



Government
Equalities Office

What is stopping disabled people standing for election?



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In this easy read document, difficult words are in **bold**. We explain what these words mean in the sentence after they have been used.



Some words are [blue and underlined](#). These are links which will go to another website which has more information.

Introduction



The Government's Equalities Office has written this report to look at:

- how disabled people take part in elections in different countries around the world



- what is stopping disabled people from **standing in an election**.

Standing in an election means people can vote for you to get an official job, like one in politics.



We collected information by:

- reading reports from governments, political parties and universities



- speaking to experts around the world



- interviewing disabled people.

Speaking up to politicians



Everyone should have an equal chance to speak up to the politicians that are making laws and running the country or the local council.



If disabled people do not speak up, then politicians will not make things better for disabled people.



Standing for election

Everyone should have an equal chance to take part in elections and to stand for election if they want.



If disabled people do not take part in elections or stand for election, then governments and councils will not make things better for them.

What is stopping political parties from choosing disabled people to stand in elections?



Disabled people may not be chosen to stand in an election because:

- of people's attitudes towards disabled people
- disabled people are busy caring for someone
- of the cost of standing in an election
- parties usually choose the same sorts of people to stand in elections. They don't think of other people - like disabled people





- the way that parties usually work is hard for disabled people



- it takes a lot of time to stand in an election



- there is not good support for disabled people in political parties



- disabled people often don't have the right experience to stand in an election.

Ways that political parties could involve more disabled people



Political parties around the world have worked to include people from all different groups in elections.



For example, in the UK, political parties have been working to include more black people and women in elections.



They do this by:

- providing training sessions
- saying that a certain number of people being interviewed must be from a certain group
- saying that a certain number of people standing in an election must be from a certain group.



Taking part in elections



In some countries disabled people are not allowed to vote.



In countries where all disabled people are allowed to vote, many do not take part.

Accessible voting

In the UK elections are made easier for disabled people by:



- making all voting places **accessible**

Accessible means it is easy to use and suitable for people with different needs.



- letting disabled people ask for someone to help them to vote
- providing a voting device that you can use just by touch



- providing ballot papers in large print.

You can also ask for information in braille or audio.

Difficulties for disabled people

But there are still problems, like:



- no ramps or accessible parking at voting places
- voting booths and pencils not being accessible
- not enough support from staff
- not enough information in Easy Read
- family members and carers not thinking that the disabled person is able to vote.

Other reasons

Disabled people are also less likely to vote because they:

- haven't had a good education
- don't have much money
- don't have a job
- are usually not involved in things.



There are not enough disabled politicians to inspire disabled people to do more.

Disabled politicians

There is no official information about how many politicians are disabled.



In the General Election in 2017 only 5 members of parliament said they were disabled.



A survey of local councils showed that about 1 in every 7 councillors were disabled.

What people said



We asked disabled people who were involved in politics about the things that made it hard for disabled people.



Accessible meetings

People told us that many of the places that local political parties hold their meetings are not accessible.



Some people said the organisers just don't think about making sure meetings are accessible.



It can be hard to find a building you have never been to before.



People who were D/deaf said it was often hard because:

- there were no hearing loops



- it is too expensive to hire a sign language interpreter.

Local political parties did not have the money to make their meetings accessible.



Some people couldn't go to a meeting because there was no accessible toilet.

Accessible information



It is hard for disabled politicians to get information that is accessible to them.



Some disabled politicians need much longer than other people to read the information.



It's not so bad if information is sent before a meeting, but it is impossible to read information that is given out during a meeting.

The party

Some people said that their political party made things hard, by:



- criticising them because they couldn't go knocking on people's doors



- making the fundraising events too expensive for someone on benefits.



The way politics works

Politics involves a lot of formal meetings and arguments.



Many disabled people do not have a job which has formal meetings and serious discussions.



Many disabled people do not feel comfortable going to these sorts of meetings.



Choosing people to stand in elections

Different political parties have different ways to choose the people who will stand in an election.



Often the people who organise the meetings are **volunteers**.

Volunteers are people who do work without getting paid for it.



The volunteers are nice, but often the meetings aren't run very well.



Sometimes you don't have very long to apply to stand for a certain position. This can be hard for a disabled person.



It is expensive to apply to stand for election. People said that you need a lot of help from family and friends to do it.



Benefits

Some people were told that they may lose their benefits if they stood for election, because they could get work instead.



Canvassing

Canvassing is when politicians knock on people's doors and talk to local people.

This can be very hard for a disabled person.



Hustings

Hustings are where politicians from all the different parties are on a stage so that people can ask them questions.



Hustings are difficult for D/deaf people because it takes time to work through a sign language interpreter.

If you get elected

If you get elected you may get many of the same problems, like



- rooms that are not accessible.



- information that is not provided in a way that you can understand.



- people who have bad attitudes towards disabled people.



- organisations that are not used to doing things in a way that is easy for disabled people.

Ways to make things easier



Disabled people used different ways to make it easier for them to take part in elections.



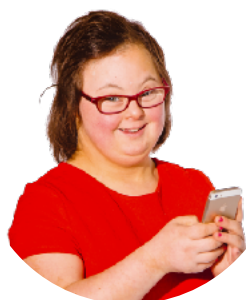
Family and friends

Because there was no official help, many disabled people got help from family and friends.



Social media

Many disabled people used social media like Facebook and Twitter, to explain why you should vote for them.



Disabled people felt that using social media was easier than canvassing or going to meetings.



Assistive technology

Assistive technology is gadgets and equipment that helps disabled people.



Many people used assistive technology like:

- iPads that could ‘talk’ for them
- computers you could speak to
- devices that made text larger.



Confidence

People told us about ways that they had become more confident at speaking up.



Money from the government

Many of the disabled people we spoke to had received help from the Access to Elected Office Fund.



This was a fund of money to help disabled people in politics. It closed in 2015.