

News release

UK expats – Don't miss out, you may be able to vote in the General Election says Electoral Commission

This week the UK Electoral Commission has launched a dedicated overseas voter registration campaign. The campaign aims to encourage British citizens living overseas to register to vote ahead of the UK Parliamentary General Election, due to take place on Thursday 7 May 2015.

To mark the start of the campaign, the elections watchdog is hosting Overseas Voter Registration Day on **Thursday 5 February 2015** in a bid to boost the numbers of UK residents overseas on the UK's electoral registers.

This is the first UK General Election where people can register to vote online. The Electoral Commission hopes that the new online process will encourage more UK nationals living overseas to register to take part in elections from overseas.

Estimates show that there may be as many as 5.5 million UK nationals living overseas, but there are fewer than 20,000 currently on the electoral registers.

To register as an overseas voter, UK residents overseas must have previously been registered in a UK constituency within the last fifteen years.

Alex Robertson, Director of Communications at the Electoral Commission said:

“A lot of people aren't aware that it's possible to register as an overseas voter for the General Election. We need to challenge the misconception that once you've

moved overseas you can't take part. Many people can and now it's easier than ever to take the first step by registering online."

"That's why we are urging UK nationals who are now living abroad to take five minutes on Overseas Registration Day to visit <https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote> and make sure they will be able to have their say at the General Election in May."

"Overseas Voter Registration Day is also the perfect opportunity for everyone to encourage friends, family or colleagues to check if they can vote and ask them to register online from wherever they are in the world."

The Cabinet Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office are supporting the Electoral Commission's campaign to raise awareness of voter registration among British residents overseas in the run up to the general election.

To register to vote, UK citizens should visit <https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>

Ends

Free resources to support the campaign, including posters, web banner and web button are available to download from our website here: [Resources to support overseas voter registration](#)

For further information contact Megan Phillips in the Electoral Commission press office on 020 7271 0714/out of office hours 07789 920 414 or mphillips@electoralcommission.org.uk

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Notes to editors

1. The Electoral Commission is an independent body set up by the UK Parliament. Our aim is integrity and public confidence in the UK's democratic process. We regulate party and election finance and set standards for well-run elections.
2. There have been two relatively recent estimates of the total number of UK citizens living abroad: one by the [Institute for Public Policy Research](#), in 2010 put the number at 5.5 million; whilst another one by the World Bank, in 2010, estimated it to be 4.7 million.
3. Figures from the Office for National Statistics - which are based on based on electoral registers published on 1 December 2013 (Northern Ireland), 17 February 2014 (England) and 10 March 2014 (Wales & Scotland) show that there are 15,849 overseas voters on the UK electoral registers

4. Since the introduction of online registration in June 2014 up until December 2014, 17,168 applications had been made from overseas electors.
5. Overseas voters can choose how they want to vote. They can vote either by post, by proxy or even in person (if they will be in their constituency on polling day)
6. The deadline to register to vote is midnight on Monday 20 April 2015. Overseas voters should register as far in advance of this as possible.
7. The deadline for applications for postal votes is 5pm on Tuesday 21 April 2015. Overseas voters should apply as far in advance of this as possible.
8. The deadline for applications for proxy votes is 5pm on Tuesday 28 April 2015. Overseas voters should apply as far in advance of this as possible.