

# **Elections Bill**

## **Report Stage Briefing (Commons)**

January 2022

## Summary

Age UK has significant concerns about the impact of the introduction of photo ID for in person voting.

Older people are more likely to face hurdles when voting, including barriers to accessing transport and limited mobility which make getting to a polling station a lot harder. The proposed addition of compulsory photo ID, will further complicate in person voting.

Increasing confidence in the integrity of the electoral system is important but with no evidence that personation fraud in the UK is widespread and evidence that in small pilots, over a hundred people were unable or unwilling to return to a polling station to present valid photo ID, it feels that the introduction of this security measure is disproportionate to the threat of personation fraud. Age UK believes the proposal represents a sledge hammer to crack a nut. Any scheme put in place to address electoral fraud should not disenfranchise people who are less likely to hold recognised forms of ID, including older people.

***Age UK opposes Clause 1 of the Elections Bill, 'Voter Identification'.  
We would like the Government to remove Clause 1 of the Bill. We support Amendment 1 to leave out Clause 1 in the Elections Bill.***

## Ownership of photo ID

Older people often face issues when they are asked to prove their identity. We have found that being asked for frequently held forms of ID like passports is more difficult for older people who are less likely to have one.

Data from the 2011 census shows that the number of people reporting that they do not have a passport increases with age. **52% of people aged 85 and over reported not having a passport. Similarly, the percentage of people that report owning a driver's licence also decreases with age: 38% of those over 70 do not own a driving licence.**

We welcome the inclusion of the older person's bus pass in the proposed list of approved photo ID, but even with the inclusion of this pass, many older people do not already hold the forms of identification necessary to vote. Research commissioned by the Cabinet Office in March 2021 found:

- **2% of people aged over 70, (equivalent to approximately 180,000) living in Great Britain do not hold any of the forms of identification the Bill proposes would be accepted when voting**
- **Having to present photographic identification at the polling station would make voting difficult for 6% of people aged over 70, (equivalent to more than half a million people) living in Great Britain**
- **4% of people aged over 70, (equivalent to around 360,000 people) living in Great Britain would be less likely to vote**

These figures are likely to be underestimates of the true number of older people who will be affected. Older people living in care homes were excluded from the survey. The survey also had

a very low response rate of 31%. Survey non-response is more common among people who are in poor health or socioeconomically disadvantaged, both of which are linked to a higher likelihood of not having identification and to greater existing barriers to voting.

## Existing barriers to in person voting for older people

Voting in person is a valuable way for older people to exercise their democratic rights and older people are very highly motivated to vote<sup>1</sup>. Age UK's analysis found that 70.2% of people aged over 65 prefer to vote in person.

	Prefer not to say	In person	By post	By proxy
<65	0.3%	81.3%	17.3%	1.0%
65+	0.1%	70.2%	29.2%	0.6%
Total	0.2%	78.3%	20.6%	0.9%

Many older people already face barriers to in person voting. Adding to these difficulties by requiring them to find and present the correct forms of photo ID will only exacerbate the problem. In response, some people may simply decide not to participate.

In person voting is already difficult for some older people:

- **More than half of over 75s are disabled so experience the same difficulties with physical access, neurological and sensory impairment that other disabled voters face.**
- **Over half of over 75s have not used the internet in the past 3 months so registering online, being made aware of changes to voting arrangements and access to information from their council or political parties will be difficult.**
- **1 in 6 of over 80 year olds have dementia and that can lead to presumptions being made on their behalf by family members or professional carers that they should not register to vote even when on the day, they may have the capacity to exercise their vote.**
- **Those living in care homes may struggle to register to vote without support from the care home manager, and they will not have access to individual utility bills and other such evidence of their residence if this is required to gain access to a form of identification.**
- **Older people are likely to face barriers to accessing transport and limited mobility which make getting to a polling station much harder.**
- **Older people often provide care to spouses and other family members which can make leaving the house, even for short periods, difficult to arrange.**

## Mitigation against disenfranchisement

<sup>1</sup> Age UK analysis of 2019 British Election Study Post-Election Random Probability Survey data, accessed here: <https://www.britishelectionstudy.com/data-objects/cross-sectional-data/>

If the proposals to require photo ID for in person voting are enacted, the Government should put in place safeguarding measures to ensure that no individual is disenfranchised in circumstances that they do not have the required documentation and cannot travel to an electoral office to confirm their identity.

Mitigating measures should include:

- **A well advertised non-digital form of free elections ID alongside any digital offering. Electors should not have to scan or download personal information onto a local government portal or website – this would be an additional barrier to many older people accessing free photo ID.**
- **Polling station staff being briefed on the full list of acceptable photo ID including on accepting expired Government issued travel passes, such as the Bus Pass, from different areas of the country.**
- **Clear communication to voters ahead of elections on what ID will be required when voting: This could be done by printing information on polling cards, through notices issued alongside polling cards, posters being placed in prominent areas, and by contacting targeted groups where there are likely to be harder to reach voters, such as care home residents and caregivers, informing them that they will need to bring a particular form of ID in advance.**
- **Local authority election staff should proactively reach out to electors to offer a free form of election ID and travel to them to support them in securing this form of identification.**

## **Get in touch**

For more information or to discuss the Bill in more detail, please contact Roshni Mistry, Senior Public Affairs Officer at [roshni.mistry@ageuk.org.uk](mailto:roshni.mistry@ageuk.org.uk)