

# INTERIM REPORT

United Kingdom General Election  
8th June 2017



Dr John Ault

8<sup>th</sup> June 2017



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## Interim Report on Election Observation

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### Objectives

1. To objectively observe the electoral process across the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
2. To advise the local councils and national electoral bodies on the results of the observation for the improvement of electoral practice within the UK.
3. Support local councils and national election bodies with constructive feedback on areas of concern so that they may consider remedial action.

### Methodology

Twenty teams made up of 73 observers made up in teams of 2, 3 or 4, who were registered with the UK's Electoral Commission, made 485 separate observations in 650 polling stations across the United Kingdom.

Teams were deployed to all the English regions as well as in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Observers came from around the world, including 10 member states of the European Union and member states of the OSCE (including Canada, The United States of America and Moldova). This international group increased the ranks of Democracy Volunteers to produce the largest electoral observation of polling stations in UK electoral history. Some of the observers have worked as part of core teams for the OSCE/ODIHR and the European Union on observation missions around the world and many have worked as LTOs and STOs in the past.<sup>1</sup>

Each observation was conducted in pairs to allow for objective observation and the observers then agreed their opinions of the electoral process before submitting data to the central team. However, in some of the larger polling stations, most notably in Scotland and Northern Ireland (some having six separate ballot boxes) three or more of the team were deployed. The survey was conducted online so data was collected, and could be checked, live.

The observations generally took between fifteen and thirty minutes per polling station as the observers were asked to ensure that they attempted to see the entire process, which included staff greeting electors on arrival at the polling station. This happened on every occasion.

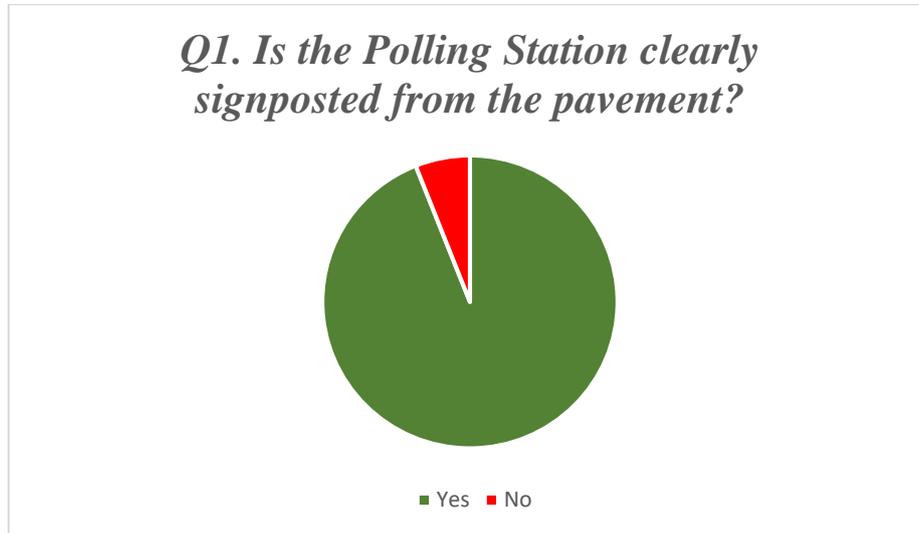
The organisation of polling stations was generally well run across the UK, voters could clearly see how to access voting and staff were trained to manage the process. We would, however, draw attention to the large scale evidence of 'family voting' which the team identified in 18% of polling stations.

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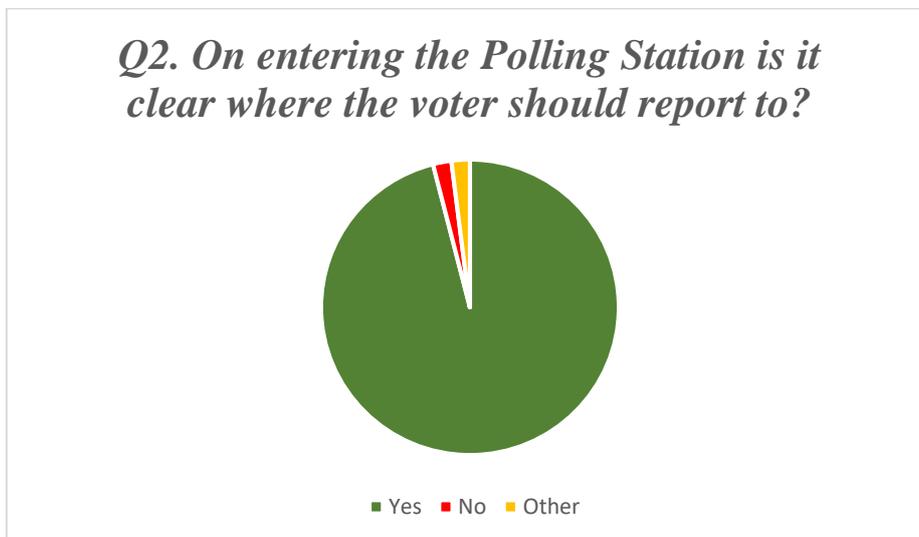
<sup>1</sup> Long Term Observers and Short-Term Observers

## Results of the Observation

The observers answered the following questions in order as they progressed with each observation at each polling station:

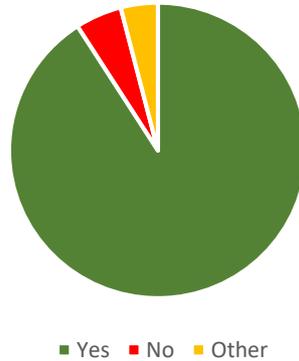


**QUESTION 1:** In 94% of cases polling stations were properly signposted from the pavement.



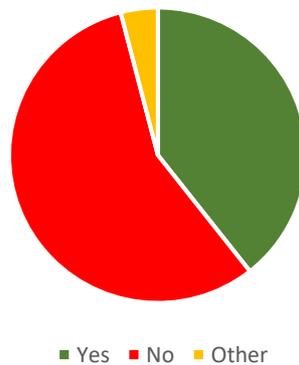
**QUESTION 2:** In 96% of cases, observers did not identify problems with where voters should report.

***Q3. Was it clear how disabled voters would access the Polling Station?***



**QUESTION 3:** 90% of observations indicated that access to the polling station was clear. Another 5% suggested that the disabled access was available however this was not clearly signposted. 5% identified other issues.

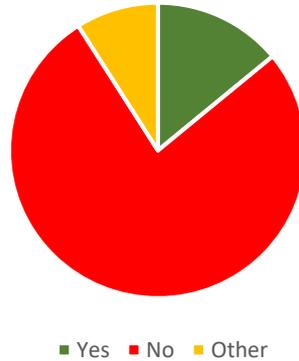
***Q4. Did the polling staff ask to see your ID on arrival?***



**QUESTION 4:** Polling staff were unaware that observation teams might be operating across the areas, the formal procedure for identifying, and then recording, that observers had visited the polling station was not followed in the vast majority of cases.

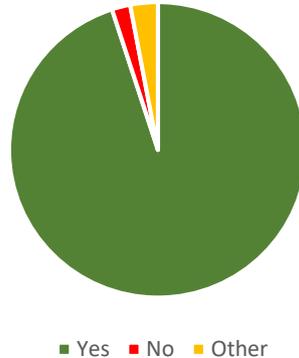
In only 39% of cases did observers have their credentials checked on arrival at the polling station. However, 56% did not check the ID of observers on arrival at the desk in the polling station.

*Q5. Did the staff record your ID number on a form?*



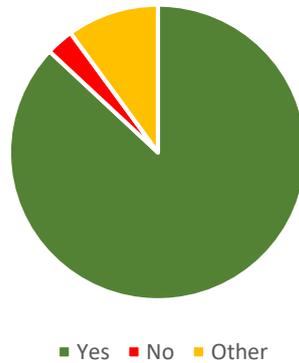
**QUESTION 5:** Similarly, we asked observers to note if the polling staff took a note of the ID that the observer was wearing. In each case this was an Electoral Commission badge which was numbered. Only 14% of polling stations recorded the ID details of the observers. Meanwhile, 77% of polling stations did not record attendance at all.

*Q6. Are there two staff on duty in the polling station as you arrive?*



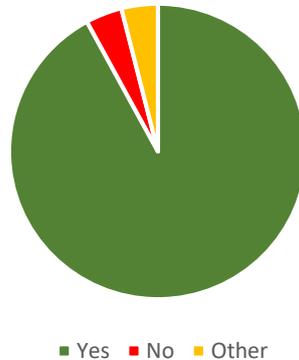
**QUESTION 6:** 96% of polling stations had two members of polling staff on duty when observers arrived at the polling station.

***Q7. Is the Ballot Box clearly sealed with cable ties?***



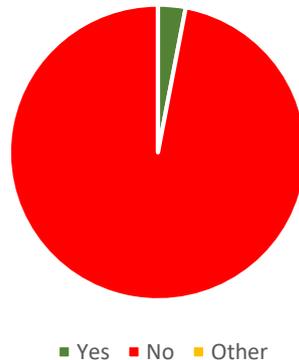
**QUESTION 7:** An important aspect of the electoral process is that the ballot should be secret and maintained as such allowing no one access to the ballot papers. The process for closing and sealing a ballot box, from the opening of the polls at 7am and closing at. 87% the ballot boxes were visibly sealed. 10% of ballot boxes were sealed but with fewer than the require number of cable ties.

***Q8. Is each polling booth equipped with an explanatory poster and a pen/pencil?***



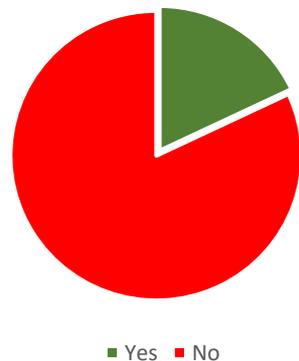
**QUESTION 8:** 93% of polling stations were properly equipped with the requisite pencil and poster.

***Q9. Are there any political leaflets in sight within the Polling Station?***



**QUESTION 9:** This question was asked primarily to illicit whether improper political activity was taking place within the polling station.<sup>2</sup> 3% of polling stations were found to contain political leaflets while 97% did not.

***Q10. Was there evidence of 'family voting' in the polling station?***



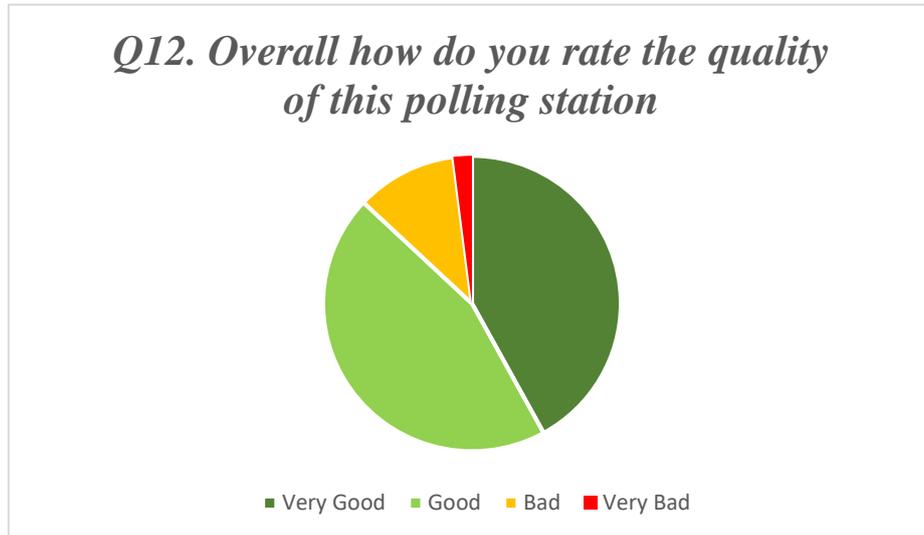
**QUESTION 10:** In 18% of cases, our observer team identified so-called 'family voting'. OSCE/ODIHR, which monitors elections within the UK, describes 'family voting' as an 'unacceptable practice'.<sup>3</sup> It occurs where husband and wife voting together is normalised and women, especially, are unable to choose for themselves who they wish to cast their votes for and/or this is actually done by another individual entirely.

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<sup>2</sup> This question did not just relate to literature specific to this election but observers were also asked to identify if other literature, such as MP or councillors' surgeries were on public display – advertising the names of candidates and/or parties.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.osce.org/>

**QUESTION 11:** Observers were asked to identify other authorised persons within the polling station. They reported that in 5% of cases, police officers were present, in 7% of cases other council staff were present, 3% of polling agents, 1% had candidates and 28% had candidate agents or representatives of the candidate. (No chart applied).



**QUESTION 12:** Observers were asked for an overall rating of the polling station they had attended. 42% of polling stations were reported to be 'Very Good', 45% 'Good', 11% 'Bad', and 2% 'Very Bad'.