
Myanmar 2015 General Elections

Fact Sheet



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International Foundation for Electoral Systems

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When will the elections be held?

On July 8, 2015, the Union Election Commission announced that elections will be held on November 8, 2015.

Who will Myanmar voters elect in the 2015 elections?

Voters will elect representatives to the *Amoytha Hluttaw*, Myanmar's upper house of Parliament; the *Pyithu Hluttaw*, Parliament's lower house; and State and Region Assemblies on Election Day.

What type of electoral system will Myanmar use in the general elections?

Myanmar uses the first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system where representatives are chosen from single-member constituencies. The FPTP system is also known as a relative majority system and it applies to elections in Myanmar's national Parliament, as well as to elections in states/regions. Under this system, the candidate with the highest number of votes in a given constituency wins the seat.

Although there were debates in the *Pyidaungsu Hluttaw*, Myanmar's two-chamber national legislature comprised of Parliament's two houses, about changing the electoral system from FPTP to proportional representation in 2014 and 2015, no changes are expected to the electoral system prior to this year's elections.

How many representatives in total will be elected in the general elections?

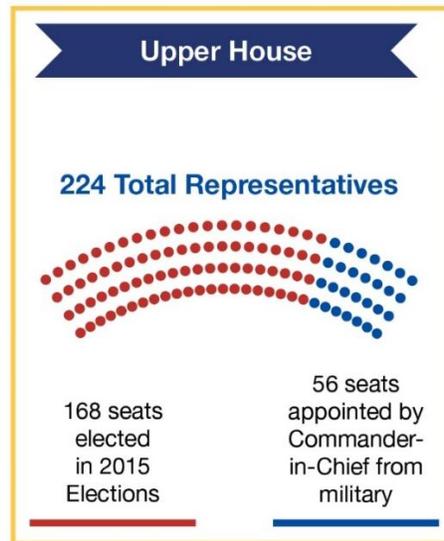
A total of 1,171 representatives will be elected, some to Parliament and some to State and Region Assemblies.

How many representatives will be elected to the upper house?

There are 224 representatives in the upper house of Parliament. One hundred sixty-eight representatives will be elected in the upcoming elections. The Commander-in-Chief of the Defense Services will also appoint 56 Members of Parliament from the military, which is equivalent to 25 percent of the seats in the upper house.

Representation in the upper house is equal across Myanmar's 14 states and regions, which will each elect 12 representatives. Within each state/region, constituencies for the upper house are based on township boundaries. In states/regions where the number of townships is less than 12, the Union Election Commission (UEC) has split the most populated townships into two constituencies. In states/regions where the number of townships is more than 12, the UEC has created electoral districts by combining the

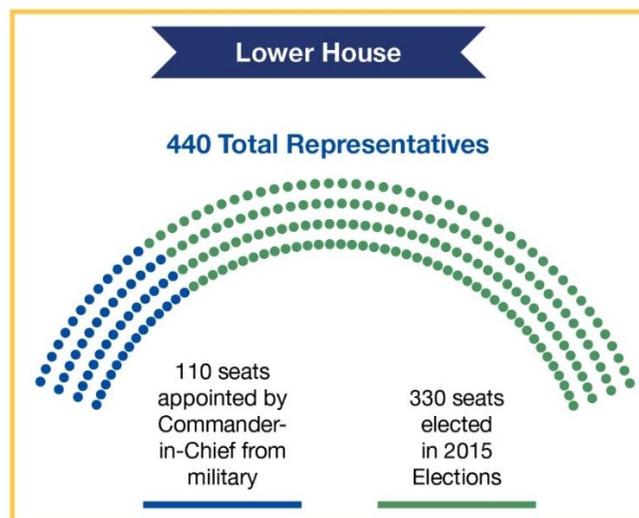
townships with the lowest populations into larger constituencies. The UEC has used data collected from the 2014 national census to determine constituencies for the upper house.



How many representatives will be elected to the lower house?

There are 440 representatives in the lower house of Parliament. Three hundred thirty representatives will be elected in the upcoming elections. Constituencies for the lower house are based on Myanmar's township boundaries. Each of the 330 townships in Myanmar will elect one representative to the lower house of Parliament.

The Commander-in-Chief of the Defense Services will also appoint an additional 110 Members of Parliament from the military, which is equivalent to 25 percent of the seats in the lower house.



How many representatives will be elected to State and Region Assemblies?

The number of representatives that will be elected to each of the 14 State and Region Assemblies elections will be based on the number of townships in a given state/region, with each township divided into two constituencies. A representative will be elected from each constituency that is formed.

In addition, the Commander-in-Chief of the Defense Services will appoint military Members of Parliament to each State/Region Assembly so that they make up one-third of the total seats.

Who will vote for an Ethnic Affairs Minister for State and Region Assemblies?

Ethnic Affairs Ministers will be elected in states and regions where an ethnic community has a population equal to, or greater than, 0.1 percent of the national population of Myanmar. Based on provisional census results, which identified the total population of Myanmar as 51,486,253, the population required to elect an Ethnic Minister will be roughly 51,400 people. This rule however does not apply to ethnic minorities that are the majority within their state/region, or that live within a state/region where the ethnic group already has a self-administered district/zone.

A total of 29 Ethnic Affairs Ministers will be elected during the 2015 elections.

How will the President be elected?

Voters will not directly elect the President. The President will be elected by representatives of both houses of Parliament through the formation of a presidential electoral college following the elections.

The elected and appointed representatives of Parliament will form a presidential electoral college comprised of three groups that include the following representatives:

1. Elected representatives to the upper house;
2. Elected representatives to the lower house; and
3. Appointed military representatives to both houses of Parliament.

Each group will nominate a single candidate for the presidency. The three candidates can be chosen from elected and appointed representatives to Parliament, or be any person that is not a Member of Parliament that meets eligibility criteria established under Article 59 of the 2008 Constitution. Under Article 59, qualified candidates must be citizens who are at least 45 years old and have lived in Myanmar for 20 years. Candidates' immediate family members must also be citizens and not hold foreign citizenship, which is the clause that effectively bars opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi from becoming President because her children hold British citizenship as did her late spouse.

In addition, Article 59 states nominees must meet the requirements for standing as candidates in Parliament (see the following question) and be loyal to Myanmar and its citizens as well as possess knowledge of the country's political, administrative, economic and defense affairs.

Parliament then holds elections. Each Member of Parliament from both houses will cast a single vote for his or her preferred presidential candidate. The candidate with the most votes will become the President, and the other two candidates will become Vice Presidents. In 2010 this process took three months following Election Day. It is possible that the process could take a similar or longer period of time in 2015, meaning that a president may not be elected until early to mid-2016.

For more, see the infographic on page 7.

Who is eligible to be a candidate?

A candidate seeking election in any of Myanmar's legislative bodies – at the state/region or national level – must meet certain candidacy requirements that are established under Myanmar's Constitution and election laws and include: being a citizen of Myanmar that has resided in Myanmar for at least 10 consecutive years; being an eligible voter; and having parents that are citizens of Myanmar. The election laws also provide criteria that would make an individual ineligible for candidacy, such as being declared insolvent by a court or holding dual citizenship. Candidates for the upper house must be at least 30 years old, while candidates for the lower house and State/Region Assemblies must be at least 25 years old.

What election-related constitutional changes have been approved by Parliament?

Parliament has considered a number of possible changes to the Constitution under the 2015 Constitution Amendment Bill. To date, Parliament has voted to approve a change to one of the presidential eligibility criteria from knowledge of "military affairs" to knowledge of "defense affairs." Draft amendments to broader changes for presidential eligibility and an amendment that would have decreased the threshold for Parliament approval to change the Constitution were not approved.

What institution is responsible for administering elections? What are its roles and responsibilities?

Myanmar's election management body (EMB), the Union Election Commission (UEC), will administer the 2015 elections. The UEC was established under the 2008 Constitution as a permanent institution that is responsible for holding, supervising and conducting administrative functions for elections. The Constitution states that the UEC must be staffed with a Chairman and at least five Commissioners, all of which are appointed by the President. There are currently fifteen Commissioners including the Chairman.

The UEC is a mixed model EMB, composed of a constitutionally mandated independent election commission, the UEC, and a secretariat that is supported with resources and personnel from the General Administration Department, as well the Ministry of Immigration and Population and various line ministries with offices at township and ward/village tract administrative levels. The UEC also has several levels of sub-national offices including at the ward/village, township, district and state/region levels.

The UEC is responsible for holding, supervising and conducting the administrative functions for legislative elections during the pre-election, election and post-election periods.

Who is eligible to vote?

The Constitution and election laws state that a person is eligible to vote if he or she:

- Holds full citizenship, associate citizenship, or naturalized citizenship;
- Is 18 years old or older on Election Day; and
- Is registered on the voter list in his or her constituency.

Who is not eligible to vote in the elections?

Myanmar's election laws state that the following persons are not eligible to vote:

- Members of religious orders;
- Convicts;
- Persons judged to be of unsound mind by the relevant court;
- Persons who have not yet been discharged from bankruptcy;
- Persons who have committed a violation of the electoral law; or
- Foreigners or persons who have assumed foreign citizenship.

What are the provisions for out-of-country voting?

Individuals that are eligible for out-of-country voting must meet the same eligibility requirements for voting in Myanmar, as well as one of the following:

- Diplomats of the Union of Myanmar that are assigned to embassies, offices of permanent representatives, consulates and other people assigned to carry out the duties of the said offices;
- Delegates and civil service personnel who are assigned by the government to carry out their duties outside of the country;
- Persons outside the country and working at an international organization or a department of a foreign government;
- Private businesspeople with the permission of the government;
- State scholars that have the permission of the government; or

- Other persons who are outside the country with the permission of the government.

What new voting procedures were introduced for the 2015 elections?

The Union Election Commission (UEC) is introducing a number of new polling procedures for the 2015 elections. It has detailed these in a comprehensive manual for poll workers that provides instructions on the roles of the respective polling station members and details all polling and counting procedures. The manual also includes a code of conduct for all polling station members.

Important changes include:

- Voters will use a stamp to mark their ballots in this year's election;
- The UEC is introducing a number of integrity measures including tamper-evident pull through ballot box seals that are individually numbered, and indelible ink to mark voters' fingers; and
- Domestic and international observers will be allowed in the polling station and the names of witnesses observing the counting process will be recorded on the back of the results form; and results will be displayed at each polling station after ballots have been counted.

MYANMAR 2015 NATIONAL ELECTIONS

