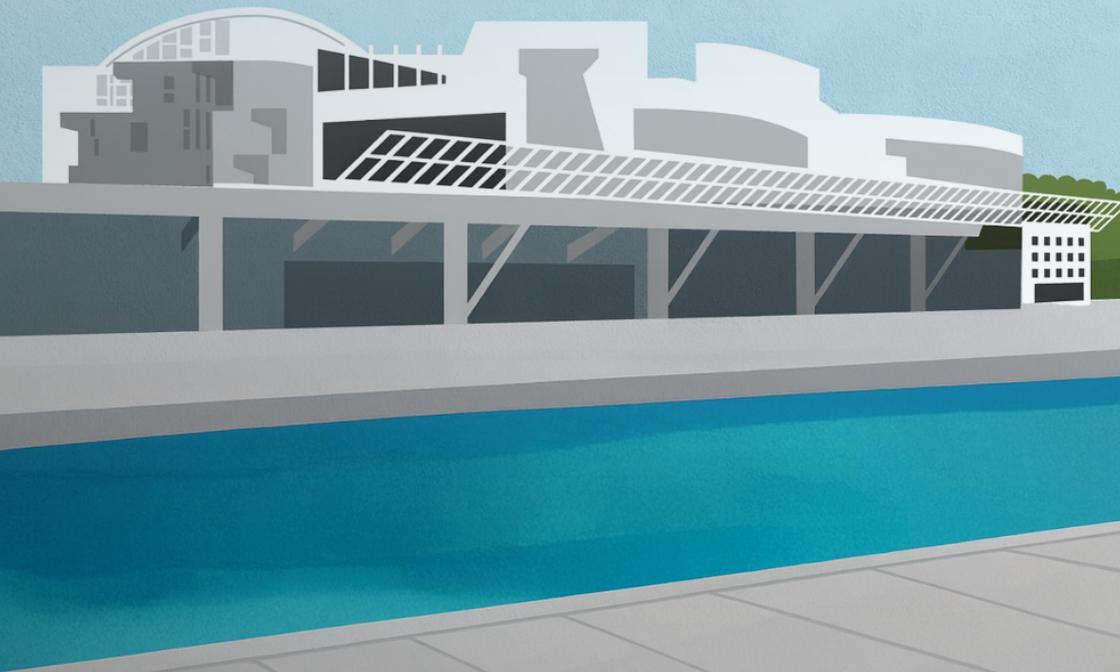


# Your guide to voting in the Scottish Parliament election

Thursday 7 May 2026



The  
Electoral  
Commission

**YOUR VOTE MATTERS**

**DON'T LOSE IT**





## On Thursday 7 May 2026, there will be an election to the Scottish Parliament

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The Scottish Parliament has powers to make laws for Scotland on a range of areas including:



**health**



**education**



**housing**



**justice**



**environment**

**The laws and decisions the Scottish Parliament will make will affect you and your community.**

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

# Who can vote?

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You can vote in this election if you are registered to vote in Scotland, will be **16 years old or over** on Thursday 7 May 2026 and are:

- a UK or Irish citizen or
- a qualifying Commonwealth citizen or
- a qualifying foreign national who has permission to enter or stay in the UK or who does not need such permission, including EU citizens

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

For more information about eligibility and who can vote go to **electoralcommission.org.uk/who-can-vote**

# How do I register to vote?

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**You must be registered to vote by midnight on Monday 20 April 2026 to vote in this election.**

It's important that you register to vote as early as possible in case your electoral registration office needs to check any details with you.

If you've never registered or have recently moved house or changed your name, you can register to vote online at **gov.uk/register-to-vote** or by contacting your local electoral registration office.

You can find your local electoral registration office contact details by typing in your postcode at **electoralcommission.org.uk/voter** or calling **0800 3 280 280**

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

# How do I vote?

1

**At your polling station** on Thursday 7 May 2026



Polling stations are open from 7am to 10pm.

You will be sent a poll card telling you where your polling station is. You don't need your poll card to vote and if you lose it or don't receive it, you can find your polling station by typing in your postcode at **electoralcommission.org.uk/voter** or contacting the elections office at your local council.

You **do not need** to show photo ID to vote in the Scottish Parliament election.



2

**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.

**It must arrive by 5pm on Tuesday 28 April 2026.**

## In an emergency



If you have an emergency that means you can't get to the polling station in person, you can apply for an emergency proxy (allowing somebody you trust to vote on your behalf).

You will need to apply before 5pm on polling day, Thursday 7 May 2026.

3

## By post



To apply to vote by post, you need to complete a postal vote application form and send it to your local electoral registration office. **It must arrive by 5pm on Tuesday 21 April 2026.**

If you already have a postal vote, make sure it is for the Scottish Parliament election. Your postal vote may be for the UK Parliament general election only. If you haven't received a **poll card that confirms you have a postal vote for this election**, contact your local electoral registration office to check if you need to apply for a Scottish Parliament postal vote.

You will receive your ballot papers and postal voting statement by post. Complete and return your postal vote pack, ensuring you leave enough time for it **to arrive by 10pm on Thursday 7 May 2026.**

You can also hand in your postal vote pack at your polling station on polling day by 10pm.

Complete the postal voting statement using the same signature and date of birth you provided when you applied for your postal vote. Your postal vote is not valid without this form. This is to make sure that your postal vote is secure. If you think that your signature has changed since you first applied, contact your local electoral registration office for advice.

For more information or to find a postal or proxy application form, go to **[electoralcommission.org.uk/voter](https://electoralcommission.org.uk/voter)** or call our helpline on **0800 3 280 280**

# What am I voting for?

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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 on a range of areas including health, education, housing, justice and the environment.

You will be represented by eight Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs): one for your constituency (or local area) and seven for the larger electoral region in which you 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)

## Has your constituency or region changed?

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Your constituency (or local area) and the electoral region in which you live may have changed.

This is because the boundaries of Scottish Parliament constituencies have been reviewed.

Boundary reviews take place to ensure that each constituency has roughly the same number of electors.

You can get more information on your constituency and region by typing in your postcode at [boundaries.scot](https://www.boundaries.scot)

# How do I fill in the ballot papers?



**You must be registered in order to vote.**

**You will receive two ballot papers.**

**You vote once on each paper.**

Please make sure you read the instructions on both your ballot papers.

## Constituency ballot paper (local area)

**Election of Members of the Scottish Parliament for the [XXXXXXXXXXXXX] Constituency**

Vote for **only one candidate** by putting a cross in the box next to your choice

<b>Candidate A</b> A Party	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Candidate B</b> B Party	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Candidate C</b> Independent	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Candidate D</b> D Party	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Candidate E</b> Independent	<input type="checkbox"/>

On this ballot paper you vote for a candidate to represent your constituency.

To vote, 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 [XXXXXXXXXXXXX] Region**

Vote **only once** by putting a cross in the box next to your choice

<b>A Party</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>B Party</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>C Party</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Candidate D</b> Independent	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Candidate E</b> Independent	<input type="checkbox"/>

On this ballot paper you vote for a party or independent candidate to represent your region.

To vote, mark a cross (X) in the box opposite the name of one party or independent candidate.

**Only put one cross (X) on each ballot paper.** If you put a cross (X) next to more than one box, your vote will be considered a 'spoilt ballot' and will not be counted.

# How can I find out more?

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If you would like a copy of this booklet in another format, go to **[electoralcommission.org.uk/booklet](https://electoralcommission.org.uk/booklet)**

Scan the QR code to access this information in other formats



If you have any questions, call our helpline on **0800 3 280 280**

To contact us using BSL, go to **[electoralcommission.org.uk/BSL](https://electoralcommission.org.uk/BSL)** for details

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 **/ElectoralCommissionUK**

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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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Commission