

Institute for Public Policy Research



MODERNISING ELECTIONS

HOW TO GET VOTERS BACK

**Parth Patel
and Ryan Swift**

December 2024

ABOUT IPPR

IPPR, the Institute for Public Policy Research, is an independent charity working towards a fairer, greener, and more prosperous society. We are researchers, communicators, and policy experts creating tangible progressive change, and turning bold ideas into common sense realities. Working across the UK, IPPR, IPPR North, and IPPR Scotland are deeply connected to the people of our nations and regions, and the issues our communities face.

We have helped shape national conversations and progressive policy change for more than 30 years. From making the early case for the minimum wage and tackling regional inequality, to proposing a windfall tax on energy companies, IPPR's research and policy work has put forward practical solutions for the crises facing society.

IPPR
4th floor,
8 Storey's Gate
London
SW1P 3AY

E: info@ippr.org
www.ippr.org
Registered charity no: 800065 (England and Wales),
SC046557 (Scotland)
This paper was first published in December 2024. © IPPR 2024

The contents and opinions expressed in this paper are those of the authors only.

The progressive policy think tank



CONTENTS

Summary	5
1. Introduction	9
2. Recent trends in voting inequality	11
3. Making voting easier	15
Before election day	15
On election day.....	18
4. Making voting worthwhile	21
My vote vs your money	22
My vote vs your vote.....	26
5. Cultivating voting norms	28
Socialisation, schools, and reducing the voting age	28
Responsibilities of the citizen.....	30
6. Conclusion	33
References	36

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dr Parth Patel is associate director for democracy and politics at IPPR.

Dr Ryan Swift is a research fellow at IPPR and IPPR North.

ABOUT THE ANALYSTS

Dr Viktor Valgarðsson is a Leverhulme research fellow at the University of Southampton. He supported the analysis of voting patterns.

Steve Goodrich is head of research and investigations at Transparency International UK. He supported the analysis of political donation trends.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work has been funded by the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust and the This Day Foundation. The material presented here represents the views of the authors, not necessarily those of JRRT or This Day.

The authors would like to thank Matthew McGregor (38 Degrees), Martha Dalton (Lodestone), Dr Jessica Garland (Electoral Reform Society), Steve Goodrich, Margot Mollat and Rose Zussman (Transparency International), Dr Susan Hawley and George Havenhand (Spotlight on Corruption), Will Somerville (Unbound) and Toby James (University of East Anglia) for their contributions to this report. We would also like to thank our tireless colleagues at IPPR, including Sarah Mulley, David Wastell, Georgia Horsfall, Liam Evans, Harry Quilter-Pinner, Abi Hynes and Richard Maclean.

Download

This document is available to download as a free PDF and in other formats at:

<http://www.ippr.org/articles/modernising-elections>

Citation

If you are using this document in your own writing, our preferred citation is:

Patel P and Swift R (2024) *Modernising elections: How to get voters back*, IPPR.

<http://www.ippr.org/articles/modernising-elections>

Permission to share

This document is published under a creative commons licence:

Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 2.0 UK

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/uk/>

For commercial use, please contact info@ippr.org



SUMMARY

Elections are the defining feature of modern democracy. They are the process by which we express a desired future en masse. It is the mass dimension that matters most; it is the mass dimension that is receding.

One in every two adults living in this country voted at the 2024 general election. This is the lowest share of the population to vote since universal suffrage. Even among registered voters, only three in every five cast a ballot. If non-voters were a party, they would have been the largest party by some distance.

As important as size is spread. Table S.1 describes the ‘turnout gap’ across various measures at the 2024 election. Turnout was very unequal.

TABLE S.1

Turnout gaps between sociodemographic groups using individual-level data

Sociodemographic group	Turnout gap (%)
Between 18- to 24-year-olds and over-60s	21
Between top and bottom third earners	11
Between graduates and non-graduates	11
Between working- and middle-class occupations	11
Between renters and owners	19
Between white British people and others	6

Source: IPPR-Valgarðsson analysis of British Election Study (2024)

Note: turnout gap refers to the percentage difference in turnout among registered voters between comparable sociodemographic groups.

This report unearths a new, concerning trend. While inequality across age and income groups has stayed roughly constant across the most recent general elections, it has grown on measures of housing tenure and education. The turnout gap between graduates and non-graduates has doubled since the 2019 election and grown by a quarter between renters and owners since the 2017 election.

Political inequality in this country has sharpened. A growing number of Britons sense they do not have a stake in the collective decision-making endeavour that is democracy. This increases the space for populist politicians, who pit ‘the people’ against ‘the elite’, to exploit. They are doing so to ruthless effect. Reform UK and the Conservatives performed better with non-graduates than graduates at the 2024 general election; the opposite was true of the Labour, Liberal Democrat and Green parties. This is a relatively new development: before 2016, non-graduates were more likely to vote Labour in every election since 1979.

As long as progressives interpret populism thinly as a symptom only of economic and cultural grievances, they will be fighting with one eye closed. It is also a symptom of political grievances. If the cause is political, so too must be the remedy.

Which is to say the only off-ramp to the heightening doom loop of voting patterns, skewed policy and populist politics is democratic reform. This report focusses on an important and actionable part of that: elections.

It puts forward three policy approaches to improve turnout and reduce inequality at UK general elections.

- 1. Make voting easier.** By taking down the barriers to electoral registration before election day, and barriers to arriving at the ballot box on election day. This could include automatic voter registration, removal or relaxation of voter ID requirements, moving polling day to a non-working day, and extending voter rights to some long-term residents with permanent residency rights.
- 2. Make voting more worthwhile.** By ensuring there is a perceived 'return' on voting relative to other forms of political influence, and that individuals have roughly equal 'returns' on their vote. This could include capping political donations, stronger rules and enforcement on political donations, electoral system reform and population-based constituencies.
- 3. Create norms of voting.** By cultivating a stronger culture of democratic participation using state and civic institutions. This could include extending voting rights to 16- and 17-year-olds, citizenship education at school, compulsory voting and an election day service.

The policies analysed in this report are not all equal. Some are more effective than others at raising overall turnout numbers; others will more effective at reducing inequality. Some are pretty straightforward to implement; others are fraught, complicated or controversial.

Figure S.2 assesses policies according to three criteria: turnout, inequality and implementation. Using this tool, policies can be combined to optimise a particular outcome. Policy makers most interested in reducing age inequalities, for example, will bring together a different assortment than those most interested in maximising the sheer number that turn up.

TABLE S.2

Assessing policies to improve participation in general elections

	Policy	Effect size on turnout		Will it reduce political inequality?			Ease of implementation	
		Short run	Long run	Age	Class	Race	Practical	Political
Make voting easier	Automatic voter registration	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Green
	Remove photo ID requirement	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Green
	Non-working day elections	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Green
	Voting rights for permanent residents	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Red
Make voting more worthwhile	£100,000 annual cap on political donors	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow
	Regulations for cleaner money in politics	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow
	Electoral system reform	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Red	Red
	Population-based constituencies	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green
Cultivate voting norms	Votes for 16 and 17 year olds	Yellow	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green
	Citizenship education at schools	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green
	Election day service	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Green
	Compulsory voting	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Red

Source: IPPR analysis

A small number of ‘goldilocks’ policies emerge in our analysis as effective in raising turnout and narrowing inequality, and as feasibly implementable in this parliament. These are:

- automatic voter registration
- £100,000 annual cap on political donors
- votes for 16- and 17-year-olds
- election day service.

The government should introduce an elections bill, whatever suite of policies it opts for. Putting forward a bill does at least two things. First, it shows the government is serious and strategic about breaking out of the doom loop of political inequality and populism; that this is not a problem for sticking plasters. Second, the most impactful proposals discussed in this report will require primary legislation. An elections bill is the right vehicle to carry them. It is time the institutions of the British state were be used to revitalise the state itself.

The blind spot in this government’s plans to beat populism is the lack of a policy agenda on political inequality. It needs one.

1. INTRODUCTION

The future is susceptible to human influence. This is the basic premise of democratic politics (White 2024). The form it takes varies between countries and over time. But one feature is constant: elections (at least in modern history). It is of no doubt to anyone who has participated in one that they are imperfect. But nor is it of any doubt that they are the ultimate guarantor of our collective agency.

Elections are the process by which we express a desired future en masse. It is the mass dimension that matters most. It is the mass dimension that is receding. We are getting closer to the tipping point at which elections lose legitimacy because the mass did not take part.

Just one in every two adults in this country voted at the 2024 general election (Patel and Valgarðsson 2024). It is the lowest share of the population to vote since universal suffrage.

Perhaps the only thing as important as size is spread. Older, wealthy, white people expressed themselves at a greater rate than their counterparts, reflecting a pattern we have become so used to that we forget it was not always so sharp. Turnout gaps across the income distribution were negligible in the 1960s; they have grown seven-fold since (Patel 2023).

Different rates of participation between different groups is a problem for democracy. It generates political inequality, which matters for at least two reasons.

First, it skews policy. Public policy is more responsive to the ‘haves’ and the ‘have-nots’ (Rosset and Stecker 2019; Schakel and Van Der Pas 2021; Elsässer and Schäfer 2023; Mathisen 2023). Political inequality is at the heart of understanding many policy puzzles in British democracy. Why have we allowed housing to become so unaffordable? Or tolerated income and wealth inequality to rise and remain high? Why is it easier to cut benefits for working-age people than for pensioners?

Second, it feeds populism. Those on the sharp end of the ledger know where they stand. Non-graduates are more than twice as likely to say “it’s not worth voting” than graduates (Patel 2023), while the bottom third of earners are twice as likely to think people like them have “no say in what government does” compared to the top third (Ansell and Gingrich 2022). This kind of inequality is the underlying logic of populism, which pits ‘the people’ against ‘an elite’ to challenge not the principle of democracy but the way it is practised. It is no surprise that populist parties are so effective at mobilising non-voters.

The only off-ramp to the heightening doom loop of declining turnout, skewed policy and growing populism is democratic reform. In the 2024 King’s speech, the government noted this off-ramp (“this government is committed to improving the integrity of and widening participation in elections”) but stopped short of taking it.

Letting current trends in political inequality play out would be an obvious act of self-harm for this government. Its main challengers are in the populist form, a politics that thrives on perceptions of unequal political influence. For as long as progressives interpret populism thinly as a symptom only of economic and cultural grievances, they will be fighting with one eye closed. If the cause is political, so too must be the remedy.

To be clear, dealing with political inequality is a grander and more challenging endeavour than dealing with voting inequality. Improving participation in elections, however, is the easiest first step to take towards a more politically equal country. If progress cannot be made on basic issues such as voter registration, more complicated reforms – such as those concerning the media ecosystem – will remain off the agenda.

This report puts forward three policy approaches to improve turnout and reduce inequality at UK general elections.

1. **Make voting easier.** By taking down the barriers to electoral registration before election day, and the barriers to arriving at the ballot box on election day.
2. **Make voting more worthwhile.** By ensuring there is a perceived ‘return’ on voting relative to other forms of political influence, and that individuals have roughly equal ‘returns’ on their vote.
3. **Create norms of voting.** By cultivating a stronger culture of democratic participation using state and civic institutions.

This report sets out and examines a range of policy options to deliver against these three goals. It offers discussion on strengths, drawbacks and implementation challenges for these proposals, before providing an assessment and categorisation of reforms the government should prioritise.

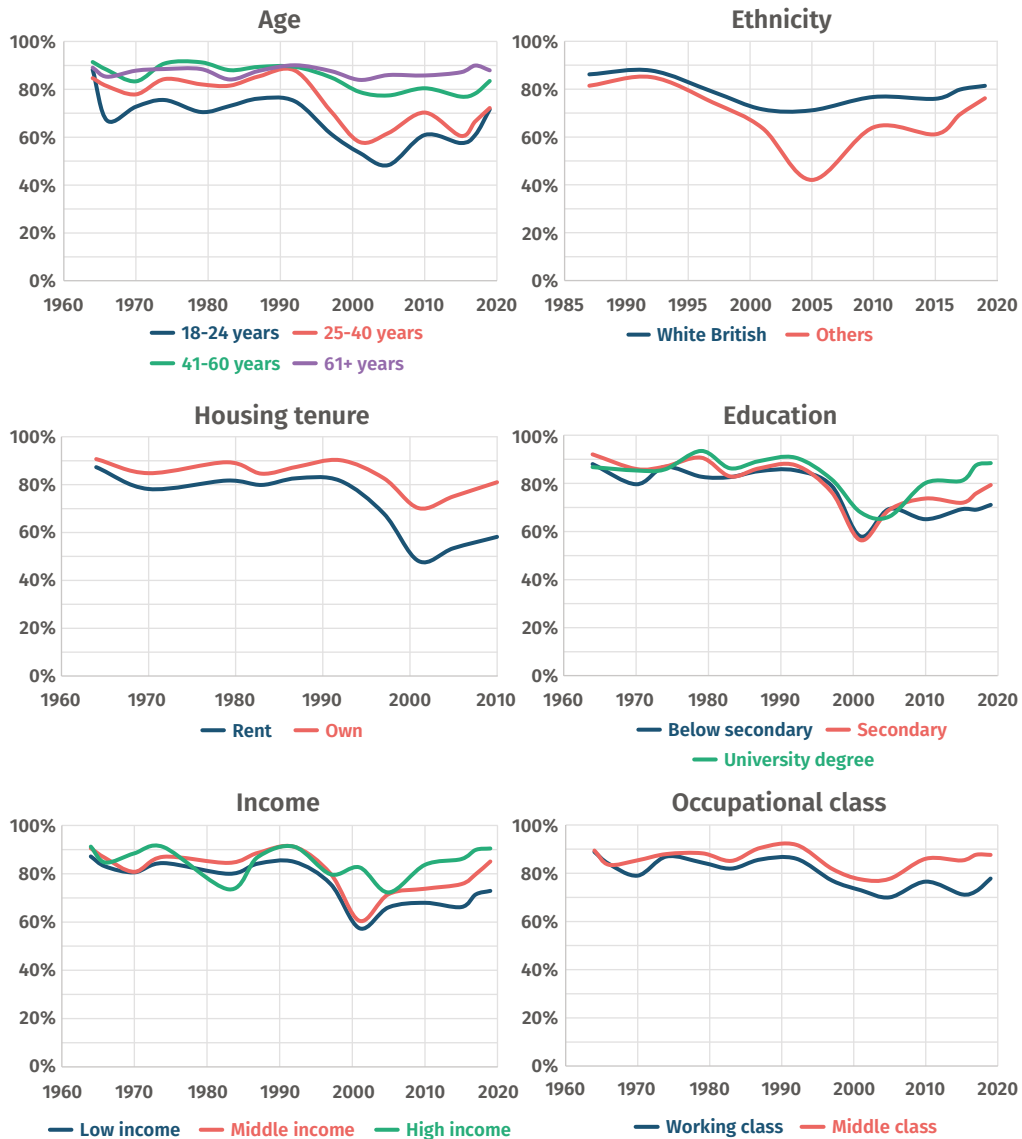
2. RECENT TRENDS IN VOTING INEQUALITY

Inequalities in turnout at UK general elections have grown across virtually all dimensions over the past half century (Patel 2023). The turnout gap has grown especially quickly since the turn of the century (figure 2.1).

FIGURE 2.1

Voting inequalities have grown over the long run

Percentage of people who voted at a UK general election (self-reported)



Source: Patel 2023

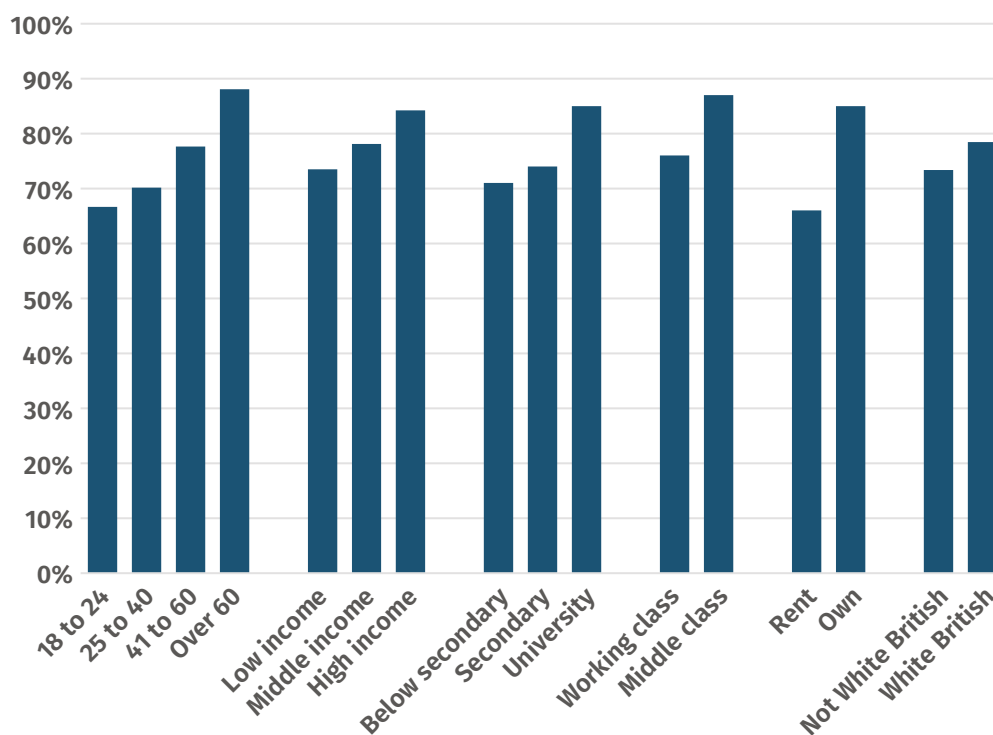
If the trend over the long run is clear, over the short run it is not. Is inequality in voter turnout at UK general elections growing, falling or staying about the same? Using individual-level data from the British Election Study (2024), this report examines patterns and trends in turnout since the 2015 election.

Figure 2.2 is a snapshot of turnout patterns at the 2024 general election. The turnout gap between 18- to 24-year-olds and those over 60 was 21 percentage points, and 19 percentage points between renters and owners. It was 11 percentage points between: top and bottom third earners; graduates and those with secondary education; and people in working class and middle-class jobs.

FIGURE 2.2

Patterns of inequality at the general election

Percentage of people who voted in the 2024 general election by sociodemographic group (self-reported)



Source: IPPR-Valgarðsson analysis of British Election Study (2024)

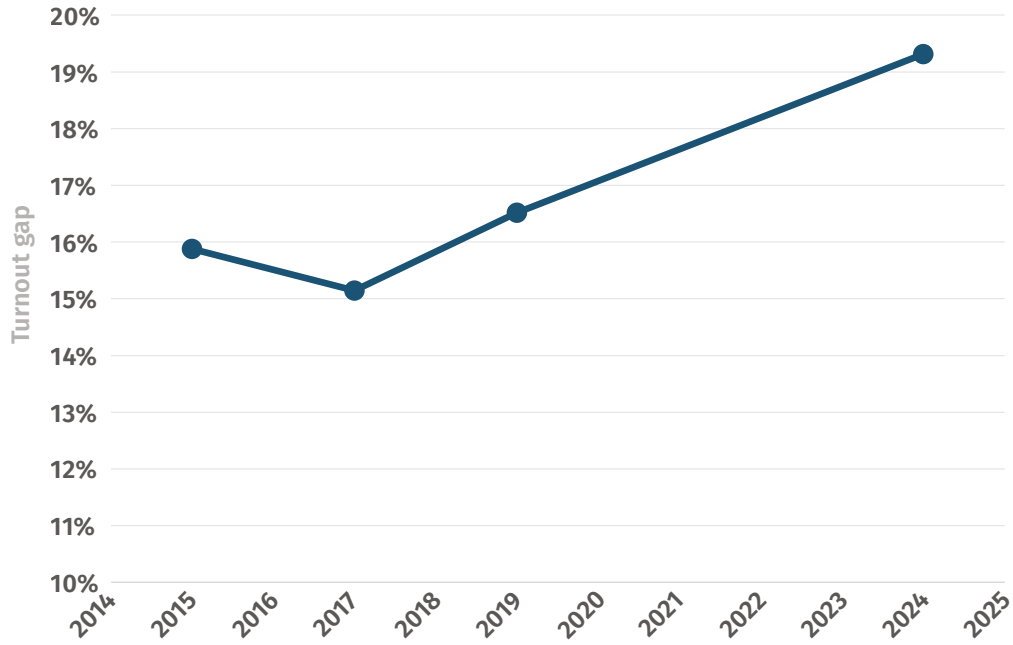
In terms of trends, the story is complicated. Inequalities in turnout across income groups and age groups have stayed roughly the same between 2015 and 2024. To be clear, the inequalities are very wide; they are just not growing.

The story is different with regard to housing tenure and education. Inequalities on those two dimensions have been growing since the 2017 election. The turnout gap between renters and owners has grown by around a quarter since the 2017 election (figure 2.3). The greatest transformation, however, regards education voting. The turnout gap between graduates and non-graduates has doubled between the 2019 and 2024 general elections (figure 2.4).

FIGURE 2.3

The turnout gap between renters and owners is growing

Percentage point difference in turnout between renters and homeowners in recent general election (self-reported)

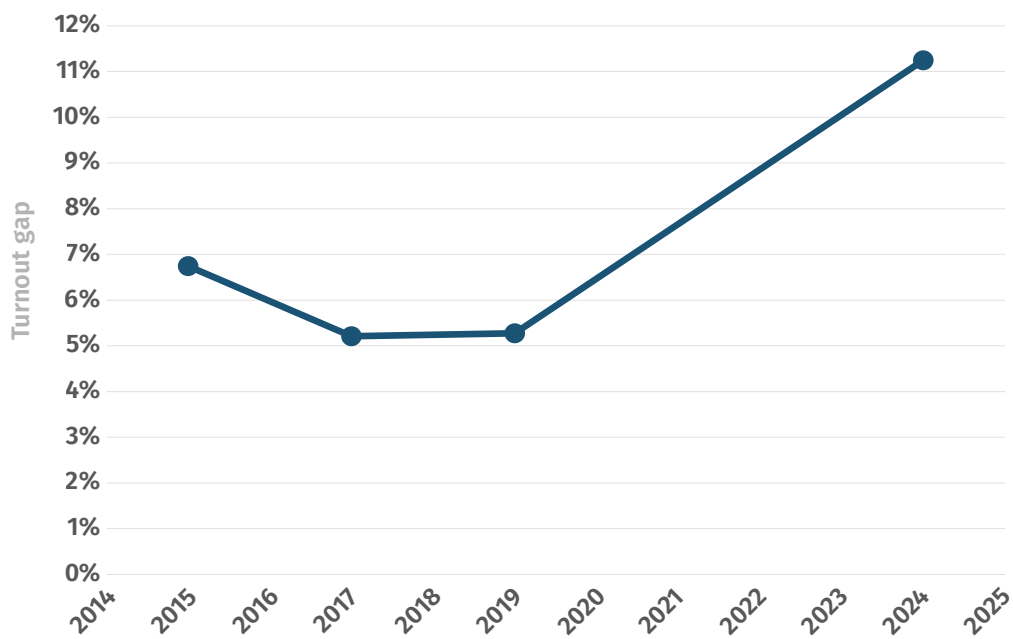


Source: IPPR-Valgarðsson analysis of British Election Study (2024)

FIGURE 2.4

The turnout gap between graduates and non-graduates is growing

Percentage point difference in turnout between graduates and non-graduates in recent general election (self-reported)



Source: IPPR-Valgarðsson analysis of British Election Study (2024)

These are worrying trends. Voting inequalities between social groups are wide across virtually every dimension. None show any sign of narrowing. Most concerning, however, is the steadily growing turnout gap between renters and homeowners, and the rapid growth in the turnout gap between graduates and non-graduates.

3.

MAKING VOTING EASIER

The most obvious approach policy makers should consider to improving turnout in elections is to make participating in them easier. The ‘costs’ or barriers associated with voting have a bearing on political equality if they are easier for some groups to navigate than others (Beramendi et al 2022). This is true for the UK today, where the barriers to voting are higher or harder to break through for groups like renters, young people and those in precarious jobs or on low incomes.

Despite the secular decline in voter turnout and impossible-to-ignore inequalities in the ways in which Britons turn up on election day, policies implemented by the Johnson-Truss-Sunak government imposed new barriers to voting without clear rationale or evidence. It was a strange focus of the government’s limited bandwidth on democratic reform, especially because it coincided with a collapse in confidence and participation in British democracy.

This government should change direction. Policy has to face the problems we have, not the problems we want. Barriers to participating in British democracy can and should be lowered. There are two kinds of barriers to think about: those before election day and those on election day.

BEFORE ELECTION DAY

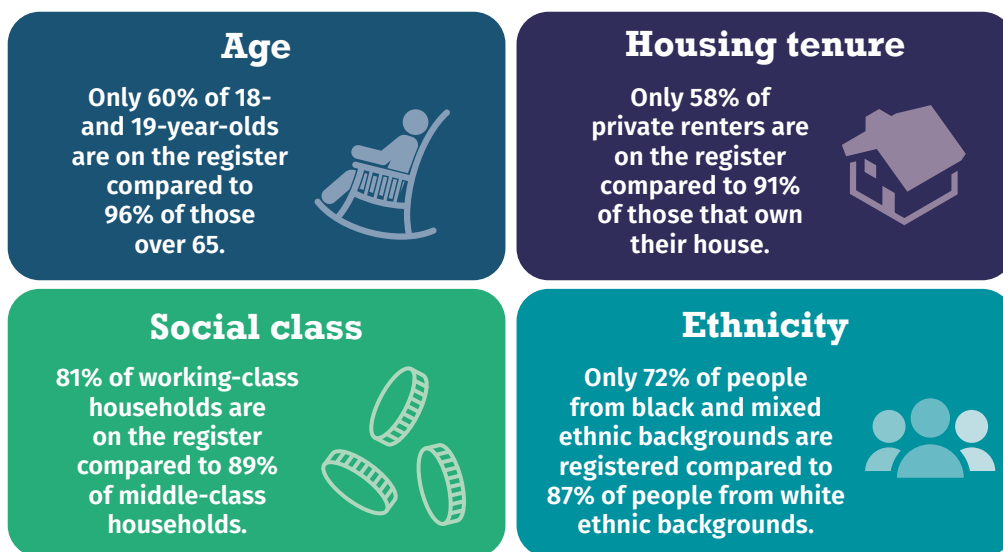
Automatic and assisted voter registration

For UK general elections, the onus is on individuals to register themselves, with the process managed by local authorities across the country. Our electoral registration process is more difficult to navigate than those of other democracies, making it harder to participate in elections, new research comparing electoral registration systems across 62 countries finds (Rushworth and Sobolewska, forthcoming).

Millions of eligible citizens are currently missing from the electoral register. According to the Electoral Commission (2023b), between 7 and 8 million eligible voters aren’t registered, either because they are missing from the electoral rolls or incorrectly registered at an old address. There are notable inequalities in who is registered to vote (figure 3.1). Young people, renters, working-class and minority ethnic people are over-represented in the population of eligible but not registered voters.

FIGURE 3.1

Inequalities in people who are registered to vote



Source: Electoral Commission 2023b

There could be a number of reasons why people are not registered to vote. It may be that they do not understand the process. They may have busy lives and don't prioritise registering to vote; this is particularly true for some groups such as renters who may be required to re-register much more frequently than more settled homeowners. Or they might just currently be uninterested in voting. It is impossible to say how many more people would vote if only they had been correctly registered. Many wouldn't. But a not-insignificant number would, and at least the 7 to 8 million 'missing voters' would have the choice on election day. It is common for people to show up at polling stations on the day of the election asking to vote, only to be told they can't because they haven't properly registered (James and Clark 2019).

There are a number of options for improving how voter registration works in the UK. One option is to create a new centralised electoral register. While this might be the most direct pathway to AVR, it would be challenging to implement quickly and may come with costs and several questions about ethical and safe data use. Another option is to expand the DWP customer information system, which could essentially act as a single national electoral register. In this approach, individuals could be identified and added to the register based on their national insurance numbers. This would be more feasible but would require consent from the Department for Work and Pensions for NI data to be used in this way and would also necessitate wholesale reform of the current voter registration system (ibid).

Efforts to develop new centralised electoral registers are more complex and fraught than efforts to improve existing local electoral registers. There are merits therefore to prioritising the latter approach in order to implement an effective system of AVR in the short to medium term. To do so, electoral registration officers (EROs) could be granted further powers to enable them to directly register eligible citizens for whom they have the necessary reliable data to do so. This would enable potential voters to be registered without having to take any action. EROs would then write to the person to tell them that they are being registered – giving them the opportunity to request anonymous registration. This method of automatic registration would require a data source that has the requisite eligibility information. The Electoral Commission has suggested using Passport Office data for this purpose.

This approach would be an effective way of automatically registering new potential voters, but other more assisted forms of voter registration could be introduced, either in tandem or sooner if more practical, to ensure the widest possible number of people are registered. This could be implemented by giving citizens the opportunity to register to vote or update their voting details when using other government services such as applying for a passport or a driver's license or when applying for universal credit or other benefits. This approach was backed in a recent report by the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee (2024). It recommended that legislation should be brought forward by the government to enable the sharing of data held by DVLA, DWP, and HM Passport Office with EROs, and to enable EROs to use that data fully.

Nudging people to register to vote in this way would provide millions of citizens each year with the opportunity to easily register to vote or update their details when using other necessary government services. For example, 6.5 million people per year could register when applying for a passport; 4 million could register when they update their driving licence address with the DVLA; 2 million a year could register when applying for universal credit; 2.5 million students could be registered through annual student enrolment; 800,000 could register when they apply for child benefit for the first time; 500,000 could register when they provide the Student Loans Company with a new address; and 450,000 could register when they apply for disability benefits (James and Bernal 2020).

For future generations, the government could explore whether citizens can be automatically registered shortly before their 16th birthday at the same time they are issued with their national insurance number. Doing so would add 700,000 young people to the electoral register each year (ibid).

AVR AROUND THE WORLD

In other countries, the process of voter registration is easier. Forms of automatic or assisted voter registration (AVR) are the normal way to register voters in most liberal democracies. Very few take a laissez-faire approach to voter registration as is the case with the UK.

France, Germany, Italy, Austria, Denmark, Spain, Sweden and at least 24 other liberal democracies use a form of automatic voter registration where eligible citizens are directly enrolled on the electoral register by government bodies without the need for action by citizens themselves. Such a process usually takes place at specific life moments. For example, in France, citizens are automatically registered when they turn 18.

Other countries use a form of assisted voter registration where citizens can take the opportunity to register to vote when interacting with other government services. This approach has been adopted at various levels in Anglosphere countries such as Australia, Canada, and the USA (James and Bernal 2020).

In the US, after introducing the 'motor-voter' laws in 1993 which included assisted registration, there has more recently been a move towards automation, with 23 states and the District of Columbia introducing automatic voter registration in the last seven years. Research found that these rules saw increases in the number of registrants ranging from 9 per cent to 94 per cent (Morris and Dunphy 2019). For example, in the state of Colorado, which has a population of around 6 million people, AVR added 200,000 citizens to the electoral register in a single year (James 2021).

Moreover, evidence from the US suggests that AVR not only improves registration levels but also has a positive impact on political participation: it has increased voter turnout among previously underrepresented groups (McGhee et al 2021, James and Bernal 2020, Morris and Dunphy 2019).

This highlights that there are a number of ways that we could move towards more automatic and assisted forms of voter registration. As the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee (2024) acknowledged, while there remain some concerns around the issue of data sharing required for AVR, these are not insurmountable given that many other countries have managed to overcome them. Similarly, a feasibility study by the Electoral Commission (2021a) noted that issues around privacy and data sharing must be considered – particularly when it comes to the introduction of assisted voter registration – but recognised that AVR would have positive impacts on voter registration. Research by James and Garnett (2023) compares voter registration systems across 159 countries and finds that automated registration improves both the completeness and accuracy of electoral registers.

Any reform to voter registration should retain citizens' ability to register anonymously should they need or wish to do so. Under the current process for electoral registration, citizens can apply to register anonymously. This means their name and address is kept off the electoral register, but they are still eligible to vote (this lasts for a period of one year and must be reapplied for). This is an important safeguard, particularly for those who may be vulnerable should their name and address be publicly accessible. Planned pilots for automatic voter registration in Wales propose giving 45 days' notice to opt out or request to be registered anonymously (Haines 2024). Other proposals recommend similar safeguards to give people time to register anonymously if they wish and to be excluded from the open register (James and Bernal 2020).

To offset concerns about privacy and anonymity, all new enrolments could be notified that they will have their name added to the electoral register at least four weeks before they are added. This would then give people time to register anonymously if they wished and to be excluded from the open register (there is a wider debate to be had about whether open registers should be abolished entirely). There is opportunity for further reform to improve safeguarding, by increasing the period in which voters can register anonymously without renewing from the current one year to five years.

Introducing AVR would go a significant way to improving electoral registration and ensuring that many more eligible voters are able to participate in our democracy. This move would also be very popular with citizens; recent polling by YouGov finds that 81 per cent of the public support AVR (Smith 2024).

To bring in automatic registration, the government could consider legislation that gives EROs the legal power to register electors without receipt of an application, if they have sufficient data to justify their enrolment. This is the approach currently being taken to implement AVR in Wales. Additionally, legislation to introduce a legal requirement for specific public offices to provide assisted voter registration could be considered. This is crucial to how AVR works in the USA. The specific offices could be set out by ministers in secondary legislation and adapted over time.

ON ELECTION DAY

Relax or remove the photo ID requirement to vote

Brought in as part of the Elections Act 2022, voters in UK general elections must now show specific forms of photo ID in order to cast their ballot. These regulations were brought in to tackle the issue of voting fraud. Experts, however, have questioned the extent to which voter fraud is a problem in UK elections. The Electoral Commission (2023c) finds no evidence of large-scale electoral fraud over the past five years.

Evidence from the 2024 general election highlights the negative impacts of the voter ID rule on electoral participation. The Electoral Commission (2024a) has

found that at least 16,000 people across Britain were turned away from polling stations and unable to vote in person due to the requirement to show ID. This figure only captures those turned away from polling stations; many others may have been reminded of their inability to vote due to lacking the requisite ID before this point. A survey by the Electoral Commission (ibid) found that when asked to choose from a list of reasons for not voting in the 2024 general election, some 10 per cent chose reasons related to voter ID. Not only does this deny these voters' voices from being heard, but it also potentially has an impact on election outcomes and the policy agendas for this parliament.

Furthermore, a report by the Local Government Information Unit finds that the scheme has had an impact on electoral administration, increasing the pressure on government services and making it harder to recruit staff for polling stations (Stride, 2023).

There are a number of potential options for improving the voter ID rule, including broadening the types of ID that can be used as proof of personation. This would be relatively simple to achieve, only requiring the amendment of existing legislation, and would enable some of the problems with voter ID requirements to be addressed – such as older voters having more forms of accepted ID than younger ones. It would not, however, remove the barriers to voting imposed by the voter ID requirement. For this to happen, the government would need to propose legislation to remove the voter ID requirements.

Move polling day to a non-working day

Since 1935, all UK general elections have been held on a Thursday. The vast majority of comparable democracies hold their elections on a weekend. Sunday is by far the most popular day internationally, while several other countries hold their elections on a Saturday, including Australia and New Zealand (Martinez i Coma and Leiva 2024). A handful of democracies, including the US, Ireland and the Netherlands, hold elections on weekdays.

When it comes to the impact on turnout of the day an election is held, some evidence suggests that weekend voting can have a positive effect on rates of participation. A study on participation in European Parliament elections found that turnout was 10 per cent lower in countries that held elections during the working week compared to those held on a weekend (Mattila 2003). Other academic analysis has found that moving elections to a Sunday could increase turnout by 6 to 7 per cent (Franklin 2002).

A study by the Electoral Commission (2021b) exploring public attitudes to electoral administration reform found that overall, the idea of weekend voting was popular. In particular, people who had long working hours thought that weekend voting would be a better option than voting on a weekday. Not having to close schools in order to carry out elections on a Thursday was also viewed positively. Some people did, however, express concerns that weekend voting could impinge on weekend leisure time.

The idea of moving polling day to a weekend has been subject to debate and trials for some time. In 1993, Labour's review of electoral systems chaired by Lord Plant considered the timing of elections. It suggested that elections could take place over the course of a weekend. Throughout the 2000s, several pilots of early or weekend voting were held by local authorities for local elections. Evaluations from these pilots noted that voters had welcomed being able to vote on a weekend; they felt that it was more convenient and opened up greater opportunities to participate (White 2008). Nevertheless, these pilots did not see significant increases in levels of voter turnout. This was also the case in more recent pilots in Wales (Electoral Commission 2022). Since turnout in local elections tends to be lower than national elections, and awareness of the localised pilots may not have been widespread, may have

been key reasons for this. Weekend voting in a general election would be a very different context.

An alternative option though – given some of the concerns around moving elections to a weekend, and to Sundays in particular – could be keeping elections on a Thursday or another weekday but make polling day a national holiday in order to enable more people to be free to participate. This approach is taken in some other democracies including South Korea and Israel (DeSilver 2018). In 14 US states, election day is a public holiday, while a number of other states require employers to give their workers time off to vote (Edwards 2024).

Creating a new ‘election day’ national public holiday for general elections could have a positive impact in terms of fostering a greater sense of excitement in participation in the electoral process (HCPCRC 2014). Moreover, an election day holiday could have a positive impact when it comes to efforts to foster a norm of political participation (as discussed in more detail in chapter 5). Academic analysis from the US suggests that designating election day as a national holiday could have both statistically and substantively significant impacts on increasing turnout, including for lower income and ethnic minority citizens, through minimising many of the largest barriers to voting such as working and being too busy (Bradfield and Johnson 2017). Polling by YouGov finds that 51 per cent of the public would support making election day a bank holiday in order to encourage more people to vote compared to 31 per cent who would oppose it (Smith 2024).

It should be noted that under the current legislation, elections cannot take place on Saturday or Sunday as these days must be disregarded for the purposes of the electoral timetable under the ‘parliamentary election rules’ in the Representation of the People Act 1983. As such, implementing weekend voting across the country for UK general elections would require primary legislation to amend this. New legislation may also be required to introduce an election day public holiday.

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE AND VOTING RIGHTS

Some segment of a country’s population has always been deemed ineligible to vote. This segment shrank dramatically during the 20th century in the UK, as voting rights extended to non-propertied men, women and younger adults.

In the 21st century, that segment is growing again. That’s because immigration and emigration have profoundly changed the composition of the resident UK population. Democratic institutions have yet to come to terms with this new reality.

As things stand, around 5 million permanent tax-paying residents of the UK do not have the right to vote in its elections (Johnston 2023). This is because citizens of countries other than the UK, Ireland and Commonwealth nations cannot register to vote for UK parliamentary elections regardless of how long they have been resident in the UK. On the other side, around 3 million non-resident citizens of the UK do have the right to vote in its elections, regardless of how long ago they left the country.

There is a clear need for a wider political conversation about the notion of citizenship and voting rights in the UK in 2024. This could consider extending voting rights to UK residents with permanent residency rights, as is the case in some other countries such as New Zealand (Barker and McMillan 2014). Additionally or alternatively, policy makers could explore encouraging citizenship acquisition, and lowering associated costs, for people who would be eligible for it.

4. MAKING VOTING WORTHWHILE

Although voting has become easier in many democracies in recent history, inequality in turnout has increased (Cagé 2023). That is why just making voting easier is insufficient as a policy strategy on its own. Voting also has to be perceived as worthwhile.

It is increasingly not (figure 4.1). A growing number of Britons over the past 30 years believe it is not really worth voting. This is most acutely felt by people in the bottom third of the income distribution, renters, people in working-class jobs, and non-graduates.

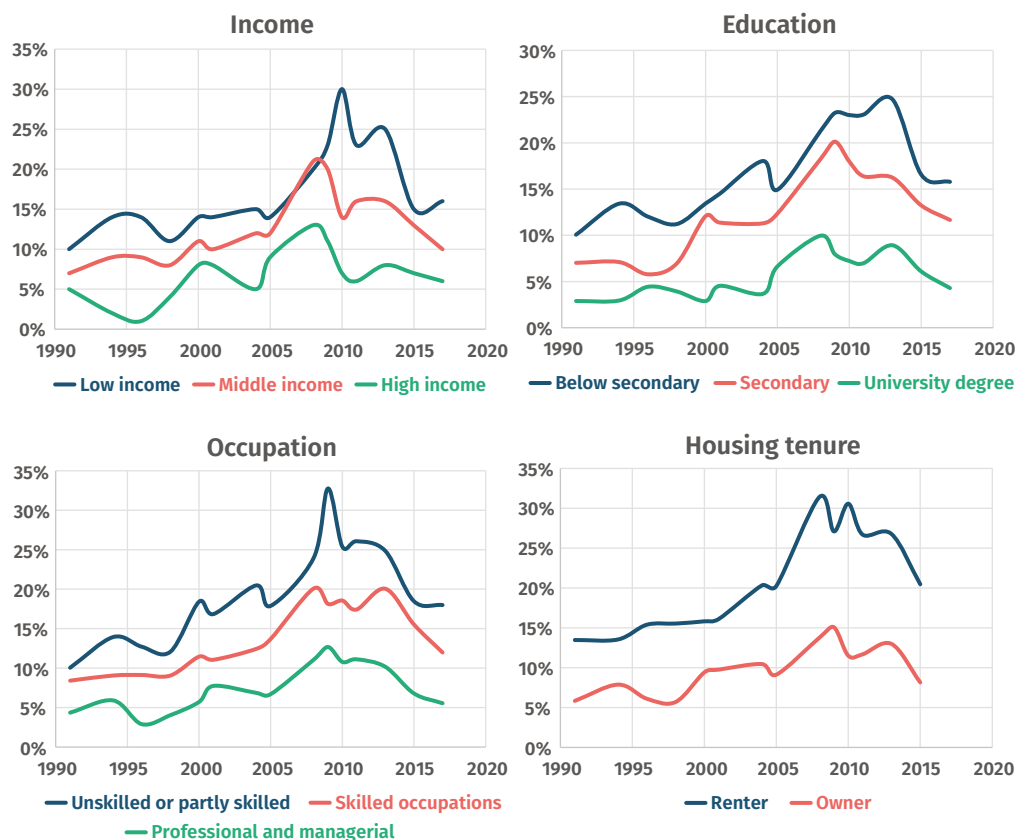
There will be several causes for this but at least two things, with regard to election processes, are important.

- **My vote vs your money.** The perceived returns to voting have declined because of the increasing amount and concentration of political donations.
- **My vote vs your vote.** The perception that some voters have more or less weight over election outcomes than others.

FIGURE 4.1

Gaps in perceptions of how worthwhile voting is are growing

Percentage of people in the UK who agree with the statement: "It's not really worth voting"



Source: Patel 2023

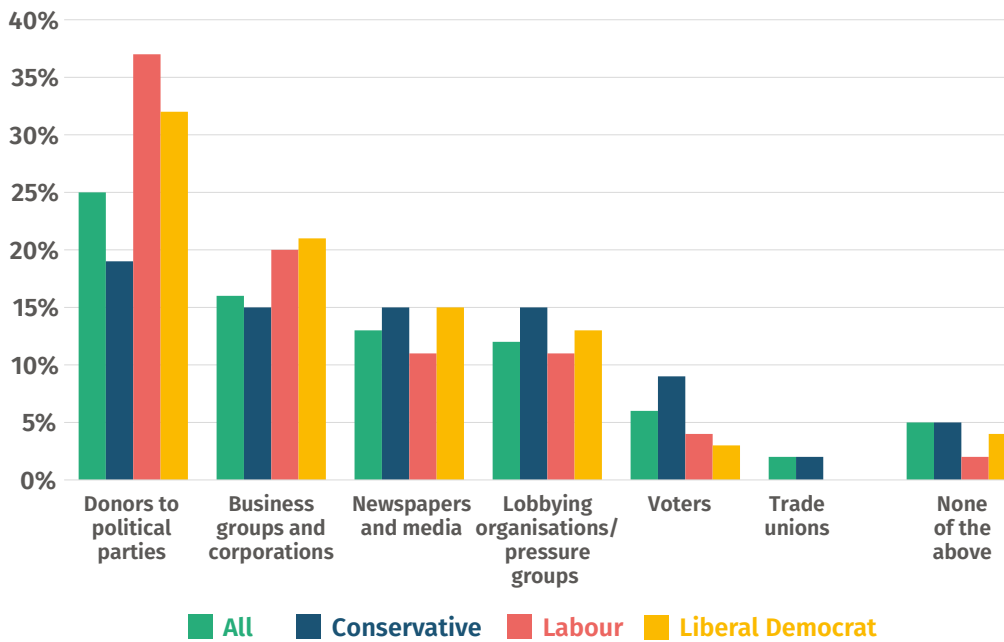
MY VOTE VS YOUR MONEY

There has been a long-term decline in the public’s perception of the transparency and integrity of party and campaign finance. In 2011, 37 per cent of people felt that party spending and funding was transparent (Electoral Commission 2024b). In 2024, just 15 per cent believed this. Research for the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) finds that 90 per cent of people believe that MPs ‘very often’ or ‘sometimes’ decide what to do based on what their donors want, rather than on what they really believe (Goddard 2016). This was seen as unacceptable to the vast majority, with 88 per cent feeling that it is ‘never’ or ‘very rarely’ acceptable for politicians to do special favours for contributors. True or not, the public perceive donors to political parties as exercising more influence over public policy than voters, business, the media and lobbyists (figure 4.2).

FIGURE 4.2

People perceive donors to political parties as more influential than voters, business, the media and lobbyists

UK voters’ response to the question: “Which of the following, if any, do you think has the most influence over public policy decisions the government makes?”



Source: Patel and Quilter-Pinner 2022

Note: Party distributions according to vote cast in the 2019 general election

The shift in public opinion has coincided with shifts in political financing. Total political donations, adjusted for inflation, have more than doubled since the turn of the century in the UK (Draca et al 2023). More concerning than volume is concentration. There were more donations over £1 million in 2023 than ever before since records began. Before 2017, the sum of £1 million+ donations had never breached the £10 million mark. Since then, it has been breached four times – three times by the Conservatives and once by Labour. The growth in donations over £1 million has been especially sharp in the Conservative party (figure 4.3).

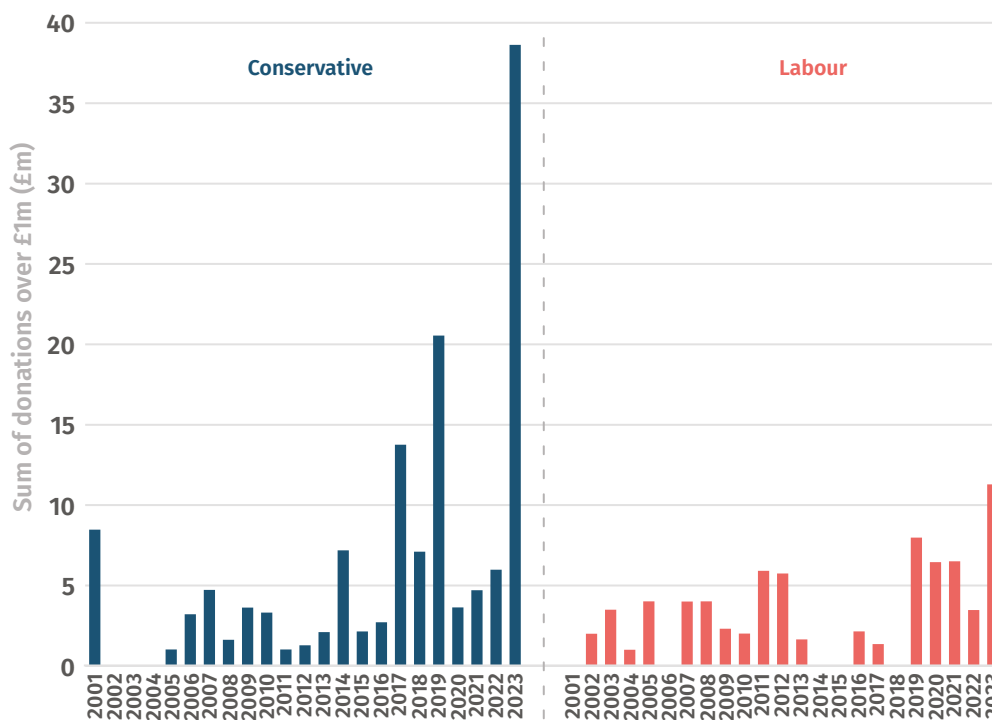
If the financial sustainability of a political party is reliant on millionaires, it is no surprise that voters perceive diminishing returns on their vote compared to the power of someone else’s pound. Addressing this issue may improve public

perceptions and political trust, thereby boosting turnout and improving political equality (Cagé 2023).

FIGURE 4.3

Big money has entered British politics

Annual sum of £1 million+ donations to the Conservative and Labour parties



Source: IPPR-Transparency International UK analysis of Electoral Commission data

Less money in politics

Despite the growing amount and concentration of money in British politics, recent policy has chosen to exacerbate both. Party spending limits were increased by 80 per cent in 2023, from £19.5 million to £35 million, drawing more ‘big money’ into politics. The previous government did not carry out a full impact assessment nor consult the Electoral Commission when making these changes. It also introduced the measure through a statutory instrument – a legislative tool that can pass without a full debate or vote – which limited parliamentary scrutiny of the change.

There is currently no limit on how much an individual can donate to political parties. The UK’s approach to party funding makes it something of an outlier compared to other European democracies. France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Spain and Portugal have caps on political donations. The level at which these are set varies depending on the party funding system in place. In countries where there is significant state funding of political parties, individual caps tend to be low; in Belgium for example the cap is set at €500 annually (France 2023). In systems where parties receive limited or no state funding, caps tend to be higher; for example, in Italy the cap is €100,000 annually (ibid).

This government should follow suit; it should introduce an annual cap on political donors. This is the single most important policy for the government to fulfil its manifesto pledge to “strengthen the rules around donations to political parties.”

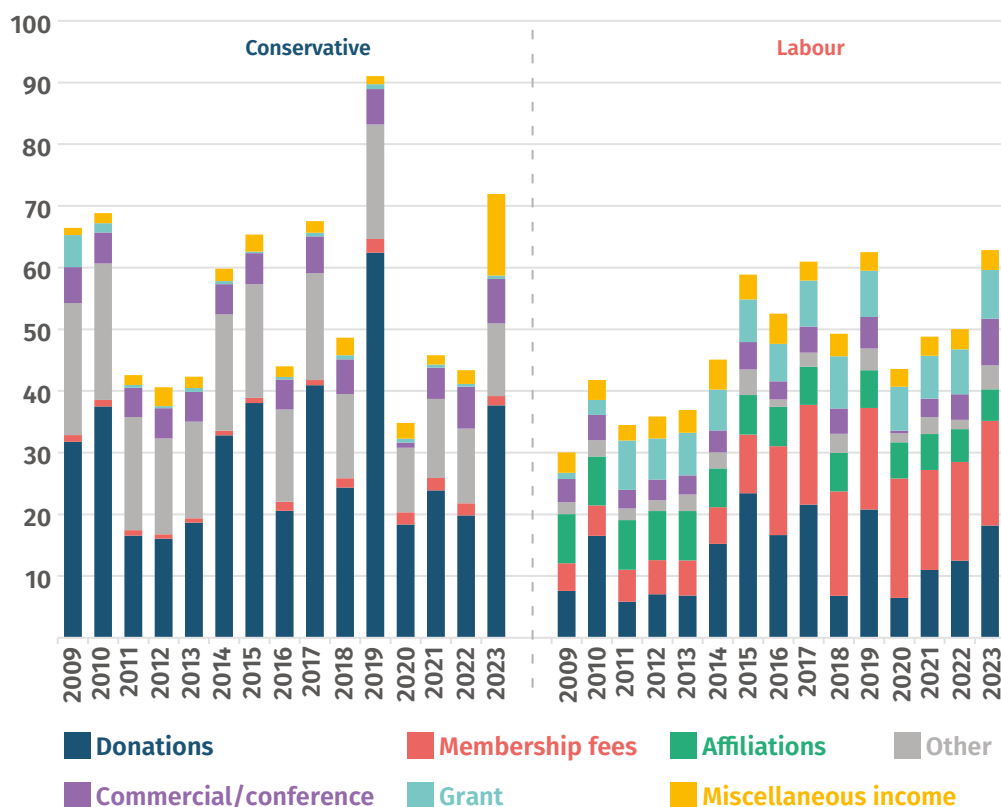
In 2011, the Committee on Standards in Public Life has recommended that “[a] cap of £10,000 should be placed on donations to a political party or regulated donee from any individual or organisation in any year” (CSPL 2011). Transparency International UK (2016) have also recommended a cap of £10,000 on donations per donor per year.

Introducing a cap as low as this would require having a clear plan for alternative sources of party funding. At the moment, we do not. Given that, introducing a cap of £10,000 would significantly affect the financial stability of political parties, especially the Conservative party, which is vastly more dependent on donations as an income source than the Labour party (figure 4.4).

In that context, to attempt to halt or slow concerning trends in public opinion and political behaviour, we propose the government introduces a higher cap of £100,000 on political donations for an individual or company in any year. This will only affect so-called ‘super-donors’. At the same time, the government should initiate a wider cross-party conversation on the future of political financing, examining various proposals for a less concentrated and corruptible politics.

FIGURE 4.4

The Conservative party is more dependent on donations than the Labour party
Party income by year disaggregated by source (£m)



Source: Transparency International and IPPR analysis of Electoral Commission data

Cleaner money in politics

In addition to bringing in tighter caps on donations and spending limits, there is also a need to introduce stricter regulation on donations from sources that could serve as vehicles for corruption or as routes to foreign influence in our politics. In particular, the law can be updated to block political donations from public contractors and from unincorporated associations, and the rules around donations from shell companies could be tightened.

When it comes to public contracts, there is a real risk that those who make donations are able to obtain privileged access to decision-makers, which could increase conflicts of interest in procurement decisions, or in decision-making about laws and regulations. This has wide-ranging negative consequences for public trust in our electoral system and the quality of public goods and services. Over the last 14 years under the previous governments, there were a number of examples high-worth donors to the Conservative party being involved in companies that went on to receive public contracts (Mason 2023; Goodier and Aguilar Garcia 2024).

These problems could be addressed by legislative proposals that amend the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA). The amendment would prohibit any person or entity who enters into a contract with a UK government department or agency – and any owner, director, manager or partner of such an entity – from directly or indirectly donating to any UK political party, MP or candidate, or promising to make any such donation. It would also prohibit the soliciting of any such donation, and fix a period for the prohibition. This period could reflect rules in the US: ie any time between the commencement of negotiations for the contract and the completion of contractual performance or the termination of negotiations.

Unincorporated associations (UAs) must also be addressed in potential new legislation aiming to tackle the issue of money in politics. UAs are a significant risk area and entry point for foreign money to enter our political system. To be a lawful donor, a UA just needs to have more than one member, a main office in the UK, and to be carrying on business or other activities in the UK. Those who give money to UAs are not required to be lawful donors. The Electoral Commission (2024c) has highlighted that this means UAs could legitimately donate using funding from unlawful sources. The UK's main political parties accepted millions of pounds from UAs over recent years which cannot be connected to the original source (Thévoz et al 2021).

Similarly, shell companies, a UK-registered company or limited liability partnership (LLP), may donate to a UK political party provided it “carries on business in the UK” (PPERA, section 54). But there is no requirement for its donation to derive from profits generated in the UK. The Electoral Commission has said this broad test of “carrying on business” exposes parties to risk, including of accepting the proceeds of crime (CSPL 2021). The lax rules leave the door open for foreign money and dirty money being channelled to parties via UK-registered shell companies.

There is agreement among independent bodies and security experts – including the CSPL and the chair of the Electoral Commission (CSPL 2021, Pullinger 2022) – that UK political finance is vulnerable to foreign influence and that electoral law should be changed to reflect the policy proposal above (Spotlight on Corruption 2024). These problems could be addressed by legislative proposals that: require all political parties to have procedures in place to determine the true source of donations and to develop a risk-based policy for managing donations, proportionate to the level of risk they are exposed to; prohibit donations from a company or LLP if they exceed its net profits generated in the UK within the preceding two years; and require UAs to conduct permissibility and due diligence checks on money they receive, and to declare the source of this income if it is in amounts over £500.

Strengthen the Electoral Commission

While the rules around donations need to be strengthened, so too does enforcement. In recent years, there has been a significant decrease in the number of people who think that if a political party or another campaigner is caught breaking the rules, the authorities will take appropriate action (Electoral Commission 2023a). Potentially exacerbating this, the Elections Act passed in 2022 weakened both the independence and the powers of the Electoral Commission. The Electoral Commission's regulatory independence was undermined by the introduction of a new power for the government to issue a strategy and policy statement for it. This exposes it to the risk of political interference and was strongly opposed by the Electoral Commission and parliamentary committees (Dean 2022). The UK is now out of step with its key democratic allies in having the government set the strategy and policy of its electoral agency.

In terms of its powers, the Electoral Commission's criminal enforcement powers were removed, leaving no agency with overall responsibility for the criminal enforcement of UK political finance law (Spotlight on Corruption 2023). At the same time, the Elections Act did not strengthen the Commission's investigative and civil enforcement powers as recommended by expert bodies, including the Electoral Commission and the CSPL. Currently, the Electoral Commission can only impose a maximum fine of £20,000. The Act also failed to extend the Commission's remit to cover candidates' finance.

These problems could be addressed by repealing the government's statutory power to designate a strategy and policy statement for the Electoral Commission to restore its independence, as well as providing it with increased and additional powers. These could include powers to: impose a maximum fine of £500,000 per offence or 4 per cent of a campaign's total spend, whichever is higher; compel the provision of information and documents from any person to ensure compliance of the law, not just when a formal investigation has been opened; share information with other regulators and the police where the commission considers it to be in the public interest; and investigate candidates' compliance with the rules, and to impose sanctions.

MY VOTE VS YOUR VOTE

The electoral system

In UK general elections, geography matters. In our electoral system, there will always be 'safe seats', where votes for parties other than the dominant one in that area are unlikely to change the outcome of the election. Where you live determines how influential your vote is on election outcomes. Some voters matter more than others, which is why it is not surprising that turnout is significantly lower in majoritarian electoral systems than proportional ones (Geys 2006, Blais and Carty 1990).

A full discussion of the electoral system for UK general elections is beyond the scope of this paper. In truth, there is little prospect of change in this parliament. The Labour party won a historic majority with an extremely 'efficient' or 'disproportionate' distribution of votes, depending on which way you look at it. It is not surprising that the government has been clear that proportional representation is not on its agenda.

In the longer run, the prospects of electoral system change are probably waxing. That is because of structural changes in the party system. The growth of 'smaller' parties, or the collapse in vote share for the two main parties (who received the lowest combined vote share in at least a century), is likely a new structural feature of party competition. Whether parties as varied as Reform and the Greens will co-ordinate on issues of electoral system transition is another matter. At the same time, a growing number of Britons support adopting a proportional system (NatCen 2022).

Population-based boundaries

Another factor that shapes the relationship between the influence of a vote and geography is the size of constituencies and the way that is measured. In recent years, attempts have been made to try and equalise the size of constituencies. The Voting System and Constituencies Act 2020 requires that all constituencies (except five protected island seats) should contain between 69,724 and 77,062 voters (Barr et al 2024). This was implemented in the most recent boundary review ahead of the last general election. The problem is that these figures are based on the number of registered voters in each seat. As we have already seen, the completeness of our electoral registers is far from perfect and many people, particularly those who are younger, from lower-income groups, renters, and people of colour are less likely to be registered. Moreover, it discounts all those under the age of 18 and residents not eligible to vote, who still deserve political representation too. Indeed, MPs should represent all of their constituents regardless of whether they are eligible to vote or not.

This means that, despite the legislation, the true population size of our constituencies varies significantly. Constituencies with the largest resident populations are more likely to be in inner-city areas with higher levels of deprivation; meanwhile seven in 10 of England's smallest constituencies by population size are in more affluent areas (Quinn 2024). The least populated non-protected seat, New Forest West, has a population of 85,000, while the most populated, Birmingham Ladywood, has a population of 152,000 (Barr et al 2024). Some MPs therefore are required to represent and support well over 50 per cent more constituents than others (Quinn 2024).

As Baston (2010) points out, there is a deep-rooted and powerful democratic case that elected representatives should represent more or less the same number of people, with the demand being made by the Chartists more than a century and a half ago. This is important in providing equality in terms of both political representation and voting power (ibid).

If automatic or assisted voter registration (AVR) were to be implemented, the completeness and accuracy of our electoral register would be improved, and more accurate and equal constituency boundaries could be drawn on that basis. This would, however, still not account for the entire population within a seat. For this reason, using whole population as the basis for drawing constituencies, rather than voters, might be a better approach for ensuring equality of representation. Census population estimates would be appropriate for this, particularly if constituency boundary reviews were timed to coincide with the census given that population movement can mean that census estimates become less accurate over time. This approach is common elsewhere, with population used as the basis of electoral districts in the United States, Canada, India and France among others.

Introducing population-based boundaries in the UK would require primary legislation to change the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986, and implementing it would require a new and updated review of constituency boundaries.

5.

CULTIVATING VOTING NORMS

In addition to making participation easier and more worthwhile, we must also take action to improve our democratic culture and build norms of political participation. These are the underpinnings of a stable democracy (Almond and Verba 1963). Democratic norms, including that of electoral participation, are a key ‘guardrail’ of a strong democracy – and of vital importance to protect against further declining rates of engagement and the associated dangers of populism and democratic backsliding (Goldstein 2024). This is essential for the long-term health of our democracy.

Here, age is important. Levels of political participation in early life often impact future participation. Young people are less likely to participate in politics than older people. There is a real danger, therefore, that today’s 18-year-olds who do not vote become the future 50-year-olds who do not vote. As such, there is a strong case to enact reforms to build a norm of democratic participation from a young age. This could include lowering the voting age alongside bolstering the importance of civic, democratic and political education in schools.

There is also more that could be done to foster and extend democratic norms across the wider electorate. This could include plans such as introducing an elections day service, similar to jury service, to give all citizens the chance to work in a polling station on election days. This would remove the veil from electoral democracy, increase understanding of how it operates, and enable more citizens to play a role in its functioning. It could also have the effect of strengthening our collective democratic culture.

SOCIALISATION, SCHOOLS, AND REDUCING THE VOTING AGE

Voting rights for 16- and 17-year-olds

We know that younger generations are much less likely to vote than older generations. Ipsos (2024) estimates that just 37 per cent of 18- to 24-year-olds turned out to vote in the 2024 general election. Analysis by IPPR shows that turnout levels were higher in constituencies with a larger share of older voters rather than young people. This is a concern for the long-term health of our democracy because the habit of voting is sticky; young people who do not habituate voting early in their lives are less likely to vote in later years.

Extending the franchise to 16- and 17-year-olds for UK general elections would enfranchise an additional 1.5 million young voters. This would give young people the chance to begin participating in our democracy sooner and, based on evidence from elsewhere, this is likely to help build a norm of democratic participation over the longer term. Moreover, it may have some positive impact on the preferences and needs of young people being on the political agenda.

In Scotland (since 2015) and Wales (since 2020), 16- and 17-year-olds have the right to vote in local and national elections. A number of other European democracies also have a voting age of below 18 for certain elections, including Austria (16), Malta (16) and Greece (17) for all elections. Evidence shows that when given the chance to vote, 16- and 17-year-olds have higher rates of turnout than young

voters aged over 18 (Bergh 2013, Zeglovits and Aichholzer 2014, Aichholzer and Kritzinger 2020, Huebner and Eichhorn 2020, Ødegård et al 2020).

A key reason for this is that the socialisation effects that encourage voting are more impactful on 16- and 17-year-olds – many of whom will still live in the family home and be in full-time education – than older voters (Zeglovits and Aichholzer 2014, Eichhorn and Bergh 2021, Eichhorn and Hübner 2023, Bhatti and Hansen 2012). This increases their likelihood of political participation. As scholars have increasingly recognised, political participation is an essentially social act (Bhatti and Hansen 2012).

This is important for building a norm of democratic participation. Evidence from Scotland, where 16- and 17-year-olds have been able to vote in local and Scottish Parliament elections since 2015, suggests that lowering the voting age can have positive effects on introducing a longer-term habit of voting and participation in electoral politics (Eichhorn and Hübner 2023). Wider international evidence also finds this to be the case (Franklin 2020, Eichhorn and Bergh 2021). Inequalities in turnout can persist, whereby young people with parents who vote can be more likely to vote compared to other young people whose parents do not (Eichhorn and Hübner 2023; Huebner et al 2022). Boosting participation rates across all age groups could therefore have knock-on positive effects for future generations. Moreover, as we highlight below, democratic socialisation in schools and colleges can mitigate against some of these inequalities.

Some opponents of lowering the voting age argue that 16- and 17-year-olds lack the maturity, sophistication and political knowledge necessary to cast an informed vote. Yet evidence from Austria finds that the quality of 16- and 17-year-olds' voter choices is similar to that of older voters, in that they cast votes in ways that enable their interests to be represented equally well as other cohorts (Wagner et al 2012).

As well as bringing democratic benefits, reducing the voting age to 16 for all UK elections would have the additional benefit of addressing the divergence of youth voting rights and asymmetries in the framing of youth citizenship that have arisen in the UK over the past decade as a result of the reform to voting rights in Scotland and Wales (Loughran et al 2021).

Proposals to lower the voting age have been gaining traction in many advanced democracies in recent years (Huebner and Sanhueza Petrarca 2024). When the UK passed the Representation of the People Act in 1969, it became the first democracy in the world to allow 18-year-olds to vote in all elections, and many other countries came to follow suit (Loughran et al 2021). Extending the franchise to allow 16- and 17-year-olds the right to vote would once again put the UK at the forefront of improving democratic rights for young people. Moreover, it would ensure that the government fulfils its manifesto commitment of lowering the voting age. It could therefore be an important element of an elections bill. Extending the franchise to 16- and 17-year-olds for all UK elections could be done through introducing primary legislation to amend the Representation of the People Act 1983.

The role of education

The introduction of votes at 16 should take place alongside an extension of the provision of citizenship and well-resourced and unbiased politics education in schools. This would include healthy debate and discussion to ensure that young people feel adequately informed and equipped to take part in our electoral politics. Enhanced citizenship education enjoys public support. Recent polling for IPPR found that 63 per cent of the public support increasing citizenship education in schools – compared with just 13 per cent who don't (Quilter-Pinner et al 2023).

There is evidence to suggest that citizenship education can lead to improved rates of political participation and help build a norm of longer-term participation

(Dassonneville et al 2012, Tonge et al 2012, Weinberg 2022). Beyond this, bringing the practices of a healthy democracy such as debates and critical and engaged discussion of politics into the school environment more broadly, not just in formal citizenship classes, can bring benefits (Huebner et al 2021). For example, deliberative political literacy education can mitigate inequalities in political knowledge and improve engagement and participation (Eichhorn and Christine Hübner 2023). Additionally, research has found that an open classroom climate that invokes social and political issues in daily learning may drive young people's electoral participation and close participatory inequalities (Weinberg 2022).

In other countries where the voting age has been lowered, such as Austria, legislation to enhance the teaching of democracy and politics in schools has been implemented concurrently (Huebner et al 2022, Renwick 2015). This was found to heighten the political interest of adolescents after the voting age had been lowered (Zeglovits and Zandonella 2013). When the voting age was lowered in both Scotland and Wales, the important role of education was recognised, but it was not accompanied by statutory measures to bolster the teaching of politics in schools (Huebner et al 2022). If the voting age is lowered to 16 for all UK elections, serious considerations of the steps and potential legislation required to ensure that all young people can receive adequate knowledge to equip them to participate in politics and democracy will be important.

In addition to education, practical barriers that can prevent young people from participating should also be removed or mitigated against. The introduction of AVR would be a positive step here. But other innovations, such as having polling stations in schools and colleges while young people are in attendance so they can more easily cast their vote, should be considered (Huebner et al 2021).

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CITIZEN

Election day service

Extending the franchise to younger people and doing more in schools to increase political awareness and socialise democratic participation would play a key role in seeding norms of political participation within future generations. This is essential for the long-term health of our democracy. To build on this and to extend democratic norms across the wider electorate, further steps could be included within an elections bill.

A key way of doing this could be through reforming electoral administration to bring a wide range of citizens into the electoral process. Rather than rely on the use of 'stipended' volunteers, the UK could consider adopting a system of recruiting poll workers by lot, in a similar way to how we recruit members of the public to serve on juries. Not only would this address issues of recruitment of polling staff which is becoming more pressing (AEA 2023, Birch et al 2023, Clark and James 2023), but it would also have the effect of improving democratic understanding, boosting electoral participation rates and building norms of participating, and enhancing trust in the electoral process (Birch et al 2023).

The recruitment of poll workers varies in democracies around the world (Clark and James 2023). In some countries, poll workers are state employees who are seconded to run elections. In others, poll workers are selected because of party allegiance or membership. And in other polities, the task has traditionally been voluntary. A number of democracies, however, including other European countries such as Belgium, Spain and Greece, compel citizens to undertake the task as a civic duty (Birch et al 2023).

International evidence suggests that the recruitment of poll workers via sortition can have an important impact on improving public understanding of elections and

the democratic process (Birch et al 2023). If adopted in the UK, recruiting polling station staff by this means would result in members of the community from many different walks of life coming to have a greater understanding of the electoral process. Elections would not seem quite so 'other' to traditional non-voters (ibid). Additionally, it is suggested that giving administrative roles directly to ordinary people has the potential to address populist concerns about elite abuses of power (ibid). In the UK, poll workers tend to have more positive perceptions of electoral integrity than the general public (ibid). Extending the number of people who have experience of working in polling stations therefore has the potential to build trust in the democratic process and enhance public legitimacy of elections.

As well as enhancing democratic understanding and trust, the recruitment of poll workers via sortition can also result in improvements in democratic participation. Evidence from Spain finds that being drafted to serve as an officer in a polling station activates participation, with electoral officers being more likely to vote on the day they fulfil their compulsory civic duty (Artes and Jurado 2023). They are also more likely to continue to participate in upcoming elections, at least in the short-term (ibid).

The recruitment of poll workers via sortition would also mean that polling station staff would become more diverse and more representative of the public at large. Again, this could have a positive impact on electoral participation. At present, poll workers tend to be, on average, older than the population as a whole. This has the potential to make young people in particular think that voting is not something for them. Given that young people are less likely than all other age groups to vote in elections, the recruitment of poll workers by lot could be one way of seeking to address this problem of political participation (Birch et al 2023).

One potential risk with this method of recruiting poll workers is that some may not wish to do it and simply not turn up to fulfil their civic duty. There are examples of this being an issue in both Spain and Mexico (Hernández-Morales 2023, Seira Bejarano et al 2017). This could have a negative impact on the smooth running of elections. To mitigate this risk, it would be essential to make the system fair through providing adequate training and financial compensation. Exemptions should also be available for the elderly, those with caring responsibilities, and other groups who may not be able to fully take part. Given the civic importance of the task, punishments for avoiding taking part without adequate reason could also be considered, in a similar way to those that already exist for avoiding jury service. In an elections bill, legislation could be brought forward to implement this reform. This could be done on a trial basis in the first instance in order to test the process and iron out any potential challenges.

COMPULSORY VOTING

A controversial option for bolstering norms of political participation could be introducing a legal obligation to vote. Data from the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance shows that while only 13 per cent of democracies have compulsory voting, in those that do, turnout is on average 7 per cent higher than in countries without compulsory voting. Other international evidence, including that from advanced democracies such as Belgium and Australia, suggests that compulsory voting boost turnouts and that by ensuring that most eligible voters take part, it can also strengthen the ability of groups that are currently underrepresented in our politics to have their voice and can make parties and policy more responsive to them (Klemperer 2023, Fowler 2013, Birch 2009, Keane and Rogers 2006).

Polling finds that that Britons are split on the issue of compulsory voting, with 41 per cent in favour but 52 per cent against (Smith 2024). Introducing a legal obligation to vote would likely jar with the UK established culture of voluntary political participation (Electoral Commission 2006). While there are merits to the idea of compulsory voting, there are also reasonable concerns. Compulsory voting is not on the political agenda for the moment, but it is a debate worth having. Is it state coercion or the creation of new democratic norms? If we citizens can expect to be called upon to serve on a jury, why not call on them to vote on election day?

6. CONCLUSION

This report sets out three approaches policy makers should consider to improve participation in the ultimate democratic exercise, a general election, and considers key policy proposals under each.

Many of the proposals set out in the report could be taken alone and implemented relatively easily by the government. Some do not even require primary legislation. This report, however, recommends the government introduces an elections bill.¹

Putting forward a bill does at least two things. First, it would show that the government is serious and strategic about breaking out of the doom loop of political inequality and populism – that this is not a problem for sticking plasters. Second, the most impactful proposals discussed in this report will require primary legislation. An elections bill is the right vehicle to carry them. It should do this sooner rather than later. Enacting political and constitutional reform will become more fraught the closer it gets to the next election.

What proposals should be prioritised? It is obvious that the policies analysed in this report are not all equal. Some are more effective than others at raising turnout numbers; others will be more effective at reducing inequality. Some are pretty straightforward to implement; others are fraught, complicated or controversial. Some packages, however, could be genuinely transformative.

Figure 6.1 provides an analysis of the proposals examined in this report according to three criteria: turnout, inequality and implementation. Using this tool, policies can be combined to optimise a particular outcome. Policy makers most interested in reducing age inequalities, for example, will bring together a different assortment to those most interested in maximising the sheer number that turns up. Figure 6.2 summarises actionable reforms policy makers could consider for different policy goals.

A small number of ‘goldilocks’ policies emerge from our analysis that the authors of this report view as effective in raising turnout and narrowing inequality – *and* as feasibly implementable in this parliament. These are:

- automatic voter registration
- £100,000 annual cap on political donors
- votes for 16- and 17-year-olds
- election day service.

¹ There are two options to consider for the bill design. The first takes a suite of new proposals to make progress toward higher and more equal turnout in UK elections. The second is a more demanding bill that incorporates recommendations to consolidate and simplify existing elections laws. This bill would take longer to draft, debate and pass, but it would act on the recommendations of several expert committees and simplify the over 100 pieces of existing electoral legislation into a single legislative framework to bring clarity the electoral process and the laws around it.

FIGURE 6.1

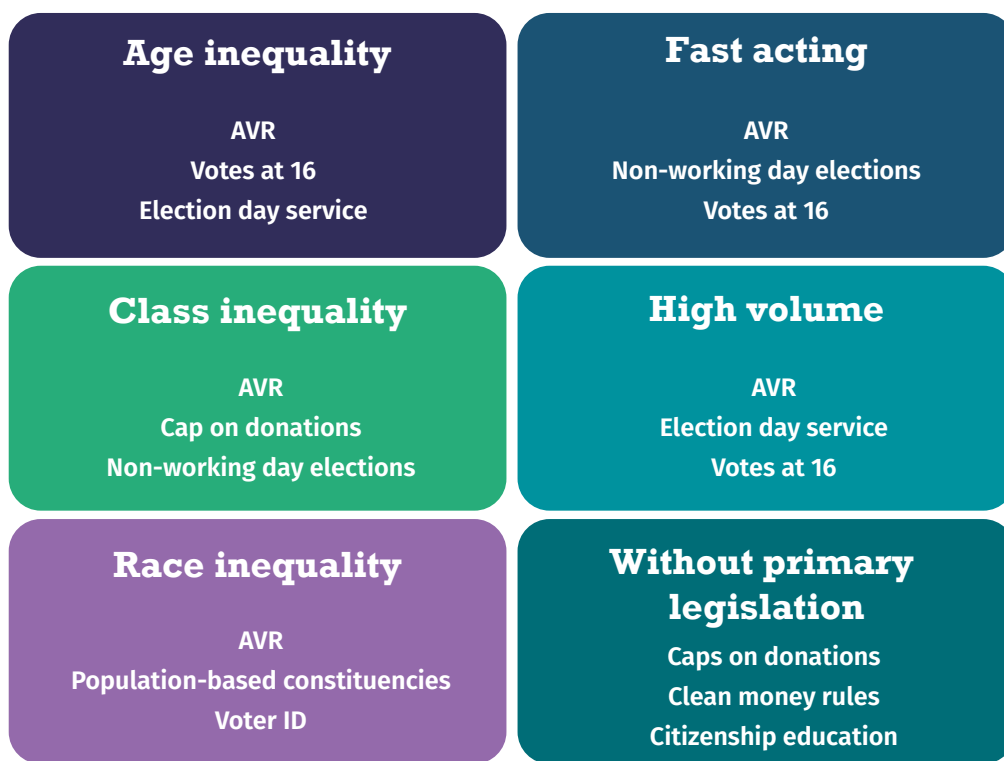
Policy assessment on turnout, inequality and implementation

	Policy	Effect size on turnout		Will it reduce political inequality?			Ease of implementation	
		Short run	Long run	Age	Class	Race	Practical	Political
Make voting easier	Automatic voter registration	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Green
	Remove photo ID requirement	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Green
	Non-working day elections	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Green
	Voting rights for permanent residents	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Red
Make voting more worthwhile	£100,000 annual cap on political donors	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow
	Regulations for cleaner money in politics	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow
	Electoral system reform	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Red	Red
	Population-based constituencies	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green
Cultivate voting norms	Votes for 16 and 17 year olds	Yellow	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green
	Citizenship education at schools	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green
	Election day service	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Green
	Compulsory voting	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Red

Source: IPPR analysis

FIGURE 6.2

Policy packages for different policy goals



Source: IPPR analysis

The blind spot in this government’s agenda against populism is the lack of a policy agenda on political inequality. Without actively and strategically trying to make people in this country more politically equal, populist politics will always be able to mobilise large swathes of people, even in conditions of economic growth.

In his regular references to ‘respect’, the prime minister has shown his interest in political inequality as an idea, but we are yet to see this operationalise in policy (BBC 2024). We hope this report will help with that.

REFERENCES

- Aichholzer J and Kritzingner S (2020) 'Voting at 16 in Practice: A Review of the Austrian Case', in Eichhorn J and Bergh J (eds), *Lowering the Voting Age to 16: Learning from Real Experiences Worldwide*, Palgrave Macmillan
- Almond G and Verba S (1963) *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*, Princeton University Press
- Ansell B and Gingrich J (2022) Political inequality. <https://ifs.org.uk/inequality/politicalinequality-chapter>
- Artes J and Jurado I (2023) 'Compulsory civic duty and turnout: evidence from a natural experiment'. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/political-science-research-and-methods/article/compulsory-civic-duty-and-turnout-evidence-from-a-natural-experiment/A4513AB17F3E98BD251DD07F2552D7E0>
- Association of Electoral Administrators [AEA] (2023) AEA 2023 post polls report published. <https://www.aea-elections.co.uk/aea-2023-post-polls-report-published>
- Barker F and McMillan K (2014) 'Constituting the Democratic Public: New Zealand's Extension of National Voting Rights to Non-Citizens', *New Zealand Journal of Public and International Law*, 12 (1)
- Barr B, Baker F and Nye P (2024) '2023 constituency boundary changes', <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/explainer/2023-boundary-changes>
- Baston L (2010) 'How pressing is the case for further equalisation of constituency electorates?' <https://www.democraticaudit.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/how-pressing-is-the-case-for-further-equalisation.pdf>
- BBC (2024) 'Work of change begins', Keir Starmer's No 10 speech in full. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/crgewjwqqq4o>
- Beramendi P, Besley T and Levi M (2022) *Political Equality: What is it and why does it matter?* <https://ifs.org.uk/inequality/political-equality-what-is-it-and-why-does-it-matter>
- Bergh J (2013) 'Does Voting Rights Affect the Political Maturity of 16- and 17-Year-Olds? Findings from the 2011 Norwegian Voting-Age Trial'. *Electoral Studies*, 32, 90–100
- Bhatti Y and Hansen K M (2012) 'Leaving the Nest and the Social Act of Voting: Turnout among First-Time Voters', *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*, 22(4), 380–406
- Birch S (2009) 'The case for compulsory voting', *Public Policy Research*, 16 (1)
- Birch S, Martínez i Coma F and Ruiz-Rufino R (2023) *Sorting elections: the use of random selection in poll worker recruitment*. <https://constitution-unit.com/2023/07/25/sorting-elections-the-use-of-random-selection-in-poll-worker-recruitment>
- Blais A and Carty R (1990) 'Does proportional representation foster voter turnout?' *European Journal of Political Research*, 18 (2), 167–181
- Bradfield C and Johnson P (2017) 'The Effect of Making Election Day a Holiday: An Original Survey and a Case Study of French Presidential Elections Applied to the U.S. Voting System', *Sigma: Journal of Political and International Studies*, 34 (4)
- British Election Study (2024) panel study data. <https://www.britishelectionstudy.com/data-objects/panel-study-data>
- Cagé J (2023) 'Political Inequality'. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4524142
- Clark A and James T (2023) 'Electoral administration and the problem of poll worker recruitment: Who volunteers, and why?' *Public Policy and Administration* 38 (2)
- Committee on Standards in Public Life [CSPL] (2021) 'Regulating Election Finance'. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/999636/CSPL_Regulating_Election_Finance_Review_Final_Web.pdf

- Committee on Standards in Public Life [CSPL] (2011) 'Political Party Finance: ending the big donor culture'. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/political-party-finance-ending-the-big-donor-culture>
- Dassonneville R, Quintelier E, Hooghe M and Claes E (2012) 'The Relation Between Civic Education and Political Attitudes and Behavior: A Two-Year Panel Study Among Belgian Late Adolescents', *Applied Developmental Science*, 16 (3), 140–150
- Dean A (2022) 'The Electoral Commission is now under government control. We should fear for UK democracy'. <https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/politics/38752/the-electoral-commission-is-now-under-government-control-we-should-fear-for-uk-democracy>
- DeSilver D (2018) 'Weekday elections set the U.S. apart from many other advanced democracies'. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2018/11/06/weekday-elections-set-the-u-s-apart-from-many-other-advanced-democracies/>
- Draca M, Green C and Homroy S (2023) 'Financing UK democracy: a stocktake of 20 years of political donations disclosure', *Fiscal Studies*, 44 (4), 433–449.
- Edwards J (2024) 'Map Shows States Where Election Day is a Public Holiday'. <https://www.newsweek.com/map-shows-states-election-day-public-holiday-1950809>
- Eichhorn J and Bergh J (2021) 'Lowering the Voting Age to 16 in Practice: Processes and Outcomes Compared', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 74 (3), 507–521
- Eichhorn J and Hübner C (2023) 'Votes-at-16 in Scotland 2014-2021'. <https://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/assets/doc/Votes%20at%2016%20in%20Scotland.pdf>
- Electoral Commission (2006) *Compulsory voting around the world.* https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/sites/default/files/electoral_commission_pdf_file/ECcompvotingsummaryfinal_22226-16485_E_N_S_W_.pdf
- Electoral Commission (2016) *Electoral Commission calls for stronger powers to sanction political parties, as Liberal Democrats are fined maximum penalty.* <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/media-centre/electoral-commission-calls-stronger-powers-sanction-political-parties-liberal-democrats-are-fined>
- Electoral Commission (2021a) *Modernising electoral registration: feasibility studies.* <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/news-and-views/our-priorities-reforming-elections/a-modern-electoral-register/modernising-electoral-registration-feasibility-studies>
- Electoral Commission (2021b) *The Future of Voting.* <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/sites/default/files/2021-10/Electoral%20Commission%20Report%20-%20Future%20of%20voting%20%28FINAL%29.pdf>
- Electoral Commission (2022) *Advance voting pilots evaluation.* <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/research-reports-and-data/pilot-evaluations/advance-voting-pilots-evaluation>
- Electoral Commission (2023a) *Public attitudes 2023.* <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/research-reports-and-data/public-attitudes/public-attitudes-2023>
- Electoral Commission (2023b) *Electoral registers in the UK.* <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/research-reports-and-data/electoral-registration-research/accuracy-and-completeness-electoral-registers/2023-report-electoral-registers-uk>
- Electoral Commission (2023c) *Electoral fraud data.* <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/research-reports-and-data/electoral-fraud-data>
- Electoral Commission (2024a) *Voter ID at the 2024 UK general election.* <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/research-reports-and-data/our-reports-and-data-past-elections-and-referendums/voter-id-2024-uk-general-election>
- Electoral Commission (2024b) *Public attitudes 2024.* <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/research-reports-and-data/public-attitudes/public-attitudes-2024>
- Electoral Commission (2024c) *Written evidence submitted by The Electoral Commission.* <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/128808/pdf/>
- Elsässer L and Schäfer A (2023) Political Inequality in Rich Democracies, *Annual Review of Political Science*, 26 (1), 469–487
- Fowler A (2013) Electoral and Policy Consequences of Voter Turnout: Evidence from Compulsory Voting in Australia, *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*, 8 (2), 159–182

- France G (2023) *Limits on political donations: global practices and its effectiveness on political integrity and equality*, Transparency International. https://knowledgehub.transparency.org/assets/uploads/helpdesk/Limits-on-political-donations_global-practice-and-effectiveness_final.pdf
- Franklin M (2020) 'Consequences of Lowering the Voting Age to 16: Lessons from Comparative Research', in Eichhorn J and Bergh J (eds) *Lowering the Voting Age to 16: Learning from Real Experiences Worldwide*, Palgrave Macmillan
- Franklin, M (2002) *The Voter Turnout Puzzles*. <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=bedfc86813fa108e26ac1516cb4937a561da982d>
- Geys B (2006) 'Explaining voter turnout: A review of aggregate-level research', *Electoral Studies*, 25 (4), 637–663
- Gilens M (2012) *Affluence and Influence*, Princeton University Press
- Goddard D (2016) *Public Attitudes to Party Funding in Britain*. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a8151c1e5274a2e8ab53555/Dee_Goddard_CSPL_Party_Funding_Report.pdf
- Goldstein D (2024) *The Social Foundations of Democratic Norms*. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4314977
- Goodier M and Aguilar Garcia C (2024) 'Companies linked to Tory donors given £8.4bn in public contracts since 2016'. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/article/2024/jun/27/public-contracts-companies-tory-donors>
- Haines C (2024) 'Plans advance for introduction of automatic voter registration in Wales'. <https://nation.cymru/news/plans-advance-for-introduction-of-automatic-voter-registration-in-wales>
- Hernández-Morales A (2023) 'Vacation 1, Election 0: Spain struggles to staff its polling stations'. <https://www.politico.eu/article/spain-struggles-to-staff-its-polling-station-ahead-national-election-vote-july>
- House of Commons Political and Constitutional Reform Committee [HCPCRC] (2014) 'Voter engagement in the UK', Political and Constitutional Reform – Fourth Report. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmpolcon/232/23202.htm>
- Huebner C and Eichhorn J (2020) 'Votes at 16 in Scotland: Political Experiences beyond the Vote Itself', in Eichhorn J and Bergh J (eds) *Lowering the Voting Age to 16: Learning from Real Experiences Worldwide*, Palgrave Macmillan
- Huebner C, Smith K, Loughran T, Mycock A and Eichhorn J (2022) 'Votes at 16' without investment in political education is a missed opportunity: Learning from experiences of Scotland and Wales. <https://www.ukvotingage.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Huebner-extract-TC.pdf>
- Huebner C, Smith K, Mycock A, Loughran T and Eichhorn J (2021) *Making Votes-at-16 Work in Wales Lessons for the Future*. https://www.ukvotingage.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Huebner-et-al_2021_Making-Votes-at-16-work-in-Wales.pdf
- Huebner C and Sanhueza Petrarca C (2024) 'Votes at 16? How the Rest of the World Does it', *Political Insight*, 15 (1)
- Ipsos (2024) 'How Britain voted in the 2024 election'. <https://www.ipsos.com/en-uk/how-britain-voted-in-the-2024-election>
- James T (2021) 'Register Every Voter: How Automatic Voter Registration can bring the forgotten millions back into our democracy'. <https://unlockdemocracy.org.uk/automatic-voter-registration>
- James T and Bernal P (2020) 'Is it time for Automatic Voter Registration in the UK?'. <https://www.jrrt.org.uk/avr-report-blog>
- James T and Clark A (2019) 'Electoral integrity, voter fraud and voter ID in polling stations: lessons from English local elections', *Policy Studies*, 41(2-3), 190–209
- James T and Garnett H (2023) 'The Determinants of Electoral Registration Quality: A Cross-National Analysis', *Representation*, 60 (2), 279–302
- Johnston N (2023) 'Who can vote in UK elections?'. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8985>

- Keaney E and Rodgers B (2006) *A Citizen's Duty: Unequal Voting and the Case for Compulsory Turnout*. <https://www.ippr.org/publications/a-citizens-dutyvoter-inequality-and-the-case-for-compulsory-turnout>
- Klemperer D (2023) *The case for compulsory voting in the UK*. <https://consoc.org.uk/compulsory-voting-uk>
- Labour Party (2024) *Labour Party Manifesto 2024: Our plan to change Britain*. <https://labour.org.uk/updates/stories/labour-manifesto-2024-sign-up>
- Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee (2024) *Electoral Registration: Fourth Report of Session 2023–24*. <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/43968/documents/217860/default>
- Loughran T, Mycock A and Tonge J (2021) 'A coming of age: how and why the UK became the first democracy to allow votes for 18-year-olds', *Contemporary British History*, 35 (2), 284–313
- Martinez i Coma F and Leiva D (2024) 'Which day of the week gets the most people to vote? We analysed thousands of international elections to find out'. <https://theconversation.com/which-day-of-the-week-gets-the-most-people-to-vote-we-analysed-thousands-of-international-elections-to-find-out-222143>
- Mason R (2023) 'One of Tories' biggest ever donors profited from £135m of NHS contracts'. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2023/sep/20/one-of-tories-biggest-ever-donors-frank-hester-profited-from-135m-of-nhs-contracts>
- Mathisen R (2023) Affluence and Influence in a Social Democracy, *American Political Science Review*, 117 (2), 751–758
- Mattila M (2003) 'Why bother? Determinants of turnout in the European elections', *Electoral Studies*, 22 (3), 449–468
- McGhee E, Hill C and Romero M (2021) *The Registration and Turnout Effects of Automatic Voter Registration*. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3933442
- Morris K and Dunphy P (2019) *AVR Impact on State Voter Registration*. <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/avr-impact-state-voter-registration>
- National Centre for Social Research [NatCen] (2022) 'Half of Britain wants voting system to change, with clear majority among Labour supporters'. <https://natcen.ac.uk/news/half-britain-wants-voting-system-change-clear-majority-among-labour-supporters>
- Ødegård G, Bergh J, and Saglie J (2020) 'Why Did Young Norwegians Mobilise: External Events or Early Enfranchisement?', in Eichhorn J and Bergh J (eds) *Lowering the Voting Age to 16: Learning from Real Experiences Worldwide*, Palgrave Macmillan
- Patel P (2023) *Who decides? Influence and inequality in British democracy*. <https://www.ippr.org/articles/who-decides>
- Patel P and Quilter-Pinner H (2022) *Road to renewal: Elections, parties and the case for democratic reform*. <https://www.ippr.org/articles/road-to-renewal>
- Patel P and Valgarðsson V (2024) 'Half of us: Turnout patterns at the 2024 general election'. <https://www.ippr.org/articles/half-of-us>
- Pullinger J (2022) 'We need proper transparency to keep British politics free of foreign meddling'. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2022/05/31/loophole-allowing-foreign-money-influence-uk-politics-must-shut>
- Quilter-Pinner H, Poku-Amanfo E, Menzies L, O'Halloran J (2023) 'Out of kilter: How to rebalance our school system to work for people, economy and society'. <https://www.ippr.org/articles/out-of-kilter>
- Quinn B (2024) 'Boundary changes may reduce access to MPs in UK's poorest areas, research finds'. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2024/mar/14/boundary-changes-may-reduce-access-to-mps-in-uks-poorest-areas-research-finds>
- Renwick A (2015) *Votes at 16: What effect would it have?* <https://ukandeu.ac.uk/votes-at-16-what-effect-would-it-have>
- Rosset J and Stecker C (2019) 'How well are citizens represented by their governments? Issue congruence and inequality in Europe', *European Political Science Review*, 11 (2), 145–160

- Rushworth K and Sobolewska M (forthcoming) 'How difficult is electoral registration in the UK? Comparing registration systems using the International Difficulty of Registration Index (IDORI)
- Schakel W and Van Der Pas D (2021) 'Degrees of influence: Educational inequality in policy representation', *European Journal of Political Research*, 60 (2), 418–437
- Seira Bejarano E, Gomberg A, Malmendier U and Simpser A (2017) *Donating Time for Democracy: Encouraging Citizen Participation in Electoral Work in Mexico*. <https://www.povertyactionlab.org/evaluation/donating-time-democracy-encouraging-citizen-participation-electoral-work-mexico>
- Smith (2024) 'What electoral reform proposals would Britons support?' <https://yougov.co.uk/politics/articles/49960-what-electoral-reform-proposals-would-britons-support>
- Spotlight on Corruption (2023) 'The integrity of the UK's next election is at serious risk from rogue actors overseas'. <https://www.spotlightcorruption.org/enforcement-electoral-finance-laws>
- Spotlight on Corruption (2024) 'Protecting the UK's Democracy: Key Electoral Reforms Recommended by Independent Experts'. <https://www.spotlightcorruption.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Key-Electoral-Reforms-Recommended-by-Independent-Experts-public-version.pdf>
- Stride G (2023) 'The impact of voter ID'. <https://lgiu.org/workstream/local-democracy-research-centre/the-implementation-of-voter-id>
- Thévoz S, Williams M and Geoghegan P (2021) 'Tories have accepted £2.6m from 'shadowy' donors since Boris Johnson became PM'. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/dark-money-investigations/tories-have-accepted-26m-from-shadowy-donors-since-boris-johnson-became-pm>
- Tonge J, Mycock A and Jeffery B (2012) 'Does Citizenship Education Make Young People Better Engaged Citizens?' *Political Studies*, 60 (3)
- UK Government (2024) The King's speech 2024. <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-kings-speech-2024>
- Wagner M, Johann D, and Kritzinger S (2012) 'Voting at 16: Turnout and the quality of vote choice', *Electoral Studies*, 31 (2) 372–383
- Weinberg J (2022) 'Civic education as an antidote to inequalities in political participation? New evidence from English secondary education', *British Politics*, 17, 185–209
- White I (2008) *Weekend voting*. <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN04469/SN04469.pdf>
- White J (2024) *In the Long Run: The Future as a Political Idea*, Profile Books
- YouGov (2022) 'Britons are split on whether they would support compulsory voting'. https://yougov.co.uk/politics/articles/42471-britons-are-split-whether-they-would-support-compu?redirect_from=%2Ftopics%2Fpolitics%2Farticles-reports%2F2022%2F05%2F10%2Fbritons-are-split-whether-they-would-support-compu
- YouGov (2024) 'How Britain voted in the 2024 general election'. <https://yougov.co.uk/politics/articles/49978-how-britain-voted-in-the-2024-general-election>
- Zeglovits E and Aichholzer J (2014) 'Are People More Inclined to Vote at 16 than at 18? Evidence for the First-Time Voting Boost Among 16- to 25-Year Olds in Austria', *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*, 24 (3), 351–361
- Zeglovits E and Zandonella M (2013) 'Political interest of adolescents before and after lowering the voting age: the case of Austria', *Journal of Youth Studies*, 16 (8), 1084–1104

Institute for Public Policy Research

The background features an abstract design with two overlapping shapes. A large, dark purple shape is positioned on the right side, extending from the top right towards the bottom right. It has a curved top edge and a straight left edge. To its left, a teal shape is positioned, extending from the top left towards the bottom left. It has a straight top edge and a curved bottom edge. The two shapes overlap in the center, creating a darker purple area. The overall composition is minimalist and modern.

GET IN TOUCH

For more information about the Institute for Public Policy Research, please go to www.ippr.org

You can also e-mail info@ippr.org or find us on X [@ippr](#)

Institute for Public Policy Research

Registered Charity no. 800065 (England & Wales),
SC046557 (Scotland), Company no, 2292601 (England & Wales)

The progressive policy think tank