



Timetable for the UK Parliamentary General election

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Since the general election in 2010, when Parliament was dissolved by prerogative powers and the election timetable lasted 17 days, two pieces of legislation have made changes to the triggering of, and timetable for, a general Parliamentary election.

The *Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011* fixes the date of the next general election as 7 May 2015, and provides for five year intervals between elections. The Act ends the prerogative power of dissolution. The *Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013* made provision for lengthening the UK Parliamentary election timetable, both for general and by-elections. These provisions have been brought into force and Parliament will have to be dissolved 25 rather than 17 days before the general election on 7 May 2015. The by-election timetable will now also vary between 21 and 27 days from the issuing of the writ. For further details see Library Standard Note 6609, [By-election timetables](#).

A brief outline of the timetable for the 2015 General Election is provided in this Note. Parliament will be dissolved on Monday 30 March 2015, Day 0 of the timetable, for polling day to be on Day 25, Thursday 7 May 2015. The Electoral Commission has recently published full details of the [timetable](#) for 7 May 2015 on its website.

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1 The *Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011*

The Act fixes the date of the next General Election as 7 May 2015 and on the first Thursday in May in every fifth year thereafter. The Act sets a maximum term between elections rather than the actual length of the Parliament. There is scope for a Prime Minister to lay an order before both Houses to extend this date for a maximum of two months to deal with unexpected developments; they must set out the reasons for the delay. One precedent is the foot and mouth disease outbreak in 2001 which delayed local and general elections by one month.

Section 2 of the *Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011* provides for early General Elections when either of the following conditions is met:

- if a motion for an early general election is agreed either by at least two-thirds of the whole House (including vacant seats) or without division or;
- if a motion of no confidence is passed and no alternative government is confirmed by the Commons within 14 days by means of a confidence motion.

Where an early election has taken place, the next election will generally take place five years later. The only exception is where an early election is held before the first Thursday in May in an election year, in these circumstances, the next General Election will be held on the first Thursday in May in the fourth year from the previous election. This means that Parliaments cannot extend beyond five years and that the normal cycle is restored to five years.

The *Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011* does not set the date for the meeting of a new Parliament following the General Election. Instead, this date will be set out in the royal proclamation which announces the meeting of a new Parliament.

2 Previous timetable

The timetable for a general election is set out in the Parliamentary Election Rules of Schedule 1 to the *Representation of the People Act 1983*. The previous timetable for a general election was 17 working days (not including the day on which writs are issued).

| | |
|--|-------|
| Proclamation summoning new Parliament /issue of writ | Day 0 |
| Receipt of writ | Day 1 |
| Last day for publication of notice of election (4pm) | Day 3 |
| Last day for delivery of nomination papers/withdrawals of candidature/ appointment of election agents(4pm) | Day 6 |
| Statement of persons nominated published at close of time for making objections to nomination papers (5 pm on Day 6) or as soon afterwards as any objections are disposed of | |
| Last day for requests for a new postal vote or to change or cancel an existing postal vote or proxy appointment (5pm) | |

| | |
|---|--------|
| Last day to apply to register to vote | Day 11 |
| Last day for new applications to vote by proxy (except for medical emergencies) (5pm) | Day 11 |
| Last day for appointment of polling and counting agents | Day 15 |
| Polling Day (7 am – 10 pm) | Day 17 |
| Last day to apply for a replacement for spoilt or lost postal ballot papers (5pm) | |

The *Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011* did not alter this timetable. However, the Act ended the uncertainty about the actual dissolution date of a parliament. Previously, the calling of a general election and the election date was the decision of the Prime Minister, who asked the monarch for a dissolution. The term of a Parliament now automatically expires, unless there is an early election. Section 6(1) of the Act preserves the prerogative power to prorogue Parliament a few days before the actual date of dissolution. This power is exercised by a royal proclamation, following a Privy Council meeting after which an Order in Council is issued. A proclamation will be made to summon a new Parliament. The date on which the new Parliament will meet is also given but not the date of the general election.

If there is an early election, then an additional proclamation is required to set the polling day date, under section 2 (7) of the Act. Following a Privy Council meeting an Order in Council will be issued.

3 New model general election timetable

Section 14 of the *Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013* lengthened the general election timetable to 25 days. This provision was brought into force on 6 April 2014 by article 3 of the [Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 \(Commencement No. 5 and Transitory Provisions\) Order 2014](#).¹

The new model timetable is as follows:

| | |
|--|-------------|
| Proclamation summoning new Parliament, and issue of writ | Day 0 |
| Receipt of writ | Day 1 |
| Last day for publication of notice of election | Day 3 (4pm) |
| Last day for delivery of nomination papers/withdrawals of candidature/appointment of election agents (4pm) Statement of persons nominated published at close of time for making objections to nomination papers (5pm on Day 6) or as soon afterwards as any objections are disposed of, but not later than 4pm on Day 7 | Day 6 |
| Last day to apply to register to vote * | Day 13 |

¹ SI 414 2014

| | |
|--|--------------|
| Last day for requests for a new postal vote or to change or cancel an existing postal vote | Day 14 (5pm) |
| Last day for new applications to vote by proxy (except for medical emergencies)(5pm) | Day 19 |
| Last day for appointment of polling and counting agents | Day 20 |
| Polling Day (7 am – 10 pm) | Day 25 |

- Note that the deadline for making an application for registration prior to an election is now 12 days before the election. The deadline had been altered by the *Electoral Administration Act 2006* to eleven days before the election but in January 2014 the Electoral Commission announced that it had identified an issue with the 11 day deadline. Amendments made to Regulation 29(4) of the *Representation of the People (England and Wales) [and (Scotland)] Regulations 2001* had added a day to the process; this had the effect of making the last day for making registration applications before an election twelve working days before the poll. The Commission has published a detailed explanation of the situation on its website: [Deadline for registration ahead of an election](#).

The days which are disregarded are Saturday, Sunday, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Good Friday, other bank holidays and any day appointed for public thanksgiving or mourning. Bank holidays which only take place in one part of the UK are nevertheless counted as disregarded. For example, St Patrick's Day would affect the timetable if an early general election was held some days after 17 March.² For by-elections, bank holidays held only in one part of the UK are relevant only if the constituency is situated in that part of the UK.

4 General Election timetable for 7 May 2015

The new 25 day timetable represents a significant extension of the length between dissolution and day of poll in May 2015, given that Easter falls between dissolution and poll. The issue of writs would take place on 30 March, rather than 13 April, under the previous 17 day timetable.

| | 25 Day Timetable |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Day 0 – Dissolution and Issue of Writ | Monday 30 March |
| Day 1 | Tuesday 31 March |
| Day 2 | Wednesday 1 April |
| Day 3 | Thursday 2 April |
| | <i>Friday 3 April (Good Friday) is a Bank Holiday and Monday 6 April is a Bank Holiday in England, Wales and Northern Ireland but not in Scotland. These days</i> |

² Rule 2 of the Parliamentary Election Rules in Schedule 1 of the *Representation of the People Act 1983*

| | |
|--------|---|
| | <i>are therefore not counted for the purposes of the timetable.</i> |
| Day 4 | Tuesday 7 April |
| Day 5 | Wednesday 8 April |
| Day 6 | Thursday 9 April |
| Day 7 | Friday 10 April |
| Day 8 | Monday 13 April |
| Day 9 | Tuesday 14 April |
| Day 10 | Wednesday 15 April |
| Day 11 | Thursday 16 April |
| Day 12 | Friday 17 April |
| Day 13 | Monday 20 April |
| Day 14 | Tuesday 21 April |
| Day 15 | Wednesday 22 April |
| Day 16 | Thursday 23 April |
| Day 17 | Friday 24 April |
| Day 18 | Monday 27 April |
| Day 19 | Tuesday 28 April |
| Day 20 | Wednesday 29 April |
| Day 21 | Thursday 30 April |
| Day 22 | Friday 1 May |
| | <i>Monday 4 May is Bank Holiday</i> |
| Day 23 | Tuesday 5 May |
| Day 24 | Wednesday 6 May |
| Day 25 | Thursday 7 May 2015 POLLING DAY |

5 Other elections to be held in May 2015

The *Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011* moved the dates of the elections for the Scottish Parliament and the National Assembly for Wales to May 2016. The date for the Northern Ireland Assembly elections was not affected by the provisions of the Act. New elections for the Assembly were due in 2015, but Section 7 of the [Northern Ireland \(Miscellaneous](#)

Provisions) Act 2014 postpones the elections to 2016 and provides for the Assembly to move to fixed five year terms thereafter. For further information, see Library Research Paper 13/38 *Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2013-14*.

Local elections in England are due on 7 May 2015; further information about future elections is given in Library Standard Note 6491 *Local elections in 2013*. The Electoral Commission has published the [timetable](#) for the combined local elections in England and the Parliamentary general election on 7 May 2015.

Appendix: New general election timetable compared to the old timetable

| | New 25 Day Timetable | Old 17 Day Timetable |
|--|--|--|
| Day 0 – Dissolution and Issue of Writ | Monday 30 March | Monday 13 April |
| Day 1 | Tuesday 31 March | Tuesday 14 April |
| Day 2 | Wednesday 1 April | Wednesday 15 April |
| Day 3 | Thursday 2 April | Thursday 16 April |
| | <i>Friday 3 April (Good Friday) is a Bank Holiday and Monday 6 April is a Bank Holiday in England, Wales and Northern Ireland but not in Scotland. These days are therefore not counted for the purposes of the timetable.</i> | |
| Day 4 | Tuesday 7 April | Friday 17 April |
| Day 5 | Wednesday 8 April | Monday 20 April |
| Day 6 | Thursday 9 April | Tuesday 21 April |
| Day 7 | Friday 10 April | Wednesday 22 April |
| Day 8 | Monday 13 April | Thursday 23 April |
| Day 9 | Tuesday 14 April | Friday 24 April |
| Day 10 | Wednesday 15 April | Monday 27 April |
| Day 11 | Thursday 16 April | Tuesday 28 April |
| Day 12 | Friday 17 April | Wednesday 29 April |
| Day 13 | Monday 20 April | Thursday 30 April |
| Day 14 | Tuesday 21 April | Friday 1 May |
| | | <i>Monday 4 May is Bank Holiday and therefore not counted for the purposes of the timetable.</i> |
| Day 15 | Wednesday 22 April | Tuesday 5 May |
| Day 16 | Thursday 23 April | Wednesday 6 May |
| Day 17 | Friday 24 April | Thursday 7 May 2015 POLLING DAY |
| Day 18 | Monday 27 April | |

| | | |
|--------|--|--|
| Day 19 | Tuesday 28 April | |
| Day 20 | Wednesday 29 April | |
| Day 21 | Thursday 30 April | |
| Day 22 | Friday 1 May | |
| | <i>Monday 4 May is Bank Holiday</i> | |
| Day 23 | Tuesday 5 May | |
| Day 24 | Wednesday 6 May | |
| Day 25 | Thursday 7 May 2015 POLLING DAY | |