

British Elections A2



UK Government

How do British people elect their parliament? There will be a general election on 8 June.



10, Downing Street/UK Government

Prime Minister, Theresa May

In theory, British general elections are every five years. The last election was in 2015, so normally the next election date was planned for 7 May 2020.

But in April, the Prime Minister, Theresa May, asked Parliament to have an election in June. Her party, the Conservatives, only have a small majority in Parliament: 10 seats. Mrs May wants a bigger majority.

Voting

British citizens can vote or be a candidate at age 18. There are 650 Members of Parliament (MPs), who each represent a constituency. Voters vote for one candidate and the candidate with the majority of votes in the constituency becomes the MP.



**Mhairi* Black was elected to as
a Scottish National Party MP in 2015.
She was just 20, the youngest MP in 350 years!**

SNP

* pronounced Marry

This system is called "First Past the Post". It is good for the big, traditional parties who have a lot of voters in one place: the Labour Party (left-wing) and the Conservatives (right-wing, in government since 2010). It is not good for parties like the Liberal Democrats (centre), who have some support in each constituency.

In 2015, the Conservatives won 331 seats (51 per cent) with 36.9% of votes. Labour won 232 seats (36%) with 30.4% of votes. The Liberal Democrats won only 8 seats (1.2%) with 7.9% of the vote.

Forming a Government

After the election, if one party has 326 seats or more (a majority), the Queen asks their leader to form a government. Their leader becomes the Prime Minister.

If no party has 326 seats, then the party with the most seats tries to create a coalition with one or more other parties to form a government. ■



Five of the parties participating in the election. Clockwise from top left: the Conservatives, Labour, the United Kingdom Independence Party, the Scottish National Party, the Liberal Democrats.



Help

citizen (n) person who has the nationality of a country. A British citizen has a British passport.

coalition (n) when more than one party forms one government

constituency (n) the place and the people one Member of Parliament represents

law (n) legal text. A law says what citizens must or mustn't do. For example, the law says that children aged 5-18 must go to school.

left-wing (adj) from the left (socialism)

right-wing (adj) from the right (conservatism)

seat (n) here, one elected place in Parliament.

the most (adj) the biggest number, the majority

The UK Parliament consists of three parts:

The House of Commons

- 650 elected Members of Parliament.
- The Government is formed from the MPs of the party with the majority of seats.
- Proposes, debates and votes laws.

The House of Lords

- About 800 Peers (not elected). They are nominated as experts in different aspects of society.
- Proposes, debates and votes laws.

The Monarch

- Not elected.
- The monarch asks the leader of the winning party to form a government.
- Once a year, the Monarch goes to Parliament and presents the Government's programme.
- The Monarch signs all laws. In theory she or he can refuse, but in reality that doesn't happen.



Queen Elizabeth II

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