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Evaluation of the Modern Electoral Registration Programme

2021 Report

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Constitution Group Analysis, Registration and Franchise Division

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Contents

Overview	6
Executive Summary	7
Key findings	8
Going forward & next steps	9
Approach	10
Method 1: Qualitative research	10
Method 2: Electoral Services Experience Survey	10
Quantitative Analysis	11
Qualitative Analysis	11
Limitations	11
Net satisfaction scores	12
Table 1: Net satisfaction for the responses to each question	12
Qualitative themes	14
Electoral Services Experience Survey, 2021	14
Figure 1: Qualitative themes identified across open text survey responses	14
Qualitative research	15
Figure 2: Qualitative themes identified across qualitative research project	15
Key findings	16
Section A: ES Experience	16
Q1 How satisfied were you with the level of discretion you and your team had to run a tailored canvass to suit your local area under the first year of the reformed annual canvass?	16
Q2 How satisfied were you that the first year of the reformed annual canvass process allowed your team to exercise innovation and improvement?	18
Q3 How effectively could you and your team target your time and resources under the first year of the reformed annual canvass requirements?	20
Q4 How satisfied were you with the processes for the national data match under the first year of the reformed annual canvass?	21

Q5 How satisfied were you with the Route 1 processes under the first year of the reformed annual canvass?	23
Q6 How satisfied were you with the Route 2 processes under the first year of the reformed annual canvass?	25
Q7 How satisfied were you with the Route 3 processes under the first year of the reformed annual canvass?	27
Q8 Overall, how satisfied were you and your team with the first year of the reformed annual canvass?	29
Section B: Electoral Registers	31
Q9 How satisfied were you with the first year of the reformed annual canvass processes to safeguard the completeness of your electoral register?	31
Q10 How satisfied were you with the first year of the reformed annual canvass processes to safeguard the accuracy of your electoral register?	32
Q11 How satisfied were you with the first year of the reformed annual canvass processes to maintain the security and integrity of your electoral register (for example security and integrity around collation of the information, and identifying fraudulent applications)?	34
Section C: Citizen Experience	35
Q12 How satisfied were you that the first year of the reformed annual canvass processes were simple and clear for citizens?	35
Q13 Please select the frequency with which you receive the following categories of correspondence from citizens about pre-reform annual canvass processes.	37
Q14 In your opinion, how satisfied do you think citizens were with the first year of the reformed annual canvass process?	39
Section D: Management Information & EMS suppliers	41
Q15 How satisfied were you that the data and statistics during the canvass period allowed you to make informed decisions on how to conduct the first year of the reformed annual canvass in your area?	41
Q16 How effectively did you feel you could evaluate the effectiveness of the canvass under the current Management Information (first year of the reformed canvass)?	42
Additional findings: 2020 in context	44
Going forward & next steps	46
Annex A: ES survey qualitative themes	47
2020 themes	47
2021 themes	49

Overview

This publication is a report of research into the first year of the reformed annual canvass, which took place in 2020. This report combines two research products: qualitative research with Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) and electoral administrators conducted between December 2020 and January 2021, and a survey of electoral administrators conducted in summer 2020 and summer 2021, to provide an overview of changes in satisfaction compared with the pre-reform canvass.

The annual canvass gathers information on potential additions and changes to, and deletions from, the register. The new model adds a data matching step, which informs EROs where there are likely to be changes to the register and allows them to put properties into different routes based on this. It also gives much greater flexibility for how they choose to communicate with electors.

This research contributes to the evaluation of the Modern Electoral Registration Programme (MERP). The Modern Electoral Registration Programme (MERP) aims to create a more efficient registration system, make the process simple and clear for citizens, and give EROs more discretion, whilst maintaining completeness and accuracy of the registers. Constitution Group Analysis in the Cabinet Office is evaluating MERP against four key themes:

- Theme 1: Maintain the completeness and accuracy of the registers
- Theme 2: Create efficiencies in the registration system
- Theme 3: Improve the citizen experience
- Theme 4: Improve the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) experience¹

Although this research contributes to findings across all of the themes, it was designed to focus on themes 3 and 4, citizen experience and ERO experience. While we have early indications of the impact of canvass reform on completeness and accuracy and efficiencies, more research is needed in these areas, and we will be publishing reports in 2022 and 2023 which cover these themes in more detail.

In 2022, we will publish a report of follow-up qualitative research and survey covering the second year of canvass reform, as well as research into completeness and accuracy. In 2023, we will publish a final report which synthesises findings from across the themes of the evaluation.

¹ This theme encompasses research with both EROs and electoral administrators.

Executive Summary

Key findings

Section A: Electoral Services (ES) Experience

- **Tailoring & Flexibility:** Many administrators noted that they took a **cautious approach** towards the first year of canvass reform so chose not to make large changes in the first year. In the qualitative research, **participants were positive that canvass reform gave them more options for flexibility** in how they conducted the canvass, such as the new communication methods. Variation between local areas had a significant impact on how participants conducted the canvass.
- **Innovation:** There were restrictions on innovation by COVID-19 and the EMS, but respondents **welcomed the new methods of communication** for being efficient and cost saving; consequently, some argued that there should be more discretion over the door knock. In the qualitative research, local authorities expressed that canvass reform had had a **positive impact on their costs and resources**, whilst COVID-19 had had a mixed impact.
- **New canvass reform processes:** the **national data match was praised** for being quick and easy. In the qualitative research, local data matching was seen to be important, though access to local data varied significantly. On Route 1, **many were concerned about the potential impact on completeness and accuracy**, though some felt Route 1 was too restricted, so evidence was mixed overall. In the qualitative research, participants expressed that **Route 1 had had a positive impact on both their experience and on elector experience**, whilst use of e-communications was limited.
- On Route 2, views on the forms were mixed, and there were conflicting views on the effectiveness of the telephone canvass compared to the door knock. Most saw the amount of options and permutations as a positive. On Route 3, **the introduction of the Single Responsible Officer (SRO) was welcomed but COVID-19 understandably made care homes challenging**, and there were also EMS limitations. In the qualitative research, success with universities varied significantly, and houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) were also challenging. Approaches tended to be similar to previous years.
- **Team experience:** Overall, there was a **positive impact on workload**. In the qualitative research, participants had been apprehensive about canvass reform, depending on experience; **training and supporting guidance was seen as essential** by administrators and EROs. Participants believed that relationships with the Cabinet Office, EMS supplier, and other local authorities were important to maintain and develop.

Section B: Electoral Registers

- There was **concern and uncertainty about the impact of Route 1 on completeness and accuracy**. Several sent Household Notification Letters (HNLs) to check this, with mixed findings on changes at the time of the local elections in 2021, though some maintained that

they could not be sure until a high-turnout general election. There were no real impacts on the security of the registers.

Section C: Citizen experience

- There was **some confusion from electors** who returned the Route 1 Canvass Communication A (CCA) and concern around emails, though we **may expect this behaviour to change** over time as the new processes become more familiar. Respondents found it difficult to estimate elector response given a lack of feedback and engagement but acknowledged that **Route 1 was likely to be appreciated**. In the qualitative research, some argued that the shift towards **e-communications was positive** for electors. Participants were mostly positive about the changes to the forms, though the two stage registration process continued to be an issue for electors.

Section D: Management Information

- Respondents mentioned **substantial issues with the reports they were able to extract from the EMS systems**, such as variations in statistics and lacking data at a deeper level, meaning they were not as able as they wished to evaluate the effectiveness of actions taken during the canvass. Several stated that in their view the EMS had not been ready for the 2020 canvass, but some mentioned that it had improved over time. However, **participants were positive about the processing of the MI and their relationship with their EMS supplier**.

Additional findings: 2020 in context

- Overall, **respondents were positive about canvass reform**, but repeated their reservations from elsewhere. We must also consider the context of 2020: COVID-19 impacted participants' ability to conduct the canvass through the cancellation of the door knock in many local authorities. Despite this, many argued that canvass reform had helped to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19. Some speculated that the 2019 General Election may have encouraged a higher match rate.

Going forward & next steps

Respondents were positive about the impact of canvass reform and keen to realise the benefits going forward, such as by increasing their use of ecommunications. Some barriers remain around the EMS and access to local data, which was considered to be very important. Focus group participants argued ongoing support was important.

Results show that canvass reform represents a **major improvement over the pre-reform canvass, which is encouraging given the context of COVID-19 and expectations of change in the first year of the reformed canvass**. Further work has been undertaken, for example, to enhance the MI functionality for this year's canvass and it will be important to continue to evaluate canvass reform, including in the next ES survey in 2022.

Approach

Method 1: Qualitative research

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in-house by trained social researchers in Constitution Group Analysis (CGA). Interviews were conducted with electoral administrators from 19 local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales about their experiences facilitating and implementing the first year of canvass reform. A focus group was also conducted with four EROs from Scotland and England, in order that views at a senior level were represented in the evaluation.

During a semi-structured interview, interviewers follow a structured topic guide, but are also able to follow up spontaneously to the participants' responses during the interview, giving greater flexibility but slightly less standardisation across interviews.

Interviews and the focus group took place over Google Meet and were recorded using a secure dictaphone. Informed consent to take part and be recorded was obtained prior to the interview and confirmed on the record.

Data from the anonymised transcripts were analysed using a thematic analysis approach, where data across multiple interviews is organised into codes and wider themes. Quality Assurance checks were carried out to ensure information and insights presented were grounded in the data collected.

Participants were selected based on the key characteristics of their local authorities using purposive sampling. We aimed to sample for a wide range within each characteristic, which does not mean that the sample is nationally representative but ensures that the full range of experience is considered. Key characteristics included:

- **Percentage of properties canvassed in Route 2 & 3.** Local authorities were ordered in our sample frame by their percentage of Route 2 properties from most to least. We segmented these into four categories, making sure that at least four local authorities were represented in each category to ensure a broad range. For Route 3, we selected six LAs where the percentage was above 4%, with the other 13 below.
- **Rural / Urban.** Local authorities in England were selected according to their 2011 Rural Urban Classification (RUC2011). We made sure that there was a balance across each category with a minimum of one and a maximum of five local authorities in each category.
- **Region.** We ensured that local authorities were selected from across England, Scotland and Wales, and from every region in England. Unfortunately, a local authority from the North East dropped out between sampling and interview.
- **EMS supplier.** We made sure that all three EMS suppliers in our sample frame were present in the final sample.
- We aimed to ensure representation from across a wide range of other characteristics, including **migration, deprivation, mean population age, and population density.**

Method 2: Electoral Services Experience Survey

The Electoral Services (ES) Experience Survey was designed to gather feedback from Electoral Registration Officers and those in electoral service teams (one response per LA/VJB), who are

familiar with the canvass process, on their experience of the pre-reform annual canvass. The survey ran from the 19th of May to the 2nd of July 2021, at a similar timeframe to the 2020 survey. Overall, 200 LAs/VJBs responded to the survey from a total of 371 (excluding Northern Ireland) for a response rate of 53.91%. This compares with a 62% response rate to the 2020 survey.

Quantitative Analysis

Data Cleaning and Collating

We have cleaned the data received, which included removing eight duplicate responses for a resulting total of 200 responses.

Confidence

All statistics are statistically significant unless otherwise stated. Confidence levels are calculated at the 95% level of significance.

Likert Calculations

When determining the relative satisfaction by region/question, we assign numerical values to each response: Very dissatisfied/ineffectively = -2; dissatisfied/ineffectively = -1; neither satisfied or dissatisfied = 0; satisfied/effectively = 1; very satisfied/effectively = 2 and don't know/other = 0. We then calculate the mean average of these values in order to gauge the general level of satisfaction, which theoretically range from -2 to 2.

Qualitative Analysis

Each non-demographic question in the survey had an optional open-text response box. These text responses were collated into a spreadsheet and each response was coded to the concepts mentioned by respondents. These codes were then combined to create wider themes. The main themes across the survey and the links between them have been expressed in figure 1, below. In addition, we identified cross-cutting themes which did not appear within specific questions: these are discussed in the 'additional findings' section.

Limitations

Qualitative findings should be taken within context. Participants have often given recommendations for how canvass reform could be improved: we should consider that qualitative research is transferable, but not generalisable.

Qualitative data cannot be used as a baseline in the same way as quantitative data, because the data is not generalisable and we risk prescribing themes for next year's survey. However, further explanation of themes from this year and last year's survey can be found in **Annex A**.

On Sampling in the survey, there is a risk of sample bias in that we asked all LAs and VJBs to take part but those with strong views may have been more motivated to take part. There is a risk that some LAs and VJBs will not have responded to both the 2020 and 2021 iteration of the survey, so LAs and VJBs views will not be represented, making findings potentially less representative of the

population as a whole. This is a standard methodological limitation with surveys and we mitigated this to a large extent by promoting the survey on multiple occasions. Similarly we asked EROs for their view of the citizen experience, which is not coming directly from the citizen.

Net satisfaction scores

Whilst the survey covers all themes of the evaluation², it primarily focuses on the theme of 'ERO experience'. The first edition, in 2020, was used as a baseline of attitudes towards the pre-reform canvass. This edition shows attitudes towards canvass reform.

Table 1, below, shows the net satisfaction for each question, and the percentage change from the 2020 survey. These net scores are all positive, ranging from 19% to 95%. In all but two questions, covering Management Information and statistics, net satisfaction has improved, often substantially. This is promising given that we did not anticipate any immediate and dramatic changes in the 2021 survey. Some questions cannot be compared because they relate to new canvass reform processes.

For question 13, the type of responses are different to all of the other questions, with sub-questions asking about the number of correspondence local authorities receive of different types. The question has been broken down into sub-questions and a score calculated for each; further explanation of the methodology is outlined in question 13.

Table 1: Net satisfaction for the responses to each question

Question	Net Satisfaction	
	Post Reform (Year 1)	Percentage Change
Q1 How satisfied were you with the level of discretion you and your team had to run a tailored canvass to suit your local area under the first year of the reformed annual canvass?	82.50%	69.50%
Q2 How satisfied were you that the first year of the reformed annual canvass process allowed your team to exercise innovation and improvement?	71.00%	62.00%
Q3 How effectively could you and your team target your time and resources under the first year of the reformed annual canvass requirements?	77.00%	31.00%
Q4 How satisfied were you with the processes for the national data match under the first year of the reformed annual canvass?	95.00%	N/A
Q5 How satisfied were you with the Route 1 processes under the first year of the reformed annual canvass?	81.00%	N/A
Q6 How satisfied were you with the Route 2 processes under the first year of the reformed annual canvass?	77.50%	N/A
Q7 How satisfied were you with the Route 3 processes under the first year of the reformed annual canvass?	55.50%	N/A
Q8 Overall, how satisfied were you and your team with the first year of the reformed annual canvass?	90.00%	71.00%
Q9 How satisfied were you with the first year of the reformed annual canvass processes to safeguard the completeness of your electoral register?	57.50%	12.50%

² The four themes of the MERP Evaluation are: 1) Maintain completeness and accuracy; 2) Create efficiencies; 3) Improve the citizen experience; and 4) Improve the ERO experience

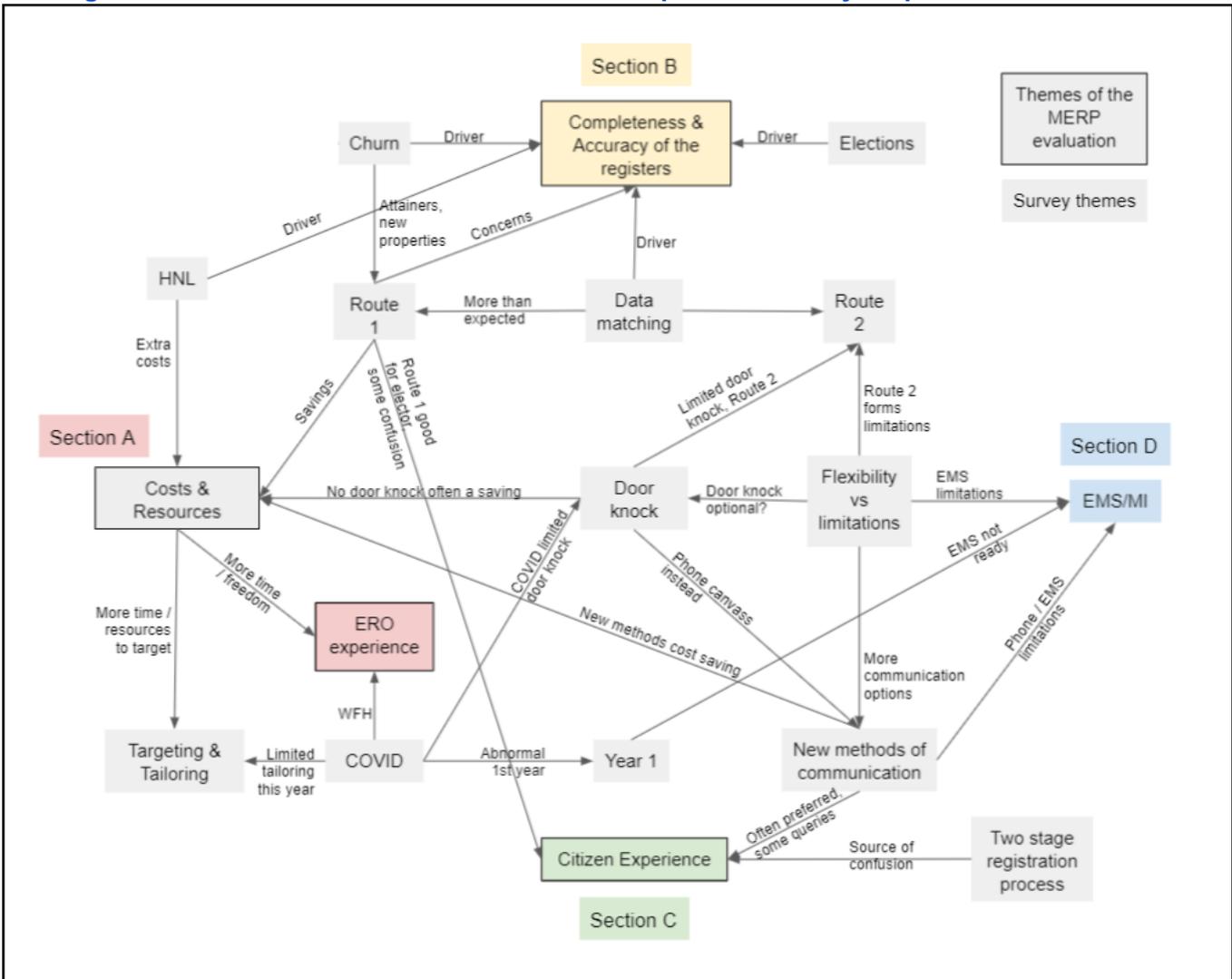
Q10 How satisfied were you with the first year of the reformed annual canvass processes to safeguard the accuracy of your electoral register?	57.00%	8.00%
Q11 How satisfied were you with the first year of the reformed annual canvass processes to maintain the security and integrity of your electoral register (for example security and integrity around collation of the information, and identifying fraudulent applications)?	82.00%	19.00%
Q12 How satisfied were you that the first year of the reformed annual canvass processes were simple and clear for citizens?	53.50%	62.50%
Q13 Please select the frequency with which you receive the following categories of correspondence from citizens about pre-reform annual canvass processes.	See page 34 for a breakdown of this question.	
Q14 In your opinion, how satisfied do you think citizens were with the first year of the reformed annual canvass process?	47.50%	46.50%
Q15 How satisfied were you that the data and statistics during the canvass period allowed you to make informed decisions on how to conduct the first year of the reformed annual canvass in your area?	28.50%	-20.50%
Q16 How effectively did you feel you could evaluate the effectiveness of the canvass under the current Management Information (first year of the reformed canvass)?	18.50%	-30.50%

Qualitative themes

The qualitative research and the open text responses to the survey were both analysed using a thematic analysis approach. Figure 1 and Figure 2, below, show diagrams of the main themes identified through both pieces of research, and the relationships between these themes.

Electoral Services Experience Survey, 2021

Figure 1: Qualitative themes identified across open text survey responses

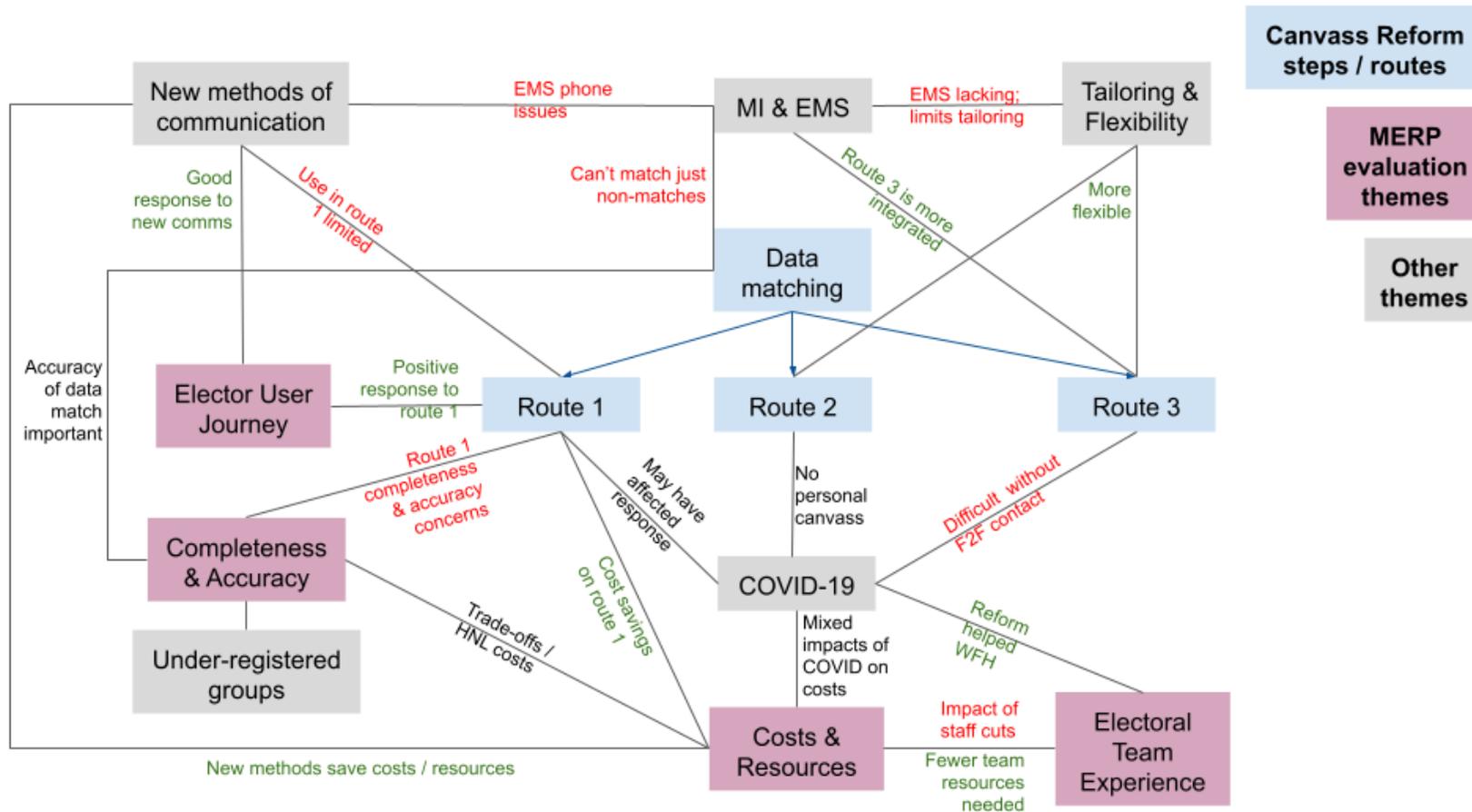


Notes - The coloured boxes show key themes of each of the 4 sections of the survey. Boxes with an outline show themes which are assessed as part of the MERP evaluation, and boxes without an outline show any other themes. The arrows show the links between themes, with text to explain the links or illustrate sub-themes. This diagram covers themes which appeared across multiple questions; for themes which appeared only in specific questions, please see the report.

Qualitative research

This diagram shows the relationship between the themes which arose from qualitative research. Positive relationships are marked in green, negative relationships in red, and neutral relationships in black. Themes are explored further in the 'key findings' and 'additional findings' sections.

Figure 2: Qualitative themes identified across qualitative research project



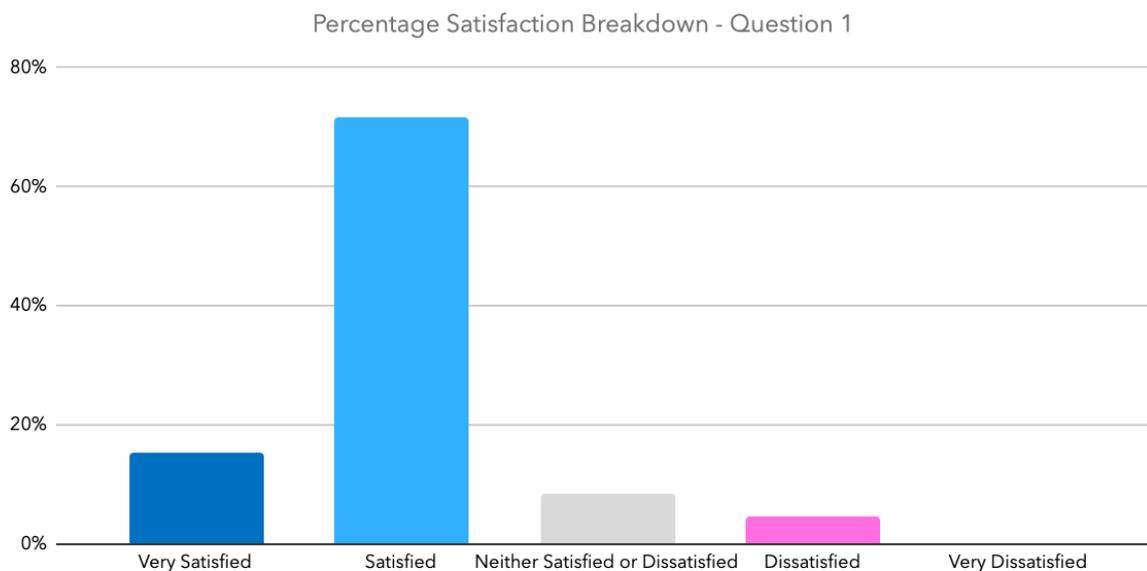
Key findings

Section A: ES Experience

Q1 How satisfied were you with the level of discretion you and your team had to run a tailored canvass to suit your local area under the first year of the reformed annual canvass?

For this question, the net satisfaction was +82.5%. Overall, the findings were positive. 87% were satisfied and 4.5% were dissatisfied. This marks a net change in satisfaction of +69.5% points compared to the 2020 survey.

Figure 3: Percentage breakdown for each response given to Q1



While respondents were satisfied overall, in the open text responses most mentioned the limitations in being able to tailor the canvass to their local area in the first year of canvass reform. For example, across both pieces of research several stated that they were taking a cautious approach in the first year and wanted to see the impact of changes, such as on Route 1, before making big alterations. In the qualitative research, many argued that they had to take a consistent approach across their local authority so had chosen not to substantially tailor the canvass.

Furthermore, several mentioned restrictions on canvassing and planning as a result of COVID-19, including home working and not undertaking door knocking during the pandemic. In the qualitative research, some felt this had reduced the level of flexibility in the first year of canvass reform.

Respondents welcomed the increased options of canvass reform to run a telephone canvass or send more forms instead. In the focus group, one ERO mentioned that this was due to needing to simplify the process for staff working from home, but across both the interviews and focus group most said that they had taken a cautious approach in order to see what works, and there was agreement in the focus group that there would be more experimentation in future years. In some cases, it led to savings on staff or mileage from not conducting the door knock. Across both pieces of research, some went further, arguing that the door knock should be an optional step:

“Due to COVID-19, we chose not to run a 'door knock' canvass for the final few 'non-responders'. Where we could however, we did however provide a 'telephone canvass'. (...) This actually got a much higher response than predicted, had we ran a personal 'door knock' as planned. This was also significantly cheaper and less time consuming (especially when you consider our rural location and demographic). Personally, I believe a 'personal canvass' is now (for some authorities at least) of very little benefit and perhaps instead of being a compulsory step, it should be only 'an optional choice'.”

Furthermore, across both pieces of research, respondents asserted that they had been held back by limitations of their electoral management systems (EMS), with one survey respondent commenting that “the flexibility of the EMS did not match the flexibility of the legislation”. One issue cited was that data was not available for specific polling districts, which meant the canvass could not be tailored to their local area. There also appeared to be issues with the timings of some of the stages, such as putting in reminder steps, or sending communications at different times, like being able to send an email on Route 2 first. In the qualitative research, some participants experienced particular difficulties tailoring to Route 3, either due to difficulties accessing data or due to time constraints. Finally, options around the data match were praised, though in some cases local data matching was seen to be limited by access to data sets or the EMS software.

Qualitative research themes: Tailoring & Flexibility

Overall, participants were positive that canvass reform gave them more options for flexibility in how they conducted the canvass. Participants praised the flexibility of Route 3, and some argued that Route 3 properties had benefited from Canvass Reform. In the focus group, EROs echoed that the increased flexibility was positive, though they noted that they had not used it as much as they could have in the first year of canvass reform.

Furthermore, the introduction of new methods of communication was also appreciated for increasing flexibility. For example, giving electors more options to respond was seen as a positive step. Some participants noted that they liked having the option of sending ecommunications even if they chose not to use it, for example because of elderly populations in their local authority.

Variation between local areas had a significant impact on participants' ability to conduct the canvass. For example, one local authority in an urban area expressed concern that a large amount of churn limited the effectiveness of data to tailor the canvass:

Participant 6B

“We have a huge churn and it isn't necessarily a churn in just specific broad areas, it is across the whole borough. So this is why we've had this sort of slight concern over the

Route one canvass form A. Because as much as we can locally data match as well as DWP data match, it's only correct up to a certain point of how up to date that data is."

Whilst a local authority with limited churn argued that this meant tailoring would be limited:

Participant 19A

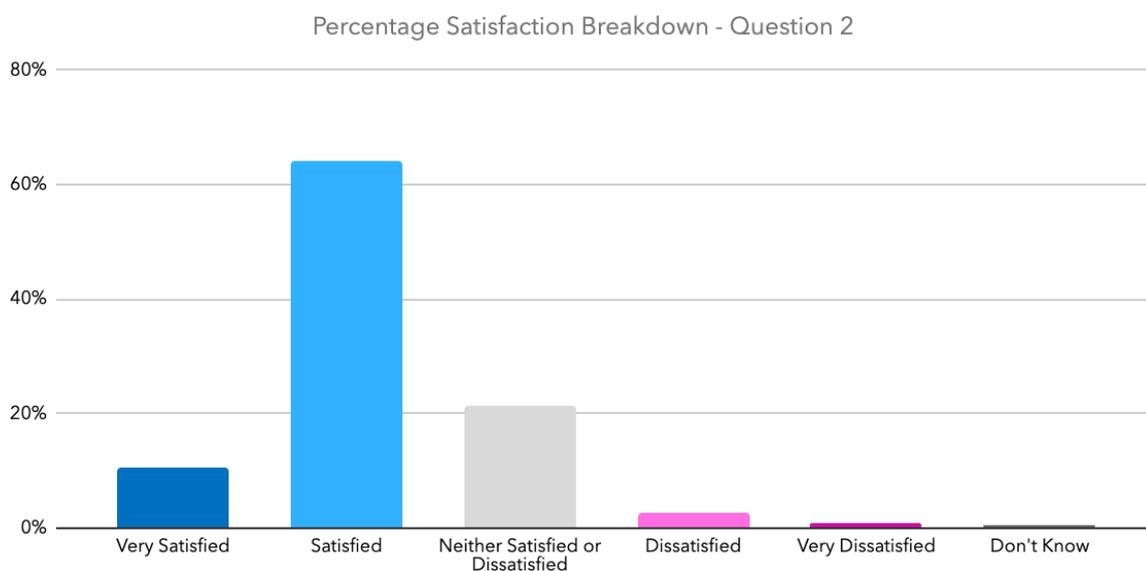
"Our population is pretty stagnant. It doesn't move a great deal. We don't have a lot of flow in and out... So actually from that perspective, it was almost as if the only way we really tailor it... was just about how we would send those forms out."

Most participants expressed that they would tailor the canvass more in future years if data allowed it, for instance through more ecommunications.

Q2 How satisfied were you that the first year of the reformed annual canvass process allowed your team to exercise innovation and improvement?

For this question, the net satisfaction was +71%. Overall, the findings were positive. 74.5% were satisfied and 3.5% were dissatisfied. This marks a net change in satisfaction of +62% points compared to the 2020 survey.

Figure 4: Percentage breakdown for each response given to Q2



As above, while respondents were satisfied overall, many noted the limitations on innovation in the first year, such as the need to take a cautious approach and establish a baseline from which future years could build. In addition, many commented that COVID-19 had limited their ability to innovate, due to home working or being redeployed as a result of the pandemic, though again, the new communication methods were appreciated.

"We really wanted to understand what difference the data match would make to our area before we felt confident in changing our approach to canvass. I am sure that there are other

authorities out there who also felt that they would like a 'control year' so that there would be more evidence upon which to draw and identify areas for innovation. We were very satisfied with the move to e-comms though and we were very surprised by the overwhelmingly online response we received. However, I think a lot of this was to do with Covid-19, which has encouraged many more people to go online for their services now, especially in the more ageing and rural communities that our area covers... Nonetheless, it has set a precedent and we will be continuing to use e-comms going forward."

Where new communication methods were used instead of a door knock, this was seen to save costs, paper, and be safer in the context of the pandemic. There was a view that having more options and discretion was an improvement, rather than these new methods simply being better. For example, the telephone canvass was not always successful. Across both pieces of research, some criticised the fact that they could not telephone unmatched electors at a property:

"Telephone canvass - all outstanding properties that I have an email or telephone number for should allow us to make contact via this method as canvass reform purpose is to save money - it should not be limited to the match rate and current restrictions. Door knocking has value and having various options is valuable - discretion how you make contact should be with resources and information available."

Participant 16A

"We used telephone canvassing, but it was really disappointing. I think we only had about 300 properties that we could actually call anyone."

Qualitative themes: new methods of communication

Many participants expressed that email was the most effective method of communication; electors appeared to like the immediacy of response this afforded. A small number of local authorities spoke very positively about the efficiency and effectiveness of the telephone canvass compared with the door knock. This view was somewhat echoed by focus group EROs: in one local authority, a surprisingly good response was achieved, while in another, the response was not as good but still better than the door knock. It was also expressed in both the focus group and an interview that telephone canvassing was particularly useful in rural areas. Only a small minority of local authorities that we spoke to mentioned using SMS; one participant said that the character limit on text messages meant that this method was not useful.

Participant 19B

"If it hadn't been for COVID, we would have really utilised the telephone canvassing (...) I would have loved to have done that this time around and it's definitely something we'll be looking at next year instead of going out because we're quite rural so door knocks (...) take ages, and we end up spending loads of money on it because it could be an hour at three different properties."

However, participants encountered a number of difficulties with using the new communication methods. Firstly, many reported lacking access to sufficient numbers of email addresses or telephone numbers. Many chose not to use ecommunications because of this. Several participants expressed disappointment at the low response to the telephone canvass

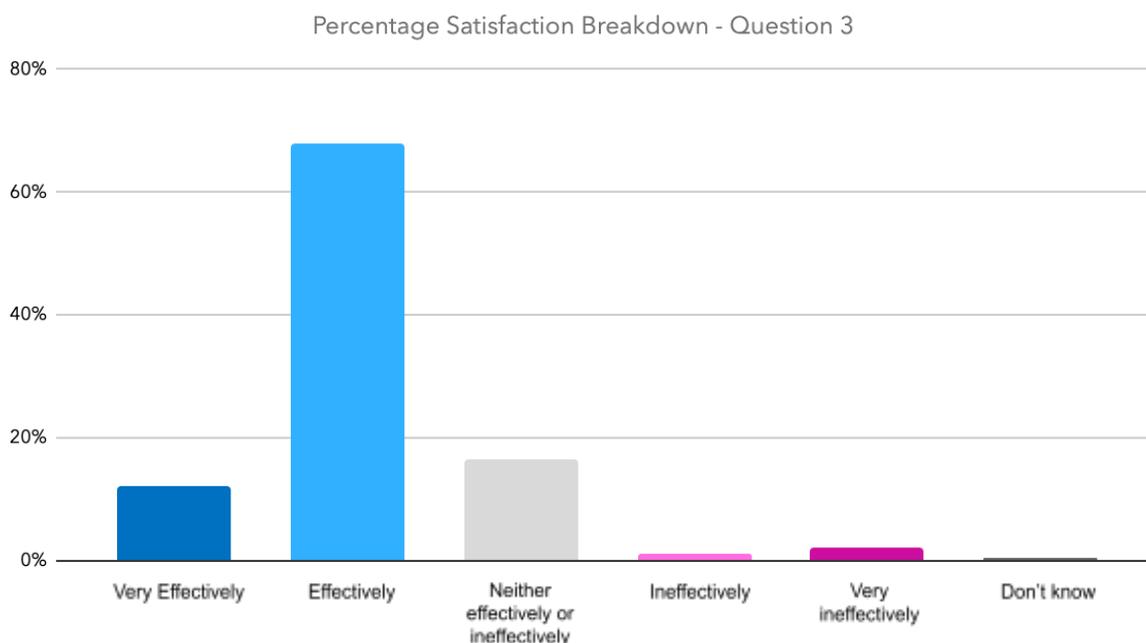
because of the compounding effect of a lack of numbers and a poor response from those that they did phone.

There was a large variation in how new methods of communication were used. Some participants noted that they liked having the option of using new methods even if they hadn't used them to their full extent. Some chose to use new methods of communication only in certain routes: in particular, many did not use ecommunications in Route 1. Many participants stated that they would continue to build up their databases of emails and telephone numbers to use in future.

Q3 How effectively could you and your team target your time and resources under the first year of the reformed annual canvass requirements?

For this question, the net satisfaction was +77%. Overall, the findings were positive. 80% were able to target effectively and 3% were not. This marks a net change of +31% points compared to the 2020 survey.

Figure 5: Percentage breakdown for each response to Q3



In the open text responses, many respondents chose to frame their answers within the context of COVID-19 restrictions, such as redeployment, working from home, and no door knocking. However, it should be noted that most respondents were able to target effectively, and in the open text responses many answered that they were able to manage despite COVID or if not, had not managed due to COVID, rather than canvass reform. For example, one extra cost mentioned was the cost of using Royal Mail rather than using hand-delivery, whilst another was the use of extra forms in place of door knocking.

Some commented that year 1 of canvass reform was a learning experience, reporting that there had been some guesswork involved in their choices, sometimes perceived to be caused by a lack

of readiness of the EMS software. Positively, some described canvass reform as a more efficient process: the reduction in return post processing meant that more time and resources could be freed up to target properties in low response areas. In the qualitative research, the efficiency of the routes were praised, with Route 1 allowing electoral service teams to spend more time focusing on Route 2.

“The significant decrease in the volume of CCAs and Canvass forms returned meant that the team could spend more time targeting non responders.”

Qualitative research themes: Costs and resources

Overall, local authorities expressed that canvass reform had a positive impact on their costs and resources. Participants were most positive about the time saved scanning and processing forms, though some had outsourced this previously so didn't feel this impact.

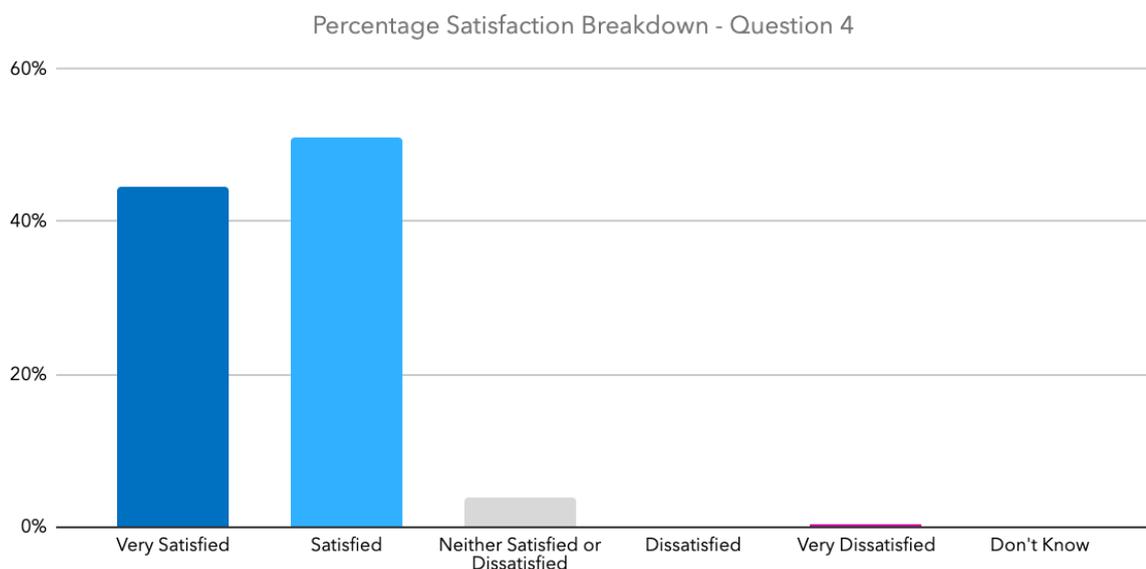
There were some positive impacts on canvassing. As noted, some savings were due to COVID-19 preventing the door knock in some cases. While recruitment of canvassing staff was often described as difficult, in some cases it had a positive impact because they did not need to recruit as many. Two local authorities were able to invest in tablets as a result of cost savings.

Funding is a longstanding issue. Some local authorities expressed that in general they had had substantial funding issues or had experienced staff cuts. Others were confident savings would be more long term.

Q4 How satisfied were you with the processes for the national data match under the first year of the reformed annual canvass?

For this question, the net satisfaction was +95%. Overall, the findings were positive. 95.5% were satisfied and 0.5% were dissatisfied.

Figure 6: Percentage breakdown for each response to Q4



This was reflected in the qualitative responses: many praised the national data match for being quick, easy and straightforward. Many said they encountered no issues, though a small minority did experience technical issues, which made the process slower. In most cases this appeared to result from local authority systems rather than issues at a national level. Suppliers were also praised for making the process smooth.

Many commented that they had a high match rate of properties going down Route 1, though a smaller number were disappointed it was not higher. In the qualitative research, some achieved a better match than the data test:

Participant 18

“So initially it came back and it was really low, it was about 38%. And we were 42 or 43% in the test. And I was sitting in the office, and my deputy manager's sat there with me. And he went, oh that's alright. That's [our local authority] for you. 38%, 40%, that's what we expect. And then suddenly he leant over and said, no, that can't be right. We've done so much good work in the last two years, changed the way we do things, emails going out every day, all that sort of stuff. Anyway, there was a blip in the software (...) And then we ran it all again, and it went up to 63%. I nearly fell off my chair. I just went, hell yeah.”

Satisfaction appeared to be somewhat related to the level of churn within a local authority, with a small number of technical issues reported around new properties and empty properties.

Qualitative research themes: Data matching

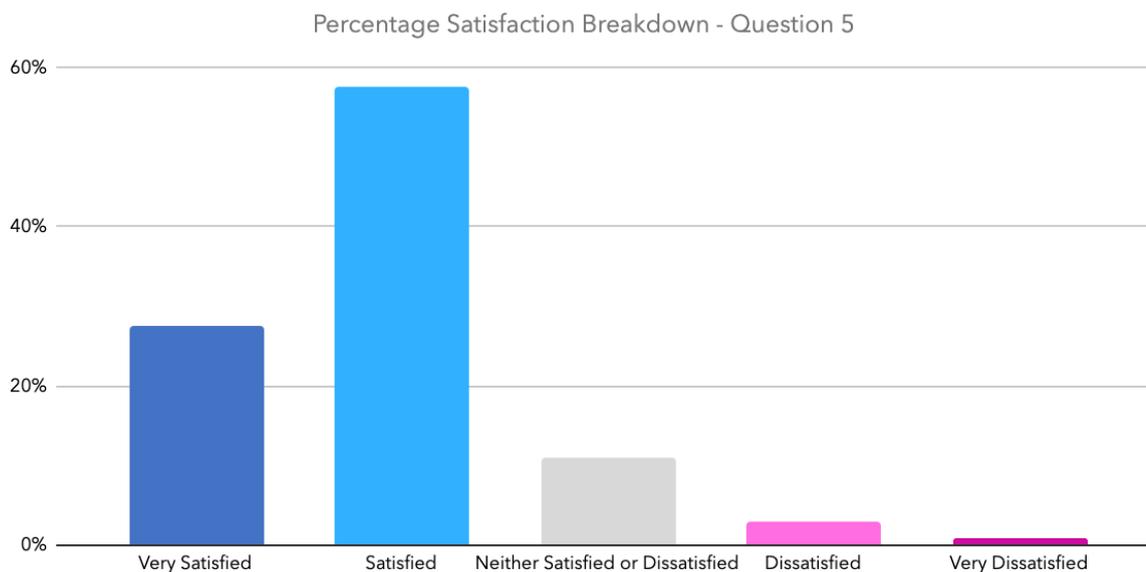
Local data matching was seen to be important, though access to local data varied significantly. Several participants praised the local data match for further decreasing the number of properties that they needed to door-knock. While established local data sources were seen to be important to achieving a good match, some local authorities were able to set up local data-sharing agreements for the first time in 2020. Some participants in unitary authorities stated this helped them to access local data. Quality of data was also seen to be important, and most chose to only use council tax data because they believed it was good quality. Nevertheless, many reported having limited access to local data and were keen to improve local relationships to improve access in the future. EROs in the focus group echoed that data quality was important. Some expressed, across both interviews and the focus group, that getting data from county councils was particularly difficult.

Other issues with data matching included running out of time and lack of functionality in the EMS. Some participants reported that they left the data match later to get the register in a good condition and avoid mistakes, and some said that they would conduct the national data match earlier in future. A number of participants also noted that the EMS lacked functionality to match only those that had not matched earlier, which was also described as time consuming, though others praised being able to check incorrect matches. COVID and lack of staff each prevented local data matching in two local authorities.

Q5 How satisfied were you with the Route 1 processes under the first year of the reformed annual canvass?

For this question, the net satisfaction was +81%. Overall, the findings were positive. 85% were satisfied and 4% were dissatisfied.

Figure 7: Percentage breakdown for each response in Q5



Responses to this question appeared more interesting in comparison to its initial appearance having investigated the breakdown of responses by COVID-19 impact

As with the qualitative research, in the open text responses many had concerns about the potential impact of Route 1 on completeness and accuracy, if people that should have responded failed to do so. Due to this concern several chose to send a Household Notification Letter (HNL) after the register had been published, and some found a substantial number of amendments as a result. There was concern from some about changes to the register being found outside the canvass period, such as in the run-up to an election, as well as the associated costs of this. Evidence of this from the May 2021 elections was mixed, and some mentioned churn as a potential factor in this.

“While at the time of the first canvass, we were very happy with the conciseness of Route 1, we were concerned that properties would ‘slip through the cracks’ and unreported changes would go missed. We found in the run up to the election that there were several route 1 properties that had changes that were not picked up and had to be actioned later on. This is a consideration we will be making in this canvass - whether savings from canvass might be used to fund a Route 1 HNL at the end of canvass or in Feb/March to ensure that no one is missed.”

As elsewhere, respondents were broadly positive about the ability to use ecommunications, but there were some issues. Some questioned why ecommunications required a response from electors on Route 1 when paper forms did not, showing that for some Route 1 does not go far enough: it is important to consider this alongside the concerns around completeness and accuracy

of Route 1. Of those that did use paper forms, some felt there was room for improvement, such as by allowing local authorities the discretion to change the wording, and barcodes for those who returned the form with changes or were unable to respond online. Some also mentioned that electors had responded to Route 1 when they did not need to.

“No evidence from the May 6th polls to suggest that the register was any less accurate than in previous years despite the CCA not requiring a response.”

Qualitative research themes: Route 1

Participants expressed that Route 1 had had a positive impact on both their experience and on elector experience. Many local authorities did not report having significant issues conducting the Route 1 canvass. Some reported that it worked better than expected or that they had received fewer queries from electors than anticipated. Furthermore, Route 1 was seen to save costs and resources through less requirement for printing and processing; some described the old canvass as “wasteful”. This allowed electoral service teams to spend more on Route 2 properties and other engagement work. For example, one local authority expressed that sending fewer people down Route 2 compared to the pre-reform canvass made telephone canvassing more feasible.

Participant 14

“I think it’s a more intelligent approach. It requires you to think about what you’re doing more, rather than just blindly sending out three letters.”

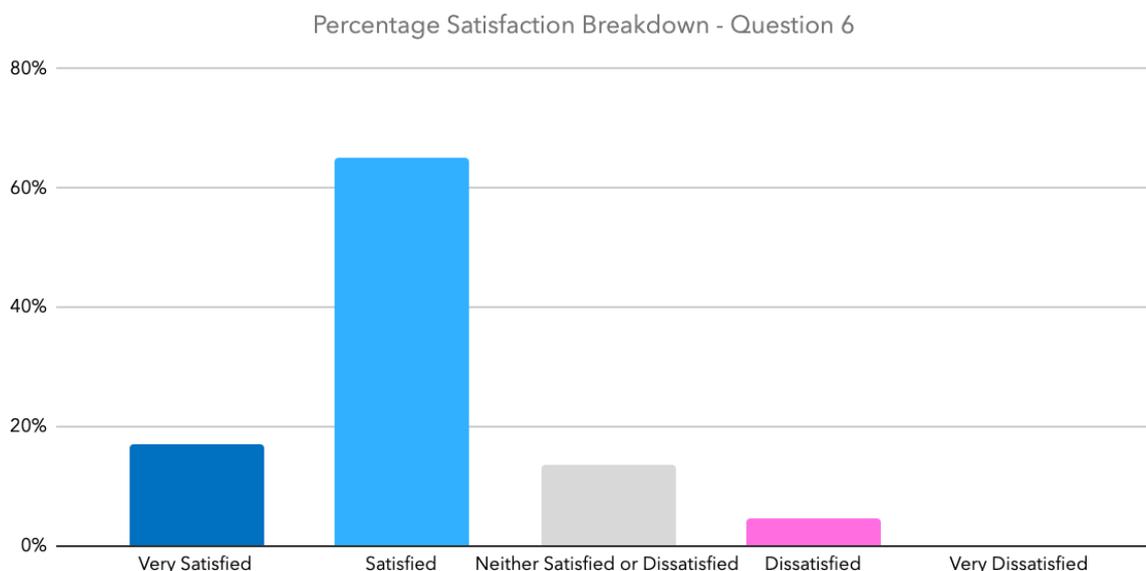
Use of ecommunications in Route 1 was limited, reflecting the variation in approaches taken. Those that did not use ecommunications did so because they lacked access to sufficient email addresses or because it would have required sending a reminder. Those that did use ecommunications often chose to stagger sending the forms after sending ecommunications. A small minority of electors disliked receiving emails. Overall, while some were keen to use or further tailor their ecommunications in future years, some said that requiring a response from electors discouraged them from using ecommunications in Route 1.

There were minor issues around over 76 electors. Two local authorities reported an increase in queries from electors over the age of 76: in one, it was suggested that the new forms were picking up people who had turned 76 some time ago but had not previously realised they needed to report changes, while in the other, turning 76 had been their only change and they did not want to go online to change it. This issue was also mentioned in the survey.

Q6 How satisfied were you with the Route 2 processes under the first year of the reformed annual canvass?

For this question, the net satisfaction was +77.5%. Overall, the findings were positive. 82% were satisfied and 4.5% were dissatisfied.

Figure 8: Percentage breakdown for each response in Q6



Across both pieces of research views on the Route 2 forms, the Canvass Communication B (CCB) and the Canvass Form (CF) were mixed. Some mentioned they had a poor response when using the CCB. On the other hand, others mentioned that the CCB had helped to drive up online responses which in turn had helped to reduce costs or workload. In the qualitative research, the lack of a return envelope was cited as a reason for why the CCB was both used and not used. Authorities with older populations that preferred a return envelope appeared to use it less, while authorities that did use the CCB did so because it was cheaper and encouraged channel shift.

One local authority said that the layout of the CCB made it harder to sort which ones had changes, while another stated that CCBs not having barcodes made the forms more difficult to match against properties. Some questioned why both forms were needed, since the amount of options this created led to confusion from both electors and administrators. However, several mentioned using both forms in combination to drive up response, and those that did not like having two forms were split on their preferences.³ In the qualitative research, most took the view that more options were better, especially due to COVID-19.

As above, some felt limited by being unable to conduct the door knock but others felt that the door knock should be optional, feeling that the telephone canvass was more effective. While we can speculate rurality as a potential cause of this, we did not find it to be a factor in our quantitative analysis.

Qualitative research themes: Route 2

Overall, Route 2 was described as similar to a traditional canvass but with more flexibility in communication. It was seen to be straightforward and easy. Consequently, most participants kept things largely the same, though a small minority were more experimental. Most praised the ability to use new communications methods as part of the main chase cycle, as this reduced the use of ineffective methods as well as reducing costs and workload through less printing and posting. Some mentioned that they would reconsider the order of their messaging in future years.

³ The Electoral Commission [note](#) "Questions and answers about voter materials" explains the rationale behind the changes to the forms.

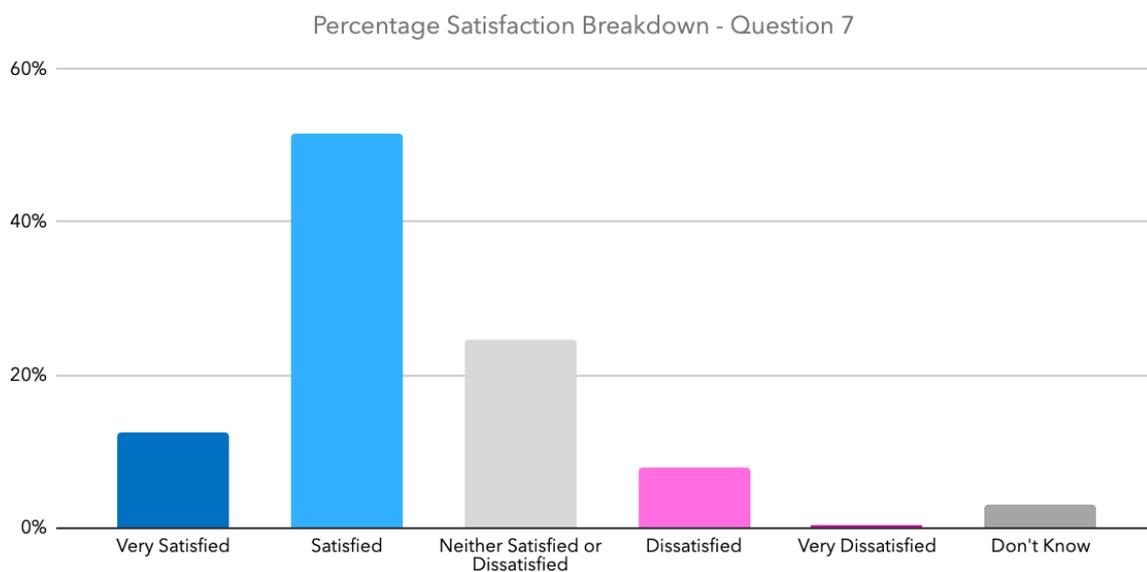
Most saw the amount of options and permutations as positive, and this was thought to be positive for the elector. However, this could occasionally be difficult to explain to customer service teams. Limitations included people not answering the phone and a lack of access to phone numbers. Some mentioned it was difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of Route 2 in the EMS.

There was a mix of views on the level of response to the canvass. Some participants compared the response to Route 2 favourably to Route 1 because they had to respond. Other local authorities noted there had been a drop in response compared to the pre-reform canvass process, though some argued that this reflected the hard to reach demographics present in Route 2. Some noted that serial non-responders would continue to be an issue under the new canvass.

Q7 How satisfied were you with the Route 3 processes under the first year of the reformed annual canvass?

For this question, the net satisfaction was +55.5%. Overall, the findings were positive. 64% were satisfied and 8.5% were dissatisfied. This question had the highest number of 'don't know' responses, likely from those that did not use Route 3 - this is supported by the qualitative responses.

Figure 9: Percentage breakdown for each response in Q7



In the open text responses, COVID-19 was seen to make Route 3 more challenging than it otherwise would have been. For example, it made visits with care homes impossible, so local authorities contacted these properties via email or telephone instead, and many welcomed this flexibility. In the qualitative research, many cited COVID-19 as a cause of low returns from care homes. Care homes were seen to be challenging already due to issues around capacity due to dementia. Many also welcomed the introduction of Single Responsible Officers (SROs).

“We have a number of care homes in our area and the ability to be able to obtain the information from one 'Responsible Person' and choose the contact method made the canvass process much easier for these types of properties.”

One issue mentioned in the qualitative research was that participants and care home staff did not want to remove the right to vote, but residents did not then go on to register because they did not have the mental capacity to do so. Consequently, some stated that they did not feel that the two-stage registration process was appropriate for care home residents and should be reconsidered.

Participant 17

“For nursing homes, I just don't feel like [Route 3] works. There should be some kind of exception for nursing homes. It's very difficult for staff, or sometimes people in these situations don't have relatives, so that's a process I would like to see changed. Maybe some kind of exception process, where a single responsible officer could give you all the information to register the people in a nursing home especially.”

However, some found it difficult to communicate with SROs in the context of the pandemic. Additionally, these were seen to take a long time to set up, though some acknowledged that this was a one-off process. Some of the satisfied respondents mentioned that they had established processes or employed regular extra staff on Route 3, all of which indicates that there may be improvements over time.

“Didn't work well in Year 1. Lot of the 'responsible people' at supported accommodation were too busy with Covid response. It should have worked well, but didn't as a result.”

Furthermore, some felt that the EMS functionality in Route 3 was limited or not ready in time for the 2020 canvass. For example, this meant that some were forced to put electors into Route 2, and could not take them out again. Finally, some were keen to have more guidance on how to run Route 3 effectively.

Qualitative research themes: Route 3

There was wide variation in the extent to which Route 3 was used. Some local authorities scarcely used Route 3 because there were not many properties that fit the Route 3 criteria in their area. Those that did use Route 3 usually had a large population of students or a substantial number of care homes.

Those that used Route 3 tended to take a similar approach to previous years, though the additions of Route 3 were praised. Many local authorities had established relationships with universities and care homes. Some already employed a staff member to specifically deal with this area of the canvass, while another planned to recruit a staff member for next year. Thus, the addition of the SRO was praised for personalising the request for data, as well as for integrating it better into the EMS.

Response rates varied significantly. One local authority was able to achieve a 100% response rate, though they did not have many properties. For most participants, getting a response was

challenging, though some mentioned that they had had more success telephoning Route 3 properties than other contact methods.

Success with universities varied significantly. Of the local authorities with universities, some cited good relationships with them. Others mentioned continuing challenges with access to data from universities over many years.

Participant 5B

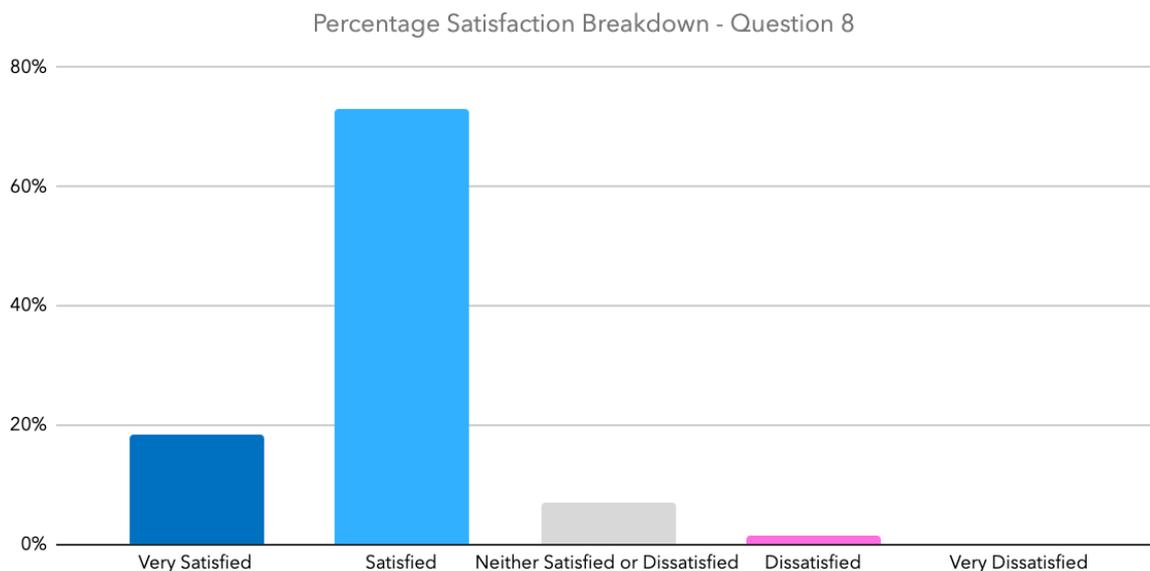
“Route 3 worked quite well with the university halls of residence because we have, or are in the process of putting through a sort of formal data agreement with the university and we have a specific port of call within the university... [but] it's the privately run ones -- the Route 3, the mechanism if you like is fine, the concept of it is brilliant, the reality of it is that it doesn't quite work...the majority of them weren't having it, just citing data protection, saying I can't, no matter how much you emphasise that you're entitled to it, they just wouldn't provide it. So then you end up not getting to it. It's not sort of a blunt tool in the respect that, in reality, we can't force people to give information, we can request it and there are possibilities of enforcement or something, but in reality, you ask for it, and they call your bluff and say 'I'm not giving it to you', and you can't really do anything further with it.”

Canvassing houses in multiple occupations was also challenging. The reasons mentioned for this were due to difficulties defining HMOs, difficulty contacting them, and a lack of data.

Q8 Overall, how satisfied were you and your team with the first year of the reformed annual canvass?

For this question, the net satisfaction was +90%. Overall, the findings were positive. 91.5% were satisfied and 1.5% were dissatisfied. This marks a net change in satisfaction of +71% points compared to the 2020 survey.

Figure 10: Percentage breakdown for each response in Q8



In the qualitative responses, local authorities summarised their concerns from elsewhere in this section. Firstly, respondents outlined their concerns around the potential completeness and accuracy of Route 1. While most had not experienced major changes to the register through HNLs or the May 2021 elections, some felt that the accuracy of the register would only become apparent at the time of a major election with high turnout.

“The pandemic restricted some of the improvements we wanted to make with reducing canvasser numbers. The use of CCAs and confusion with many electors still returning them stating 'No Changes' is worrying & whilst we have had the May 2021 elections these were not reflective of the level of voter turnout, so it might take a GE [General Election] to determine how accurate our register is.”

Some were able to achieve substantial cost savings, although others were not and were uncertain about the impact on costs in the long term. Nevertheless, several stated that their workload had been lower. Furthermore, there was a view that it would be important to see the impacts of canvass reform without COVID-19, though some stated that they had managed well despite the pandemic.

“Definite improvements in terms of the cost and time the canvass takes to carry out. We need to run in a 'new' normal year to try and work out where we can change things.”

On Route 2, there was praise for the new methods of communication, though some argued further flexibility was needed. As elsewhere, the limitations or perceived lack of readiness of the EMS was criticised. Finally, there were mixed views on whether canvass reform had been simple or complicated.

Qualitative themes: Team experience and support

Participants were apprehensive about canvass reform, depending on experience. Several said they had felt apprehensive about delivering canvass reform prior to the training and in context of other factors such as COVID, though some were confident beforehand. Participants stated that experience was important to being confident to deliver the canvass, though no more or less than before reform.

Training was seen as essential. Some felt that the training had made canvass reform seem complicated due to the volume of information, but that it was good in practice. The timing of the training was criticised by some. One local authority praised the remote training for being more accessible. Going forward, several stated that EMS training and statistical support would continue to be important.

Participant 12

“We were very satisfied, it was brilliant. I think I don't think you realise how good it was until you actually get into it. And you can refer back to it because, I mean, when you go on those trainings, it's all going in and you're thinking "how am I ever going to cope with this?" But it's only when you're actually faced with it, and you then start looking at your books you start thinking "oh, yeah, that's what it meant, yes, that's what it means". So, yes, it was very good at that.”

In the focus group, EROs were also positive about the training. One ERO mentioned that the training had helped the rollout of the process with auditors, whilst an ERO in Scotland praised the accessibility of training being in Glasgow, meaning that they could take many staff members. This ERO also expressed that the quality of the training material meant that they could deliver additional training in-office. Another ERO praised the workshop style of the training.

Supporting guidance was also viewed positively. Guidance from the Cabinet Office, Electoral Commission, and AEA was all praised, though some had issues with the Electoral Commission website.

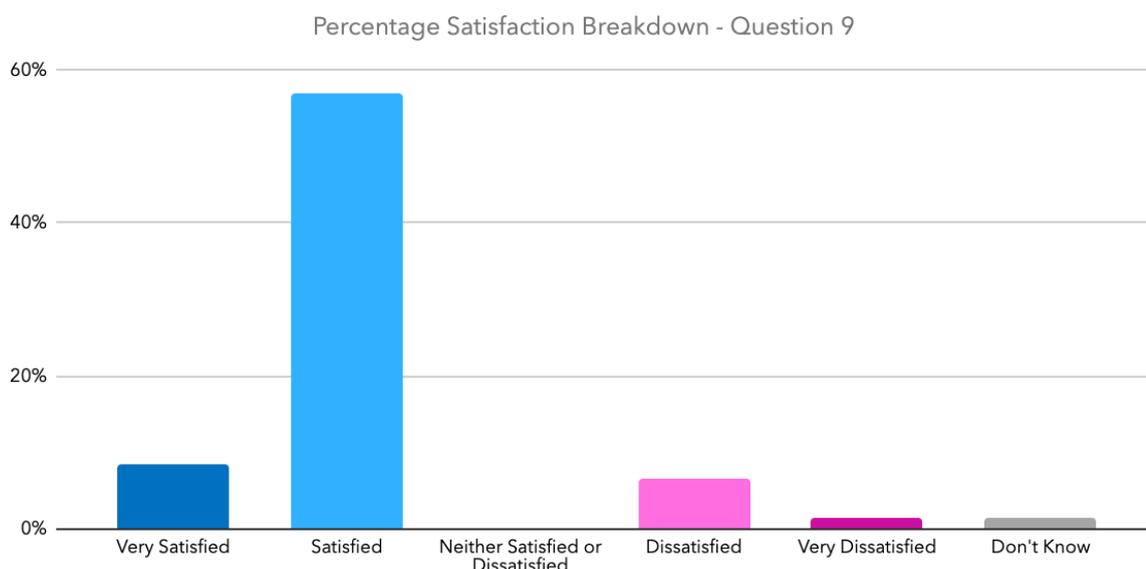
Participants believed that relationships with the Cabinet Office, EMS supplier, and other local authorities were important to maintain and develop. One local authority expressed that relationships with Cabinet Office had improved under canvass reform, though one other stated that they could be difficult to get hold of. As noted above, some did not feel EMS suppliers were responsive enough at responding to their issues. One local authority was concerned about the reliance of electoral services on commercialised software providers. Throughout, participants were keen to learn from colleagues in other local authorities to improve their canvass processes. One local authority appreciated that the training provided by the Cabinet Office was done on a branch by branch basis, alongside colleagues from neighbouring authorities.

Section B: Electoral Registers

Q9 How satisfied were you with the first year of the reformed annual canvass processes to safeguard the completeness of your electoral register?

For this question, the net satisfaction was +57.5%. Overall, the findings were positive. 65.5% were satisfied and 8% were dissatisfied. This marks a net change in satisfaction of +12.5% points compared to the 2020 survey.

Figure 11: Percentage breakdown for each response in Q9



As above, there was concern from some respondents about the impact of Route 1 on completeness and accuracy. Several sent HNLs in order to check the accuracy of the register between publishing and the May elections. In some cases these did not pick up many changes, whereas in others there were a lot of changes to the register. Respondents stated that these changes were people that had moved house or attainers that had not been picked up originally, though some speculated that this could be because people were only just moving due to COVID-19. Several saw the lack of door knocking due to COVID-19 as having a negative impact on the completeness of the register.

“HNL responses and poll card queries proved that our register was as complete as it would have been under the old canvass.”

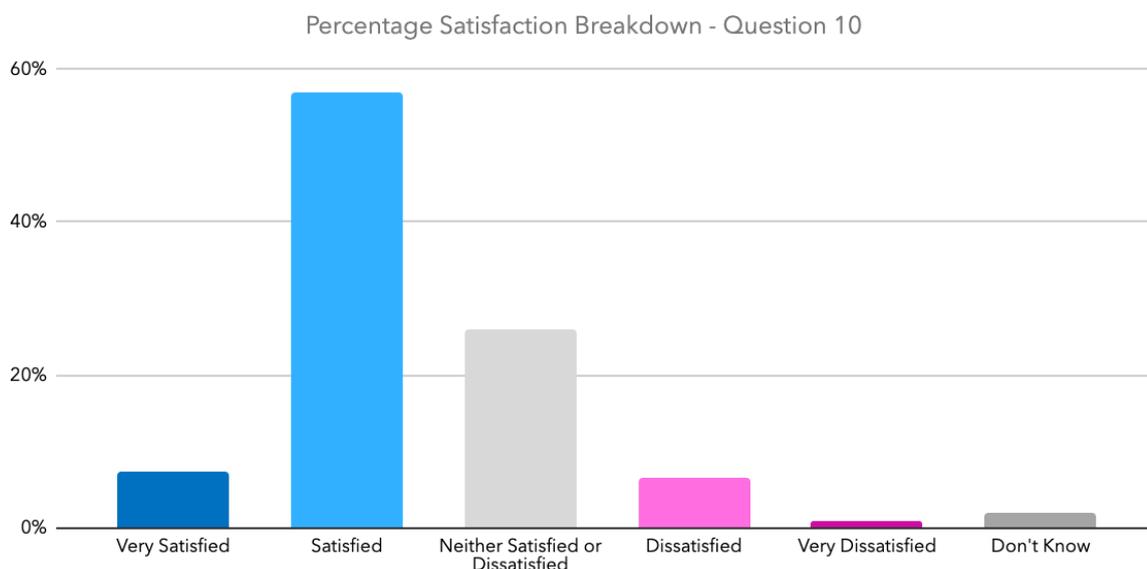
“The number of changes which came as a result of the HNL sent out in February may have indicated that the register was not as complete as in previous years. However, this may have been due to people starting to move rather than the process.”

Despite the cost savings of Route 1, there were some concerns about the costs of HNLs as an approach. As in question 8, while respondents largely did not have major concerns about accuracy resulting from the May 2021 elections, a small number had concerns that issues could be stored up for a parliamentary election. Finally, there was also seen to be a relationship between the quality of the data matching and the accuracy of the register.

Q10 How satisfied were you with the first year of the reformed annual canvass processes to safeguard the accuracy of your electoral register?

For this question, the net satisfaction was +57%. Overall, the findings were positive. 64.5% were satisfied and 7.5% were dissatisfied. This marks a net change in satisfaction of +8% points (not statistically significant) compared to the 2020 survey.

Figure 12: Percentage breakdown for each response in Q10



The open text responses covered much the same themes as Question 9 around the potential negative impact of Route 1, the impact of churn, the use of HNLs and data matching to check accuracy, and a majority not finding substantial changes to the register at the time of the May 2021 elections. A small number of respondents mentioned that online responses reduced errors, leading to increased accuracy.

“More opportunity for self-serve responses and fewer paper forms increase accuracy.”

Qualitative research themes: Completeness & accuracy

Some were concerned about the effect of Route 1 on completeness, as noted above. Some argued that the register might actually be more accurate under the reformed canvass. However, a few were also concerned about accuracy. Some participants were sceptical of the accuracy of the DWP data, though none were very concerned about this having a substantial impact.

Participant 10

“To be honest, looking at the response rates that I've tried to give, I don't think it will be any better or worse, if I'm completely honest. What we don't know is how many people that got a Route 1 notification just didn't respond. It might have had changes, but didn't respond. I don't entirely trust the data from DWP and personal experience from that (...)

Interviewer 1

Can I just jump in? Did your scepticism of the DWP data sources have impact on any of the decisions that you made in terms of what routes you have taken?

Participant 10

No, it didn't. I can honestly say that. It's just my experience over the years and my personal experiences of DWP. Taking a long time to update details means that it might get sent back as a Route 2, when it should have been a Route 1. Just because they haven't updated that and we've updated our register more quickly. But, no, it didn't affect anything we did. You've got to trust it, whether you actually do or not, if that makes sense.”

Some commented that their electorate had gone down, perhaps as a result of the previous canvass taking place alongside the run up to the 2019 General Election. Queries related to credit applications were also seen to be a strong indicator of accuracy.

In the focus group, EROs tended to echo the concerns about completeness and accuracy.

There was specific concern about low levels of response to Route 2 shown by initial data, though this was not shared by all. There was uncertainty as to the root cause of this. Some EROs mentioned that canvass reform was more targeted, so those in Route 2 would be less engaged, while others speculated that COVID may have had an impact, such as because of less house-moving or because of the late start to the canvass. An ERO in Scotland also mentioned the extension of the franchise to foreign nationals. On the positive side, one participant was reassured that there had been returns in Route 1 from those without additions, who are not required to return. Ultimately, there was broad agreement that it would be difficult to tell what the impact would be for some time.

Qualitative research themes: relationship between costs and completeness & accuracy

Some participants stated that there is a potential trade off between the cost savings of the Route 1 canvass and the costs of sending HNLs. As above, there was concern from some respondents about the impact of Route 1 on completeness and accuracy. Consequently, several chose to send HNLs in order to check the accuracy of Route 1. One local authority noted they would still have cost savings even with the extra cost of sending the HNL, while another stated that they would send an HNL but could not afford to. Another felt that sending the HNL had balanced out their costs, and another speculated whether further resources would be required to achieve completeness and accuracy. Some were sceptical about whether the reduced workload was positive if completeness and accuracy was not achieved.

In the focus group, EROs were positive about the impact of canvass reform on costs and resources, but stressed that they could not be sure of savings until they had an understanding of the impact on completeness and accuracy. There was positivity that canvass reform was a more efficient process that removed the most wasteful processes introduced by IER. Some stated that there had been some impact on staffing and costs in the short term through less back-office processing and lack of door knock, though the latter was due to COVID-19 not canvass reform. However, there was uncertainty about whether those were real savings or whether costs had been moved to a different point in the year. There was a widely held view that the canvass had to be delivered as cost-efficiently as possible, but that this should not come at the expense of completeness and accuracy. EROs emphasised that as budget holders, it was important for them to attain long term fiscal stability.

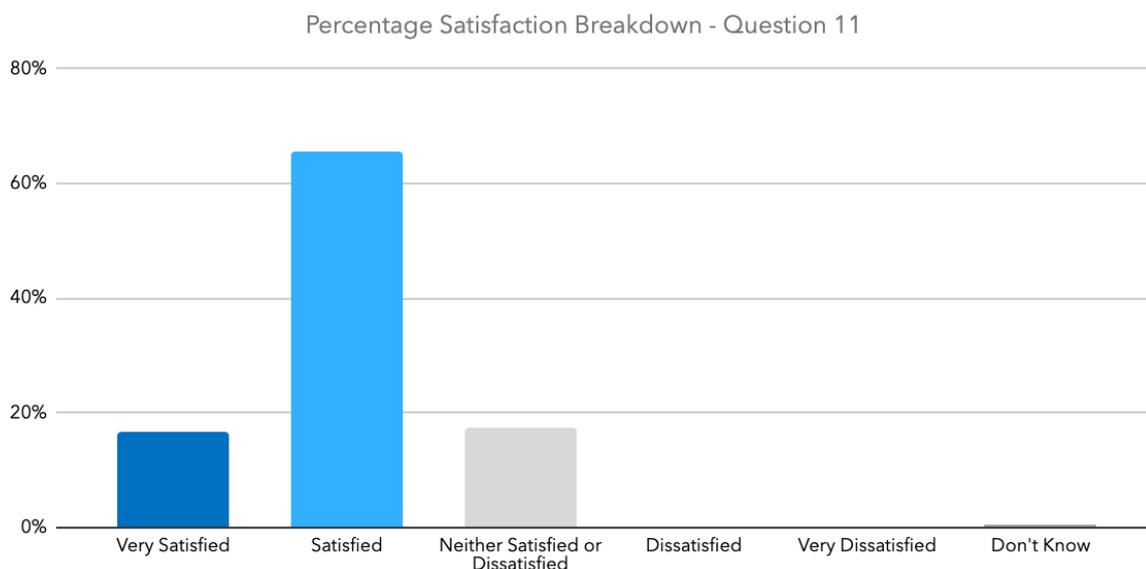
ERO 3

“We're all budget holders, we're all working within a local government framework, the fiscal position is incredibly tight. Our aim is to deliver it as efficiently as possible. But at the end of the day, we are also EROs and we have a duty to make sure it is complete and accurate. So you know I would not trade completeness and accuracy for financial saving. What you want to do is maximise completeness and accuracy at the minimal possible cost. But it can't be cost that drives the completeness and accuracy. We've got the tools, I think it is going to take some time to know what was effective and (...) this knock on effect is if the canvass has cost a lot less money but hasn't been effective, then you're not really saving it. It is, in effect, false economy at that stage.”

Q11 How satisfied were you with the first year of the reformed annual canvass processes to maintain the security and integrity of your electoral register (for example security and integrity around collation of the information, and identifying fraudulent applications)?

For responses to question 11, **the net satisfaction was +82%**. Overall, the findings were positive. 82% were satisfied and 0% were dissatisfied. This marks a net change in satisfaction of +19% points compared to the 2020 survey.

Figure 13: Percentage breakdown for each response in Q11



Across both pieces of research, some respondents mentioned issues related to online responses. A particular issue expressed by a number of participants was that GOV.UK Notify was not trusted by electors because communications did not look official and did not come from a .GOV.UK email address. Some were able to find workarounds for this issue. In the qualitative research, the attitude of electors via email had a negative impact on electoral service teams in a small number of authorities. However, many survey respondents stated that canvass reform had not had any impact on the security of the registers - some mentioned that fraudulent applications are picked up through the Invitation to Register (ITR) rather than the canvass. Some mentioned being able to check duplicate applications as important.

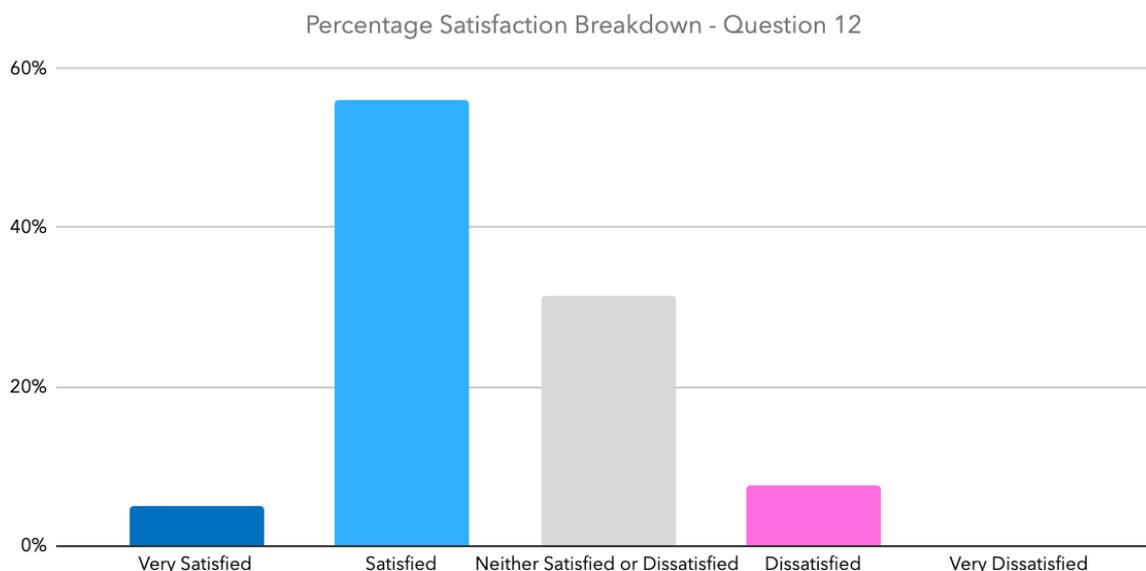
“Some electors did query email and telephone contacts and their legitimacy but overall this was minimal. I am very confident in the integrity and security of our register generally and canvass reform did not impact on this.”

Section C: Citizen Experience

Q12 How satisfied were you that the first year of the reformed annual canvass processes were simple and clear for citizens?

For this question, the net satisfaction was +53.5%. Overall, the findings were positive. 61% were satisfied and 7.5% were dissatisfied. This marks a net change in satisfaction of +62.5% points compared to the 2020 survey.

Figure 14 Percentage breakdown for each response in Q12



In the open text responses, many respondents noted that there was some confusion from electors around not needing to return the CCA on Route 1 if there were no changes, as reportedly some chose to return this form anyway. Some also said that this occurred with the CCB, and a small number mentioned they would have liked to change the wording of the forms. Given that this confusion is based on previous habits, we may expect behaviour to change over time.

In addition, some respondents also mentioned that people were confused why their neighbour or relative had received a different form to them. That said, several respondents also argued that some electors do not read the forms properly, and many felt the new forms were clearer. Respondents mentioned undertaking comms strategies, such as informing electors what they needed to do and keeping it simple, though this had mixed results. Some argued that a national publicity campaign would have been helpful.

“Many people find change difficult to accept and people still wanted to return forms even when they didn’t need to. I also feel that many households that went down route 1 CCA didn’t report changes when perhaps they would have done if they were required to send back the form. It doesn’t seem to matter what information is provided, if people don’t read it, they are in danger of not doing what you expect them to do.”

As with Question 11, some mentioned receiving correspondence from electors concerned canvass emails may be a scam. Finally, respondents reported continued confusion from electors over the need to respond to both the canvass and the ITR.

“Electors are consistently confused by the processes and the number of different steps involved, and often disregard the paper communications that are sent to them as most communications are now by electronic means. They want a one stop shop approach. They don’t understand that when ticking a box for a postal vote they then have to complete and return the separate postal vote application form, and they certainly think that they have registered to vote when they complete a HEF. The process needs to be simplified into fewer steps.”

Q13 Please select the frequency with which you receive the following categories of correspondence from citizens about pre-reform annual canvass processes.

The aim of this question was to understand the type and frequency with which local authorities receive feedback (both positive and negative) about the annual canvass.

We initially find that the quantity of positive feedback on the experience of the canvass process has marginally decreased since 2020 and that more than half of EROs received no positive feedback relating to processes introduced by the canvass.

The scores for these are on a scale of one to five. A score of one means that zero forms of correspondence had been received for a particular issue and a score of five means that in excess of 40 forms of correspondence had been received for said issue.

We find that there has been a fall by 0.28, but this is small compared with other changes, and the score was not very high to begin with (2.14). Therefore, this does not mean that the reformed canvass was poor, just that people tend not to go out of their way to write positive feedback on the process. We can speculate that the small fall may be due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

General confusion and misunderstanding on the canvass process has decreased since 2020 with fewer forms of correspondence sent to complain regarding this specific issue. One observes a similar pattern regarding any specific confusion over the two-stage registration process as in 2020 a score of 4.26 is seen (indicative of strong dissatisfaction) where-as in 2021 a score of 3.37 is seen. This means that, on average, there are fewer forms of complaint on this issue compared to last year.

The strongest decrease in forms of complaint is regarding comments on the cost/waste of money on the process with the majority of EROs seeing 1-9 forms of correspondence relating to this issue. This is a change from 2020 as the average correspondence was 10-24 forms. Further to this, we see a marked change in the amount of correspondence regarding electors being referred to as British rather than English, Scottish or Welsh as complaints regarding this have also decreased. The majority of EROs, again, see 1-9 forms relating to the issue.

Due to new categories being added to this section of the survey, we cannot directly compare results with 2020, however on the whole there were very few correspondences received relating to processes introduced by canvass reform. More concerningly however, there were, on average, 10-24 correspondences regarding whether emails relating to the canvass were genuine (see *Table 2* below and notice how little skew exists between categories). However, as with citizens responding to Route 1 unnecessarily, we may expect this behaviour to change over time as new habits are formed. Finally, almost the entirety of EROs reported no correspondence regarding other issues with the canvass process. This implies that the categories already present in the question cover most of the issues people had.

Table 2: Response frequencies to each option in Q13

Response Option	Number of forms of correspondence over the whole canvass period					Average 2020 Score	Average 2021 Score
	None (*1)	1 - 9 (*2)	10 - 24 (*3)	25 - 40 (*4)	40+ (*5)		
Positive Polarity							
Positive feedback on experience of the canvass process	98	60	24	9	9	2.14	1.86
Positive feedback relating to processes introduced by canvass reform	111	60	20	5	4	N/A	1.66
Negative Polarity							
General confusion and/or misunderstanding over the canvass process	26	51	49	28	46	3.88	3.09
Specific confusion over the two-stage registration process	31	33	36	31	69	4.26	3.37
Comments relating to cost/waste of money of the process	59	72	37	20	12	3.55	2.27
Comments relating to electors being referred to as British rather than English, Scottish or Welsh	24	80	37	24	35	3.62	2.83
Comments relating to whether emails relating to the canvass are genuine	43	45	40	29	43	N/A	2.92
Negative feedback relating to processes introduced by canvass reform	111	55	19	10	5	N/A	1.72
Other	182	7	3	3	5	1.79	1.21

In the open text responses, some respondents stated that they found it difficult to estimate volumes of correspondence due to the timing of the survey. Thus, we should treat this question as a general guide of which forms of correspondence local authorities are most likely to receive. Expanding on the above, a couple of respondents mentioned that they had not used email in this canvass because concerns around this issue were identified previously. The most common theme was the two stage registration process: respondents repeated that this was confusing for electors, and clarified that most correspondence for this came at election time rather than during the canvass period. This was also a theme in the qualitative research.

In the qualitative research, some mentioned that they had not received the same complaints about being sent the same form year after year. Some participants stated that there had been fewer complaints across the board, though some were sceptical whether this meant electors were less engaged due to Route 1, or due to COVID-19. Other local authorities stated that they had received phone calls from electors querying why they did not have to respond. Most took a lack of correspondence from electors as a positive sign, as most of this correspondence tends to be negative, though a small number mentioned receiving positive feedback that they would not normally receive:

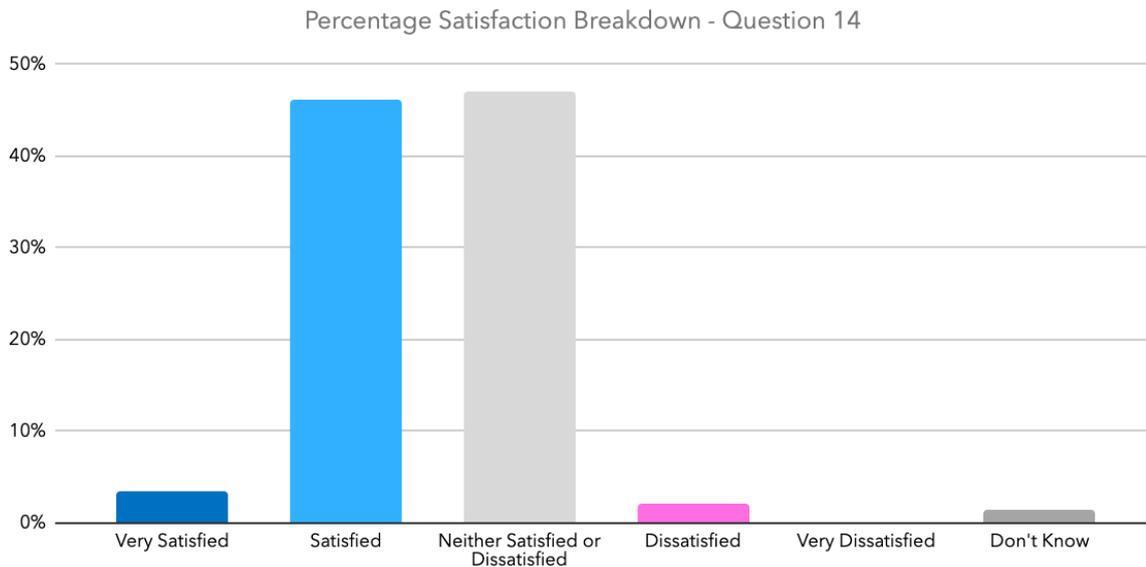
Participant 10

“We've had a few people commenting that it was a lot better. I think we've had a few people who used the online portal to make a response, who hadn't used it in the past. They discovered it for the first time. Because they got an email, they used the online response portal, whereas in the past they would have got a letter and sent the form back. Now, we've had that portal for a number of years, but this year it almost doubled its responses that went through it, because we were able to send emails out. And we were able to make the online response the main subjects of a letter, rather than an actual form. I think that we have a lot of compliments about that, that they could go online and do it, or that we emailed them. So, I think it has improved their user journey, because it's more of an instant thing, for them.”

Q14 In your opinion, how satisfied do you think citizens were with the first year of the reformed annual canvass process?

For this question, the net satisfaction was +47.5%. Overall, the findings were positive. 49.5% were satisfied and 2% were dissatisfied. This marks a net change in satisfaction of +46.5% points compared to the 2020 survey. It should also be noted that 47% reported they were ‘neither satisfied or dissatisfied’ - the highest of any question - we speculate on reasons for this in our analysis of the open text responses.

Figure 15: Percentage breakdown for each response in Q14



In the open text responses, many respondents stated that electors would not have noticed any changes under canvass reform, and found it difficult to judge because they did not receive much feedback from electors either way. This is likely why many answered ‘neither satisfied or dissatisfied’. Nevertheless, some mentioned receiving fewer complaints than usual, which they took as a positive, and others speculated that COVID-19 had helped to ease people into the changes. In the qualitative research, participants expected that electors did not know canvass reform had taken place. Participants stated that they did not have any way of knowing if Route 1 was being well received because electors did not have to respond.

“I think it is very difficult for EROs to judge how satisfied citizens are as feedback is not available from all electors. Receiving an annual form is expected by them and the majority of them do as required without commenting.”

While this lack of engagement can be taken as a negative, respondents also acknowledged that Route 1 would improve elector experience through not needing to respond, although as above there was some confusion on this aspect.

“Citizens were satisfied because 80% of them didn't do anything.”

A small number mentioned that electors still perceive parts of the process as a waste of money.

Qualitative research themes: Elector user journey

The shift towards ecommunications was seen to be positive for electors, though this was not always positive for electoral service teams due to the expectation from electors of an immediate response to emails.

Participants were mostly positive about the changes to the forms. In particular, some were pleased with the lack of any wording regarding a fine on the CCA and CCB, whilst others praised the changes to the colours of the forms. Criticisms from participants included the unclear wording on the forms and lack of room on the forms.

There were few new queries from electors overall. Some stated that feedback had not changed much. A small number of participants mentioned queries from electors around emails, and this was often related to the issues with GOV.UK Notify. Other queries included electors in Route 1 checking that they didn't have to respond and queries from electors over 76.

Qualitative research themes: under-registered groups

Many stated that there was no evidence that under-registered groups had been impacted by canvass reform. In some cases, participants stated that there were no under-registered groups living in their local authority, whilst others expressed that they lacked the data to be able to tell if there had been any impacts. There was substantial variation as other local authorities mentioned that they had more under-registered groups than average.

Some stated that the routes could improve registration in these groups. For example, some said that the routes made it easier to target certain groups or made the differences between groups easier to see. Some spoke positively of Route 3 while one local authority argued that those in Route 2 would see the most benefit. Overall, however, local authorities were quite uncertain about any positive impacts.

Several participants argued that students were negatively impacted, though this was largely due to COVID-19 rather than canvass reform. Several noted that they had been unable to do their normal engagement work with schools or universities due to COVID-19. One local authority argued that their student numbers were down due to being outside an election year, while another argued that it was difficult to estimate impacts because students had not attended university in person last year.

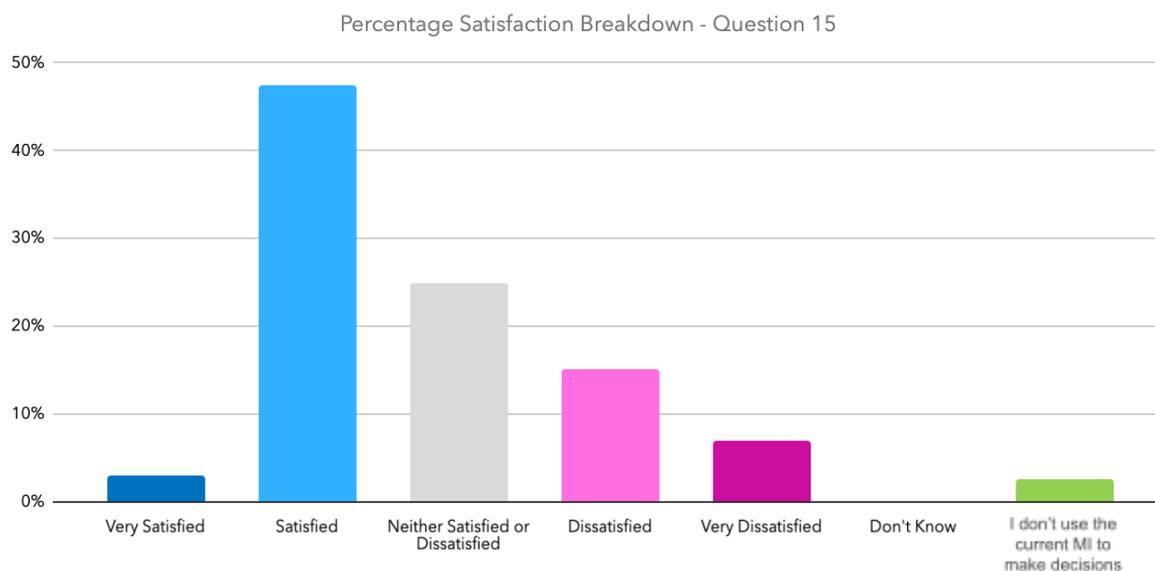
Canvass reform has not substantially improved student data sharing. A longstanding issue encountered by several participants was getting data from universities or county councils on students. However, one local authority was able to obtain email addresses of students for the first time.

Section D: Management Information & EMS suppliers

Q15 How satisfied were you that the data and statistics during the canvass period allowed you to make informed decisions on how to conduct the first year of the reformed annual canvass in your area?

For this question, the net satisfaction was +28.5%. Overall, the findings were mixed. 50.5% were satisfied and 22% were dissatisfied. This marks a net change in satisfaction of -20.5% points compared to the 2020 survey.

Figure 16: Percentage breakdown for each response in Q15



Across both pieces of research, respondents mentioned substantial issues with the reports extracted from the EMS systems. For example, respondents were dissatisfied that it was difficult to find the appropriate reports, and that there were variations in statistics between reports. In addition, respondents found it difficult to find data at a deeper level, such as within particular routes, or broken down into polling districts (as in Question 16). On ecommunications, there were mixed views, with some finding it well integrated and others finding it difficult to do what they wanted. All this was said to make it difficult to make informed decisions early on.

Several stated that in their view the EMS had not been ready for the 2020 canvass, but some mentioned that it had improved over time or expected improvements in time for the 2021 canvass.

In addition, some noted that inevitably, the 2020 canvass could not be easily compared to previous years and that this would be different in 2021.

“They were not ready for the canvass reform in this respect. I wanted data to be able to relay information to the ERO and build a picture for years to come but this wasn’t a priority for the EMS provider. Equally, they didn’t understand the requirements of it. The reports that they supplied were partial evidence that they thought satisfied our requirements, this was not the case for us or several other authorities.”

There was a view from some that suppliers had only done what was strictly required of them by the Cabinet Office or Electoral Commission. Some acknowledged that work had been done by the Cabinet Office to improve metrics but argued that there was further work to be done between the Cabinet Office and EMS suppliers.

“[Our EMS supplier] provided very few meaningful statistics during the canvass or at the end. They concentrated on providing information required by Cabinet Office / Electoral Commission so everything was at Ward level not polling district / canvass area level, and couldn’t get figures on response rates / methods per Route.”

In the qualitative research, some participants criticised the responsiveness of their EMS supplier to updating the MI or responding to issues.

Participant 8

“[The management information is] not very good at all (...) it’s just difficult to know which reports to run and get the correct piece of information that you’d like. So sometimes you will run an elector totals report, something as simple as that, and you’ll get a completely different figure on one report than you’ll get to another report (...)

Interviewer 2

“So what do you think the cause of the problem is then? Is it because the software has been worse this year or is it because the canvass is more complex?”

Participant 8

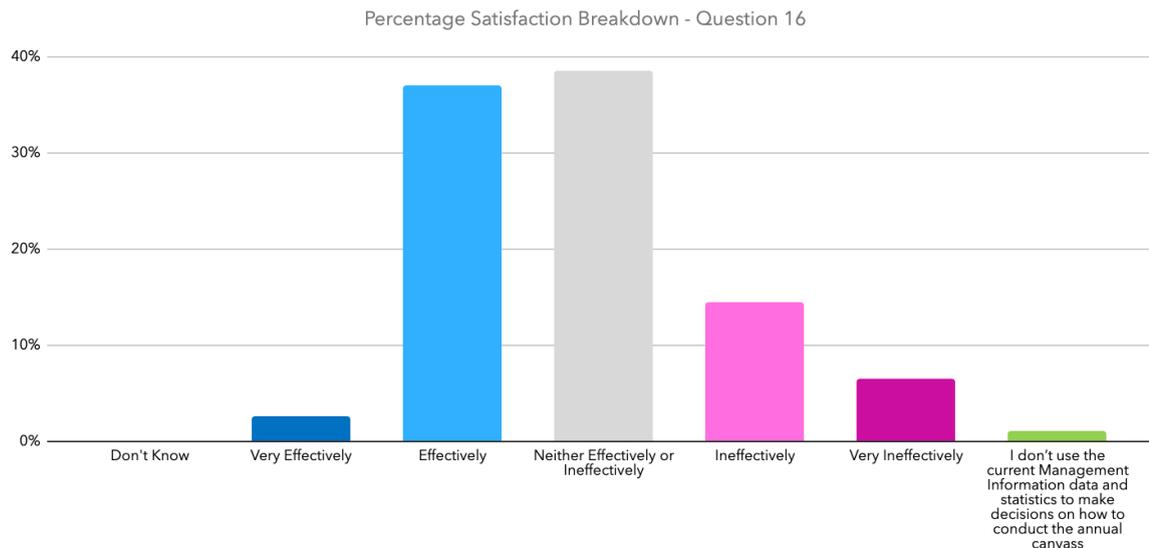
“I think they’ve just been quite slow to update the system and the reporting tools, especially for our side of things. I know they’ve got what the Cabinet Office have asked for, they’ve got what the Electoral Commission have asked for, but they don’t seem to have anything that the administrators have asked for.”

However, others acknowledged that they had not initially been sure what they wanted from the MI. Many were hopeful that the quality of the MI would improve and some stated that it had improved over the course of the canvass.

Q16 How effectively did you feel you could evaluate the effectiveness of the canvass under the current Management Information (first year of the reformed canvass)?

For this question, the net satisfaction was +18.5%. Overall, the findings were mixed. 39.5% were satisfied and 21% were dissatisfied. This marks a net change in satisfaction of -30.5% points compared to the 2020 survey.

Figure 17: Percentage breakdown for each response in Q16



Across both pieces of research, participants had difficulties evaluating the effectiveness of the canvass, and argued that the MI did not break down enough which made it difficult to tell what impact their decisions were having on the register. Respondents had mixed views on the integration of the EMS with new communications methods and a small number of qualitative participants noted issues with telephone integration. In addition, some respondents noted that they were unable to see day-to-day figures as previously. This made it difficult to assess the response rates across the different routes. Consequently, some mentioned that they resorted to creating their own custom reports which was more time consuming. That said, some mentioned that some of the reports were good.

“The EMS didn't seem to have any relevant reports for the reformed canvass. When I asked for a couple I was told I'd have to create them myself. If every ESM was being told the same, what a waste of resources for us all to be creating basically the same thing. A number of reports were received from the EMS supplier towards the end of the process but by then I was using the ones I'd created myself.”

Finally, some stated that the complexities of planning the May 2021 elections had not left them with any time to evaluate the effectiveness of the canvass.

Qualitative research themes: Management Information & EMS supplier

Of the local authorities we interviewed, a range of EMS suppliers were represented. There were mixed views on suppliers across the sample.

Participants were positive about the processing of the MI and their relationship with their EMS supplier. Most were positive about the workflow of the MI, in terms of allowing them to process forms, conduct data matching, and look at different routes. A small minority were positive about using the MI to evaluate the canvass. While most were not uniformly positive about their supplier, many considered that they had done well under the circumstances, were improving, or that other suppliers were worse.

Additional findings: 2020 in context

General views

Qualitative research participants' impressions of canvass reform were largely positive. They particularly praised its efficiency through new contact methods and the route system, resulting in several cases in less processing of paper, reduced costs and reduced demands on the team. EROs in the focus group echoed that they felt canvass reform had gone smoothly.

The impact of COVID-19

COVID-19 impacted participants' ability to conduct the canvass through the cancellation of the door knock in many local authorities. For some, the COVID-19 pandemic limited them from delivering or making changes to the canvass as effectively as they would have liked. Some local authorities cancelled their door knock whilst others were curtailed by the November lockdown. The impact of cancelling the personal canvass varied by local authority.

Many argued that canvass reform had helped to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19. For example, the move towards data matching and ecommunications allowed electoral officers to work from home much more effectively. One local authority mentioned that canvass reform had allowed staff to be redeployed to work on COVID-19 because they were less busy:

Participant 10

“Surprisingly, the biggest difference for us was that we were not in the office, we were at home and doing it remotely. I think if you asked anybody beforehand, could you work at home full-time during the canvass, they would have all said “no, what are you talking about, we need to be in the office”. Actually, it works pretty well. And as long as technology holds up, then you can do anything. Obviously, there were days we would have to be in the office to hand out the canvassers equipment and we have to make sure we were in to open post and things like that, but we've managed very well.”

There was also a view that canvass reform had come at the right time:

Participant 14

“The timing was impeccable for the introduction of canvass reform and I just feel that the team were, I suppose their mental state, their motivation, enthusiasm was assisted by the fact that we weren't buried by boxes and boxes of forms coming back on a daily basis. You know, it seems never ending at one point, at some points. Yeah, so I just feel that all in all we sort of dodged a bullet a bit there I think.”

In the qualitative research, several local authorities stated that COVID-19 had not had a substantial impact on their ability to deliver the canvass. Some felt that not door knocking had not had a substantial impact on their overall response. Others went further, arguing that forgoing the door knock had allowed them to make cost savings and were keen to move away from or lessen door knocking in future. This was echoed by one of the EROs in the focus group. In the

survey, some (though not all) concluded that the door knock was an outdated method, whilst others that did undertake the door knock were also critical that they had had to do this under COVID-19.

“A much more effective way of operating the canvass processes, enabling additional time to be incorporated and resulting in a positive outcome. We would not welcome a return to the former system! A review of the door-to-door canvass would be welcome as this has minimal effect and takes up much resource - instead consideration should be given to an HNL being issued a few months before an election. This is much more effective.”

Others commented that COVID-19 made it difficult to tell how effective the canvass had been because it was so different to a typical year. Some found it difficult to estimate the impact COVID-19 would have, such as whether people had moved house.

Other factors

Some participants speculated that the 2019 General Election may have had some impact by encouraging a higher match rate for the data match, though as noted earlier some speculated that this may also have caused register numbers to fall in 2020. Staffing issues and IT issues were also common themes throughout, but most participants did not feel these other issues had impacted their ability to deliver canvass reform.

Going forward & next steps

Survey respondents were keen to fully realise the benefits of canvass reform, but some barriers still remain. For example, respondents stated that there are areas for improvement around the EMS, with more reports needed, and some limitations around when and how properties can be put into routes or contacted. Some also mentioned that accessing or using local data was difficult.

“Changes to the annual canvass have been a great success and have proven to deliver an effective and cost saving way of working... It has reduced the burden of the paper trail tremendously. It not only modernised the way in which the electorate could interact with the authority but also modernised the way in which we could work. The unexpected benefits of moving to a modernised system meant that when we had to move to working from home, we could easily accommodate this as there was very little requirement to be in the office to deal with the returned household forms. Gone are the days of standing over a letter opener and sorting 25 thousand bits of paper! I would urge the continued progression of allowing authorities to choose how and when to contact households.”

Qualitative participants said that they would increase their use of ecommunications, both email and phone, including introducing it on Route 1 in some cases. Part of this included building up their databases of email addresses and telephone numbers. Some participants were keen to get more responses in Route 3, or make changes to Route 3 to ensure this. There were a wide variety of responses here, reflecting the diversity of local authorities, so many themes were only mentioned by one or two local authorities. Overall, participants were positive about canvass reform and were hopeful that they would be supported in this in the future.

Participant 18

"I think canvass reform's been for the better. But if we all sit there on our laurels and think that we've cracked it then we're in trouble. We need to really go and have a look, which is why you're doing this."

Participants were asked what they thought was the most important thing to ensure the success of canvass reform in the future. The most common theme was the importance of having good quality, up to date data that they could trust. Many responses also emphasised the importance of ensuring completeness and accuracy. Some of these had concerns about accuracy and whether some people would inevitably be missed going forward. Related to this, some mentioned continued funding as an important factor. Clear communications with electors was also mentioned. Finally, local authorities were keen to continue making improvements to their processes.

In the focus group, EROs emphasised the importance of ongoing learning and support from the Cabinet Office. A key area for learning was EMS data and reporting, which was seen to be limited. There was a view that the Cabinet Office's key supporting role was to drive forward change at a national level, such as through investigating improvements to national data matching or through continued funding support. This publication allows us to work with the Electoral Commission (EC) and local authorities to encourage further learning.

Overall, results show that canvass reform represents a major improvement over the pre-reform canvass. Notably, unlike the 2020 survey, all of the satisfaction scores were net positive, although there was variation. Indeed, the most negative scores were around management information, which can be improved, rather than fundamental issues with the policy. This is especially encouraging given that in our report on the 2020 survey, we stated that we should not anticipate dramatic improvements to satisfaction in the first year of canvass reform, and we should also acknowledge that this has occurred alongside continued impacts from COVID-19.

Nevertheless, many respondents felt that COVID-19 had a substantial impact on this year's canvass, even where they were able to manage despite it. In addition, there will be learnings from this year's canvass and local authorities will be able to make more informed decisions. Therefore, it will be important to assess the effectiveness of canvass reform in its second year, which is why we will run the survey again in 2022.

A clear theme throughout the research was the uncertainty of the impacts of canvass reform at this early stage, the need to learn and develop processes going forward, and the need for ongoing support from delivery partners. Further work has been undertaken to enhance the MI functionality for this year's canvass. We are planning to undertake more qualitative research in 2021 / 2022 which will build on the themes we have developed in this research. We will continue to evaluate canvass reform more widely through the MERP evaluation, including research that focuses more specifically on the themes of completeness & accuracy and efficiencies. We will publish two further research reports on the MERP evaluation in 2022 and 2023.

Annex A: Electoral Services (ES) experience survey qualitative themes

Below, the main themes of the 2020 and 2021 ES Experience Survey have been captured, with explanation of each theme. To note, themes from the 2020 survey refer to the pre-reform canvass (in 2019) whilst themes from the 2021 survey refer to the reformed canvass (in 2020).

Themes - 2020 ES Experience Survey (pre-reform canvass)

Theme	Explanation
Canvass is costly, wasteful and resource intensive	Respondents felt that the pre-reform canvass was costly, wasteful and resource intensive. Required returns from households with no changes each year were perceived to be a waste, meaning resources could not be targeted where needed. The paper-based system led to peaks in volumes during processing and at certain times of year. Recruitment of canvassers for door knocking was seen as difficult.
Tailoring to local area	Respondents felt they had limited discretion to tailor the pre-reform canvass to their local area. They argued that too much resource was spent on no change areas, due to the rigidity of legislation (see below). This meant that there was little flexibility to target areas and populations that needed it, such as students.
Accuracy / Completeness of register	Respondents were satisfied overall with the completeness and accuracy of the register. However, it was criticised for being a snapshot in time, meaning that 100% accuracy and completion could never be achieved. Many respondents felt that election day was the best test of the accuracy and completion of the register.
Citizen Attitudes	Citizens were described by respondents as being apathetic towards the canvass process. There was a view that citizens are only engaged with the process when they need to vote, consequently lacking understanding of the canvass or the need for it. This manifested as complaints over duplication with other council data and the need to complete it annually. However, citizen satisfaction is not gathered by EROs; some took the lack of complaints from the majority as evidence of satisfaction.
Citizen Correspondence	In addition to that noted in the question, a wide variety of correspondence was received from citizens. This included age-related queries such as people over 76 or under 16, and queries from parents of children, often around the threat of fines. Other correspondence included queries around the Open Register, second homes, and refusal to complete the forms. It was noted that positive feedback was received elsewhere and that correspondence was difficult to estimate.
Attitudes to MI	Some respondents were satisfied with the MI, citing its wide variety of reports and the ability to easily generate data. Others described it as functional but limited in use. For example, response rates were used to assess effectiveness, but some saw this as a crude measure. Respondents called for more focused reports to allow better targeting.

Hard to reach groups	Respondents cited groups which required more resources to reach, making it difficult to achieve a complete and accurate canvass. These groups varied between local authorities, meaning this was also strongly related to the theme of tailoring to the local area. The key groups cited were students, care homes, HMOs, and serial non-responders. The stability of the population was a key factor in the ability of canvassers to reach residents.
Rigidity of pre-reform canvass	The rigidity or lack of flexibility in the pre-reform canvass legislation was seen as a barrier to tailoring the canvass to the local area, ability to innovate, and ability to target time and resources. Consequently, respondents reported relying on the experience and training of their teams. There were positive views that the rigidity of the canvass allowed advanced planning.
Two stage registration process is confusing	A frequently mentioned problem throughout the survey was that the two stage registration process was confusing to citizens. The similarity of the forms and unclear wording were seen to contribute to this.
Problems with paper-based system	Respondents criticised the paper-based system for being costly and resource intensive. There were peaks in resources around printing runs, and processing and posting large forms was costly. This was especially frustrating with no-change properties. Door knocking was criticised as it was hard to recruit for, and citizens did not like being contacted in this way, especially in light of COVID-19. The inclusion of return envelopes was seen to actively encourage paper returns.
New methods of communication	New methods of communication were seen to lead to cost savings and innovation. These included email, telephone, online responses, and tablets. It was noted that these were only used to encourage responses and could not be used as a formal stage in the process.
Relying on canvasser experience / training	There was a view that canvassers relied on the experience of their teams to understand their local requirements. This was seen as a way of working around the limitations of the pre-reform canvass. This included processes not technically allowed under the pre-reform canvass such as bespoke relationships with outside organisations. Training was viewed as particularly important for carrying out data security processes.
Problems specific to this year	Two main issues were mentioned as being disruptive to the canvass this year: the 2019 General Election and COVID-19. The election left respondents less time than usual to conduct checks and analysis, and was used as evidence that the canvass was election-driven. COVID-19 was seen to present issues for the paper-based canvass, and door knocking in particular. Most respondents noted that these issues were largely manageable, but they may present issues to the baselining of the survey results.
Attitudes to reformed canvass	Canvass reform was generally viewed positively, with data matching seen as a positive for resource savings, targeting, and citizen understanding. Some were critical that canvass reform did not go far enough due to the continued inclusion of the door-knocking stage. Respondents were cautious that it would take time to effectively implement the reforms, and that it could reduce the accuracy of the register.
Pre-reform canvass was	There was a widely held view that the pre-reform canvass was outdated and that legislation had failed to keep pace with modern technology and the way

outdated	people live their lives. Door knocking was seen as outdated whilst the paper-based canvass was seen to be resource intensive. The snapshot based approach was also criticised in light of rolling registration.
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Themes - 2021 ES Experience Survey (reformed canvass)

Themes which were also found in the 2020 survey are shown in **bold**.

Theme	Explanation
Costs & Resources	Many saw large cost savings and reductions in workload as a result of Route 1 and new methods of communication (partly a result of the door knock being cancelled in many local authorities). This gave them more time to target non-responders. However, some had extra costs, such as if they had chosen to send an HNL.
Tailoring to local area	Increased options and cost / time savings from other areas allowed local authorities to tailor the canvass more effectively. However, many noted they were taking a cautious approach in Year 1, and there were also restrictions from COVID-19 and the EMS. Some called for more flexibility.
Accuracy / Completeness of register	There was substantial concern about the impact of Route 1 on completeness and accuracy. Several sent HNLs to check this, with mixed findings on changes at the time of the local elections in 2021, though some maintained that they could not be sure until a high-turnout general election.
Citizen Experience	There was some confusion from electors who returned the Route 1 CCA when they had no changes, though we may expect this behaviour to change over time. Some electors had concerns about canvass emails being a scam. Some respondents felt this confusion was due to electors rather than issues with the communications. Respondents found it difficult to estimate elector response given a lack of feedback, and also stated that electors would not be aware of the changes, but also acknowledged that Route 1 was likely to be appreciated.
Flexibility / Limitations	While canvass reform gave local authorities more flexibility, such as through the routes, contact methods, or timings, some stated that limitations remained. The cancellation of the door knock in many local authorities as a result of COVID-19 led some to argue it was outdated. The EMS posed limitations such as on the telephone canvass and the timings of the stages, particularly around Route 2.
EMS / MI	Respondents mentioned substantial issues with the EMS reports, such as variations in statistics and lacking data at a deeper level. Several stated that in their view the EMS had not been ready for the 2020 canvass, but some mentioned that it had improved over time. Consequently, administrators had difficulty evaluating the canvass day-to-day.
Two stage registration process	The two stage registration process of canvass followed by ITR continues to be a source of confusion to electors. Respondents clarified that most correspondence for this came at election time rather than during the canvass period.

New methods of communication	The new methods of communication (telephone canvass or email) helped to save time and costs such as processing. There were some queries from electors around emails. Some felt there were limitations around ecommunications, such as restrictions around the telephone canvass.
Problems specific to this year: Year 1	Many felt that the first year of the canvass was a learning process, such as around targeting. Some mentioned that they took a cautious approach so that Year 1 could act as a 'control' year. Many felt the EMS had not been ready in time for the first year of canvass reform.
Problems specific to this year: COVID-19	COVID-19 contributed to an abnormal first year for canvass reform. The main impact was the cancellation of the door knock in many local authorities. It also contributed to the cautious approach taken, as there were things administrators could not do working from home or seconded. Route 3 was particularly challenging. However, some said canvass reform had helped them to manage despite COVID.
Door knocking	COVID-19 led to the cancellation of door knocking in many local authorities. This created limitations on contact methods, though for others the telephone canvass was successful, so felt that there should be more discretion over how the door knock is conducted.
ERO experience	COVID-19 had a substantial impact on ERO experience as teams worked from home or were redeployed as a result of the pandemic. However, canvass reform also reduced teams' workload, allowing them to run the canvass under these circumstances and in some cases target and tailor it more effectively.
Household Notification Letter (HNL)	Due to concerns over the completeness and accuracy of Route 1, some chose to send HNLs between the canvass period and the elections. Some found few changes whereas for others there were substantial changes to the register. There was some concern about the cost of this approach going forward.
Elections / May 21	Respondents noted that elections are a major driver of the completeness and accuracy of the registers. Most did not find major changes to the register in May 2021, but some were concerned that this would not be the case in the general election. The complexity of the May elections left teams with less time to evaluate their approach.
Route 1	Route 1 led to cost and time savings in many cases. Many were concerned about the potential impact on completeness and accuracy, though some felt Route 1 was too restricted. Route 1 was perceived as good for electors, although there was some confusion.
Route 2	Views on the forms were mixed, and some felt limited by being unable to undertake the door knock, though others felt the telephone canvass was more effective.
Data matching	The national data match was praised for being quick and easy. There were some issues with local data matching.