



International Foundation
for Electoral Systems

Elections in Armenia

2021 Early Parliamentary Elections

Frequently Asked Questions

Europe and Eurasia

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

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Frequently Asked Questions

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When is Election Day?

Elections for Armenia's National Assembly will be held on June 20, 2021. Polls will be open from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

The official campaigning period begins seven days after the final day of registration and concludes one day before Election Day. In this instance, the campaign will take place from June 7 to June 18. June 19, the day before the vote, is a "silent" day, during which no campaigning is allowed.

Who are citizens voting for on Election Day?

Citizens are voting for members of the National Assembly, or Parliament. Following the resignation of the prime minister on April 25, 2021, and two failed attempts to elect a new prime minister, Parliament was dissolved. The president of the republic then called for snap elections. The Armenian National Assembly has a minimum of 101 seats (with four additional, optional seats for minorities), and approximately 25 political parties are competing.

Why are early elections being called?

In September 2020, large-scale fighting erupted in Nagorno-Karabakh between the Armenian-backed defense forces of this disputed region and Azerbaijan. The fighting culminated in a Russian-brokered ceasefire in November. According to a tripartite statement about the ceasefire, the Armenian-backed *de facto* government of Nagorno-Karabakh was to cede all surrounding territory that was gained and held after the first large-scale conflict (from 1992 to 1994), as well as some regions of Nagorno-Karabakh itself. Following a cease-fire agreement signed by both parties on November 9, these areas came under the control of the Azerbaijani army. Despite strong public support for Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's reform agenda, the setback of the conflict galvanized the opposition. In a political compromise, Prime Minister Pashinyan agreed to early parliamentary elections to allow the Armenian people to voice their opinions on the trajectory of the country for the first time since the 2018 Velvet Revolution.

What is Armenia's electoral system?

Armenia has a parliamentary system of government. The unicameral National Assembly is the legislative body, and the prime minister is the head of government. Members of Parliament are elected for five-year terms.

National Assembly elections will be conducted through closed party list proportional representation, as promulgated on April 26, 2021. Through this system, political parties that meet a specific threshold are allotted seats. Political parties must meet an electoral threshold of 5 percent and alliances of political parties must meet a threshold of 7 percent. Seats are distributed proportionally among the winning parties and alliances according to the number of votes received nationwide.

On June 20, voters will receive ballots according to the number of political parties and political party alliances running in this election. The voter chooses the ballot of his or her preferred political party or alliance and places it in the voting envelope. Party lists must include at least

one woman out of every three candidates, and the overall percentage of candidates of a given gender are not to exceed 70 percent.

On Election Day, voter authentication devices will be used to verify the identity and eligibility of voters. Video cameras in almost 1,500 precinct election commissions will livestream voting proceedings on the internet.

In December 2020 and earlier this year, the National Assembly passed a comprehensive reform of the legal framework governing elections. However, many of the new provisions of the Law on Political Party, the Electoral Code and other election-related legislations will not come into force until January 1, 2022.

What is Armenia's election management body?

Elections in Armenia are overseen by a three-tiered system of election commissions. The Central Election Commission (CEC), which oversees elections at the national level, certifies and declares the results. The CEC's decisions and functions are implemented by 38 territorial election commissions and 2,008 precinct election commissions that administer elections at the regional and local levels. Approximately 16,064 poll workers will staff the polling stations. Additionally, each level of the election management body system has its own responsibilities, including polling station management and counting. The National Assembly elects the CEC, a permanent body composed of seven members. All CEC sessions are public and are streamed online.

Who can vote in these elections?

There are 2,583,823 eligible voters in Armenia as of May 14, 2021. A passive voter registration system is in place for voters aged 18 or older. The National Police maintain the central voter registry. Voter lists are posted on the Central Election Commission website and in front of each polling station for public awareness. Inaccuracies and omissions can be reported to the police at least 10 days prior to Election Day. While the police are primarily responsible for main voter lists of a given area, on Election Day precinct election commissions can submit supplementary voter lists for persons with court or police documents noting their absence from previous voter lists.

Voters who are in precincts temporarily can be added to voter lists until at least 10 days before Election Day. This also applies to temporarily relocated personnel, including the police and precinct election commission members. Hospitals submit lists of their in-patient voters no later than seven days prior to elections. Voting in in-patient hospitals and preliminary detention centers is organized with a mobile ballot box.

Out-of-country voting is not allowed for most Armenian citizens. However, diplomats and members of the military assigned abroad can vote via a secure electronic voting system in advance of Election Day.

What provisions are in place to guarantee equal access to the electoral process for persons with disabilities?

The Election Code addresses accessibility for voters with disabilities, and local government authorities take measures to ensure compliance with this part of the code. However, according to a recent survey conducted by local disabled persons organization Agate Rights Defense Center for Women with Disabilities, no polling stations in Armenia are fully accessible and only one-quarter of polling stations are partially accessible, meaning that these polling stations only cater to certain disabilities or partially comply with needed adjustments. The Central Election Commission is responsible for procuring and distributing voting tools designed to assist voters with disabilities to polling stations across the country. Tactile ballot guides, a braille list of all political parties competing in the polls as well as voting procedures in braille will be available at every polling station to help voters who are blind or have low vision to vote without assistance. Precinct election commission officers learn to accommodate voters with disabilities as part of their general training ahead of Election Day.

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

Because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Central Election Commission (CEC) has put forth a set of recommendations to protect the safety of voters, poll workers and observers on Election Day. Voters, precinct election commission members, political party proxies and observers will be required to wear masks at all times inside the polling stations. Voting rooms should be ventilated regularly through the day, but if the outdoor temperature is above 18 degrees Celsius the windows of voting rooms should be kept open. Voters are required to remove their masks temporarily for identification and registration. The fingerprint scanner of voter authentication devices will be disinfected after each voter's use. Physical distancing of 1.5 meters should be maintained by observers whenever possible. Additionally, the CEC will provide hand sanitizer and single-use face masks to polling stations across Armenia, which will be placed at the entrance of every polling station.

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

Citizen and international observers can be accredited to monitor the elections through the Central Election Commission (CEC). The organizational charters of domestic nongovernmental organizations must have included democracy and human rights objectives at least one year prior to the day when elections are called. Those organizations may monitor the polls only after they adopt a code of conduct and a train their observers. Political parties running in elections are allowed to have proxies present at the polling stations on Election Day. Foreign and international organizations can observe elections upon the invitation of the president of the republic, the speaker of the Parliament, the prime minister or the CEC.

All accredited observers may be present at an election commission session and in polling stations during voting. Observers can also observe the printing, transportation, storage and counting of ballot papers and stickers, among other actions. Observers must remain neutral and

may not express preferential attitudes toward a candidate or political party, and they are not allowed to interfere with the activities of election commissions at any level.

What are the campaign expenditure and donation limits?

Campaign expenditures are limited to 500 million Armenian dram (AMD), approximately USD 950,000. Excessive campaign expenditures may trigger a fine or removal from the candidate list. Statements of accounts must be audited every three days during the campaign period.

A party or candidate must open a campaign fund account at the Central Bank of Armenia within seven days of registering to be eligible to receive donations. Political parties, candidates and individuals can contribute up to AMD 100 million (approximately USD 194,000), AMD 5 million (approximately USD 9,700) and AMD 500,000 (approximately USD 970), respectively. Political parties that received at least 2 percent of votes in the last election are eligible for state funding based on a regressive scale in accordance with the number and percentage of votes received. All Armenian citizens are allowed to donate to campaigns.

When will official results be announced?

Within 24 hours of the closing of polls, the Central Election Commission (CEC) will announce the preliminary results and will declare the final results to the National Assembly on June 27, 2021. However, if no majority is formed in Parliament after distribution of seats or by forming a coalition within six days after the announcement of the final elections results, the CEC will call for a second round of elections, which will take place 28 days after the first Election Day.

How will election disputes be adjudicated?

The Constitution of Armenia guarantees the right to file electoral process complaints on a variety of topics. Election disputes and complaints are adjudicated for those whose rights are at stake, including voters, media representatives and political party representatives. Any decision, action or inaction of an electoral commission can be appealed to a higher commission or to the Administrative Court, although parallel administrative and judicial procedures are prohibited. Precinct election commission results can be appealed to a territorial election commission (TEC), and TEC decisions can be appealed to the Administrative Court. However, petitions against the final results of elections to the National Assembly can only be appealed to the Constitutional Court on the fifth day after they are announced.

Resources

- [Central Election Commission of Armenia](#)
- Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe: [Armenia, Early Parliamentary Elections, June 2021 Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights Needs Assessment Report](#)
- Agate Rights Defense Center for Women with Disabilities: [Assessing the Accessibility of Polling Stations in the Republic of Armenia](#)
- [ARMENPRESS](#)
- Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's [Armenian Service](#)
- [CIVILNET](#)

About IFES in Armenia

Through the “Strengthening Electoral Processes and Political Accountability” (SEPPA) project funded by United States Agency for International Development, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems accompanies the political transformation in Armenia by reinforcing the capacities of the election administration, improving electoral legislation, enhancing the transparency of political finance, enfranchising people with disabilities, promoting election justice and engaging youth in civic activism.

Disclosure

These FAQs reflect decisions made by the Armenian elections authorities as of June 15, 2021, to the best of our knowledge. This document does not represent any IFES policy or technical recommendations. This paper is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The information herein is provided by the author(s) and does not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.