

Minority Ethnic Matters Overview+

MEMO+ is an occasional series of briefing papers on topics of interest to minority ethnic communities in Scotland.

It is produced by the [Scottish Council of Jewish Communities](#) in partnership with the [Black and Ethnic Minority Infrastructure in Scotland](#), and is supported by the Scottish Government.

Briefing: Voting in the 2010 General Election

The General Election, to select Members of the UK Parliament, will take place on Thursday 6 May 2010, and it is important that as many people as possible vote to ensure that the views of Scottish people are represented at Westminster. Please circulate this issue of MEMO+ among your membership and encourage everyone to vote!

The UK Parliament consists of 650 MPs, of whom 59 represent Scottish constituencies.

Candidates from the following parties are standing in Scotland, as well as some from small, sometimes single-issue, parties, and there are also a number of independent candidates.

[Scottish National Party](#)

[Labour Party](#)

[Conservative Party](#)

[Liberal Democrat Party](#)

[British National Party](#)

[Scottish Green Party](#)

[Scottish Socialist Party](#)

[United Kingdom Independence Party](#)

[Click here](#) to find out who is standing in your constituency.

Note that candidates can be nominated until 4pm on 20 April, so the list may not be complete until after that date.

Who can vote?

In order to vote your name must be on the Electoral Register, and you must be:

- 18 or over on polling day (6 May);
- Resident in the UK or a British citizen who has been living abroad for less than 15 years;
- A British citizen, an Irish citizen, or a [Commonwealth Citizen](#) who either does not require, or has leave to remain in the UK.

If your name is on the Electoral Register you will automatically receive a polling card that will tell you where you should go to vote. You do not need to take your polling card with you when you go to vote.

If you are unable to go to the polling station you can still vote by post or you can name another person to vote on your behalf at the polling station (voting by proxy). The deadline for registration is 20 April, so if you are not on the Electoral Register, or if you would like to register for a postal or proxy vote, see [About My Vote](#) or contact your [local Electoral Registration Officer](#) as soon as possible. If you are not sure whether your name is already on the Electoral Register, you can find out from the Electoral Registration Officer.

Important dates for the General Election

- 15 April 2010** Deadline for applying for a new postal or proxy vote in N Ireland.
- 20 April 2010** Deadline in Scotland, England, and Wales for:
- a) registering to vote
 - b) applying for a new postal vote
 - c) changing or cancelling an existing postal or proxy vote.
- 23 April 2010** Deadline for applying for an electoral ID card in N Ireland.
- 27 April 2010** Deadline for applying for a new proxy vote in Scotland, England, and Wales.
- Note:** *if you are prevented from voting by a medical emergency you may apply for a proxy vote any time until 5pm on polling day.*
- 6 May 2010** Polling day – vote between 7am and 10pm.

How to vote

The ballot paper will list the candidates, their political party and its logo, or whether they are standing as an Independent.

Vote by putting ONE **X** beside the name of the candidate that you want to support. DO NOT number candidates in order of preference.

Do not write anything else on your ballot paper otherwise your vote may not be counted. If you make a mistake do not try to correct it, but instead tell the election staff who will give you a replacement ballot paper.

How your vote counts

The General Election uses a "first past the post" system. This means that the person receiving the most votes wins the seat. The winner does not need to receive a majority of the votes cast, only at least one vote more than the next most popular candidate.

Election Results

In most constituencies ballot boxes will be taken to a central location where they will be opened and the count begun immediately after polling stations close at 10pm. However, Returning Officers may choose to delay starting the count until the following day. This is most likely to be in areas where they will have to wait for ballot boxes to be brought in from rural polling stations. If the election result is close, the full make-up of the new Parliament may not be known until late Friday or even Saturday, especially if close results require recounts in individual constituencies.

From Parliament to Government

Technically, it is the Queen who appoints the new Prime Minister and invites him or her to form the next government. In practice, if one party has an absolute majority of seats in the House of Commons, it forms the Government: its leader will be Prime Minister, and will almost immediately begin to announce senior ministerial appointments. However, if there is a "hung parliament" in which no party has an overall majority, either the largest party may try to form a minority administration (as the SNP did after the last Scottish Parliament election), or there will be a prolonged period of negotiation leading to the establishment of a coalition government (as after previous Scottish Parliament elections). It can therefore be some time before the new Government is formed.

Useful Websites

- **About My Vote**
<http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk/>
- **The Electoral Commission**
<http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/>
- **Electoral Registration Officers in Scotland**
<http://www.votescotland.com/stv/82.html>

**Please Circulate this issue of MEMO+ among your membership
and encourage people to register and to vote in the
General Election on 6 May!**



Scottish Council of
Jewish Communities

The **Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC)** is the representative body of all the Jewish communities in Scotland. It advances public understanding about the Jewish religion, culture and community, and also works in partnership with other organisations to promote good relations and understanding among community groups and to promote equality. (Scottish Charity SC029438)
<http://www.scojec.org/>



BEMIS is the Scottish national Ethnic Minorities led umbrella body, supporting, empowering, and building the capacity of minority third sector community organisations. As a strategic partner with Government, it is proactive in influencing the development of race equality policy in Scotland, and helps develop and progress multicultural Scotland, active citizenship, democracy, and Human Rights Education at the Scottish, UK, and European levels. <http://www.bemis.org.uk/index.html>



The **Scottish Government** is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and social justice for all those who live in Scotland. **One Scotland** is the Scottish Government campaign designed to tackle racism. It aims to raise awareness of racist attitudes, highlight its negative impact and recognise the valuable contributions that other cultures have made to our society – and make Scotland no place for racism. <http://www.scotlandagainstracism.com/>