



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Briefing Note

Paper 17/14

4 February 2014

NIAR 907-13

Dr Raymond Russell

Electoral Registration statistics and voting patterns

1 Introduction

This Briefing Note reviews voting behaviour in the Northern Ireland Assembly Elections, held on 5 May 2011. In particular, as requested, the note will consider the following three questions:

1. The percentage turnout by constituency.
2. The percentage of women who voted and / or registered to vote by constituency; and
3. The percentage of the population registered as an ethnic minority by constituency (2013).

2 Turnout by Constituency

Turnout in the last Northern Ireland Assembly election, held on 5 May 2011, was 55.7 per cent. This represented a continued decline from the 70 per cent turnout at the first Assembly election in 1998, 64 per cent in 2003 and 62.9 per cent in 2007.

Table 2.1 presents the official turnout figures for each of the 18 constituencies, sorted from high to low.

Table 2.1: Official Turnout in Northern Ireland Assembly Election, 2011

Constituency	Eligible Electorate	Votes Polled	Turnout (%)
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	70,985	48,949	69.0
Mid Ulster	66,602	43,522	65.3
West Tyrone	62,970	40,323	64.0
Newry and Armagh	77,544	47,562	61.3
Strangford	62,178	30,186	58.5
South Down	73,240	42,551	58.1
Belfast West	61,520	35,618	57.9
Foyle	68,663	39,686	57.8
Upper Bann	77,905	43,113	55.3
North Antrim	74,760	40,983	54.8
East Londonderry	65,226	35,303	54.1
Belfast East	61,263	32,828	53.6
Lagan Valley	67,532	35,842	53.1
Belfast South	62,484	32,752	52.4
Belfast North	68,119	34,280	50.3
South Antrim	65,231	32,652	50.1
East Antrim	61,617	29,430	47.8
North Down	62,170	28,528	45.9
Total	1,210,009	674,108	55.7

Source: Electoral Office for Northern Ireland (2011)

The table shows that the constituency of Fermanagh and South Tyrone had the highest turnout in 2011 (69.0 per cent), while North Down (45.9 per cent) had the lowest. In general, the highest turnout figures were recorded in the west of Northern Ireland, and the lowest in the east.

3 Voting Patterns and Gender

There are no official figures relating to either voting behaviour or electoral registration by gender. In the case of voting behaviour, the ballot is held in secret and there are no gender identifiers on the ballot paper. Similarly, the electoral registration form issued by the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland contains only personal identifiers (i.e. name, address, National Insurance No. and nationality).

However, Dr John Garry, QUB, conducted a survey of voting behaviour in the 2011 Assembly election, using a representative sample of 1,200 households across all 18 Assembly Areas. Fieldwork was carried out between 18 May and 17 June 2011¹.

Respondents were asked if they voted in the Assembly election, and Table 3.1 (overleaf) provides an analysis of turnout (the 'yes' responses) by gender and constituency. Overall, it was found that men and women were equally likely to vote (57 per cent), although there is some variation across the constituencies².

The study also found a relationship between participation and **age**: the older you were the more likely you were to vote. Just over half (51 per cent) of 18 – 22 year olds voted, compared with 66 per cent of those aged 65 or over (Fig 3.1).

Similarly, Catholics (65 per cent) were more likely to vote than their Protestant counterparts (55 per cent). Somewhat surprisingly, a relationship was also found between participation and **social class** (Fig 3.2): the C2 and DE categories ('working class') were more likely to vote than the AB and C1 groups ('middle class'). This finding is at variance with many international studies, which show that it is the affluent who are more likely to become involved in the democratic process.

Garry (2011) suggests that this finding "... may be explained by the relationship between religion and voting. Catholics are considerably more likely to vote than Protestants. Catholics are also more likely to be working class than Protestants, hence driving up the working class participation rate." (p.9)

¹ Garry, J. (2011). **Report prepared for the Electoral Reform Society on the 2011 Northern Ireland Assembly Election and AV Referendum**. School of Politics, International Studies and Philosophy, The Queens University Belfast. Available at: <http://www.qub.ac.uk/schools/SchoolofPoliticsInternationalStudiesandPhilosophy/FileStore/Stafffiles/JGarry/Fileupload,281998,en.pdf>

² While the overall finding of 57 per cent is robust, as it is based upon the entire sample of 1,200 respondents, and accords with official turnout figures, caution should be exercised when drawing inferences about individual constituencies. This is because the N (number of respondents) for those who answered 'yes' is relatively small, ranging from 58 in Foyle to only 16 in North Down. In this situation, even a small change of one or two in the count can dramatically change the percentage figure.

Table 3.1: Did you vote in the Assembly elections on 5 May 2011? Analysis of 'Yes' responses by Gender

	Male (%)	Female (%)	N of 'yes' count
Northern Ireland	57.3	57.2	687
Foyle	75.7	81.1	58
West Tyrone	80.8	77.1	48
East Londonderry	50.0	69.2	37
North Antrim	47.1	68.4	42
Belfast West	82.1	67.6	46
Mid Ulster	65.4	65.7	40
South Down	57.6	63.4	45
Newry and Armagh	54.5	62.1	42
East Antrim	48.3	59.4	33
Belfast East	50.0	57.7	29
Lagan Valley	58.8	56.8	41
Upper Bann	69.7	53.7	45
Fermanagh and S. Tyrone	50.0	48.7	33
Belfast South	54.3	48.5	35
Belfast North	61.5	45.7	32
Strangford	66.7	42.5	37
South Antrim	41.2	36.8	28
North Down	27.3	25.0	16

Source: Garry, J. (2013) NI Assembly Election Survey Data (SPSS)

Figure 3.1: Turnout by Age Group (%)

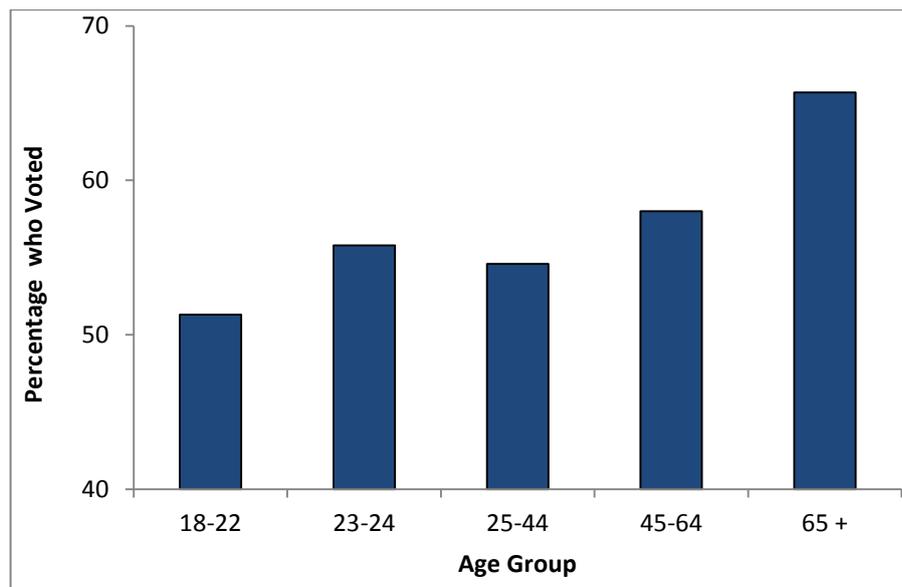
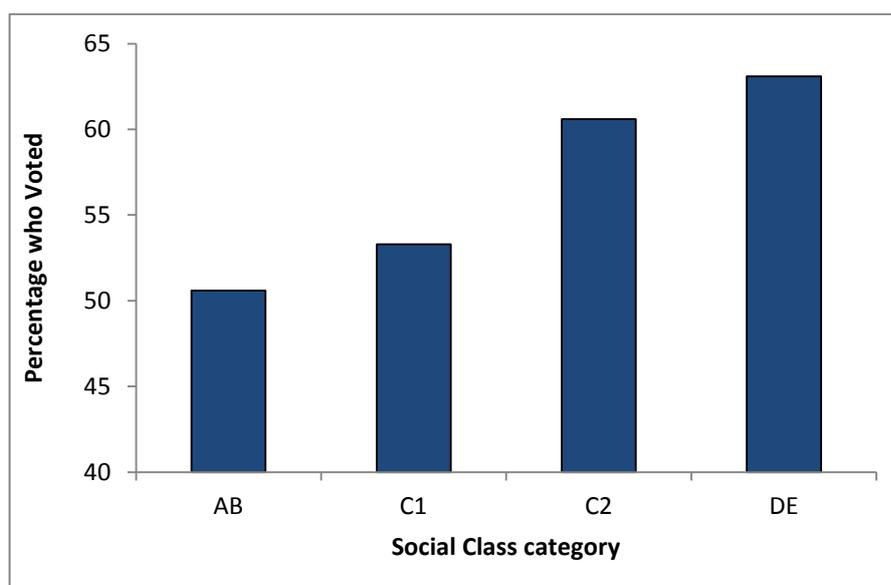


Figure 3.2: Turnout by Social Class (%)

Source: Gray (2011) Northern Ireland Election Study.

4 Ethnic Minorities Registered to Vote 2013

British, Irish or Commonwealth citizens, or citizens of a Member State of the European Union (EU) are entitled to vote in Northern Ireland elections. While some Commonwealth citizens, including those from India, Pakistan, and Hong Kong, can be considered as part of various minority ethnic groups, they often form part of long-established communities in Northern Ireland. In recent years, most inward migration has come from the EU 12 Accession States in Central and Eastern Europe.

For this reason, when contemplating an engagement strategy for minority ethnic groups, it may be helpful to include the new residents from the Accession States (see Section 4.2).

4.1 Minority Ethnic Groups, Census 2011

In March 2011, 1.8 per cent (32,400) of the resident population of Northern Ireland belonged to minority ethnic groups, more than double the proportion in 2001 (0.8 per cent). Chinese (6,300), Indian (6,200) and Mixed (6,000) were the most prevalent minority groups, followed by Other Asian (5,000) and Black African (2,300).

Table 4.1 reveals that members of minority ethnic groups were resident across all eighteen Assembly Areas, with the largest concentration in Belfast South (6,500), followed by Belfast East (2,700) and Belfast North (2,300). The Assembly Areas with the least number of minority ethnic group members are in West Tyrone (760), Strangford (930) and Mid Ulster (960).

Table 4.1: Minority Ethnic Groups by Assembly Area (Count), Census 2011

Geography	Chinese	Indian	Mixed	Other Asian	Black African	Irish Traveller	Pakistani	Other ¹	Total
N. Ireland	6,303	6,198	6,014	4,998	2,345	1,301	1,091	4,164	32,414
Belfast South	1,852	1,403	771	1,008	602	68	186	610	6,500
Belfast East	540	513	427	579	228	25	71	284	2,667
Belfast North	294	568	380	479	225	43	69	211	2,269
Upper Bann	385	253	464	380	186	54	179	305	2,206
Lagan Valley	333	434	368	272	131	26	46	221	1,831
Foyle	251	603	374	180	80	71	46	220	1,825
Fermanagh & ST	164	233	322	227	121	112	42	551	1,772
Belfast West	171	311	290	449	124	158	24	140	1,667
South Antrim	300	449	361	188	109	20	99	136	1,662
North Down	252	247	381	250	122	14	84	289	1,639
East Antrim	419	230	345	157	74	11	52	101	1,389
East Londonderry	272	157	279	201	69	34	40	145	1,197
Newry & Armagh	197	219	221	104	37	211	45	136	1,170
South Down	182	102	254	97	60	47	15	232	989
North Antrim	184	158	185	141	38	90	52	125	973
Mid Ulster	181	90	202	65	92	183	18	133	964
Strangford	216	100	229	91	33	14	11	239	933
West Tyrone	110	128	161	130	14	120	12	86	761

Source: NINIS, NISRA (2013) Table KS201

Note: ¹ 'Other' includes Black Caribbean, Black Other, Bangladeshi, and Other.

Chinese residents, the largest ethnic minority, were most numerous in Belfast South (1,800) and Belfast East (540), while the lowest numbers were recorded in West Tyrone (110) and Fermanagh and South Tyrone (160). Similarly, the largest number of Indian residents were living in Belfast South (1,400) and Foyle (600), while the smallest number were in Mid Ulster (90) and Strangford (100).

4.2 EU 12 Migrants, Census 2011

The proportion of the population born outside Northern Ireland rose from 9 per cent (151,000) in April 2001 to 11 per cent (202,000) in March 2011. This change was largely as a result of inward migration by people born in the 12 countries which have joined the European Union (EU 12) since 2004. These EU accession countries accounted for 2 per cent (35,700) of usual residents in Northern Ireland on Census Day 2011, while their share of the 2001 Census population was 0.1 per cent.

The top three Accession states are Poland (19,700 residents), Lithuania (7,300) and Slovakia (2,700). Together, they accounted for 83 per cent of all EU 12 residents living in Northern Ireland on Census Day 2011.

Table 4.2 shows that the largest proportion of Polish nationals live in Upper Bann (2 per cent of resident population), followed by Fermanagh and South Tyrone (1.9 per cent), Newry and Armagh, and Belfast South (1.7 per cent). Similarly, Lithuanian migrants are more likely to live in Fermanagh and South Tyrone (1.9 per cent), Newry and Armagh (1.3 per cent), and Upper Bann (1.0 per cent). The highest concentration of Slovakian residents live in Mid Ulster (0.5 per cent), North Antrim (0.4 per cent) and Belfast South (0.3 per cent).

Bringing all four Belfast constituencies together yields a combined total of 6,000 Polish, Lithuanian and Slovakian nationals living in the Belfast Assembly areas in March 2011.

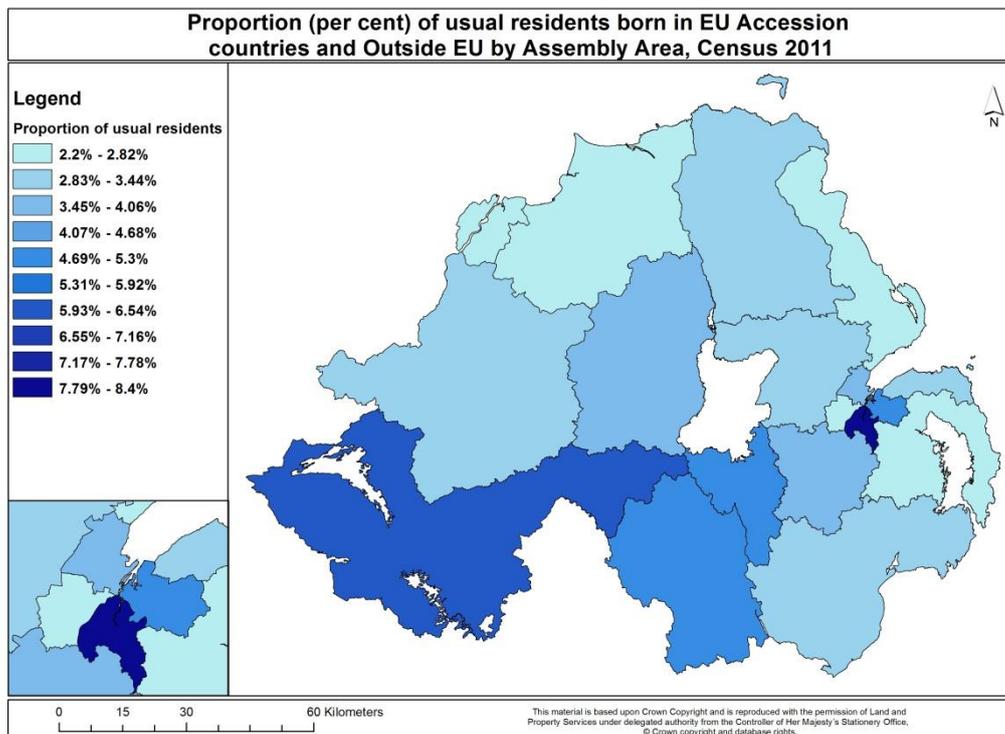
Table 4.2: Country of Birth, Top 3 EU Accession Countries by Assembly Area, Census 2011

	All usual residents COUNT	Poland COUNT	Lithuania COUNT	Slovakia COUNT	Poland PER CENT	Lithuania PER CENT	Slovakia PER CENT
Northern Ireland	1,810,863	19,658	7,341	2,681	1.1	0.4	0.1
Belfast East	92,221	1,424	91	222	1.5	0.1	0.2
Belfast North	102,531	1,224	88	184	1.2	0.1	0.2
Belfast South	111,402	1,942	132	279	1.7	0.1	0.3
Belfast West	93,986	344	68	42	0.4	0.1	0.0
East Antrim	90,067	296	48	45	0.3	0.1	0.0
East Londonderry	99,673	1,060	46	30	1.1	0.0	0.0
Fermanagh and Sth Tyrone	102,553	1,960	1,943	143	1.9	1.9	0.1
Foyle	100,807	599	72	19	0.6	0.1	0.0
Lagan Valley	101,710	777	331	43	0.8	0.3	0.0
Mid Ulster	99,155	922	754	462	0.9	0.8	0.5
Newry and Armagh	112,401	1,967	1,419	126	1.7	1.3	0.1
North Antrim	108,207	1,413	48	400	1.3	0.0	0.4
North Down	89,498	357	56	49	0.4	0.1	0.1
South Antrim	99,238	872	336	239	0.9	0.3	0.2
South Down	108,835	966	427	52	0.9	0.4	0.0
Strangford	89,370	323	206	47	0.4	0.2	0.1
Upper Bann	118,010	2,309	1,123	174	2.0	1.0	0.1
West Tyrone	91,199	903	153	125	1.0	0.2	0.1

Source: NINIS, NISRA (2013) Table QS208

Map 4.1 combines the figures for EU 12 residents with those born outside the EU to illustrate the dispersal and concentration of migrants across the Assembly Areas. The map reveals that EU 12 and non-EU residents are concentrated in the south and west (Fermanagh and South Tyrone, Newry and Armagh, Upper Bann) and Belfast (Belfast South and Belfast East).

Map 4.1 Proportion of residents born in either EU 12 or outside EU by Assembly Area



The scale of recent inward migration to particular Assembly Areas becomes even clearer when viewed at ward level. Table 4.3 (overleaf) shows those wards (35) where ten per cent or more of the usually resident population were born either in the EU Accession states or outside the EU.

Top of the list are five wards, four of which are in the Dungannon area, where more than 20 per cent of the resident population were born either in the EU Accession states or outside the EU.

Table 4.3: Wards where 10 per cent or more of usual residents were born either in EU 12 or outside EU, Census 2011

Ward Name	Assembly Area	Resident Pop	Total EU12 and Outside EU	Per cent
Coolhill	Fermanagh and South Tyrone	2,716	749	27.6
Ballysaggart	Fermanagh and South Tyrone	2,730	739	27.1
Killymeal	Fermanagh and South Tyrone	2,891	637	22.0
Drumglass	Fermanagh and South Tyrone	2,357	492	20.9
Castle Demesne	North Antrim	2,126	438	20.6
Mullaghmore	Fermanagh and South Tyrone	2,351	433	18.4
Annagh	Upper Bann	3,042	524	17.2
Windsor	Belfast South	8,141	1,280	15.7
Shaftesbury	Belfast South	7,214	1,054	14.6
Ballynafeigh	Belfast South	5,928	849	14.3
Callan Bridge	Newry and Armagh	2,817	402	14.3
Woodstock	Belfast South	5,445	739	13.6
Park	North Antrim	2,139	283	13.2
Dunclug	North Antrim	2,363	306	12.9
Corcrair	Upper Bann	3,320	414	12.5
Fair Green	North Antrim	1,784	222	12.4
Springfarm	South Antrim	4,186	518	12.4
Botanic	Belfast South	8,945	1,099	12.3
Newbuildings	Mid Ulster	2,187	266	12.2
St Mary's	Newry and Armagh	2,284	275	12.0
Strule	West Tyrone	1,496	179	12.0
Island	Belfast East	5,014	594	11.8
Drumgor	Upper Bann	2,745	323	11.8
Blackstaff	Belfast South	3,998	465	11.6
The Mount	Belfast East	5,591	650	11.6
Drumalane	Newry and Armagh	3,352	389	11.6
Harbour (North Down)	North Down	3,022	343	11.4
Church	Upper Bann	2,131	235	11.0
St Patrick's	Newry and Armagh	3,530	389	11.0
Central (Coleraine)	East Londonderry	1,835	202	11.0
Moy	Fermanagh and South Tyrone	3,009	331	11.0
Kernan	Upper Bann	6,107	667	10.9
The Mall	Newry and Armagh	1,740	186	10.7
Moygashel	Fermanagh and South Tyrone	2,189	223	10.2
Daisy Hill	Newry and Armagh	3,155	321	10.2

Source: NINIS, NISRA (2013) Table KS204

4.3 Electoral Registration by Nationality

As noted above, apart from UK and Ireland nationals, the only other citizens eligible to vote in Northern Ireland are citizens from the Commonwealth, British Overseas Territories, and EU Member States.

On 2 December 2013, the Electoral Office published the final statistics from the 2013 electoral registration canvass. Sixty eight countries are represented in the electoral registration database (Appendix 1). Table 4.4 lists the top 10 countries of origin by Assembly Area, which together account for 83 per cent of all Commonwealth and EU citizens on the Register.

The register largely reflects Census 2011, with most new registrants coming from the EU 12 Accession states. Polish citizens form the largest group (9,660, 37 per cent), followed by Lithuania (3,903, 15 per cent) and Portugal (1,849, 7.1 per cent). Indian and Slovakian nationals are also well-represented, accounting for over five per cent of the total.

In terms of Assembly Areas, Upper Bann (3,132), Fermanagh and South Tyrone (2,692) and Newry and Armagh (2,326) have the largest concentration of EU and Commonwealth registrants. Belfast West (364), East Antrim (416) and Strangford (428) have the least.

Table 4.4: Electoral Registrants by Top 10 Countries of Origin (British Commonwealth and EU only, excludes UK and Ireland)

Country	Poland	Lithuania	Portugal	India	Slovakia	Latvia	Hungary	Germany	Romania	France	Top 10 Total
Upper Bann	1,335	700	608	53	123	158	56	35	27	37	3,132
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	756	919	609	35	62	190	62	34	10	15	2,692
Newry and Armagh	982	826	26	59	59	238	64	28	25	19	2,326
Belfast South	912	78	79	433	97	61	58	78	81	94	1,971
Mid Ulster	406	388	197	18	207	165	34	7	17	9	1,448
Belfast East	793	75	23	150	153	27	24	49	26	48	1,368
North Antrim	699	13	19	26	213	37	4	27	169	15	1,222
Belfast North	653	44	54	119	83	23	50	26	11	36	1,099
South Antrim	453	147	37	83	133	6	27	19	22	17	944
Lagan Valley	429	181	32	69	29	50	23	37	31	22	903
West Tyrone	415	79	7	5	56	45	197	12	12	12	840
South Down	334	196	9	26	24	79	29	27	18	34	776
East Londonderry	583	17	19	5	14	35	14	39	5	22	753
North Down	194	34	24	61	25	29	20	62	19	23	491
Foyle	235	29	14	100	5	11	8	36	7	21	466
Strangford	145	119	18	15	11	66	13	17	9	15	428
East Antrim	182	30	60	45	17	6	9	25	20	22	416
Belfast West	154	28	14	87	10	7	21	14	10	19	364
Total (Count)	9,660	3,903	1,849	1,389	1,321	1,233	713	572	519	480	21,639
Per cent (of total)	37.1	15.0	7.1	5.3	5.1	4.7	2.7	2.2	2.0	1.8	83.1

Source: Electoral Office for Northern Ireland (2013). **Elector Summary by Country / Constituency**, Personal Communication, 6 December 2013

Appendix 1: Countries whose citizens are eligible to vote in Northern Ireland

List of Commonwealth countries, British Overseas Territories and EU states

Commonwealth countries

Antigua and Barbuda	Kenya	St Vincent & The Grenadines
Australia	Kiribati	Seychelles
The Bahamas	Lesotho	Sierra Leone
Bangladesh	Malawi	Singapore
Barbados	Malaysia	Solomon Islands
Belize	Maldives	South Africa
Botswana	Malta	Sri Lanka
Brunei	Mauritius	Swaziland
Cameroon	Mozambique	Tanzania
Canada	Namibia	Tonga
Dominica	Nauru	Trinidad & Tobago
Fiji	New Zealand	Tuvalu
The Gambia	Nigeria	Uganda
Ghana	Pakistan	United Kingdom
Grenada	Papua New Guinea	Vanuatu
Guyana	Republic of Cyprus	Western Samoa
Hong Kong	Rwanda	Zambia
India	St Christopher & Nevis	Zimbabwe
Jamaica	St Lucia	

British Overseas Territories

Anguilla	Montserrat
Bermuda	Pitcairn, Henderson, Ducie & Oeno Islands
British Antarctic Territory	St Helena and dependencies (Ascension and
British Indian Ocean Territory	Tristan da Cunha Islands)
Cayman Islands	South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands
Falkland Islands	Turks and Caicos Islands
Gibraltar	Virgin Islands

European Union member states

Austria	France	Malta ¹
Belgium	Germany	Netherlands
Bulgaria	Greece	Poland
Croatia	Hungary	Portugal
Cyprus ¹	Ireland ¹	Romania
Czech Republic	Italy	Slovakia
Denmark	Latvia	Slovenia
Estonia	Lithuania	Spain
Finland	Luxembourg	Sweden

¹ Citizens of the Republic of Ireland, Cyprus and Malta are eligible to be registered to vote in respect of all elections held in the UK.

Source: Electoral Office for Northern Ireland (2013)