

Introduction

Many British citizens living abroad have the right to vote at Parliamentary and European Parliamentary elections held in the UK. (This does not include Local Government elections). This following information explains who can vote and how to register as an overseas elector.

Who can vote?

If you do not live in the UK you can vote at Parliamentary and European Parliamentary elections if you Register as an overseas elector. However, you must be a British citizen and to qualify you must fit into one of the categories below.

Category One

- Your name was previously on the electoral register for an address in the UK.
- You were living in the UK on the relevant date for that register.
- There are no more than 15 years between the dates for that register and the register you want to be on.

Category Two

- You last lived in the UK less than 15 years before the date for the register you now want to be on.
- You were too young to be on the electoral register which was based on the last relevant date before you left.
- A parent or guardian was on that electoral register, for the address where you were living on that date.
- You were at least 18 years old, or will become 18 when the register you now want to be on is in force.

When to register

You have to register every year as an overseas elector. This means you can vote in Parliamentary Elections held in the 12 months following your registration. You may continue to register for 15 years from the date your name was last shown in the register prior to you leaving the UK.

You can register to vote at anytime. You do not need to wait until an election is called.

How to register as an overseas elector

You will need to give your full name and overseas address as well as the UK address where you or your parent/guardian were registered and the date you left the UK.

If this is the first time you have made an overseas elector's declaration (or if you have been registered as an elector living in the UK since making a previous declaration) you will have to give additional information to show you are a British citizen. If you left the UK before you were old enough to register, you will have to provide a copy of your full birth certificate and information about the parent or guardian whose registration you are relying on.

If this is the first time you have made an overseas elector's declaration (or if you have been registered as an elector living in the UK since making a previous declaration) you will have to find someone to support what you say in your declaration. He or she can be anyone who:

- Is aged 18 or over;
- Has a British passport which describes his or her status as a "British Citizen";
- Knows you but is not a close relative (husband, wife, parent, grandparent, brother, sister, child, or grandchild).

The two versions of the register

The full register has the names and addresses of everyone registered to vote and is updated every month. Anyone can look at it, but copies can only be supplied for certain purposes, such as elections and law enforcement. Credit reference agencies are also allowed to use the full register, but only to check your name if you are applying for credit, and to help stop 'money laundering'. Anyone who has a copy of the register will be committing a criminal offence if they unlawfully pass on information from it. You do not have a choice about your name being on this register.

The edited register will be available for general sale and can be used for any purpose. You can choose not to be on it. It will be kept separate from the full register and updated every month. The edited register can be bought by any person, company or organisation and could be used for different purposes such as checking your identity and commercial activities such as marketing.

If you do tick the box on the voter registration form, your name will not appear on the full register, which will only be used for certain lawful purposes, such as elections, law enforcement and checking applications for credit.

If you do not tick the box on the voter registration form, your name will also appear on the edited version of the register, which anyone can buy. This means anyone can use your details for any purpose.

How to vote

Your vote will be cast in the constituency which includes the address where you were last registered as a UK elector (or where your parent or guardian was registered).

You can vote by post or proxy and the application to vote in either of these two ways are included in the Voter Registration Form.

Postal Ballot Papers

Postal ballot papers are only sent out a week before election day, and you will need to consider whether this gives you enough time to complete and return your ballot paper before polling day. For this reason it is recommended that you appoint a proxy to vote on your behalf.

Your proxy must be:

- able and willing to vote on your behalf;
- living in the UK;
- a British citizen or a citizen of the Commonwealth or of the Republic of Ireland;
- old enough to vote; and
- legally allowed to vote

A proxy may not vote at the same election for more than two people unless they are a close relative (husband, wife, parent, grandparent, brother, sister, child, or grandchild) of the people they are voting for. The Electoral Administration Act 2006 introduced new measures to improve the security of postal and proxy votes. From 1 January 2007 all postal and proxy voters in England and Wales will be required to give their date of birth and signature when applying for a postal or proxy vote.

From January 2007, each local authority will write to all existing postal/proxy voters and request their date

of birth and signature on a form. If you do not return the form, with the requested details, your postal or proxy vote will be cancelled. You will not be removed from the electoral roll though, and can re-apply for a postal or proxy vote. Special provision can be made for those who are unable to sign the form. For more information please contact your [local electoral registration office](#).

Your personal identifiers will be stored securely. Each time you vote as proxy via the post, your signature and date of birth provided on the postal voting statement will be checked against these identifiers, to ensure the postal vote remains secure. This should help guard against postal vote fraud.

For further information

If you require further information or assistance in registering as an overseas elector you can contact: Lesley Taylor - +44 (0) 20 7984 8015
Or visit: www.conservativesabroad.org or www.dontleaveyourvoteathome.com or www.aboutmyvote.co.uk

How to return this form

To find the address of your Electoral Office visit the [About My Vote](#) website.

Making sure you are registered

Once you have completed and returned your form your Electoral Registration Office will write to tell you whether you qualify as an overseas elector and will include you on the register. If they have doubts about your age or citizenship, they may ask for further evidence or documentation. If they reject your application, they will return the documentation and explain the reasons for doing so.

Once you are registered as an overseas elector you will be sent a reminder approximately 3 months before your current registration expires (so long as you remain qualified); remember you need to apply every year. Another application form will come with the reminder.

The electoral registration officer makes a list of overseas electors and their address abroad. This is available to the parliamentary candidates so that they may send literature to overseas electors if they wish.

Registration/voting as an overseas elector will not be taken into account in determining whether you have UK domicile for tax purposes.

