Template press release for local authorities

January 2024

Spread the word abroad! More Brits overseas can now vote

British citizens living abroad are now eligible to register to vote in UK general elections, regardless of how long they’ve been living outside the UK. A new law has removed the previous 15-year time limit.

Supporting the awareness raising campaign of the Electoral Commission, <name of location authority> is calling on residents to spread the word and to tell friends and family living abroad to check if they are eligible.

Those that have previously lived in or been registered to vote in the UK now have the right to vote in UK parliament elections. They can register online at [www.gov.uk/registertovote](http://www.gov.uk/registertovote) and will need to confirm their personal information every three years. Anyone on a UK electoral register is also considered a permissible donor to UK political parties and campaigners.

**<Name>, Returning Officer at <name of local authority>, said:**

“This change means that more British citizens living abroad who previously lived in <insert local authority area> may now be eligible to register to vote and vote in this area. If you know anyone who used to live locally and is now living abroad, spread the word so they are aware of their rights.

“If they want to have their say at the next election, they need to be registered. It only takes five minutes and can be done online at gov.uk/registertovote. It’s also now possible to apply online to vote by post or by proxy.”

The [government estimates](https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN05923/SN05923.pdf) that the abolishment of the 15-year rule could mean three million more British citizens could be eligible to vote. [Resources are available](https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/voting-and-elections/who-can-vote/other-registration-options/voting-if-you-live-overseas) from the Electoral Commission to help reach the UK’s dispersed diaspora, and the Commission is working with partner organisations to help spread the word.

Applicants will need to provide details of the address and time they were last registered or resident. <Name of location authority> must be able to verify an applicant’s identity and past connection to the area.

More information is available on the [Electoral Commission’s website](https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter), along with a [post code lookup tool](https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/your-election-information) that helps voters living overseas find the contact details for their local authority, using the postcode of the last place they lived in the UK. Many voters living abroad choose to vote by post or proxy. Applications for absent votes can now also be done online.

Ends

Notes to editors

* [ONS research](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/articles/livingabroad/april2018#quality-and-methodology) suggests that the most popular destination countries for British emigrants are Australia or New Zealand, US or Canada, and EU member countries.
* Many voters living abroad choose to apply for absent votes. Applications to vote by [post](https://www.gov.uk/apply-postal-vote) or [proxy](https://www.gov.uk/apply-proxy-vote) in Great Britain can now also be done online.
* UK Parliament elections covers UK parliamentary general elections, UK parliamentary by-elections and recall petitions. Eligibility for other types of election has not changed.
* The change is part of the UK Government’s Election Act, passed in 2022.
* The Electoral Commission is the independent body which oversees elections and regulates political finance in the UK.