

Lessons from e-voting in England 2000-07

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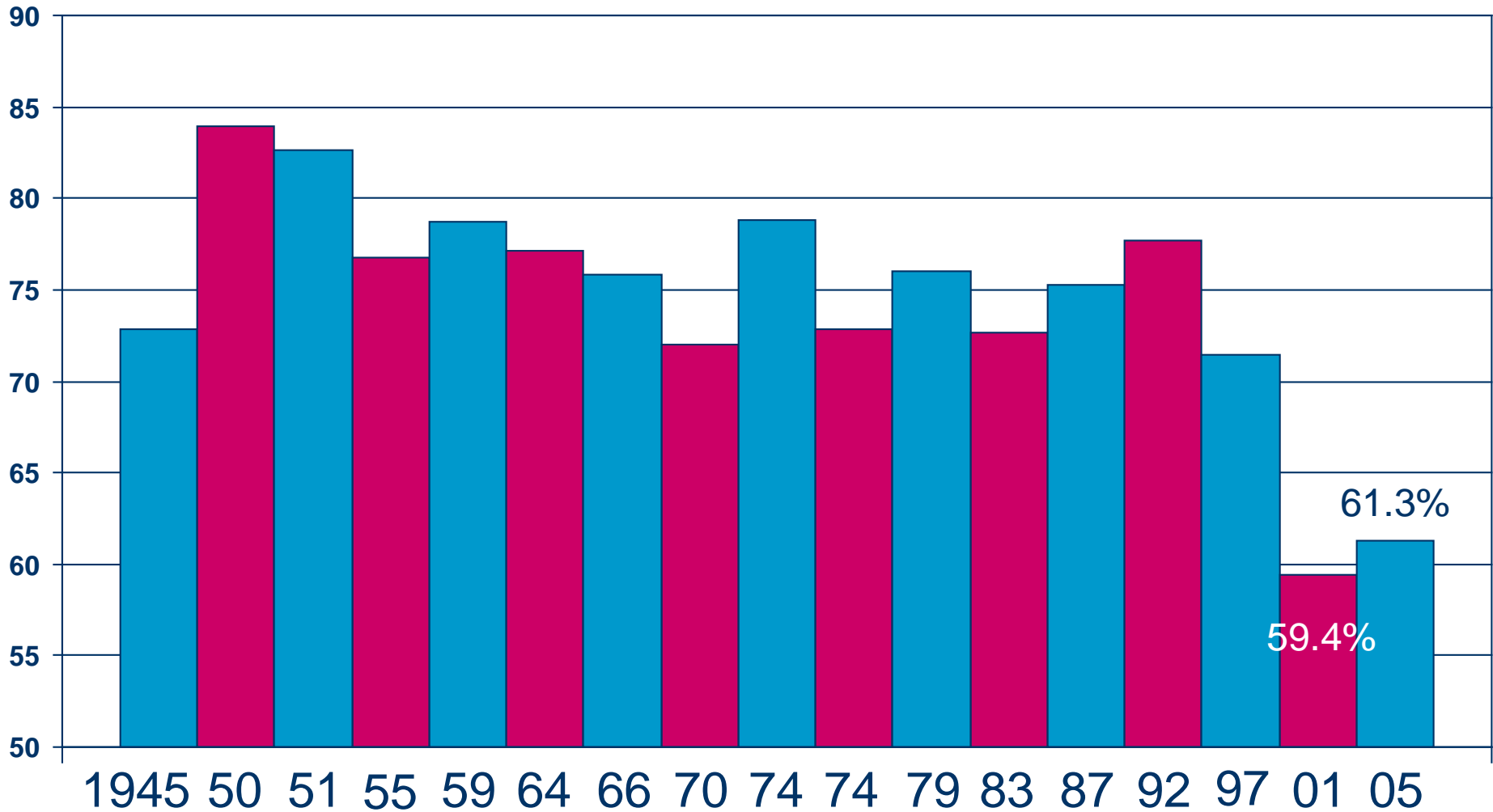
Ottawa, January 2010

Declining turnout and desire to increase convenience are key drivers for e-voting in UK

- Long-term decline in turnout at all elections in UK
- Declining levels of trust and engagement with traditional or formal politics
- Perceptions of changes to patterns of society – busier lifestyles, less time available to participate
- Increased opportunities for online activity in other areas of life – shopping, banking, other government transactions

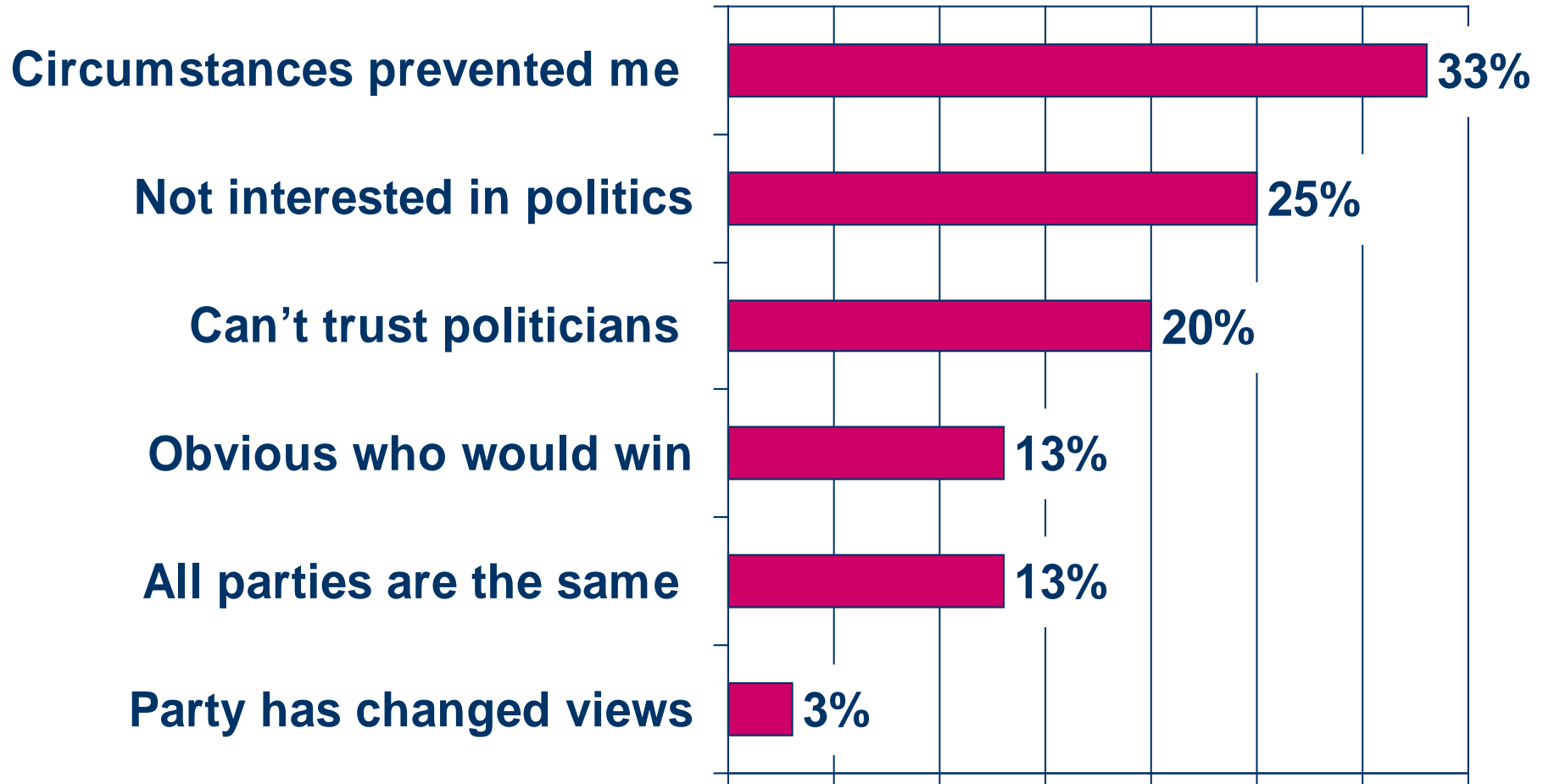
Turnout at UK Parliament General Elections, 1945 – 2005

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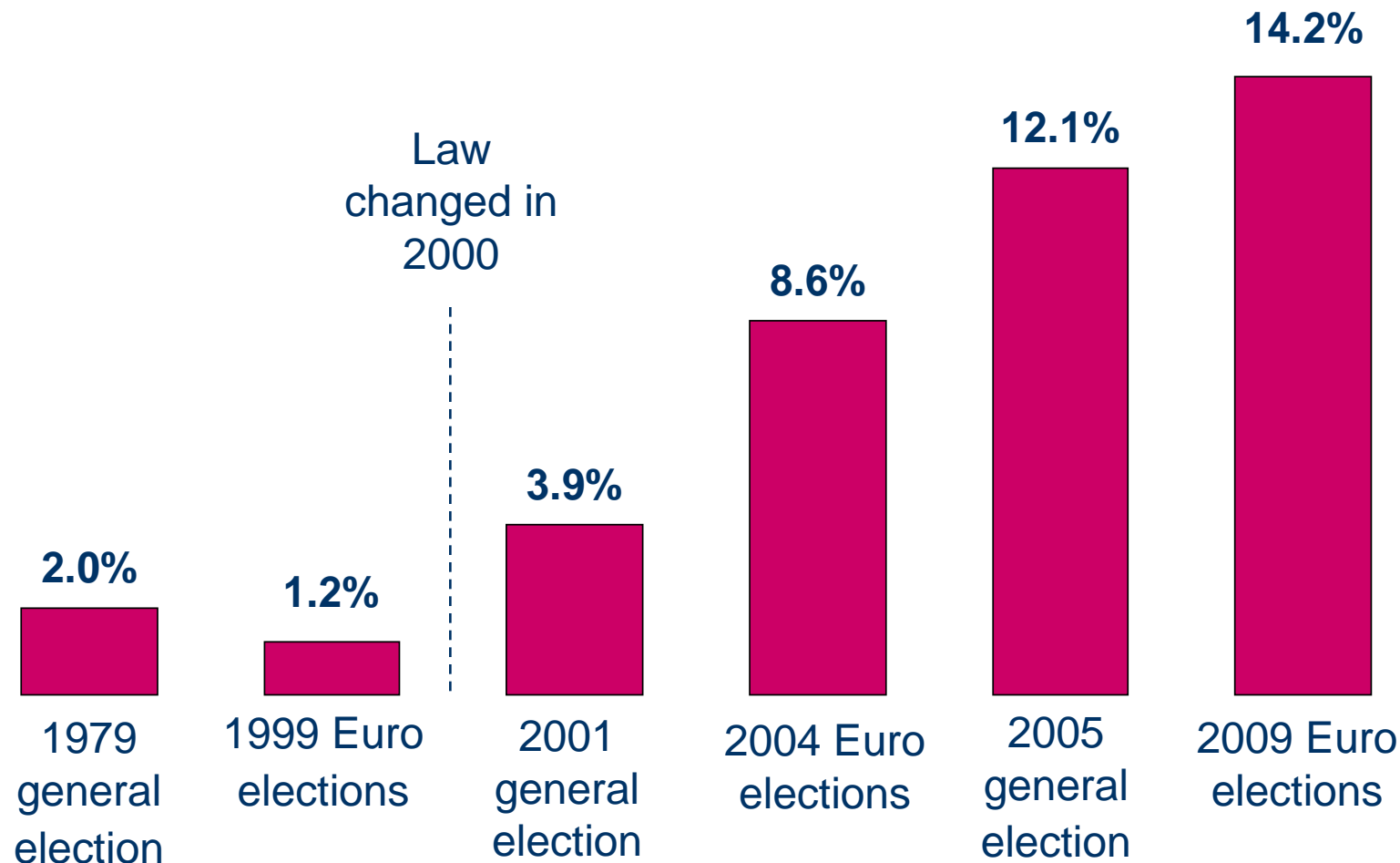
Reasons given by non-voters for their decision not to vote, 2005

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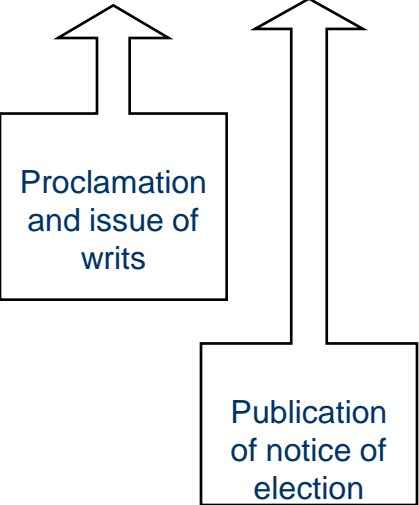
Postal voting is increasingly popular in Great Britain

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Percentage of electors receiving postal votes

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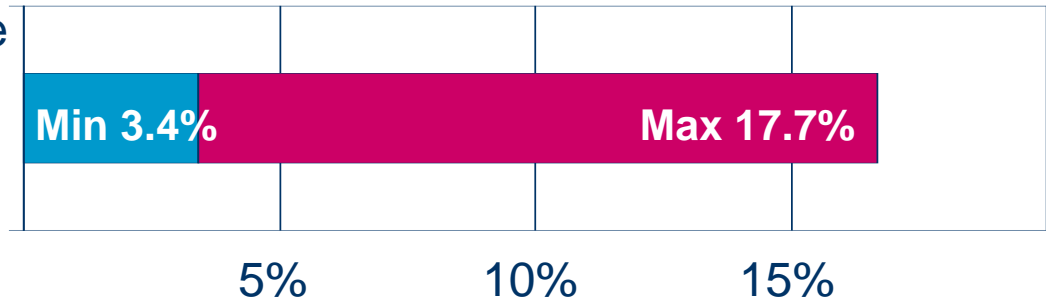
But the General Election timetable leaves little time to apply for, receive or return a ballot paper by post

The UK has
carried out e-
voting tests
since 2000

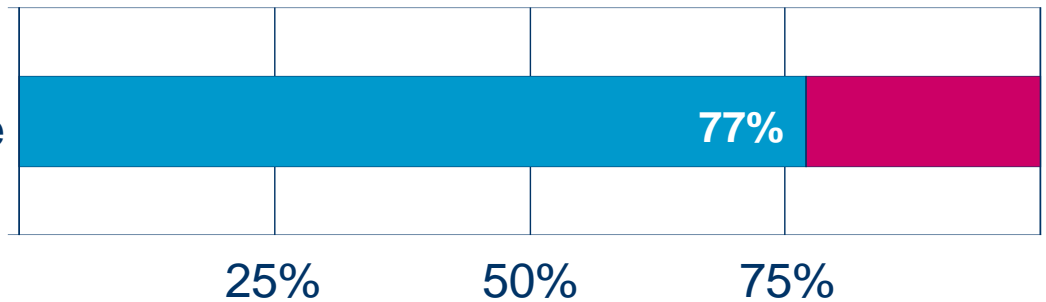
- Legal framework for pilot schemes at local government elections
- 31 e-voting pilot schemes 2000-07:
 - e-voting machines in polling place (2000-03)
 - remote e-voting using Internet, telephone
- Electoral Commission has provided independent evaluation of pilot schemes
 - turnout and convenience
 - security and confidence
 - administrative impact and value for money

E-voting has not persuaded significant numbers of 'non-voters' to vote ...

Percentage of electors using e-voting



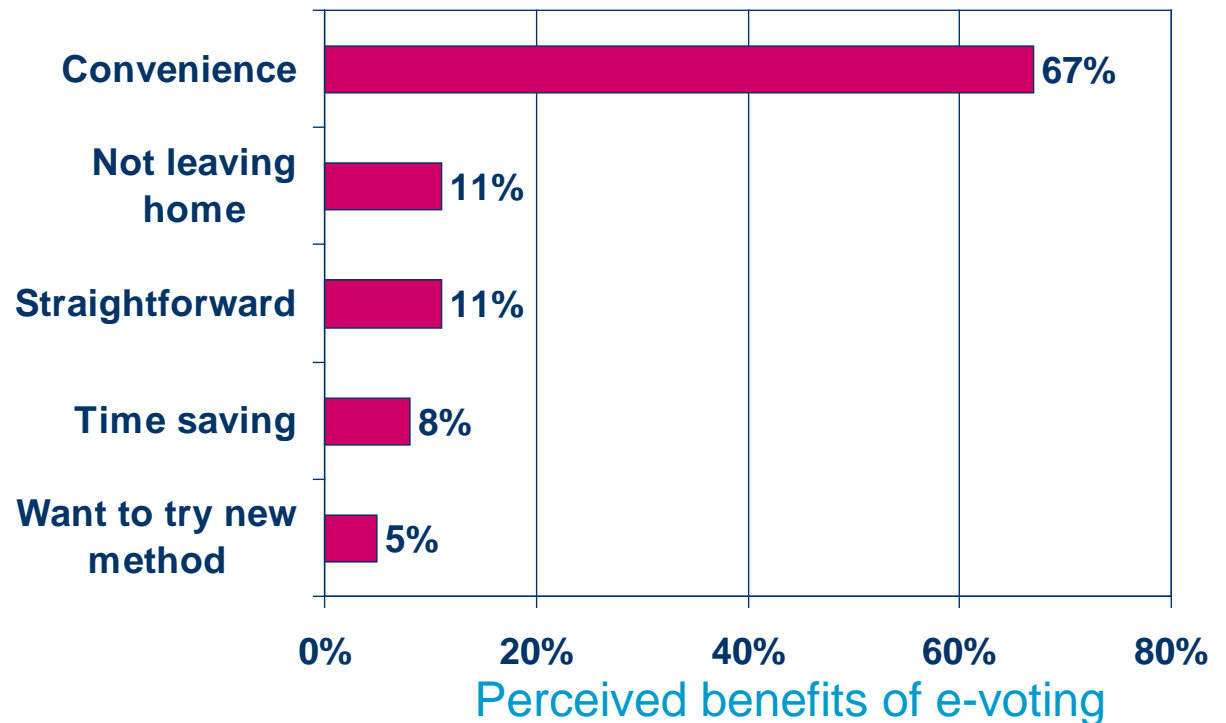
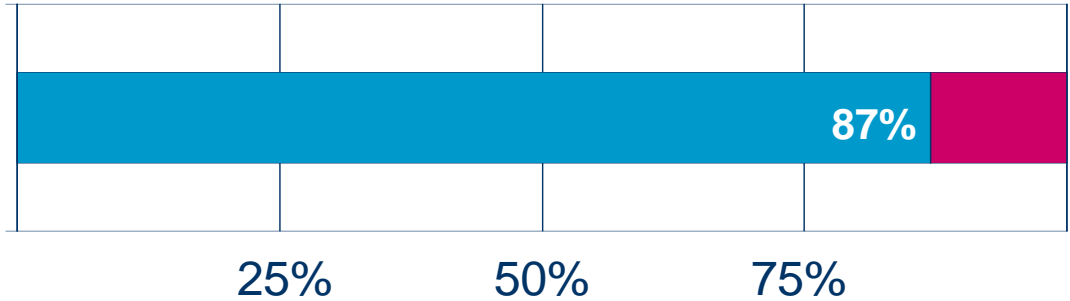
Percentage of e-voting users who would have been likely to vote anyway



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... but it has successfully widened choice and convenience for people who are interested in voting

Percentage of e-voting users who say more convenient



No serious
security
breaches have
been detected

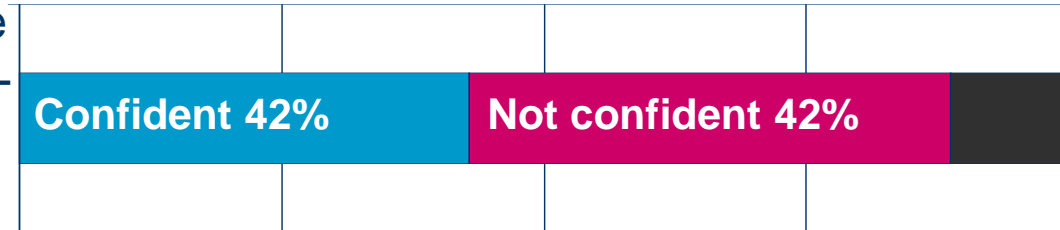
...

- Timescales for implementation of pilot schemes has been biggest contributor to project risk – insufficient opportunity for design, development, quality management and testing
- Although no serious security problems reported, level of risk of incident consequently much higher than it should have been

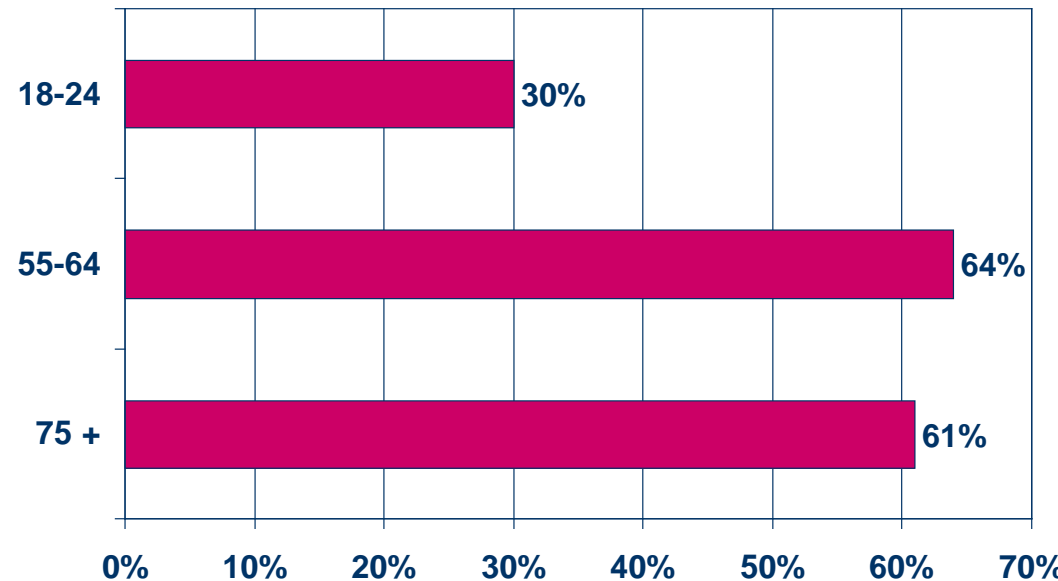
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... But confidence in e-voting may be fragile and concerns about risks remain

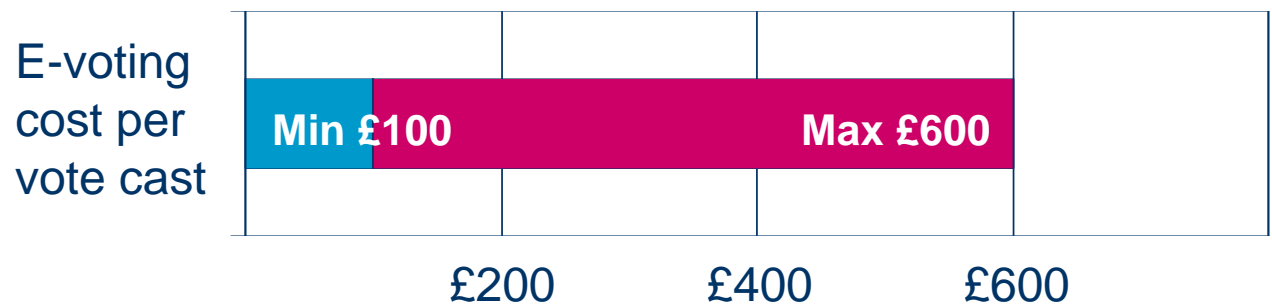
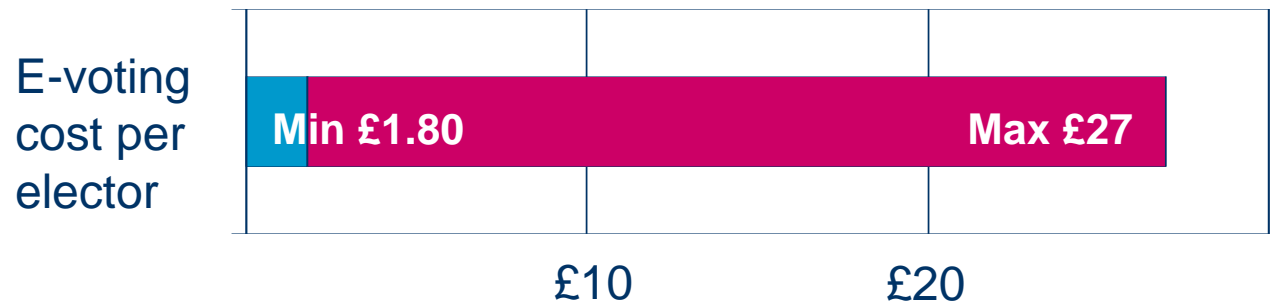
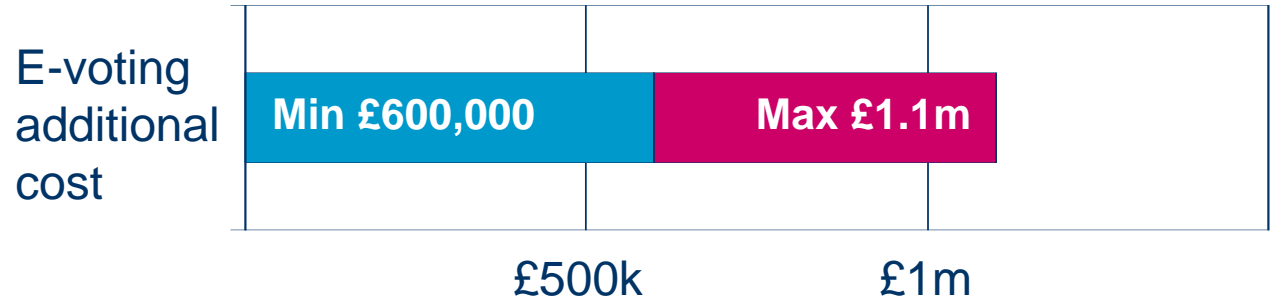
Percentage confident e-voting is secure



Percentage not confident e-voting is secure, by age group



UK e-voting pilot schemes have been very expensive...



.. But the current level of usage does not allow economies of scale to be achieved

- One-off pilot schemes always likely to be more expensive activity
 - Short timescales
 - Complex IT systems
- Systems were significantly oversized for the voting capacity required, to meet availability and resilience requirements
- Future costs may be lower
 - Competitive, certified market
 - Economies of scale

Successful development of e-voting policy needs to be set within a wider strategic context for elections

- Piecemeal trials on tight timescales have provided limited learning value
- UK Government still considering ways to improve voting processes
- Awaiting UK Government's vision for electoral modernisation
- Need a robust, publicly available document to provide basis for extensive consultation
 - Allow voters and others to feed back to the Government on its proposals
 - Facilitate broad discussion on principles of public trust, security and transparency

Key strategic
issues for e-
voting and
electoral
modernisation

- **Timescales** – minimum of 6 months before poll for implementation, if not more
- **Procurement** – need for greater assurance of the suitability and competence of suppliers and their solutions before implementation
- Timing and extent of **quality assurance and testing** required
- **Increasing capacity of Returning Officers and staff** to effectively manage modernisation projects and assimilate best practice
- **Public trust** and the need for public debate

Key lessons learned from e- voting pilot schemes in England

- E-voting alone is unlikely to increase turnout
- It may improve convenience for voters
- Cost likely to be prohibitive in the short-term
- Confidence is fragile, and trust must be built and sustained

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www.electoralcommission.org.uk