

# LGBTQ+ VOTER ID REPORT



# Stonewall foreword

**At Stonewall, we stand for all lesbian, gay, bi, trans, queer, questioning and ace (LGBTQ+) people. We imagine a world where LGBTQ+ people everywhere are free to be themselves and can live their lives to the full. We've achieved many great things since we were founded in 1989, from securing legislation which allowed same-sex couples to marry, to the repeal of Section 28.**

The world has changed considerably since the 2019 general election. The COVID-19 pandemic has deepened existing inequalities faced by marginalised communities; hate crimes based on sexual orientation and trans status continue to rise; and we are facing a crisis in access to gender-affirming healthcare. It has never been more important that LGBTQ+ communities, and all marginalised people, are empowered to use their vote.

We are proud to have partnered with LGBT Foundation on this crucial and timely research into ID ownership among LGBTQ+ communities, and the potential impact of Voter ID requirements on LGBTQ+ people's likelihood to vote.

This report – the first research of its kind into LGBTQ+ ID ownership in the UK – shows that LGBTQ+ people are less likely to have ID that could be used to vote.<sup>1</sup> 85% of LGBTQ+ people said that they own at least one form of usable photo ID, compared to 96% of the general population. For many trans, non-binary and gender nonconforming people, the photograph, name, and/or gender marker on their on their identity documents may not reflect their appearance or gender identity.

Nearly two in five trans respondents and over a third of non-binary respondents have previously experienced problems

getting their ID accepted. The introduction of Voter ID could inadvertently result in them being turned away from polling stations, or simply deciding not to vote for fear of this happening: over half of trans and non-binary respondents said that they would be less likely to vote if they had to present ID. LGBTQ+ disabled people, people of colour, and those who are homeless or in severe poverty, are also more likely to face barriers to voting under the UK Government's proposed legislation.

These findings point to wider systemic barriers for LGBTQ+ people's access to ID, particularly for trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming people. Our research found that nearly a quarter of trans people (24%) didn't have access to usable ID, and 96% had experienced at least one barrier to obtaining appropriate ID. It should be simple, affordable, and straightforward for all trans people, including non-binary people, to access identity documents that accurately reflect their lived name and gender.

This research shows how crucial it is that the UK Government addresses the risk of the Elections Bill having a disproportionate impact on LGBTQ+ people's ability to vote and ensures that LGBTQ+ voters, as well as voters from other marginalised groups, are empowered to engage fully and fairly in the democratic process.

<sup>1</sup> This is ID of the types that the UK Government has proposed should be required in order to vote

# LGBT Foundation foreword

**LGBT Foundation are eager to support this urgent piece of work looking at the impact of proposed voter ID laws on LGBTQ+ people. We have been at the forefront of social and legal changes in the UK that have pushed for greater rights for LGBTQ+ people since 1975. We serve 40,000 people annually, as well as reaching a further 600,000 online – amplifying people’s voices, providing support and offering hope.**

We are strongly committed to ensuring that LGBTQ+ people have access to the same rights and opportunities as everyone else. We feel that, if the Government’s proposed legislation requiring voters to present photo ID at polling stations is passed, the requirement will have a significantly damaging impact on the communities we support and uplift.

LGBTQ+ people are empirically shown to be less likely to have the forms of ID required under the proposed legislation and during the pilot schemes that the UK Government ran for certain local elections. Our work with service users and the support we provide through our online resources have consistently indicated that there are clear barriers to accessing ID, meaning that, if voter ID requirements are introduced, a significant part of the voting population will be disenfranchised.

In particular, we must stress that trans and non-binary people would be disproportionately affected by photo ID requirements, in no small part due to the unforgivable normalisation of transphobia in society today. Further barriers such as race and ethnicity, class and income, and disability further exacerbate this issue.

Voting is a fundamental right in any democratic society. Instituting a mandatory voter ID rule will only serve to take that right away from groups that are already vulnerable and marginalised – something completely at odds with the declared aims of the UK Government’s reform proposals. As this report shows, the impact on LGBTQ+ voters will be severely damaging and it is imperative that any Voter ID reform is cognisant of how it will affect different communities.

We strongly urge the UK Government to reconsider its position and ensure that there is a commitment to equality and fairness. This should include regular monitoring and evaluation of any impacts from any future Voter ID reform, as well as a transparent and accessible reporting system so that affected communities can share their views. We hope that this report is the first step in a longer conversation around LGBTQ+ equity and rights.

# Executive summary

**In June 2021, the UK Government introduced its Elections Bill, which would require voters to present photo identification (ID) to vote in general elections, English local elections, and police and crime commissioner elections in England and Wales.**

There is currently no published research on ID ownership among LGBTQ+ people in the UK. Stonewall and LGBT Foundation conducted a survey of nearly 1,300 LGBTQ+ people to understand the diverse experiences of LGBTQ+ communities and the potential impact of voter ID requirements.

The results demonstrate that LGBTQ+ people are less likely than the general population to have the required forms of ID. This disparity is driven by the figures for trans and non-binary people. While the rates of ID ownership among non-trans LGB people are similar to those in the general population, nearly a quarter of trans respondents and nearly one in five non-binary respondents said that they do not own any usable photo ID. Nearly two in five trans people and over a third of non-binary people have experienced problems getting their ID accepted in the past.

Many LGBTQ+ people also face specific barriers that make obtaining the required form of ID more difficult. Getting accurate ID that reflects their name, gender marker and appearance is a particularly long and expensive process for trans people, while the binary nature of gender markers on ID means that non-binary people are unable to get accurate ID. This forces many trans and non-binary people to risk their safety and be subjected to intrusive and demeaning questioning, as well as potentially having their ID rejected altogether. LGBTQ+ people – particularly those who are also marginalised on the basis of ethnicity, disability or trans status – are more likely to live in severe poverty, and therefore be unable to pay for ID. LGBTQ+ people who have had to flee unsafe situations, or who are homeless, are also less likely to have proof of identity.

The government's Voter ID proposals will prevent many LGBTQ+ voters, as well as voters from other marginalised groups, from participating fully and fairly in the democratic process. Stonewall and LGBT Foundation will campaign against these proposals and advocate for cheaper, faster and easier processes for obtaining ID for all.

# Key findings

**1. LGBTQ+ people are three times more likely than the general population to be without any usable photo ID. 12% of respondents said they do not own any usable photo ID, compared to 4% of the general population.**<sup>1</sup>

**2. This disparity is driven by the figures for trans and non-binary people. Nearly a quarter of trans respondents (24%) and nearly one in five non-binary respondents (19%) said they do not own usable photo ID, compared to 3% of non-trans respondents.**

**3. Two in five LGBTQ+ people (39%) said that they would be less likely to vote if they had to present ID. This rises to more than half of trans and non-binary respondents (55% and 52% respectively).**

**4. Nearly two in five trans respondents (38%) and over more than one third of non-binary respondents (35%) have previously experienced problems getting their ID accepted, compared to 12% of non-trans respondents. The most common issue experienced was that the photo does not match their current appearance.**

**5. More than nine out of ten trans and non-binary respondents (96%) experienced at least one barrier to accessing ID. In particular, 88% of trans respondents and 81% of non-binary respondents said that concerns about their privacy and safety – such as the risk of being ‘outed’ or asked intrusive questions – made it more difficult for them to obtain ID.**

<sup>1</sup> The Cabinet Office, “Voter identification: photographic ID ownership in Great Britain”, 2021. Available via: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/voter-identification-photographic-id-ownership-in-great-britain>

# Background

In 2019, the UK government ran some **pilot schemes** to trial different voter ID requirements in local elections, including options for **photo-only ID** and a **mixture of photo and non-photo ID**. Under the pilot schemes, if the ID presented by an elector raised reasonable doubt as to whether the elector was who they said they were, the presiding officer was obliged to **refuse to issue a ballot paper** to that elector.

On 5 June 2021, the UK Government introduced the **Elections Bill**. If enacted in the form that was introduced to Parliament, the Bill would require voters to present **photo ID** in polling stations for UK parliamentary elections, English local elections, and Police and Crime Commissioner elections in England and Wales. The Bill provides a list of photo ID options and retains the obligation contained in the pilot schemes for the presiding officer to refuse to issue a ballot paper if they think there is reasonable doubt about the elector's identity based on their ID.

In this report, references to '**usable** photo ID' are to any form of photo ID listed in Appendix 1 that would be accepted under the Government's current voter ID proposals. It can be expired, but must have the correct name, address (if relevant) and gender (if relevant), and the photo should be recognisable. Usable ID can also be accessed easily and is not damaged.

# Demographics

The survey was conducted via an online questionnaire between 11 August and 17 September 2021, and received 1,271 valid responses.<sup>2</sup>

A condensed version of the survey was printed and distributed in paper form at LGBTQ+ community venues in London, Birmingham and Cardiff, with the aim of reaching digitally-excluded people who would not be able to complete the survey online. This received 11 valid responses, all from Cardiff.

**GENDER:** 37% of respondents were men, 34% were women, and 25% were non-binary.

**TRANS STATUS:**<sup>3</sup> 38% of respondents were trans. Of the 56% of respondents who did not say they were trans, 93% were cis and 7% were non-binary.<sup>4</sup>

**SEXUALITY**<sup>5</sup>: 43% of respondents were gay or lesbian, 20% were bi, 14% queer, 11% pansexual, 9% ace and 2% heterosexual (respondents who were both heterosexual and non-trans were excluded from the survey).

**AGE:** 23% of respondents were aged 18-24, 33% were aged 25-34, 17% were 35-44, 15% were 45-54, 9% 55-64 and 4% over 65.

**ETHNICITY:** 92% of respondents were white, and 7% of respondents were people of colour / BAME: 4% were from mixed or multiple ethnic backgrounds, 2% were Asian or Asian British, and 1% were Black or Black British.

**DISABILITY:** 33% of respondents said that they considered themselves to be disabled. 59% of respondents said that they had a long-term physical or mental health condition or illness. For the purposes of this survey, we have chosen to focus on those with long-term health conditions rather than those who self-identify as disabled, as the former category is more expansive and focuses on the impact of these conditions.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> A 'valid' response here is a response from an LGBTQ+ person eligible to vote in the UK. So respondents who are not LGBTQ+, or not eligible to vote in UK general elections or English local elections, were discounted.

<sup>3</sup> Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% because there were options for 'Unsure', and 'Prefer not to say'.

<sup>4</sup> Throughout the survey we will distinguish between all trans respondents, all non-binary respondents, and all respondents who did not state they were trans (whether or not they identify as non-binary).

<sup>5</sup> For a glossary of the LGBTQ+ terms used in this report, see Stonewall, List of LGBTQ+ terms, available via <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/faqs-and-glossary/list-lgbtq-terms>.

<sup>6</sup> Almost all respondents who considered themselves disabled (94%) also said that they have a long-term physical or mental health condition. Only 4% of respondents who self-identified as disabled said that they do not have a physical or mental health condition.



# ID ownership

LGBTQ+ people are less likely than the general population to own usable photo ID. 85% of respondents said that they own at least one form of usable photo ID, compared to 96% of the general population.<sup>7</sup>

12% of respondents said that they **do not own any form of usable photo ID** – three times higher than the general population.<sup>8</sup> This disparity is driven by the figures for trans and non-binary people. Nearly **a quarter of trans respondents** (24%) and nearly **one in five non-binary respondents** (19%) said they do not own usable photo ID. 3% of non-trans respondents said that they do not own any usable ID, which is broadly in line with rates among the general population.

*“It took me ages to get a new passport (cost; GP refused to give me letter to have gender marker changed) and eventually all forms of photo ID stopped being accepted after I transitioned. I had no ID that would be accepted for several years. Even with deed polls linking my old ID with new people wouldn’t accept it.”*

– Liam, 27, gay trans man.

*“ID contains deadname and image of myself when presenting as male. I no longer look the same and have been turned away before, forcing me to disclose my trans status to gain entry.”* – Isla, 20, pansexual trans woman.

**Young people** are also less likely to own usable photo ID (16% of 18–24-year-olds did not own any, compared to 2% of 55+ year-olds), as are people with **long-term health conditions** (16% of people with health conditions do not own usable photo ID, compared to 6% of those without).

## Specific forms of ID

The most commonly owned forms of photo ID are a passport and a driving licence.<sup>9</sup> A quarter of respondents (26%) do not own a usable passport, and a third (33%) do not own a usable driving license. However, trans and non-binary people are less likely to own these in usable form: just under **half of trans respondents** (46%) and nearly **two in five non-binary respondents** (37%) do not own a usable passport, compared to 12% of non-trans respondents.

A significant proportion of trans and non-binary respondents stated that they own **non-usable** forms of photo ID. This is ID where they are not recognisable in the photo, or with an incorrect name, address or gender marker. A third of trans respondents

<sup>7</sup> The Cabinet Office, “Voter identification: photographic ID ownership in Great Britain”, 2021. Available via: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/voter-identification-photographic-id-ownership-in-great-britain>

<sup>8</sup> Note that these percentages do not add up to 100 because blank responses were excluded.

<sup>9</sup> Please see Appendix for the full list of acceptable ID.



(35%) and three in ten non-binary respondents (30%) own a non-usable passport, compared to 7% of non-trans respondents. 21% of trans respondents and 19% of non-binary respondents (compared to 6% of non-trans respondents) own a non-usable driving licence.

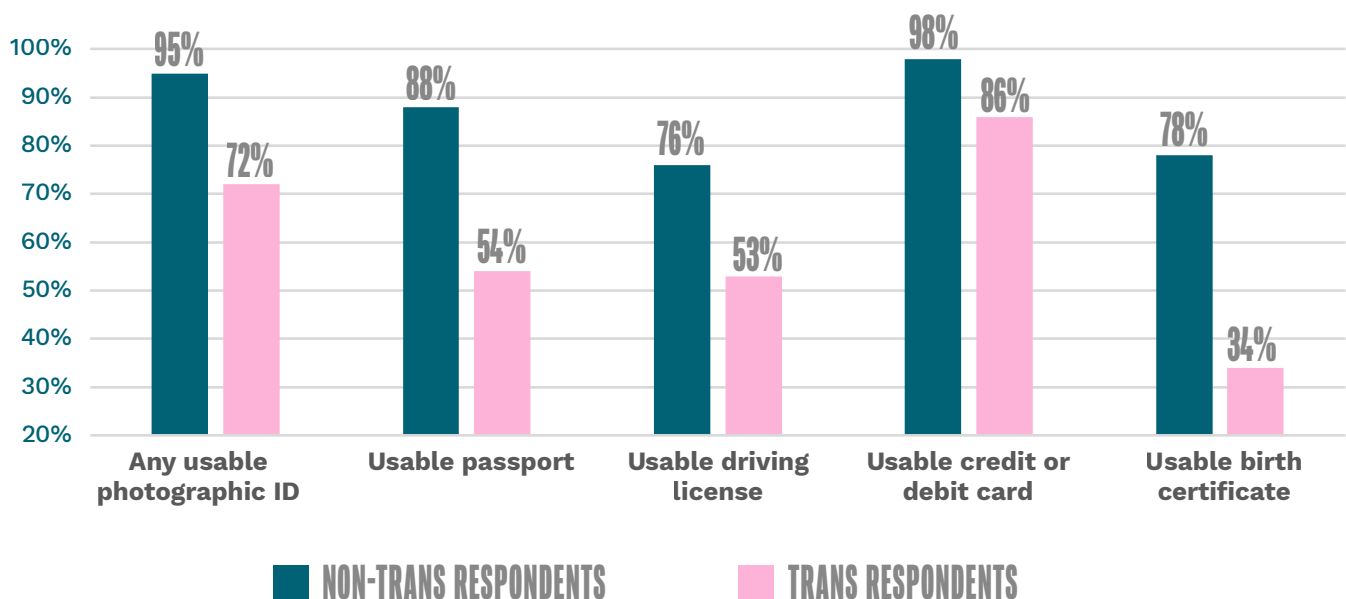
**“My passport still lists my “legal” sex as female and an outdated photograph. Since going on hormones, there have been times when this has caused some confusion and embarrassment. It’s the only photographic ID I have though and the one most likely to be accepted as a “legitimate” form of ID.” – James, 40, gay trans man.**

Respondents were also asked about non-photographic ID, such as birth certificates and utility bills (as listed in the Appendix). The most commonly held forms of non-photographic ID are a valid debit or credit card (93% of respondents owned a usable debit or credit card) and a birth certificate (60% owned a usable birth certificate). Again, trans and non-binary respondents are less likely to own these. Only 86% of trans respondents and 90% of non-binary respondents own a usable debit or credit card, compared to 98% of non-trans respondents. Just **one-third of trans respondents** (34%) and half of non-binary respondents (49%) own a **usable birth certificate**, compared to 78% of non-trans respondents.

**“As a younger person who had to leave my family as a result of sexual and physical violence, I had no contacts or people in my life who could sign a passport or document, and my parents burned all my documents! I was left without being able to get ID for 7 years.” – Devon, 25, non-binary.**

93% of respondents said that they have previously received polling cards through the post, meaning that a polling card would likely be the most popular form of ID that could be used for voting. This was slightly less common among respondents who have experienced homelessness in the last five years (90%).

## ID OWNERSHIP



# Getting ID accepted

Trans and non-binary respondents are more likely to have their ID challenged or questioned, or to encounter problems getting their ID accepted. Nearly **two in five trans respondents** (38%) and **over a third of non-binary respondents** (35%) have previously experienced problems getting ID accepted, compared to 12% of non-trans respondents.

***“I have had people question whether I am me or the owner of my ID because the gender marker doesn’t match or because they don’t perceive me as the correct gender on IDs that do have the right marker. It’s very stressful and I often feel like it’s my fault because I haven’t managed to get the right ID and makes me feel like all my fears regarding my dysphoria are real.” – Ben, 30, bi trans man.***

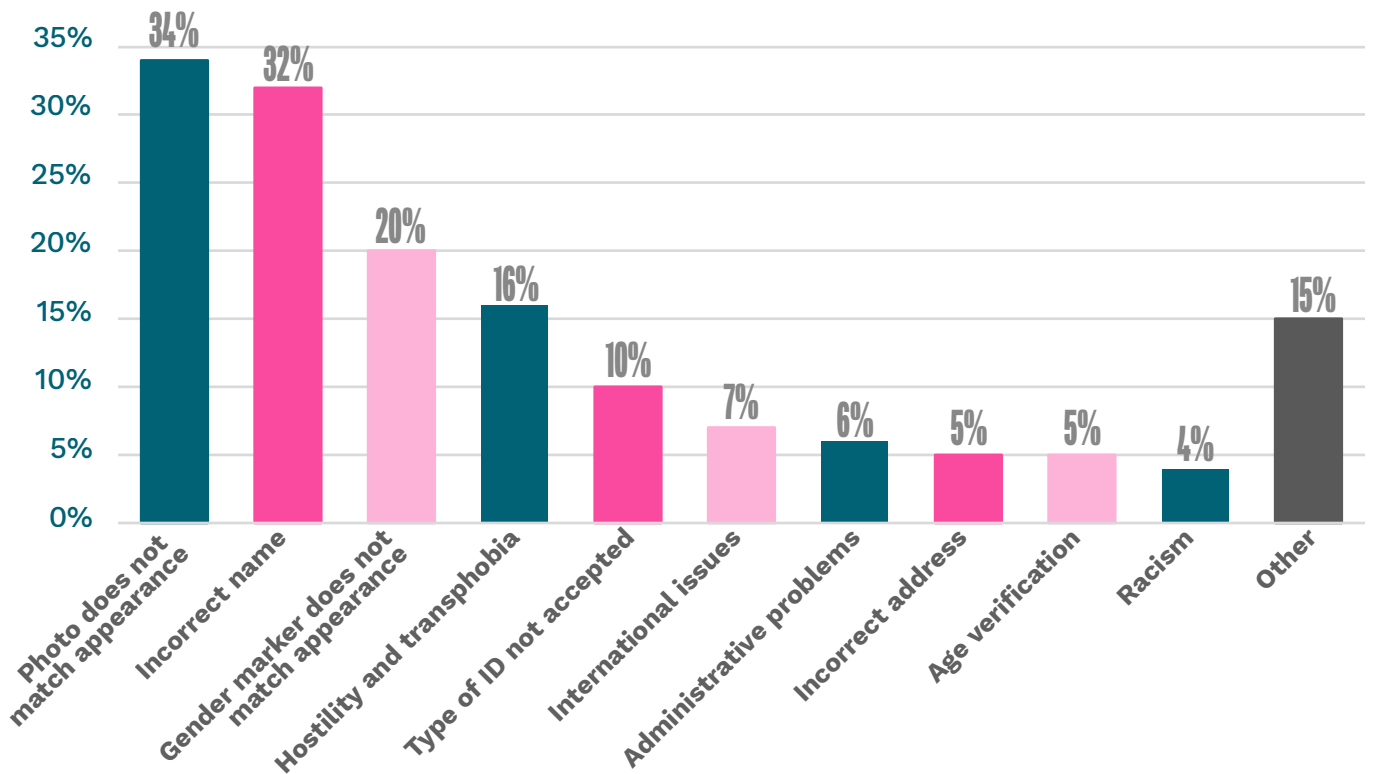
The most common issue experienced by people who have had difficulty getting their ID accepted was their photo not matching their appearance (34%), closely followed by their name not being correct (32%).

***“At the time the name in my ID didn’t match my actual name (cos I’m trans) and the person didn’t seem to understand that I was the same person and they keep saying “But this says you’re \*deadname\*” I didn’t want to have to come out to this random person and it was really uncomfortable and embarrassing.” – Ash, 29, bi non-binary.***

***“I have been refused service for goods because in the early days of my transition I looked too masc compared to my ID although I hadn’t changed my name yet, and later on because my ID was post coming out but before HRT [Hormone Replacement Therapy] and so I looked a lot different. I often get invasive and insulting comments about it when I need to present it, which has a negative impact on my self-image and mental health. Finding the money to update my documents isn’t easy.” – Jay, 32, queer non-binary.***

One in five respondents (20%) also said they experienced problems because the gender marker on their ID did not match their presentation, and 16% of all respondents, rising to 22% of trans respondents, had experienced overt transphobia or hostile questioning.

# REASONS WHY RESPONDENTS HAVE HAD ID QUESTIONED OR REJECTED



Of 262 responses to the question: “Have you experienced any problems with having your ID accepted in the past? If yes, can you tell us more about this experience/these experiences, what happened and what it was like?”, coded by theme.

# Voter ID

## Likelihood of voting

The Government's Voter ID proposals would disproportionately disenfranchise the LGBTQ+ community. **39% of respondents said that they would be less likely to vote if they had to present ID** in order to do so: eight times higher than the general population (5%).<sup>10</sup>

*“I live in a small town where it does not feel safe to be openly trans. While I have a passport in the correct name, the photo makes it easy to guess that I am transgender. I do not feel I could safely show it.” – Alex, 26, genderqueer.*

*“I simply wouldn't be able to vote at all until I'd attained my GRC and gotten enough money together to get an updated UK passport with it.” – Gabby, 19, pansexual trans woman.*

This rises to **more than half** of trans and non-binary respondents (55% and 52% respectively). Younger respondents would also be less likely to vote under the Government's proposals – 56% of 18–24-year-olds said they would be less likely to do so, compared to 18% of 65+ year olds.

*“The only suitable photo ID that I have is my passport. I will have to cover the gender marker with tape in order to not disclose the gender I was assigned at birth to members of the local community in my small Welsh town. I hate this.*

*Now that I've been transitioned medically and socially in a non-binary gender role for the past 10 years, this is the main source of my gender dysphoria. I feel so utterly worthless to my community, my government, my elected MPs, etc. knowing that none of them care enough about me and people like me that they are willing to do what's necessary to recognise me in law.” – Frankie, 38, queer non-binary.*

Just 3% of respondents said that they would be more likely to vote if they had to present ID.

<sup>10</sup> The Cabinet Office, “Voter identification: photographic ID ownership in Great Britain”, 2021. Available via: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/voter-identification-photographic-id-ownership-in-great-britain>

# Voter ID proposals

Respondents were overwhelmingly critical of the Government's Voter ID proposals. When asked what impact a requirement to present ID at a polling station would have on them, respondents raised concerns about the difficulty or inconvenience of obtaining ID and the risks of being 'outed' or misgendered.

***"I would be concerned that people might realise I'm trans. In a small community where I live, that feels exposing and worrying in the current anti-trans climate." – Ethan, 50, pansexual trans man.***

***"It would out me every single time and force me to relive trauma and experience crippling dysphoria." – Cameron, 33, ace non-binary.***

***"As someone who is entitled to vote as a Commonwealth citizen, I would be anxious that poll workers wouldn't be aware of my right to vote and would not allow me to vote when presenting my (non-UK, Commonwealth country) passport. I would be concerned that my immigration status would be scrutinised." – Olivia, 30, cisgender queer woman.***

# Voter Cards

The Government has said that it would provide free Voter Cards to people who do not have photo ID. While these would reduce the financial burden of obtaining ID, the application procedure and requirements for Voter Cards are not clear.

Respondents raised questions about the effort required to apply for Voter Cards, and how accessible they would be. Many also queried what 'proof', such as other documents, would be required to apply for the cards – for example, LGBTQ+ people fleeing domestic abuse or violence are unlikely to have any proofs of name or address. Respondents also questioned whether the cards would be trans inclusive (for example by not requiring gender markers).

**The specific details of the Voter Cards are to be set out in secondary legislation. However, they are to include at minimum a name and a photograph.**

**We understand that the proposal currently under consideration would require an individual to provide one of the following options to obtain a Voter Card:**

**Two proofs of name and one proof of address**

**One proof of name and two proofs of address**

**Four proofs of address**

**Attestation by an individual on the electoral register**

***“If voter ID is introduced providing free ID is a minimal necessary step, otherwise there is a monetary barrier to voting. It would also need to be of no hassle to receive. Potentially it would be sent to you without needing you to ask for it to avoid demanding time and energy for what should be a democratic right.”***

***– Ellen, 21, bi trans woman.***

***“[A Voter Card] would be great but also the whole ID requirement is unnecessary. The process of getting free ID is likely to be very time-consuming. There are also barriers like paying for photos or having the energy to commit to getting the card. I expect the administrative delays would also be huge and impact people. Also I work in a domestic violence charity and several of our service users have to flee without their ID so the card would not change that.”*** – Charlotte, 33, cisgender bi woman.

***“I am concerned that they would be difficult for some people (including myself) to get a hold of. E.g. would I be able to get one in the correct name and gender? Without a birth certificate? Without a proof of permanent address? Without doctors’ notes?”*** – Joe, 22, pansexual trans man.

***“Given that I would have to prove my identity, I would have the same issues getting a voter card as I would voting with my current ID.”*** – Liz, 30, pansexual trans woman.

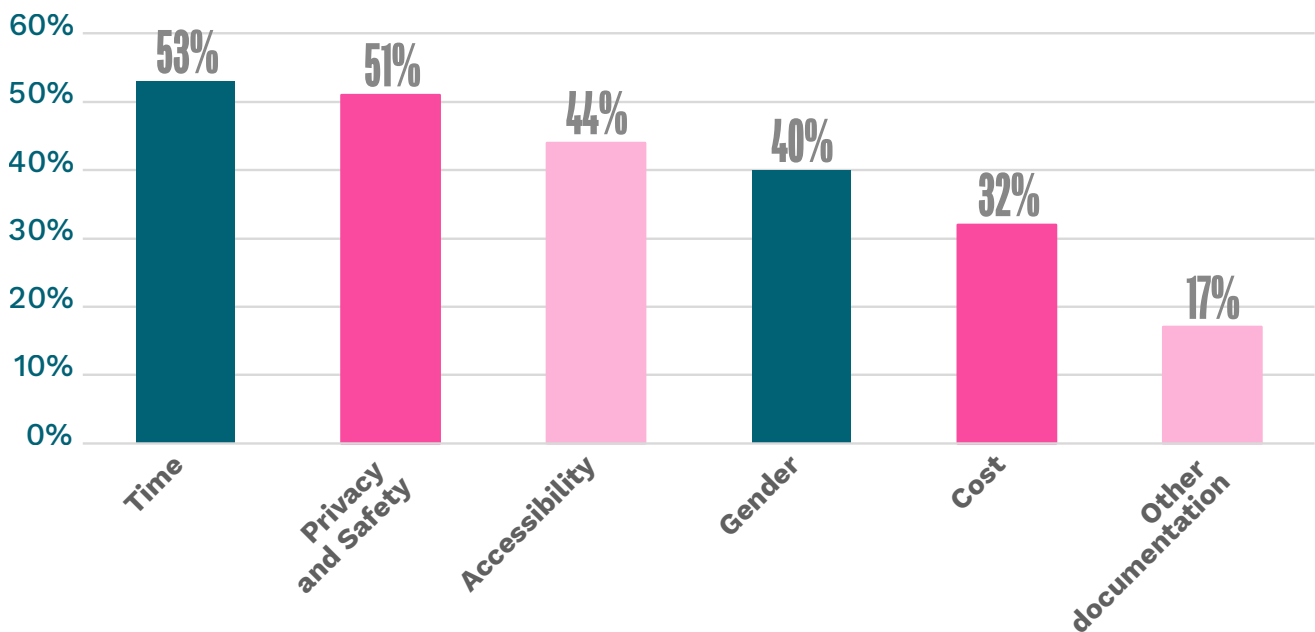
Overall, **60% of respondents said that Voter Cards would have no impact on their likelihood of voting.** This included 36% of respondents who said that Voter ID would make them less likely to vote. A further 10% were unsure whether they would have any impact.

***“A cheaper solution for the government would be to just not require ID to vote.”*** – Isaac, 32, cisgender gay man.

# Obtaining ID

Respondents were also asked about the issues that affect their ability to obtain ID. They discussed barriers pertaining to the time and energy involved, problems with accessibility, and concerns regarding safety and accurate gender markers. **Three quarters** of all respondents (76%) said that they experienced barriers or concerns that made it harder to obtain ID, rising to **96%** of trans and non-binary respondents.

## TYPE OF BARRIER OR CONCERN



Percentage of all respondents (1271) who said that these barriers applied to them.

## Accessibility

The most commonly-selected issues related to the **time and energy** required to obtain ID – **53%** of respondents said that these are barriers for them. Specifically, 37% of respondents said that obtaining ID takes **more energy than they have available**. This was higher among respondents with long-term health conditions (49%), whose energy may be limited or need conserving.

*“As mentioned, the biggest barrier for me is ADHD - it’s such a huge job to prep / witness a deed poll and then contact *every* single provider under the sun that I can’t muster the mental energy to even get started - especially as the number of times I actually need to use my ID are very few, and everyone knows me / uses my female name anyway.” – Jane, 50, bi trans woman.*



A greater proportion of respondents with **long-term health conditions** said that ID is inaccessible for them because transport is unreliable or infrequent (22% of those with health conditions said this is a barrier for them, compared to 7% of respondents without health conditions); transport is inaccessible (11% of those with health conditions, compared to 1% of those without); or they cannot easily leave the house (20% of respondents with health conditions, compared to 0.4% of those without).

***“It’s expensive and time consuming to get. It is already hard enough for me to find a wheelchair accessible polling station, let alone also having to have ID.” – Kate, 29, cisgender bi woman.***

Trans and non-binary respondents also more frequently said that obtaining ID takes more energy than they have available (58% and 57%, respectively). They discussed having to go through long and complicated processes to get ID that accurately reflects their gender, name and appearance.

***“It took me months of phone calls and trips to my local branch to change my name with my bank. It’s still in the wrong gender. It is costing me a lot of time, money and energy to get my ID into my new name - bank, utilities, HMRC, work, uni, driving licence, pension scheme, passport etc. I’m early in my transition so I get a lot of awkward questions with presenting ID marked with either gender marker on it, and sometimes get disbelieved or turned away when presenting ID. It already makes it hard when starting new jobs, finding a place to rent, or even just going to the pub.” – Tom, 26, queer non-binary.***

Other accessibility issues raised included lack of access to a printer: 33% of respondents said that they cannot easily print documents.

## Trans and Non-Binary respondents

The most frequently selected type of barrier for non-binary respondents related to gender and gender markers. **92% of non-binary respondents and 85% of trans respondents** said that these presented difficulties for them.

In particular, 87% of non-binary respondents said it is impossible to get ID that reflects their non-binary identity. Gender markers on ID in the UK are currently limited to either ‘M’ or ‘F’, and so non-binary respondents either cannot obtain ID, or have to get ID that is inaccurate and may be rejected.

***“I don’t like that I have to choose whether to be female or male, instead of being able to say I’m non-binary. It feels intrusive because I have to out my AGAB [assigned gender at birth] and feels like it’s implying I’m woman-lite. I feel like it also opens me up to potential criticism and transphobia. It’s making me scared to vote in the future and obtain important ID like a passport.” – Ash, 25, bi non-binary.***

***“I always feel torn. I do not identify with any gender, let alone male or female. Having to pick one of the binary, or having to choose my assigned gender is humiliating and upsetting. I do not think adding a third non-binary option on these forms will help. Gender is irrelevant to all of these things – passports, driving licences, all of it.” – Lex, 19, queer.***

Half of trans respondents (49%) and two in five non-binary respondents (42%) said it is difficult or impossible to get ID that reflects their chosen name and gender. Of respondents who have difficulty changing the gender marker on their ID, 93% said they experience this problem with UK passports, 70% experience it with driving licences and 62% experience it with birth certificates.

***“Obtaining a new passport with my correct name and gender would likely leave me without any ID for an extended period, and would require going through the additional (needlessly long and intrusive) process of obtaining a GRC [Gender Recognition Certificate], and of obtaining evidence of my name change, something I don’t actually know how to acquire.”***

***– Jules, 23, ace non-binary.***

**Changing the gender marker on a UK passport currently requires a Gender Recognition Certificate, a new birth or adoption certificate, or a letter from a doctor or medical professional.**

**This process can be lengthy, complex and expensive, with an average 18-month wait for a first appointment at a Gender Dysphoria Clinic (LGBT Foundation, [Hidden Figures: LGBT Health Inequalities in the UK, 2020](#)). 34% of trans respondents and 27% of non-binary respondents said they are currently waiting for an appointment at a Gender Dysphoria Clinic, and 21% of trans respondents said they are currently waiting for a letter or paperwork to change their gender marker.**

Trans respondents are particularly concerned about their **privacy and safety** in applying for ID. **87% of trans respondents** and **81% of non-binary respondents** said that they are affected by these concerns, compared to 26% of non-trans respondents.

***“You have to be openly trans for a long time before being able to get ID. This makes it dangerous to use ID during the first year or so of your transition which is when you are potentially most vulnerable and visibly trans.”*** – Mark, 30, bi trans man.

***“From the point where I legally changed my name, it took me around 8 months, and a lot of effort (and money), to get driving licence, bank accounts, passport and other ID changed, as I was changing my full name and also my stated gender. I am a trans woman and while I don’t ‘pass’ as cis, I do present as feminine full-time. There’s a background level of abuse, both verbal and physical, that trans people experience in public and it’s not pleasant. The thought of being ‘outed’ when presenting ID is horrific and a big safety issue.”*** – Alice, 50, ace trans woman.

In particular, trans respondents are concerned about being ‘outed’ to other people (72%) and receiving intrusive questions from people such as council workers and polling station workers (71%). If ID is required for voting, this may translate to discomfort with extra measures put in place in polling stations.

*“I will be outed to whoever checks my ID. It isn’t safe for me to do that, especially since the person will also know where I live and what I look like. I also can’t afford to pay for ID to enact my legal right to vote so I’ll essentially be barricaded from that right while people who have the privilege of money will be free to do so.”*

– Max, 25, queer non-binary.

## Cost

The cost of obtaining photo ID was a concern for nearly **one-third of respondents** (32%), particularly for respondents of colour (42%) and trans respondents (44%).

Three in ten respondents of colour (30%) said that they cannot afford the **direct cost** of obtaining photo ID (compared to 22% of white respondents). A standard UK adult passport costs between £75.50 and £85, and a driving licence costs between £34 and £43.

*“I didn’t have any valid legal ID for many years because it was too expensive and it was also hard to find people to validate my passport photos as I do not know any professionals that were in the recommended section for proof that it is me in the photo. Many people I know cannot afford ID.”* – Rhys, 22, queer non-binary.

A quarter of respondents of colour (24%) said that they cannot afford the **additional or indirect costs** of obtaining ID, compared to 18% of white respondents. These costs can include changing your name, address or photograph; getting photographs taken; and posting the required documents and forms securely. Nearly three in ten trans respondents (28%) and a quarter of non-binary respondents (24%) also said that they cannot afford additional or indirect costs. For trans and non-binary people, these can include the costs of getting proof for a change of name or gender marker.

*“Generally, the admin costs aren’t just from an application, but from providing medical evidence. This means I’ve had to plan financially and in advance to get ID with my correct name and gender, even as someone who earns enough to make a comfortable living.”* – Saima, 33, lesbian trans woman.

### DIRECT COSTS OF ID

Standard UK adult passport:  
£75.50 - £85

UK driving licence: £34 - £43

### INDIRECT COSTS OF ID

Photographs: £5 - £15

Post Office check and send service: £16

Secure delivery with the Post Office: £3

Gender Recognition Certificate: £5

Medical letters: around £25

Government-recognised deed polls: £42.44

*“The photo was very stressful early in my transition and this makes the whole process difficult [...] updating photos costs money, which with transition I was really strapped for. I have a photo on my drivers’ licence that looks significantly different to me now and I find using it embarrassing (feel it outs me) but I don’t want to fork out to get the picture updated.*

*These processes really don’t take into account how sensitive photo ID is for people during their transition. That time is already so hard and it makes it even harder. Passport was also difficult as I had to get my second passport (NZ) updated before UK would let me change my name. This left me months without ID as I worked it all out. If I had short notice for voting and needed photo ID I could have been prevented from voting during that period.” – Sarah, 26, bi trans woman.*

These costs can be prohibitive, especially for those on low incomes. When asked to estimate their income after housing costs, almost **a quarter of all respondents** (23%) said that they had less than £70 per week left over after housing costs, which is defined by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation as ‘**extremely low income**’.<sup>11</sup> This rises to around a third of trans respondents (32%) and over a quarter of non-binary (26%) respondents.

*“Making voting harder for those in need or with limited funds is ridiculous. It would make me feel as though my vote/view/opinions do not matter. I really hope this does not happen.” – Callum, 25, cisgender pansexual man.*

*“Paying for ID was very costly and awkward. It took a while for me to send my application off. I also don’t want my gender on my ID at all. It was incredibly stressful for me. I am worried when it expires I will not be able to afford to replace it.” – Sammy, 22, bi non-binary.*

Income can be difficult to estimate, especially for those in more precarious positions whose income may vary significantly at different times. However, other socio-economic indicators also demonstrate that **LGBTQ+ people experience higher rates of poverty**, especially those who are trans or face multiple marginalisations based on intersections of race and/or disability.

A fifth of respondents (20%) said that they are eligible to receive government benefits, with higher rates among those with long-term health conditions (30%), people of colour (27%) and trans people (26%). 7% of respondents who said they were entitled to receive benefits said that they did not actually receive any.

*“Expense is a big part of the problem – even if you’ve got the right documents, plenty of time and energy to get the correct proof together – it doesn’t matter if you can’t afford to pay.” – Rebecca, 40, cisgender pansexual woman.*

<sup>11</sup> Joseph Rowntree Foundation, [Destitution in the UK](#), 2020, p. 7.

One in ten respondents (10%) have experienced homelessness in the last five years. This figure was again higher among trans respondents (15%) and non-binary respondents (12%), compared to 6% of non-trans respondents. 14% of those with health conditions had experienced homelessness, compared to 4% of those without, and 13% of respondents of colour had experienced homelessness compared to 10% of white respondents.

Two per cent of respondents said that they are currently experiencing homelessness or insecure housing, with the most common form of this being ‘sofa surfing’. Four per cent of respondents said that they have been issued a food bank referral in the past five years.

***“When I was homeless I regularly ended up in bureaucracy traps where my inability to prove who I was left me highly vulnerable and unable to access important services.” – Grace, 38, queer trans woman.***

## Other issues

Other issues that made it more difficult for respondents to obtain ID included a lack of additional documentation often required as supporting evidence. For example, 11% of respondents said they do not have a birth certificate, and 6% do not have a fixed or permanent address.

This issue is worse for people of colour: 21% of people of colour said they experienced problems with a lack of other documentation (compared to 16% of white respondents), and respondents of colour are **more than twice as likely** as white respondents to be **without a fixed or permanent address** (11% of people of colour, compared to 5% of white people).<sup>12</sup>

***“Kicked out of home by homophobic/abusive parents without access to documentation.” – Amy, 37, bi woman.***

Additional issues mentioned by respondents included international barriers, such as the difficulty of navigating different ID requirements in different countries. Respondents also highlighted the difficulty of finding people ‘of good standing in the community’ who can countersign applications.

***“I am a citizen of 3 countries. Only one (Australia) accepts an X (rather than M/F) and has been (administratively) the most difficult to update with my new name. The UK (where I live permanently) refused to issue me a permanent passport in my new name until I had an updated passport from the other two countries. All have different requirements for obtaining a passport with a new name. Very expensive, time intensive, and awkward process all around.” – Kay, 30, non-binary.***

***“I am very worried about the validity of my ID suddenly being retracted due to changing UK immigration laws.” – Mahbub, 28, cisgender gay man.***

<sup>12</sup> It should be noted that the sample size here is quite small: 86 people of colour answered this question, of which 9 said they are without a fixed or permanent address. 1,163 white people answered this question, of which 59 said they are without a fixed or permanent address.

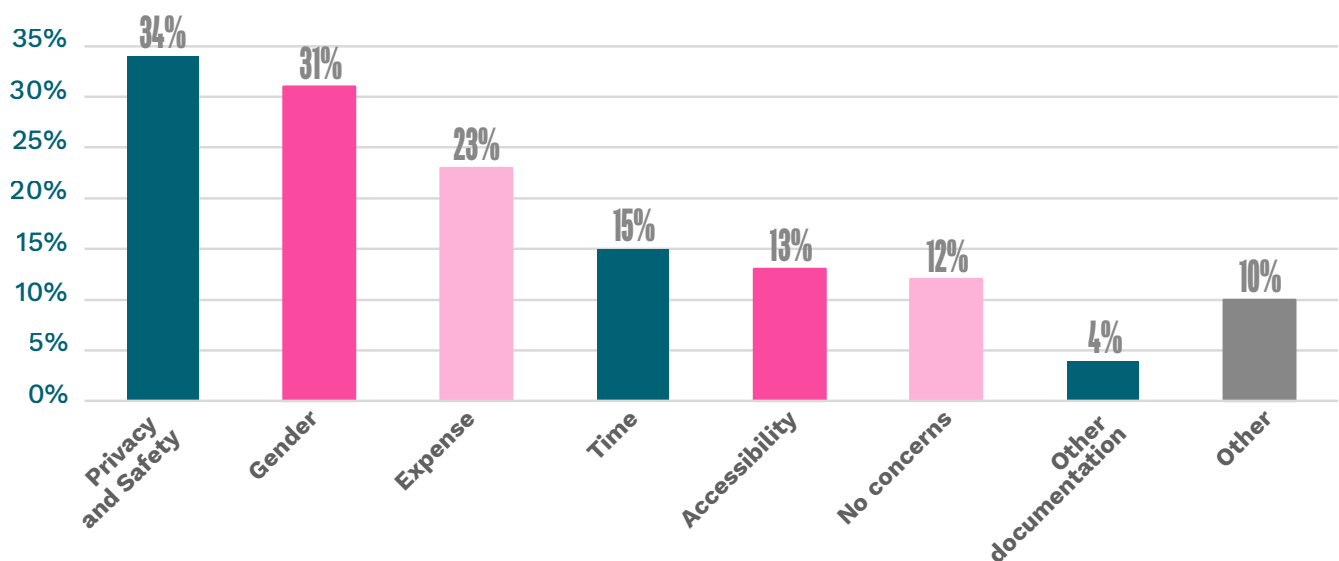


# Impact

Respondents were asked to select the barriers that were most significant to them. The most significant concern for respondents related to their **privacy and safety** (34%). This was a major concern for **half of trans respondents** (49%).

31% of all respondents said that their ability to get ID that reflected their gender was among their top three concerns, rising to 60% of trans respondents. 23% of respondents said that the cost of ID was one of their top three concerns, and just 12% said that they had no concerns.<sup>13</sup>

## THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CONCERNS WHEN OBTAINING ID



Of 893 responses to the question: Which of these concerns is most significant to you? (List up to three)

When asked about how these barriers and concerns affected them, 18% of respondents said that they feared discrimination or abuse as a result of the problems they faced obtaining ID. 17% highlighted the effort required, and 16% discussed the cost. 11% of respondents said that difficulty obtaining ID had a detrimental impact on their mental health.

***“It’s made my life more difficult because I could not participate in activities with my friends and [have] been unable to access services. I could not take my driving test when I was ready as I was waiting for my provisional licence renewal to be approved. I’ve been publicly humiliated and upset by not having ID or having my ID questioned.” – Josh, 26, bi trans man.***

***“I’m in a trial constituency for Voter ID. While I was in the process of changing my ID as part of my transition, I was essentially having to hope that there wouldn’t be a snap election, because I wouldn’t have been able to vote while passport was being replaced.” – Corey, 29, non-binary.***

***“Just sucks, you don’t feel like part of society.” – Jamie, 25, queer non-binary.***

<sup>13</sup> Note that these percentages do not add up to 100 because respondents could select up to three concerns.

# Recommendations

**This research shows there is a significant risk that the proposed Voter ID requirements will disproportionately affect LGBTQ+ people.**

**We recommend the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities take the following steps regarding the Elections Bill to avoid the disproportionate disenfranchisement of LGBTQ+ communities:**

**1. The Elections Bill must be amended to ensure that, if ID is required in order to vote, non-photographic ID is also permitted. This should include the use of polling cards, which were the most commonly held forms of ID.**

**2. Free Voter Cards are helpful, but do not necessarily tackle respondents' concerns about misgendering and potential harassment. If implemented, the statutory guidance accompanying the Elections Bill must ensure that Voter Cards are accessible, do not require gender markers, and there must be multiple verifiable routes to obtain them, including other verifiable forms of ID like bank cards or through attestation by a person of good standing in the community.**

**3. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the Electoral Commission must ensure that funded training is rolled out to Presiding Officers and polling station staff to ensure that they operate in a manner that is LGBTQ+ inclusive and to address respondents' concerns around harassment and intrusive questioning. This training should also ensure that specific measures are put in place to ensure that LGBTQ+ people can vote as easily as other electors.**



# Appendix: Types of ID

## 1. Photographic ID

TYPE OF ID	% of respondents who own it in usable form
UK Passport	72%
Non-UK passport	11%
Driving licence (including a provisional licence)	67%
Oyster photocard	4%
Other photographic concessionary travel card	15%
Blue Badge photocard parking permit	3%
Proof of Age Standards Scheme (PASS) card	3%
Northern Ireland Electoral Identity Card	0.3%
Biometric immigration document issued in the UK	2%
Photographic identity card issued in the European Economic Area	3%
Ministry of Defence Identity Card	1%

## 2. Non-photographic ID

TYPE OF ID	% of respondents who own it in usable form
Valid debit or credit card	93%
Bank or building society chequebook, or building society passbook	30%
Birth certificate	60%
Adoption certificate	1%
Marriage certificate or civil partnership certificate	17%
Non-photographic driving licence (including a provisional licence)	7%
National Insurance Number card	43%
Bank or building society statement (no older than three months)	67%
Letter from a bank or building society confirming the opening of an account (no older than three months)	10%
Credit card statement (no older than three months)	41%
Utility bill (no older than three months)	50%
Council tax demand letter or statement (no older than one year)	50%
P45 form or P60 form (no older than one year)	46%
Mortgage statement (no older than one year)	22%
Student loan statement (no older than one year)	21%
Firearms certificate	0.4%
The record of a bail decision made about you	0.2%
Benefits statement or entitlement to benefits statement	13%

A stylized illustration of a hand holding a white sign with a dark teal border. The sign contains the text 'LGBTQ+ VOTER ID REPORT' in a bold, dark teal, sans-serif font. The background of the entire page is a light pink color.

# LGBTQ+ VOTER ID REPORT

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