



International Foundation
for Electoral Systems

Election FAQs: Kyrgyzstan

2021 Parliamentary Elections

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Europe and Eurasia

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

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Election Snapshot

- Election Day: Nov. 28, 2021
- Registered voters:
 - 3,699,046 across the country
 - 3,621,751 in single mandate constituencies
- Polling stations: 2,494 total
 - 2,435 on the territory of the Kyrgyz Republic
 - 59 abroad
- Poll workers: 30,764
- Physical distancing: 1.5-2 meters
- Seats: 90
- Candidates:
 - 21 political parties
 - 290 candidates in single mandate constituencies (some 250 women will participate in the elections, 19 in single-mandate constituencies)
- Campaign expenditure and donation limits:
 - Donations - maximum 200,000,000 KGS (~2,360,000 USD)
 - Expenditures - maximum 200,000,000 KGS (~2,360,000 USD)
- Domestic and international observers:
 - 435 international observers from 56 countries
 - 5 domestic nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)
- Accredited media:
 - 152 mass media publications
 - 92 internet publications

When is Election Day?

On Aug. 28, 2021, the president of Kyrgyzstan, Sadyr Japarov, signed a decree¹ announcing the elections of deputies of the *Jogorku Kenesh* (Parliament) to be held on Nov. 28. Polls will be open on Election Day from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. at 2,435 polling stations across Kyrgyzstan and 59 polling stations in diplomatic embassies and consulates outside the country. Voting is also permitted one day prior to Election Day, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., provided that the voter has submitted a written statement requesting an opportunity to vote at his or her home or other location, such as a hospital or military base. Early voting is intended for voters who cannot visit polling locations on Election Day because of health conditions, those who live in remote areas and members of law enforcement who work on Election Day.

Why are these elections important?

The 2020 parliamentary elections sparked a period of significant political transition and reform. Following the last election, protests against what was perceived as manipulated election results

¹http://www.president.kg/ru/sobytiya/20427_podpisan_ukazo_naznachenii_viborov_deputatov_ghogorku_keneshakir_gizskoy_respubliki

led to the resignation and removal of then-President Sooronbai Jeenbekov and several other high-ranking political leaders. Since the 2020 parliamentary election, the *Jogorku Kenesh* (Parliament) has continued to convene despite members' terms having expired on Oct. 15, 2020. With the official annulment of the 2020 parliamentary election results on Oct. 6, 2020,² the upcoming 2021 elections will bring legitimacy to the next convocation of Parliament.

Notably, these elections will be the first held since significant changes were made to Kyrgyzstan's electoral legislation and Constitution. They will be the fifth elections this year—after the 2021 early presidential elections in January, two referenda and two rounds of local elections. The new Constitution lowered the number of MPs from 120 to 90, reverting to the number before the 2010 change to the Basic Law. Of the 90 members of Parliament (MPs) to be elected under the mixed system, 54 seats will be determined proportionally within a nationwide constituency, with 36 seats determined by winners of single-mandate districts.

Who are citizens voting for on Election Day?

Citizens participating in the election will be voting for deputies of the *Jorgoku Kenesh* (Parliament). Following the 2021 constitutional reform, the results will decide the 90 members of the seventh convocation of the Parliament.

Each voter will receive two ballots on Election Day to vote for 1) a political party and give preference to one candidate from the list and 2) a candidate from his or her single-mandate constituency.

For the Nov. 28, 2021 parliamentary elections, voters will choose from 21 political party lists within a single nationwide constituency³ and from 290 candidates including 13 women running in single-mandate constituency elections.⁴

What is the electoral system?

Following the January 2021 early presidential election and constitutional referendum, the government of Kyrgyzstan entered a period of significant electoral and legal debate. On Aug. 26, one day before the call for elections, President Japarov signed a new law governing the election of *Jogorku Kenesh* deputies. Moving away from the fully proportional electoral system, Kyrgyzstan will for the first time utilize a mixed electoral system during the Nov. 28 elections. Each political party will nominate 54 candidates on its list. This number equals the number of seats in Parliament to be determined by the single nationwide proportional vote. For candidates included on party list to be elected, the respective political parties must meet the national electoral threshold of 5 percent (reduced from 7 percent requirement during the 2020 parliamentary elections), as well as a 0.5 percent threshold in each region and the cities of Bishkek and Osh. A voter will be able to cast one vote for a political party and indicate his or her preference for one candidate from the party's open list. Voters will select the remaining 36

² CEC Recognizes Voting Results Invalid, October 6, 2021. <https://shailoo.gov.kg/ru/news/3702/>

³ "21 political parties registered for the elections of deputies of the *Jogorku Kenesh* of the Kyrgyz Republic," October 29, 2021. <https://shailoo.gov.kg/ru/news/5752/>

⁴ "CEC registered 321 candidates in single-mandate constituencies," October 29, 2021. <https://shailoo.gov.kg/ru/news/5757/>

candidates by voting for candidates running within single-mandate constituencies. In total, there will be 90 seats in Parliament, and no party may hold more than 65 seats.

What is the legal framework for conducting the elections?

Kyrgyzstan's *Jogorku Kenesh* amended the legal basis for the conduct of elections just before the parliamentary elections were scheduled. The following components shape the legal framework for elections in Kyrgyzstan:

1. The Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic, adopted by referendum on April 11, 2021, and entered into force by the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic of May 5, 2021;
2. The Constitutional law on elections of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic and deputies of the *Jogorku Kenesh* of the Kyrgyz Republic, as amended on Aug. 26, 2021; and
3. The Constitutional Law on the Central Commission for Elections and Conducting Referenda of the Kyrgyz Republic, dated June 26, 2021.

Kyrgyzstan is party to several international legal frameworks with implications for electoral participation, including the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the 2003 Convention Against Corruption and the 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which Kyrgyzstan ratified in March 2019.

Who is eligible to run as a candidate?

A citizen of the Kyrgyz Republic with a university-level degree and no criminal record and who has reached the age of 25 by the day of elections can be elected a deputy of the *Jogorku Kenesh*.⁵ The most recent update to the Constitution increased the minimum age requirement from 21 to 25 years.

There are no residency requirements for candidates. Within the nationwide constituency, candidates must be nominated by a registered political party from an approved party list of candidates. Political party candidates, as well as independent or unaffiliated candidates, are allowed to run for Parliament within one of the 36 single-mandate districts. Candidates running on political party lists, however, cannot also run within the single-mandate elections. The total number of candidates nominated by a political party list must not exceed 54 individuals.

The Central Election Commission (CEC) has the authority to refuse registration to a political party or independent candidate on the following grounds:

- Failure to submit the required documents for registration of the list of candidates;
- Non-observance of the order of nomination provided by the Constitution;
- Registration of a candidate in the list of another political party for the given elections;
- Failure to create an electoral fund;

⁵ Article 59.2, Constitutional Law on Election of President and Deputies of the *Jogorku Kenesh* of the Kyrgyz Republic.

- Registration of a non-citizen as a candidate; or
- State registration of the political party less than six months before the date on which elections are announced.

What are the campaign expenditure and donation limits?

The new electoral legislation separately regulates the electoral funds of a political party and candidates in single-mandate constituencies.⁶ Kyrgyz law establishes the calculated indicator for maximum limits at 100 Kyrgyzstani Som (KGS).⁷

Political parties can acquire election funds from the following sources:

1. A candidate's private funds. *(Not to exceed the calculated indicator more than 15,000 times—1.5 million KGS, or approximately \$17,700 USD).*
2. Funds from a political party that participates in the elections or nominates a candidate. *(Not to exceed the calculated indicator by more than one million times—100 million KGS, or approximately \$1.18 million USD).*
3. Donations from individuals. *(Not to exceed the calculated indicator by more than 2,000 times—200,000 KGS, or approximately \$2,400 USD).*
4. Donations from legal entities. *(Not to exceed the calculated indicator by more than 30,000 times—3 million KGS, or approximately \$35,400 USD).*

The maximum amount received for and spent from the electoral fund of a political party that has nominated a list of candidates cannot exceed the estimated figure by more than three million times. Thus, the ceiling for campaign expenditures is 300 million KGS or approximately \$3.5 million USD.

The electoral funds of candidates for deputy of the *Jogorku Kenesh* in single-mandate constituencies can be acquired from the following sources:

1. The candidate's own funds. *(Not to exceed the calculated indicator by more than 1,500 times—150,000 KGS, or approximately \$1,800 USD).*
2. Funds allocated to the candidate by a nominating political party. *(Not to exceed the calculated indicator by more than 10,000 times— one million KGS, or approximately \$11,800 USD).*
3. Donations from individuals. *(Not to exceed the calculated indicator by more than 2,000 times—200,000 KGS, or approximately \$2,400 USD).*

⁶ Article 41, Constitutional Law on Election of President and Deputies of the *Jogorku Kenesh* of the Kyrgyz Republic.

⁷ A standard monetary indicator is used for determining the number of social payments, compensations, economic sanctions, administrative penalties and fines, and other economic indicators not related to wages. Since 2006, the calculated indicator is 100 KGS.

4. Donations from legal entities. (*Not to exceed the calculated indicator by more than 5,000 times—500,000 KGS, or approximately \$5,900 USD*).

The maximum amount of funding received for and spent from the electoral fund of a candidate of a single-mandate constituency cannot exceed the calculated indicator by more than 100,000 times. Thus, the ceiling for campaign expenditures of single-mandate candidates is 10 million KGS, or approximately \$118,000 (USD).

Voluntary donations to election funds are forbidden from:

- Foreign states, state bodies, institutions or enterprises and legal entities, including their branches and representative offices; foreign citizens; international organizations; and legal entities registered in Kyrgyzstan with employees with foreign citizenship.
- Stateless persons.
- Government bodies (at all levels).
- State and municipal institutions and enterprises.
- Legal entities with state or local tax exemptions.
- Military units, institutions and organizations.
- Courts and law enforcement agencies.
- Charitable and religious organizations.
- Anonymous sources (defined as citizens who do not provide one or more of the following: last name, first name, patronymic, address of residence and passport data, as well as those who provide false information).
- Entities carrying out unregistered entrepreneurial activities.
- Legal entities with debts to the state budget or the Social Fund of Kyrgyzstan.

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

The Central Commission for Elections and Referendums in the Kyrgyz Republic (CEC), 36 district election commissions (DECs) and 2,494 precinct election commissions (PECs) will administer the 2021 parliamentary elections in Kyrgyzstan.

The CEC manages all elections in Kyrgyzstan. The CEC is a permanent state body consisting of 12 members, six of whom are elected by Parliament and six appointed by the president. The CEC members elect a chairperson by secret ballot. It is a legal entity with its own budget, special fund and official letterhead and stamp with the state emblem. The CEC, which is renewed every five years, has all powers necessary to organize and conduct elections. A detailed list of powers is included in the Constitutional Law On the Central Commission for

Elections and Conducting Referenda of the Kyrgyz Republic, dated June 26, 2021. The CEC was renewed on June 30, 2021, following the end of the previous commission's mandate.

The elections are administered at the sub-national level by the lower-level election commissions: DEC and PECs. The CEC forms a DEC of at least 12 members for each constituency. For the 2021 parliamentary elections, the CEC formed 36 DECs with a total of 490 members.⁸ DECs organize the preparation and conduct of elections and referenda within their designated districts; propose the boundaries of polling stations and constituencies for the CEC's approval; form and approve the composition of PECs; publish polling locations in the mass media; receive reports from PECs on electoral issues; provide legal, organizational, methodological, material and technical assistance to PECs; and maintain, update and clarify the voter list. A DEC's term of office starts on the day of its first meeting and ends by decision of the CEC after the official publication of election results.

DECs form PECs, which consist of at least seven representatives of political parties and the previously established reserve list of PEC members.⁹ PECs inform voters within their respective precincts of the address and telephone number of the relevant precinct election commission, its working hours and the date and place for voting. PECs ensure that voters have access to the voter list, and they receive and consider statements about errors and inaccuracies. PECs oversee adherence to the rules for placing campaign materials in the vicinity of polling stations during the campaign period. PECs ultimately organize voting at polling stations on Election Day. Once voting concludes, PECs count and tabulate voting results and transfer documents related to election preparation and conduct to their respective DEC or archive. PECs receive and maintain written records of complaints and send them to the CEC for inclusion in the relevant register.

The CEC determines the number of members of a PEC based on the number of voters at each polling station, as follows:

- Up to 500 voters: at least seven PEC members;
- 501 to 1,200 voters: at least nine PEC members; and
- More than 1,200 voters: at least 11 PEC members.

In total, 2,494 polling stations have been designated across the country. In addition, 59 PECs are scheduled to be open abroad on Election Day.

How is the election management body protecting the elections and voters from COVID-19?

For the safe conduct of elections, the CEC approved the "Algorithm of actions to ensure sanitary and epidemiological safety and protect the health of citizens during the preparation and conduct

⁸ "CEC approved the composition of district election commissions," September 12, 2021. <https://shailoo.gov.kg/ru/news/5459/>

⁹ The Law on Election Commissions for Holding Elections and Referenda of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2021.

of elections and referendums in the Kyrgyz Republic."¹⁰ The CEC has coordinated the algorithm, or safety plan, with the Ministry of Health of the Kyrgyz Republic. All precinct election commissions are obliged to organize their work on Election Day in accordance with the rules established as part of the plan, which includes measuring the temperature of all voters, providing information about measures to prevent COVID-19, distributing of masks and sanitizing liquid and enforcing social distancing guidelines.

What is the election management body doing to strengthen its technology and procedures to resist vulnerabilities and counter foreign interference?

The CEC website was exposed to cyberattacks during the parliamentary elections in October 2020 and the presidential election in 2021. In July 2021, on the day of repeat elections for deputies of city councils of Bishkek, Osh and Tokmak, 130 cyberattacks from 10 countries were registered against the CEC website. According to the CEC chairperson, the system successfully repelled these attacks.

Who can vote in these elections?

A voter must be a citizen of the Kyrgyz Republic who has reached the age of 18 on Election Day, and who has submitted biometric data and is on the voter list. In single-mandate constituencies, the voter must reside within and be included on the voter list of his or her constituency. To vote on Election Day, a voter must present a voter identification document, such as any type of national passport.

How many registered voters are there?

As of Nov. 18, 2021, in the final voters list, 3,703,420 voters were listed within the single nationwide constituency. In contrast, 3,619,292 people are registered to vote with single-mandate constituency elections. Compared to the number of participants in the referendum (nationwide vote) on the Constitution on April 11, 2021, the number of voters has increased by 97,219.

The last day for a voter to register for the parliamentary election was Nov. 12, 2021. Voters are unable to register to vote on Election Day. Voter lists for the elections of deputies of the *Jogorku Kenesh* of the Kyrgyz Republic are posted in all 2,494 polling stations (2,435 in the country and 59 abroad). According to the election legislation, voter lists must also be posted on the state voter portal, [Tizme](#).

The number of out-of-country voters for the Nov. 28 election was 75,651 as of Oct. 29, 2021. This is more than double the number of registered out-of-country voters for the 2020 parliamentary elections (32,602).

¹⁰ <https://shailoo.gov.kg/media/nurgul/2021/09/01/bdwsnl.pdf>

What provisions are in place that support the equal rights of women, persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups?

The current updated legislation includes only one provision that refers to the formation of lists of candidates from political parties:¹¹

- No more than 70 percent of candidates of one gender can be included on the list, and alternation of women and men should not exceed three positions;
- At least 15 percent of candidates may not be older than 35 years, with at least three of those among the first 25 candidates on the list;
- At least 15 percent of candidates must be of different ethnicities, and at least three of those must be included in the first 25 candidates; and
- At least two candidates should be persons with disabilities, and one of those must be included among the first 25 candidates on the list.

There are no special provisions addressing marginalized populations governing the upcoming single-mandate constituency elections.

The election commissions are tasked with ensuring the accessibility of the voting premises. If a polling station is not equipped with devices such as ramps to enable voters with disabilities to enter, then, no later than 40 calendar days before Election Day, the precinct election commission will appeal to the relevant local government bodies to take measures that ensure the accessibility of the polling station. Local self-government bodies, as well as their officials, are obliged to take immediate and necessary measures to comply with the request of the election commission. Failure to do so results in legal liability. On Election Day, each polling station is equipped with one voting booth designed for people with disabilities, where magnifying sheets and braille stencils are available for voters with disabilities. If there is no ramp at the polling station, voters are able to ask for assistance by using a call button.

Persons with disabilities can also request to vote the day before Election Day at their homes or alternate locations, including hospitals. In these cases, precinct election commission members visit the specified locations with portable ballot boxes to allow the opportunity to vote. The Central Election Commission (CEC) also established a video hotline at the CEC Call Center via WhatsApp. Using the hotline, voters with hearing and speech impairments can receive answers to their questions in sign language and obtain up-to-date information on the elections.¹²

¹¹ Article 60.3, Constitutional Law on Election of President and Deputies of the *Jogorku Kenesh* of the Kyrgyz Republic.

¹² CEC of the Kyrgyz Republic: "WhatsApp video hotline of the CEC CALL center was launched to inform voters with hearing and speech impairments using sign language," October 19, 2021. <https://shailoo.gov.kg/ru/news/5696/>

Is out-of-country voting allowed?

Out-of-country voting will take place at 59 polling stations in 29 countries, in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.¹³ Voters at such polling stations will only be able to vote for candidates from parties within the nationwide constituency and cannot vote for candidates in single-mandate constituencies. The state portal provides a full list of polling locations abroad.¹⁴

Who can observe during Election Day? How can they get accreditation?

The legislation provides for three types of observers:

- Observers representing a candidate or political party;
- Citizen observers (nominated by a non-profit organization); and
- International observers.

International observers are accredited by the Central Election Commission (CEC), with invitations sent by the president, the *Jogorku Kenesh*, the Cabinet of Ministers or the CEC. Requests for accreditation may be submitted by international and national non-profit organizations specializing in electoral legislation and elections or human rights protection, beginning after the official election announcement and ending three days prior to Election Day. As of Nov. 19, 435 international observers from 56 countries have been registered.¹⁵ Five non-profit organizations have notified the CEC of their intention to observe.¹⁶

In addition, the CEC has accredited 152 mass media and 92 online or internet publications.¹⁷

Who is managing security on Election Day?

The employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) will be in charge of ensuring security. One month before the elections, they activated an enhanced service option based on an order by the MIA, "On measures to ensure public order and security in the preparation and conduct of elections."¹⁸

The MIA established an operational headquarters to carry out the tasks assigned to law enforcement officers and developed comprehensive measures to ensure law and order. The plan describes the organization of work to preserve the rule of law, the rights and freedoms of

¹³ "Information on PECs abroad, for the elections of deputies of the *Jogorku Kenesh* of the Kyrgyz Republic," October 31, 2021. <https://shailoo.gov.kg/ru/news/5807/>

¹⁴ <https://tizme.gov.kg/>

¹⁵ <https://shailoo.gov.kg/ru/news/5920/>

¹⁶ "List of non-profit organizations that notified the CEC of the Kyrgyz Republic of their intention to observe the elections of deputies of the *Jogorku Kenesh* of the Kyrgyz Republic, scheduled for November 28, 2021," October 5, 2021. <https://shailoo.gov.kg/ru/NablyudateliBaykoochular/>

¹⁷ "The CEC accredited 244 mass media and online publications for the elections of deputies of the *Jogorku Kenesh* of the Kyrgyz Republic," September 23, 2021. <https://shailoo.gov.kg/ru/news/5517/>

¹⁸ <https://mvd.gov.kg/news/181>

citizens, the protection of polling stations, inventories and the secure transportation and delivery of ballots to the polling stations.

The MIA carries out round-the-clock monitoring of mass media, social networks, video hosting sites and TV and radio broadcasting companies to identify inaccurate information that sows panic and provokes public concern among citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic. It will take measures against those who violate public order and disseminate false information that threatens to violate public order and security. In addition, the police created an information and analytical group for the exchange of data with the Central Election Commission.

What will the ballot papers look like?

Each voter will receive two ballots. The ballot paper for the single nationwide constituency will list the 21 parties, the position "against all" and 54 numbered boxes for voters to identify individual candidate preferences. Voters can vote for a political party and, if desired, for one candidate by ticking the box beside that candidate's number.

A separate single-member constituency ballot will list the names of candidates running in the respective constituency and the position "against all."

When will official results be announced?

The Central Election Commission (CEC) will determine the results of the elections on the basis of protocols received directly from district election commissions and formed by precinct election commissions after the counting and tabulation of ballots. Results must be confirmed no later than 20 calendar days from the day of voting.

The CEC officially publishes the election results within two weeks from the day when election results are determined.

How will election disputes be adjudicated?

Kyrgyzstan uses a vertical appeals procedure to respond to election disputes. Decisions can be appealed to a higher election commission, and decisions of the Central Election Commission (CEC) to the Administrative Court, and then, in case of disagreement, to the Supreme Court.

The CEC created a working group to consider complaints and appeals. This group prepares a preliminary conclusion for each complaint or appeal and submits it to the CEC. The CEC can then make its own decision or refer the case to law enforcement agencies for consideration.

Resources

- [Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic](#)
- [Constitutional Law on Election of President and Deputies of the Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic](#)
- [The CEC Algorithm of actions to ensure sanitary and epidemiological safety and protect the health of citizens during the preparation and conduct of elections and referendums in the Kyrgyz Republic](#)
- [The Law on election commissions for holding elections and referenda of the Kyrgyz Republic](#)
- [Central Election Commission of the Kyrgyz Republic](#)
- [Official Website of the Ministry of Interior](#)

About IFES in Kyrgyzstan

Operating in Kyrgyzstan since 1994, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) has worked with a variety of local partners to support the development and sustainability of democratic institutions and practices in elections and civic engagement. IFES has helped build and improve the capacity of electoral administration and legislation, strengthened civil society and provided civic education opportunities to high school students through in-class learning as well as extracurricular activities. IFES continues to work in Kyrgyzstan with support from the United States Agency for International Development to assist with ongoing development of electoral democracy and building of political culture.

Disclosure

These FAQs reflect decisions made by the Central Election Commission as of Nov. 11, 2021, to the best of our knowledge. This document does not represent any IFES policy or technical recommendations.

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