

Overseas voter changes – FAQ

What is changing?

In the past, British citizens were only eligible to vote in UK Parliament elections if they had previously been registered in the UK and living abroad for less than 15 years.

From January 2023, there is no longer a time limit. Voters that have previously lived or been registered to vote in the UK now have the right to vote in UK parliament elections.

What are the eligibility rules?

British citizens, which includes eligible Irish citizens and citizens of Crown Dependencies, may register as overseas voters if they are now living abroad, providing they:

- were previously registered to vote in the UK, either before they left the UK or as an overseas voter
- were previously resident in the UK

Overseas British citizens must apply to register as a voter using the address where they were last registered to vote in the UK or, if they have never been registered, the last address at which they were resident in the UK.

What if voters have been registered at more than one address in the past?

If an applicant has been previously registered at more than one address, they use the most recent address at which they were registered.

How do voters register?

Overseas voters can apply to register in the same way as any other voter. They can apply online at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote, by sending a paper form to the relevant local authority or by telephone if the relevant local authority provides that service. Contact details of local authorities across the UK are available to search on the [Electoral Commission website](#).

Those who were previously registered will have to provide details about the address and time they were last registered.

Those who previously lived in the UK, but were not registered, will need to provide details about the address and time where they were last resident.

How do overseas voters prove those details?

Local authorities, which are responsible for the electoral roll in their area, must be satisfied that the applicant was registered or lived in the area previously, and must be able to verify an applicant's identity.

Local authorities have a number of resources for verifying this information, including checking previous registers, other locally-held records, or evidence provided by the applicant.

How often do overseas voters need to register?

Under the new rules, overseas voters need to provide a renewal declaration every three years. Previously, it was every 12 months. A renewal declaration confirms that the details held on the electoral register are accurate and provides an opportunity to update correspondence details if necessary.

Registration will need to be renewed before 1 November, three years after the voter registered as an overseas voter, unless the voter has successfully renewed their voter registration in the meantime. So, if a British citizen living overseas applies to vote in March 2024, they will need to renew their application before 1 November 2026.

Are overseas voters allowed to donate money to UK political parties?

Yes, under electoral law, those on an electoral register are also permitted to donate to political parties and campaigners campaigning in UK elections.