



Your Scottish Parliament election voting guide

THURSDAY 6 MAY 2021



On Thursday 6 May 2021, there will be an election to the Scottish Parliament.

This booklet explains what you need to know before the election, and tells you where you can find further information.

How do I register to vote?

You must be registered to vote by midnight on Monday 19 April 2021 to vote in this election. It's important that you register to vote as early as possible in case your registration office needs to check any details with you.

If you've never registered or have recently moved house, register to vote online at **www.gov.uk/register tovot e** or call 0800 3 280 280 for more information.

Who can vote?

You can vote in this election if you are registered to vote in Scotland and will be 16 or over on Thursday 6 May, and are:

- a British or Irish citizen, or
- a Commonwealth citizen who has leave to remain in the UK, or does not require such leave, or
- a citizen of a European Union country, or
- a qualifying foreign national who has permission to enter or remain in the UK, or who does not need such permission

British citizens living overseas can't vote in the Scottish Parliament election.

Your poll card tells you where and when to vote. If you have recently received a poll card, you are registered to vote.

Information is correct at the time of print on 9 February 2021.
For the latest information about the election and Covid-19 safety measures, go to **electoralcommission.org.uk/voter** or call your local council.

What is different since the last Scottish Parliament election in 2016?

In 2020, the Scottish Parliament passed a new law that means if you are aged 16 or over and resident in Scotland, you can vote in Scottish elections regardless of your nationality.

This means that the following groups can now vote in Scottish Parliament and council elections:

- qualifying foreign nationals (those who have permission to enter or remain in the UK, or who do not need such permission)
- refugees (but not those with a pending asylum application in Scotland)
- prisoners who are serving a sentence of 12 months or less in a UK prison and would usually be resident in Scotland



To find out more about which elections you can vote in, go to **electoralcommission.org.uk/voter** or call our helpline on 0800 3 280 280.

How do I vote?

There are three ways to vote:



At your polling station on Thursday 6 May

You will be sent a poll card telling you where your polling place is. You don't need your poll card to vote and if you lose it, or don't receive it, you can contact your local council to find out where your polling place is.

Polling places are open from 7am to 10pm.



By post

To apply to vote by post, complete a postal vote application form and send it to your local electoral registration office to arrive by 5pm on Tuesday 6 April.

You will receive your ballot papers by post. Complete and return your ballot papers, ensuring you leave enough time for them to arrive by 10pm on Thursday 6 May.



By proxy (allowing somebody you trust to vote on your behalf)

To apply to vote by proxy, complete an application form and send it to your local electoral registration office to arrive by 5pm on Tuesday 27 April.

In an emergency where you cannot go to the polling station in person, you can apply for an emergency proxy up to 5pm on Thursday 6 May.

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What can I expect at the polling place?



Polling places will be safe places to vote during Covid-19 and will comply with Public Health Scotland guidance.

A number of measures will be put into place to help you stay safe when voting in person at the polling place.

You can expect to see many of the measures you've become used to over recent months in shops and other indoor spaces.

You will be expected to use the hand sanitiser provided when you enter and exit the polling

place and you must wear a face covering at all times (unless you are exempt).

We recommend that you bring your own pen or pencil to mark your ballot papers, but clean pencils will also be available.

Physical distancing measures will be in place and there may be a one-way system in operation. You may have to queue to enter the polling place as there will be a limit to the number of voters allowed in the building at any one time.



Other ways to vote

If you do not want to vote in person, you can vote by post, or by proxy (asking someone that you trust to vote on your behalf).

You need to complete an application to vote by post or by proxy. If you are not already registered to vote, you must also register for your application to be accepted.



For more information, or to get a postal or proxy application form, go to electoralcommission.org.uk/voter or call our helpline on 0800 3 280 280.

How do I fill in the ballot papers?

You will receive two ballot papers and you will vote once on each paper:

Constituency ballot paper

(Local area)

Election of Members of the Scottish Parliament for the [XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX] Constituency	
Vote for only one candidate by putting a cross in the box next to your choice	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Candidate A A Party	<input type="checkbox"/>
Candidate B B Party	<input type="checkbox"/>
Candidate C Independent	<input type="checkbox"/>
Candidate D D Party	<input type="checkbox"/>
Candidate E Independent	<input type="checkbox"/>

On this ballot paper you vote for a candidate to represent your constituency. Mark a cross (X) in the box opposite the name of one candidate.

Regional ballot paper

(Larger electoral area)

Election of Members of the Scottish Parliament for the [XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX] Region	
Vote only once by putting a cross in the box next to your choice	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
A Party	<input type="checkbox"/>
B Party	<input type="checkbox"/>
C Party	<input type="checkbox"/>
Candidate D Independent	<input type="checkbox"/>
Candidate E Independent	<input type="checkbox"/>

On this ballot paper you vote for a party or independent candidate to represent your region. Mark a cross (X) in the box opposite the name of one party or independent candidate.

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What am I voting for?

You are voting for your representatives who will work on your behalf in the Scottish Parliament. The Scottish Parliament has powers to make laws for Scotland in a range of areas including health, education, housing, justice, and the environment.

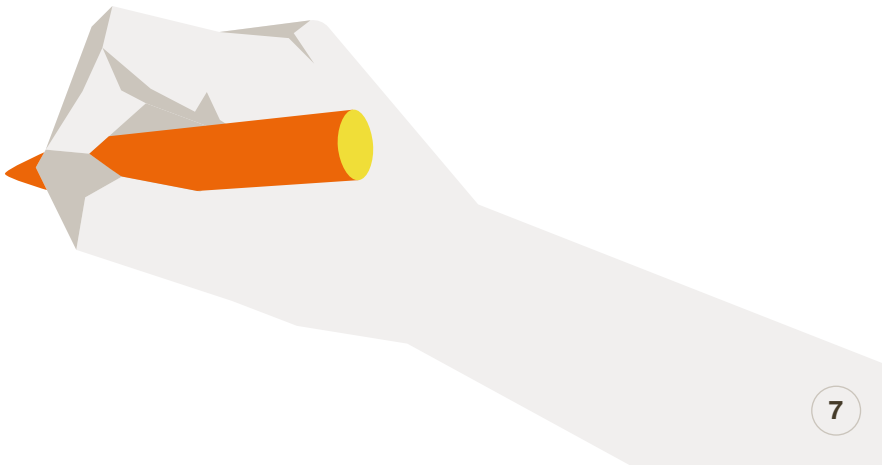
Everyone in Scotland is represented by eight Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs): one for their constituency (or local area) and seven for the larger electoral region in which they live.

There are 129 elected MSPs including:

- 73 constituency MSPs, one for each of the 73 constituencies
- 56 regional MSPs, seven for each of the eight electoral regions in Scotland



For more information about the Scottish Parliament, go to **[parliament.scot](https://www.parliament.scot)**



How can I find out more?

If you have any questions, or would like to obtain this leaflet in another format, go to **electoralcommission.org.uk/voter** or call our helpline on 0800 3 280 280.



**[Click here](#) to access
this information in
alternative formats.**



This booklet has been produced by the Electoral Commission.

The Electoral Commission is the independent body which oversees elections and regulates political finance in the UK. We work to promote public confidence in the democratic process and ensure its integrity.

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