

The Members of Dáil Éireann are elected by the people of Ireland in a general election. A general election must be held at least every five years, and all Irish and British citizens who live in Ireland and are aged 18 years or over are entitled to vote.

For the purpose of general elections the country is divided into 39 areas known as constituencies. The size of these constituencies varies and they may elect three, four or five TDs. Constituency boundaries can be revised based on changing census results.

Ireland uses a system of proportional representation and each voter has a single transferrable vote. On polling day, voters are given a ballot paper with the names of all the candidates in their constituency. Voters do not select just one candidate, but can vote for several candidates in order of preference, giving number one to their favourite, two to their next choice and so on. If a voter's number one candidate receives more number one votes than they need to be elected, their surplus is redistributed. This means the number two preferences on the surplus ballot papers are transferred to the other candidates.