



# Glossary: Scottish Parliament Election 2021

**Additional Members System (AMS)**

AMS is a form of proportional representation which aims to give political parties a share of MSPs in proportion to their share of the vote. It's a combined electoral system consisting of first-past-the-post and an element of proportional representation. Find out more about the system [here](#).

**Agent**

A person who leads a candidate's campaign and represents them when dealing with the electoral authorities.

**Ballot**

Another term for vote.

**Ballot box**

This is a sealed box with an opening at the top where voters put their ballot papers.

**Ballot paper**

A piece of paper containing a list of all candidates standing in a constituency. In Scottish Parliament elections voters get 2 votes. They are asked to place an X next to their choice for their constituency MSP (lilac paper) and an X next to their choice for their regional MSP (orange paper).

**Candidate**

A person who stands for election, representing a political party in an area or as an independent.

**Canvassing**

When supporters of a political party ask other voters who they plan to vote for and try to persuade them to vote for their party's candidate.

**Coalition**

When two or more parties form a government. This can happen when no political party wins an overall majority.

**Confidence and supply**

Often when a smaller party supports a larger party in important votes - specifically confidence votes and finance/supply bills.

**Constituency**

A geographical area which elects MSPs. There are 73 single-member constituencies.

**Devolution**

Devolution is the transfer of powers from a central to a regional authority. The Scottish Parliament at Holyrood can pass laws on devolved matters - in general, those affecting most aspects of day-to-day life in Scotland. Find out more [here](#).

**Election expenses**

The money spent by candidates on their campaign. There are limits in place on how much candidates can spend and they must prove this after the election.

**Electoral register**

A list of all those in a constituency entitled to vote.

**Exit poll**

When researchers ask people how they voted just after they have cast their vote to estimate the outcome of the election.

**First Minister**

After an election the MSPs elect one Member to be First Minister. This is usually the leader of the biggest party in the Parliament.

**Franchise**

The right to vote. Those over 16 can vote in Scottish Parliament elections and can register to vote from age 14.

**Manifesto**

A document that sets out a political party's ideas and policies and what they will do if their party forms the government.

**MSP (Member of Scottish Parliament)**

A person elected to the Scottish Parliament to represent a constituency or region. There are 129 MSPs in total - 73 constituency MSPs and 56 regional MSPs.

**Opposition**

The largest party not in government.

**Party Election Broadcast (PEB)**

Broadcasts made by the parties and transmitted on TV or radio.

**Poll**

Another term for vote or election.

**Polling day**

Election day.

**Polling station**

A place where people go to cast their votes. This is often schools, libraries and community centres.

**Postal vote**

Voters can send their vote by post if they apply to do so in advance.

**Proportional representation (PR)**

A voting system in which the distribution of seats corresponds closely with the number of the total votes cast for each party.

**Proxy vote**

When someone votes on behalf of another person. This can only be done if they apply in advance. Normally done when a person can't get to a polling station.

**Region**

A geographical area which elects MSPs. There are 56 regional MSPs in total. Each region has 7 MSPs.

**Safe seat**

A constituency in which the candidate from one particular party nearly always wins by a large number of votes.

**Scottish Government**

The Scottish Government is the group of senior Ministers in the Scottish Government. It comprises the First Minister, other Ministers appointed by the First Minister and the two Scottish Law Officers. The Scottish Government is responsible for most of the issues of day-to-day concern to the people of Scotland, including health, education, justice, rural affairs, and transport.

**Spoiled ballots**

Ballot papers which have been filled in incorrectly. E.g. putting a tick or number in instead of a X.

**Swing**

The transfer of votes from one party to another.

**Tactical voting**

This is when people don't vote for the party they really support, but for another party in order to keep out a party they don't want to win.

**Turnout**

The number or percentage of people eligible to vote in a constituency who actually vote.