you believe the proposed policy could be formulated or changed so as to have positive effects or increased positive effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language, and no adverse effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language

Total number of responses: 22

Questions 87 and 88 asked for views on the impact of these policies on the Welsh language. Overall, the general consensus among views expressed was that there

was unlikely to be any significant impact upon the Welsh language by implementing these policies. Respondents expressed a view that the Welsh language was adequately provided for and supported in public services.

One member of the public noted that public facing material relating to elections should be easily understood and not contain complicated terminology or translations. The Welsh Language Commissioner expressed a view that there should be more training available to councillors through the medium of Welsh. That would have a positive impact on the use of Welsh at elections.

Views were expressed by stakeholders that all digital developments in the electoral field should be available equally in Welsh and English. One respondent noted that there may be challenges to consider regarding the Electoral Management Systems as they did not support Welsh language provision as effectively.

The AEA, a Returning Officer, two local authorities also suggested that when developing these policies, Welsh Government liaise with the Welsh Language Commissioner as well as other relevant stakeholder groups such as the Welsh Legislation Advisory Group, Wales Electoral Co-Ordination Board and Wales Electoral Practitioners Working Group to provide expertise in relation to this specific area.

Easy Read Q17. We would like to know if you think any of this work could impact the Welsh language. Do you think there is anything we can do to make sure Welsh is treated the same as English?

Number of Easy Read responses: Three

Responses to this question expressed a view that the Welsh language was already adequately provided for by the Welsh Government.

Youth Friendly Q16. Do you think our proposals will have positive or negative effects on the Welsh language? Can you explain what you think the effects will be?

Number of Youth Friendly responses: 21

16 respondents offered comments in response to this question, most of whom felt there would be no or minimal effect upon the Welsh language. Two respondents felt that Welsh language was disproportionately favoured over English by the Welsh Government.

Question 89: We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any comments on any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please tell us below.

Total number of responses: 32

Comments given in response to this question raised concerns in the following areas:

- The quality of candidates and politicians was poor. This needed to be addressed to encourage people to vote.
- Returning Officers and electoral administrators did not have the resources or capacity to deliver all of the proposals within this White Paper.
- Divergence between devolved and non-devolved elections brought a high risk of voter confusion. This placed an added burden on already stretched electoral staff and therefore combined elections should be avoided.

The Electoral Commission noted that it would like to see action on electoral issues not included within the White Paper. These were:

- Joint descriptions on the ballot paper
- Postal vote secrecy requirements
- Ban campaigners from handling postal votes

Whilst not included within this White Paper, two members of the public and four stakeholders expressed concerns regarding Senedd reform proposals under this question.

Easy Read Q18. Is there anything else you would like to add that has not been covered?

Number of Easy Read responses: Four

There were four responses to this question. One called for electronic voting, another felt that the existing system of postal voting was adequate. Another response noted that Welsh Government should look to reduce costs without increasing bureaucracy.

Youth Friendly Q17. Is there anything else we need to think about when making changes to elections in Wales?

Number of Youth Friendly responses: 19

Youth Friendly responses particularly highlighted the need for better quality candidates standing for election to encourage people to vote.

4. Summary of Engagement events

4.1 As part of the consultation process targeted engagement events were held with key stakeholders. They were designed to inform stakeholders and test the practical application of the proposals contained within the White Paper. Welsh Government officials also engaged with key stakeholders through routine meetings and informal contact.

4.2 Key engagement events included:

- Meeting between the Counsel General and Minister for the Constitution, Returning Officers, the AEA and electoral service managers
- A round-table workshop for third sector and local authorities hosted by the Electoral Reform Society
- A technical session hosted by the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales (the Commission)
- Three technical sessions with electoral software providers
- Three Diversity in Democracy events, including candidate safety workshops
- A drop-in session for Members of Senedd on Diversity in Democracy and candidate safety.

4.3 On the whole attendees of the engagement events were positive about the need for change and Welsh Government's intention to modernise electoral administration.

4.4 Concerns were expressed by Returning Officers, the AEA and electoral service managers regarding the administrative and financial burden some reforms would place upon Returning Officers and Local Authorities. Running pilots was highlighted as a considerable concern, as were the digital elements and the ability of electoral management systems to implement the proposed changes.

4.5 Divergence between devolved and non-devolved elections was also a key concern among electoral services managers and the AEA. Views were expressed that again this creates an administrative burden for electoral staff and could lead to confusion among voters.

4.6 At the Candidate safety workshops attendees expressed support for harsher penalties for, and more legal action taken against, those that abuse candidates and elected members.

4.7 The electoral administrators that attended the technical briefing session held by the Commission were generally supportive of the proposals to amend the Commission's functions.

4.8 Engagement was undertaken with the existing Electoral Management System (EMS) providers in Wales as part of the Welsh Government's regular update meetings. Discussions included an overview of aspects of the consultation White Paper that would directly impact the EMS providers. The meetings were intended to ensure that EMS providers were aware of the contents of the White Paper and were able to ask clarification questions. All the providers welcomed the

engagement and were keen to continue to discuss the issues after the consultation and as the policies were developed further.

4.9A public communication strategy was also used, with information about the consultation proposals and how to respond to the consultation being published in Welsh media channels, and through Welsh Governments online communications.

5. Next Steps

5.1 The Welsh Government appreciates all of the views expressed in response to this consultation which will help deliver our vision of increasing voter participation and ensuring every citizen can play their full part in our democracy. A written statement has been published alongside this summary report, outlining the next steps for electoral reform in Wales. We will continue to work with our stakeholders as we further develop and begin implementation of our proposals.

6. List of Respondentsⁱ

Responses were received from the following organisations and individuals.

Main Consultation:

- Fiona Hughes
- Susan Davies
- Ffred Clegg
- Mr Peter Vincent Everall, Councillor for Jeffreyston Community Council
- Wentlooge Community Council
- Keith Mortimer
- Monmouthshire County Council, Democratic Services Committee
- Michael Thomas
- Les Hayward
- Monmouthshire County Council
- None of the above
- Owain Arfon Jones, Community Councillor, Gwersyllt Community Council
- Cllr. Dr. Del Morgan
- Benjamin Hickey
- Race Alliance Wales
- Roger Watson
- Llandough Community Council
- Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales
- Reform Political Advertising
- Learning Disability Wales
- One Voice Wales / Un Llais Cymru
- Neath Port Talbot - Returning Officer / Electoral Registration Officer
- St Ishmael Community Council
- Portskewett Community Council
- Association of Electoral Administrators (AEA)
- Janet Finch Saunders MS, Member of Senedd
- NUS Wales
- Ian Lucas
- Penarth Town Council
- WCVA
- Ceredigion County Council

- Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales
- RCTCBC Overview & Scrutiny Committee
- Disability Wales
- Democracy Club
- Archives and Records Association
- WEN Wales
- Colegau Cymru
- Prof. Toby James, Professor of Politics and Public Policy, University of East Anglia Co-Director, Electoral Integrity Project
- Electoral Commission
- Returning Officer Caerphilly CBC
- My Society
- Dr Christine Huebner, Dr Katherine A. Smith, Dr Thomas Loughran, Dr Jan Eichhorn, Dr Andrew Mycock, Universities of Sheffield, York, Lancaster, Edinburgh and Huddersfield
- Children's Commissioner for Wales
- Returning Officer
- UK Democracy Fund Hosted by the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust
- Electoral Reform Society Cymru
- Cardiff Council's Electoral Registration and Democratic Services Department
- RNIB Cymru
- WLGA
- Wales Electoral Coordination Board (WECEB)
- Returning Officer/Electoral Registration Officer, Pembrokeshire County Council
- Modern Democracy
- Flintshire County Council
- Cyngor Gwynedd
- Vale of Glamorgan Council
- Omidaze Productions
- Comisiynydd y Gymraeg
- Equality and Human Rights Commission

Easy Read Consultation:

- Llandough Community Council
- Pembroke Dock Town Council
- Abergavenny Town Council
- Talgarth Town Council
- Paul Woolman
- Jenny Edwards, Hirwaun Community Councillor
- Coychurch Higher CC

British Sign Language Consultation: No respondents

ⁱ 28 respondents requested to remain anonymous. Names and Organisations were not requested from those completing the Youth Friendly version of the consultation.