

THE ELECTORAL OFFICE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

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PRESS RELEASE

POSTAL VOTE FIGURES ANNOUNCED BY ELECTORAL OFFICE

The Electoral Office today announced details of the number of Postal votes that have been issued to individuals who are unable to vote in person for the Assembly elections on 7 March 2007.

Overall the number of postal votes issued is down by 30% compared with the combined General and district council elections in 2005 but only 3% down on the last Assembly elections in November 2003.

Fermanagh and South Tyrone has with 3375 the highest numbers of postal votes in any constituency. The lowest number issued is 393 in North Down. The two constituencies also reflect the greatest change since 2005 as both have a drop of 50% in postal votes.

Douglas Bain, the Chief Electoral Officer said:

“In general terms a postal vote will only be issued to someone who is unable to go to a polling station in person, this could be because of physical incapacity, being away from home on holiday or for work or educational reasons.

“All applications are carefully checked on receipt and those that do not comply with the statutory requirements are rejected. Where there are suspicions of fraud the cases will be referred to the police for investigation.

“I am determined that any attempt to interfere with any aspect of the democratic process will be dealt with to the full extent of the law.”

Notes for Editors:

1. The numbers of postal votes by constituency for the 2007, 2005 and 2003 elections are attached.
2. The figures for 2007 may increase marginally due to applications on the grounds of unforeseen illness which can be made up until 5pm on 27 February.
3. With a postal vote a ballot paper is sent to the elector who votes at home and posts it back to the Electoral Office where it is included with the votes cast at polling stations.

4. In Northern Ireland postal votes are only available on specified statutory grounds. Broadly speaking the elector must be unable to go to the polling station to vote in the normal way. This could be because of physical incapacity or being away from home on holiday, for work purposes or for educational reasons.
5. There have been a number of high profile criminal cases in England in connection with fraudulent postal votes.

POSTAL BALLOT PAPERS ISSUED

Constituency	NI Assembly Election 2003	Westminster Parliamentary Election 2005	NI Assembly Election 2007*
Belfast East	446	584	426
Belfast North	503	570	445
Belfast South	502	681	441
Belfast West	446	743	811
East Antrim	397	622	429
East Londonderry	1288	1647	988
F & South Tyrone	3600	4559	3375
Foyle	1091	2515	1308
Lagan Valley	798	1087	784
Mid Ulster	2174	2891	2183
Newry & Armagh	1416	1873	1226
North Antrim	893	1444	971
North Down	496	727	393
South Antrim	480	711	524
South Down	1462	2041	1318
Strangford	632	861	540
Upper Bann	1015	1162	803
West Tyrone	2330	2962	2345
TOTAL	19969	27680	19310

*Not including postal votes issued due to unforeseen illness (application deadline 27 February 2007)