



BRIEFING PAPER

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2018 Boundary Review: initial proposals for Wales

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Summary

The 2018 Review of constituency boundaries is set to reduce the number of constituencies in the UK from 650 to 600, and reduce the variation in their electorates.

On 13 September 2016, the Boundary Commission for Wales published its initial proposals for 29 seats in Wales (a reduction of 11 seats). This briefing paper examines how the initial proposals would change the existing map of constituencies. It looks at:

- the extent to which proposed constituencies can be identified with existing seats. For 60% of existing seats, the proposals suggest transferring more than 75% of their electors to a single new seat;
- which seats 'disappear';
- which existing constituencies would be most affected by the proposals; and
- which proposed seats cannot straightforwardly be identified with existing seats.

A number of proposed constituencies cross local authority boundaries.

The proposed constituency with the largest electorate is Cardiff North (78,014). The proposed seat with the smallest electorate is De Clwyd a Gogledd Sir Faldwyn (71,097).

The proposed constituency covering the largest geographical area is Brecon, Radnor and Montgomery (3,624 km²). The proposed constituency covering the smallest area is Cardiff North (48 km²).

Library Briefing Paper 5929 [Constituency boundary reviews and the number of MPs](#) provides background to the boundary review process and discusses the 2013 Review which was halted. Information on the public consultation process that follows the publication of the initial proposals is provided in Library Briefing Paper 7696 [Parliamentary boundary reviews: public consultation](#).

Maps showing the proposed constituency boundaries in each region are on <http://constituencyboundaries.uk/>. Maps and discussion for individual proposed constituencies are on the [Boundary Commission for Wales' website](#). Factors considered by the Boundary Commission for Wales in developing its proposals are explained in [Guide to the 2018 Review](#), also available on the Commission's website.

1. The 2018 Review of constituency boundaries

The 2018 Review of constituency boundaries must report between 1 September and 1 October 2018 and follows the 2013 Review of constituency boundaries that was halted. The rules for the review are set out in the [Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986](#) (as amended). More information on the boundary review process and the 2013 Review is provided in Library Briefing Paper 5929 [Constituency boundary reviews and the number of MPs](#).

The four Boundary Commissions launched their reviews on 24 February 2016. They confirmed the electoral quota for the 2018 Review (based on the electorate at 1 December 2015) as 74,769. With the exception of four island seats, constituencies must be within 5% of the electoral quota.¹ This means constituencies must have an electorate between 71,031 and 78,507.² The table below shows how many seats are allocated to each part of the UK.

Allocation of seats in the 2018 Review

	Number of existing constituencies	2018 allocation	Reduction in seats		Current mean electorate	New mean electorate
			in seats	% change		
UK	650	600	50	8%	70,530	74,537
England	533	501	32	6%	72,127	74,651
Scotland	59	53	6	10%	66,593	73,526
Wales	40	29	11	28%	57,040	75,236
Northern Ireland	18	17	1	6%	66,146	73,139

The Boundary Commissions publish initial proposals that are open to revision following a public consultation process. A further consultation on the revised proposals may inform the final recommendations, which are subject to approval by Parliament. The new boundaries are due to take effect at the 2020 General Election.

1.1 Initial proposals

The Boundary Commission for Wales published its initial proposals for 29 Welsh constituencies on 13 September 2016. Most constituencies proposed by the Boundary Commission for Wales are wholly made up of entire wards, except for the De Clwyd a Gogledd Sir Faldwyn and Wrexham Maelor seats, which both contain parts of the Ponciau ward.³ In some instances, proposed constituencies cross local authority boundaries or geographical features such as rivers.

¹ Two Isle of Wight constituencies and the two Scottish constituencies of Na h-Eileanan an Iar, and Orkney and Shetland are exempted from this requirement

² Boundary Commission for Wales, [2018 Review](#), 24 February 2016; Boundary Commission for England, [2018 Review](#), 24 February 2016; Boundary Commission for Scotland, [2018 Review of UK Parliament constituencies](#), 24 February 2016; Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland, [Current Review](#), 24 February 2016

³ The Boundary Commission uses ward boundaries as they existed on 7 May 2015, although in some areas these wards are no longer in use following more recent local government boundary reviews

Further background to the initial proposals and a description of the changes to each constituency in Wales are provided in Library Briefing Paper 7704 [2018 Review of Parliamentary constituencies: Wales](#). Provisional proposals for constituencies in Northern Ireland were published on 6 September 2016 and are discussed in Library Briefing Paper 7700 [2018 Review of Parliamentary constituencies: Northern Ireland](#). The initial proposals of the Boundary Commission for England were published on 13 September and are discussed in Library Briefing Paper 7716 [2018 Boundary Review: initial proposals for England](#). The initial proposals for Scotland are expected on 20 October.

1.2 Reduction in Welsh seats

The Boundary Review is set to reduce the number of constituencies in Wales from 40 to 29. This is a 28% reduction in seats, the greatest in any part of the UK. The initial proposals do not leave any constituencies in Wales unchanged.

1.3 National Assembly for Wales

National Assembly for Wales constituencies and regions are not included in the boundary review and the Boundary Commission for Wales' proposals will introduce significant disparities between the boundaries of Westminster seats and Assembly constituencies. Currently, Assembly constituencies are the same as Westminster parliamentary constituencies, but the [Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011](#) removed the automatic link between the two sets of boundaries.

2. Extent of change

2.1 Changes to existing constituencies

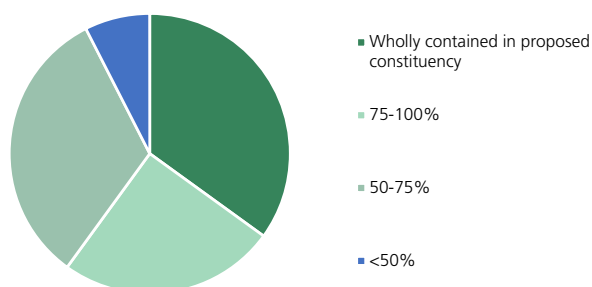
Some existing constituencies are split up between several proposed constituencies, while others remain largely the same. 14 constituencies in Wales are wholly contained within a constituency proposed by the Boundary Commission. Another 10 would have over 75% of their electorate transferred to a single proposed constituency.

Division of existing constituencies among proposed constituencies

Fraction of existing constituency contained within proposed constituency	Number of existing constituencies	% of existing constituencies
Wholly contained in proposed constituency	14	35.0%
75-100%	10	25.0%
50-75%	13	32.5%
<50%	3	7.5%
Total	40	100%

Division of existing constituencies among proposed constituencies

Fraction of existing seat's electorate transferred to new seat



Under the initial proposals, there are 3 existing seats that would not see a majority of their electors transferred to a single proposed constituency.

Existing constituencies that have less than 50% of their electorates transferred to a single proposed seat

Constituency	Party	MP	Proposed constituency	Fraction of electorate going to proposed seat
Aberavon	LAB	Stephen Kinnock	Neath and Aberavon	47.0%
Islwyn	LAB	Chris Evans	Blaenau Gwent	48.8%
Montgomeryshire	CON	Glyn Davies	De Clwyd a Gogledd Sir Faldwyn	49.6%












2.2 Disappearing and new constituencies

Disappearing constituencies

An existing seat can be said to 'disappear' if it does not contribute the largest number of voters to any of the proposed seats: disappearing seats are split into fragments that do not form the largest part of any proposed seat.⁴

There are 11 disappearing seats in Wales, listed in the table below.

Disappearing seats: existing constituencies that do not make up the largest share of any proposed constituency

Current constituency	Party	MP
 Aberavon	Labour	Stephen Kinnock
 Aberconwy	Conservative	Guto Bebb
 Arfon	Plaid Cymru	Hywel Williams
 Cardiff Central	Labour	Jo Stevens
 Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire	Conservative	Simon Hart
 Delyn	Labour	Mr David Hanson
 Gower	Conservative	Byron Davies
 Islwyn	Labour	Chris Evans
 Montgomeryshire	Conservative	Glyn Davies
 Newport East	Labour	Jessica Morden
 Pontypridd	Labour	Owen Smith

New constituencies

A proposed constituency can be defined as 'new' if it does not draw 50% or more of its electorate from any existing seat.

On this basis, there is one new constituency in the initial proposals for Wales: De Clwyd a Gogledd Sir Faldwyn. The largest share of the electorate of this proposed constituency (41.9%) is drawn from the existing Clwyd South seat.

2.3 Index of Change

Academics Colin Rallings, Ron Johnston and Michael Thrasher use an 'Index of Change' to quantify the extent to which constituencies are changed by boundary reviews. They explain that this Index is calculated by dividing the total numbers added to and removed from an existing 'base' constituency by that constituency's total electorate.⁵ The base constituency is the existing constituency that contributes most to the proposed constituency. The Index of Change is expressed as a percentage, as demonstrated in the box below.

⁴ Electoral Calculus, *New Constituency Boundaries for Britain 2018, Disappearing Seats*, 15 September 2016, <http://www.electoralcalculus.co.uk/boundaries2018.html>

⁵ Colin Rallings, Ron Johnston and Michael Thrasher, 'Changing the boundaries but keeping the disproportionality: the electoral impact of the Fifth Periodical Reviews by the Parliamentary Boundary Commissions for England and Wales', *The Political Quarterly*, 2008, 79:1, pp80-90

Box 1: Calculating the Index of Change

$$\frac{(\text{Total deletions from base} + \text{total additions to base})}{\text{Electorate of base constituency}} \times 100$$

The table below provides a summary of changes in Welsh constituency boundaries, using the Index of Change. In 48% of proposed constituencies, the number of electors being added to and removed from the base constituency is greater than half of the base electorate (i.e. the Index of Change is over 50%).

In one proposed constituency, the Index of Change exceeds 100%, meaning the number of electors leaving and joining the base is greater than the base electorate. In this case, the term 'base' is not very meaningful.

Extent of change in Welsh constituency boundaries:**Index of Change (%)**

None	0-10	10-25	25-50	50-100	100+	Total
0	0	3	12	13	1	29

These proposals represent a more extensive revision of constituency boundaries than the boundary changes that came into force at the 2010 General Election. More than half the constituencies proposed in the boundary review published in 2006 had an Index of Change of 10% or less. The Index of Change exceeded 50% in 2 out of 40 Welsh constituencies, compared to 14 out of 29 now.⁶ The 2013 Review of constituency boundaries had proposed a similar level of change to the current proposals, but was halted in 2012.

Box 2: Example – the Index of Change for Cardiff North

The proposed Cardiff North constituency draws most of its electorate from the current Cardiff North seat, which therefore counts as the 'base constituency'. 56,682 of Cardiff North's 63,574 voters are transferred to the proposed Cardiff North seat. The remaining 6,892 voters are transferred to another proposed seat. The proposed Cardiff North seat also takes 18,574 voters from the current Cardiff Central seat and 2,758 from the current Pontypridd seat.

The Index of Change for Cardiff North is **44.4%**:

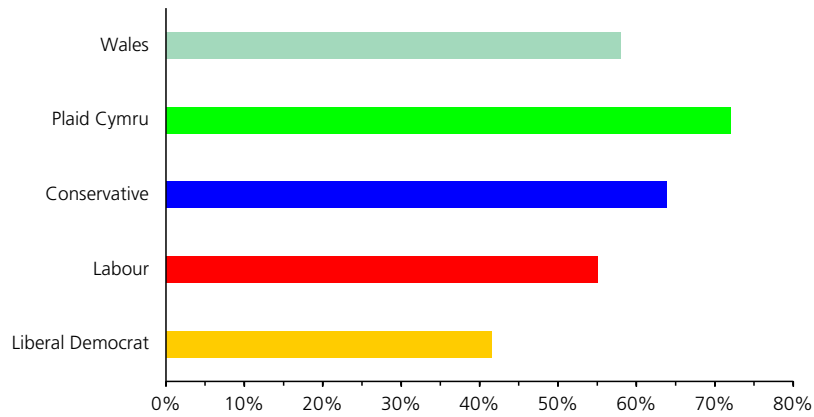
$$\frac{(6,892 + 18,574 + 2,758)}{63,574} \times 100$$

⁶ Colin Rallings, Ron Johnston and Michael Thrasher, 'Changing the boundaries but keeping the disproportionality: the electoral impact of the Fifth Periodical Reviews by the Parliamentary Boundary Commissions for England and Wales', *The Political Quarterly*, 2008, 79:1, p81

Political parties and the Index of Change

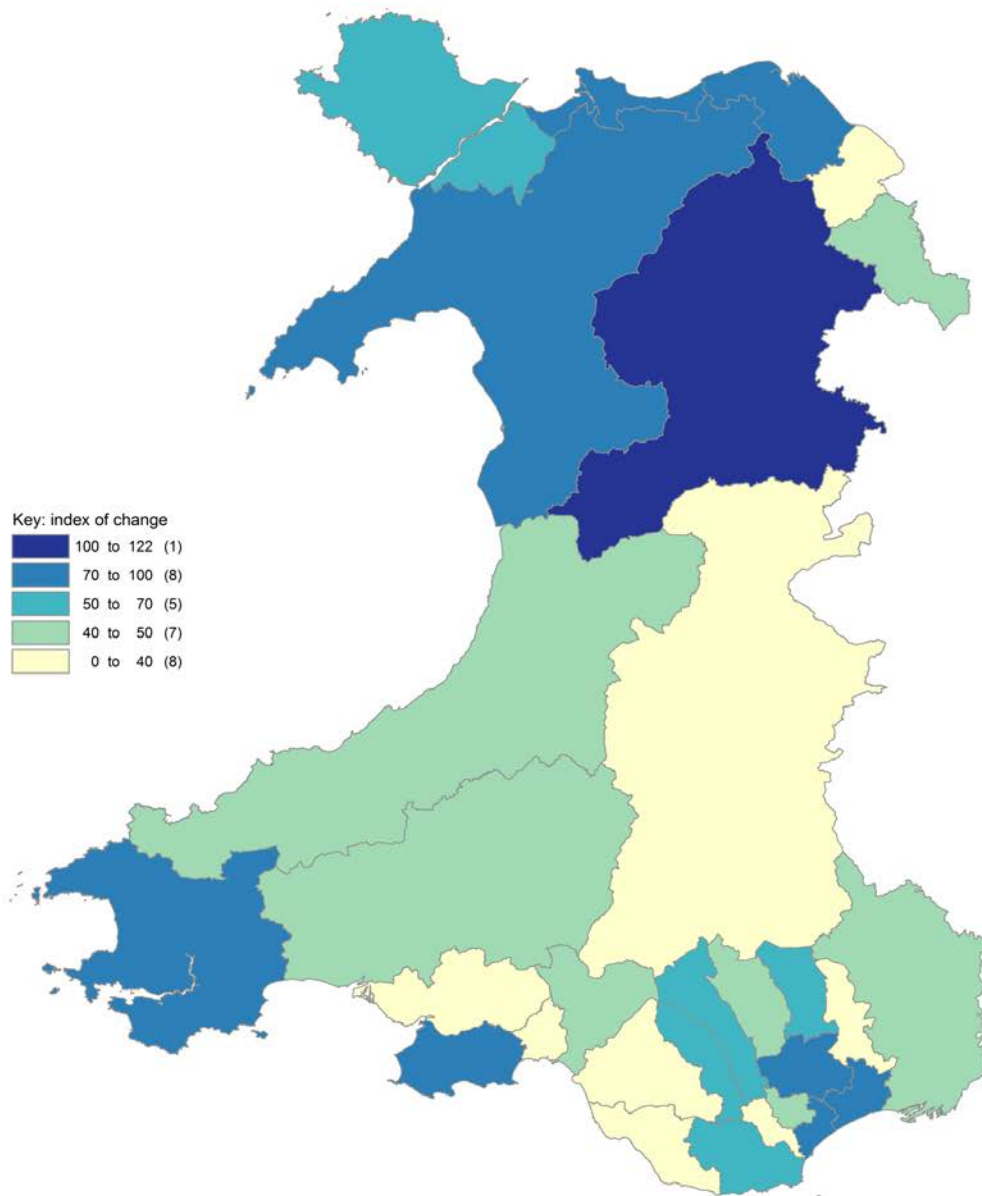
The average Index of Change across constituencies in Wales is 57.9%. It is possible to calculate an average Index of Change by political party, by looking at the 'base' constituencies currently held by political parties. Excluded from this calculation are the 11 disappearing constituencies (see above), which are not the base constituency to any proposed seat.

Average Index of Change, by party



2.4 Map: Index of Change of proposed constituencies

Proposed boundary changes: index of change, Wales



3. Local authority boundaries

Wales is divided into 22 single-tier principal areas for local government purposes. 15 out of the 29 proposed constituencies cross one or more local government boundaries.

Proposed constituencies that cross local authority boundaries

Constituencies	Local authorities			
Blaenau Gwent	Blaenau Gwent	Caerphilly		
Bridgend and West Vale of Glamorgan	Bridgend	Vale of Glamorgan		
Caerphilly	Caerphilly	Newport		
Cardiff North	Cardiff	Rhondda Cynon Taf		
Ceredigion a Gogledd Sir Benfro	Carmarthenshire	Ceredigion	Pembrokeshire	Powys
De Clwyd a Gogledd Sir Faldwyn	Conwy	Denbighshire	Gwynedd	Powys Wrexham
Flint and Rhuddlan	Denbighshire	Flintshire		
Gogledd Clwyd a Gwynedd	Conwy	Denbighshire	Gwynedd	
Llanelli and Lliw	Carmarthenshire	Swansea		
Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney	Caerphilly	Merthyr Tydfil		
Monmouthshire	Monmouthshire	Newport		
Ogmore and Port Talbot	Bridgend	Neath Port Talbot	Rhondda Cynon Taf	
Swansea East	Neath Port Talbot	Swansea		
Torfaen	Newport	Torfaen		
Ynys Môn ac Arfon	Gwynedd	Isle of Anglesey		

The requirement for proposed constituencies to be within 5% of the electoral quota means that four out of the 22 local authorities in Wales could contain a whole number of seats:

- Cardiff;
- Denbighshire;
- Gwynedd;
- Monmouthshire.

However, in the initial proposals, these authorities all contain parts of seats that cross local government boundaries.

4. Electorates of the proposed seats

4.1 Origins of the electorate

Most proposed constituencies draw their electorate from two existing seats. Two proposed constituencies are combinations of fragments from five existing seats.

Origins of the electorate of proposed constituencies

Contribution of current constituencies to proposed	Number of proposed constituencies	% of proposed constituencies
One	0	0.0%
Two	16	55.2%
Three	9	31.0%
Four	2	6.9%
Five	2	6.9%
Total	29	100.0%

4.2 Deviation from the electoral quota

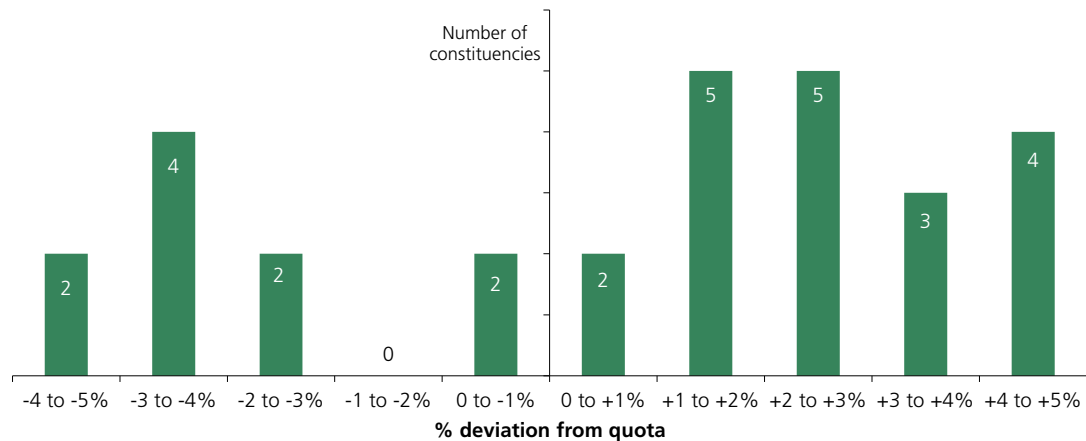
The Boundary Commission for Wales is required to propose constituencies that have an electorate within 5% of the electoral quota of 74,769: constituency electorates must be between 71,031 and 78,507.

The electorates of the proposed constituencies are distributed fairly uniformly across the permitted range – boundaries resulting in constituency electorates that are closer to the quota are not favoured over boundaries that result in electorates at the periphery of the permitted range.

Deviation of electorates of proposed constituencies from the Electoral Quota

Deviation from EQ (+/-)	Number of constituencies
0-1%	4
1-2%	5
2-3%	7
3-4%	7
4-5%	6
Total	29

Deviation of electorates of proposed constituencies from electoral quota



4.3 Largest and smallest electorates

Under the provisional proposals the largest constituency in Wales (in terms of electorate) would be Cardiff North, with 78,014 electors. It comprises electors from the following existing seats:

- Cardiff Central (18,574 electors)
- Cardiff North (56,682 electors)
- Pontypridd (2,758 electors)

Proposed constituencies with largest electorates

1 Cardiff North	78,014
2 Cynon Valley and Pontypridd	78,005
3 Gower and Swansea West	77,873
4 Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney	77,770
5 Ynys Môn ac Arfon	77,425

The constituency with the smallest electorate is De Clwyd a Gogledd Sir Faldwyn, with 71,097 electors. This is 66 voters more than the minimum permissible electorate.

Proposed constituencies with smallest electorates

1 De Clwyd a Gogledd Sir Faldwyn	71,097
2 Ceredigion a Gogledd Sir Benfro	71,392
3 Brecon, Radnor and Montgomery	72,115
4 Wrexham Maelor	72,137
5 Torfaen	72,367

5. Area of proposed constituencies

The reduction in the number of seats means that the average size of a Welsh constituency increases to 732 km². The largest of the proposed constituencies in Wales is Brecon, Radnor and Montgomery, which has an area of 3,624 km². There are four other proposed constituencies covering more than 2,000 km². By comparison, the area of the largest existing Welsh constituency, Brecon and Radnorshire, is 3,015 km²; the existing Dwyfor Meirionnydd seat is the second largest in Wales with an area of 2,815 km².

Proposed constituencies covering the largest geographical area

Proposed constituency	Electorate	Area (km ²)
1 Brecon, Radnor and Montgomery	72,115	3,624
2 Gogledd Clwyd a Gwynedd	76,147	2,980
3 De Clwyd a Gogledd Sir Faldwyn	71,097	2,704
4 Ceredigion a Gogledd Sir Benfro	71,392	2,672
5 Caerfyrddin	72,569	2,056

The proposed constituency covering the smallest geographical area is Cardiff North, with an area of 48 km².

Proposed constituencies covering the smallest geographical area

Proposed constituency	Electorate	Area (km ²)
1 Cardiff North	78,014	48
2 Cardiff South and East	77,059	52
3 Cardiff West	75,563	56
4 Swansea East	76,514	81
5 Newport	75,986	97

6. List of proposed constituencies

List of proposed constituencies

Proposed constituency	Base Constituency	Proposed Electorate	Area (km ²)	Index of change
Alyn and Deeside	Alyn and Deeside	76,678	203	26.6%
Blaenau Gwent	Blaenau Gwent	75,664	160	52.4%
Brecon, Radnor and Montgomery	Brecon and Radnorshire	72,115	3,624	38.0%
Bridgend and West Vale of Glamorgan	Bridgend	73,004	209	23.9%
Caerfyrddin	Carmarthen East and Dinefwr	72,569	2,056	49.7%
Caerphilly	Caerphilly	76,323	160	97.0%
Cardiff North	Cardiff North	78,014	48	44.4%
Cardiff South and East	Cardiff South and Penarth	77,059	52	97.8%
Cardiff West	Cardiff West	75,563	56	18.3%
Ceredigion a Gogledd Sir Benfro	Ceredigion	71,392	2,672	41.6%
Colwyn and Conwy	Clwyd West	75,035	161	93.6%
Cynon Valley and Pontypridd	Cynon Valley	78,005	227	57.9%
De Clwyd a Gogledd Sir Faldwyn	Clwyd South	71,097	2,704	121.6%
Flint and Rhuddlan	Vale of Clwyd	75,902	335	93.9%
Gogledd Clwyd a Gwynedd	Dwyfor Meirionnydd	76,147	2,980	94.2%
Gower and Swansea West	Swansea West	77,873	250	84.3%
Llanelli and Lliw	Llanelli	76,751	385	34.2%
Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney	Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney	77,770	201	46.3%
Monmouthshire	Monmouth	74,532	969	43.0%
Neath and Aberavon	Neath	77,397	291	41.5%
Newport	Newport West	75,986	97	88.6%
Ogmore and Port Talbot	Ogmore	72,503	345	35.4%
Rhondda and Llantrisant	Rhondda	74,965	154	52.5%
South Pembrokeshire	Preseli Pembrokeshire	74,070	1,165	83.1%
Swansea East	Swansea East	76,514	81	39.4%
Torfaen	Torfaen	72,367	141	23.6%
Vale of Glamorgan East	Vale of Glamorgan	76,984	220	50.9%
Wrexham Maelor	Wrexham	72,137	295	47.6%
Ynys Môn ac Arfon	Ynys Môn	77,425	984	57.1%

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