



# POST ELECTORAL EVENT REVIEW

Presidential Election | 24 October 2025

## Table of Contents

<b>1. Foreword</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2. Executive Summary</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>3. PEER October 2025 Recommendations</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>4. Scope of PEERs</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>5. Attendance and Observation of Electoral Events</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>6. PEER Checklist</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>7. Polling Stations – Selection Criteria</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>8. PEER Routes</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>9. PEER Data Analysis</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>10. Best Practices Observed</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>11. Electoral Poll Data: National Election and Democracy Study</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>12. Voter Experiences</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>13. New Irish Citizens – Certificates of Naturalisation</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>14. Polling Information Cards – Omission of Polling District Letter</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>15. Invalid Ballot Papers</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>16. Freepost</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>17. Stamping Instrument Trial Cork South-West and Cork North-Central</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>18. Island Voting</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>19. Accessibility Overview</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>20. Seeing is Understanding Case Studies</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>21. IWA Case Study</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>22. DSI Case Study</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>23. Assigning and Altering Polling Stations and Polling Places</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>24. Postal Voting, ACT/IDEA Joint Study</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>25. Special Voting</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>26. Postal and Special Voting Data</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>27. PEER Recommendations – Progress Chart</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>28. New PEER October 2025 Recommendations</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>29. Next Steps</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>30. Appendices</b>	<b>84</b>
Appendix 1 – Information Campaign for October Presidential Election	84
Appendix 2 – Index of Polling Stations Visited	87
Appendix 3 – PEER Checklist Statistical Analysis	95
<b>31. Endnotes</b>	<b>97</b>

Published by An Coimisiún Toghcháin,  
April 2026

ISBN: 978-1-911722-16-8

An Coimisiún Toghcháin,  
The Electoral Commission,  
Dublin Castle,  
Dublin 2, D02 X8X8.

# 1. Foreword

On 24 October 2025, the people of Ireland voted to elect their tenth President. Not only had it been seven years since a presidential election was last conducted in Ireland; it was the first such election to take place since the establishment of An Coimisiún Toghcháin on 9 February 2023, and only the ninth contested presidential election in the history of the State.

We took the decision, in exercise of the statutory powers vested in An Coimisiún by s.68 of the Electoral Reform Act 2022, to prepare and publish a Post Electoral Event Review (PEER) for the 2025 Presidential Election, and so advised the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the returning officers appointed in connection with this election.

The publication of this PEER means that An Coimisiún has now conducted a review of every type of electoral event to which our statutory powers pertain, namely Dáil, Seanad, European, presidential and local elections, and referendums. These reviews have informed our work across our broad range of functions. These types of reviews have not previously been carried out in the State, and I hope that they have contributed to an understanding of our electoral system, and will improve and enhance electoral administration at a local and national level.

Within a span of less than 20 months, the people of Ireland were asked to cast their vote in no fewer than eight electoral events. My colleagues and I have been heartened by voters' commitment and enthusiasm when exercising their democratic rights, and by the diligence of the election officials throughout this particularly active time in the history of one of the world's longest established democracies.

I wish to thank the returning officers and their staff for facilitating An Coimisiún as we gathered vital data for this report. The work of everyone involved in the running of this election is to be commended, including the Presidential Returning Officer, returning and presiding officers, poll clerks, count staff, Gardaí, count centre caterers and the caretakers who opened polling stations early to ensure that the heating was on for staff and voters as they arrived on polling day.

An Coimisiún's observers met many people on election day who enthusiastically spent time and effort to ensure the success of this electoral event; from the Garda who travelled to Clare Island the night before the election with the island's only ballot box, to the staff in Gaeltacht na Mí who ensured that locals could complete the entire voting process in their native tongue, to the staff in Bunclody who set up an additional polling station with a chair for elderly electors. These efforts at a local level have a material impact on the experience of voters and, therefore, on the health and integrity of our democratic system.

As was the case with our previous PEERs, members and staff of An Coimisiún observed voting at polling stations for the purposes of this report. Presidential elections are unique in that they are the only Irish election in which the entire country is presented with the same ballot paper and elects a single candidate. It was a great honour for us to witness this important democratic occasion at 100 polling stations, spanning every county and every Dáil constituency in the State. Key principles of international election observation were followed as part of these visits. Polling stations were selected based on a range of criteria, underpinned by An Coimisiún's commitment to increase

Map of 100 PEER Polling Stations Visited



participation among underrepresented groups, to advocate for the accessibility of the voting process for all, and to safeguard the integrity of our electoral events.

In line with previous PEERs and with the legislative provisions governing these reviews, this report places a focus on the assistance provided to electors while voting, in particular voters with a disability. Building on our experience of accompanying wheelchair users as they cast their vote at the 2024 General Election, we were particularly pleased to accompany members of the Irish Wheelchair Association on polling day in Co. Donegal, as well as members of Down Syndrome Ireland in Co. Kerry. The insights gleaned from voters with physical and intellectual disabilities at their polling stations have been invaluable in the preparation of this report and will further inform An Coimisiún's work in the years ahead. I wish to thank the respective organisations and the voters for generously sharing their experiences and insights with us on polling day.

We were satisfied to find that these voters had a largely positive experience while voting, thanks in no small part to the supports that were in place for all voters, and enhanced supports for those with a disability and the professionalism of the poll staff. Indeed, as noted in this report, we were pleased to find that the overall accessibility of the 100 polling stations visited by An Coimisiún on this occasion had noticeably improved from our last PEER. Having observed first-hand some of the barriers facing voters with a disability, An Coimisiún reaffirms its commitment to ensuring that every voter in Ireland be able to participate in our democracy with dignity and ease.

Notwithstanding these welcome improvements, it is clear to us that work remains to be done to improve accessibility and thus enhance the integrity of Ireland's electoral processes. As we reflect on this electoral cycle, I note that many of the legislative and administrative reforms proposed in past PEER reports have yet to be fully implemented. I strongly urge that the recommendations set out herein, which stem from An Coimisiún's observations at this electoral event and those preceding it, will be carefully considered and adopted before the Irish people next return to the polls in years to come.

I trust that this report will be of assistance as we pursue our shared goal of safeguarding and strengthening the democracy upon which the State depends, and I commend it to the reader.

The Honourable  
**Ms Justice Marie Baker**  
Chairperson, An Coimisiún  
Toghcháin



## 2. Executive Summary

Including this report, An Coimisiún Toghcháin has published five PEER reports covering all of the eight electoral events since March 2024. These PEER reports are produced under the powers in s.68 of the Electoral Reform Act 2022 which provides that An Coimisiún may, after each electoral event, prepare and publish a report on the administration of that event – a ‘Post Electoral Event Review’ (PEER). All PEER reports have been published in compliance with the statutory deadline, which is within six months of each electoral event.

PEERs were conducted for all electoral events in 2024 and 2025.

- On 8 March 2024 (Family and Care Referendums), 32 An Coimisiún staff and members visited 98 polling stations across all 26 counties.
- On 7 June 2024 (Local, European and Limerick Mayoral Elections), An Coimisiún attended 100 polling stations in 26 counties, including Inis Oírr, one of five Gaeltacht areas visited on that polling day, and the first of five offshore islands visited to date.
- On 29 November 2024 (General Election), An Coimisiún visited 87 polling stations in 26 counties, from Árainn Mhór to Sherkin Island and from Belmullet to Skerries.
- Between 29 January and 3 February 2025 (Seanad General Election), An Coimisiún attended count centres situated in the RDS, Trinity College Dublin and Leinster House, observing all key stages of the electoral process in the run-up to the count.
- On 24 October 2025 (Presidential Election), An Coimisiún visited 100 polling stations across all 26 counties and 43 Dáil constituencies, from

Letterkenny to Whiddy Island, and from Wexford to Clare Island.

This PEER report relates to the presidential election held on 24 October 2025.

Of the 100 polling stations visited on polling day, 24 October 2025:

- 73 polling stations were in Central Statistics Office (CSO) designated urban areas: 27 of these were in cities, 20 of which were in Dublin city.
- Four polling stations were in Gaeltacht areas: Scoil Uí Ghramhnaigh (Ráth Chairn, Co. na Mí); Scoil Ultain Naofa (Baile Ghib, Co. na Mí); Scoil Abán Naofa (Múscaí, Co. Chorcaí); Scoil Éinne (An Spidéal, Cois Fharraige, Co. na Gaillimhe)
- Two polling stations were situated on offshore islands: The Old School House (Whiddy Island, Co. Cork); Clare Island N.S. (Clare Island, Co. Mayo)
- Five polling stations in Co. Donegal were chosen as part of a case study conducted with the Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA) service-users: St. Baithins N.S. St Johnston; Newtowncunningham N.S., Newtowncunningham; Old Courthouse, Letterkenny; Scoil Mhuire gan Smál, Letterkenny; Kilmacrennan N.S., Kilmacrennan.
- Four polling stations in Co. Kerry were chosen as part of a case study conducted with Down Syndrome Ireland service-users: C.B.S Primary School, Tralee; St. Oliver’s N.S., Ballylongford; Presentation National School, Listowel; Cullina N.S., Beaufort.
- 12 polling stations were selected to be visited after being highlighted to An Coimisiún by members of the public as having accessibility or privacy issues.

For the 2025 Presidential Election, in addition to visits to polling stations, we observed the issuing of postal votes for the Dublin constituencies and for Cork City and County and visited nursing homes in Dublin and Offaly on days when special voting was in progress. We attended count centres in counties Dublin, Donegal, Galway, Offaly, Kerry, Kildare Kilkenny, Meath, Sligo, Tipperary and Waterford, and we were present for the announcement of the overall result in Dublin Castle on the evening of 25 October.

An Coimisiún believes that the combination of election observation and accessibility-focused appraisals of the 385 polling stations visited to date by our PEER observer teams over the course of 20 months has resulted in tangible improvements in polling stations. For the Presidential Election, 97% of polling stations were considered by An Coimisiún to be accessible for electors with a disability. This level of accessibility is a significant improvement on the General Election (89%), the June 2024 elections (79%) and March 2024 referendums (75%).<sup>1</sup> Other notable improvements are the significant rise in the provision of low-level voting compartments across constituencies and the switch from problematic polling stations identified by An Coimisiún to more modern and accessible venues. Ultimately, the measures taken by returning officers have played a role in creating a more positive experience for voters in Ireland. Our recommendations in PEER reports have also led to advancements in election administration such as through the publication of the guidance issued to returning officers and presiding officers in connection with each electoral event, as well as the refinement of statistics such as the separation of postal and special vote data.

This was our first time conducting a PEER for a presidential election. In contrast to the short turnaround time between

the announcement and holding of the general election, the timelines for the 2025 Presidential Election were much longer. Once the Presidential Election Order<sup>2</sup> was issued on 3 September, electors who realised they could not travel to a polling station on 24 October due to occupational or study obligations, could apply for the postal vote with a deadline of 29 September. Generally, the deadline of 7 October to register to vote on polling day also afforded sufficient time for newly eligible electors to complete their applications. The longer lead-in time facilitated the printing of the ballot papers well in advance of polling day, so that voters had more time between receiving and casting their postal vote than for the 2024 General Election when postal votes were issued in some constituencies just nine days before polling day. Crucially, we understand the timelines for the 2025 Presidential Election in the main provided sufficient time for the sending and returning of ballots to our overseas embassies and Defence Forces.

An Coimisiún was encouraged by the efforts made to promote efficiency and accessibility during the Presidential Election, particularly in the initiatives adopted by returning officers to aid in the voting process. Examples of these initiatives included the efforts of supervisory presiding officers to facilitate the flow of voting through the use of elector numbers and signage to aid electors in identifying their polling station; the display of public notices reminding electors to ensure that their ballot paper is marked with the official mark and the display of public notices providing contact information for registration authorities.

The approach taken in this PEER is an evolution in our ‘seeing is understanding’ approach first adopted for the General Election PEER, where the voting experiences of electors with additional

support needs are observed as they enter polling stations to cast their vote. For this PEER, we partnered with the Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA) and Down Syndrome Ireland (DSI), meeting with their members as they arrived to vote in five polling stations in Co. Donegal and four polling stations in Co. Kerry. These exercises have been invaluable, affording us the opportunity to observe directly and listen to the voting experiences of electors with physical or intellectual disabilities. As a result of these case studies, we have formed strong bonds with these two organisations and look forward to continued engagement with the IWA and DSI. In the wider sphere, we wish to work alongside all organisations who assist members of society, especially those with disabilities. Through our work we seek to understand the needs of voters who may sometimes feel disconnected from politics, elections and voting, including on polling day when a journey to a polling station may pose challenges.

The methodology and approach taken when conducting each PEER relies in the main upon data collected in the field through our PEER polling station observations which are supplemented by data gathered as part of our ongoing National Election and Democracy Study (NEDS) (see 'Electoral Poll Data: NEDS', p. 36). NEDS survey data captures the views of voters on their voting experience. For the Presidential Election NEDS, 1,173 respondents stated they had voted. Of these, similar to satisfaction levels recorded in previous NEDS surveys held in 2024, 97% said that their voting experience was a positive one. Feedback on voter experiences sent by members of the public directly to An Coimisiún or media reports on matters arising in connection with an electoral event may also influence our approach in designing a PEER.

Our recommendations arising from this PEER are fewer than in previous PEERs. In the main we have chosen in this PEER report to expand upon or to re-emphasise key recommendations from previous PEERs. Many areas highlighted in earlier PEER reports surfaced again as requiring action in the administration of the Presidential Election.

A key recommendation in our inaugural *Post Electoral Event Review | Family and Care Referendums | 08 March 2024* report was for electoral legislation to be amended to expressly provide for the attendance of An Coimisiún staff and members at polling stations and count centres. Concerning this recommendation, we are aware that the legislative framework governing the conduct of polling in Ireland vests returning officers with significant discretion over who may be present at key electoral proceedings. An Coimisiún respects the independence of returning officers in the exercise of their functions. On the rare occasion where we have been denied entry to polling stations, we have not challenged or entered into dispute on such matters. However, the lack of guarantee that entry be permitted cannot continue. An Coimisiún's statutory remit to review electoral events has been hampered by the absence of a corresponding statutory right of access. Ultimately, this is the reason we are re-emphasising the requirement for legislation to provide for our attendance in an observatory capacity at polling stations and count centres. Additionally, we seek express legislative provision to be present at administrative tasks conducted in connection with electoral events, such as special voting and the issuing and opening of postal votes.

### 3. PEER October 2025 Recommendations

#### Legislative:

- ▶ Amend electoral legislation to expressly provide for the attendance of An Coimisiún staff and members as observers at polling stations on polling day and at the conduct of administrative tasks in association with the administration of an electoral event.

#### Policy:

- ▶ Voter registration by freepost to be available to all electors as an alternative option to online registration.

#### Guidance:

- ▶ While continuing to respect the independence of the returning officers in decision-making, updated guidance to be issued on how and why returning officers may deem a ballot paper to be invalid and for the identification by them of the category under which a vote is declared invalid.

#### Administrative:

- ▶ Standardise the formatting used for the *Notices of Polling Stations* to allow for efficient use and extraction of data on polling stations and polling places.
- ▶ Amend election data reporting forms completed by returning officers after each electoral event so that 'unmarked ballot papers' are recorded and counted separately from ballot papers where 'a first preference is not clearly indicated'.

\* Previous Peer Recommendations – Progress Chart, p.79.

## 4. Scope of PEERs

One of An Coimisiún's key electoral reporting functions is that it may prepare and publish a report on the administration of electoral events called a 'Post Electoral Event Review' (PEER).

At the core of a PEER is the administration of an electoral event and how it is organised, from the opening announcement and scheduling stages to the compilation of the results and electoral statistics. Allied to the review of the administrative aspects, is the requirement set out in s.68 of the *Electoral Reform Act 2022*, for a focus in all PEERs on the supports offered to electors who may require special assistance on polling day.

The key objectives for our PEER of the 2025 Presidential Election remained the same as for previous PEERs conducted in 2024 – to gain an overview of voting procedures and conditions and to highlight areas for improvement, particularly regarding accessibility and enhancing participation.

We also strove to identify best practices and innovations in relation to voting experiences, a positive and forward-looking dimension we initially featured in the PEER report for the November 2024 General Election.

In scoping and designing each PEER, our approach has been to ensure that PEERs are based on practical 'on the ground' voter experience. From the outset, visits by PEER observer teams to polling stations have formed a core element of our PEERs. Our polling stations visits afford us a firsthand opportunity to observe the facilities and conditions in which electors cast their vote, at the same time noting the assistance given to voters with additional support needs. Our PEER checklist was devised to

represent this scope, directing us to review important practical arrangements at polling stations such as signs, ramps, car parking or polling station layout and flow. We also consulted the PEER checklist to assess matters connected with the integrity of the electoral process. Practices which are central to fairness, trust and security such as ballot paper stamping, identity checks, location of posters highlighting electoral offences and the security of the ballot box were reviewed. The recommendations in each of our PEER reports are based on our observations, each of which is aimed at improving the administration, integrity and accessibility of the electoral process.

On 24 October 2025, 19 teams comprised of two An Coimisiún Toghcháin staff or members, visited 100 polling stations. Once again, these polling stations were spread across all 26 counties. For the November 2024 General Election, we had expanded our focus on accessibility to adopt a broader 'seeing is understanding' approach by conducting a case study in association with the Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA). Following the success of this observation exercise and the learnings we gained regarding wheelchair users, we collaborated with the IWA once again for the Presidential Election (see 'IWA Case Study', p.61). For our second case study, Down Syndrome Ireland (DSI) agreed to collaborate with us on polling day, working to identify a suitable cohort of electors and an itinerary to facilitate our case study. As a result of Down Syndrome Ireland's coordination and planning, on 24 October 2025, outside four polling stations in Co. Kerry, we met with a group of Munster Technological University students who are members of DSI's Kerry branch (see 'DSI Case Study', p.64).

We have also continued to widen our understanding of the various administrative tasks required in connection with an electoral event through our attendance at the issuing of the postal vote, the conduct of the special vote and the counting of votes in count centres.

This PEER report also highlights research activities and awareness campaigns connected to the Presidential Election, in which An Coimisiún was involved. These activities include data collected on voter experience through the National Election and Democracy Study (see 'Electoral Poll Data: NEDS', p. 36) as well as our information campaigns encouraging people to register to vote and to cast their vote on polling day (see Appendix 1).

The scope of the issues examined in this PEER is based on legislative provisions regarding accessibility for electors: s.68(3) of the *Electoral Reform Act 2022*, the *Electoral Act, 1992* and the *Presidential Elections Act, 1993*. The statutory provisions governing the conduct of a presidential election are contained in the *Presidential Elections Act, 1993*, as amended. The form of the ballot paper to be used at a presidential election is prescribed in S.I. No. 329/2018 - *Presidential Elections (Forms) (Amendment) Regulations 2018*.

The *Memorandum for the Guidance of Local Returning Officers at the Presidential Election, 24 October 2025*<sup>3</sup> and the *Manual for Presiding Officers at the Presidential Election, 24 October 2025*<sup>4</sup> substantially informed our work. In line with the recommendation in our March PEER, we consider that the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage's decision to publish these manuals assists in raising public levels of trust in the electoral system by engendering a culture of transparency.



## 5. Attendance and Observation of Electoral Events

For the 2025 Presidential Election, as well as visiting 100 polling stations nationwide, An Coimisiún members and staff attended, in an observer capacity, the issuing of postal votes, special voting and the counting of votes in Dublin, Donegal, Galway, Offaly, Kerry, Kildare, Kilkenny, Meath, Sligo, and Waterford. Our practice is to seek, from the respective returning officers, written permission in advance to attend.

Over the course of the PEERs conducted for all electoral events held since 2024, the co-operation and assistance provided by returning officers and their staff in facilitating our observation of election administration activities has generally been exceptional. We have benefited from the experience and insights of many seasoned election administrators. We have received personal demonstrations and explanations of electoral procedures in a live context. As an organisation only established in 2023, this collegiate-like assistance extended to An Coimisiún Toghcháin is hugely appreciated and has allowed our staff and members to learn rapidly through our observational attendance at each of these electoral events. Our learning and knowledge have also been bolstered by our own training and education activities. An Coimisiún staff have obtained diplomas in Irish electoral law, completed international election observation courses, attended election training workshops provided by the Institute of Public Administration, participated in online election training modules (also used for training purposes by polling staff and presiding officers), as well as undergoing specialist disability awareness training.

An Coimisiún members and staff have also participated in international election observation missions, including to Bosnia-Herzegovina and Moldova.

Perhaps to some degree due to the lack of express legislative provision for our attendance and observation, there have been isolated cases where An Coimisiún staff and members have not been permitted to enter a polling station or have been restricted in our ability to freely observe the voting process.

In our *Post Electoral Event Review | Family and Care Referendums | 08 March 2024* report, An Coimisiún made the following recommendation

“Amend electoral legislation to expressly provide for the attendance of An Coimisiún staff and members at polling stations and count centres for all electoral events.”

Following the March PEER recommendation, reference to our attendance at polling stations has been included in the manuals for presiding officers issued in advance of every electoral event, including the *Manual for Presiding Officers at the Presidential Election, 24 October 2025*.

“A member of An Coimisiún Toghcháin or its staff may present themselves at the polling station as observers, as part of their work in producing a post-electoral event audit in relation to certain issues (e.g. assistance provided at the polling station to voters with visual impairment, physical incapacity or an inability to read or write to such an extent that they are unable to vote without assistance). You should check their ID to satisfy yourself as to their identity.” (p.12)

Whilst our inclusion in these manuals is most welcome, four electoral events have taken place since March 2024 and electoral legislation has yet to expressly provide for the presence of An Coimisiún Toghcháin in either polling stations or count centres.

On a more general level, s.30 of the *Electoral Reform Act 2022* sets out the functions of An Coimisiún, including s.30(2), which provides that “The Commission shall have all such powers as are necessary or expedient for, or incidental to, the performance of its functions.” If a PEER is to be conducted, as set out in s.68(3) of the *Electoral Reform Act 2022*, the report should include “a description of the assistance given by presiding officers or returning officers to certain persons”, particularly those with disabilities, under requirements in existing electoral legislation. A proper review of whether reasonable facilities exist for voting or polling stations which are accessible to wheelchair users can only be undertaken by An Coimisiún observers having access to polling stations.



The current legislative framework gives returning officers broad discretion to control access to polling stations and count proceedings. Unless and until the regulations are amended, our ability to observe and review electoral events requires the permission of returning officers. This situation has the potential to restrict our work and undermine the effectiveness of post-electoral event reviews. Ultimately, specific changes to electoral legislation, are at the discretion of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage but we seek an expedited review of this area as a priority.

### Polling Stations

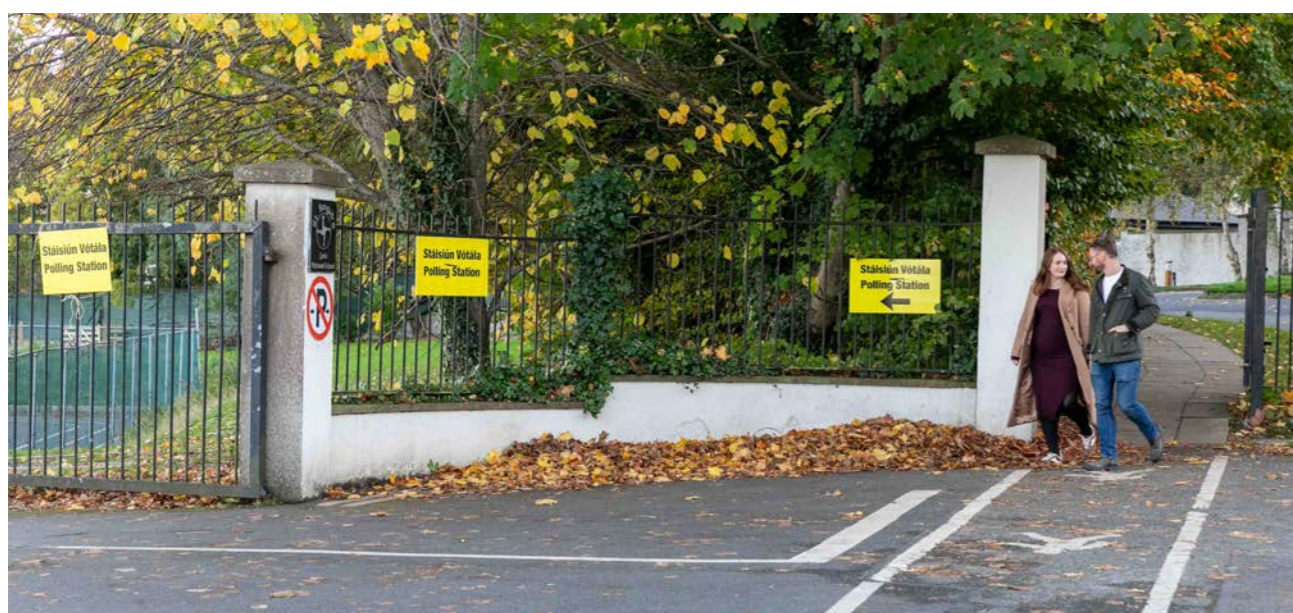
s.98 of the *Electoral Act, 1992* as applied by s.44 of the *Presidential Elections Act, 1993* expressly sets out who may be admitted to polling stations and provides that only persons authorised by the returning officer may be present.

### Count Centres

s. 113 of the *Electoral Act, 1992* as applied by s.47 of the *Presidential Elections Act, 1993* makes provision for who may attend the counting of the votes with the presence of any other person being contingent on the returning officer granting permission.

### Special Voting

s.82.2 of the *Electoral Act, 1992* as applied by s.41(2) of the *Presidential Elections Act, 1993* provides that no person other than the special presiding officer and the member of the Garda Síochána shall be present when the special voter is voting.



In regard to amending the legislation governing special voting in s.82(2) of the *Electoral Act, 1992* (see section ‘Special Voting’ p. 73), we particularly endorse the principle highlighted in *Special Voting Arrangements from The International IDEA Handbook*



“Legal frameworks on special voting arrangements should provide for the right of observers to accompany polling staff in special institutions such as hospitals, care homes and places of detention”.<sup>5</sup>



In addition to the March PEER recommendation, we now also recommend that electoral legislation be amended to expressly provide for the attendance of An Coimisiún staff and members at administrative tasks conducted in association with the administration of an electoral event, such as special voting in communal areas of nursing homes or the issuing and opening of the postal vote.

An Coimisiún is also aware of a separate longstanding issue regarding the absence of legislative provision for the presence of domestic and international observers at elections in Ireland. The OSCE’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) *Needs Assessment Mission Report-Ireland-Early Parliamentary Elections, 8 February 2020*, noted



“However, despite a previous ODIHR recommendation, there are no explicit provisions for the presence of citizen or international observers, which is at odds with paragraph 8 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document.” - Ireland (p.5)



Following an invitation to observe the Presidential Election in Ireland, and in accordance with its mandate, in October 2025, ODIHR deployed an Election Assessment Mission (EAM) to Ireland for the Presidential Election. ODIHR had previously observed the general election held in Ireland in 2007. ODIHR’s *Needs Assessment Mission Report - Early Parliamentary Elections, 29 November 2024*<sup>6</sup> refers again to the fact that its previous recommendation on “the status of citizen and international observers” remains unaddressed.

## 6. PEER Checklist



Post Electoral Event Review  
Presidential Election 2025



Post Electoral Event Review  
Presidential Election 2025

SECTION A: Observer Team	
A1. Team Number	<input type="text"/>
A2. Time of Arrival	<input type="text"/>
A3. Time of Departure	<input type="text"/>
SECTION B: Polling Station Identification	
B1. Polling Station Name	<input type="text"/>
B2. Polling Booth Number	<input type="text"/>
B3. Number of Polling Booths in Polling Station	<input type="text"/>
B4. Polling Station Presiding Officer	<input type="text"/>
B5. Polling Station Selection Criteria	<input type="checkbox"/> Largest Electorate <input type="checkbox"/> Electorate > 80 <input type="checkbox"/> Pobal Index <input type="checkbox"/> Reported <input type="checkbox"/> Geo. Dist.

SECTION C: Opening   Complete Only if Present at Opening	
C1. <b>Timing</b>   Was the polling station open for voting at the appointed time of 07:00?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
→ Comments: <input type="text"/>	

C2.1 <b>Ballot Box</b>   Was the ballot box demonstrated to be empty to those that were present at the time of opening?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
C2.2 <b>Ballot Box</b>   Was the ballot box demonstrated to be securely sealed to those that were present at the time of opening?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
→ Comments: <input type="text"/>	

SECTION D: Exterior	
D1.1 <b>Signage</b>   Is there directional signage present on the approach route to the polling station?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
D1.2 <b>Signage</b>   Is an official notice indicating "polling station", displayed at the entrance to the polling station?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
→ Comments: <input type="text"/>	
D2.1 <b>Canvassing</b>   Are there any election posters in evidence within 50 meters of the curtilage of the polling station?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
D2.2 <b>Canvassing</b>   Are there any alternative forms of canvassing e.g. leafletting in evidence within 50 meters of the curtilage of the polling station?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
→ Comments: <input type="text"/>	
D3.1 <b>Car Parking</b>   Are there adequate car parking facilities?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
D3.2 <b>Car Parking</b>   Is there designated accessible car parking for people with disabilities near the main pedestrian entrance to the polling station?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
→ Comments: <input type="text"/>	

SECTION E: Exterior (Electors with Disabilities)	
E1.1 <b>Hazards</b>   Are there any steps or steep changes in level outside the polling station?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
E1.2 <b>Hazards</b>   Are there any other observable hazards or obstacles on the approach to the polling station?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
→ Comments: <input type="text"/>	
E2.1 <b>Wheelchair Use (External)</b>   Is the primary entrance to the polling station generally accessible for wheelchair users?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
E2.2 <b>Wheelchair Use (External)</b>   Is there a sign indicating that the entrance is accessible?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
E2.3.1 <b>Wheelchair Use (External)</b>   Is there a wheelchair ramp available?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
E2.3.2 <b>Wheelchair Use (External)</b>   If there is a wheelchair ramp is it permanent (i.e. built-in to the entrance)?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
E2.3.3 <b>Wheelchair Use (External)</b>   If there is a wheelchair ramp is it temporary (i.e. portable/ removable)?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
E2.4 <b>Wheelchair Use (External)</b>   If the primary entrance is inaccessible is there an alternative accessible wheelchair entrance (e.g. side entrance)?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
→ Comments: <input type="text"/>	

SECTION F: Interior	
F1.1 <b>Layout</b>   Is the layout in the polling station adequate for the conducting of the poll e.g. sufficient space, sufficient lighting etc.?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
F1.2 <b>Layout</b>   Is the layout in the polling station intuitive and conducive to the flow of the polling process e.g. entrance, identification, voting, exit etc.?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
F1.3 <b>Layout</b>   Is the layout in the polling station conducive to the security of the ballot box (publicly visible and in a secure area)?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
F1.4 <b>Layout</b>   Is the layout in the polling station conducive to the secrecy of the voting process (private space)?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
→ Comments: <input type="text"/>	
F2. <b>Staffing</b>   Are staff in the polling station identifiable and positioned in areas where they are visible to electors?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
→ Comments: <input type="text"/>	
F3.1 <b>Emergency</b>   Are there emergency exits in the polling station?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
F3.2 <b>Emergency</b>   If yes, are the emergency exits signposted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
→ Comments: <input type="text"/>	

SECTION G: Interior (Electors with Disabilities)		
G1. <b>Layout</b>   Is the layout suitable for electors with physical disabilities e.g. entryways, corridors, voting compartments etc.?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
G2.1 <b>Wheelchair Use (Internal)</b>   Is the interior accessible to wheelchair users in terms of layout e.g. turning space and an absence of obstacles?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
G2.2.1 <b>Wheelchair Use (Internal)</b>   Is there a low-level voting space?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
G2.2.2 <b>Wheelchair Use (Internal)</b>   Is this a low-level voting compartment?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
G2.2.3 <b>Wheelchair Use (Internal)</b>   Is this a low-level table with a screen?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
G2.3 <b>Wheelchair Use (Internal)</b>   Is the ballot box accessible to wheelchair users (e.g. placed at an accessible height ≈ 1 metre from ground)?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
→ Comments: <input type="text"/>		

SECTION H: Voting Procedures		
H1.1 <b>Posters</b>   Are the <i>Electoral Offences and Evidence of Identity</i> posters on display?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
H1.2 <b>Posters</b>   Is a <i>Large-Print Notice of Ballot Paper</i> displayed?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
→ Comments: <input type="text"/>		
H2. <b>Materials</b>   Are any of the essential election materials missing from the polling station?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
→ If yes, please specify:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Ballot Boxes <input type="checkbox"/> Ballot Papers <input type="checkbox"/> Register of Electors <input type="checkbox"/> Balancing List/ Supplement to the Register <input type="checkbox"/> Stamping Instrument <input type="checkbox"/> Guidance to Presiding Officers <input type="checkbox"/> Pens/Pencils		
→ Comments: <input type="text"/>		
H3. <b>Identification</b>   Were any electors asked to provide ID on being issued with a ballot paper during the time of the review? [Non-Mandatory]	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
→ Comments: <input type="text"/>		
H4.1 <b>Ballot Paper</b>   Were ballot papers 'stamped' with the official mark <i>on being issued</i> to electors?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
H4.2 <b>Ballot Paper</b>   Were the names of electors marked off the Register of Electors on being issued a ballot paper?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
→ Comments: <input type="text"/>		
H5.1 <b>Voting</b>   Did the voting compartments enable electors to vote in secret?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
H5.2 <b>Voting</b>   Was there only one elector in a voting compartment at a time, unless accompanied by a voting companion?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
H5.3 <b>Voting</b>   Were any electors observed engaging in 'selfies' or other forms of prohibited photography?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
→ Comments: <input type="text"/>		

SECTION I: Voting Procedures (Electors with Disabilities)		
I1.1 <b>Vision Impairment</b>   Are Ballot Paper Templates (BPTs) available for electors with a vision impairment?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
I1.2 <b>Vision Impairment</b>   Are any issues with the use of the BPTs observable e.g. difficult to use?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
I1.3 <b>Vision Impairment</b>   Are any visually impaired electors observable using the 'Freephone' facility to aid in voting?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
→ Comments: <input type="text"/>		
I2. <b>Deaf/Hard of Hearing</b>   Are there any provisions to aid those who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing with a hearing impairment e.g. a Loop System (sound system) for hearing aids?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
→ If yes, please provide further detail: <input type="text"/>		
I3. <b>Non-Physical Disabilities</b>   Did you observe electors with intellectual, learning, sensory or developmental disabilities receiving assistance from poll staff (e.g. assistance with voting or general assistance)?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
→ Comments: <input type="text"/>		
I4.1 <b>Voting Companion</b>   Was voting with the assistance of a voting companion in evidence?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
I4.2 <b>Voting Companion</b>   If yes, was the oath or affirmation issued to the voting companion by the Presiding Officer? [*Non-Mandatory]	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
→ If yes, please provide further detail: <input type="text"/>		

SECTION J: Persons Present		
J1. <b>Polling Station Staff</b>   Please indicate the staff present in the polling place at the time of review:		
Staff	Present	Staff Numbers Present
Presiding Officer	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Supervisory Presiding Officer	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Poll Clerk	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
→ Comments: <input type="text"/>		
J2.1 <b>Authorised Persons</b>   Were there personation agents present in the polling station at the time of the review?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
→ If yes, please provide further detail: <input type="text"/>		
J2.2 <b>Authorised Persons</b>   Were there any issues with regard to unauthorised persons present in the polling station at the time of review?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
→ Comments: <input type="text"/>		
J3. <b>Communication</b>   Did you discuss any issues with the Presiding Officer e.g. the absence of materials or the lack of a low-level voting compartment?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
→ Comments: <input type="text"/>		

**SECTION K: Innovation & Improvement**

K1. **Initiative** | Were there any initiatives or measures implemented at a local level by Returning Officers or Presiding Officers that aided in the efficiency or integrity of the electoral process? Yes  No

→ If yes, please provide further detail:

**SECTION L: Additional Comments**

If you have any additional comments regarding the accessibility of the polling station or the administration of the poll in general, please outline them below:

## 7. Polling Stations – Selection Criteria

Based on details provided in the *Notices of Polling Stations*, 6,443 polling stations in 2,613 polling places were deployed across the 43 Dáil constituencies for the 2025 Presidential Election. In comparison, 6,756 polling stations in 2,701 polling places were in use across the 43 Dáil constituencies for the 2024 General Election<sup>7</sup>. In our examination of data on polling stations and polling places over seven electoral events, An Coimisiún observed that the formatting used in the production of the *Notices of Polling Stations* does not allow for the efficient use and extraction of data on polling stations and polling places. An Coimisiún recommends standardisation of the formatting used for the *Notices of Polling Stations* so that they contain the following: the number of polling stations in use in a constituency, the number of polling places in use in a constituency, and a list of polling place changes enacted in the constituency.

In selecting the polling stations to be visited for PEER report purposes in 2024 and 2025, we used secondary data derived from Central Statistics Office (CSO) census statistics for 2022.

We also selected some polling stations using the Pobal HP Deprivation Index<sup>8</sup> (Haase and Pratschke, 2017), a social gradient tool which also uses data from Census 2022 to show the level of overall affluence and deprivation of areas in Ireland. This tool was incorporated in our methodology as socio-economic factors are considered as having potential to influence levels of voter turnout.



# The Pobal HP Deprivation Index



The Pobal HP Deprivation Index is Ireland's primary social gradient tool. Based on the latest Census information it reveals the profile of communities throughout Ireland.

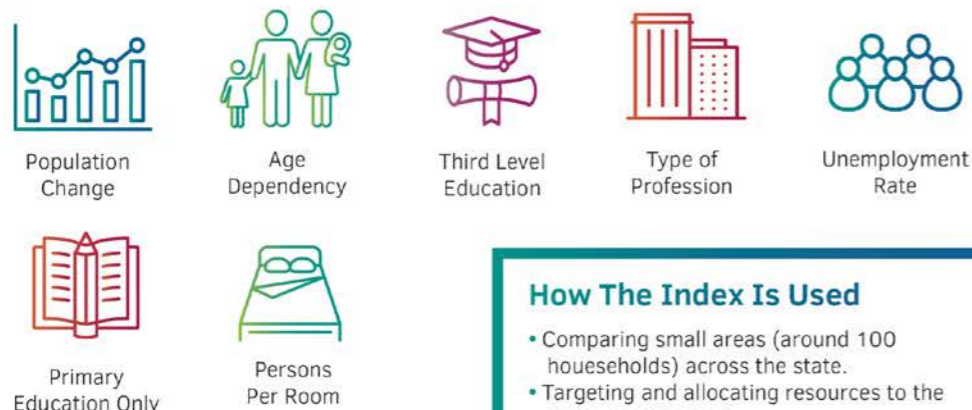
It is a powerful tool that enables Government Departments and state-agencies to target resources where they are needed most.



The 18,919 small areas in the Republic of Ireland are a consistent geographical boundary with an average of 100 households.

## Indicators Used To Calculate The Relative Index Score

Three categories - demographic, social class and labour market situation, which include the following indicators:



### How The Index Is Used

- Comparing small areas (around 100 households) across the state.
- Targeting and allocating resources to the areas most in need.
- Plotting changes in deprivation over various censuses (2006, 2011, 2016, 2022).
- Planning effective service delivery.

### Who Uses The Index

- The Department of Education (DEIS school identification).
- The HSE (Health Atlas Ireland).
- Various other Government Departments and State Agencies involved in targeting and supporting marginalised communities.
- Researchers, media and the public.

Find out more by visiting  
[www.pobal.ie](http://www.pobal.ie)  
 or email: [pobalmaps@pobal.ie](mailto:pobalmaps@pobal.ie)

## Polling stations with large electorates

On polling day for the November 2024 General Election, as an addition to their itinerary, a PEER observer team visited J.F.K. Memorial School in the Limerick City constituency, where major delays in voting had been reported. On arrival, the PEER observer team established that the delays were attributable to high levels of voters not having received their polling information cards. Consequently, electors were observed having to go to several presiding officers' issuing desks to establish to which desk they should go to receive their ballot paper. A key takeaway from our visit to J.F.K. Memorial School in November 2024 was the consequence of electors not receiving polling information cards which is exacerbated in a large polling station with multiple polling booths. For the Presidential Election, we decided to identify large polling stations to visit on polling day. This required an examination of the data available in the numerous polling schemes prepared by local authorities. This data allowed us to pinpoint 48 polling stations with large numbers of polling booths in the 43 Dail constituencies across all 26 counties. The two largest polling stations visited in Knocklyon, Co. Dublin (Dublin South-West) and Knocknacarra, Co. Galway (Galway West) contained 14 polling booths each.

**1. Large Electorates** – 48 polling stations with some of the largest designated electorates in each of the 43 Dáil constituencies and 26 counties were visited. These polling stations were identified based on the information in the *Notices of Situation* published by each returning officer ahead of the Presidential Election.

## Other selection criteria

The remaining 52 polling stations were selected for visits based on the following criteria:

**2. Electors Aged 80+** – 15 polling stations were visited in electoral divisions (EDs) identified in Census 2022 as having some of the highest concentrations of residents over the age of 80.

**3. Case Study: Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA)** – Five polling stations were visited in Co. Donegal accompanied by a selection of service users of the IWA.

**4. Case Study: Down Syndrome Ireland (DSI Kerry)** – Four polling stations were visited in Co. Kerry where the PEER observer team met with a group of Munster Technological University students who are members of Down Syndrome Kerry, an associated branch of DSI.

**5. Public Engagement** – 12 polling stations were visited by An Coimisiún on account of prior issues raised by members of the public, by their representatives or in media reports.

**6. Geographic Distribution** – Seven polling stations were visited to ensure adequate representation of offshore islands, Gaeltacht areas and other identified regions.

**7. Disadvantaged Areas: Pobal Index** – Ten polling stations were selected across the six Dáil constituencies least visited by An Coimisiún during previous PEER visits. The polling stations to be visited were chosen based on areas identified as 'Very Disadvantaged' by the Pobal Deprivation Index.

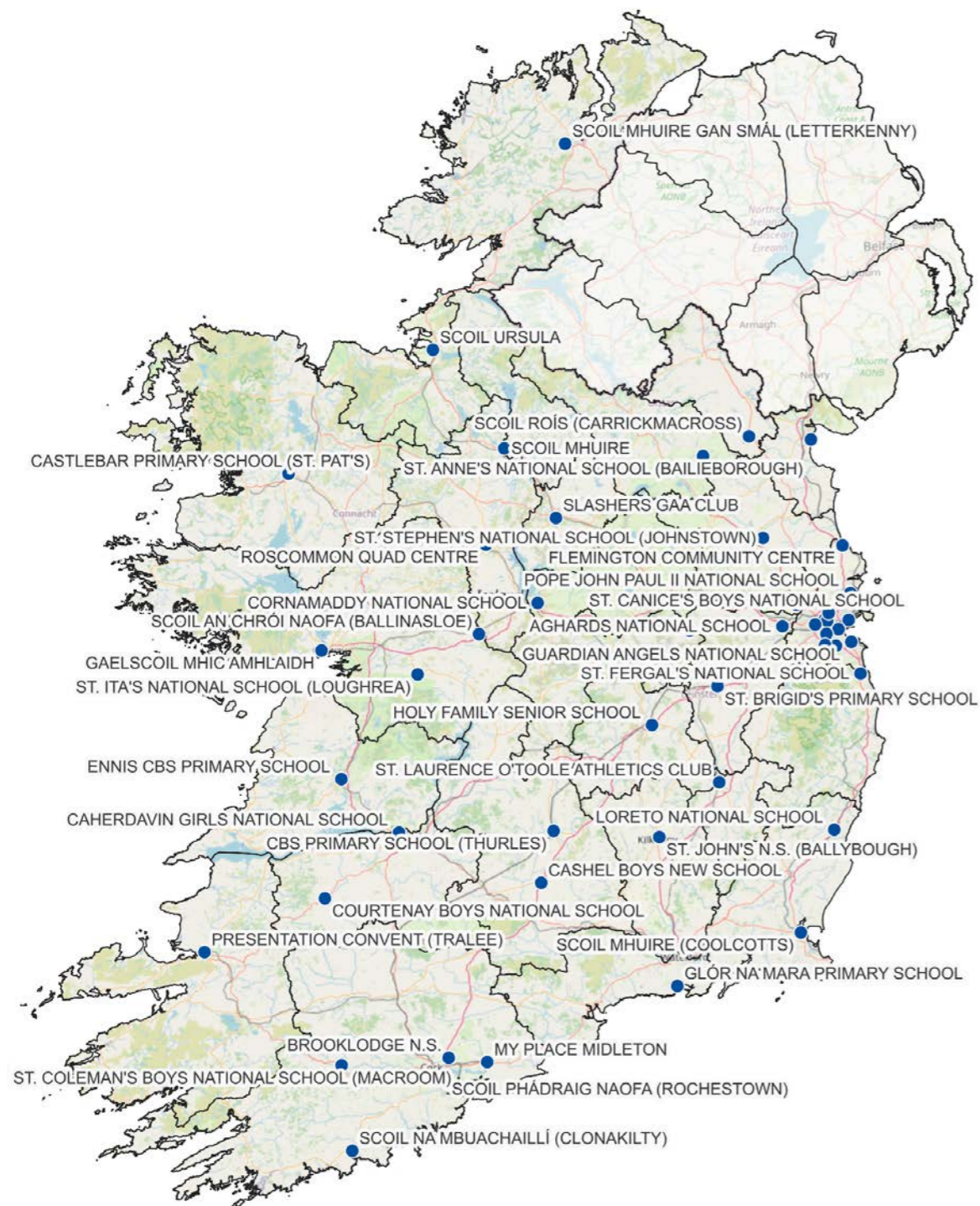
In a limited number of cases where it was not feasible to visit a particular polling station on 24 October, an alternative polling station was sought.

(To view the full list of polling stations visited see Appendix 2 – Index of Polling Stations Visited).

## 8. PEER Routes

### Map 1.

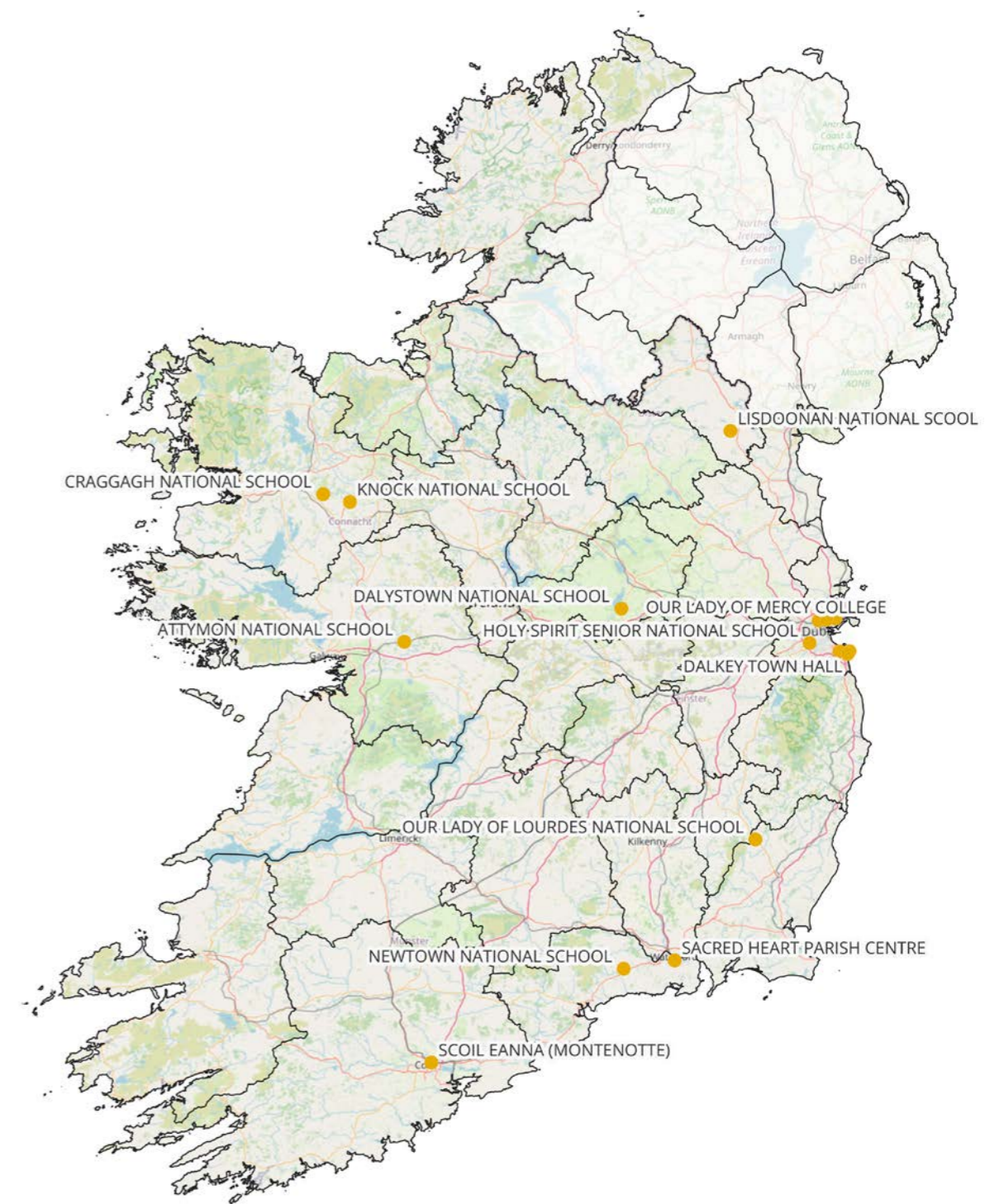
Map of 48 polling stations selected based on Large Electorates – covering each of the 43 Dáil constituencies and 26 counties.



@OpenStreetMap contributors

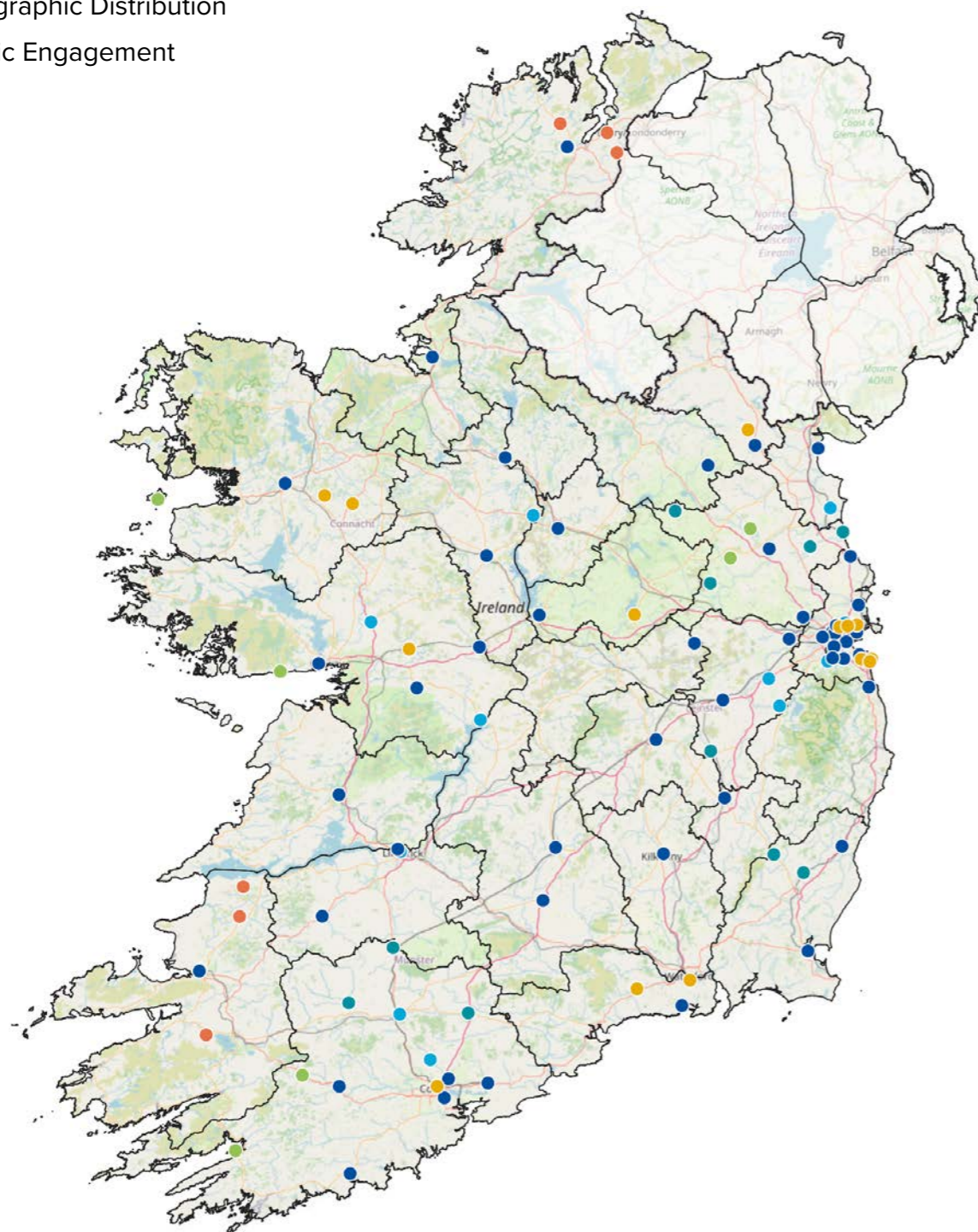
### Map 2.

Map of 15 polling stations selected based on electoral divisions (EDs) with high numbers of Electors aged 80 years and older as identified in Census 2022.



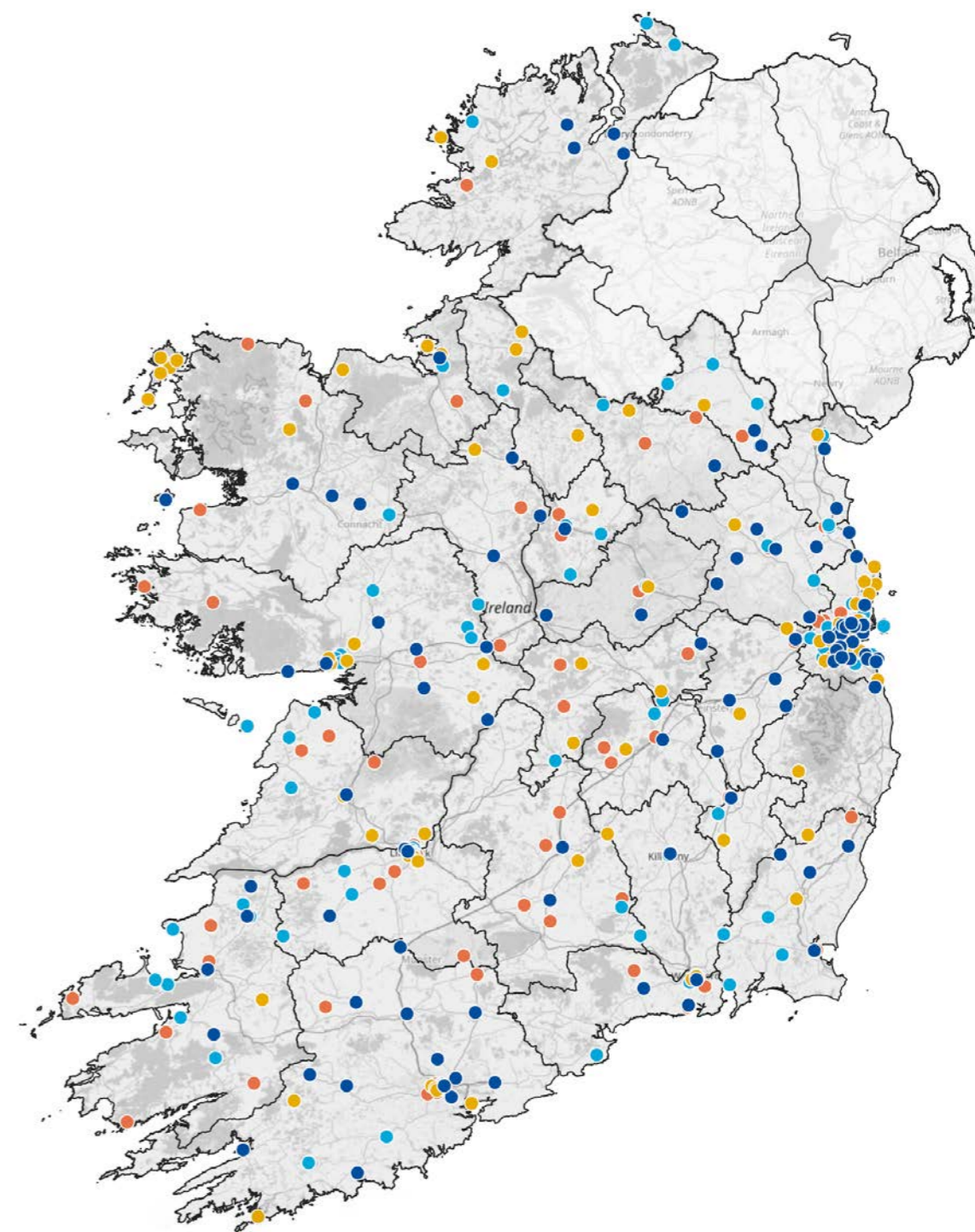
**Map 3.**  
Map of 100 PEER Polling Stations visited.

- Largest Electorates
- Electors Aged 80+
- Accessibility Case Studies
- Disadvantaged Areas: Pobal Index
- Geographic Distribution
- Public Engagement



**Map 4.**  
Map of 385 PEER polling stations visited over all PEERs.

- Presidential
- General
- Local and European
- Referendums



## 9. PEER Data Analysis

### Accessing the Polling Station – External Considerations

#### Parking

An Coimisiún observers reported that 93% of polling stations visited provided adequate on-site or on-street parking facilities. This is consistent with our observations from the general election, during which 92% of polling stations provided adequate parking facilities.

In terms of parking facilities for voters with disabilities, 67% of polling stations provided accessible parking, representing a material improvement on the General Election during which 58% of polling stations provided accessible parking. We note this 16% increase in parking accessibility may be related to the decision to observe the poll in populous polling stations.



#### Directional Signage

Directional signage helps ensure that voters – especially first-time voters and those new to an area – can find the polling station. An Coimisiún observers reported that directional signage was displayed on the approach to 39% of polling stations at which the poll was observed (38% of polling stations for the 2024 General Election).

To improve matters, An Coimisiún understands that returning officers are looking at investing in more durable directional signage and ensuring that Eircodes are included on the polling information cards (PICs) issued to voters.



*New signage used in Cork constituencies*

In addition to directional signage, returning officers are expected to display an 'official notice' indicating that a premises is a polling station; this was in evidence at 99% of polling stations, representing an 11% improvement on the General Election during which 88% of polling stations displayed the 'official notice'.

### Accessibility Infrastructure – Level Entry, Permanent Ramps and Temporary Ramps

Taking into account altered access arrangements such as temporary ramps or alternative accessible entrances, 97% of polling stations visited were accessible for electors with a disability. This represents a welcome improvement on accessibility when we commenced our visits to polling stations in March 2024 where we considered only 75% of polling stations were accessible.

94% of polling stations at which the poll was observed had a primary entrance accessible to wheelchair users in comparison with the General Election (75%). Accessible entrances included level entrances, entrances with permanent ramps, and entrances with temporary ramps intended to facilitate access to the polling station. Of the polling stations which had an inaccessible primary entrance, 50% provided an alternative accessible entrance. Only three of the polling stations out of the 100 visited, presented intractable access issues in that both the primary entrance was inaccessible, and no alternative accessible entrance was available.

47% of polling stations at which the poll was observed included access ramps; of these approximately 84% were permanent access ramps and 16% were temporary access ramps, erected for polling day.

Approximately 50% of polling stations visited had a level entrance accessible to wheelchair users compared to the General Election (36%).

### Obstacles to Accessibility – Steps, Steep Alterations in Level & Threshold Lips, Internal Circulation

Steps and steep alterations in level were observed at 9% of polling stations. This is another major improvement on the General Election, when almost 25% of polling stations presented obstacles caused by steps or steep alterations in level.

Additional obstacles to accessibility included the presence of a threshold lip at the entrance doors. These issues were identified at 7% of polling stations, representing a modest improvement in this category on the General Election (10%). It was evident to us that the implementation by returning officers of altered access arrangements mitigated the presence

of obstacles to an extent, ensuring that wheelchair users were able to access polling stations.

Internal accessibility focuses on internal circulation arrangements and the situation of election materials, including issuing desks and voting compartments. 97% of polling stations observed provided adequate levels of internal accessibility for wheelchair users. This level is identical to our observations from the General Election.

Isolated cases of impediments to internal accessibility included voting compartments with limited circulating space and internal doors which were often difficult to operate for unaccompanied wheelchair users.

### Accessible Voting Provisions – Accessible Voting Compartments

An accessible voting space such as a low-level voting compartment, a low-level desk with a privacy screen or a private precinct of the polling station allows electors with a disability to vote in private. PEER observers reported that 98% of polling stations visited provided an accessible voting space for electors with a disability, another positive improvement on the general election (93%).

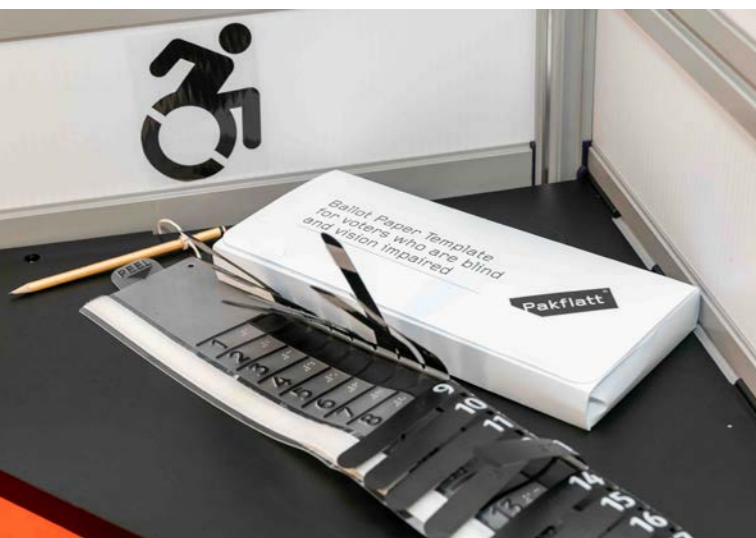
93% of polling stations observed provided a low-level voting compartment for electors with a disability – in addition, a low-level desk was often provided at these polling stations to afford disabled and elderly electors the option to sit. 4% of polling stations provided a low-level desk instead of a low-level voting compartment. An Coimisiún considers that – in the absence of a low-level voting compartment – low-level desks should always include a privacy screen.

Ballot boxes should be positioned at an accessible height so that electors, including wheelchair users or voters short in stature, are able to place their ballot paper in the

ballot box unaided. PEER observers advised that the ballot box was accessible at 84% of polling stations visited, which is slightly lower than that observed at the General Election (88%). An Coimisiún considers that, depending on the circumstances, positioning the ballot box on issuing desks may render it inaccessible to wheelchair users.

### Voting Aids – Assisted Voting & the Ballot Paper Template (BPT)

Voting aids are materials intended to facilitate voting by electors with a disability. The primary voting aid for visually impaired voters is the ballot paper template (BPT), a transparent device designed to enable visually impaired electors to vote independently. As described in previous PEERs, the BPT is a transparent plastic device with tactile elements that is placed on top of the ballot paper by the presiding officer. The tactile elements guide users to openings on the template which correspond to the election candidates on the ballot paper beneath.



To vote with the BPT, a visually impaired voter must be aware of the order of candidates on the ballot paper. For this reason, the BPT is used in conjunction with a freephone service which a voter may call to hear a list of the candidates read out in

the order in which the candidates appear on the ballot paper.

PEER observers advised that the BPT was available for visually impaired electors at 99% of polling stations at which the poll was observed. This is consistent with our observations from previous electoral events. Overall, we observed visually impaired electors voting at 5% of polling stations visited.

Of these voters:

- Three voted with the aid of the BPT. Of those three, two voters used the BPT in accordance with the associated freephone service designed to support voters with visual impairments. One voter used the BPT with the assistance of a voting companion.
- An additional two voters voted without the aid of the BPT. One elector voted with the assistance of the presiding officer and the other voted with the assistance of a voting companion.

Our observations from the Presidential Election are consistent with previous electoral events where we noted varying levels of adoption of the BPT and a degree of uncertainty as to how this voting aid should be used. As previously recommended in our PEER report on the European Parliament, Local and Limerick Mayoral Elections,<sup>9</sup> “a comprehensive review by all relevant stakeholders of the guidance and materials on offer to blind or visually impaired voters when casting their vote is necessary. The direct involvement of visually impaired electors in this review is essential”. An Coimisiún understands a review of the guidance and materials on offer to blind or visually impaired voters was commenced by the Working Group on Disability Voting chaired by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in 2025.

In a repeat of the exercise conducted for previous elections in 2024, we test-called the freephone numbers listing candidates in the order they appear on the ballot paper. We were satisfied following our checks that all freephone numbers were operational in the run-up to the Presidential Election. However, following our November PEER recommendation that audio files would be a useful supplementary option<sup>10</sup> if made available to voters, we noted no progress was made regarding the provision of audio files listing the candidates.

### Voting Experience – Layout and the Flow of Voting

Internal conditions for conducting the poll, including the arrangement of issuing desks and voting compartments, have implications for the efficiency, privacy, and integrity of the poll. An Coimisiún observers advised that 99% of polling stations at which the poll was observed provided adequate conditions. This is consistent with observations from previous electoral events. During the Presidential Election, minor issues with facilities, such as problems with lighting, were observed and a temporary power outage at one polling station was reported.

A fundamental consideration with respect to efficiency relates to the “flow” of voting at polling stations, which focuses on the voter experience of the voting process and their ability to navigate the space provided for that purpose. In an efficient polling station, it will be apparent to voters where they are expected to present their identification and receive their ballot paper, where they may complete their ballot paper in privacy, and where they are expected to place their ballot paper in the assigned ballot box. An Coimisiún observers reported that all polling stations at which the poll was observed provided an intuitive voter experience that aided in the flow of voting.

### Integrity of the Poll – Privacy and Identity

One measure designed to preserve the integrity of the electoral process is the requirement for voters to provide evidence of identity, which prevents personation. Guidance issued by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) advises presiding officers to request identity documents from one in four voters. PEER observers advised that evidence of identity was requested from electors at 71% of polling stations visited, an increase in comparison with the General Election (63%).

The marking of the ballot paper with the official mark is a further measure employed to protect electoral integrity. An Coimisiún observers reported that all ballot papers were marked with the official mark at polling stations at which the poll was observed, in compliance with s.101(2)(b) of the *Electoral Act, 1992*, as applied by s.38 of the *Presidential Elections Act, 1993*.

This is consistent with our observations from previous electoral events which presented compliance with the legislative requirement. An Coimisiún acknowledges that returning officers have made great efforts to address this issue (see ‘Invalid Ballot Papers’, p. 47).

Electoral integrity is further protected by ensuring that a voter is marked off the *Register of Electors* on being issued with a ballot paper. This prevents personation and multiple voting, by providing a record of the voters that have voted in a particular electoral event. PEER observers reported that voters were marked off the *Register of Electors* at all polling stations at which the poll was observed.

Electoral process integrity is equally dependent on voter privacy. PEER observers reported that 99% of polling stations visited provided voting compartments which facilitated private voting. This is consistent with our observations from the General Election. A related consideration is the requirement that only one voter be present in a voting compartment when voting.

An Coimisiún observers advised that this requirement was satisfied at 98% of polling stations visited. In two instances, observers reported that there appeared to be multiple voters in a voting compartment, which is an improvement on the General Election when 5% of polling stations infringed this requirement.



## 10. Best Practices Observed

### Ballot Paper Template (BPT)

PEER observers noted that returning officers implemented measures intended to promote awareness of the Ballot Paper Template (BPT). At the entrance to some polling stations, we observed large-print posters advertising the freephone service which reads out the order of candidates on the ballot paper to all callers. This service assists visually impaired voters when marking their ballot paper and may be used in conjunction with the BPT. As an additional measure, we also noted a paper insert of the freephone number in the box in which the BPT was stored. The inclusion of this insert acted as a reminder to presiding officers to advise electors of the freephone service when attaching the BPT to the ballot paper and issuing the ballot paper to the voter.



### Voter Registration

A new initiative noted during the Presidential Election was the provision of information related to the *Register of Electors*, by which some returning officers displayed a poster with the contact details for the relevant registration authority. The provision of these details helps ensure that voters are provided with a contact point to assist if any issues arise concerning their registration or voting entitlement. The display of contact details for the registration authority also represents a form of resource efficiency, in as far as it enables presiding officers to focus on facilitating the voting process. The implementation of initiatives that integrate elements of the registration process is to be welcomed.

Another welcome initiative is the increased availability in polling stations of forms providing voters with the opportunity to update their own registration details (ERF1) or amend the registration details of a third party (TPC1), such as a deceased family member. While the maintenance of the *Register of Electors* is a matter for registration authorities, the decision by certain returning officers to record and facilitate requests for amendments to the register is a valuable initiative that reinforces the integrity of the electoral process.

## Flow of Voting

As an aid to the flow of voting by ensuring that voters are directed to their polling booth, we noted that posters were displayed at the entrance to some polling stations indicating the polling booth to which electors were assigned, based on their address as listed on the *Register of Electors*.



An alternative form of poster displayed by returning officers uses the elector number as printed on the polling information card (PIC) to direct voters to their polling booth. We noted that for this measure to function efficiently, a voter needs to know their elector number.



In populous polling districts, many presiding officers also established information desks at the entrance to polling stations; overseen by the supervisory presiding officer, these information desks directed voters to their assigned polling booth. In addition to aiding voting efficiency, the implementation of this measure ensured that disabled voters were advised of accessible voting arrangements and provided with assistance if required; this represents an improved emphasis on voter engagement and is to be commended.

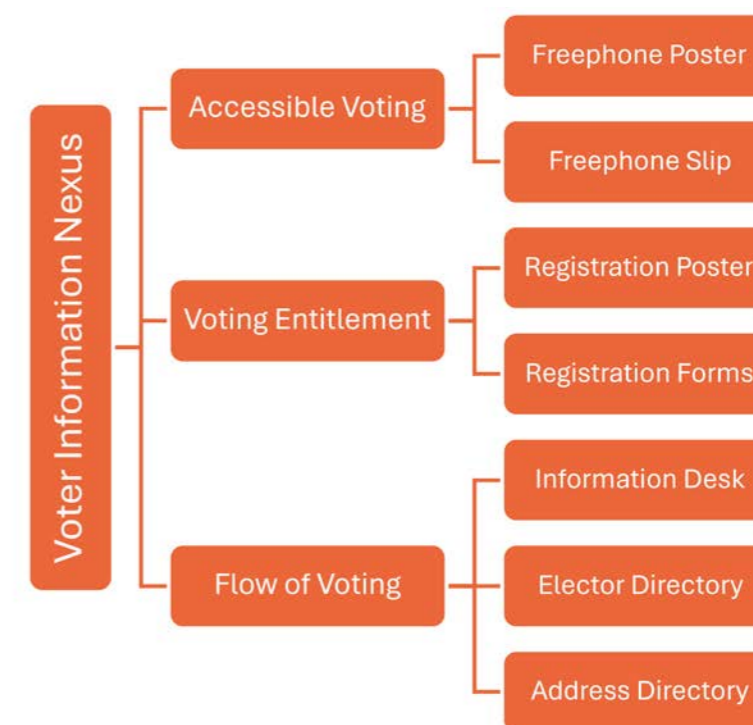


Figure 1

## Overview of Initiatives Implemented by Returning Officers



Large-print posters in polling stations advertising the freephone service which calls out the candidates in the order they appear on the ballot paper.



Inclusion in the box in which the Ballot Paper Template is stored of a paper insert advising of the freephone service and phone number.



'Register of Electors' posters in polling stations giving out the contact details for the relevant registration authority.



Provision of voter registration forms in polling stations (ERF1) and (TPC1).



Directory of elector numbers displayed at the entrance of the polling station corresponding with the elector number printed on PICs.



Posters indicating voters' assigned polling booths on the basis of an address directory displayed at the entrance of the polling station.

# 11. Electoral Poll Data: National Election and Democracy Study

In addition to PEER data collected through in-situ electoral observation, An Coimisiún also engages in electoral-event-specific quantitative data collection through its National Election and Democracy Study (NEDS) initiative.

For the Presidential Election, An Coimisiún surveyed a total of 1,765 respondents at three distinct points throughout the election campaign between 29 September and 3 November 2025. 1,173 respondents stated they had voted. Of these, 1,313 took part in each wave of the survey. The final wave of the survey, which took place immediately after the election, included a series of questions specifically focused on voter experience, voter accessibility and on the voting experience of those living with a disability.

As seen in **Figure 2**, 97% of respondents who voted indicated that their voting experience was a positive one, of who 87% stated the process was “very easy” and 10% that it was “easy”. Similarly, 96% percent of voters indicated that their polling station was easily accessible. These findings are a positive indication that critical measures pertaining to voting experience and accessibility have remained resilient.

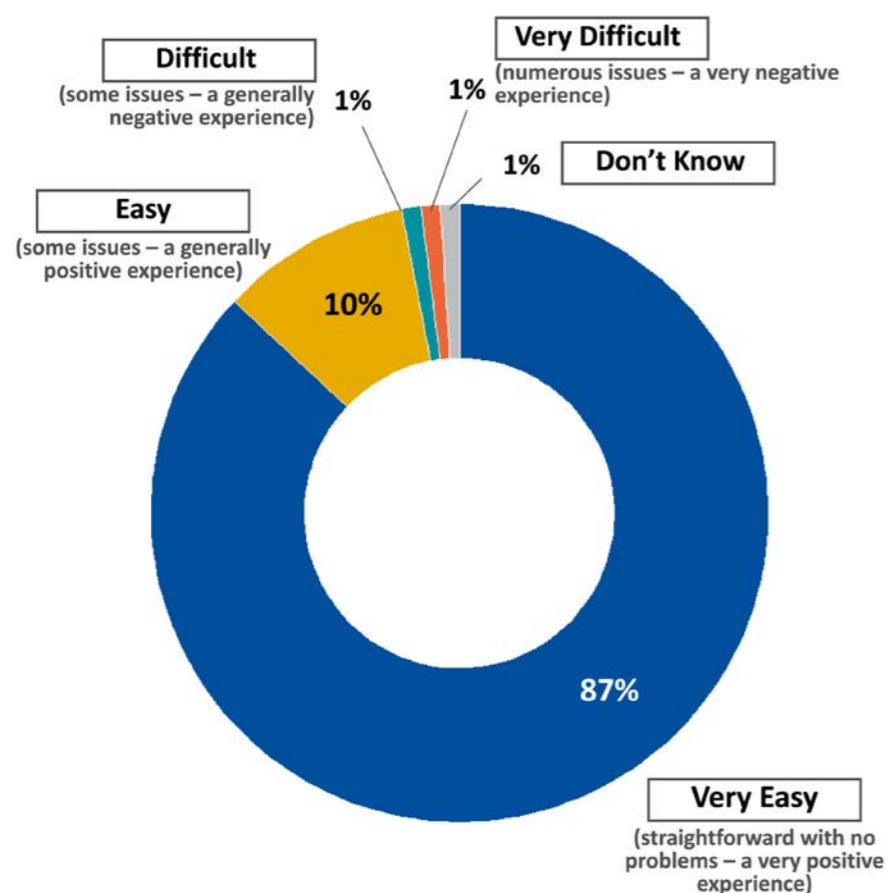


Figure 2

Expanding on the voter experience, **Figure 3** provides further information on a series of attitudinal statements relating to the overall voting experience. Encouragingly, 96% of respondents responded in the affirmative that they understood how to cast their vote, with a similarly high proportion (89%) also

confirming that they believed their vote was secret once placed in a ballot box. On the opposite end of the spectrum, 82% of respondents disagreed with the statement that they did not get the assistance they needed from the polling staff.

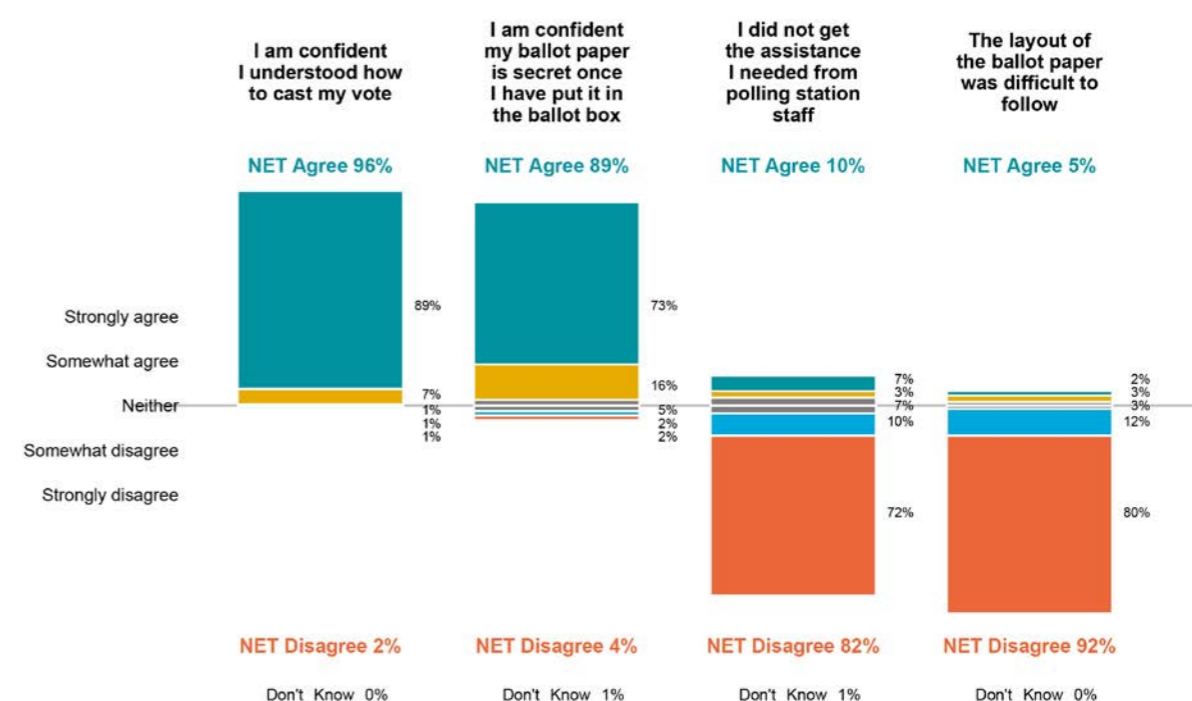


Figure 3

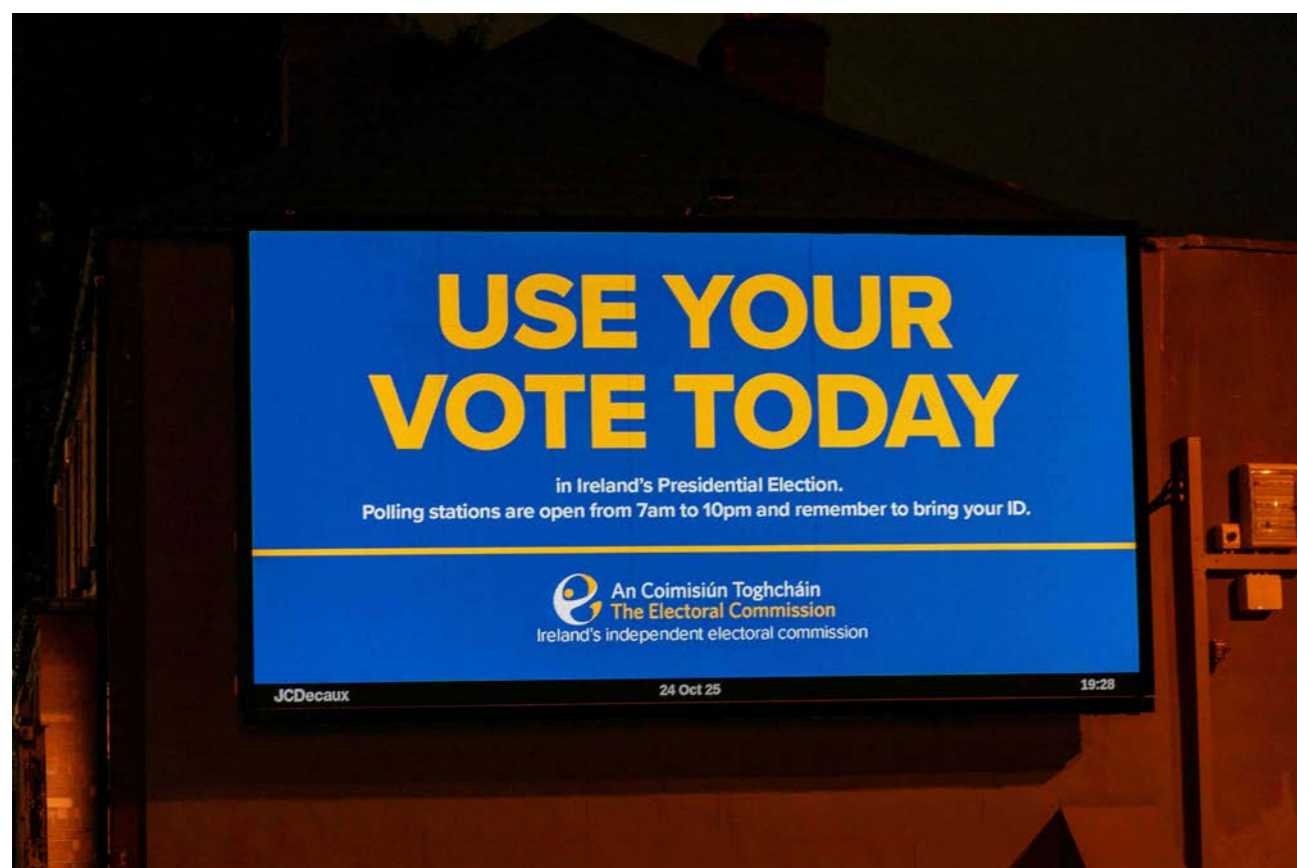
Additionally, 92% of voters disagreed with the statement that the layout of the ballot paper was difficult to follow. Following on from this, **Figure 4**, expands on that 7% who indicated that the ballot paper was not easy to follow<sup>11</sup>, the two most cited reasons related to writing being too small (38%) and uncertainty where on the ballot paper the voter needed to mark (27%).

The writing was too small / difficult to understand	38%
It was unclear where on the ballot paper I needed to mark my vote	27%
Don't know	22%
The ballot paper too long	10%
Prefer not to say	9%
Something else	6%
I couldn't identify my preferred candidate	6%

Figure 4

In line with the PEER's emphasis on accessibility, NEDS respondents are asked a series of socio-demographic questions concerning their experiences with disability. This allows An Coimisiún to disaggregate voting experience metrics so as to better examine the specific perceptions of respondents with disabilities. 249 (15.7%) respondents out of a total of 1,583 respondents in Wave 3 indicated that they had a disability or health issue that affected their day-to-day activities. The disaggregated data indicates that the proportion of voting respondents with disabilities or health issues who disagreed that they had received adequate assistance from polling staff was similar to the overall sample at 7%, with a slightly higher proportion indicating ambivalence.

The proportion of voting respondents with disabilities or health issues who indicated that their polling station was easily accessible was also similar to the broader sample, at 97%, as was the proportion indicating a generally positive voting experience, again at 97% of the weighted sample. Overall, these results are encouraging and align with the broader body of evidence collected through PEER-oriented observation.



## 12. Voter Experiences

Excerpts of feedback we received in connection with the Presidential Election:

### Accessibility Issues

#### Co. Dublin (Dublin City)

*Caller advised that their polling station was inaccessible for wheelchair users – caller stated they were unable to vote due to the accessibility issue.*

#### Co. Donegal

*Caller advised that it was dark at the opening of the poll. There were multiple polling stations but no directional signage inside the polling station. There was no one to greet them and tell them where to go.*

#### Co. Cork (Cork City)

*"I went to vote last Friday (...) it was dark, the outside lights on the building were not turned on (...) and it was very dangerous (...). As a matter of health and safety this should be looked into."*

#### Co. Kerry

*"My parents are (...) older and the access to the vote (...) needs a bit of care (...) in dusk, it's impossible to see the steps, but in the daylight the steps are covered in grime and are extremely dangerous.*

*Also coming from the car park there are no signs directing people where to go. I hope this feedback helps makes voting day safer for our older community."*

## Co. Offaly



*“(...) they moved the normal polling station, as such the address on the polling card was wrong. It took a lot of figuring out to find where to vote.*

*The polling centre was (...) insufficiently signposted, two signs direct you into an estate where you are met with a sign saying, ‘residents only’. (...) many people turned away. I eventually found it; the entrance is narrow and confined (...) the ballot box is too close to the staff desk. It is an unsuitable venue, hard to find.”*



## Co. Dublin



*“I cast my vote today. I noticed that there were no seats available for people with reduced mobility or older people in need of them. There is an older population where I live who would avail of seats in the polling station. I have reduced mobility (...) I had nowhere to rest for a few minutes. A few seats in polling stations would be a welcome addition and vital for some people. Can this issue be addressed in all polling stations please?”*



## Co. Galway



*“(...) who is in charge of signage for polling stations? I have just returned from voting on a dark rainy evening trying to find the polling station (...) no lighting at the entrance – eventually (...) I made out a very small sign which said polling station.*

*(...) there is an assumption that everyone was born in the locality and has (...) knowledge of the location of the polling station. This absolutely does not encourage more recent residents or young voters to vote. Please improve this!”*



## Privacy Issues

## Co. Limerick



*“I have just returned from voting (...) was very disappointed to see the new polling booths in use.*

*There was very poor privacy (...) the polling attendants could clearly see my polling card as I filled it in due to the (...) arrangement of the booths.*

*This totally undermines the sanctity of the secret ballot, and I urge you to remedy this for the next elections.”*



## Co. Limerick (Limerick City)



*“I went to vote in the Presidential Election, collected my ballot paper and was shocked to see I had no privacy in how I voted.*

*(...) they had these new voting areas with no curtains but a stall (...) open to anyone and everyone who could walk up to you or look while I was voting.”*



## Anonymous



*“I would like to make a complaint about the new voting tables which left sides open to full view of the polling staff and anyone waiting to cast their vote. These tables are not compatible with casting a secret ballot in a democratic country.”*



## 13. New Irish Citizens – Certificates of Naturalisation

Only Irish citizens are eligible to vote in the election for a president of Ireland. Under electoral legislation,<sup>12</sup> registration authorities (local authorities) can require electors to produce proof of citizenship when they are applying to register to vote or to update their details on the electoral register. Such proof includes a certification of naturalisation, a valid passport or a statutory declaration that he/she is an Irish citizen.

In advance of the Presidential Election, An Coimisiún received queries from new Irish citizens, who, having attended their citizenship ceremonies in mid-September 2025, wished to register to vote for the first time or to update the nationality section of their voter registration details. As a copy of their certificate of naturalisation was required, these individuals were concerned they would not meet the registration deadline of 7 October as they were still waiting to receive their certificates by registered post.

An Coimisiún noted the following information provided by the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration on its website.<sup>13</sup>

### What happens at a ceremony

At the ceremony you will take an oath of fidelity to the nation. You do not become an Irish citizen until you have made your declaration. Your certificate of naturalisation will be issued by registered post in the weeks following the ceremony.

An Coimisiún considered it important that a person should know whether they formally become an Irish citizen on their making of the declaration of allegiance at a citizenship ceremony, or only following receipt of a certificate of naturalisation. This question is key to resolving when voters could update their nationality details or apply for the first time to register to vote in the Presidential Election.

An Coimisiún contacted the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration who clarified that s.18 of the *Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act, 1956* states that “Every person to whom a certificate of naturalisation is granted shall, from the date of issue and so long as the certificate remains unrevoked, be an Irish citizen”. Therefore, under the Act, an individual does not become an Irish citizen until they receive their certificate of naturalisation.

An Coimisiún learned that prior to 2025, certificates of naturalisation were provided to applicants at their citizenship ceremony and were printed in-house within the Citizenship section of the Immigration Service Delivery Unit in the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration. However, the printing of certificates has since been outsourced due to a significant increase in the volume of applications. Having attended their citizenship ceremonies, individuals must now wait 3-4 weeks to receive their certificates of naturalisation. The Department confirmed to An Coimisiún that in advance of the Presidential Election, the Minister’s office received a number of queries relating to the issuing of certificates of naturalisation and outlined that correspondents were advised that the production of the certificates could not be expedited in time for the electoral registration deadline.

An Coimisiún has written to the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration to highlight the fact that the period of time, which can be a few weeks, between citizenship ceremonies and the issuing of certificates of citizenship may affect new citizens’ ability to register or update their registration details prior to an electoral event. The date at which a person becomes a naturalised citizen is specified in the *Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act, 1956* as the date of the issued certificate.

However, it appears that those attending citizenship ceremonies are given a clear impression that they become a citizen on the day of the ceremony. An Coimisiún has requested that the Department reviews its communications with respect to this matter and considers ways to reduce any unnecessary delays regarding the issuing of citizenship certificates in all electoral periods, including the upcoming bye-elections.



## 14. Polling Information Cards – Omission of Polling District Letter

### Sample Polling Information Card

Cárta Faisnéise Vótaíochta / Polling Information Card		Postas íoctha / Postage Paid	Baile Átha Cliath / Dublin
Mura seachadtar an cárta, cuirtear ar ais é chuig: If undelivered, please return to: Local Authority Office, Co. Dublin, Eircode		L	Ceadúnas 10761
<b>Uimhir an toghthóra / Elector number: 00 000</b>		<b>Imeacht toghcháin / Electoral event</b>	
<b>Toghlach / Constituency</b> Dublin West	Toghchán uachtaráin Presidential election		
<b>Dáta agus am na vótaíochta / Polling date and time</b> Dé hAoine, Lá Mí 2025, 7am - 10pm Friday, Day Month 2025, 7am - 10pm		<b>Stáisiún vótaíochta / Polling station</b> St Michael's Primary School Main Street Dublin Eircode	
<p><b>Cad ba chóir duit a thabhairt leat chuig an stáisiún vótaíochta</b> <b>What you should bring with you to the polling station</b></p> <p>Cé nach bhfuil an Cárta Faisnéise Vótaíochta seo ag teastáil uait chun vótáil, iarrtar ort é a thabhairt leat nuair a théann tú chun vótáil. Cuideoidh sé sin le foireann an stáisiúin vótaíochta. Ba chóir duit fianaise i dtaobh do chéannachta a thabhairt leat freisin. Tá tuilleadh faisnéise faoi na doiciméid chéannachta atá inghlactha ar fáil ar chúl an chárta seo.</p> <p>While this Polling Information Card is not required for voting, please bring it with you when you go to vote. This will help polling staff. You should also bring evidence of identity. There is information about acceptable forms of identity on the back of this card.</p>			

Figure 5

Polling information cards (PICs) are issued to electors in advance of each electoral event to inform them of the polling station in which they are designated to vote. While electors do not need to show their PIC to vote, they are asked to bring their PIC with them when they go to vote as this “will help polling staff.”

For the Presidential Election, a revised PIC was introduced by the Department for Housing, Heritage and Local Government for use across all constituencies. The Department consulted with An Coimisiún regarding the new standardised layout and design for the bilingual PIC.

As currently set out in s.92.1 of the *Electoral Act, 1992* as applied by s.39 of the *Presidential Elections Act, 1993*, a PIC should inform an elector of their number on the register of electors and of the place at which they will be entitled to vote, and should also include the “polling district letter”.

The elector number as it appears in the top left-hand side of the PIC consists of a polling district letter(s) such as “MM” followed by an elector number such as “1192”. This elector number is the same number assigned to a person on the register of electors for a particular electoral event.

During polling day, PEER observer teams in polling stations in some Dublin City Council electoral areas noted reports on the ground that the section of the polling information card featuring an elector’s number was incomplete. A PEER observer team was advised that the polling district (PD) letter had been omitted with only the 4 digits of the elector number displayed in the ‘Elector Number’ section of the PIC.

This omission caused some confusion for electors on arrival to vote in locations with a number of polling stations. These electors had trouble establishing exactly to which polling station they should present themselves to receive their ballot papers.

Subsequently, An Coimisiún viewed PIC (Dublin North-West Constituency) where the polling district letter had been omitted. See below

Cárta Faisnéise Vótaíochta / Polling Information Card		Postas íoctha / Postage Paid	Baile Átha Cliath / Dublin
Mura seachadtar an cárta, cuirtear ar ais é chuig: If undelivered, please return to: D.C.C. Block 4, Floor 4, Wood Quay, Dublin 8 D08 RF3F		L	Ceadúnas 10761
<b>Uimhir an toghthóra / Elector number: 1333</b>		<b>Imeacht toghcháin / Electoral event</b>	
<b>Toghlach / Constituency</b> Baile Átha Cliath Thiar Thuaidh / Dublin North West (Dublin City Council)	Toghchán uachtaráin Presidential election		
<b>Dáta agus am na vótaíochta / Polling date and time</b> Dé hAoine, 24 Deireadh Fómhair 2025, 7am - 10pm Friday, 24 October 2025, 7am - 10pm		<b>Stáisiún vótaíochta / Polling station</b> Ballymun Library Ballymun Road Dublin 11 D11 DCR7	
<p><b>Cad ba chóir duit a thabhairt leat chuig an stáisiún vótaíochta</b> <b>What you should bring with you to the polling station</b></p> <p>Cé nach bhfuil an Cárta Faisnéise Vótaíochta seo ag teastáil uait chun vótáil, iarrtar ort é a thabhairt leat nuair a théann tú chun vótáil. Cuideoidh sé sin le foireann an stáisiúin vótaíochta. Ba chóir duit fianaise i dtaobh do chéannachta a thabhairt leat freisin. Tá tuilleadh faisnéise faoi na doiciméid chéannachta atá inghlactha ar fáil ar chúl an chárta seo.</p> <p>While this Polling Information Card is not required for voting, please bring it with you when you go to vote. This will help polling staff. You should also bring evidence of identity. There is information about acceptable forms of identity on the back of this card.</p>			

Figure 6

In comparison, An Coimisiún viewed a PIC for the Dún Laoghaire constituency which displayed the polling district letter followed by four digits. See below

Cárta Faisnéise Vótaíochta / Polling Information Card		Postas ioctha / Postage Paid	Baile Átha Cliath / Dublin
Mura seachadtar an cárta, cuirtear ar ais é chuig: If undelivered, please return to: 3 Damastown Close, Damastown ind Prk, Dublin 15, D15 FK76		L	Ceadúnas 10761
<b>Uimhir an toghthóra / Elector number: LJ 2150</b>		<b>Imeacht toghcháin / Electoral event</b>	
<b>Toghlach / Constituency</b>	Toghchán uachtaráin Presidential election		
Dún Laoghaire	<b>Dáta agus am na vótaíochta / Polling date and time</b>		
	Dé hAoine, 24 Deireadh Fómhair 2025, 7am - 10pm Friday, 24 October 2025, 7am - 10pm		
<b>Stáisiún vótaíochta / Polling station</b>	Glenageary-killiney National School Wyvern Killiney Road Co.Dublin A96 P585		
<b>Cad ba chóir duit a thabhairt leat chuig an stáisiún vótaíochta What you should bring with you to the polling station</b>			
Cé nach bhfuil an Cárta Faisnéise Vótaíochta seo ag teastáil uait chun vótáil, iarrtar ort é a thabhairt leat nuair a théann tú chun vótáil. Cuideoidh sé sin le foireann an stáisiúin vótaíochta. Ba chóir duit fianaise i dtaobh do chéannachta a thabhairt leat freisin. Tá tuilleadh faisnéise faoi na doiciméid chéannachta atá inghlactha ar fáil ar chúl an chárta seo. While this Polling Information Card is not required for voting, please bring it with you when you go to vote. This will help polling staff. You should also bring evidence of identity. There is information about acceptable forms of identity on the back of this card.			

Figure 7

An Coimisiún noted the *Memorandum for the Guidance of Local Returning Officers at the Presidential Election, 24 October 2025* referred to new procedures in place in relation to the production of polling information cards, advising returning officers to consult with their respective registration authorities “and agree in advance on arrangements for personalising the polling information cards.” The guidance further advised for returning officers to view sample PICs in advance of proceeding to printing stage.

An Coimisiún considers that any failure to include the complete elector number on the PIC was not in compliance with s.92.1 of the *Electoral Act, 1992* as applied by s.39 of the *Presidential Elections Act, 1993*. In addition, the instances where the polling district letter was not included in the elector number section of the PIC led to deviations in the rollout of a standardised PIC across all constituencies, as all PICs should contain the polling district letter as prescribed in the legislation.

## 15. Invalid Ballot Papers

As prescribed in s.48 of the *Presidential Elections Act, 1993*, if a ballot paper does not bear the official mark, a first preference is not clearly indicated, including unmarked ballot papers, a first preference is indicated for more than one candidate, or if anything is marked or written on the ballot paper which is calculated to identify the voter, this vote will be declared invalid at the count and categorised as ‘rejected’.

Statistics published on the October 2025 Presidential Election show that 213,738 ballot papers were deemed invalid. This figure represents close to 13% of votes cast and is a more than tenfold increase on the number of spoiled votes in the 2018 presidential election, when 18,438 ballot papers (1.2%) were deemed invalid.

Dublin North-West and Dublin Mid-West recorded the highest number of invalid votes (20%), followed by Dublin South Central (19%).

### Unstamped ballot papers

As set out in s.38(1) of the *Presidential Elections Act, 1993*, a ballot paper shall at the time of issue to a voter be marked with an official mark which shall be either embossed or perforated so as to be visible on both sides of the paper. The marking (‘stamping’) of the ballot paper with the official mark is required for a vote to be counted. The use of stamping instruments at the 2025 Presidential Election is explored further in this report (see ‘Stamping Instrument Trial Cork South-West and Cork North-Central’, p. 51).

213,738 of the 1,656,436 ballot papers cast in the Presidential Election were deemed invalid. Noting the large percentage of invalid votes cast in the presidential election in comparison to previous electoral

events, according to statistics published by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH), of the 1,656,436 ballot papers cast in the Presidential Election, 0.05% (816) were invalid because of the absence of the official mark. This is an improvement on the General Election during which 0.09% (1,956) of the 2,218,302 ballot papers cast were invalid on the basis that the official mark was absent.

Looking at the 213,738 invalid ballots, 0.38% votes were invalid due to the absence of the official mark. Kildare-South recorded the highest number of invalid votes due to want of the official mark (48). An Coimisiún welcomes this reduction in the overall rate of unstamped ballots. An Coimisiún commends the actions taken by returning officers and their election officials to secure such improvements in complying with the legal obligation for the election official to mark the ballot paper.

### Other invalid votes: no clear first preference/unmarked/more than one first preference/writing or mark on ballot paper.

Close to 26% (55,539) of the votes deemed by returning officers to be invalid in October 2025 were due to a first preference not being clearly indicated, including unmarked ballot papers. Given the names of only three candidates were printed on the ballot paper, one of whom having declared they were no longer campaigning in the election, the level of votes ruled as invalid due to no first preference being clear, or unmarked ballot papers is noteworthy.

An Coimisiún notes that the presidential elections’ results booklet 1938-2025 divides invalid votes into four categories for the October 2025 Presidential Election.<sup>14</sup>

**Categories of Invalid Ballot Papers**

Want of Official Mark
First Preference not clearly indicated, including unmarked ballot papers
First Preference indicated for more than one
Writing or mark calculated to identify the voter

In future, the separate recording of ‘unmarked ballot papers’ from the ‘first preference not clearly indicated’ could further assist our understanding of voter behaviour and voter education needs in an election context. An Coimisiún recommends that the reporting forms completed by returning officers after each electoral event be amended taking into account the legislative provisions governing invalid votes, in this case, s.48 of the *Presidential Elections Act, 1993*, so that ‘unmarked ballot papers’ are recorded and counted separately from ballot papers where ‘a first preference is not clearly indicated’.

Ballot papers on which a first preference was indicated for more than one candidate, accounted for almost 15% of ballot papers deemed invalid (31,651). Most notably and as widely reported and commented upon, almost 59% of the invalid (125,732) votes in the Presidential Election were declared invalid due to there being writing or a mark on the ballot paper calculated to identify the voter. An Coimisiún is acutely aware that the adjudication of invalid ballot papers is, ultimately, a matter for the judgment of each individual local returning officer. An Coimisiún observers in count centres noted how the high volumes of votes declared as invalid limited intense scrutiny in the count centre of matters such as how a mark or

writing on every potentially invalid ballot paper was calculated to identify a voter. We were present at some of the sample analysis exercises of doubtful ballots votes conducted by local returning officers in the presence of agents and An Coimisiún observers. An Coimisiún understands the view taken that, logistically, scrutiny of all ballot papers categorised as invalid, was not pragmatic in the interests of facilitating the timely collation of results across each constituency.

An Coimisiún observers also noted, in some instances, that local returning officers in different constituencies adopted different approaches when determining which votes were invalid, and when categorising invalid votes as is their right. In the official breakdown of invalid votes, there were significant disparities in the ratio of invalid votes being classified as belonging to each category from one constituency to the next. For example, some constituencies reported high numbers of ballots with no clear first preference, but none or very few with a first preference for more than one candidate. Conversely, some constituencies reported high numbers of ballots with a first preference for more than one candidate, with far fewer ballots with no clear first preference. It is possible that these disparities stemmed from the local returning officers’ interpretations of the respective categories. While the authority and independence of returning officers in the exercise of their duties must be preserved, it may be beneficial that efforts be made to ensure greater consistency in the adjudication and categorisation of invalid votes across the country.

An Coimisiún recommends that guidance is updated on how and why returning officers may deem a ballot paper to be invalid and under which category of invalid vote it will be designated. An Coimisiún notes the guidance issued to returning officers on invalid votes in Section 22 of

the *Memorandum for the Guidance of Local Returning Officers at the Presidential Election, 24 October 2025*<sup>15</sup> and considers an expanded, separately published, version of this guidance would be of great value and assistance. The application of such guidance during the adjudication process as well as in the subsequent reporting and categorisation of the count results helps to provide a common level of consistency, demonstrating collective agreement on invalid vote adjudication practices generally.

In terms of the remit of An Coimisiún to examine the administration of an electoral event through a PEER report, our chief focus regarding invalid votes is those votes which were ruled as invalid due to the failure by an election official to mark the ballot paper using the stamping instrument provided for this purpose. All such invalid votes demonstrate instances of a failure to comply with electoral law. Apart from this, the choice by a voter when marking their ballot paper is a democratic decision which remains outside of our PEER examination of the administrative aspects of an electoral event. However, the reasons and motivations behind deliberately invalidated votes were explored as part of the Presidential National Election and Democracy Study with results available at [www.neds.ie](http://www.neds.ie)



## 16. Freepost

Shortly after the Presidential Election, An Coimisiún received a report from the Immigrant Council of Ireland highlighting a requirement in some cases to pay for postage if applying to register to vote using the manual paper application form (ERF1)<sup>16</sup>, rather than applying by completing the form online on [www.checktheregister.ie](http://www.checktheregister.ie) or [www.voter.ie](http://www.voter.ie) (Dublin only).

We examined the paper version of the ERF1 Form and noted that on the back of the form it is stated

### Where to send your form

Send your form with any other information needed to your local authority. On the envelope, write 'Electoral Register' and the address of your local authority. **You may post using a standard stamp.**

An Coimisiún understands that local authority guidance on the preparation and maintenance of electoral registers includes reference to the management of the freepost facility in relation to paper applications. However, the guidance does not indicate there is any automatic right or provision for free postage as an alternative to online applications.

An Coimisiún notes there is no reference on the ERF1 form as to how potential electors might avail of a freepost option. In response to a parliamentary question on the matter in May 2023, then Minister for Housing, Local Government, and Heritage, Darragh O'Brien outlined



*“Paper forms are however still an option for those who wish to, or have to use them. I understand that some local authorities currently accept forms that are returned without a fixed stamp and have freepost written on the envelope. As local authorities are liable for the freepost charges, I intend shortly to survey all the local authorities on the matter, following which the issue will be reviewed.”<sup>17</sup>*



It is the stated view of An Coimisiún Toghcháin that no one should have to pay when applying to register to vote. The absence of any reference to freepost on the ERF1 paper application form and lack of consistency in local authorities' policies regarding freepost are not acceptable. It is recommended that a policy of voter registration by freepost in all local authorities is adopted. The freepost option should be clearly flagged to all electors on the ERF1 form.

## 17. Stamping Instrument Trial Cork South-West and Cork North-Central

As set out in s.38 of the *Presidential Elections Act, 1993*

38.—(1) A ballot paper shall at the time of issue be marked with an official mark (in this Act referred to as “the official mark”), which shall **be either embossed or perforated** so as to be visible on both sides of the paper and the local returning officer shall provide a sufficient number of marking instruments for this purpose.

For the past number of decades, the official mark on ballot papers has been made with a stamping instrument that perforates the ballot paper (known as a needle stamp). Given the challenges in maintaining and replacing needle stamps, in advance of the Presidential Election, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage advised An Coimisiún that it had decided, in consultation with returning officers, to phase in the use of embossing seals to make the official mark on ballot papers. The Office of Public Works procured a quantity of embossing seals and the phasing in of these embossing seals commenced in Cork South-West and Cork North-Central. Features of an embossing seal are:

- it is a heavy-duty desktop unit that requires no assembly,
- it embosses a ballot paper with an alphabetical letter that is crisp, sharp and visible on both sides of the paper,
- it allows for interchangeable letters that slide into the seal,
- it is easier and faster to clean in contrast to the maintenance required for the pins on the current perforating needle stamps.

The returning officer for Cork, Ms Sinéad McNamara, confirmed to An Coimisiún staff, attending the issuing of the postal vote for Cork City and County, that the switch from a needle stamp to an embossing seal was being conducted due to issues the OPW were experiencing maintaining the traditional stamping instruments which tend to become blunt over time. Ballots for the other three Cork constituencies (and the rest of the country) were stamped with a perforation, as usual.



Stamping instrument used to emboss ballot papers in Cork South-West and Cork North-Central. [Figure 8]

Although the perforated ballots and the embossed ballots were stamped with the same letter (N) for the Presidential Election, An Coimisiún considered that the embossed stamp on a ballot paper is visibly very different from a perforated ballot paper.



Sample of Embossment [Figure 9]

Feedback received from PEER Observer Teams visiting six of the polling stations trialling the new stamping instrument, indicated in one case that the polling clerk had not noticed the difference in appearance between the new stamping instrument and the stamping instrument used in previous electoral events. In another polling station visited, a member of staff commented that they found embossing a less visible indicator than a perforation on the ballot paper. Polling station staff in Mallow expressed satisfaction with the embossing seal to the visiting PEER observer team.



Perforated ballot paper [Figure 10]

## 18. Island Voting

Part 8 of the *Electoral Reform Act 2022* amended electoral legislation to the effect that voting on all 19 offshore islands where polling stations are located now takes place on the same day as in the rest of the country. The Family and Care Referendums held in March 2024 marked the first occasion where all offshore islands voted on the same day as the mainland.

### Offshore islands where polling stations are located:

#### Cork South-West

- Bere Island (population:<sup>18</sup> 218)
- Cléire (population: 110)
- Dursey Island (population: 3)
- Hare Island (population: 22)
- Whiddy Island (population: 31)
- Long Island, Schull (population: 17)
- Sherkin Island (population: 110)

#### Donegal

- Árainn Mhór (population: 478)
- Gabhla (population: 15)
- Inis Bó Finne (population: 16)
- Inis Fraoigh (population: 0<sup>19</sup>)
- Toraigh (population: 141)

#### Galway West

- Inis Mór (population: 820)
- Inis Meáin (population: 184)
- Inis Oírr (population: 343)
- Inishbofin (population: 184)

#### Mayo

- Clare Island (population: 138)
- Inis Bigil (population: 12)
- Inishturk (population: 56)

(Population figures retrieved from Census 2022 results)



Whiddy Island



Whiddy Island

As part of previous PEER exercises, An Coimisiún visited polling stations in Árainn Mhór, Co. Donegal; Sherkin Island, Co.Cork; and Inis Oírr, Co. Galway.

Of the 100 polling stations visited on polling day of the Presidential Election, two polling stations were situated on offshore islands: The Old School House (Whiddy Island, Co. Cork) and Clare Island N.S. (Clare Island, Co. Mayo).

As set out in s.86 of the *Electoral Act, 1992* as amended by s.200 of the *Electoral Reform Act 2022*, where necessary, there is the facility to shorten polling hours on any of the 19 islands if local circumstances such as the “sudden onset of stress of weather or unforeseen transport difficulties” require such measures. Equally provided for in this legislation, is the scenario where a presiding officer may close the poll if they are of the opinion that, if the poll were to continue, the ballot boxes could not reach the place for the counting of the votes at or before the hour of 9 a.m. on the day after polling day. The PEER observer team on Clare Island reported these provisions were availed of, when due to bad weather in Mayo and Donegal, some island polling stations had to close early to ensure that the ballot boxes could get back to the count centres in time for counting. On Whiddy Island, the PEER observer team similarly reported polling station staff indicating that the polling station would be closing ‘around 7’ in order to get the ballot box back to the mainland in time.



Clare Island

In terms of same day voting, feedback so far seems to be varied. Logistical hurdles on Inis Bigil (Co. Mayo) on polling day were outlined to PEER observers concerning the ballot box needing to be delivered by the coast guard due to inclement weather. On Clare Island, the Garda with custody of the ballot box arrived the night before polling commenced and remained on the island till the poll closed. The PEER observer team on Clare Island were advised that advance voting was in many ways easier than same day voting, including from a Garda planning perspective.

Island voters may now exercise their democratic franchise on the same day as other voters. Naturally, islanders embrace same day voting as having achieved a long-sought parity in voting rights. For many years, islanders had complained of having to cast their votes ahead of the mainland, in some instances before the final events of the campaign had taken place. The logistical issues posed by coastal weather and transport modes are hazards that potentially impede the ability to provide the same voting window on polling day

as mainland voters. The need for the contingency measures to be instigated as provided for in the *Electoral Act, 1992* as amended by the *Electoral Reform Act 2022* is noted.

Regarding the population figures of the offshore islands on which polling stations are situated, the policy paper *Our Living Islands. National Islands Policy 2023-2033*<sup>20</sup> outlines that “Over 20% of the islands’ population in 2016 were aged 65 years and older; this is considerably higher than the national average of 12% for that age cohort.” Looking at the Census 2022 population figures, we estimate that over a quarter of the islands’ population were aged 65 years plus in comparison to a national average of 15.1% of persons.<sup>21</sup> A higher-than-average elderly population on our offshore islands signals that the polling stations utilised there need to cater for elderly voters, who may have additional support needs due to age and infirmity.

Regarding accessibility for wheelchair users, out of the five island polling stations visited to date, the polling station on

## Home

---

### IMPORTANT - Island Weather Notice

*Local Returning Office*  
 Courthouse  
 Letterkenny  
 County Donegal  
 Telephone: 074 – 9202091 (5:00-8:00pm)  
 Email: info@donegalreturningofficer.com

*Offis an Cheann Comhairimh Áitiúil*  
 Teach an Chuirte  
 Leitir Ceanainn  
 Dun na nGall  
 Teileafón: 074 – 9202091 (5:00-8:00pm)

**Due to inclement weather forecast for Friday afternoon**

**There is a change of closing time of the Poll at both polling stations at Arranmore Island to 7pm in place of 7.30pm due to weather forecast.**

James Canny  
 Local Returning Officer

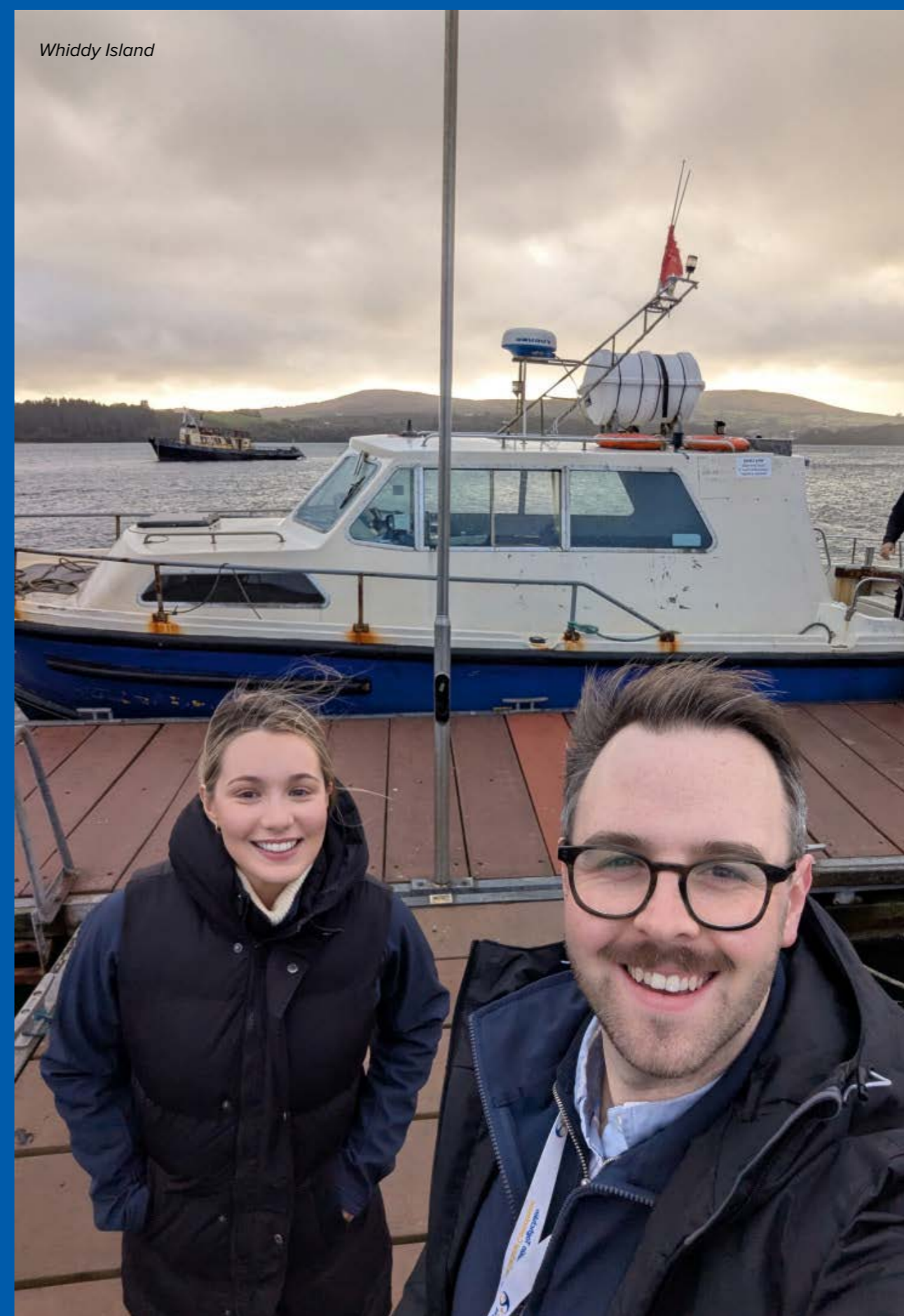
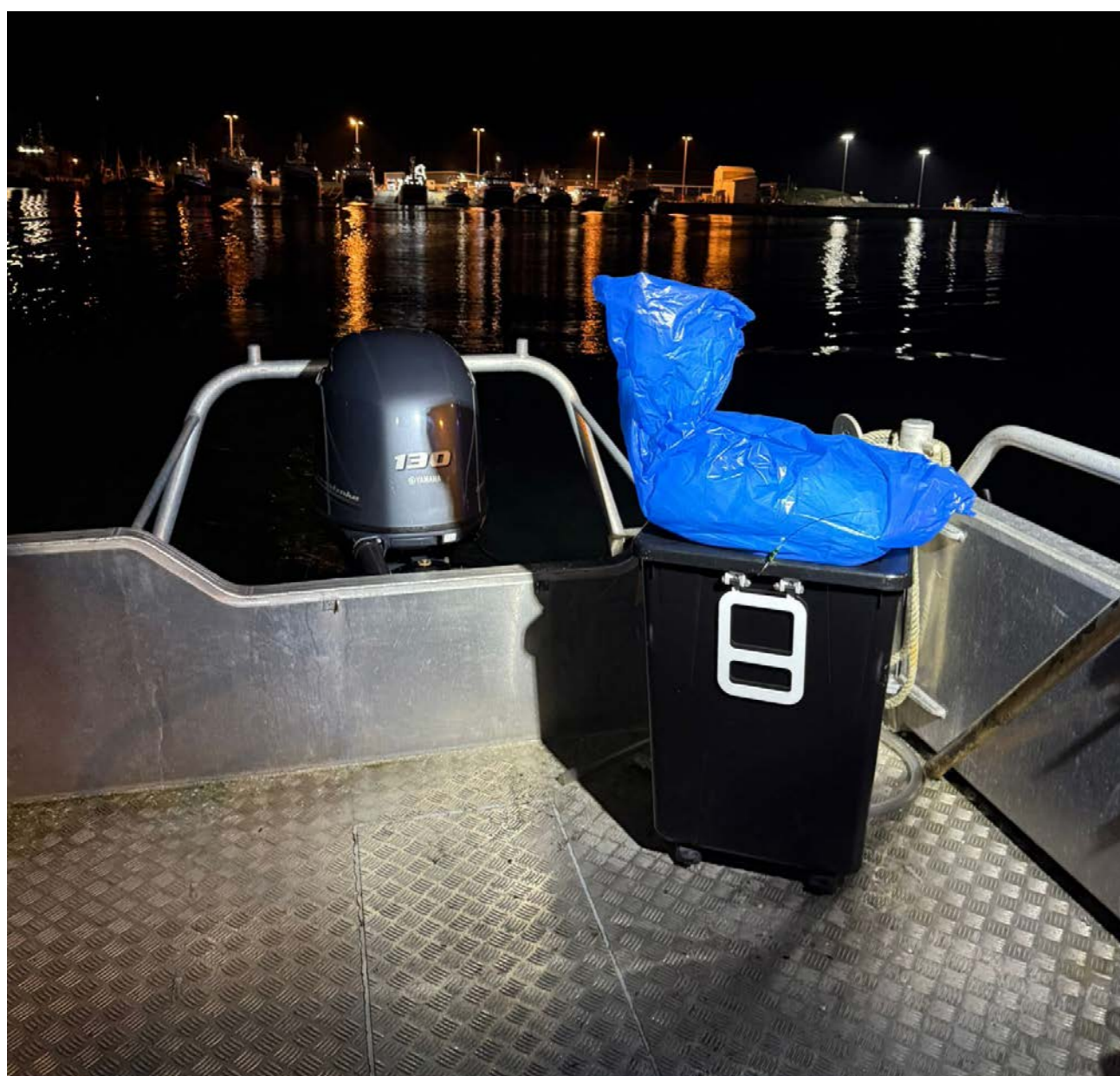
Figure 11

Notice on [donegalreturningofficer.com/](http://donegalreturningofficer.com/)

Sherkin Island had a primary entrance that was not accessible to wheelchair users but offered an alternative entrance with a permanent ramp which was marked as 'wheelchair user accessible'. The PEER observer team were advised whilst visiting this polling station, that a new hall due to be completed in 2026 would be used thereafter as the polling station. Elsewhere, the polling station on Clare Island had an internal doorway into the room where polling booths were located which the PEER observer team did not consider would be accessible to an elector with a physical disability.

An Coimisiún wishes to understand more closely the island voting experience and plans to observe voting on the islands on polling day whenever possible, including as part of the Dáil bye-election for the Galway West constituency in 2026.

*Bere Island*



## 19. Accessibility Overview

The *National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People 2025-2030*<sup>22</sup> was published in September 2025. This strategy is Ireland’s plan to achieve full compliance with its obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) which was ratified by Ireland in 2018. An Coimisiún notes the reference in the Strategy to the right of equal participation in political and public life for persons with disabilities as enshrined in Article 29 of the UNCRPD.

Given the provisions set out in the *Electoral Reform Act 2022*, PEER reports to date have resolutely focused on the challenges faced when voting by electors with disabilities. As noted by Art O’Leary, Chief Executive, An Coimisiún Toghcháin in his address to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Disability Matters in July 2025, “a golden thread” running through each PEER has been the consistent focus on accessibility. Integrating accessibility into every stage of the electoral process is crucial:

“Democracy is only truly representative when it includes everyone. That means ensuring people with disabilities are not just counted but heard. Many people with disabilities face barriers to participation and voting, whether physical, informational, attitudinal or systemic. These obstacles do not just deny individuals their rights; they weaken our democracy. Voting is not just a civic duty; it is a way to shape the systems that directly affect people’s lives: transport, housing, healthcare and education. Disabled people must have a say in those decisions - not just as an afterthought but as active participants. When accessibility is built into every stage of the electoral process, from

enrolment to casting a ballot, we uphold not only the right to vote but the dignity and agency of every citizen. True inclusion means accessible polling places, plain-language materials, assistive technology and respectful attitudes. It means ensuring that all people’s needs are supported, not excluded.<sup>23</sup>”

Over the course of the PEERs conducted to date, we have directly observed and gained rich insights into how central accessibility is to the act of voting. General access issues to polling stations may be encountered by some voters due to physical frailty caused by ill-health or old age. Specific obstacles to the voting experience may be physical or sensory such as for wheelchair users, visually impaired voters or electors from the Deaf Community. Alternatively, challenges may be posed at polling stations through the environment and lay-out in which voting takes place, for example, neurodivergent electors may require settings adapted to their needs, or voters with intellectual disabilities might need the voting process to be made clear in a manner tailored to their understanding.

## 20. Seeing is Understanding Case Studies

For the 2024 General Election, we expanded our PEER focus on accessibility to a broader ‘seeing is understanding’ approach by conducting a case study in association with the Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA). This initial case study entailed one PEER observer team meeting with IWA service-users as they voted in five polling stations across the Belmullet Peninsula in North Mayo.

Following the success of this observation exercise and the learnings gained, we collaborated with the IWA once again for the Presidential Election. We noted the IWA had since become a member of the **Groups Experiencing Barriers Working Group** established in early 2025 by An Coimisiún to assist in the development of its *Education and Public Engagement Strategy*.

In terms of our observations on the ground on polling day, as well as focusing on the experiences of wheelchair users, the needs and views of voters with intellectual disabilities is an area we turned to in this PEER for the first time. Down Syndrome Ireland, also a member of the **Groups Experiencing Barriers Working Group**, agreed to work with An Coimisiún and organised for us to meet with some of its members to capture their experiences on polling day.

Our collaborations with the Irish Wheelchair Association and Down Syndrome Ireland tie in with the ‘Next Steps’ identified in our *Post Electoral Event Review of the General Election* | 29 November 2024.<sup>24</sup>



“For the presidential PEER, the voting experiences of electors with disabilities will be examined in consultation with the Groups Experiencing Barriers Working Group established by An Coimisiún.” (p.65)



These actions were also in line with a general commitment in the same PEER report that



“The presidential election PEER approach and plan will be devised in consultation with the groups established by An Coimisiún to assist in the development of its Education and Public Engagement Strategy.” (p.11)



Initially when planning our ‘**seeing is understanding**’ set of case studies for the Presidential Election, we sought to collaborate with a Disabled Person’s Organisation. In July and September 2025, we contacted two Disabled Person’s Organisations to propose individual meetings to discuss their possible participation as part of the PEER election observations to be conducted in October 2025. Unfortunately, possibly due to the many and varied pressures on the resources of Disabled Person’s Organisations, these contacts did not prove to be fruitful in terms of delivering engagement. We would like to emphasise that we wish to collaborate with Disabled Person’s Organisations in the future, including possibly as part of the PEER exercises to take place in conjunction with the Dáil bye-elections for the Galway West and Dublin Central constituencies in 2026. We also welcome the stakeholder engagement structures being set up as part of the *National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People 2025-2030* to ensure the full participation of DPOs in the creation and governance of all Government initiatives, policies and services affecting disabled people.

Regarding our general engagement programme on the PEER reports with Disabled Person’s Organisations, Disability Service Providers and other civil society organisations, copies of previous PEER reports have been circulated to: Physical Impairment Ireland, Voice of Vision Impairment, AsIAm, Disabled Women Ireland, Independent Living Movement Ireland, Irish Deaf Society and National Platform of Self-Advocates. In addition, copies of the PEER were circulated to the following Disability Service Providers and organisations: the National Disability Authority, Inclusion Ireland, Irish Wheelchair Association, Mental Health Reform, Disability Federation and Down Syndrome Ireland. Several of these organisations have responded following receipt of the PEER reports, providing insightful feedback and views.



## 21. IWA Case Study



Following the success of our inaugural case study with the Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA) during the 2024 General Election, we met with the IWA to discuss plans to conduct a repeat exercise in connection with the Presidential Election. Based on an itinerary drawn up by the IWA and agreed with An Coimisiún, we travelled to Co. Donegal to meet with IWA service users on polling day.

By prior arrangement, a PEER observer team comprised of two staff from An Coimisiún met with five voters on their arrival to each of the five polling stations in which they were designated to vote.

### Newtowncunningham N.S.

An Coimisiún PEER observers attended Newtowncunningham N.S. with Katriona O’Laughlin, a wheelchair user, who had used the IWA’s accessible bus service to access the polling station on polling day.

The presiding officer advised the PEER observers that accessibility works had recently been completed on the primary entrance to the polling station in advance of the Presidential Election. Despite this, in the opinion of the PEER observers, the gradient of the ramp at the entrance presented accessibility complications for an unaccompanied wheelchair user. As regards the voting process, Katriona voted without issue. Overall, Katriona indicated that her experience at the polling station was a positive experience. However, regarding the entrance to the polling station, PEER observers noted Katriona was assisted by the IWA in using the ramp and Katriona herself commented she would have been unable to access the polling station if unaccompanied. In terms of an accessible voting booth, we noted that a low-level voting compartment was provided.

### Scoil Mhuire gan Smál

As PEER observers, we attended Scoil Mhuire gan Smál with IWA service user John Doherty, a visually impaired elector. John attended the polling station with a voting companion who was a family member. In terms of accessibility, we noted there was an accessible permanent ramp at the entrance to the polling station. In terms of layout and internal accessibility, PEER observers noted the poll was conducted in several classrooms and considered there was limited space internally within the classrooms but despite this, the space was intuitively organised.

PEER observers noted that to aid in the flow of voting in the polling station, the supervisory presiding officer had established an information desk at the entrance to the polling station. John advised us that his experience at the

polling station was mixed, as the poll was previously conducted in the hall rather than in classrooms, which had presented fewer obstacles for him as a visually impaired person. According to John, while he was able to vote with his voting companion without issue, he had difficulty identifying their assigned polling booth and John considered that the decision to conduct the poll in classrooms contributed to this issue. In terms of an accessible voting booth, we noted that a low-level voting compartment was provided.

### S.N. Naomh Baoithín

We attended S.N. Naomh Baoithín with IWA service user Dorothy Robinson, a wheelchair user. Primary entrance to the polling station was an accessible level entrance. In terms of internal layout and circulating space, we considered that the positioning of the voting compartments provided limited space. As an electric wheelchair user, Dorothy initially experienced issues accessing the low-level voting compartment which was situated against the wall. In response, the presiding officer advised they would re-arrange the voting compartment. Dorothy confirmed that once the voting compartment was moved out away from the wall, she voted without issue and that overall that her experience at the polling station was a positive one. As well as the introduction of the low-level compartment being of great assistance, Dorothy advised that previously this was a polling station which had been inaccessible, but this time, following a school building extension, a new area was being used in which to vote.

### The Old Courthouse

We attended the Old Courthouse with IWA service user Mary T. Gallagher, a rollator user. As PEER observers, we noted there were obstacles to accessibility at the entrance to the polling station. Access for wheelchair users on the approach involved an incline that presented accessibility complications for unaccompanied wheelchair users and electors with a physical disability of some kind. Primary entrance to the polling station was via an accessible level entrance. In terms of an accessible voting booth, we noted that a low-level voting compartment was provided for voters. Mary outlined to PEER observers that she had a mixed voting experience, being able to vote inside the polling station without issue but had difficulty accessing the polling station because of the incline. An Coimisiún was advised that an alternative polling station to the Old Courthouse will be used in further elections.



### Kilmacrennan N.S.

As PEER observers, we attended Kilmacrennan N.S. and met with Martin Cassidy, a wheelchair user. We noted that the primary entrance to the polling station was an accessible level entrance that provided ample circulating space between the external and internal doors. In terms of accessibility, the external doors at the

entrance to the polling station were in a closed position, presenting complications for unaccompanied wheelchair users. Martin outlined to us that as the external doors were manually operated, he required assistance from his voting companion to enter the polling station. In terms of voting, the poll was conducted in an accessible area with ample circulating space. Voting compartments were arranged in an intuitive layout that afforded voters adequate privacy. As regards accessible voting, a low-level voting compartment was provided for voters. In terms of the voting process and experience, Martin indicated that he voted without issues and his experience at the polling station was a positive one.

An Coimisiún wishes to extend thanks to the IWA, for its organisation of the logistics in connection with this exercise, to Nicole Sheridan and to Owen McFadden for their dedicated support and cooperation on the day. Meeting with the IWA service users in Co. Donegal provided us with a comprehensive account of these voters' journeys from their physical approach to each of the polling stations as well as their voting experiences inside. We extend our thanks to all the voters who agreed to meet with us to share their voting experiences and views.



## 22.DSI Case Study



*“People with Down syndrome are an audience that matters deeply to all of us in An Coimisiún Toghcháin, both professionally and personally. Their voices, choices and participation enrich our democracy. Ensuring that they are supported to take part fully is not an optional extra - it goes to the heart of what a healthy, fair society looks like.”*

*Art O’Leary, Chief Executive,  
An Coimisiún Toghcháin*



In September 2025, we decided to conduct a case study with Down Syndrome Ireland (DSI) in which we would observe electors with Down syndrome, who potentially had additional support needs, voting in their polling stations. We met with DSI in advance of the Presidential Election to discuss plans to meet with their members on polling day. DSI identified a group of students who are members of DSI’s Kerry branch and drew up an itinerary accordingly. The voters agreeing to participate in the case study were all students at Munster Technological University’s Tralee Campus who were registered to vote across a variety of electoral districts in Co. Kerry. The itinerary for the day was designed so that students and their families could vote at a time convenient to them and which

would not interfere with their attendance at university. Sinéad Flynn, Head of Further Education and Training in DSI confirmed her attendance in Kerry on polling day to oversee the exercise on behalf of DSI.

By prior arrangement, on polling day a PEER observer team comprised of two staff from An Coimisiún met with five voters and their families on their arrival to each of the four polling stations in which they were designated to vote [C.B.S. Primary School, Tralee; Cullina N.S, Beaufort; Presentation Primary School, Listowel; and St. Oliver’s N.S., Ballylongford]. We also had the opportunity to speak with the voters and their families once they had cast their ballot, which was a useful opportunity for us to gather feedback and gain first-hand insights into the voting experience of voters with an intellectual disability. We were pleased to receive overwhelmingly positive feedback



from the students on their voting experience, all of whom voted independently without assistance. We thanked the students and their families for agreeing to meet with us.

We first met MTU student Yann O’Carroll in Tralee, having come straight from college to cast his vote. Yann told us that he hasn’t missed a vote since he turned 18 and watches the news on TV every night. He had been following the campaign and carefully considered who to vote for before polling day.

We met Maurice Flavin and Stephen Faley at their polling station in Ballylongford, both avid voters. Maurice noted how positive the voting experience had been for him. We were informed as we were introduced to Stephen “If you need to know anything about politics, this is your man.” Having cast his vote, Stephen told us about his visits to Kerry County Council, Leinster House and Brussels: “I’m just waiting for tomorrow now; I’ll be watching the results all day.”

Stephen told us that he also had experience voting on Down Syndrome Ireland’s Kerry Regional Advisory Council – a council that comprises adults with Down syndrome, of which Stephen is the Co-Chairperson.

We accompanied Dale O’Carroll into his polling station in Listowel and heard from Dale afterwards that he had a very positive experience independently casting his vote. Dale told us about the webinar on the Presidential Election which he had watched – a collaboration between An Coimisiún and DSI. He said he learned a lot about how to vote and the President’s role. He found this very useful. Finally, we met James Doyle at Cullina National School in Beaufort. James let us know that he had also voted at every electoral event since he turned 18 and enjoyed his experience on polling day. We also had a chance encounter with DSI member and friend of James, Anthony O’Connor, who was looking forward to casting his vote.





In each of the polling stations visited, our PEER observer team consulted the same PEER checklist used by all PEER observer teams to assess the conditions and materials available, as well as gathering feedback directly from the voters and their families. In terms of general accessibility, we noted each polling station visited for the case study had a permanent ramp at the entrance to the polling station. Inside all four polling stations, we saw that a low-level voting compartment was provided for electors.

In two polling stations (CBS Primary School, Tralee; Presentation Primary School, Listowel), the ballot box was positioned on a table which we considered might present issues for wheelchair users and other voters with a disability. In one of these polling stations, a parent of one of the students shared with us that the positioning of the ballot box on a table had made it difficult for her son to place his ballot in the ballot box. In all of the polling stations visited, the large-print notice of the ballot paper was displayed within the polling stations but not in the voting booths. Regarding parking conditions, two of the four polling stations

had designated accessible car-parking available and all four had adequate general car-parking space.

Our key takeaway from this observation exercise was that after meeting with a group of voters who potentially had additional support needs, we concluded that no additional supports were in fact required on the day for any of the voters encountered. Although initially accompanied into the polling station by their parents or family, all the students we met with voted independently. Certain voters with Down syndrome and other intellectual disabilities may require additional assistance, which is provided for in legislation and can be offered by either a companion of the voter or the polling station staff themselves. However, the layout of the four polling stations visited, and the conduct of the staff therein ensured that the five voters we met could complete the entirety of the voting process independently and come away feeling positive about their experience. An Coimisiún welcomes this facilitation of voters' right to privacy and dignity during the voting process.

In terms of information on voting and elections intended to be of assistance to voters with Down syndrome or other intellectual disabilities, An Coimisiún has worked with DSI to host webinars with its members throughout the country to take them through voting, how to vote and the supports that are available at the voting booth. In collaboration with Inclusion Ireland and DSI, we have also produced Easy-to-Read guides and educational videos on the voting process and elections, including a webinar hosted by member Conor O'Donnell.<sup>25</sup>

An Coimisiún is hugely grateful to DSI, for its organisation of the logistics in connection with this exercise, to Michelle Burke, Tutor in MTU, and to Sinéad Flynn for her dedicated support and cooperation on the day. Meeting and observing the students as they arrived to vote and speaking with them afterwards, provided An Coimisiún with a complete and positive picture of their voting experience. We would also like to thank the voters and their families, for so generously sharing their insights and allowing us to accompany them on polling day.



## 23. Assigning and Altering Polling Stations and Polling Places

### Polling Scheme Drafting Process

A polling scheme divides the county into Electoral Areas, Electoral Divisions, Polling Districts and Townlands for the purpose of electoral events and appoints a polling place for each polling district.

Polling schemes must be updated at least every 10 years or in the event of any electoral boundary changes.

Corporate Services units in local authorities are responsible for drafting polling schemes. The drafting process involves the examination of an existing polling scheme and the designated polling places used in conducting elections under that polling scheme.

Material developments in the Local Authority area, including urban development and infrastructural expansion, demographic evolution, administrative and electoral boundary decisions are all considered. To accommodate material developments, parts of administrative areas including electoral divisions and townlands are transferred from polling district to polling district as required. Equally, a polling district may be created or dissolved in accordance with practical requirements. As regards the electorate, efforts are made to ensure that voters are assigned to a polling district that will enable them to vote at their closest polling place. A degree of adaptability is often included in the designation of a polling place for a polling district, for example, a polling scheme may designate a particular area as a polling place rather than a particular premises. This is intended to enable returning officers to adapt to issues closer to polling day.

A draft polling scheme is circulated to councillors and returning officers for their consideration. A public consultation is also conducted, providing an opportunity for members of the public and civil society organisations to offer input on the draft proposal and engage materially with the process. Public consultation represents a valuable opportunity for Disability Service Providers (DSPs), Disabled Persons' Organisations (DPOs), and members of the disabled community to provide input in respect of the polling scheme. Once the public consultation period is ended, the draft polling scheme is revised, if applicable, to account for proposed amendments. As the adoption of a polling scheme is a reserved function of the council, it is then voted on by council members. Once the polling scheme is adopted by council members it is confirmed by the Minister for the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage.

### Local Authority Access Officer Polling Station Audits

Local Authority Access Officers are a valuable resource for evaluating accessibility levels. Appointed in accordance with s. 26(2) of the *Disability Act 2005*, these Access Officers are responsible for providing and co-ordinating assistance and guidance to persons with disabilities accessing services provided by a local authority. Access Officers may subsequently offer advice or make recommendations on improvements to these services.

When conducting a case study in the Donegal constituency with the Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA) during

the Presidential Election, An Coimisiún was advised of an accessibility audit of polling stations conducted by Donegal County Council (DCC)'s Access Officer in connection with the Family and Care referendums on 8 March 2024.

In the 'Notice of Inaccessible Polling Stations' issued by the returning officer for the March referendums, polling stations at Culdaff N.S., Malin Head N.S., and Rann na Feirste S.N. were identified as inaccessible to wheelchair users. On polling day, 8 March 2024, the DCC Access Officer observed the poll at a selection of polling stations, assessing issues including accessible parking, accessible entry, internal accessibility, accessible voting, and disability awareness. Following the audit, the DCC Access Officer engaged with the constituency returning officer regarding the accessibility of several polling stations in the Donegal constituency. For the June local and European elections, a PEER observer team visiting Malin Head noted that Malin Head N.S. had been switched at late notice by the returning officer to an accessible premises in Malin Head. The PEER observer team also visited Rann na Feirste S.N and observed the presence of a temporary wheelchair ramp at the entrance to the building and considered it provided ease of access for wheelchair users on polling day.

### Considerations of a Returning Officer: Administration, Preparation & Process

In preparation for an election, returning officers may engage with the local authority, including their Access Officers on various administrative issues, including the selection of polling stations. Through this engagement the returning officer will be aware of council-owned premises which are available, or unavailable, for use on polling day. In addition, this engagement provides

the local authority with the opportunity to advise returning officers of any improvements to accessibility infrastructure in council-owned premises. Equally, post-election engagement enables returning officers to advise the local authority of any issues arising from the use of council-owned premises.

In assigning polling stations, returning officers depend on information provided by their appointed local area inspectors. Employed by returning officers to assist in the administration of elections, local area inspectors provide administrative and logistical oversight on polling day. In preparation for an election, local area inspectors conduct inspections of previously used polling stations in the constituency, affirming that premises under consideration as polling station are adequate for the purposes of conducting the poll. These inspections are consistent with recommendations related to polling station inspection contained in a Departmental Circular (18-91). Inspections conducted by local area inspectors include an accessibility assessment. In addition to conducting pre-election inspections of polling stations, local area inspectors may conduct a post-election review of polling stations, particularly if issues are registered at a polling station. Such reviews may include the perspective of the presiding officers assigned to the polling place on polling day. In addition to the evaluations conducted by local area inspectors, returning officers may also observe the poll at multiple polling places on polling day.



Figure 12

### Public Awareness

Consistency is useful in assigning polling places, allowing voters to develop an awareness of their polling place. International evidence indicates that polling place alteration and consolidation may result in reduced in-person voter turnout. In this respect, there is an incentive for returning officers to use polling places used in previous elections, provided they are consistent with accessibility requirements, in addition to ensuring that returning officers and the election administrators including presiding officers and poll clerks will be familiar with the use of the premises.

### Voter Proximity

Voter proximity provides an indication of the level of geographical accessibility involved for a voter to travel to the polling place. In selecting polling places, it is integral that considerations of infrastructural accessibility are balanced with those of geographical accessibility and voter proximity, particularly the case in rural areas with limited premises available for use. Disabled voters may experience complications in terms of independent travel and so a polling place with developed accessibility infrastructure is of limited value to disabled voters if it is difficult to travel to.

### Availability of Premises

In practice, returning officers are entitled to preferential use of publicly owned premises such as council-owned premises and publicly funded schools. The use of privately owned premises may present issues for returning officers. As the timing of some electoral events can be uncertain, it may be difficult for returning officers to reserve privately owned premises, as an organisation or individual may have reserved a privately owned premises in advance of any electoral event being scheduled.

### Cost

Expenses connected with the use of a premises vary depending on the type of premises used. Returning officers are entitled to use publicly owned premises which incur minimal expenditure, such as the use of a primary school. In contrast, privately owned premises may incur higher expense.



Figure 13

## 24. Postal Voting, ACT/IDEA Joint Study

Section 64 of the *Electoral Reform Act 2022* allows An Coimisiún to “commission or conduct research on electoral policy and procedure.” In its [Annual Report 2024](#), An Coimisiún committed that its “research on potential methods to enhance ease of voting will aim to provide the evidence to start a debate in this country as to the merits of our current voting system and the various options for reform.”<sup>26</sup>

Following a period of public consultation, An Coimisiún published its [Research Programme 2024-2026](#) on 10 July 2024 in which it committed to conducting research on postal and advance voting. The research programme identified postal voting as a priority area of research for An Coimisiún and committed to exploring “the potential for the expansion of postal voting, its advantages and disadvantages and options in this regard.”<sup>27</sup> Advance voting was also identified more broadly as a priority area of research in the research programme. Apart from the special voting conducted in hospitals, nursing homes and similar institutions, there is currently no provision

for in-person advance voting at Irish electoral events.

To this end, An Coimisiún is in the process of commissioning a research project on the topic of postal and advance voting, with the objective of assessing the feasibility and desirability of expanding such practices in the Irish electoral system. This research will engage with key stakeholders and examine international evidence and experience to evaluate the current system of advance voting in Ireland, international case studies to identify and assess, the potential positive and negative implications of expanding postal or further in person advance voting (e.g. for accessibility and participation, electoral integrity etc), and consider the practical considerations of such electoral reform. An Coimisiún may, in line with its statutory powers under s.64 of the Act, make recommendations to the Minister and the Government stemming from this research.

It is anticipated that this research will be published in the first half of 2027.



## 25. Special Voting

The special vote is for persons ordinarily resident in a hospital, nursing home or similar institution. *The Electoral Reform Act 2022* extended the special vote to allow electors ordinarily resident in psychiatric or mental health facilities to apply to be included in the special voters’ list. Eligible electors can vote at these locations in the days prior to an electoral event by completing a ballot paper brought to them by a special presiding officer who is accompanied by a member of An Garda Síochána.

As currently set out in s.82.2 of the *Electoral Act, 1992* as applied by s.41(2) of the *Presidential Elections Act, 1993*,

(2) No person other than the special presiding officer and the member of the Garda Síochána shall be present when the special voter is voting pursuant to this section.

The *Memorandum for the Guidance of Local Returning Officers at the Presidential Election, 24 October 2025*<sup>28</sup> specifically refers to this condition of attendance also.



In October 2025, An Coimisiún received the consent of two returning officers to attend, in an observer capacity, the administration of the special vote in Dáil constituencies in Dublin and Offaly.

On 15 October 2025, staff members from An Coimisiún met with special presiding officers and members of An Garda Síochána in nursing homes situated in the Dáil constituencies of Offaly and Dublin Bay North. We witnessed at a remove (outside of the room where the voting took place) the administration of the special vote in two nursing homes.

Whilst the assistance and co-operation of the returning officers for Offaly and Dublin City are most appreciated, An Coimisiún noted the constraints placed on our observers when attending the special voting, namely we were required to remain outside of the rooms - designated communal areas - in which the voting took place. We duly observed these conditions of attendance. Having reflected further on the issues encountered regarding the extent permitted to our observations, An Coimisiún endorses the international best practice standards highlighted in the *International IDEA Handbook on Special Voting Arrangements*:



*“When mobile voting takes place in publicly accessible premises such as hospitals, care homes and places of detention, observers should be able to access them on the same terms as polling staff...Observers should be able to verify the records and materials pertaining to mobile voting—for instance, the number of approved applications, the number of issued ballots, the number of returned ballots, and the voter list records for each day of mobile voting. As with other Special Voting Arrangements (SVAs), confidence in the integrity of election administration enhances confidence in this voting method.”<sup>29</sup> pp.129-130*



As recommended previously, express legal provision for our attendance and observance at electoral events is sought by An Coimisiún (see section ‘Attendance and Observance of Electoral Events’, p. 12). Whilst calling for enabling legislation to extend and enhance our observation of special voting, An Coimisiún does not intend for such access to extend beyond the communal areas designated for special voting. Special voting conducted in the rooms of persons residing in hospitals, nursing homes and care institutions is categorically outside of the scope of our observation activities or requirements.

## 26. Postal and Special Voting Data

### Special Votes

#### Presidential Election: Special Votes Breakdown

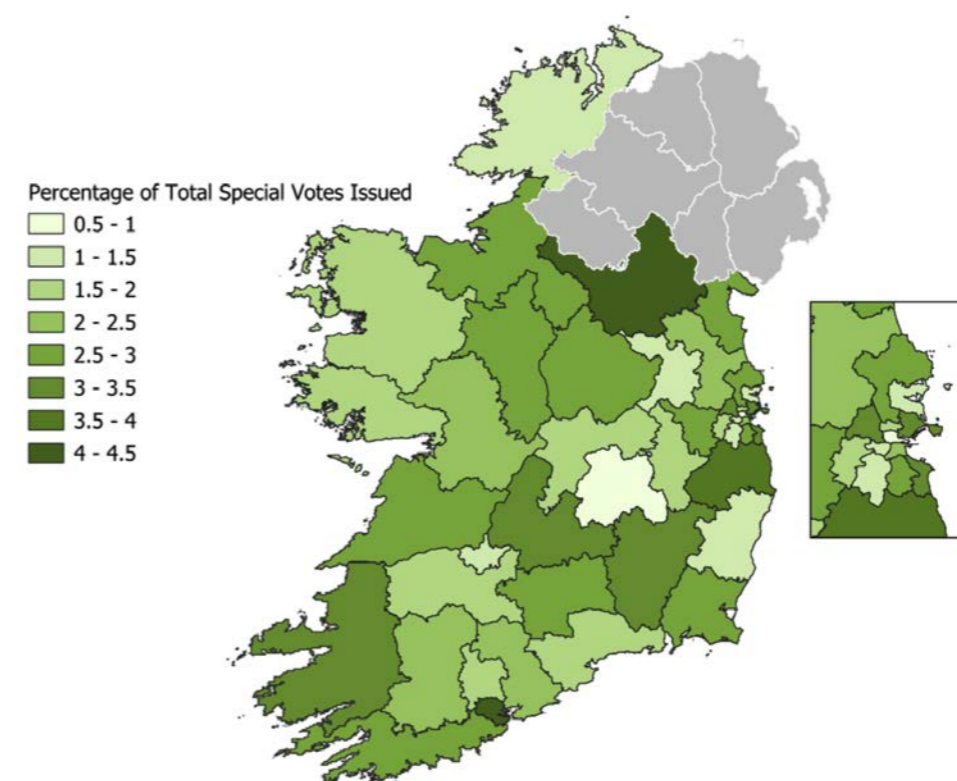
Vote Category	Vote Status	Number of Votes	% of Registered Voters
<b>Registered Special Votes</b>	–	16,154	100.00
<b>Issued Special Votes</b>	–	8,336	51.60
<b>Received Special Votes</b>	Rejected Special Ballots	28	0.17
	Accepted Special Ballots	8,308	51.43

There were 16,154 voters registered for a special vote in October 2025 in comparison to 15,510 for the general election in November 2024. Of these registered

voters, 8,336 (51.6%) were issued with the special vote. For the general election, of the 15,510 registered, 9,902 (63.8%) were issued with the special vote.

### Special Votes Constituency Breakdown

Presidential Election 2025: Issued Special Votes by Constituency



Cork South-Central was the constituency with the highest number of special votes issued (344) out of the total of 8,336 special votes issued nationwide. Cavan-Monaghan and Wicklow were also seen to have a large share of issued special votes with 342 and 333 special ballots issued respectively.

### Postal Votes

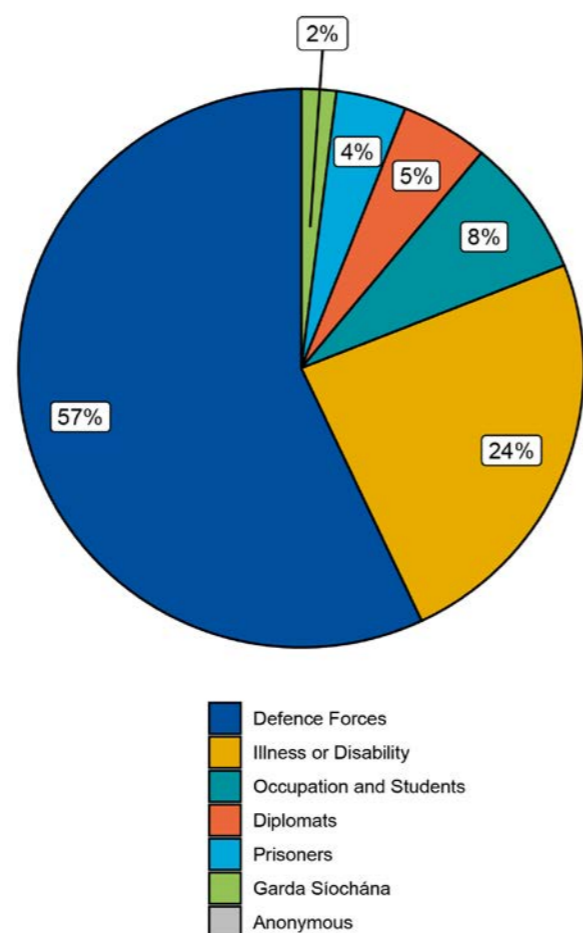
In the month of the October 2025, 14,290 electors were registered for a postal vote for the Presidential Election in comparison to 15,499 for the General Election in November 2024.

#### Postal Vote Registrations by Category

Category	Number of Registered Voters
Defence Forces	8,117
Illness or Disability	3,415
Occupation and Students	1,108
Diplomats	732
Prisoners	557
Garda Síochána	314
Anonymous	47
<b>Total Registered Postal Voters</b>	<b>14,290</b>

Out of the 14,290 registered postal voters, 3,415 electors were registered for the postal vote due to disability or a medical condition. This is a slight decrease in the numbers registered (3,564) for this reason for the general election in November 2024. Overall, 24% of postal voters were registered due to illness or disability for the presidential election in comparison to 23% for the November 2024 general election. Members of the Defence Forces were the largest category of those registered for a postal vote in the presidential election, amounting to 57% of postal vote registrations (8,117 votes). The number of prisoners registered to vote increased from 492 in November 2024 to 557 in October 2025.

Postal Vote Registration by Category (October 2025)



### Postal Votes Breakdown

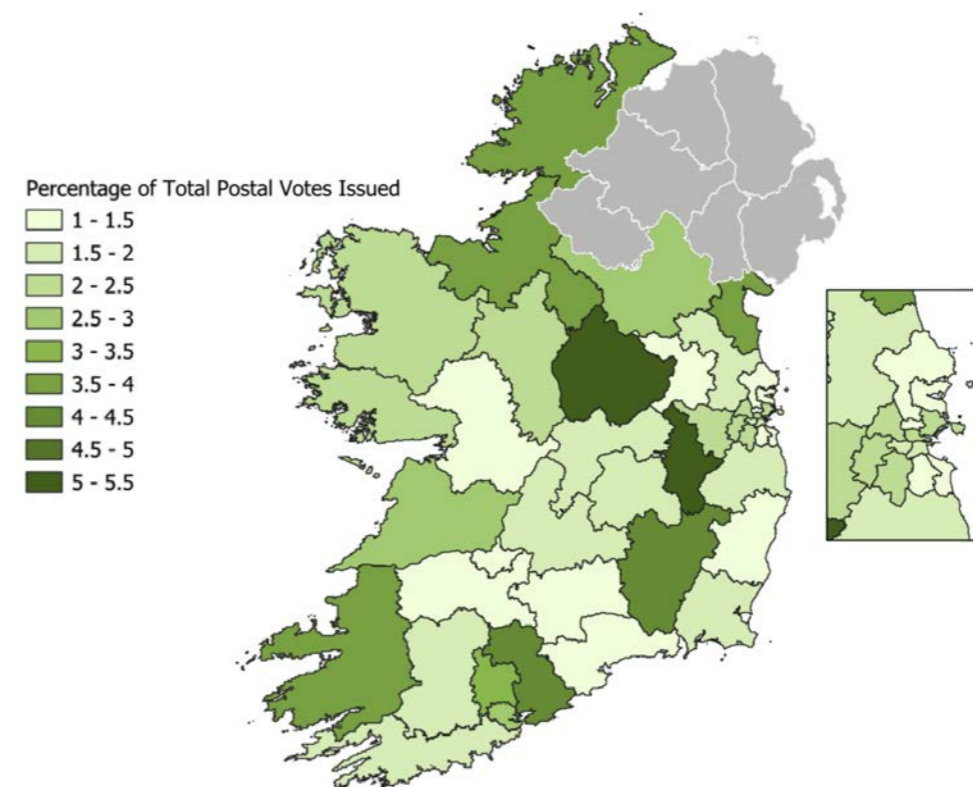
#### Presidential Election: Postal Votes Breakdown

Vote Category	Vote Status	Number of Votes	% of Registered Voters	% of Category
<b>Registered Postal Votes</b>	Total Registered Voters	14,290	100.00	100.00
<b>Issued Postal Votes</b>	Total Issued Postal Ballots	14,261	99.80	100.00
	Undeliverable Postal Ballots	174	–	1.22
	Postal Votes Received after Close of Poll	71	–	0.50
	Unreturned Postal Ballots	6,024	–	42.24
	Received Postal Ballots	7,992	–	56.04
<b>Received Postal Votes</b>	Total Received Postal Ballots	7,992	55.93	100.00
	Rejected Postal Ballots	391	–	4.89
	Accepted Postal Ballots	7,601	–	95.11

In the 2025 Presidential Election, a response rate of 56% was recorded for electors who were issued with a postal vote. In comparison, there was a response rate of 63% in the November 2024 general election.

### Postal Votes Constituency Breakdown

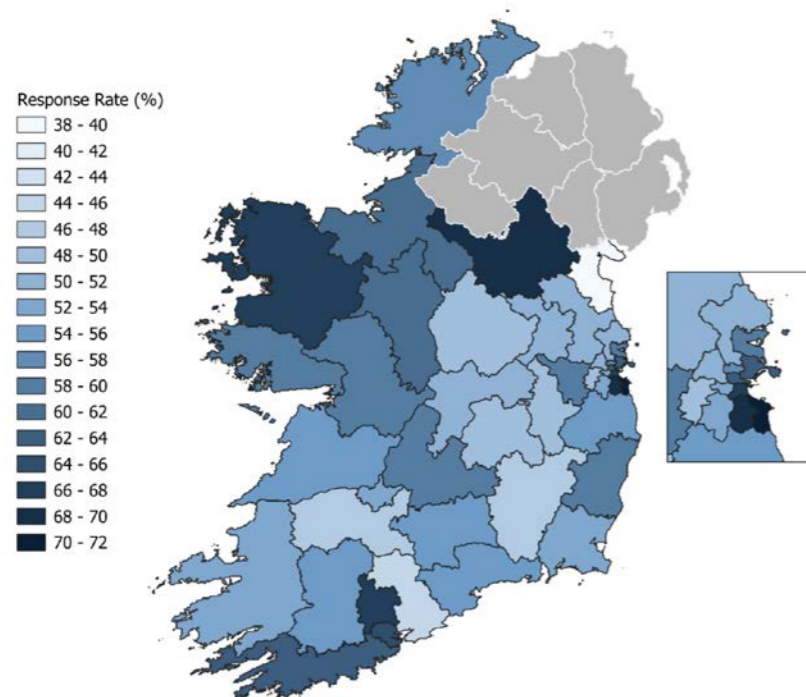
Presidential Election 2025: Issued Postal Votes by Constituency



Longford-Westmeath was the constituency with the highest number of postal votes issued overall (739) out of the total of 14,261 postal votes issued nationwide. Longford-Westmeath had a response rate of almost 50%. Other constituencies with high

numbers of postal votes issued were Kildare-South and Cork East. The lowest number of postal votes were issued in Meath West, Limerick County, Wicklow-Wexford and Limerick City.

Presidential Election 2025: Postal Vote Response Rate by Constituency



The above map presents the response rate of postal votes broken down by constituency. The overall response rate for the postal vote (56%) varies geographically. The highest response rate was seen in Dún Laoghaire with a response rate of 71%. High levels of returned postal ballots were also observed in Dublin Rathdown (70%), Cavan-Monaghan (69%), Dublin Bay South (68%), Mayo (68%), and Cork North-Central (68%). Louth, with a 39% response rate, was the constituency with the lowest response rate.

### Rejected Postal and Special Votes

As the total number of postal and special ballot papers placed in the ballot box was recorded as 15,908 and the total number of postal and special voters' covering envelopes received before close of poll was 16,328, the difference of 420 is the

total number of postal and special ballot papers rejected.

An Coimisiún recommended in the November PEER that the reporting forms completed by returning officers be amended so that postal voting statistics and returns are kept separate from special voting data where possible. Due to the implementation of this recommendation, we noted by examination of the data supplied to An Coimisiún by the Department of Housing, Local Government, and Heritage, that out of the 420 postal and special votes rejected, 391 of those rejected were postal votes with only 28 special votes rejected at opening. The segregation of data for postal and special votes is to be welcomed and will assist us in the future when comparing postal and special voting patterns across different electoral events.

## 27. PEER Recommendations<sup>30</sup> – Progress Chart

Given An Coimisiún Toghcháin's role as Ireland's oversight body for electoral events, it is to be expected that PEERs conducted on eight electoral events over the course of 20 months would produce a significant number of recommendations.

The break in this intense electoral cycle once the bye-elections expected in May 2026 are complete, will allow An Coimisiún to assess progress in some of the key recommendations listed below which remain outstanding.

Recommendation	Category	Progress
Make available to the public guidance manuals issued to returning and presiding officers, omitting any confidential operational data.	Guidance	Implemented
Promote the use of the freephone helplines for blind and visually impaired electors (once assurance of the operational readiness of the helplines has been checked).	Awareness	Implemented
Amend Form PV4 – Application for postal vote due to work or study reasons, so that attendance at a Garda station and the 'Declaration of Identity' requirements regarding voting are clearly specified on the application form.	Policy	Implemented
Amend reporting forms completed by returning officers after each electoral event so that postal voting statistics and returns are separate from special voting data.	Administrative	Implemented
Display freephone numbers which list candidates in the order they appear on the ballot paper prominently on the homepage of the returning officer and www.gov.ie websites.	Awareness	Implemented
Provide standardised training to all polling station staff, with a special focus on ensuring ballot papers are properly marked.	Training	Ongoing
Ensure wheelchair ramps are available wherever physical conditions at a polling station so require, and that all wheelchair accessible entrances are clearly signposted.	Accessibility	Ongoing
Review the guidance and materials on offer to blind or visually impaired voters.	Accessibility/ Guidance	Ongoing
Waive all charges in connection with medical certification imposed on persons applying for the postal vote because of an illness or a disability.	Policy	Departmental Review Ongoing

Recommendation	Category	Progress
Targeted information and support to be made available to increase awareness amongst electors with disabilities of the possibility of availing of a postal vote.	Guidance	Ongoing
In light of the amendments introduced in the Electoral Reform Act 2022, increase awareness amongst electors with mental health conditions and those resident in mental health facilities of the possibility of availing of the postal and special vote.	Guidance	Ongoing
Review all voting materials with a view to providing a wider range of accessible formats.	Accessibility	<i>National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People First Programme Plan of Action 2025-2026<sup>1</sup></i> , Commitment 9 – Participation in Public and Political Life Priority Action 9.3 Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage to ‘Provide clear, simple and accessible material at electoral events. This includes prioritising the legibility of printed material supplied at elections and referendums, and the accessibility of website information at electoral events’.
Publish a guidance manual for electors which should explain the facilities and voting aids available at polling stations.	Guidance	<i>National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People First Programme Plan of Action 2025-2026<sup>1</sup></i> , Commitment 9 – Participation in Public and Political Life Priority Action 9.3 Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage to ‘Provide clear, simple and accessible material at electoral events. This includes prioritising the legibility of printed material supplied at elections and referendums, and the accessibility of website information at electoral events’.

Recommendation	Category	Progress
Amend electoral legislation to expressly provide for the attendance of An Coimisiún staff and members at polling stations and count centres for all electoral events.	Legislative	To be actioned
Revise and expand the accessibility standards for polling stations in an updated Accessibility Checklist.	Accessibility/ Guidance	Ongoing
Assign an Accessibility Rating to all polling stations which is easy for electors to check in advance of voting.	Accessibility/ Guidance	To be actioned
Ensure staff in polling stations are appropriately trained to assist electors with a range of disabilities, including non-physical disabilities.	Training	To be actioned
Review the statutory timelines following the dissolution of the Dáil to ensure that voters are given every opportunity to arrange for postal voting, and those wishing to register to vote for the first time or at a new address are able to do so.	Legislative	To be actioned
Issue guidance to presiding officers regarding the safe and secure disposal of polling information cards left in polling stations by electors.	Policy	Best Practice
Review polling schemes following any changes made to electoral boundaries arising from a constituency review.	Administrative	Best Practice
Issue guidance to presiding officers on how to respond to incidents where electors are issued with ballot papers for the wrong constituency.	Guidance	Best Practice
As a supplementary option on these websites, provide audio files which call out a list of the candidates in the order in which they appear on the ballot paper.	Accessibility/ Guidance	Best Practice

<sup>1</sup> [https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/451efa01/National\\_Human\\_Rights\\_Strategy\\_for\\_Disabled\\_People\\_-\\_First\\_Programme\\_Plan\\_of\\_Action\\_2025-2026.docx](https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/451efa01/National_Human_Rights_Strategy_for_Disabled_People_-_First_Programme_Plan_of_Action_2025-2026.docx)

## 28. New PEER October 2025 Recommendations

### Legislative:

- ▶ Amend electoral legislation to expressly provide for the attendance of An Coimisiún staff and members as observers at polling stations on polling day and at the conduct of administrative tasks in association with the administration of an electoral event.

### Policy:

- ▶ Voter registration by freepost to be available to all electors as an alternative option to online registration.

### Guidance:

- ▶ While continuing to respect the independence of the returning officers in decision-making, updated guidance to be issued on how and why returning officers may deem a ballot paper to be invalid and for the identification by them of the category under which a vote is declared invalid.

### Administrative:

- ▶ Standardise the formatting used for the Notice of Situation of Polling Stations to allow for efficient use and extraction of data on polling stations and polling places.
- ▶ Amend election data reporting forms completed by returning officers after each electoral event so that ‘unmarked ballot papers’ are recorded and counted separately from ballot papers where ‘a first preference is not clearly indicated’.

## 29. Next Steps

As the first consistent data-driven review of Ireland’s electoral events, PEERs provide a foundation for monitoring over time the experiences of voters in Ireland, in the polling stations where votes are cast, but also in the context of postal and special voting, as well as procedures governing the counting of votes. Delivering sustained improvements in the voting experience is a core objective of PEERs, particularly those who may need extra support to participate in the electoral process.

In the long-term, An Coimisiún aims to ensure that PEERs will:

- contribute to the development of a defined process of election administration which recognises certain practices and procedures as essential, such as those related to accessibility.
- encourage the universal adoption of best practice initiatives implemented by individual returning officers and polling staff to become standard practice.

- build relationships with election administrators outside of the electoral cycle.
- develop and strengthen relationships with Disabled Person’s Organisations (DPOs), Disability Service Providers (DSPs) and other civil society organisations, with a view to gaining a shared understanding of the common goal of enhanced accessibility of the electoral system.

In tandem with the conduct of a PEER for the bye-elections in May 2026, An Coimisiún intends to place a renewed focus on progress in relation to key recommendations issued in all PEER reports to date, with a view to achieving their implementation before the next electoral cycle scheduled to commence in 2029. Further engagement and discussion with the stakeholders concerned will be actioned.



## 30. Appendices

### Appendix 1 – Information Campaign for October Presidential Election

The commitment of An Coimisiún to public engagement is set out in our *Statement of Strategy 2024-2026*. It outlines a tailored approach to educate and raise awareness amongst the electorate to engage in electoral events.

Ahead of polling day for the Presidential Election, An Coimisiún delivered a targeted national campaign to inform and engage the public about the election and the need to be registered and to vote.

The communications and public engagement campaign was one of the most extensive to date from An Coimisiún and ran from August 2025 right up to and including polling day on 24 October.

Our communication strategy was divided across three distinct phases between August and polling day:

1. Getting eligible people registered to vote and encouraging people to update their registration details.
2. Informing people about the presidential election, and how to cast their vote,
3. Getting people out to the polling station to vote on polling day.

The campaign secured significant public and media interest. We responded dynamically to issues and questions which arose during the campaign, particularly following the ending of campaigning by one of the candidates. We provided clear, authoritative and informative content via the news media and on our own social media channels and website.

We were heartened that our campaign period saw 60,733 new voter applications and 30,424 update applications, and a

real strength of positive engagement from people.

An Coimisiún met with thousands of younger people at a programme of events which included Electric Picnic, the National Ploughing Championships, public meetings, webinars, and events on school and college campuses across the country. We would like to thank all those who took the time to speak with us and to participate in our campaign.

Following the count, An Coimisiún noted that voter turnout was up 1.93% compared to the equivalent presidential election of 2018, with 164,098 more voters.

Analysis of our overall advertising campaign has shown that amongst 18–45-year-olds alone it reached an estimated audience of 1.1 million adults. Our post campaign research also showed that 80% of those aged 18-24 want even more information from An Coimisiún on how to vote, what they need to vote, and how to check the register, and this insight will contribute to our future campaign planning.

#### Media engagement

Our media engagement can be divided between proactive and responsive elements. From 28 August to the voter registration deadline of 7 October, we undertook local and national interviews focused on voter registration, and then from 13 October to 24 October our focus moved to encouraging eligible people to get out to vote.

The halting of one candidate's campaigning also saw a significant amount of queries about the slate of candidates, and the

status of the ballot paper. In response, An Coimisiún worked through a number of media outlets to create and circulate explainer videos that were featured on RTÉ and appeared on podcasts from the Irish Times, RTÉ, Newstalk and the Journal.

Over the course of the campaign Art O'Leary, Chief Executive; Ms. Justice Marie Baker, our Chairperson; Kieran Lenihan, Head of Electoral Operations; Sarah Keaveney, Education Manager and Brian Dawson, Communications Manager between them undertook 79 media interviews with broadcast, podcast, print and online journalists. Four Irish language media interviews were conducted with An Coimisiún's Antóin Ó Trínúin. An Coimisiún also responded directly to media queries about the elections through our press office function.

#### Advertising campaign

Our advertising campaign ran over nine weeks from 1 September to 23 October. It was delivered across multiple platforms including TV, radio, print, out of home, digital display, programmatic audio and social media channels.

Our own market research has shown a need for people to plan in advance for polling day to make the time to vote. With this in mind we used a countdown element for the first time across our print and digital outdoor sites. From 17 – 24 October, digital displays nationwide updated daily to reflect the countdown to polling day. This increased visibility reminded people about the need to plan for the casting of their individual vote.

Including a calendar QR code on advertisements was another innovation we tested for the first time. There was a total of 5,634 scans and 51% of people who scanned the QR added polling day to their personal calendars. We showed that a

simple 'add to calendar' feature to support voters in their planning can support shifting voter intent into voter action.

This was the first time that we partnered with podcasters and social media content creators on Facebook, Instagram and TikTok. These partnerships proved to be an effective way to reach audiences on social media who may not be consumers of traditional media.

#### Campaign events

The presidential election saw our largest ever public engagement campaign with a targeted focus on engaging younger voters. This targeting was based on An Coimisiún's National Election & Democracy Study (NEDS) of the 2024 General Election which found that the 18–34-year-olds surveyed made up the biggest cohort of eligible voters (68%) who were not registered to vote and therefore did not have their say in the most recent General Election.

We carefully selected the most relevant events to partner with for maximum impact to boost voter registration with 18 – 34-year-olds.

For the first time, An Coimisiún formally partnered with Electric Picnic and made voter registration a significant focus around Ireland's largest music and arts festival. This partnership saw us with a physical marquee, online and in-app promotion, competitions and an advertising presence on the festival big screens. Furthermore, in September we made our debut appearance at the National Ploughing Championships.

For both of these high-profile national events, An Coimisiún had a sizable physical presence with well-placed marquees that enjoyed very high footfall. Spin-the-wheel, mock ballots and karaoke were used to engage and inform in a fun and accessible way. The use of wifi-enabled tablets also

allowed An Coimisiún staff to register people, literally, in the field. Over both events 4,046 votes were cast in mock-elections allowing us to educate people on how to vote. These events also generated significant media coverage.

With the timing of the election campaign coinciding with the new educational year, over the course of the campaign, we visited 17 second and third-level campuses and freshers fairs nationally, registering students to vote.

In line with an overall focus on accessibility, An Coimisiún created and distributed two Easy-to-Read booklets with Inclusion Ireland, one focused on how to register and the other on voting in the Presidential Election.

Our campaign also included a focus on bilingual advertising and delivery of information in Irish. 5% of our media spend was with Irish language only outlets and 25% of the total campaign spend was on advertising through Irish.

### Social media

An Coimisiún delivered a schedule of engaging and informative posts and videos across a range of owned social media channels (X, Instagram, Facebook, Threads, Snapchat, TikTok and LinkedIn). Over 52 million impressions were served across Meta, TikTok and Snapchat. A new innovation for this campaign was a series of videos we created called Voter's Voices. We interviewed four different voters who explained why voting is important to them. These videos were used in the final five days of the campaign as an individual call to action to encourage people to get out and use their vote. The videos were viewed a total of 132,567 times in the final week of the campaign.

A regularly updated FAQ page on our website was complemented with information posts across our social media channels on how to vote and spoiled and invalid votes.

### Website

Our website, [www.electoralcommission.ie](http://www.electoralcommission.ie) was populated with targeted information and FAQs about the Presidential Election with a user-friendly layout with a focus on accessibility, particularly for those with disabilities.

The FAQ section in particular responded dynamically to queries about the ballot paper, how to vote and queries in relation to invalid votes.

Over the campaign period, there were 189,986 views of our website. Of these 135,719 were unique users and 134,000 were new users. On polling day, the website had 47,525 views. The top viewed pages over the course of the campaign were

1. Presidential Elections
2. How to Vote
3. Register to Vote
4. FAQs

Offline, there were approximately 700 responses delivered by An Coimisiún staff directly to public questions and queries in the campaign period by telephone, email and post.

## Appendix 2 – Index of Polling Stations Visited

### 1. Largest Electorate

48 buildings with some of the largest designated electorates in each of the 43 Dáil constituencies and 26 counties were visited, based on information from the *Notices of Polling Stations* published by each returning officer ahead of the Presidential Election.

	Polling Station	Constituency (County)	Address
1	St. Laurence O'Toole Athletics Club	Carlow-Kilkenny (Carlow)	Askea, Carlow, Co. Carlow, R93 K5P2.
2	St. John's N.S. (Ballybough)	Carlow-Kilkenny (Kilkenny)	Ballybough Street, Kilkenny, Co. Kilkenny, R95 NH66.
3	St. Anne's National School (Baileborough)	Cavan-Monaghan (Cavan)	Tanderagee, Baileborough, Co. Cavan, A82 DR53.
4	Scoil Roís (Carrickmacross)	Cavan-Monaghan (Monaghan)	Cloughvalley, Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan, A81 H663.
5	Ennis CBS Primary School	Clare	New Road, Ennis, Co. Clare, V95 CXV8.
6	My Place Midleton	Cork East	Midleton, Co. Cork, P25 YT50.
7	Brooklodge N.S.	Cork North-Central	Brooklodge, Glanmire, Co. Cork, T45 CA19.
8	St. Coleman's Boys National School (Macroom)	Cork North-West	Sleaveen East, Macroom, Co. Cork, P12 RV06.
9	Scoil Phádraig Naofa (Rochestown)	Cork South-Central	Foxwood, Rochestown, Co. Cork, T12 HX79.
10	Scoil na mBuachaillí (Clonakilty)	Cork South-West	O'Rahilly Street, Clonakilty, Co. Cork, P85 X788.
11	Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál (Letterkenny)	Donegal	Sentry Hill, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal, F92 CK27.
12	St. John Bosco National School Hall	Dublin West	Navan Road, Dublin 7, D07 WP22.
13	St. Gabriel's Parish Hall	Dublin Bay North	St. Gabriel's Road, Dublin 3, D03 P6F6.
14	St. Christopher's Primary School	Dublin Bay South	Haddington Road, Dublin 4, D04 FP20.
15	Deaf Village Ireland	Dublin Central	Ratoath Road, Dublin 7, D07 P973.
16	Palmerstown Boys National School	Dublin Mid-West	Palmerstown Avenue, Dublin 20, D20 W227.

	Polling Station	Constituency (County)	Address
17	St. Canice's Boys National School	Dublin North-West	Ballygall Road West, Dublin 11, D11 TW01.
18	St. Attracta's Junior National School	Dublin Rathdown	Broadford Road, Dublin 16, D16 P891.
19	Our Lady of Hope National School	Dublin South-Central	Armagh Road, Dublin 12, D12 W524.
20	Knocklyon Junior National School	Dublin South-West	Idrone Avenue, Dublin 16, D16 H337.
21	Guardian Angels National School	Dún Laoghaire	Newtownpark Ave., Blackrock, Co. Dublin, A94 H395.
22	Pope John Paul II National School	Dublin Fingal East	Inbhir Ide Drive, Malahide, Co. Dublin, K36 P796.
23	Flemington Community Centre	Dublin Fingal West	Hamlet Lane, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin, K32 HD28.
24	St. Ita's National School (Loughrea)	Galway East	Cross Street, Loughrea, Co. Galway, H62 EE06.
25	Gaelscoil Mhic Amhlaidh	Galway West	Cnoc na Cathrach, Gaillimh, H91 FV4D.
26	Presentation Convent (Tralee)	Kerry	Castle Street Upper, Tralee, Co. Kerry, V92 K768.
27	Aghards National School	Kildare North	Thornhill Gardens, Celbridge, Co. Kildare, W23 YY00.
28	St. Brigid's Primary School	Kildare South	Grey Abbey Road, Co. Kildare, R51 XY30.
29	Holy Family Senior School	Laois	Aghnaharna, Portlaoise, Co. Laois, R32 N8C2.
30	Courtenay Boys National School	Limerick County	Gortboy, Newcastle West, Co. Limerick, V42 X343.
31	Caherdavin Girls National School	Limerick City	Caherdavin, Limerick, Co. Limerick, V94 A5N7.
32	Cornamaddy National School	Longford-Westmeath (Westmeath)	Cornamaddy, Athlone, Co. Westmeath, N37 TR23.
33	Slashers GAA Club	Longford-Westmeath (Longford)	Farranyoogan, Longford, N39 R8W3.
34	Blackrock National School	Louth	Sandy Lane, Blackrock, Co. Louth, A91 AK57.
35	Castlebar Primary School (St. Pat's)	Mayo	The Lawn, Castlebar, Co. Mayo, F23 YD79.
36	Dunboyne National School	Meath East	Station Road, Dunboyne, Co. Meath, A86 X857.

	Polling Station	Constituency (County)	Address
37	St. Stephen's National School (Johnstown)	Meath West	Johnstown, Navan, Co. Meath, C15 AE03.
38	St. Patrick's Primary School	Offaly	Gilroy Avenue, Edenderry, Co. Offaly, R45 XV22.
39	Scoil an Chroí Naofa (Ballinasloe)	Roscommon-Galway (Galway)	Society Street, Ballinasloe, Co. Galway, H53 W603.
40	Roscommon Quad Centre	Roscommon-Galway (Roscommon)	Circular Road, Roscommon, Co. Roscommon, F42 CH70.
41	Scoil Ursula	Sligo-Leitrim (Sligo)	Strandhill Road, Sligo, F91 WD27.
42	Scoil Mhuire	Sligo-Leitrim (Leitrim)	Dublin Road, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Leitrim, N41 YX27.
43	Cashel Boys New N.S.	Tipperary South	Old Road, Cashel, Co. Tipperary, E25 R259.
44	CBS Primary School (Thurles)	Tipperary North	Thurles, Co. Tipperary, E41 XY10.
45	Glór na Mara Primary School	Waterford	Convent Hill, Tramore, Co. Waterford, X91 Y924.
46	Scoil Mhuire (Coolcotts)	Wexford	Coolcotts Lane, Wexford, Co. Wexford, Y35 TR29.
47	St. Fergal's National School	Wicklow	Schools Road, Bray, Co. Wicklow, A98 A521.
48	Loreto National School	Wicklow-Wexford	St. Michael's Road, Gorey, Co. Wexford, Y25 HD34.

## 2. Electors Aged 80+

15 polling stations were visited in EDs identified in Census 2022 as having some of the highest concentrations of residents over the age of 80.

	Electoral Division	Constituency (County)	Polling Station & Address
1	Terenure-St. James	Dublin South-West	Holy Spirit S.N.S., Limekiln Lane, Dublin 12, D12 AY63.
2	Cloonkeen	Galway East	Attymon N.S., Attymon, Athenry, Co. Galway, H65 YX73.
3	Ballynakill	Waterford	Sacred Heart Parish Centre, Lower Grange, Waterford, Co. Waterford, X91 V382.
4	Knock South	Mayo	Knock National School, Knock, Co. Mayo, F12 KF89.
5	Crossalare	Cavan-Monaghan (Monaghan)	Lisdoonan National School, Drumlurg, Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan, A81 WR65.
6	Edenmore	Dublin Bay North	St. Eithne's Senior Girls National School, Edenmore Park, Dublin 5, D05 NH04.
7	Ballygall B	Dublin North-West	Sacred Heart Boys National School, St. Canice's Road, Dublin 11, D11 XE17.
8	Dalkey-Bullock	Dún Laoghaire	Dalkey Town Hall, Castle Street, Dalkey, Co. Dublin, A96 DE61.
9	Beaumont A	Dublin North-West	Our Lady of Mercy College, Beaumont Road, Dublin 9, D09 V327.
10	Newtown	Waterford	Newtown National School, Newtown, Kilmacthomas, Co. Waterford, X42 VW64.
11	Montenotte B	Cork North-Central	Scoil Éanna (Montenotte), Middle Glanmire Road, Montenotte, Co. Cork, T23 Y439.
12	Foxrock-Beechpark	Dún Laoghaire	Kill O'The Grange National School, Kill O' the Grange, Blackrock, Co. Dublin, A94 X225.
13	Ballinamore	Mayo	Craggagh National School, Craggagh, Balla, Co. Mayo, F23 A590.
14	Clonfad	Longford-Westmeath (Westmeath)	Dalystown National School, Dalystown, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath, N91 W207.
15	Dalkey-Avondale	Dún Laoghaire	Glenageary-Killiney National School, Killiney Road, Co. Dublin, A96 P585.

## 3. Case Study: Wheelchair Users

Five polling stations were visited in Co. Donegal accompanied by the Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA) and their service users.

	Polling Station	Constituency (County)	Address
1	Kilmacrennan National School (St. Columba's)	Donegal	Massreagh, Kilmacrennan, Co. Donegal, F92 P934.
2	The Old Courthouse	Donegal	Justice Walsh Road, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal, F92 YH33.
3	Scoil Náisiúnta Naomh Baoithín	Donegal	Chapel Road, St. Johnston, Co. Donegal, F93 WN24.
4	Newtowncunningham N.S.	Donegal	Bankin Lane, Newtowncunningham, Co. Donegal, F93 WN51.
5	Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál (Letterkenny)*	Donegal	Sentry Hill, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal, F92 CK27.

\*this polling station was also visited as part of *Category 1: Largest Electorate*.

## 4. Case Study: Voters with Down syndrome

Four polling stations were visited in Co. Kerry accompanied by Down Syndrome Ireland (DSI) and their service users.

	Polling Station	Constituency (County)	Address
1	St. Oliver's National School (Ballylongford)	Kerry	Ballylongford, Co. Kerry, V31 KD88.
2	Presentation Primary School (Listowel)	Kerry	Convent Road, Listowel, Co. Kerry, V31 CX52.
3	CBS Primary School (Tralee)	Kerry	Tralee, Co. Kerry, V92 FD62.
4	Cullina National School (Beaufort)	Kerry	Cullenagh Upper, Beaufort, Co. Kerry, V93 RC81.

## 5. Public Engagement

12 polling stations were visited by An Coimisiún due to issues raised by members of the public, by their representatives or in media reports.

	Polling Station	Constituency (County)	Address
1	Carrignavar National School	Cork North-Central	Carrignavar, Co. Cork, T34 PP30.
2	St. Patrick's National School (Mallow)	Cork North-Central	New Road, Mallow, Co. Cork, P51 TD30.
3	Santry Parish Centre	Dublin North-West	Santry Villas, Church Lane, Dublin 9, D09 CV90.
4	The Park Community Centre	Dublin South-West	Parklands Road, Dublin 24, D24 AH70.
5	Scoil Naomh Pádraig	Dublin South-West	Ballyroan Crescent, Dublin 16, D16 XK80.
6	Annagh National School	Galway East	Annagh Cross, Ballyglunin, Co. Galway, H54 F104.
7	Portumna National School	Galway East	St. Bridget's Road, Portumna, Co. Galway, H53 C792
8	The Band Hall (Ballymore Eustace)	Kildare South	Bishopslane, Ballymore Eustace, Co. Kildare, W91 D958.
9	Convent of Mercy Primary School	Kildare North	Sallins Road, Naas, Co. Kildare, W91 XC94.
10	J.F.K. Memorial School	Limerick City	Ennis Road, Limerick, Co. Limerick, V94 P9E8.
11	Scoil Náisiúnta Mhuire Gan Smál	Louth	Newhouse, Sandpit, Termonfeckin, Co. Louth, A92 A567.
12	Whitehall National School	Roscommon-Galway (Roscommon)	Corraun, Termonbarry, Co. Roscommon, N39 P226.

## 6. Geographic Distribution

Seven polling stations were visited to ensure adequate representation of offshore islands, Gaeltacht areas and other identified regions.

	Polling Station	Constituency (County)	Address
1	S.N. Bhaile Mhic Íre	Corcaigh Thiar Thuaidh	Baile Mhic Íre, Co. Chorcaí, P12 HW02.
2	Scoil Éinne	Gaillimh Thiar	An Spidéal, Co. na Gaillimhe, H91 N9C9.
3	Bunscoil Ráth Chairn	An Mhí Thiar	Ráth Chairn, An Uaimh, Co. na Mí, C15 WT18.
4	Scoil Ultain Naofa	An Mhí Thoir	Baile Ghib, An Uaimh, Co. na Mí, C15 PD95.
5	The Old School House (Whiddy Island)	Cork South-West	Tranaha, Whiddy Island, Co. Cork, P75 DH32.
6	Clare Island N.S.	Mayo	Kill, Clare Island, Co. Mayo, F28 F516.
7	St. Colmcille's N.S.	Donegal	Convent Road, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal, F92 A386.

## 7. Disadvantaged Areas

Ten polling stations were selected across the six Dáil constituencies least visited by An Coimisiún during previous PEER visits. The polling stations visited all corresponded to areas identified as 'Very Disadvantaged' by the Pobal Deprivation Index.

	Polling Station	Constituency (County)	Address
1	St. Joseph's National School (Fermoy)	Cork East	St. Bernard's Place, Fermoy, Co. Cork, P61 YR82.
2	Scoil Naomh Pádraig (Kanturk)	Cork North-West	Mill Road, Kanturk, Co. Cork, P51 K03D.
3	Charleville CBS Primary School	Cork North-West	Bakers Road, Charleville, Co. Cork, P56 RX94.
4	Athy Church of Ireland Centre	Kildare South	Janeville, Athy, Co. Kildare, R14 HX26.
5	Duleek Boys National School	Meath East	Balsaran, Duleek, Co. Meath, A92 C903.
6	Scoil Oilibhéir Naofa	Meath East	Coast Road, Bettystown, Co. Meath, A92 H762.
7	Oldcastle National School	Meath West	Church Street, Oldcastle, Co. Meath, A82 E400.
8	Ballivor National School	Meath West	Mullingar Road, Ballivor, Co. Meath, C15 AE33.
9	Ferns National School	Wicklow-Wexford	Main Street, Ferns, Co. Wexford, Y21 H9P8.
10	Our Lady of Lourdes National School	Wicklow-Wexford	Bunclody, Co. Wexford, Y21 R820.

## Appendix 3 – PEER Checklist Statistical Analysis

PEER Checklist Question	Yes	No	N/A
Signage (Directional)	39%	61%	0%
Signage (Notice)	99%	1%	0%
Canvassing (Postering)	2%	98%	0%
Canvassing (Other)	1%	98%	1%
Carking (General)	93%	7%	0%
Carparking (Disabled)	67%	33%	0%
Hazards (Steps)	9%	91%	0%
Hazards (Other)	7%	93%	0%
Wheelchair Use (Primary Entrance)	94%	6%	0%
Wheelchair Use (Signage)	49%	40%	11%
Wheelchair Use (Ramp Available)	47%	2%	51%
Wheelchair Use (Ramp Permanent)	41%	6%	53%
Wheelchair Use (Ramp Temporary)	6%	41%	53%
Wheelchair Use (Alternative Access)	3%	3%	94%
Layout (Adequate Conditions)	99%	1%	0%
Layout (Flow of Voting)	100%	0%	0%
Layout (Security)	100%	0%	0%
Layout (Secrecy)	97%	3%	0%
Staff (Identifiable)	100%	0%	0%
Emergency Exit (Present)	92%	8%	0%
Emergency Exit (Signage)	88%	5%	6%
Layout (Accessibility)	94%	6%	0%
Wheelchair Use (Space)	97%	3%	0%
Wheelchair Use (Low-level Voting Space)	98%	2%	0%
Wheelchair Use (Low-level Compartment)	93%	6%	1%
Wheelchair Use (Low-level Desk)	39%	7%	54%
Wheelchair Use (Ballot Box)	84%	16%	0%
Posters (Offenses and Identification)	100%	0%	0%
Posters (Large-Print Ballot Paper)	99%	1%	0%
Materials	4%	96%	0%
Identification	71%	27%	2%
Ballot Paper (Stamped)	98%	0%	2%

PEER Checklist Question	Yes	No	N/A
Ballot Paper (Electoral Register)	98%	0%	2%
Voting (Compartment Secrecy)	97%	1%	2%
Voting (Compartment One Elector)	93%	2%	5%
Voting (Photography)	3%	93%	4%
Vision Impairment (BPT Available)	99%	1%	0%
Vision Impairment (BPT Issues)	2%	38%	68%
Vision Impairment (Freephone)	0%	75%	25%
Deaf/ Hard of Hearing (Loop)	1%	99%	0%
Non-Physical Disabilities (Assistance)	5%	95%	0%
Voting Companion (Assistance)	11%	89%	0%
Voting Companion (Oath)	0%	11%	89%
Authorised Persons (Personation)	1%	99%	0%
Authorised Persons (Issues)	0%	100%	0%

## 31. Endnotes

1 These ratings are qualified somewhat in that our method of calculating inaccessibility was modified from the General Election onwards to include alternative accessibility arrangements.

2 Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (2025) *Presidential Election Order made by Minister Browne: polling day to be 24 October 2025*. Available at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-housing-local-government-and-heritage/press-releases/presidential-election-order-made-by-minister-browne-polling-day-to-be-24-october-2025/> [Accessed: 1 April 2026].

3 Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (n.d.) *Memorandum for the Guidance of Local Returning Officers at Presidential Election*. Available at: [https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/d8f294c7/Memorandum\\_for\\_the\\_Guidance\\_of\\_Local\\_Returning\\_Officers\\_at\\_Presidential\\_Elect.pdf](https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/d8f294c7/Memorandum_for_the_Guidance_of_Local_Returning_Officers_at_Presidential_Elect.pdf) [Accessed: 1 April 2026].

4 Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (n.d.) *Manual for Presiding Officers*. Available at: [https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/303ba155/Manual\\_for\\_Presiding\\_Officers.pdf](https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/303ba155/Manual_for_Presiding_Officers.pdf) [Accessed: 1 April 2026].

5 Barrat, J. *et al* (2023) 'Special Voting Arrangements' *International IDEA Handbook*, p.309. Available at: [https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/2023-11/special-voting-arrangements-international-idea-handbook\\_0.pdf](https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/2023-11/special-voting-arrangements-international-idea-handbook_0.pdf) [Accessed: 1 April 2026].

6 OSCE/ODIHR (2024) *Ireland, Early Parliamentary Elections, 29 November 2024: ODIHR Needs Assessment Mission Report*, p.1. Available at: <https://odhr.osce.org/sites/default/files/documents/b/1/580954.pdf> [Accessed: 1 April 2026].

7 Electoral legislation distinguishes between a "polling place", an area or premises in which the poll is conducted, for example a national school, and a "polling station" a space within the polling place provided for electors to cast their ballot, for example a classroom. In PEER reports, the term "polling station" is often used to refer to general premises as well as the particular space provided for electors to cast their ballot.

8 Hasse, T. and Pratschke, J. (2017) *Pobal HP Deprivation Index*. Available at: <https://www.pobal.ie/pobal-hp-deprivation-index/>

9 Electoral Commission (2024) *Post Electoral Event Review: European Parliament, Local and Limerick Mayoral Elections*. 7 June 2024. Available at: [https://cdn.electoralcommission.ie/app/uploads/2024/12/06153929/Post-Electoral-Event-Review\\_7-June\\_English\\_Tagged.pdf](https://cdn.electoralcommission.ie/app/uploads/2024/12/06153929/Post-Electoral-Event-Review_7-June_English_Tagged.pdf)

10 Electoral Commission (2025) *Post-Electoral Event Review: General Election*. 29 November 2024, p.63. Available at: [https://cdn.electoralcommission.ie/app/uploads/2025/08/15092731/PEER\\_General-Election2024\\_English-updated.pdf](https://cdn.electoralcommission.ie/app/uploads/2025/08/15092731/PEER_General-Election2024_English-updated.pdf) [Accessed: 1 April 2026].

11 Caution, low sample base.

12 Government of Ireland. Electoral Act 1992 (as amended by Electoral Reform Act 2022), Rule 5(3), Second Schedule.

13 Department of Justice. Home Affairs and Migration (n.d.) *Citizenship Ceremonies*. Available at: <https://www.irishimmigration.ie/how-to-become-a-citizen/citizenship-ceremonies/> [Accessed: 1 April 2026].

14 Presidential Returning Officer (2025) Toghcháin Uachtaráin 1938-2025 Presidential Elections. Available at: <https://www.presidentialelection.ie/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Presidential-Elections-1938-2025.pdf>

15 Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (n.d.) *Memorandum for the Guidance of Local Returning Officers at Presidential Election*. Available at: [https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/d8f294c7/Memorandum\\_for\\_the\\_Guidance\\_of\\_Local\\_Returning\\_Officers\\_at\\_Presidential\\_Elect.pdf](https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/d8f294c7/Memorandum_for_the_Guidance_of_Local_Returning_Officers_at_Presidential_Elect.pdf)

16 The ERF1 form – 'Register to Vote or Update your Details' covers the majority of scenarios such as registering/pre-registering to vote for the first time, change of abode, moving out of the area, completing an existing record with details such as PPSN, date of birth and Eircode, or for making any changes to name or nationality etc.

17 Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (2023) *Parliamentary Question, 16 May 2023, Question 409*. Available at: [https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2023-05-16/409/#pq\\_409](https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2023-05-16/409/#pq_409) [Accessed: 1 April 2026].

18 Central Statistics Office (2023) *Census of Population 2022: Profile 1 – Population Distribution and Movements*. Available at: <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cpp1/censusofpopulation2022profile1-populationdistributionandmovements/populationdistribution/> [Accessed: 1 April 2026].

19 While data from the 2022 Census lists Inis Fraoigh as having a population of 0, the island contains a polling station at which four people were registered to vote at the 2024 General Election.

20 Government of Ireland (2023) *Our Living Islands: National Islands Policy 2023–2033*. Available at: <https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/our-living-islands-national-islands-policy-2023-2033.pdf> [Accessed: 1 April 2026].

21 Central Statistics Office (2023) *Census of Population 2022: Summary Results – Population Changes*. Available at: <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cpsr/censusofpopulation2022-summaryresults/populationchanges/> [Accessed: 1 April 2026].

22 Department of Children, Disability and Equality (2025) *National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People 2025–2030*. Available at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-children-disability-and-equality/publications/national-human-rights-strategy-for-disabled-people-2025-2030-formats/> [Accessed: 1 April 2026].

23 Electoral Commission (2025) *Joint Committee on Disability Matters, Debate, 16 July 2025*. Available at: [https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/joint\\_committee\\_on\\_disability\\_matters/2025-07-16/2/](https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/joint_committee_on_disability_matters/2025-07-16/2/) [Accessed: 1 April 2026].

24 Electoral Commission (2025) *Post-Electoral Event Review: General Election, 29 November 2024*, p.63. Available at: [https://cdn.electoralcommission.ie/app/uploads/2025/08/15092731/PEER\\_General-Election2024\\_English-updated.pdf](https://cdn.electoralcommission.ie/app/uploads/2025/08/15092731/PEER_General-Election2024_English-updated.pdf) [Accessed: 1 April 2026].

25 Electoral Commission (2025) *Presidential Election – Easy-to-Read Guide*. Available at: [https://www.electoralcommission.ie/app/uploads/2025/08/ETR-Presidential\\_Election\\_EN-V2\\_tagged.pdf](https://www.electoralcommission.ie/app/uploads/2025/08/ETR-Presidential_Election_EN-V2_tagged.pdf) [Accessed: 1 April 2026]. Vimeo video: <https://vimeo.com/1003533172?fl=pl&fe=vl> [Accessed: 1 April 2026].

26 Electoral Commission (2025) *Annual Report 2024*. Available at: <https://cdn.electoralcommission.ie/app/uploads/2025/08/12101602/EC-AR-2024-English-FA-Accessibility-Check.pdf> [Accessed: 1 April 2026].

27 Electoral Commission (2024) *Research Programme 2024 - 2026*. Available at: [https://cdn.electoralcommission.ie/app/uploads/2024/07/09110424/EC\\_RESEARCH\\_PROGRAMME\\_ENG\\_ACCESSIBLE-1.pdf](https://cdn.electoralcommission.ie/app/uploads/2024/07/09110424/EC_RESEARCH_PROGRAMME_ENG_ACCESSIBLE-1.pdf) [Accessed: 1 April 2026].

28 Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (n.d.) *Memorandum for the Guidance of Local Returning Officers at Presidential Election*, p.40. Available at: [https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/d8f294c7/Memorandum\\_for\\_the\\_Guidance\\_of\\_Local\\_Returning\\_Officers\\_at\\_Presidential\\_Elect.pdf](https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/d8f294c7/Memorandum_for_the_Guidance_of_Local_Returning_Officers_at_Presidential_Elect.pdf) [Accessed: 1 April 2026].

29 Barrat, J. et al (2023) 'Special Voting Arrangements' *International IDEA Handbook*, p.309. Available at: [https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/2023-11/special-voting-arrangements-international-idea-handbook\\_0.pdf](https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/2023-11/special-voting-arrangements-international-idea-handbook_0.pdf) [Accessed: 1 April 2026].

30 Excluding Seanad PEER Report Recommendations.

Published by An Coimisiún Toghcháin,  
April 2026  
ISBN 978-1-911722-16-8

---

**An Coimisiún Toghcháin,  
The Electoral Commission,  
Dublin Castle, Dublin 2,  
D02 X8X8.**

---

    @ElecCommIRL

---