

Refugees and the General Election 2019

On **Thursday 12th December 2019**, there will be a [general election](#) across the whole of the UK.

General elections are when citizens across the UK vote for an individual to represent their local area – known as a [constituency](#) – in the [UK Parliament](#). The party with the most [Members of Parliament](#) (MPs) form the [UK Government](#).

A general election is different to Scottish Parliamentary or local government elections in Scotland. There are different rules for who can vote in Scottish Elections. You can find out more about that on the [Scottish Refugee Council website](#).

In order to participate in the next general election in December, people must be [registered to vote](#) by **Tuesday 26th November (midnight)**. The deadline for applying for a postal vote is **Tuesday 26th November 2019 (5pm)**.

Who can vote in a general election?

Not everyone living in the UK is allowed to vote in a general election. To vote in an UK general election, a person must be [registered to vote](#) and also:

- **18 years old or over;**
- **Be a British citizen, a qualifying Commonwealth citizen, or a citizen of the Republic of Ireland;**
- **Not be subject to any legal incapacity to vote.**

A qualifying Commonwealth citizen is a citizen of one of the countries listed below who has leave to remain in the UK or does not require leave to remain in the UK. Any type of leave to remain is acceptable, whether indefinite, time-limited or conditional. Further information about this can be found in the [Electoral Commission's Guidance document](#).

Can refugees vote in a general election?

People with refugee status or leave to remain can only vote in a general election if they are a citizen of one of the Commonwealth countries listed below. This includes countries such as Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Cameroon, Pakistan and India. Otherwise, refugees are only eligible to vote in all elections in the UK once they have British citizenship.

Can people seeking asylum vote in a general election?

People seeking asylum are not allowed to vote in a general election, even if they are a citizen of one of the Commonwealth countries listed below. This is because they are not considered to have leave to remain in the UK.

How can I get myself heard if I cannot vote?

Even if you cannot vote, there are plenty of ways you can be involved in the upcoming election. Elections are a good opportunity to raise issues that matter to you and your community with candidates at **hustings** or even on the doorstep. If you support a particular political party, you can even get involved in campaigning in your local community. Check out [Promote the Migrant Vote](#) for more ideas on how to get involved.

Registering to vote

You cannot vote in any election in the UK unless you have registered to vote.

The easiest way to register to vote is online at <https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>.

You will need to provide some basic information about yourself, including:

- Your name
- Date of birth
- Address
- Email address
- National Insurance Number

If you do not have a fixed address, you need to [download a paper form](#), fill it out, and take it to your nearest electoral registration office. You can find your nearest electoral registration office by [clicking here](#) and entering a postcode to somewhere you will be near.

If you are not sure if you are registered to vote, contact your nearest Electoral Registration Office.

What happens on election day?

On Thursday 12th December 2019, registered voters will go to vote at their local [polling station](#). The location of your polling station will be on a [poll card](#) delivered to you by post before the election.

Remember! You do not have to show any ID or your poll card in order to vote!

Election officials will give you a [ballot paper](#) to complete in the polling station and put in a [ballot box](#).

What happens if I can't get to a polling station on election day?

If you do not think you will be able to go to the polling station on election day, you can apply for a [postal vote](#) or a [proxy vote](#).

You can apply to vote by post in two ways:

- When you are registering to vote online;
- Or applying separately applying for a [postal vote here](#).

The deadline for sending in postal votes will be before the day of the General Election. If you do not send your postal vote in on time, you can take your postal vote to your local polling station on election day.

You can also apply for someone to vote on your behalf if you are unable to get to a polling station on election day. You will need to give valid reasons as to why you cannot vote in person when you apply for a [proxy vote](#) and you will often need someone to sign your application form to confirm your reasons. Anyone can be your proxy vote, so long as they are eligible and registered to vote in the election themselves.

There is more information about voting by proxy on the UK [Government's website](#).

Commonwealth Countries

Antigua and Barbuda
Australia
The Bahamas
Bangladesh
Barbados
Belize
Botswana
Brunei
Cameroon
Canada
Dominica
Fiji
Ghana
The Gambia
Grenada
Guyana
India
Jamaica
Kenya
Kiribati
Lesotho
Malawi
Malaysia
Malta
Mauritius
Mozambique
Namibia
Nauru

New Zealand
Nigeria
Pakistan
Papua New Guinea
Republic of Cyprus
Rwanda
St Christopher and Nevis
St Lucia
St Vincent and the Grenadines
Samoa
Seychelles
Sierra Leone
Singapore
Solomon Islands
South Africa
Sri Lanka
Swaziland
Tonga
Trinidad and Tobago
Tuvalu
Uganda
United Kingdom
United Republic of Tanzania
Vanuatu
Zambia
Zimbabwe

British Overseas Territories

Anguilla
Bermuda
British Antarctic Territory
British Indian Ocean Territory
Cayman Islands
Falkland Islands
Gibraltar
Montserrat
Pitcairn, Henderson, Ducie and Oeno Islands
St Helena, Ascension and Tristan de Cunha
South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands
Sovereign Base areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia on Cyprus
Turks and Caicos Islands
Virgin Islands

Key Terms

General Election

A General Election is a UK wide election where voters elect politicians to represent their local area.

Members of Parliament

These elected political representatives are called Members of Parliament. MPs are members of different political parties.

UK Parliament

The UK Parliament is based in Westminster, London. Parliament is made up of 650 different Members of Parliament elected by the British public.

Constituency

The UK is divided into 650 different areas, known as constituencies. Elected Members of Parliament represent these different areas.

UK Government

The political party who has the most MPs elected to the UK Parliament forms the UK Government.

Hustings

During election campaigns, prospective MPs will attend public meetings with different candidates to try and get support from voters. These are called hustings.

Polling Station

On election day, voters will need to go to a polling station in their local area to vote. Polling stations can be in schools, local community centres or other venues.

Poll Card

Before election day, registered voters will receive a poll card in the post. The poll card confirms which polling station you need to go to vote.

Ballot Paper

A ballot paper is the form where you cast your vote. Each candidate for your constituency will be listed on the ballot paper, and you will be asked to put an 'X' in the box next to your preferred candidate.

Ballot Box

When you have filled in your ballot paper, you need to put it in a secure

box in the polling station. This is called a ballot box.

Postal Vote

If you cannot get to a polling station on the day of the election, you can apply for a postal vote. This means you can vote in advance and send it in by post. You have to apply for a postal vote in advance, and the deadline for postal votes is always earlier than election day.

Proxy Vote

If you cannot get to a polling station on the day of the election, you can also apply for someone to cast your vote for you. This is called a proxy vote.

You have to apply for a proxy vote in advance and provide a reason as to why you cannot vote in person.

