

The shape of UK elections to come

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The Electoral Commission

Why electronic voting?

- Commission view: we should respond to the changing lifestyles of the electorate and exploit the opportunities provided by new technologies
- BUT innovative voting methods must be capable of providing levels of security at least equivalent to more traditional methods of voting and win public and political confidence
- Government commitment: “*an e-enabled general election sometime after 2006*”. Next likely general election after 2006 is 2010.

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Pilot schemes

- 9 e-voting schemes piloted May 2002, 20 in May 2003
- 2003 pilots involved nearly 6.5 million electors
- Pilots chosen and funded by the Government
- Commission has statutory role to advise Government on election of pilot schemes and to evaluate those chosen - individual reports and overarching strategic report

Key findings 2002

- May 2002 pilots successfully widened the choice of voting methods
- No significant increases in turnout with e-voting
- There were no significant technical problems
- There were concerns in some areas about the potentially increased risk of fraud, but the Commission has no evidence that these fears were realised in practice.

Key findings 2002

- Disability access was addressed well by most pilot areas: technology can open up voting to former non-voters
- Public opinion generally positive towards new voting methods, with higher levels of support for all-postal than e-voting schemes
- Parties and candidates need to adapt to new campaigning context
- Information and publicity critical – for candidates as well as voters

E-voting 2003

- Internet
- Telephone
- Text messaging
- Interactive digital television

... in combination over 17 local authorities

Key findings

- Local authorities delivered successful elections
- Public acceptability of new voting methods
- Notable increases in turnout at all-postal elections
- Public opinion is supportive of modernisation and new voting methods

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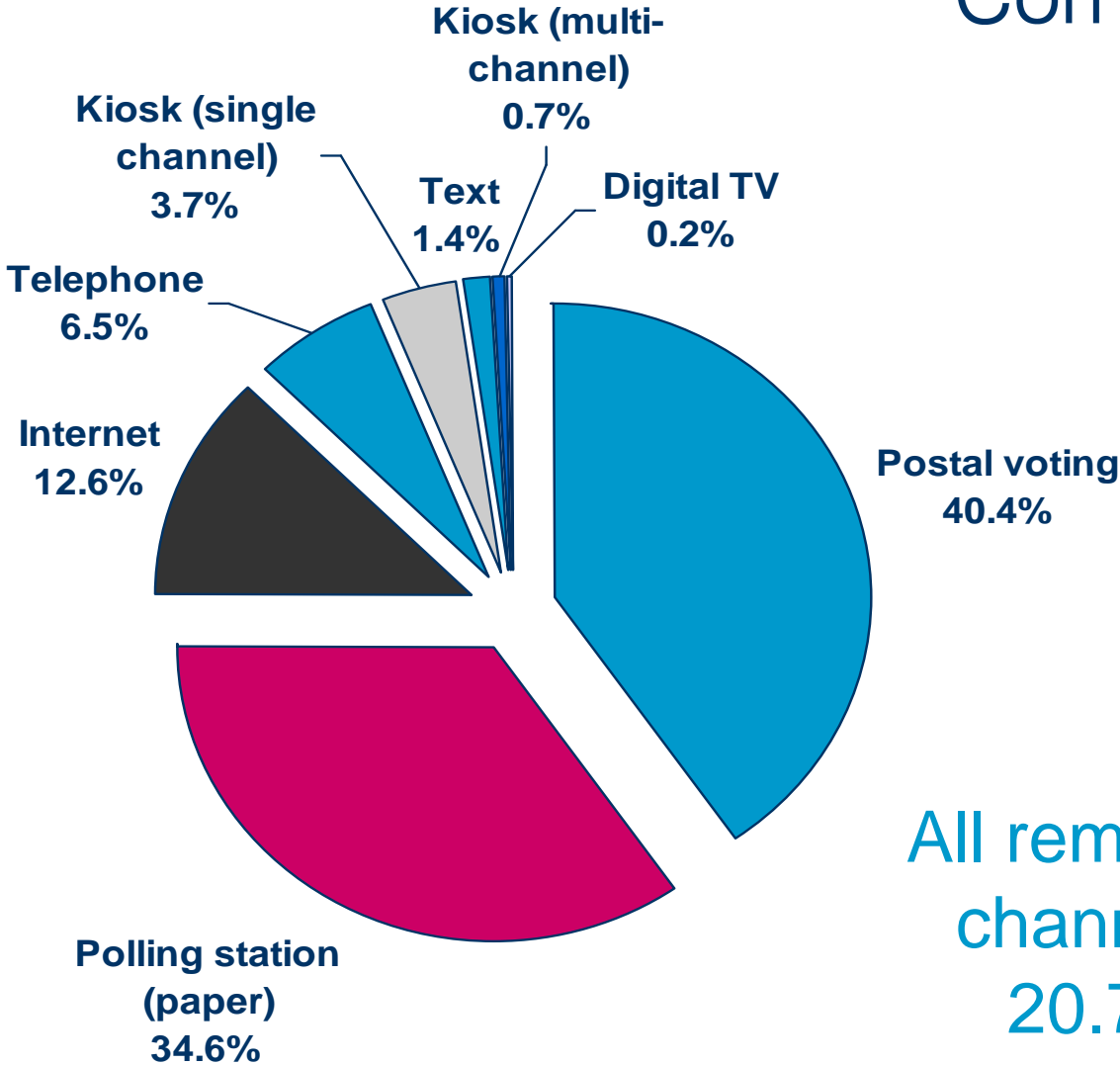
Choice

- '[choice] is seen as a natural consequence of the demands and expectations of the modern world, in that people should be able to choose the way of voting that is most convenient for them, and one that they are comfortable with'.

*MORI, public opinion survey for the Electoral Commission
2003*

Overall e-voting channel usage 2003

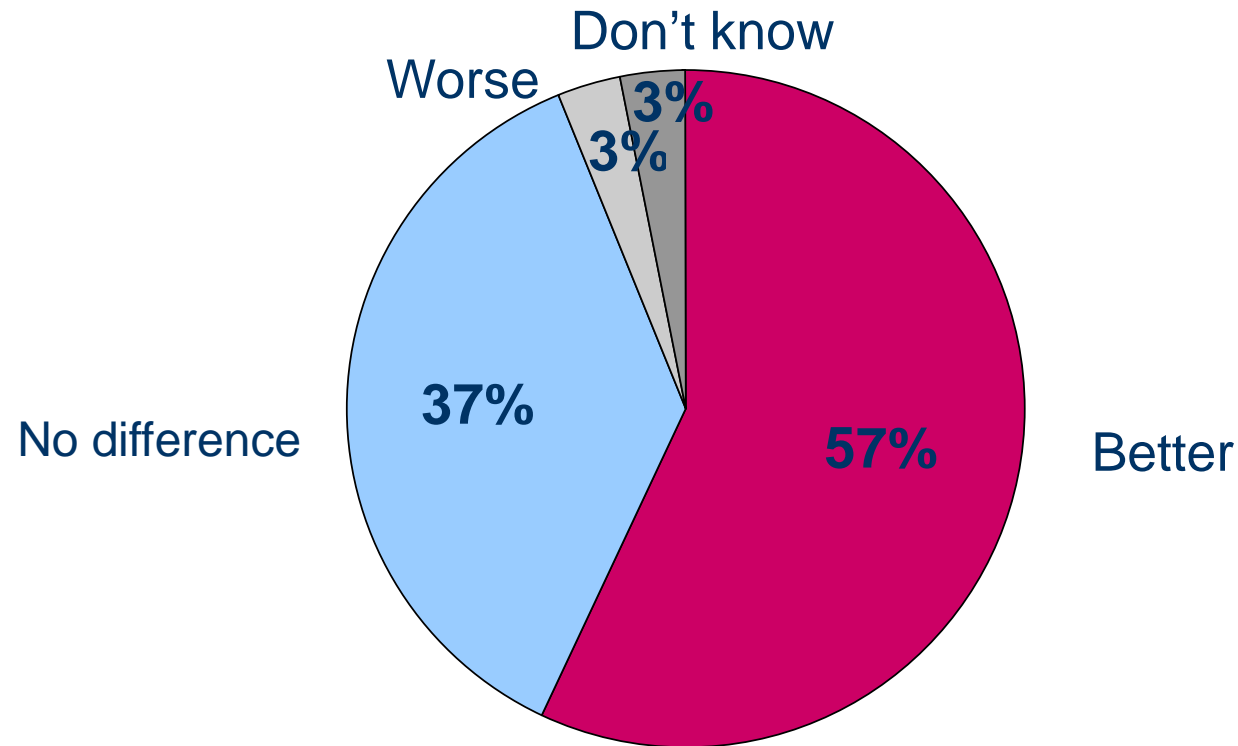
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E-voting arrangements better

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Q Whether or not you voted, from what you know, would you say that the new methods of voting available to you on 1st May made the whole process of voting better, worse, or did it make no difference?



Base: All respondents in e-voting pilot scheme areas (3,742), 2-12 May 2003

Source: MORI

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Convenience main benefit

I have got two jobs at the moment ... I don't have any time to leave the house and go to the polling station

The internet voting was fresh

Let's be pioneering, let's vote on the Internet

MORI focus group participants

Some concerns: security, secrecy

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There's a certain
security about
something you can
touch

It just looks too
complicated

I'd feel that things
could get lost or
not recorded
properly

Issues

- Security concerns remain but these are not insurmountable
- The technology is capable of delivering a secure election
- Access and acceptability
- Ease of use

Views of new arrangements

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Base: All those in e-voting pilot areas (3,742)

Source: MORI

The road ahead

- Further electronic voting pilots
- A clear strategy to reach an e-enabled general election
- Turnout not necessarily goal, but **must** make voting more convenient

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www.electoralcommission.org.uk