Who Does What
The Scottish Parliament

- Makes laws for Scotland on devolved matters
- Debates issues affecting Scotland
- Checks and challenges the work of the Scottish Government

Elections

Everyone in Scotland is represented by eight MSPs – one for their constituency and seven for the larger parliamentary region that includes their constituency. This is how they are elected.

Constituency

- One vote for a named candidate
- Candidate with most votes wins (first-past-the-post)

Regional

- One vote for a party or independent candidate
- A formula (the d'Hondt formula) is used to calculate the winners.

129 MSPs

How is the Scottish Government formed?

The 129 MSPs elect one MSP as First Minister (usually from the largest party represented in the Parliament).

The First Minister appoints certain MSPs as Scottish Ministers.

Scottish Ministers are supported by civil servants.

Scottish Government Ministers hold two separate positions: a Scottish Parliament role (MSP) and a Scottish Government role (Minister). They have a different office for each role.

The Scottish Government

- Proposes and implements laws for Scotland on devolved matters
- Makes and implements policy on devolved matters
- Proposes the Scottish budget
- Is headed by the First Minister

The Scottish Parliament

- Debates issues affecting Scotland
- Checks and challenges the work of the Scottish Government
- Proposes the Scottish budget
- Is headed by the First Minister

Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs)

129 MSPs

Scottish Parliament

- Debates issues affecting Scotland
- Checks and challenges the work of the Scottish Government
- Proposes the Scottish budget
- Is headed by the First Minister

Scottish Ministers

- Supported by civil servants
- Hold two separate positions: a Scottish Parliament role (MSP) and a Scottish Government role (Minister).
- Have a different office for each role.

All MSPs have the same status and you can contact any of the eight who represent you.
The UK Parliament
- Makes laws for the UK, including for Scotland on reserved matters
- Debates issues affecting the UK
- Checks and challenges the work of the UK Government

The UK Government
- Proposes and implements UK laws, makes UK policy and proposes the UK budget. These laws and policies affect Scotland if they are on reserved matters
- Is headed by the Prime Minister

The European Parliament
- Has a role in making laws for the European Union (EU) and deciding the EU budget
- Debates issues affecting the EU
- Checks and challenges the work of other EU institutions

Elections
- First-past-the-post (candidate with most votes wins) in 650 constituencies (small areas of the UK) = 650 Members of Parliament (MPs)
- There are 59 MPs for Scotland. Everyone in Scotland is represented by one MP for their constituency.
- Includes 6 MEPs representing the whole of Scotland, elected using the d'Hondt formula.

The UK voted to leave the EU in a referendum on 23 June 2016. However, until the end of the negotiating period, the UK remains a member of the EU.

The Scottish Government implements EU laws affecting Scotland on devolved matters.

The Scottish Government proposes most laws for Scotland on devolved matters and puts them into practice when they have been approved by the Scottish Parliament.

The UK Parliament can still make laws for Scotland on devolved matters but by convention asks for Scottish Parliament approval first.

A UK Parliament law created the Scottish Parliament and devolved power to it in 1999. Further powers were devolved in 2012 and 2016.

The UK Government implements EU laws affecting Scotland on reserved matters.

The UK Government proposes most laws for Scotland on reserved matters and puts them into practice when they have been approved by the UK Parliament.

MSPs, MPs and MEPs belong to completely separate organisations, though it is possible to hold more than one position at the same time.
Law-making powers for Scotland

Some subjects on which the Scottish Parliament, UK Parliament and European Parliament generally make laws affecting Scotland:

- Constitution
- Defence and foreign policy
- Education
- Employment
- Energy
- Environment and rural affairs
- Health
- Immigration
- Law and order
- Social security
- Taxation
- Transport

Contact details

Scottish Parliament
See back page

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UK Government
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European Parliament (office in Scotland)
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For more information on the Scottish Parliament and its powers, please contact us.

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