

The missing 6,490 electors.



Politicians working very hard inside Tynwald, the Manx Parliament.

We recently submitted a Freedom of Information request in relation to the number of Isle of Man persons registered to vote.

By a FOI response dated 31st October 2023, the Cabinet Office confirmed that the total number of registered electors at the date of the Isle of Man 2021 Census was 64,181.

As can be noted from the Isle of Man Census (carried out on 30th May 2021), the Island's total resident population was 84,069.

The Census also shows that the number of persons aged 16 and over was 70,671.

All person aged **16** and over on the Isle Man are qualified to vote (in contrast to England where the voting age is 18 and over).

This means that 70,671 Island residents were qualified to vote in the Manx General Election.

However, only 64,181 had actually registered to vote.

Consequently, **6,490 persons were missing from the Electoral Register.**

It is a legal requirement under the Registration of Voters Act 2020 for all qualified persons (persons resident on the Isle of Man and aged 16 and over) to register to vote.

Civil financial penalties can be imposed under S.5 and S.6 Registration of Voters Act 2020 for failing to complete or return the Election Registration forms.

It is also worth noting the separate FOI response we received from the Cabinet Office to a previous request for information as to what was the turnout at the last Isle of Man General Election on 23rd September 2021.

By a FOI response dated 12th November 2021 the Cabinet Office confirmed that the overall turnout on the Island was only **50.68%**.



A Castletown polling station: half of the people didn't enter.

In other words, of those actually registered to vote, a mere half chose to do so.

We have submitted follow up questions to the Cabinet Office in respect of the 6,490 persons missing from the Electoral Register including with regard to the civil penalties for non-compliance with legal obligations under the Registration of Voters Act 2020.

In the meantime, consider the following appropriate questions;-

- i) Why did nearly six and a half thousand residents (10% of those qualified to vote) choose not to register to vote?
- ii) Of those who had registered to vote, why did approximately half (a massive 31,369 persons) choose not to vote at all?
- iii) Could it be for the same reasons i.e. people choosing not to register and people choosing not to vote share similar reasons?
- iv) Some of the reasons expressed by friends and family to me include that politics equates to no more than government by the civil service for the civil service; some politicians are contemptible liars and you cannot believe a word they say; other politicians are utterly useless individuals who

promise the earth but nothing gets done or ever changes so what's the point in voting; these are some of the same politicians who imposed an authoritarian and wholly unnecessary Covid lockdown of society; there is so much taxpayers' money scandalously squandered through government mismanagement and gross incompetence; and people have no faith or confidence in a self-serving and unaccountable ruling class wholly out of touch with the day to day priorities of ordinary working people and small businesses. Are those reasons fair and correct?

- v) Given that 10% of those qualified to vote did not register to vote and that 50% of those registered to vote chose not to vote, there is clearly a very large section of the Island's community who feel alienated and disenfranchised. What can be done about this extremely worrying disconnect and **democratic deficit**?

One final thought.

It was reported this week that members of Tynwald, the Island's Parliament, (Members of the House of Keys and Members of the Legislative Council) are to receive a **6% pay rise** in 2023.

In effect, this means a handsome **£4,296.00** pay rise for each MHK (to £75,906.00 per year).



"Break open the champagne, Christmas has come early!"

This pay award comes in the midst of critical economic and social problems, with established Manx businesses tragically closing (e.g. GH Corlett Jewellers, Douglas, announcing closure this week and Radcliffe's butchers, Castletown last week), Treasury desperately withdrawing £200 million from financial reserves this year to

pay for public services, sky high electricity prices, 859 local people dying in pain on a Manx Care hospital waiting list last year, Ronaldsway Airport plagued by frequent delays and closures, millions of gallons of raw human sewage still being pumped directly into the sea at Peel and Laxey, a crippling cost of living crisis in which more citizens than ever are using the Food Bank, the new IOM Steam Packet ferry terminal in Liverpool delayed opening until March 2024 and at double the original cost (now over £70 million), countryside footpaths overgrown, Castle Rushen High School crumbling, nurses and teachers recently out on strike, town brown field sites (such as Summerland and Victoria Road Prison) left abandoned, a chronic shortage of rental properties and the average cost of a house on the Island (£387K in December 2022) being completely unaffordable for many local couples.

In this context, will the 6% pay increase for Government ministers be viewed as morally repugnant and nothing less than a ***shameless reward for failure?***

And will it inspire any of the 6,490 missing electors to now come forward and properly register to vote or will it actually have the opposite effect of causing even more disillusioned residents to slip off the register?

See hyperlink below for Cabinet Office FOI response dated 31st October 2023.

<https://www.ik.im/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/31.10.23-Persons-missing-from-Electoral-Register.pdf>

See also hyperlink below for Cabinet Office FOI response dated 12th November 2021.

<https://www.ik.im/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/12.11.21-IOM-General-Election-turnout.pdf>