



Twenty years of the Scottish Parliament

Take a look inside Holyrood, where many of Scotland's laws are made.

In 1999, the Scottish Parliament was opened in Edinburgh, Scotland's capital city. From this point, politicians elected by the Scottish public to work there, known as Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs), were given the power to create and change certain laws for the country. Previously, those decisions had been made by the UK Parliament in London. To mark 20 years of the Scottish Parliament, take a look at what it has achieved since 1999.

Why does Scotland have a parliament?



The Queen visited the Scottish Parliament in 1999.

In 1997, UK Prime Minister Tony Blair said people in Scotland should be able to decide whether they wanted a Scottish parliament. In a vote, known as a referendum, 74% of those who took part voted in favour of one. Most voters also said that MSPs should be able to decide exactly how much income tax (money paid to the Government from the salaries of workers) people would pay in Scotland. The first elections took place on 6 May 1999 and MSPs began work later that month. A new building for the parliament was opened in Holyrood, Edinburgh, in 2004, and the parliament is often referred to as Holyrood as a result.

What powers does it have?



The Parliament makes decisions about the police.

The Scottish Parliament has control over certain issues (known as devolved powers) and the UK Parliament still makes decisions on other topics that affect Scotland (known as reserved powers). Some of the powers devolved to Scotland include education, health and the police. Reserved powers include defence and trade agreements. Wales and Northern Ireland have their own forms of parliament, known as national assemblies, but Scotland has more devolved powers than any other part of the UK.



DID YOU KNOW?

Everyone in Scotland has more than one MSP representing them. One MSP is elected in their local area, and several others are picked to cover a wider region.

PARLIAMENT POWER

At least 80% of the electricity required for the Scottish Parliament comes from a renewable source, such as that generated by the wind or Sun.

The outside of the building.

£414.4 million

The cost of building the Scottish Parliament

The average age of an MSP, according to a 2018 study

51

17

The number of laws passed in Scotland in 2017–18

£42.5 billion

The amount of money the Scottish Government can spend in 2019–20



The Scottish Parliament today

Every five years, people in Scotland elect 129 MSPs using a voting system that aims to include politicians from lots of different parties. In the most recent election, held in 2016, the Scottish National Party (SNP) won the most seats and formed the Government. The SNP has been the largest party in the Scottish Parliament since 2007; current leader Nicola Sturgeon has served as First Minister (the equivalent of the UK's Prime Minister) since 2014. Year-long events have been organised to mark 20 years of the Scottish Parliament, including a visit and speech from the Queen on 29 June.

Nicola Sturgeon

Three things the Scottish Parliament has done

The Scottish Parliament and its MSPs have made use of their devolved powers by introducing ideas and laws that are different from the rest of the UK. These have included a special vote, easier access to education and a new climate-change target.



Independence referendum

In November 2013, the Scottish Parliament voted to hold a referendum on whether Scotland should leave the UK and become an independent country. In the 2014 referendum, people voted 55%–45% to remain in the UK.



University fees

Students from Scotland don't have to pay to go to universities in Scotland. However, students from elsewhere in the UK do pay if they choose to study in Scotland. People from the European Union can also attend Scottish universities for free.



Climate-change target

The Scottish Parliament has set a target of achieving zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045. Greenhouse gases contribute to climate change – the long-term change in the Earth's temperatures and weather. The UK Government's target is to reduce emissions by 80% by 2050.