



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Register of Electors

Prepared by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

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The Register of Electors

1. Introduction

In order to be able to vote at an election or referendum, a person's name must be entered on the register of electors for the locality in which the elector ordinarily resides.

Since the passage of the Electoral Reform Act 2022, registration authorities (county, city and city and county councils) are required by law to maintain and update the register of electors on an ongoing basis by adding, removing or updating details as necessary, and all applications go directly to the registration authority. Registration authorities are also required to publish the register in force in advance of an electoral event.

2. Conditions for Registration

The conditions are:

Age: a person who is resident and has reached the age of 18 years shall be entitled to be registered in the register of electors. The Electoral Reform Act 2022 made provision for a pending electors list which enables pre-registration for 16 and 17 year olds but they are not entitled to vote until they reach 18, at which point they are automatically added to the register.

Citizenship: while every adult resident is entitled to be registered, the registration authority needs to know a person's citizenship because it is citizenship that determines the electoral events at which a person may vote.

The right to vote is as follows:

- **Irish citizens** may vote at every election and referendum;
- **British citizens** may vote at Dáil and local elections;
- **EU citizens** may vote at European and local elections;
- **Non-EU citizens** may vote at local elections only.

Residence: a person must be ordinarily resident at the address in question at the time of making the application to the registration authority to be entered in the register. A person may be registered at one address only.

- If a person has **more than one address** (e.g. a person living away from home to attend college), the registration authority should be informed of the address at which the person wishes to be registered.

- If a person has **no address** at which they can be registered, they may register with 'no fixed address' – this allows for provision of an address where the person can receive correspondence, and an address where the person spends the majority of their time and at which they wish to be considered resident.

A person who leaves his/her ordinary residence with the intention of returning there within eighteen months can continue to be registered there, subject to the over-riding condition that a person may be registered at one address only. A person who is absent on a temporary basis from his/her ordinary address, for example on holiday, in hospital or in the course of employment, should be registered at his/her ordinary address. A visitor or person staying temporarily at the address should not be registered.

3. Maintaining and updating the Register

Registration authorities may carry out a range of activities to manage the register – this may include house-to-house or other inquiries; inviting people not registered to register and checking that the register is accurate and complete.

To support this work, a registration authority may require a person to provide any information in his or her possession that the registration authority needs for the purpose. In respect of his or her own registration, a person may be asked to provide a Person Public Service Number (PPSN), Date of Birth and Eircode. The registration authority may also request documentary evidence in support of eligibility to vote, e.g. a birth certificate or a passport or certificate of naturalisation in the case of citizenship.

A person can check their own details on the register at www.checktheregister.ie.

Any errors or omissions in the register should be brought immediately to the attention of the registration authority.

It is also possible to inspect the register at the offices of a local authority or other place that the local authority considers appropriate – this may include libraries or post offices.

Where a person:

- on inspecting the register of electors, has on reasonable grounds, or
- through personal knowledge (for example the death of a family member),

formed an opinion that information in the register is inaccurate, the person may submit a third party request to the registration authority to have an amendment made.

Registration authorities are required to consider all requests in respect of the register and make a decision on what action, if any, it should take. The registration authority is required to inform the requester and any person who, in the opinion of the registration authority, may be affected by its decision of the process to be followed. The person affected will have the right to appeal the decision to the county registrar. Registration authorities are required to prepare for inspection a list of claims received in the previous month.

With regard to deceased persons, registration authorities may require an tArd-Chláraitheoir, the General Registrar, to furnish information in connection with deaths of persons in the registration area of the registration authority and the authority may use such information to update the register.

4. Register to vote or update details

An eligible person can register or update details at any time of the year directly with the registration authority where the person is ordinarily resident or online at www.checktheregister.ie. The registration authority will consider and decide on each application to register or to update details as soon as practicable, and where an application is refused, the person will be notified of the reasons therefore and of their right to appeal the decision to the county registrar.

Once an electoral event has been formally called, if an application by a person to register or update details is received by the registration authority on or after the fourteenth day (excluding Sundays, Good Friday and Public Holidays) before polling day, the application shall have no effect in relation to that election or referendum. Different closing dates apply to postal and special voting applications – see paragraphs 5.1 and 5.2 below.

5. Alternative voting arrangements

5.1 Postal Voters List

Registration authorities prepare and maintain a postal voters list as part of the register of electors. Postal vote applications require some additional information, documentation or certification – the requirements vary depending on the reason for the application and are set out on the relevant application form.

The following categories of persons **must be registered** as postal voters:

- whole-time members of the Defence Forces - members who live in military barracks may be registered either at the barracks or at their home address;

- Irish diplomats posted abroad and their spouses/civil partners - they are registered at their home address in Ireland.

The following categories of persons **may apply** for registration as postal voters:

- members of the Garda Síochána (police force);
- persons living at home who are unable to go to a polling station to vote because of an illness or disability;
- persons whose occupations are likely to prevent them from voting at their local polling station on election day, including full-time students registered at home who are living elsewhere while attending an educational institution in the State;
- electors unable to vote at their polling station due to circumstances of their detention in prison pursuant to an order of the court;
- certain election staff employed at a polling station outside the constituency where they live;
- anonymous electors or members of the household of the person whose safety would be at risk if their name and address were published on the register of electors.

An application for inclusion in the postal voters list can be made at any time once the elector is eligible for entry on the postal lists. However, where a date for a poll has been set, the latest date for receipt of applications for a postal vote is –

- two days after the date of dissolution of the Dáil in the case of a general election;
- two days after the polling day order is made in the case of a Dáil bye-election;
- in the case of a Presidential, European or local election or a Referendum an application must be received by the registration authority at least twenty-two days before polling day (excluding Sundays, Good Friday and Public Holidays).

Where an application is received after that time it will not have any effect for that electoral event.

An elector registered as a postal voter may vote by post only and may not vote at a polling station.

5.2 Special Voters List

Registration authorities also prepare a list of special voters comprising electors with an illness or disability which prevents them from going to a polling station to vote and who are living in hospitals, nursing homes or similar institutions who wish to vote at these locations. In the case of a first application it must be accompanied by a certificate from a registered medical practitioner (such as a GP).

An application may be made at any time once the elector is eligible for entry on the special lists. However, where a date for a poll has been set, the latest date for receipt of applications for a special is –

- two days after the date of dissolution of the Dáil in the case of a general election;
- two days after the polling day order is made in the case of a Dáil bye-election;
- in the case of a Presidential, European or local election or a Referendum an application must be received by the registration authority at least twenty-two days before polling day (excluding Sundays, Good Friday and Public Holidays).

Where an application is received after that time it will not have any effect for that electoral event.

Electors on the special voters list vote at the hospital, nursing home or similar institutions, where they are residing by marking a ballot paper delivered to them by a special presiding officer accompanied by a Garda.

A separate leaflet in this series sets out information for voters with disabilities.

6. Pending elector list

Registration authorities are required to prepare and maintain a pending elector list to enable pre-registration of 16 and 17 year olds. These persons will then be included on the register from when they turn 18 years old.

A pending elector is a person who has reached the age of 16 years but has not reached 18 years at the time of making the application and who, other than in relation to his or her age, meets the conditions for registration set out at paragraph 2 of this leaflet.

The pending electors list is not part of the register, and it is not available for inspection.

7. Inspecting the Register of Electors

Any person may inspect the register, for purposes related to the registration of electors, during office hours at the local authority offices or other place that the local authority considers appropriate – this may include libraries or post offices.

Where a person is concerned that their safety or the safety of a member of their household would be at risk if their name and address were to be published, they can apply to be an anonymous elector and vote by post. The form is available on www.checktheregister.ie and from the local authority and requires some supporting documentation or certification. The information will still be available to registration authority staff and those administering postal votes but will not appear on the register.

A copy of the register, or extracts thereof, may be purchased from the registration authority on the payment of a fee which shall not exceed the reasonable cost of providing such copy. The information contained in the register of electors may be used for electoral purposes only, and any person who misuses or causes the misuse of the register shall be guilty of an offence. Copies of the register are provided free to elected public representatives and election candidates who may use it for electoral purposes.

8. Registration Law

The information contained in this leaflet does not purport to be a definitive statement of the law on the registration of electors. The law governing the registration of electors is contained mainly in the following legal provisions, as amended:

- Part II of, and the Second Schedule to, the Electoral Act 1992;
- Part VII and section 76 of the Electoral Act 1997;
- Part III of the Electoral Reform Act 2022.

These Acts are available from the Government Publications, Office of Public Works, Jonathan Swift Street, Trim, Meath. They may also be downloaded from the Oireachtas website at www.oireachtas.ie

9. Other Leaflets

Other leaflets available in this series on the Department's website (www.gov.ie/housing) are as follows:

How the President is Elected

The Referendum in Ireland

How the Dáil (Lower House of Parliament) is Elected

How the Seanad (Senate/Upper House of Parliament) is Elected

European Parliament: How Ireland's MEPs are Elected

How Members of Local Authorities are Elected

Information for Voters with Disabilities

gov.ie/housing

