



[WATCH LIVE](#) BBC News 24

News services
Your news when you want it



- [News Front Page](#)
- [World](#)
- [UK](#)
- [England](#)
- [Northern Ireland](#)
- [Scotland](#)
- [Wales](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Politics](#)
- [Health](#)
- [Education](#)
- [Science/Nature](#)
- [Technology](#)
- [Entertainment](#)
- [Also in the news](#)

Last Updated: Monday, 3 September 2007, 16:13 GMT 17:13 UK

[E-mail this to a friend](#)

[Printable version](#)

Ballots 'rejected automatically'

Tens of thousands of votes in the Holyrood election were rejected by the counting machines without any human adjudication, BBC Scotland has learned.



More than 140,000 ballots were rejected in May

[How the machines took over Scotland Office response](#)

An investigation has established that the machines were programmed to reject some of the new style ballot papers automatically.

They never appeared on the screens to be challenged by the parties or adjudicated by returning officers.

The Scotland Office said there was no evidence it added to voter confusion.

It added that, in the instance of auto-adjudication for the 3 May election, the decision was taken between returning officers and the e-counting provider.

However, First Minister Alex Salmond described the development as "astonishing" and deeply disturbing.

"I was under the impression - until this revelation - that the ballots that were rejected were actually seen by the election agents as part of the process," he said.

“ Right from the start the Scotland Office did not come clean about the mishandling of the elections ”

David Mundell
Shadow Scottish secretary

More than 140,000 ballots were spoiled on 3 May when votes were held for the Scottish Parliament.

Tens of thousands more ballots were rejected for the local authority elections, which were held on the same day, under a separate electoral system.

One of the enduring images of election night was of candidates and agents scrutinising screens showing the rejected ballots.

However, the BBC has learned that in some contests, more than half of all the "spoilt" ballots were rejected without any human adjudication.

The machines were set to auto-adjudicate if they thought they had a Holyrood ballot paper with a cross in one column but apparently no mark in the other.

Human adjudication

VIDEO AND AUDIO NEWS

More than 140,000 ballots were spoiled on 3 May

[WATCH](#)

SEE ALSO

[How machines took over the election](#)

03 Sep 07 | Scotland

[Ballot paper report at-a-glance](#)

23 Jun 07 | Scotland

[Scotland Office ballot response](#)

03 Sep 07 | Scotland

[Vote inquiry wants public views](#)

21 May 07 | Scotland

[Clue over voter ballot confusion](#)

15 May 07 | Scotland

[Expert to head elections review](#)

14 May 07 | Scotland

[Rejected votes more than thought](#)

09 May 07 | Scotland

[Election group criticises ballots](#)

05 May 07 | Scotland

RELATED BBC LINKS

[Scottish Politics](#)

RELATED INTERNET LINKS

[Electoral Commission](#)

[Scottish Parliament](#)

[Scottish Government](#)

[Scotland Office](#)

The BBC is not responsible for the content of external internet sites

TOP SCOTLAND STORIES

[Schools saved from closure threat](#)

[Pilot died 'doing what he loved'](#)

[Ballots 'rejected automatically'](#)

[RSS](#) | [News feeds](#)

MOST POPULAR STORIES NOW

[MOST E-MAILED](#)

[MOST READ](#)

[Coach overturns in motorway crash](#)

[Tube strike travel chaos expected](#)

[Henry's wife is granted divorce](#)

[BBC reveals Doctor Who 'gap year'](#)

['Clearest' images taken of space](#)

[Most popular now, in detail](#)

RELATED BBC SITES

[SPORT](#)

[WEATHER](#)

[CBBC NEWSROUND](#)

[ON THIS DAY](#)

[EDITORS' BLOG](#)

[Video and Audio](#)

[Have Your Say Magazine](#)

[In Pictures](#)

[Country Profiles](#)

[Special Reports](#)

In those circumstances the machine would count the good vote, reject the other one and automatically put the ballot paper in the pile alongside all the correctly-completed ballots.

Shadow Scottish secretary David Mundell said he was "appalled" by the claims.

"Unfortunately it has become part of a series of revelations. Right from the start the Scotland Office did not come clean about the mishandling of the elections," he told BBC Scotland.

The Tory MP claimed that information had to be "dragged out of" the Scotland Office.

He said: "Rather than putting their hands up and saying 'we made a complete hash of this and we apologise to the people of Scotland', they've just continued to show arrogance and contempt, as if somehow it was nothing to do with them."

Mr Mundell's Lib Dem opposite number, Alistair Carmichael, added that the auto-adjudicate decision was "inappropriate".

"Individual decisions should have been taken by returning officers in consultation with the machine operating company," he said.

A special Newnight Scotland programme - Did Your Vote Count? - will be screened on BBC2 Scotland at 1900 BST on Monday.

BBC News 24 are talking about devolution on Monday, do you have any concerns about devolution? What are the advantages? Send us your comments using the form below:

Name:

Email address:

Town and Country:

Phone number (optional):

Comments:

The BBC may edit your comments and cannot guarantee that all emails will be published.

 E-mail this to a friend

 Printable version

Bookmark with: [Delicious](#) [Digg](#) [reddit](#) [Facebook](#) [StumbleUpon](#) [What are these?](#)

FEATURES, VIEWS, ANALYSIS



Shattered history
Bodge job builders have put UK's historic building stock at risk



Basra voices
Iraqi views on the UK troop withdrawal from Basra city centre



Highway code quiz
The theory test has just got harder - could you pass?

PRODUCTS & SERVICES

[E-mail news](#)

[Mobiles](#)

[Alerts](#)

[News feeds](#)

[Interactive TV](#)

[Podcasts](#)

MMVII

Most Popular Now | The most read story in Africa is: Henry's wife is granted divorce

[Back to top](#) ^^

[Help](#) | [Privacy and cookies policy](#) | [News sources](#) | [About the BBC](#) | [Contact us](#)