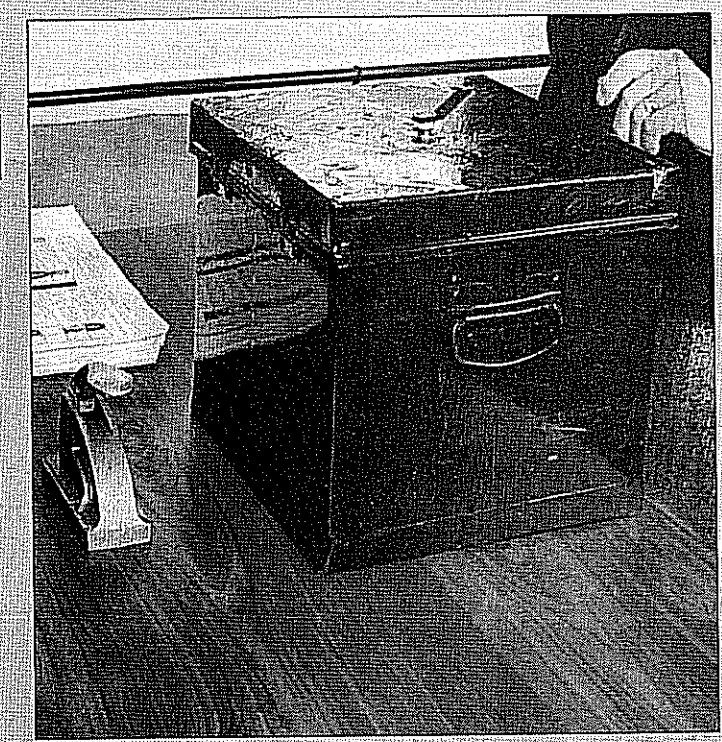


The first column in the table gives the census figure for Irish/UK adults in each constituency – a much more accurate picture of the numbers entitled to vote in the general election than the overstated electoral register. The second column shows the number of votes cast in May's election. The third column is key: showing turnout based on the assumption that 85% of adults are on the register. In no country are there 100% of adults on the electoral register – a registration rate of 85% is regarded as the norm.

General Election 2007

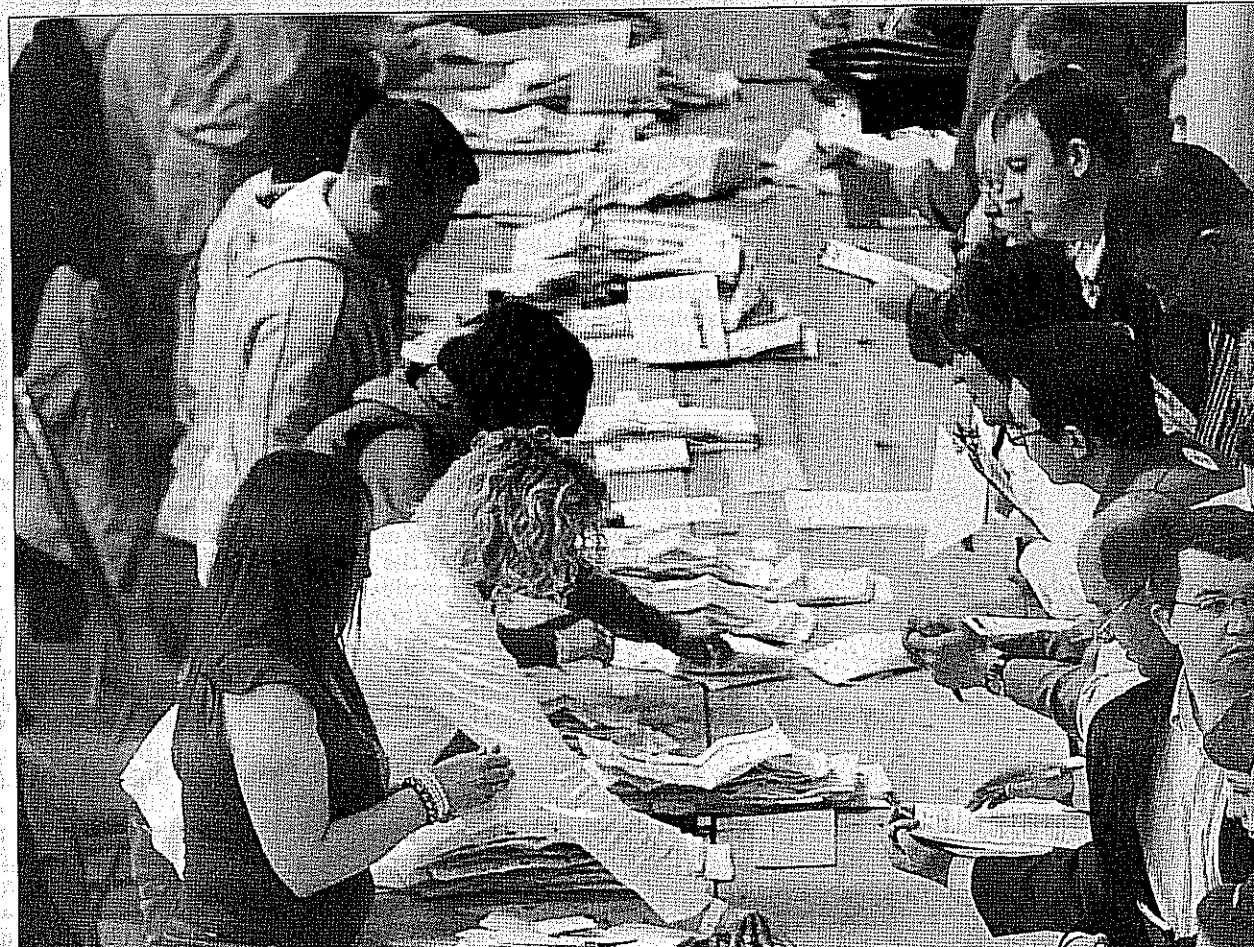
Turnout of those entitled to vote

	Number of Irish/UK adults	Total number of votes cast	Turnout assuming 85% adults on register
Cork North-West	55,705	47,021	99.30%
Roscommon-Leitrim South	55,325	46,470	98.92%
Tipperary North	53,915	44,783	97.72%
Mayo	88,284	72,086	96.06%
Cavan-Monaghan	81,804	66,547	95.71%
Galway East	69,872	56,274	94.75%
Kerry North	49,313	39,647	94.59%
Cork South-West	53,528	42,907	94.30%
Sligo-Leitrim North	50,764	40,330	93.47%
Limerick West	51,470	40,812	93.29%



Other turnout figures for constituencies (assuming 85% registration): Kerry South 93.23%, Donegal South-West 93.01%, Clare 92.15%, Longford-Westmeath 90.84%, Laois-Offaly 89.82%, Wexford 88.91%, Cork East 87.73%, Donegal North-East 87.43%, Tipperary South 87.05%, Dun Laoghaire 86.69%, Meath East 86.41%, Meath West 86.25%, Carlow-Kilkenny 86.07%, Louth 86.01%, Wicklow 84.94%, Dublin South 83.73%, Dublin North-East 82.71%, Dublin North-Central 81.91%, Dublin North 80.30%, Cork North-Central 78.82%, Waterford 78.45%, Kildare North 76.76%, Cork South-Central 76%, Kildare South 75.34%, Dublin South-West 75.06%, Dublin West 73.40%, Dublin North-West 72.56%, Galway West 71.48%, Limerick East 70.33%, Dublin Midwest 69.15%, Dublin South-Central 66.44%, Dublin Central 61.23%, Dublin South-East 57.63%

IT JUST DOESN'T ADD UP



New draft electoral register remains overstated by half a million

THE new draft register of electors published 10 days ago reveals that huge problems remain with its accuracy, with a *Sunday Tribune* investigation establishing that over half of the local authorities have more people on the register than there are adults living in their counties.

With the local elections just over 18 months away, the register of electors is still expected to be the

An analysis of census figures shows that the last election had voter turnouts of over 90% in 14 Irish constituencies – figures that are simply impossible to believe. So what was going on? Shane Coleman and Odran Flynn report

Sunday Tribune
INVESTIGATION
ELECTORAL FRAUD

COULD there have been widespread voter fraud in last May's general election? The instinctive answer of most people in the political world would be 'no'. Everybody now accepts the *Sunday Tribune's* original contention that the electoral register is a mess and is overstated. But there is a world of difference between this and suggestions that a percentage of the excess hundreds of thousands of polling cards sent out were actually used to manipulate the vote.

However, there is no denying the unusual voting patterns in the general election just gone. These unusual patterns are masked because the

If we assume 85% of adults are on the electoral register – in keeping with international norms – then 14 constituencies had a turnout of in excess of 90%. Simply impossible to believe.

register is so hugely overstated. As a result, the percentage turnout figure, while higher than would have been expected before the election, doesn't seem particularly out of the norm.

But a very different picture is presented when the number of people who voted in each constituency is compared to the number of Irish and British adults (ie the people entitled to vote in a general election) living in each constituency, based on last year's census figure.

The census figure for British and Irish adults is much more relevant because, unlike the vastly overstated register of electors, it is quite accurate and there would have been minimal changes between the time the census was taken and last year's general election. When the voter numbers in the general election are compared with Irish and UK adults, it shows 12 of the 43 constituencies had a turnout of close to, or in excess of, 80% (the highest being Cork North-West at 84.4%).

Nothing so unusual about that you might think. A turnout of in the region of 80% is certainly high but not entirely out of the question, even in these

political times.

But the true picture is almost certainly much more stark than that. The above figures are based on the assumption that 100% of British and Irish adults are on the electoral register. Nowhere in the world – not even in countries where there is compulsory registration – is there 100% registration. It is much more normal to have a registration rate of 85% of adults. The best a country can realistically hope to attain – generally after a sustained voter registration campaign involving regular door-to-door inquiries – is in the region of 90%.

Taking the impossibility of a 100% registration rate into account, a fresh examination of the turnout figures suddenly leaves them looking extremely high. If we assume 90% of adults are on the electoral register, then there are five constituencies that had a turnout last May in excess of 90% – absolutely unheard of in recent times. The turnout in Cork North-West, for example, would have been just short of 94%.

Alternatively, if we assume 85% of adults are on the electoral register – which would be in keeping with international norms – then a total of 14 constituencies had a turnout of in excess of 90%. And, in total, 29 of the 43 constituencies would have had a turnout of greater than 80%. Simply impossible to believe.

In this scenario, Cork North-West would have had a turnout of 99.3%, while in Roscommon-Leitrim South, Tipperary North, Mayo and Cavan-Monaghan more than 95% of voters would have turned up to cast their ballot. That level of turnout is clearly not believable.

So what is going on?

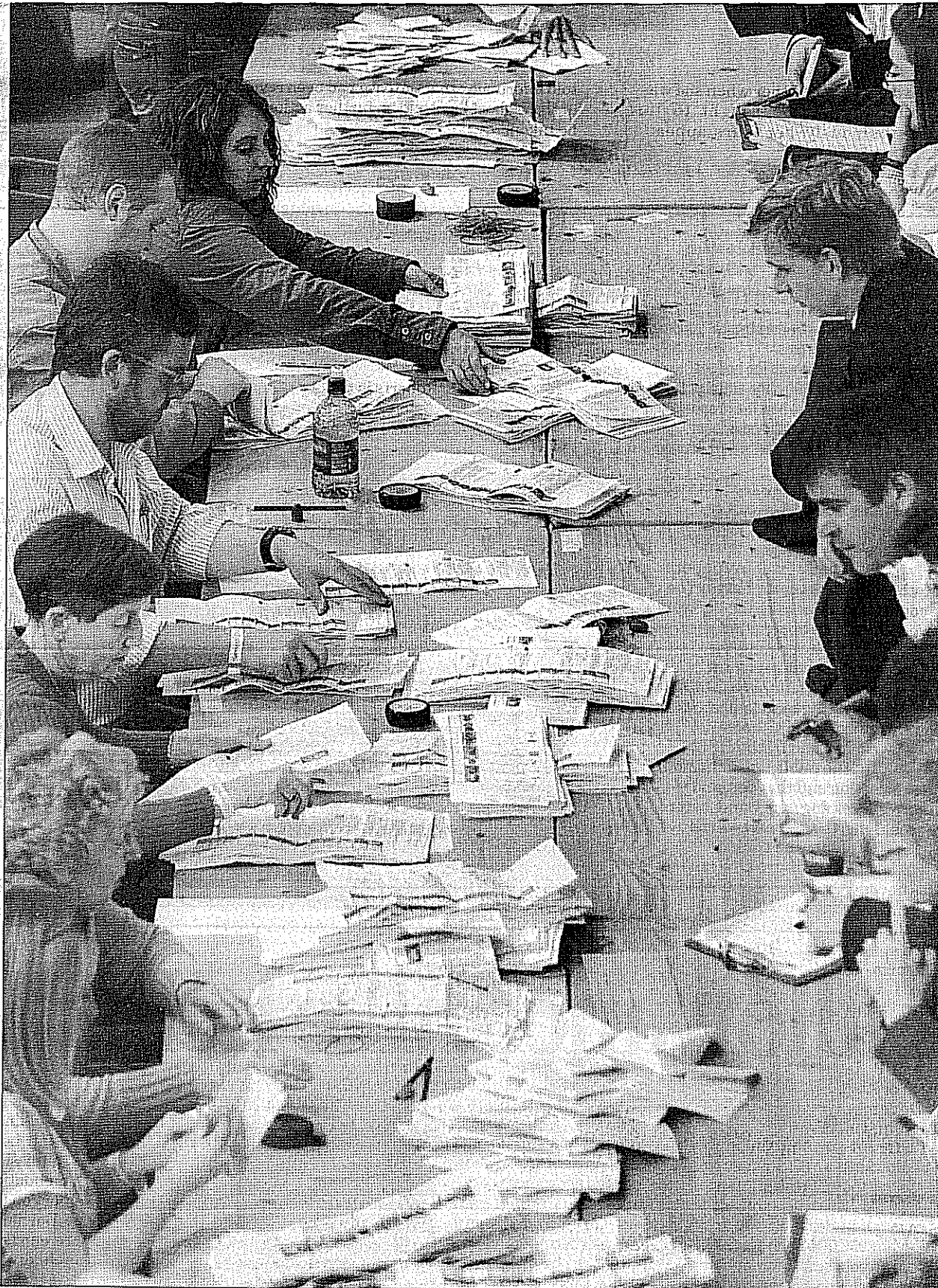
One obvious explanation for the voting patterns is students and young workers returning from urban centres to the home place to cast their vote. These people may have been recorded as living in Dublin, Cork, Galway or some other urban centre on the night the census was taken. But that doesn't preclude them from having a vote in their home village or town and going home to cast that vote on election day.

However, there are a couple of reasons why this doesn't come even close to explaining what happened last May. Firstly, the number of students and workers who would come back on a Thursday evening to cast their vote would have to be enormous to explain turnouts in some constituencies of well in excess of 90%.

In each of the constituencies of Cork North-West and Cork South-West, for example, there are 3,000 third-level students. But a significant proportion of them reside at home, so even if all the remainder of the students living outside the constituency returned home to vote, it doesn't begin to explain the high turnout in these constituencies.

Secondly, and more importantly, a look at the national picture shows this is not simply a case of people voting in different constituencies to where they live. When the total number of Irish and British adults is compared with the number of votes cast, it points to a turnout of 71.09 – exceptionally high by modern standards.

But again that assumes that every Irish and



months away, the register of electors is still overstated by in the region of 500,000 people, despite intense efforts by the government and local authorities to improve the voter database since the *Sunday Tribune* first highlighted the crisis in the register over two years ago.

Leitrim appears to be the worst offender with almost 12% more people on the register than there are adults living in the county. But even this figure understates the real level of the problem because it presumes all adults living in the county are included on the register.

Other counties with serious over-registration include Cork county (with 10% more on the register than there are adults living there), Longford (9.3%), Meath (8.6%), Westmeath (8.5%), Laois (8%), Waterford county (7.8%), Wexford (7.6%) and Mayo (7.6%). At least 19 of the 34 local authorities have a higher number of people on the register than the adult population.

The figures also show significant underrepresentation of immigrants on the electoral register.

Shane Coleman and Odran Flynn

British adult is on the electoral register – a total impossibility. If 90% of adults are on the register – the highest realistically possible based on international standards – then the turnout in May's election was 79%. That is a mere two percentage points behind the record for a general election set in 1933 of 81.3% when interest and active participation in politics was far higher than it is today.

And if a lower figure of 85% of adults are on the register, then the turnout in May was an even more staggering 83.63% – which would be a record for a general election.

Clearly something is seriously amiss. The reaction from the political classes is pretty easy to predict. Any suggestion of widespread voter fraud

at the last general election will be immediately ruled out. It is an entirely understandable reaction. The alternative is too awful to contemplate.

Nobody can say for definite at this stage that there was voter fraud at the last general election. But somebody somewhere in government will have to look at the figures and explain the highly unusual voter patterns in the general election of five months ago – because the figures, quite simply do not add up

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ABOVE: The ones who count: vote counters (left) and tallymen (right) keep their eyes on the votes as they mount up at the election count in May

PA/NIALL CARSON

RIGHT: Taoiseach Bertie Ahern casts his ballot

