

Scottish Parliament Election 6 May 2021

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Background to Scottish Parliament election

What is being
contested across UK
and in Scotland?

- 73 constituency seats and 56 regional seats are being contested.
- Eligible voters will be able to vote in person, by post, and by proxy.
- The voting system in place for constituency seats is the “first past the post” system. The candidate with the most votes in any constituency will win.
- For the regional seats, seats are allocated using the Additional Member System. This ensures a degree of proportionality.
- For the most part, the 32 local authority Chief Executives in Scotland will be Returning Officers for the election. There are some exceptions (e.g. Aberdeen).

Background to Scottish Parliament election

The
Electoral
Commission

The timetable for election is largely set out in statute. There are key dates for political parties and candidates, and voters

- The **Notice of election** will be published on 15 March.
- **Nominations** open on Tuesday 16 March and close on Wednesday 31 March.
- In constituencies, candidates representing registered political parties and independents are able to stand.
- In the regions, registered political parties submit 'party lists', and independents may also stand.
- At close of nominations on 31 March, and after objections have been dealt with, we know who will be standing for election.

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Key dates for voters

- To vote on 6 May, electors will have to be registered and otherwise qualified. Deadlines apply.
- The registration deadline is Monday 19 April.
- Due to COVID-19, we anticipate more postal vote applications. So the postal votes deadline has been brought forward to Tuesday 6 April.
- Other deadlines apply in relation to changing voting arrangements, proxy arrangements etc.

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Background to Scottish Parliament election

Polling day

- The poll will be held between the hours of 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. on **Thursday 6 May**.
- Returning officers will arrange for polling places and polling stations to be open in their areas throughout the hours of polling.
- Rules dictate who can attend a polling station during the hours of poll (Commission, RO staff, Observers, Police, Candidates and agents, polling agents) etc.
- Voters have the right to vote in secret and cannot be compelled to reveal their vote.

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Background to Scottish Parliament election

Verification and counting of votes

- At close of poll, ballot boxes will be transferred to the count venues or otherwise securely stored.
- Counting of votes will not commence until Friday 7 May. It is anticipated that counts may take a few days to complete.
- Both the constituency and regional votes need to be first verified and then counted.
- Constituency ROs will provide Regional ROs with the regional results.
- CROs and RROs will declare their results as soon as they are able to do so.
- Any challenge to result will thereafter be to courts through an election petition.

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Impact of COVID-19 on the elections

Mitigations are in place to ensure so far as possible that the election will be safe.

- Voters and other stakeholders will be expected to observe public health advice re wearing of face masks, hand sanitising and physical distancing.
- Processes will be adapted for physical distancing including polling and the verification and count.
- There may be tighter controls on who can access key proceedings but statutory rights still apply.
- As things stands, parties and campaign may not be able to undertake door to door canvassing or leafleting.
- What if the election is postponed?

