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# **Elections in Ghana**

## *2016 General Elections*

Frequently Asked Questions

Africa

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

2011 Crystal Drive | Floor 10 | Arlington, VA 22202 | [www.IFES.org](http://www.IFES.org)

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## Frequently Asked Questions

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### *Disclosure:*

*These FAQs reflect decisions made by the Ghana elections authorities as of December 5, 2016, to the best of our knowledge. This document does not represent any IFES policy or technical recommendations.*

## **When is Election Day?**

The elections are scheduled for December 7, with polls open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

## **Who are citizens voting for on Election Day?**

Ghanaian voters will elect their new president, vice president, and members of Parliament for the 275 electoral constituencies in the country.

## **What is the electoral system?**

Ghana will use the majoritarian system to elect the president and vice president and the first-past-the-post (FPTP) system to elect the members of Parliament.

**Presidential:** Ghanaians will elect a new president and vice president who are running together on either a political party ticket or an independent ticket. In the presidential election, the candidate who obtains the majority (50 percent plus one) of valid votes is the winner. If no candidate obtains a majority then a second round of elections are held for the two candidates who earned the largest percentage of valid votes. The winner of this second round then becomes the new president. The individual elected president holds the office for a four-year term.

**Parliamentary:** In the parliamentary elections, Ghana uses the FPTP system where all that is required to win the seat is to obtain the most valid votes out of the candidate pool. You do not need to obtain an overall majority of the votes to win in parliamentary elections.

## **Who can vote in the country?**

According to clause 42 of the Constitution of Ghana, all citizens 18 years or above who are of sound mind have the right to register to vote for public elections and referenda.

## **How many registered voters are there?**

There are currently 15,703,890 registered voters in Ghana.

## **Are there reserved seats for women? What is the gender balance within the candidate list?**

In Ghana, there are no seats specifically reserved for women and there are no legislative quotas or voluntary quotas in place. Currently, 30 out of the 275 seats in Parliament are held by women.

There is one female presidential candidate, Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings, who is representing the National Democratic Party. Brigitte Dzogbenuku is also the running mate of Paa Kwesi Nduom representing the People's Progressive Party.

## **What is the election management body? What are its powers?**

Article 43 (1) of constitution stipulates that the Electoral Commission of Ghana be made up of a chairman as the chief executive officer, two deputy chairmen in charge of two board divisions, and four other members, all of whom are appointed by the president. The Commission's functions are to be independent and not subject to the control of any person or authority, except in its adherence to the provisions of the Constitution. Article 52 further stipulates that the Commission may appoint committees and staff as deemed necessary to implement its functions in consultation with the Public Services Commission. Furthermore, there is a representative of the Commission in each region and district.

The Commission is responsible for compiling, revising, and expanding the voter register in accordance with the law; determining the electoral boundaries for both local and national government elections; organizing and supervising all public elections and referenda; educating the public on electoral processes; and performing all other functions as enumerated by the law.

Additionally, the Commission is responsible for the creation of regulations related to the registration of voters, the conduct and supervision of public elections including voting by proxy, identity cards, and other matters connected to elections.

## **Is out-of-country voting allowed?**

Voting outside the country is permitted for Ghanaian citizens, including those on vacation, students, and diplomatic staff.

Voters residing outside Ghana may apply to the Electoral Commission no later than 14 days prior to Election Day for a proxy paper allowing them to appoint a proxy to go to the polling station in their place on Election Day.

## **How will voters with disabilities cast their ballots?**

Measures are put in place at polling stations to ensure that persons with disabilities are able to cast their ballot on Election Day.

For example, polling stations cannot be located on verandas, across from gutters or in any location that would impede the access of persons with disabilities to polling stations. Persons with disabilities should also be given preferential treatment at the polling station so that they do not have to wait in long lines to vote. This includes the sick, elderly, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, and women with young children.

Tactile ballots have also been produced so that blind or partially sighted individuals are able to independently cast their vote. The height of some voting booths has also been lowered so that people using wheelchairs can more easily vote. Persons with disabilities who are unable to make it to the polls on Election Day are able to appoint a proxy prior to Election Day in order to vote on their behalf at the polling station with the appropriate documentation.

## **How many polling stations will be operational on Election Day?**

According to the Electoral Commission of Ghana, 28,992 polling stations will be operational on Election Day.

## **What are the registered political parties in Ghana?**

There are currently 25 registered political parties in Ghana:

- All People's Congress
- Convention People's Party
- Democratic People's Party
- Democratic Freedom Party
- Eagle Party
- Ghana Democratic Republican Party
- Great Consolidated Popular Party
- Ghana National Party
- Ghana Freedom Party
- Independent People's Party
- National Democratic Congress
- National Democratic Party
- New Patriotic Party
- New Vision Party
- People's National Convention
- Progressive People's Party
- Reformed Patriotic Democrats
- United Development System Party
- United Front Party
- United Love Party
- United Progressive Party
- United Renaissance Party
- United Ghana Movement
- Yes People's Party

## **Who are the candidates in the presidential election?**

Only six parties are fielding presidential candidates out of the 25 registered political parties:

- John Dramani Mahama, National Democratic Congress (incumbent president)
- Ivor Greenstreet, Convention People's Party
- Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, New Patriotic Party (main opposition candidate)
- Paa Kwesi Nduom, Progressive People's Party
- Edward Mahama, People's National Convention

- Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings, National Democratic Party

Jacob Osei Yeboah is running as an independent candidate.

John Dramani Mahama, of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), is the incumbent president. He was elected in 2012, and prior to that he was sworn in following the death of the late president John Atta-Mills, who died five months before the end of his first term in office. Mahama had served as vice president in the Atta-Mills administration. The NDC party was founded by former President Jerry John Rawlings, who has been at the forefront of the Ghanaian political landscape since 1979.

Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, of the New Patriotic Party (NPP), is the main opposition candidate in this election. He ran for president of Ghana previously in the 2008 and 2012 elections. He served as foreign minister in the previous NPP administration and ran against Atta-Mills as NPP's presidential candidate in the 2008 election.

## **What technology will be used?**

Prior to the 2012 election the Electoral Commission of Ghana established a new biometric registration system to prevent double registration. On Election Day, before an individual is able to vote they must register their identity with a verification officer using this biometric system.

Voters can also send an SMS message to receive their registration details – including their registered polling station – prior to and on Election Day. This service is supported by the Electoral Commission of Ghana.

## **Where is voting, counting and tabulation held?**

There are 28,992 polling stations in Ghana for voting on Election Day. According to clause 49 in the Constitution of Ghana, vote counting should occur "immediately after the close of the poll."

At the closing of the vote, the presiding officer then records the ballot papers of that station and records the votes cast in favor of each candidate. The party candidates or their representative and the presiding officer must then sign a declaration stating the results of the vote from that particular voting station. The results are then announced to the public before being communicated to the returning officer who will deliver the results to the national center for an overall tally of the votes cast.

## **Who will observe during Election Day? How can they get accreditation?**

During Election Day, there will be a mix of national and international election observers. The European Union (EU) has deployed a team of 24 long-term observers across Ghana to monitor the presidential and parliamentary elections as it has monitored every major election since 1992. The EU also deployed 34 short-term election observers for the space of time directly around Election Day. The African Union deployed four teams of election observers at the request of the Government of Ghana. These teams have been in country since October 20 and will remain in Ghana until the announcement of the results which will be in December if there is only one round of presidential elections and in January if the elections move into a second round.

In order to be an accredited election observer, you have to first seek and receive the approval of the Election Commission of Ghana.

## **When will official results be announced?**

Official voting results from the elections are expected to be announced by December 10, within 72 hours of the closing of the polls.

## **How will official results be announced?**

The Electoral Commission will post official polling station results on its website after the official results have been announced. This will be the first time that the Commission has done so in Ghana's history.

## **How will election disputes be adjudicated?**

Petitions regarding the validity of an election to Parliament may be submitted by voters and candidates to the High Court within 21 days after the publication of results in the Official Gazette. The High Court may declare that the election is void, that a candidate was duly elected, or dismiss the petition.

## **How will Election Day security be ensured?**

A 2016 National Election Security Taskforce was inaugurated by the Ministry of Interior and will be the only such organization to respond to security issues during the election. The Taskforce consists of the Ghana Police Service, Ghana Armed Forces, Ghana Immigration Service, Ghana National Fire Service, Customs Division of Ghana Revenue Authority, the Electoral Commission, the Research Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development.

Each region and district has their own replicated task force with personnel serving as representatives on various technical subcommittees at the national level.

The Ghana Police have a four-tier security system put in place. The first tier consists of one to three security officers posted at each polling station on Election Day; the second tier patrols on Election Day; the third tier has officers positioned at various vantage positions; and the fourth tier is the military in the case of more serious or more widespread incidents. Police have also announced a one-month amnesty period for turning in illegal weapons prior to the election.