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# **Elections in Ghana**

## *December 7 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections*

Frequently Asked Questions

Africa

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

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## Frequently Asked Questions

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### *Disclosure:*

*These FAQs reflect decisions made by the Ghanaian elections authorities as of December 5, 2012, to the best of our knowledge. This document does not represent any IFES policy or technical recommendations.*

## **Who will Ghanaians elect on December 7, 2012?**

On December 7, Ghanaians will vote to elect a new president and vice president along with members of parliament to represent the country's 275 electoral constituencies.

The current president, John Dramani Mahama, was sworn into office on July 24, 2012, just hours after the sudden death of then President John Atta-Mills. President Atta-Mills was five months away from ending the first term of his administration; Mahama had been his vice president.

## **How are these elections structured?**

**Presidential:** Ghanaians will elect a new president and vice president, who are running together on a political party ticket or an independent ticket. The elected president will serve as head of state and head of government for a four-year term. The constitution allows a president to serve up to two terms and no more. The presidential election is won by a majority (50 percent plus one) of valid votes cast. If none of the candidates obtains a majority of votes, a run-off election will be conducted on December 28; only the two candidates with the most votes in the first round of the election would contest this second round.

**Parliamentary:** Parliamentarians will be elected by plurality vote in single-member constituencies to serve four-year terms in the legislature. Following a boundary delimitation process that was completed this year, 45 new electoral constituencies were created by the Electoral Commission of Ghana (EC), bringing the total number of members of parliament to 275. The new constituencies were created across the country in response to population growth.

## **Which institution is administering these elections?**

The 1992 constitution of Ghana mandates that the Electoral Commission of Ghana conduct and supervise all public elections and referenda, and perform the following functions:

- Compile and revise the voter register
- Demarcate the electoral boundaries for national and local government elections
- Provide civic education concerning the electoral process
- Expand the registration of voters
- Perform other functions as prescribed by law

## **What legal provisions ensure the independence of the Electoral Commission?**

The 1992 constitution states that the Electoral Commission of Ghana "shall not be subject to the control or direction of any authority" except as provided in the constitution or any other law not inconsistent with the constitution.

The chairman and the two deputy chairmen have permanent tenure of office, and the commission has the power to hire and fire staff in consultation with the Public Services Commission.

## **Who is the current head of the Electoral Commission of Ghana?**

The Electoral Commission of Ghana, which consists of seven commissioners, is headed by Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Kwadwo Afari-Gyan. Two of the seven members serve as deputy chairmen responsible for the finance division and the administration and operations division, respectively.

Afari-Gyan has been the chairman of the Electoral Commission of Ghana since 1993, after serving as the deputy chairman in charge of operations for the Interim National Electoral Commission (INEC) in the previous year. The members of the commission are appointed by the president.

## **What are the main political parties contesting the elections?**

Currently, there are 23 registered political parties in Ghana, but only seven of them are fielding presidential candidates in the December 7 election:

- Convention People's Party (CPP)
- Great Consolidated Popular Party (GCPP)
- People's National Convention (PNC)
- National Democratic Congress (NDC)
- New Patriotic Party (NPP)
- Progressive People's Party (PPP)
- United Front Party (UFP)

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

- Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, NPP (main opposition candidate)
- Hassan Ayariga, PNC
- Henry Herbert Lartey, GCPP
- John Dramani Mahama, NDC (incumbent candidate)
- Papa Kwesi Nduom, PPP
- Akwasi Addai Odiase, UFP
- Michael Abu Sakara Foster, CPP
- Jacob Osei Yeboah (independent candidate)

John Dramani Mahama, of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), is the sitting president. 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 served as foreign minister in the previous NPP administration and ran against Atta-Mills as NPP's presidential candidate in the 2008 election.

## **Who is eligible to vote?**

Every Ghanaian citizen, age 18 or above, who is registered, is eligible to vote in the elections.

## **How was voter registration conducted? How many voters are registered?**

Approximately 14 million voters have been registered to vote in 2012. During the first half of 2012, the Electoral Commission embarked on the first-ever biometric registration exercise in Ghana's history. This effort sought to compile an entirely new voter register to replace the existing register and all previous voter ID cards. All new voters and every previously registered voter were required to register or re-register in order to be eligible to vote.

## **When will voting take place?**

Voting for both the presidential and parliamentary elections will take place on December 7, 2012. Polling stations will open at 7:00 a.m. and close at 5:00 p.m.

## **Who is allowed to enter the polling centers?**

Candidates, their spouses and their polling or counting agents; election officers; security officers on duty; persons authorized by the commission; and persons accompanying voters with physical disabilities are permitted to enter polling centers.

## **What is the voting process?**

On Election Day, Ghanaians will vote for presidential and parliamentary candidates using separate ballots.

Voters must present their voter ID cards to polling assistants at their polling stations who will check their voter information. A verification officer will then use a verification machine to confirm each voter's identity, using a scanned fingerprint and the voter's registration card.

Following verification, each voter will receive a presidential ballot paper with a validating stamp that indicates the ballot's authenticity. Each voter will proceed to a voting booth and mark his or her candidate choice by thumbprint. Voters will then cast their votes in the presidential ballot box.

After casting a vote in the presidential election, each voter will proceed to the next polling assistant for a parliamentary ballot and then, within a voting booth, indicate by thumbprint his or her choice for member of parliament. After marking the ballot, each voter will cast his or her vote in the parliamentary voting box.

## **Who can be assisted to vote?**

Voters with physical disabilities may each be assisted by a person of the voter's choosing, upon approval of the polling station's presiding officer.

## **How will vote counting and reporting be conducted?**

The presiding officer at each polling station will conduct the count. When voting concludes, votes will be tallied at each polling station in the presence of party agents and observers.

## **When will final election results be released?**

Results from the parliamentary elections will be announced after collation of polling station results at each constituency. The Electoral Commission will declare the winning presidential candidate – who must receive a majority of valid votes cast – after the collation of results from all constituencies in the country. It is expected that this process could take three days to complete.

## Resources

- [Constitution](#) of the Republic of Ghana
- Electoral Commission of Ghana [website](#)