



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities



Government
Social Research

Evaluation of the Modern Electoral Registration Programme

2023 Report

April 2024

Electoral Research & Analysis Division



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1. Executive Summary

This report is the third and final evaluation of the Canvass Reform policy within the Modern Electoral Registration Programme (MERP), following the [2021](#) and [2022](#) report. The data presented within this report has been gathered through a survey of electoral administrators conducted between 30 June 2023 to 21 July 2023, to provide an overview of changes in their satisfaction compared to the pre-reform canvass. This research contributes to the evaluation of the MERP which aims to create a more efficient registration system, make the process simple and clear for citizens, and give Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) more discretion, whilst maintaining completeness and accuracy of the registers.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities is evaluating the 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 and theme 4: Improve the ERO experience. The first research theme looks to evaluate whether the delivery of Canvass Reform has had any unintended impact on the completeness and accuracy of the registers. The second, third and fourth research themes in this report look to evaluate the implementation of Canvass Reform against the overarching aims of the MERP to improve citizen and ERO experiences, while modernising and delivering efficiencies within the annual canvass process.

The annual canvass is the yearly process for registering citizens on the Electoral Register. Throughout the report, Routes 1-3 are referred to. Following a data matching step in the annual canvass process, properties are placed into different routes based on whether there are likely to be changes in household composition. Route 1 refers to the annual canvass process used for properties where the data indicates no change in household composition. Route 2 refers to the annual canvass process used for properties where the data has highlighted a potential change to the information. Route 3 refers to the annual canvass process used for property types which do not fit clearly within Routes 1 and 2 and can include places such as residential care homes and student halls of residence.

Overview: Years 1 - 3

Throughout the MERP evaluation, administrators were generally satisfied with canvass reform. Administrator satisfaction across all aspects of the evaluation increased since pre-reform, with minor exceptions including their perception of completeness and accuracy of the register. Satisfaction increased most significantly in terms of administrators' ability to run a tailored canvass, the canvass being simple and clear for citizens, and citizen satisfaction with the annual canvass process. Most notably, administrators were overall dissatisfied with the effectiveness of the door knock as part of the canvass reform, which many viewed as cost and resource intensive.

Moving forward, while the reformed canvass has generally been viewed positively by administrators, many believed additional improvements could be made. Namely, discretion around the door knock, flexibility to change the content of prescribed forms and some highlighted increasing sources available for data matching, requiring a response from route 1 properties, and further functionality within their Electoral Management Software (EMS).

The third and final MERP evaluation had a considerably lower response rate (31%) in comparison to 2021 (response rate of 54% in Year 1) and 2022 (response rate of 71% in

Year 2). The limitations of this lower response are covered further later in this report in the Section 3: Approach.

Theme 1: Maintaining the completeness and accuracy of the registers

Completeness and accuracy

Respondents were relatively satisfied with the completeness (+39% net satisfaction in 2023) and accuracy (+34% net satisfaction in 2023) of the register under the reformed canvass, however third-year satisfaction was lower than pre-reform. Notably, respondents felt attainers (those not yet old enough to vote but who will achieve the required voting age by the end of the twelve months following the next 1st December) were being missed from the register and that changes for Route 1 properties were also being missed, impacting the completeness and accuracy of the register. The Electoral Commission report on completeness and accuracy on the other hand indicates that there has been little change in the completeness and accuracy of the register before and after canvass reform.

Respondents were very satisfied with the security and integrity of the register under the reformed canvass (+81% net satisfaction in 2023), and there was an increase in satisfaction compared to pre-reform.

Theme 2: Creating efficiencies in the registration system

The MERP published an impact assessment in 2019 appraising the then proposed changes to the annual canvass. This analysis produced an expected cost saving for local authorities of £20.3 million to £20.6 million on average over the ten year period from 2020-21 because of the implementation of the reforms to the annual canvass.

While this research has not further explored the scale of savings it indicates the majority of local authorities have achieved some efficiency improvements and resource savings: 69% of respondents stated they were able to run a more efficient canvass post-reform, while 7% stated that they weren't. The main ways administrators stated they were able to improve the efficiency of their canvass were by:

- Using e-communications as opposed to paper-based communications (19% of respondents), and therefore less printing and postage (12%)
- Not having to process as many responses due to the introduction of Canvass Communication A (CCAs)¹ (17%)
- Not having to chase properties as frequently (10%)
- Data matching (10%)

Theme 3: Improving the citizen experience

Administrators were more satisfied that the canvass was simple and clear for citizens under the reformed canvass (+57% net satisfaction in 2023), and administrators remained concerned that the two stage registration process was confusing for citizens however it's important to note that this is unrelated to the reforms. A small number of respondents also

¹ The Electoral Commission designed a paper communication for Route 1 matched properties, called a Canvass Communication A, where there is no requirement for the elector to respond if no change to report and promotes the option to respond online.

reported that citizens remained confused as to whether they needed to reply to CCAs (3%; 3 respondents in 2023).

Theme 4: Improving the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) experience

Tailoring and Flexibility

Respondents were more satisfied with their ability to tailor the canvass post-reform (+75% net satisfaction in 2023). In the first year of reform, administrators were cautious in tailoring their canvass, but in subsequent years they refined their approach to tailoring their canvass. Post-reform, the main barriers respondents reported to being able to further tailor the canvass were a lack of resources and legislative requirements.

Targeting of Time and Resources

Respondents were very satisfied with their ability to target their time and resources for all years of the reformed canvass (+83% net satisfaction in 2023). Examples of how improved targeted of their time and resources had been achieved was reported by a small number of electoral administrators: with use of e-comms (3%; 3 respondents in 2023) and the reduced amount of door-knocking (5%; 5 respondents in 2023), with use of e-comms and the reduced amount of door-knocking both reported as being cost effective. However, some respondents believed removing the requirement for the door-knock would further aid their ability to target their time and resources (4%; 4 respondents in 2023).

Innovation

Administrators were more satisfied with their ability to exercise innovation and improvement post reform and felt more comfortable to do so in Years 2 and 3 (+60% net satisfaction in 2023) of the reformed canvass. Some respondents stated they would like to innovate further and this could be enabled through the removal of certain legislative restrictions, such as being able to use e-communications more widely, not having to conduct a door knock, or being able to tailor the wording of the forms they send out. In the third year of reform, respondents indicated the main barrier to exercising innovation and improvement was a lack of resources.

Canvass Processes

Across all years of canvass reform, the national data match was described as efficient, easy, and effective. However, in Year 3 there were minor concerns regarding the limited, or absence of, year-on-year improvements of the match rates. Many respondents also praised Route 1 as resource efficient (24%; 22 respondents in 2023) and satisfaction with this process was high across the years (+72% net satisfaction in 2023), however some respondents raised concerns regarding the potential for impact of Route 1 on the completeness and accuracy of the register (18%; 20 respondents in 2023).

Satisfaction with Route 2 processes was high across all three years of the reformed canvass (+68% net satisfaction in 2023), and respondents were particularly satisfied with the increased discretion they had to deploy different communications methods. A small number of respondents did state however that they would like more discretion around whether to conduct the door knock (7%; 8 respondents in 2023), and when in the canvass period they can deploy different communication methods (5%; 5 respondents in 2023).

The desire for more discretion around whether to conduct the door knock, which is currently a statutory requirement, is reflected in the low satisfaction with this process of door knocks (-32% net satisfaction in 2023). Respondents stated this part of the process was very resource intensive with little return, that the same properties did not respond year on year, and that it was increasingly difficult to recruit canvassers, in part due to the abuse they face. However, some felt the door knock was important to maintain the completeness and accuracy of the register (6%; 7 respondents in 2023).

Respondents were satisfied with route 3 processes across all three years of the reformed canvass (+65% net satisfaction in 2023), however this seemed largely contingent on relationships with Single Responsible Officers (SROs). The main problems reported with Route 3 processes was limited responses from SROs, especially for care homes and HMOs (House in Multiple Occupation).

2. Overview

This publication reports on research on the third year of the reformed annual electoral canvass, which took place in 2022 ahead of the publication of the revised register on December 1, 2022, and synthesises findings from research on the first and second years of the reformed annual electoral canvass.

This report combines two research products:

1. a survey of electoral administrators, called the Electoral Services Experience Survey, conducted in May 2020 (baseline), 2021 (Year 1), 2022 (Year 2) and July 2023 (Year 3) to provide an overview of changes in satisfaction compared with the pre-reform canvass, and;
2. qualitative research with Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) and electoral administrators conducted between December 2021 and February 2022.

Canvass Reform Policy

The annual canvass gathers information on potential additions and changes to, and deletions from, the register. The reformed annual canvass model adds a data matching step, where the registers are compared with data held by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). In addition, EROs are also able to compare their registers against locally held data, such as council tax. Data matching informs EROs where there are likely to be changes to household composition and therefore to the register and allows them to put properties into different routes based on this.

Route 1, the matched properties route, is used for properties where the data indicates no change in household composition. Route 2, the unmatched properties route, is used for properties where data matching has highlighted a potential change to the information the ERO holds for the property and therefore requires different and more steps to be followed by the ERO. The final route, Route 3, the defined properties route, is used for property types which do not fit clearly within Routes 1 and 2 and can include places such as residential care homes and student halls of residence. The reformed canvass also gives much greater flexibility for how EROs choose to communicate with households.

This research contributes to the evaluation of the Canvass Reform policy within the Modern Electoral Registration Programme (MERP). Canvass Reform was introduced by the UK,

Scottish, and Welsh governments 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. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities is evaluating the 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) experience

This research contributes to findings across all themes, particularly focusing on theme 3: improving the citizen experience, and theme 4: improving the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) experience.

The Electoral Commission conducts regular completeness and accuracy research, to monitor the quality of the registers, which can be impacted by a number of different factors so any changes in figures cannot be directly attributed to canvas reform but provide an indication of impact.

High-level analysis of electoral registration data has been completed by the Electoral Commission² (on the December 2022 registers), which we will refer to throughout the report. Where relevant to participant responses, quantitative findings from the most recent analysis by the Electoral Commission have been included. It is therefore recommended that the Electoral Commission report is read in conjunction with this one. This research contributes particularly to theme 1: maintain the completeness and accuracy of the registers.

² Electoral Commission (2023). 2023 Report: Electoral Registers in the UK. Available at: <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/our-views-and-research/our-research/accuracy-and-completeness-electoral-registers/2023-report-electoral-registers-uk>

3. Approach

Research Strand 1: Electoral Services Experience Survey

The Electoral Services (ES) Experience Survey was designed to gather feedback from EROs and those in electoral service teams within local authorities (LAs) on their experience of the third year of the reformed annual canvass. Only one response per LA (or Valuation Joint Board (VJB) for areas in Scotland) was allowed, from an individual familiar with the canvass process. The survey ran from 30 June 2023 to 21 July 2023, consistent with previous years' research. Overall, 112 LAs/VJBs responded to the survey from a total of 362 across Great Britain (excluding Northern Ireland); a response rate of 31%. This was substantially lower than previous years, the response rates in the 2020, 2021 and 2022 surveys were higher, at 62%, 54% and 71% respectively.

Data Cleaning

The data received from the survey was cleaned prior to analysis, which included merging two sets of two duplicate responses from the Electoral Services Experience Survey.

Analysis and reporting

The majority of the Electoral Services Experience Survey questions asked the participants to rate levels of satisfaction with different aspects of canvass reform, ranging from very satisfied, to very dissatisfied. This publication reports on 'net satisfaction', which refers to the proportion of respondents who were overall satisfied minus the proportion of respondents who were overall dissatisfied. A positive net satisfaction demonstrates that a greater proportion of respondents were overall satisfied than were overall dissatisfied, whilst a negative net satisfaction demonstrates a greater proportion of respondents were overall dissatisfied than overall satisfied. The more positive or negative these values, the greater the difference between the proportion of respondent overall satisfaction and overall dissatisfaction. For the questions that measured levels of effectiveness (Q12, Q16 and Q29), rather than satisfaction, the responses are reported as net effectiveness.

For each survey question, z-scores were calculated to test whether the difference in net satisfaction year on year and additionally between the Year 3 surveys and baseline surveys were statistically significant. Unless stated otherwise, all differences reported were not statistically significant.

For the Year 3 survey, additional questions were added, inviting respondents to provide overall reflections on all three years of the annual canvass reform. These were analysed using thematic analysis to code responses, which were then organised into themes.

Research Strand 2: Qualitative Research

Qualitative research was conducted in Year 1 (2021) and Year 2 (2022) of the research, which we will refer to in this report. There were two methods of qualitative research, each conducted in-house by social researchers from Elections Research and Analysis:

1. Semi-structured in-depth interviews with electoral administrators from 18 local authorities across England, Scotland, and Wales (held from December 2021 to February 2022).
2. Two focus groups with seven EROs from England and Scotland (held in February 2022).

Sampling Approach

Qualitative Research: Purposive sampling was used to gather respondents for the qualitative research across the following three areas of focus: proportion of Route 3 properties, number of register additions and deletions, re-sampling local authorities from the 2021 (Year 1) research (see Evaluation of the Modern Electoral Integrity Programme: 2022 report for more information). In addition, the sample was selected with the aim of having a broad representation of local authority population profiles including region, rural/urban classifications, average elector age, deprivation, and net migration.

Electoral Services Experience Survey: Table 1 shows the number of responses to the 2023 Electoral Services Experience Survey by region.

Table 1. Number of respondents by region

Region	Number of Responses
East Midlands	15
East of England	12
London	9
North East	6
North West	13
Scotland	4
South East	21
South West	10
Wales	5
West Midlands	7
Yorkshire and The Humber	8
Total	110

Limitations

There are limitations in both methods of research. The qualitative research represents a small proportion of local authorities, and whilst care has been taken to include authorities with a range of demographics, findings cannot be generalised to all local authorities. Qualitative research was also not conducted in 2023 and so we do not have as much in-depth qualitative data on the third year of the annual canvass reform from electoral registration officers.

Whilst there was a relatively high response rate for the 2021 (Year 1) and 2022 (Year 2) surveys, the response rate was considerably lower in 2023 (Year 3). It should also be noted that there may be response bias with those who responded having particularly strong views and therefore being more motivated to take part. In addition, this means that some of the findings presented in this research have a small number of respondents as the base. Therefore there is a limitation of how representative some of these findings are and how much

impact can be attributed in cases. For full transparency where findings are underpinned by a small base, the size of the sample has been reported alongside them throughout this report.

Both methods of research are also reliant on participants' retrospective opinion. There is a risk that respondents do not remember experiences accurately or allow other contextual factors to impact their thoughts on the reformed canvass.

Whilst we have compared survey findings across years, it should be noted that this cannot be explicitly considered longitudinal data. Many authorities did not complete the survey each year, and for those that did it is plausible with staff turnover that the respondent differed each year. Samples for each year of the survey are therefore treated independently.

In addition, whilst the Impact Assessment made a projection on savings (theme 2), a limitation of the design of this evaluation is that further modelling to show whether the scale of the anticipated savings are in line with those projected was not part of the evaluation design, so we cannot say with certainty if these savings have materialised.

4. Research Findings

Net satisfaction change

The majority of questions in the survey have been asked across the four survey waves, which has allowed for a comparison of net satisfaction (as defined in the previous section) in relation to different aspects of the canvass, over time. Overall, respondents showed significant increases in net satisfaction for most questions in comparison to pre-reform; in many cases these were notably large. The only exception was for the two questions on completeness and accuracy of the electoral register (Q.10 and Q.11), where net satisfaction slightly decreased from Year 2 (2022).

The largest increase in net satisfaction between Year 2 (following the second year of canvass reform) and Year 3 (following the third year of canvass reform) were for satisfaction with data and statistics during the canvass period (Q14) and effectiveness of the canvass under the current Management Information (Q15). The largest decreases in net satisfaction between Year 2 and Year 3 were for the effectiveness of the door knock (Q7), completeness of the electoral register (Q10), and the accuracy of the electoral register (Q11). However, it is important to note that the Electoral Commission's 2023 study on the December 2022 registers reported that the completeness and accuracy of registers across the UK has remained stable. Table 2 shows the net satisfaction by year, and statistically significant differences.

Table 2. Net satisfaction by year

Question	Baseline (2020)	Year 1 (2021)	Year 2 (2022)	Year 3 (2023)
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 reformed annual canvass?	15%	83%*	82%	75%**
Q2 How satisfied were you that the reformed annual canvass process allowed your team to exercise innovation and improvement?	9%	71%*	67%	60%**
Q3 How effectively could you and your team target your time and resources under the reformed annual canvass requirements?	46%	77%*	78%	83%**
Q4 How satisfied were you with the processes for the national data match under the reformed annual canvass?	N/A	95%	98%	89%*
Q5 How satisfied were you with the Route 1 processes under the reformed annual canvass?	N/A	81%	75%	72%
Q6 How satisfied were you with the Route 2 processes under the reformed annual canvass?	N/A	78%	80%	68%
Q7 In your opinion, how effective is the door knock as part of the canvass process?	N/A	N/A	-19%	-32%
Q8 How satisfied were you with the Route 3 processes under the reformed annual canvass?	N/A	56%	60%	65%
Q9 Overall, how satisfied were you and your team with the reformed annual canvass?	19%	90%*	80%*	73%**
Q10 How satisfied were you with the reformed annual canvass processes to safeguard the completeness of your electoral register?	45%	58%*	52%	39%
Q11 How satisfied were you with the reformed annual canvass processes to safeguard the accuracy of your electoral register?	50%	57%	53%	34%*
Q12 How satisfied were you with 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)?	63%	82%*	79%	81%**
Q13 How satisfied were you that the reformed annual canvass processes were simple and clear for citizens?	-9%	54%*	49%	57%**
Q14 In your opinion, how satisfied do you think citizens were with the reformed annual canvass process?	0%	48%*	33%*	34%**
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 reformed annual canvass in your area?	50%	29%*	48%*	66%***
Q16 How effectively did you feel you could evaluate the effectiveness of the canvass under the current Management Information?	48%	19%*	39%*	59%*

* Significant change from the previous year

** Significant change from the baseline (for 2023 only)

*** Significant change from the previous year and the baseline (for 2023 only)

5. Maintaining the Completeness and Accuracy of the Registers

Completeness and Accuracy

19. How satisfied were you with the third year of the reformed annual canvass processes to safeguard the completeness of your electoral register?

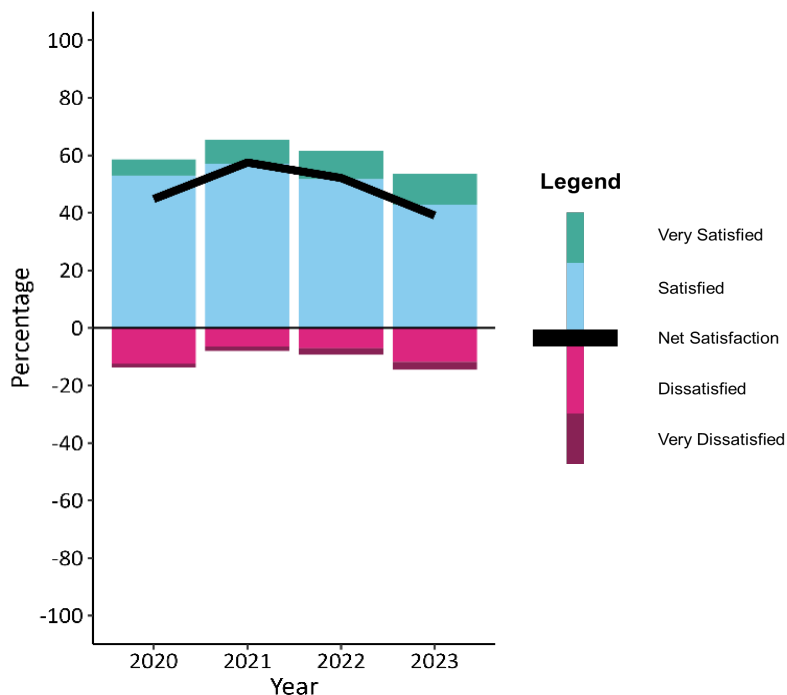
20. How satisfied were you with the third year of the reformed annual canvass processes to safeguard the accuracy of your electoral register?

21. Are there any groups that you think are more likely to be missed in terms of the completeness and accuracy of the register under the reformed canvass?

22. If you are concerned about the impact of canvass reform on completeness and accuracy, have you implemented anything to mitigate this?

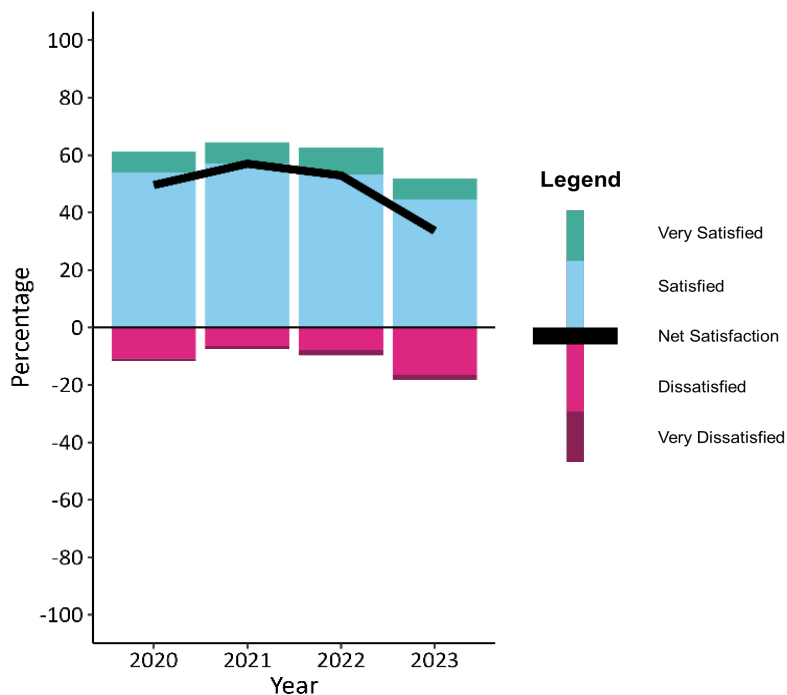
Net satisfaction with the reformed canvass regarding **completeness** of the electoral register was +39%; this represents a decrease of 13p.p. (percentage points) from Year 2 (2022), however this is not statistically significant. Compared to the baseline (2020), there was a decrease of 6p.p., however this was also not statistically significant. Figure 1 shows satisfaction by year for question 19 (Completeness).

Figure 1. Satisfaction by year for question 19 (Completeness)



Net satisfaction with the reformed canvass regarding **accuracy** of the electoral register was +34%; this represents a statistically significant decrease of 19p.p. from Year 2 (2022). Compared to the baseline (2020), there was a decrease of 16p.p., however this was not statistically significant. Figure 2 shows satisfaction by year for question 20 (Accuracy).

Figure 2. Satisfaction by year for question 20 (Accuracy)



Non-responses from Route 1 properties, which could either indicate no change having occurred or occupants failing to report a change, were the main concern which would affect the **accuracy** of the register (20%; 22 respondents), which reflects the findings of the Year 2 report.

Consistent with the previous years' findings, decreasing number of attainers being added to the register each year was also a source of concern for some (10%; 11 respondents) regarding the **completeness** of the register, with some suggesting that a response not being required for Route 1 properties was the cause of attainers not being added to the register.

“Many people are not responding [to communications] with changes – particularly with 16-18 year olds”

In addition to this, some (6%; 7 respondents) indicated the low response rate for Route 2 properties also impacted the completeness of the register. 5% (6) indicated that a UK Parliamentary General Election would play a large role in both testing and improving the accuracy and completeness of the register, echoing the findings of the Year 2 report.

“We had around 2% of properties overall still outstanding a response in the end, but it was 16.9% of route 2 properties”

The group respondents indicated would be most likely to be missed regarding the completeness and accuracy of the register under reformed canvas was attainers (36%; 40 respondents). The second most mentioned group was those living in high churn properties, movers and renters (16%; 18 respondents), followed by those with informal living situations (6%; 7 respondents), and those for whom English is not a first language (6%; 7 respondents).

22% (24 respondents) of respondents did not believe any particular groups were more likely to be missed.

The most common mitigation strategy that respondents deployed to improve the completeness and accuracy of their register is local data matching to supplement the national data match (21%; 23 respondents). 10% (11 respondents) mentioned conducting a local data match using council tax specifically. 21% (23 respondents) mentioned using communications or outreach more generally. More specifically, 8% (9 respondents) conducted school, college or university visits to encourage registration of young people or attainees, and 4% (4 respondents) used social media campaigns, in some cases also tailored to younger audiences. 4% (4 respondents) mentioned having sent or considering sending Household Notification Letters (HNLs) to update the register. Some respondents indicated that their mitigation efforts were hampered by a lack of resources (5%; 6 respondents), or a lack of access to data (4%; 4 respondents).

Comparison with the Electoral Commission Accuracy and Completeness of Electoral Registers Report³

The Electoral Commission's findings reflect the broadly stable net satisfaction of respondents; completeness across Great Britain has increased 3p.p., and accuracy has decreased by 1p.p. since 2018 (pre-reform). However, the report also corroborates the concern that attainees are increasingly being missed from the register; the percentage of attainees on the register in Great Britain decreased from 25% in 2018 to 16% in 2022 (compared to the overall completeness of the register which was 86%).

Those who had only lived at a property for up to a year also had low completeness (39%) and accuracy (54% compared to an average of 86%), which mirrors the second most frequently mentioned group above, which was those living in high churn properties, movers and renters. For renters specifically, completeness and accuracy were slightly higher, but nonetheless remained below average. Private renters had lower completeness and accuracy (65% completeness and 77% accuracy) compared to local authority renters (79% completeness and 88% accuracy) and housing association renters (79% completeness and 90% accuracy). This was similar to the pre-reform canvass.

The Electoral Commission did not report data relating to citizens for whom English is not a first language.

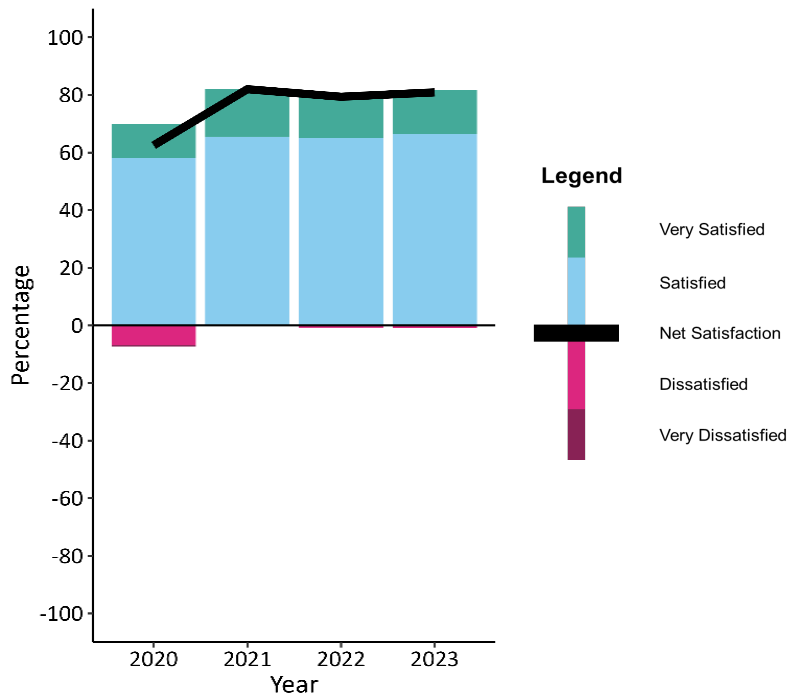
Security and Integrity

23. How satisfied were you with the third 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)?

³ Electoral Commission (2023). *2023 Report: Electoral Registers in the UK*. Available at: <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/our-views-and-research/our-research/accuracy-and-completeness-electoral-registers/2023-report-electoral-registers-uk>

Net satisfaction with the reformed canvass regarding maintaining the security and integrity of the electoral register was very high, at +81%; this represents an increase of 2p.p. from Year 2 (2022), though this was not statistically significant. However there was a statistically significant increase compared to the baseline (2020) of 18p.p. Figure 3 shows satisfaction by year for question 23.

Figure 3. Satisfaction by year for question 23



While limited open text responses were provided, the limited amount of concern there was related to the fact that handwritten signatures could no longer be checked, and there is no address check. These comments represent a minority view in light of the +81% net satisfaction.

6. Create efficiencies in the registration system

General Efficiency

30. Overall, do you think that the reforms to the canvass have enabled you to run a more efficient canvass process, compared to pre-canvass reform?

31. If applicable, please describe which areas of the canvass reform are more efficient under the reformed canvass

The Modern Electoral Registration Programme published an impact assessment in 2019 appraising the then proposed changes to the annual canvass. This analysis produced an expected cost saving for local authorities of £20.3 million to £20.6 million on average over the ten year period from 2020-21 because of the implementation of the reforms to the annual canvass.

Local authorities reported the main benefits of the reformed canvass to be efficiency improvements and resource savings (55%), increased flexibility (14%), and environmental sustainability improvements (2%).

Looking in more detail at efficiency improvements and resource savings, 69% of respondents stated they were able to run a more efficient canvass post-reform, while 7% stated that they weren't. The main ways administrators stated they were able to improve the efficiency of their canvass were by:

- Using e-communications as opposed to paper-based communications (19% of respondents), and therefore less printing and postage (12%)
- Not having to process as many responses due to the introduction of CCAs (17%)
- Not having to chase properties as frequently (10%)
- Data matching (10%)

The reduction in paper-based communication and administrative burden is perhaps best exemplified by this quote:

“The number of forms received had dropped from around 36,000 at the last old canvass to around 4,000 last year”

However, some did express concerns that this increased efficiency came at the cost of the accuracy and completeness of the register.

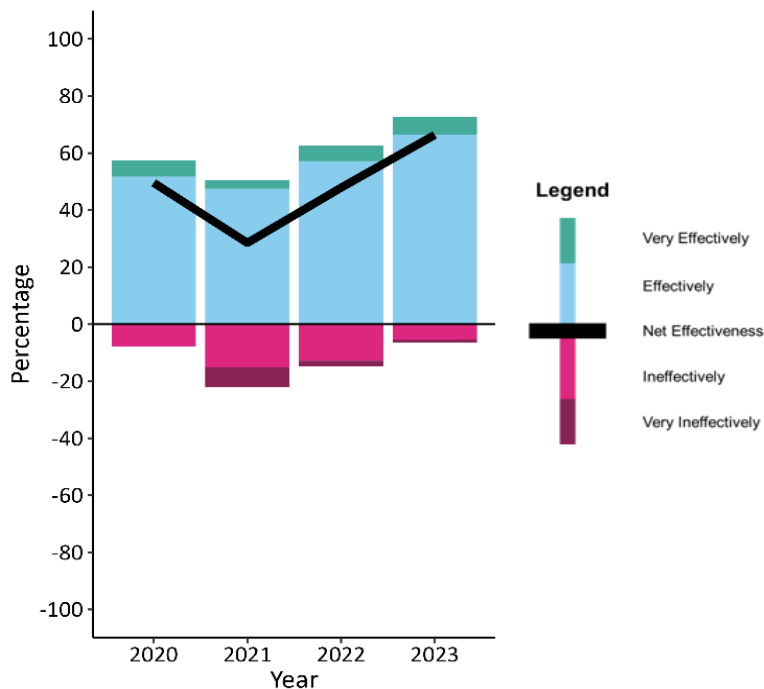
Management Information and Data and Statistics

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

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

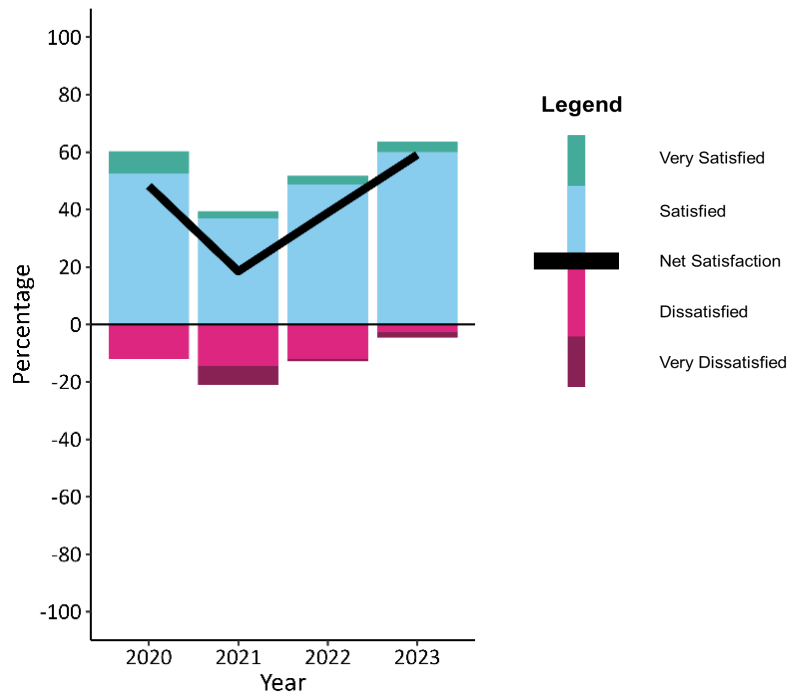
The net satisfaction regarding the use of data and statistics during canvass to make informed decisions was +66%. This represented a statistically significant 19% increase from Year 2 (2022) and having fallen in Year 1, it has now recovered and represents a statistically significant increase of 17% from the baseline (2020). Figure 4 shows satisfaction by year for question 28 (Data and Statistics).

Figure 4. Satisfaction by year for question 28 (Data and Statistics)



The net satisfaction regarding being able to evaluate the effectiveness of the canvass using the current Management Information (MI) was +59%; this represented a statistically significant 20p.p. increase from Year 2 (2022). This was a 11p.p. increase from the baseline (2020), however this was not statistically significant. Figure 5 shows satisfaction by year for question 29 (MI).

Figure 5. satisfaction by year for question 29 (MI)



Open text responses indicate where dissatisfaction arose, it was due to the stats available being limited (11%; 12 respondents), inaccurate (4%; 4 respondents), and difficult to process (4%; 4 respondents). The details of these issues varied greatly depending on the software used.

“Greater reporting and data from our EMS would be helpful, but we already have the basic information required”

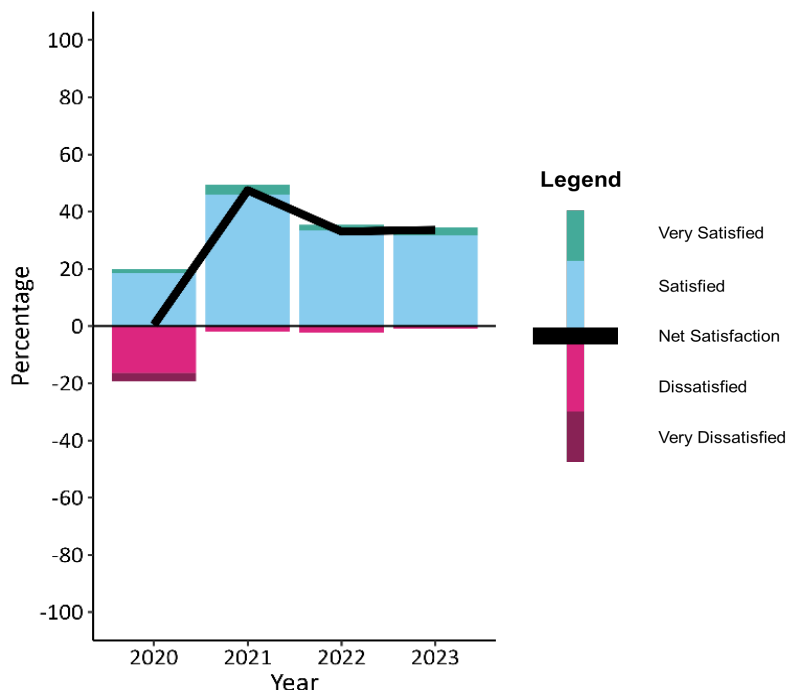
7. Improving the Citizen Experience

Overall Citizen Satisfaction

27. *In your opinion, how satisfied do you think citizens were with the third year of the reformed annual canvass process?*

Respondents estimated the net satisfaction of respondents as +34%; this represented a 1p.p. increase from Year 2 (2022) of the canvass, and this was not statistically significant. However, compared to the baseline, this represented a statistically significant increase of 33p.p.. Figure 6 shows satisfaction by year for question 27.

Figure 6. Satisfaction by year for question 27



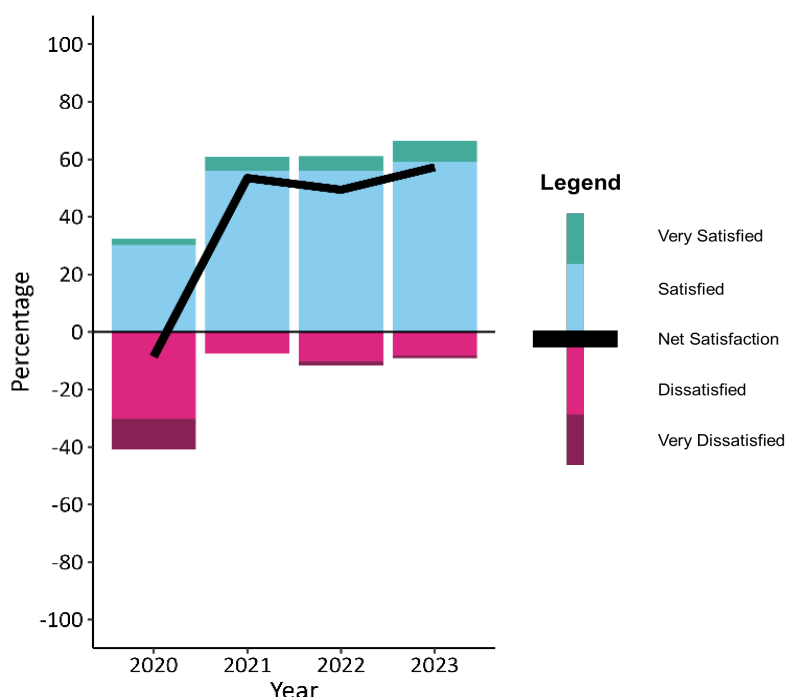
Some respondents thought citizens were apathetic towards canvass (4%; 4 respondents).

Simplicity and Clarity of Canvass

24. *How satisfied were you that the third year of the reformed annual canvass processes were simple and clear for citizens?*

Net satisfaction with the reformed canvass processes being simple and clear for citizens was high, at +57%; this represented an 8p.p. increase from Year 2 (2022), however this was not statistically significant. Compared to the baseline (2020), this represented a statistically significant 66p.p. increase. Figure 7 shows satisfaction by year for question 24.

Figure 7. Satisfaction by year for question 24



The main way in which the process was unclear for citizens, as with Year 2’s report, was the two stage process of registration, mentioned by 20% (22) of respondents (though this is unrelated to canvass reform).

“The two-stage process for newly identified electors can be confusing for citizens. Residents completing the canvass form sometimes ignore invitations to register as they think they have already registered”

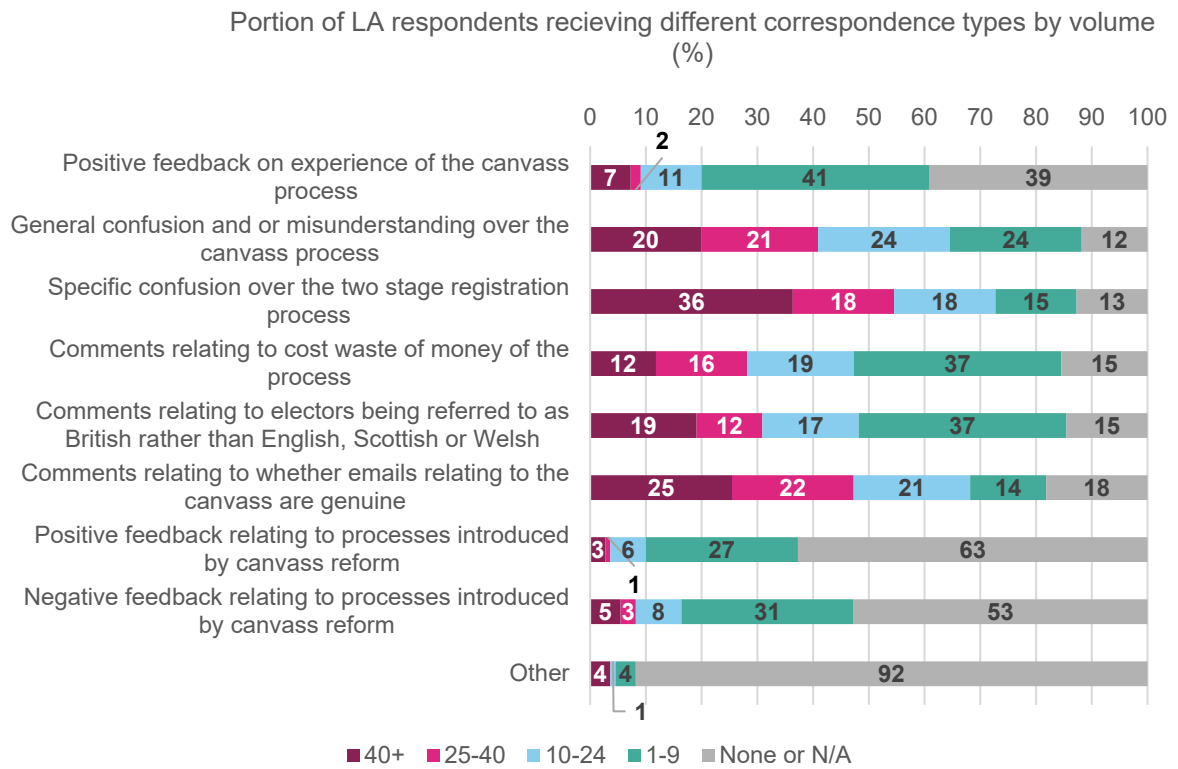
Respondents stated that citizens often did not understand that they had to complete the second step and why they had to do so and expressed dissatisfaction at the cost of such a process. Citizens were also confused over whether they needed to reply to CCAs (3%; 3 respondents).

Citizen Correspondence

25. Please select the frequency with which you received the following categories of correspondence from citizens about reformed annual canvass processes in the third year of the reform (2023). Please reflect on the whole canvass period when answering this question. Exact figures are not required, so if you are not sure, please provide your best estimate. There are some suggested categories of correspondence listed below; there is also an option to list another category if a category of correspondence you receive is not already listed.

It should be noted that 5% (6) respondents indicated not having begun their canvass at this point, and so were unlikely to receive communication from the public regarding it. Figure 8 shows the portion of LA respondents receiving different correspondence types.

Figure 8. Different correspondence types received by LAs



8. Improving the Electoral Registration Officer Experience

Tailoring the Canvass

6. 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 third year of the reformed annual canvass?

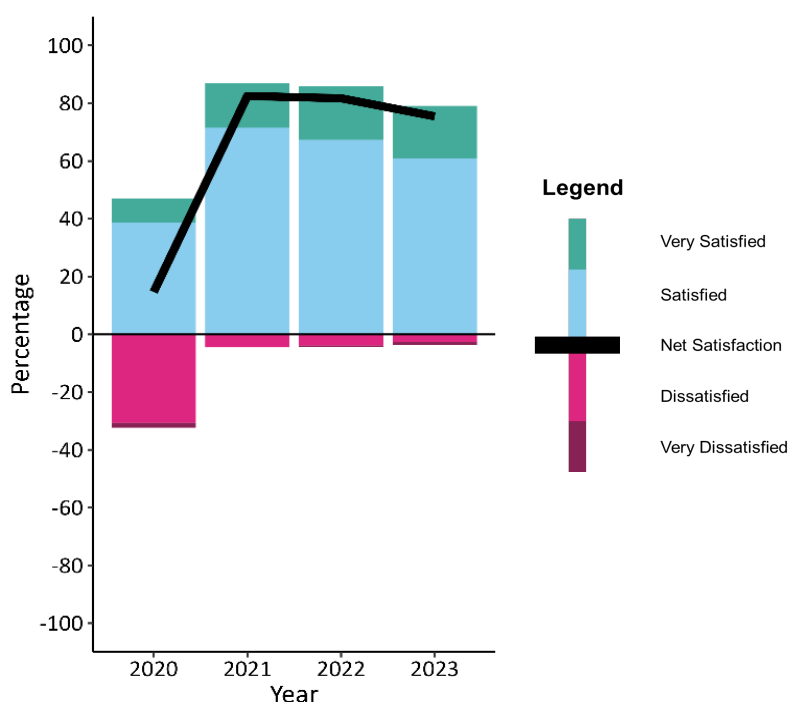
7. How have you been able to tailor the canvass, or not, to different areas in your authority under the reformed annual canvass?

8. Would you want to change your approach to running a tailored canvass in future years?

9. Has anything prevented you from running a tailored canvass? If so, please provide details below

For this question, net satisfaction was high, at +75%, representing a 6p.p. decrease from Year 2 (2022). However, compared to the baseline pre-reform (2020) there was a statistically significant increase in net satisfaction of 61p.p.. Figure 9 shows satisfaction by year for question 6.

Figure 9. Satisfaction by year for question 6



Open text responses indicated that, where respondents were able to tailor the canvass to different areas in their Local Authority, they did this through targeted outreach to low response areas (12% of respondents; 13 responses), through tailoring the types of communication they deployed (5%; 6 respondents), through the flexibility provided by route 3 (5%; 5 respondents), through local data matching (3%; 3 respondents), and through changing the order/timelines of the canvass (2%; 2 respondents). Conversely, respondents who did not tailor the canvass to different areas in their local authority opted not to due to it not being needed (8%; 9 respondents) or due to a lack of time and resources (5%; 6 respondents).

33% of respondents (36) stated they would like to change their approach to running a tailored canvass, and 31% (34 respondents) that they wouldn't; 7% (8 respondents) stated they would change their approach to running a tailored canvass by utilising more digital and e-comms, 5% (6 respondents) by removing the door knock (though this is not possible under current legislation), 3% (3 respondents) through more local data matching, 2% (2 respondents) through tailoring to lower response areas, and 2% (2 respondents) through, providing additional information regarding student registration.

“Using emails to contact route 1 and route 2 properties could reduce the amount of paper forms that we have to send”

“We are starting to struggle appointing canvassers for the door knocking stage, we may look at using e-comms and telephone canvass”

More respondents stated that they faced no barriers to running a tailored canvass (39%; 43 respondents) than that they did face barriers (25%; 23 respondents). The top three most frequently cited barriers were a lack of resources, encompassing funding and staffing, (14%; 15 respondents), legislative requirements (7%; 8 respondents), which were also mentioned as a barrier in last year's survey, and a lack of flexibility within and between the different routes (5%; 5 respondents).

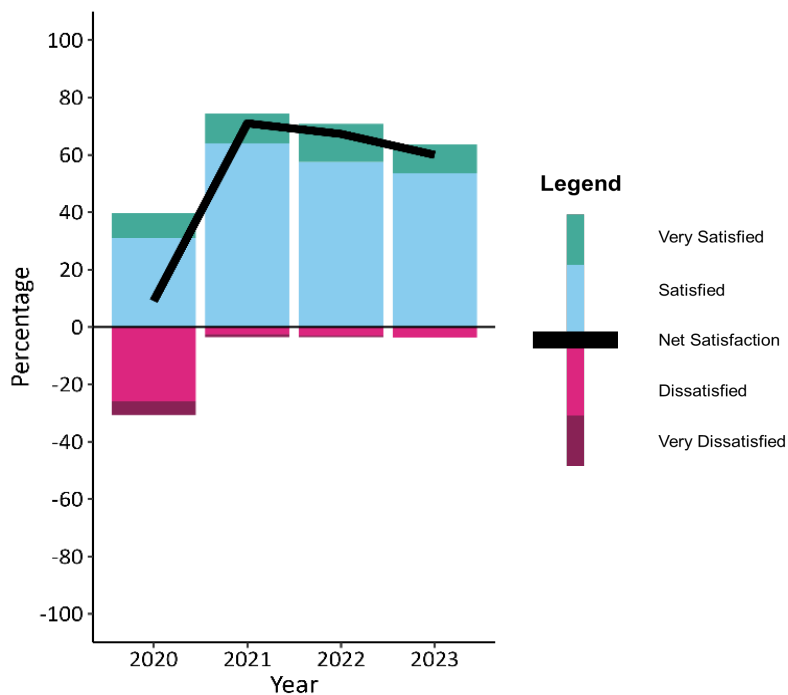
Innovation and Improvement

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

11. Have you experienced any barriers under the reformed canvass that have prevented your team from exercising innovation and improvement?

For this question, net satisfaction was high, at +60%, representing a 7p.p. decrease from Year 2 (2022). However, compared to the baseline pre-reform (2020) there was a statistically significant increase in net satisfaction by 51p.p.. Figure 10 Shows satisfaction by year for question 10.

Figure 10. Satisfaction by year for question 10



40% of respondents indicated that they did not face any barriers to innovation and improvement, as opposed to 32% who did face barriers. Open text responses indicated that the main barrier to innovation and improvement was a lack of resources, including funding and staffing (13%; 14 respondents), followed by legislative restrictions on the type of communication methods local authorities could deploy for each route (9%; 10 respondents), which echoes last year’s findings, and form wording (6%; 7 respondents).

“Lack of contact details for Route 2 properties means that we are limited to forms and personal canvass”

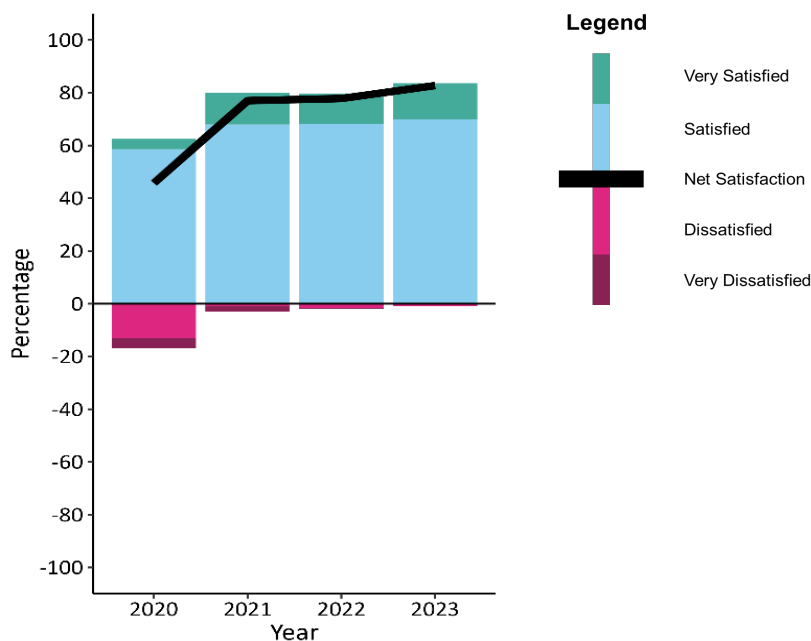
“The prescription of the forms is restricting and needs review. We have been told numerous times that the way the email is worded...has led them not to respond because they think it is a fake email”

Targeting of Time and Resources

12. How effectively could you and your team target your time and resources under the third year of the reformed annual canvass requirements?

For this question, net effectiveness was very high, at 83%, representing a 5% increase from Year 2 (2022). Compared to the baseline pre-reform (2020) there was a statistically significant increase in net effectiveness of 37%. Figure 11 shows the effectiveness by year for question 12.

Figure 11. Effectiveness by year for question 12



Further comments indicated that respondents were able to do this due to the lower amounts of door knocking and route 2 properties (5%; 5 respondents) and through the use of digital or e-comms (3%; 3 respondents). However, some respondents stated that legislative requirements prevented them from targeting their time and resources effectively by requiring them to conduct a personal canvass for route 2 properties (4%; 4 respondents).

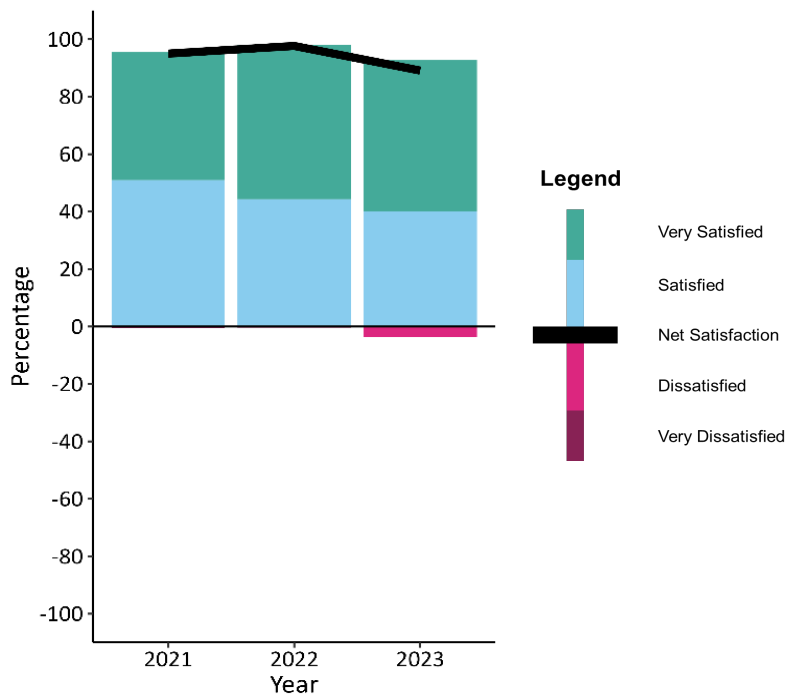
“Greater use of digital solutions and eCanvass have saved a lot of time and money but resources are significantly wasted on house visits”

The National Data Match

13. How satisfied were you with the processes for the national data match under the third year of the reformed annual canvass?

Net satisfaction with the data match was very high, at +89%, however this was a statistically significant decrease of 9p.p. from Year 2 (2022). This question was not asked in the baseline survey in 2020, as the data match did not exist at that point. Figure 12 shows satisfaction by year for question 13.

Figure 12. Satisfaction by year for question 13



Many respondents (24%; 22 respondents) praised the data match system as efficient, as they did in Year 2 (2022), reflecting the high net satisfaction.

“The national data match has now become a robust ‘business as usual’ process...a self-service exercise with fast uploading and downloaded speed”

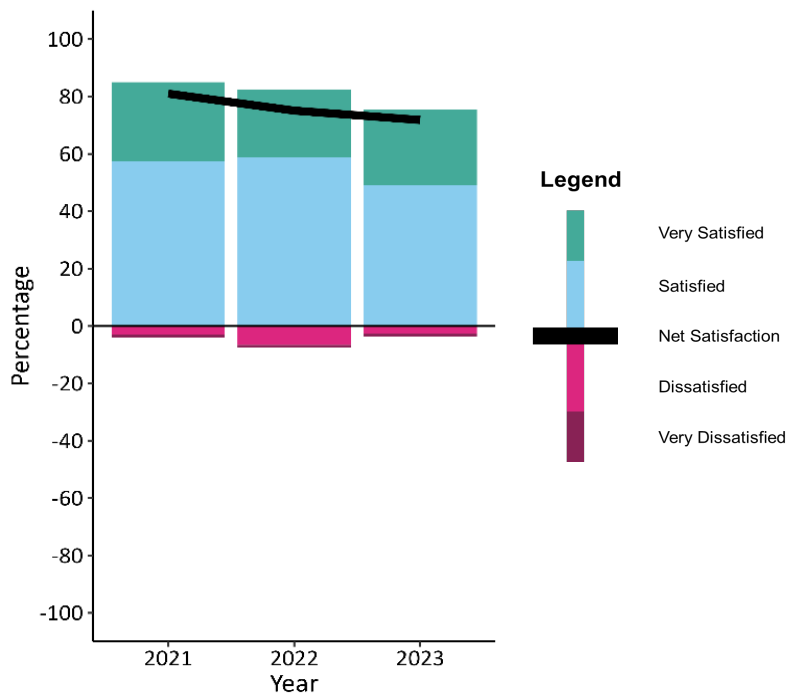
The reason for the slight but significant year decrease in net satisfaction from Year 2 (2022) might be that match rates have not improved year on year, and the same individuals are repeatedly not matched (mentioned by 4%; 4 respondents).

14. How satisfied were you with the Route 1 processes under the third year of the reformed annual canvass?

Route 1

Net satisfaction with Route 1 processes was high, at 72%; this represents a decrease of 3% from Year 2 (2022), however it is not a statistically significant one. This question was not asked in the baseline survey in 2020, as ‘Route 1’ did not exist at that point. Figure 13 shows satisfaction by year for question 14.

Figure 13. Satisfaction by year for question 14



As found in Year 2 (2022), some (6%; 7 respondents) believed the new route 1 processes saved resources for their team, while many expressed concerns over the impact of using Route 1 on the accuracy of the register (18%; 20 respondents).

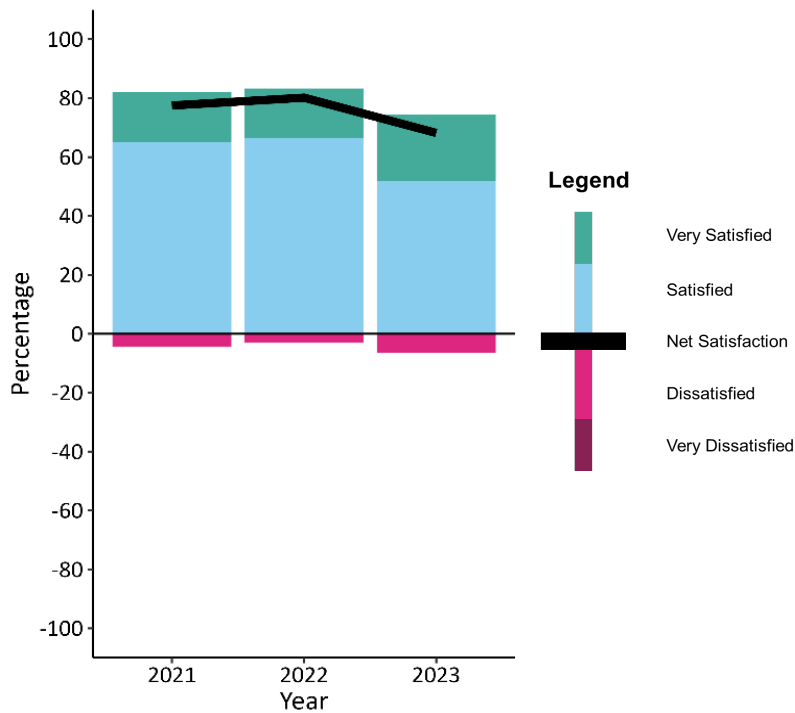
“We don’t believe that Route 1 picks up all the changes that are required to the register, but it works well in terms of not having to chase as many households”

Route 2

15. How satisfied were you with the Route 2 processes under the third year of the reformed annual canvass?

Net satisfaction with Route 2 processes was high, at +68%; this represents a decrease of 12p.p., however this is not statistically significant. This question was not asked in the baseline survey in 2020, as ‘Route 2’ did not exist at that point. Figure 14 shows satisfaction by year for question 15.

Figure 14. Satisfaction by year for question 15



As found in Year 2 (2022), administrators would like more discretion in deciding whether to use a door knock (7%; 8 respondents) and in being able to use e-comms from the beginning of canvass to contact Route 2 properties (5%; 5 respondents).

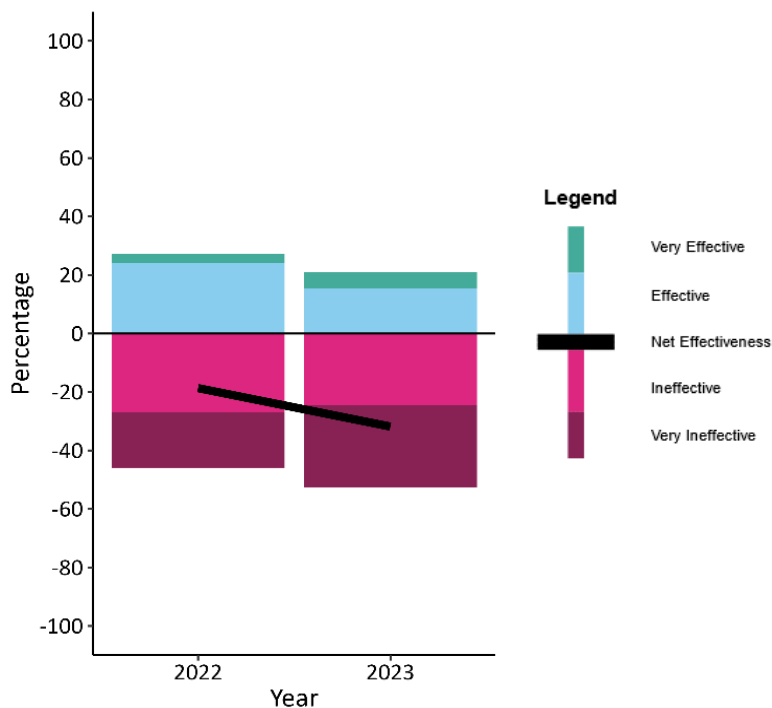
“We would like to be able to email Route 2 properties from the outset of canvass – if people have moved they can tell us”

The Door Knock

16. In your opinion, how effective is the door knock as part of the canvass process?

Echoing comments from question 6, net satisfaction for the door knock is low at -32%. This represents a 13p.p. decrease from Year 2 (2022), though this is not statistically significant. This question was not asked in the baseline survey. Figure 15 shows satisfaction by year for question 16.

Figure 15. Satisfaction by year for question 16



Based on open text responses, this lack of effectiveness stemmed from a variety of factors. The foremost was that the response rate and result from the door knock is poor (13%; 14 respondents), especially when accounting for the high cost (25%; 27 respondents), and the fact that it is the same properties who do not respond each year (8%; 9 respondents).

“Only 50% will respond to the door knocking phase for canvass”

Respondents also indicated that they experienced difficulties with recruitment and retention for the door knock (13%; 14 respondents), and some linked this to high levels of abuse. 5% (5) respondents indicated canvassers being subject to abuse. Some respondents also indicated that the door knock was more difficult to carry out in rural areas due to large distances between properties (5%; 6 respondents).

“It is very difficult to recruit canvassers. Householders are increasingly reluctant to open their doors to ‘cold callers’”

“It becomes a costly exercise, especially with the time it takes to get to places and the mileage”

However, some respondents thought that the door knock was important to maintain the accuracy of the register (6%; 7 respondents), with some indicating it is especially useful in contacting harder to reach groups.

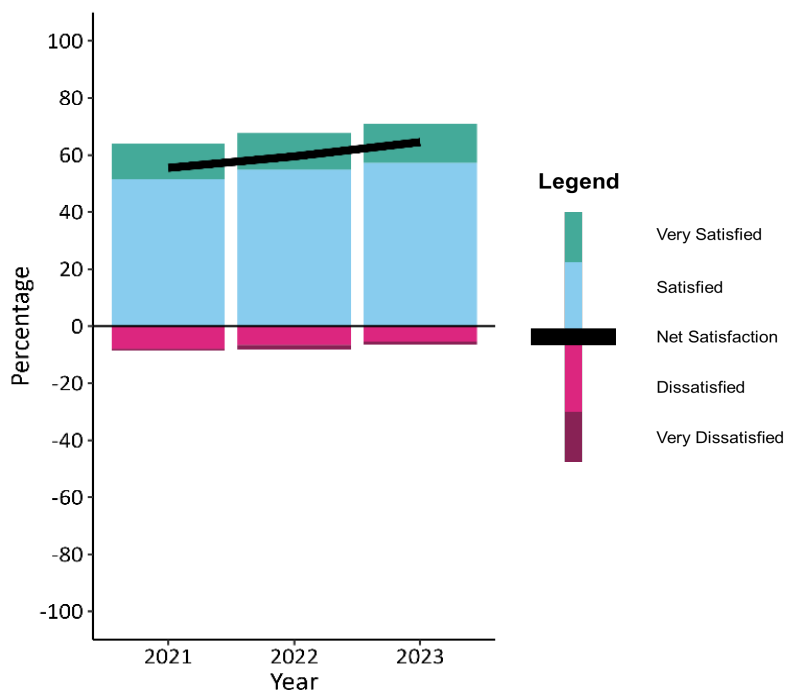
“Essential to achieve required accurate and complete register, which in turn reduces the numbers contacting the ERO with registration anomalies and potential complaints during busy election periods due to errors or omissions”

Route 3

17. How satisfied were you with the Route 3 processes under the third year of the reformed annual canvass?

Net satisfaction with Route 3 processes was high, at +65%; this represents an increase of 5p.p. from Year 2 (2022), however this is not statistically significant. This question was not asked in the baseline survey in 2020, as 'Route 3' did not exist at that point. Figure 16 shows satisfaction by year for question 17.

Figure 16. Satisfaction by year for question 17



Respondents indicated that the main issue they faced regarding Route 3 processes were limited responses (10%; 11 respondents), especially from care homes (7%; 8 respondents), and some cited staffing shortages in these care homes as the reason.

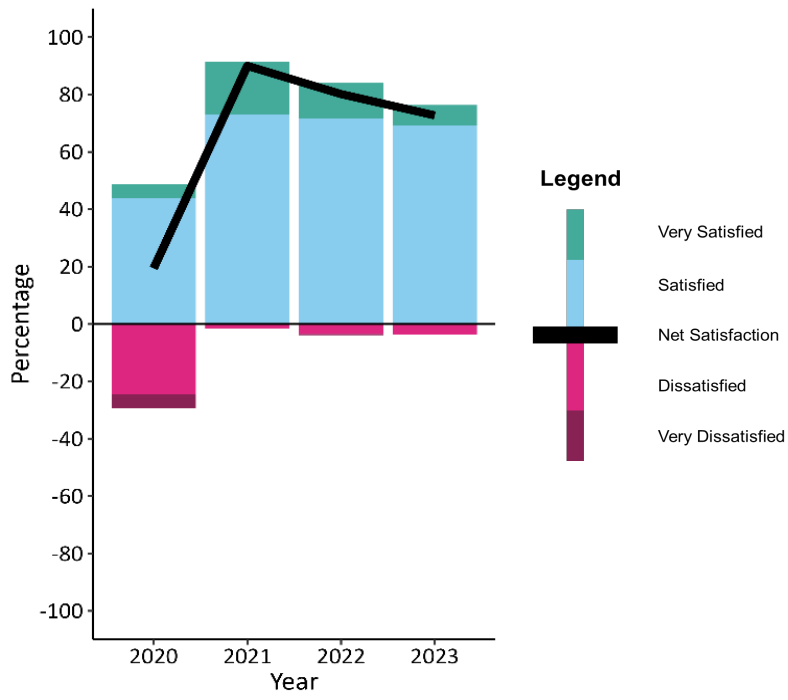
“Timing is difficult – you have to do it early enough to give time to push down route 2 if you get no response, but (especially with care homes) if you go out early then things will change a lot”

As found in the Year 2 report, success was dependent on relationships with the Senior Responsible Officer of Route 3 properties.

18. How satisfied were you with the Route 3 processes under the third year of the reformed annual canvass?

Net satisfaction with Route 3 processes was high, at +73%; this represents a decrease of 7p.p. from Year 2 (2022), however this is not statistically significant. Compared to the baseline (2020), there was a statistically significant increase of 53p.p. in net satisfaction. Figure 17 shows satisfaction by year for question 18.

Figure 17. Satisfaction by year for question 18



9. Overall Reflections

Overall Satisfaction with the 3rd Year of the Reformed Canvass

Open text responses captured the overarching attitudes of respondents towards canvass reform in its third year. On the one hand, respondents have praised the resource savings from the reformed canvass, with one respondent stating that the reformed canvass has:

“streamlin[ed] a highly bureaucratic and paper heavy registration process”

On the other hand, other respondents are concerned with the impact of canvass reform on the accuracy of the register, with one respondent stating:

“It is clear the register is getting poorer and poorer”

In contrast, it's important to note that the Electoral Commission's Accuracy and Completeness of the Electoral Registers Report⁴ findings reflect the overall relatively high net satisfaction of respondents; completeness across Great Britain has increased 3p.p., and accuracy has decreased by 1p.p. since 2018 (pre-reform).

Positive Impacts of Canvass

The main benefits of the reformed canvass were found to be efficiency improvements and resource savings (55%), increased flexibility (14%), and environmental sustainability improvements (2%).

Flexibility and efficiency improvements have been discussed in more detail in Sections D and B respectively.

Looking more in detail at environmental sustainability, which was not a part of the original evaluation, this improvement seems to have come about as a result of the reduction in paper forms. As above, one respondent stated they had gone from receiving 36,000 forms pre-reform to 4,000 after reform, and another respondent stated that the reforms:

“helped to play a part in the Council climate change declaration”

Changes Suggested by Administrators

When asked what they would change about canvass reforms, these were administrators' most requested changes:

- Being able to use alternative methods of communication for route 2 properties or removing the requirement for the door knock (25%)
- Removing the two stage registration process (7%)
- Being able to change the content of prescribed forms (3%)

⁴ Electoral Commission (2023). *2023 Report: Electoral Registers in the UK*. Available at: <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/our-views-and-research/our-research/accuracy-and-completeness-electoral-registers/2023-report-electoral-registers-uk>

- Increasing the sources available for data matching (3%)
- Being able to conduct local data matching throughout the canvass period (3%)
- Require a response from route 1 properties (3%)
- Having periodic unreformed canvasses (2%)

When asked what they would change about canvass in general, these were administrators' most requested changes:

- Removing the door knock stage (18%)
- Abolishing the canvass as it stands (10%) and instead:
 - Moving to a continuous process (5%)
 - Replace or combine it with Household Notification Letters (5%)
 - Moving to a less frequent process (3%)
- Remove the two stage registration process (9%)