

Directorate-General for the Presidency
 Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments

Factsheet: UK House of Commons
















1. At a glance

The United Kingdom is a constitutional monarchy with a bicameral Parliament. The lower House, called the House of Commons, consists of 650 Members elected directly by the citizens using the first-past-the-post system in every constituency that each Member is elected to represent. At the results of the latest election, held 7th May 2015, the Conservative party gained an absolute majority with 331 elected Members.

The functions and powers of the House of Commons (as those of the House of Lords) are governed by a number of rules, some of which are written down and are called 'Standing Orders'. Other rules are set out in resolutions of the House. However, much of what Parliament does is determined by 'custom and practice', that is unwritten convention established through continued use over time.

The House of Commons is the main legislative body of the UK Parliament. Beyond its legislative function, the House exercises democratic scrutiny over the Government through its parliamentary committees and during Prime Minister's Question Time. Should the Government fail to retain the confidence of a majority in the House of Commons, either by the House defeating the Government on a confidence motion or by defeating a policy that the Government has indicated is a 'matter of confidence', Parliament is dissolved and the Government calls a general election.

2. Composition

Results of the elections of 7 May 2015				
	Party	EP affiliation	%	Seats
	Conservative and Unionist Party		36,9	331
	Labour Party		30,5	232
	Scottish National Party		4,7	56
	Liberal Democrats		7,8	8
	Democratic Unionist Party	Non-attached	0,7	8
	Sinn Féin		0,5	4
	Plaid Cymru		0,5	3
	Others		18,4	8
			100%	650
Turnout: 66,1%. The next election will take place in 2020				

3. Officeholders

Speaker of the House of Commons  John Bercow MP, since 22 June 2009	Chair of European Scrutiny Committee  Sir William Cash MP, Appointed on 15 July 2015
Clerk of the House of Commons: Mr David Natzler (since 23 March 2015)	

4. Relations with Members of the European Parliament

Participation rights for UK MEPs in plenary sittings	No
Participation rights for UK MEPs in committee meetings	No
Availability of videoconferencing system in the House of Commons	Yes

5. Information links

- Official website: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/commons/>
- [Standing Orders of the House of Commons](#)
- [List of committees](#)
- [Recent documents submitted by the House of Commons to the Interparliamentary EU Information Exchange \(IPEX\)](#)
- [European Parliament Information Office in London](#)

6. Contacts

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