

## The election results are in, but what do they mean for women?

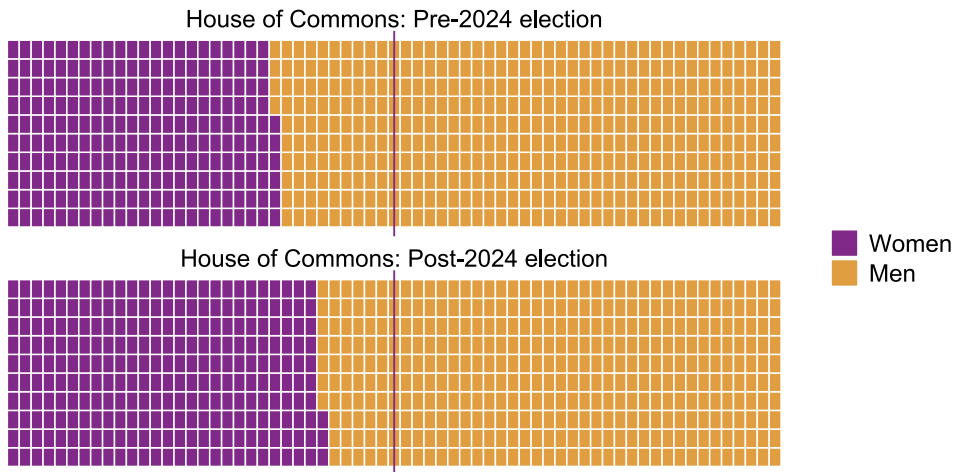
With women’s representation in the House of Commons closer to parity than ever before, politicians have the opportunity to place women’s concerns at the front and centre of public service reform.

Lizzie Ville, 10<sup>th</sup> July 2024.

### Women’s political representation: Key facts and figures

There are now **263 women MPs, making up 40.5% of the House of Commons**, as compared to 226 (35%) at the last Parliament (220 after the 2019 general election, with increases due to by-elections).<sup>1</sup> With a House of Commons that is closer to being gender-equal than ever before, the election results represent a historic moment for women’s representation.

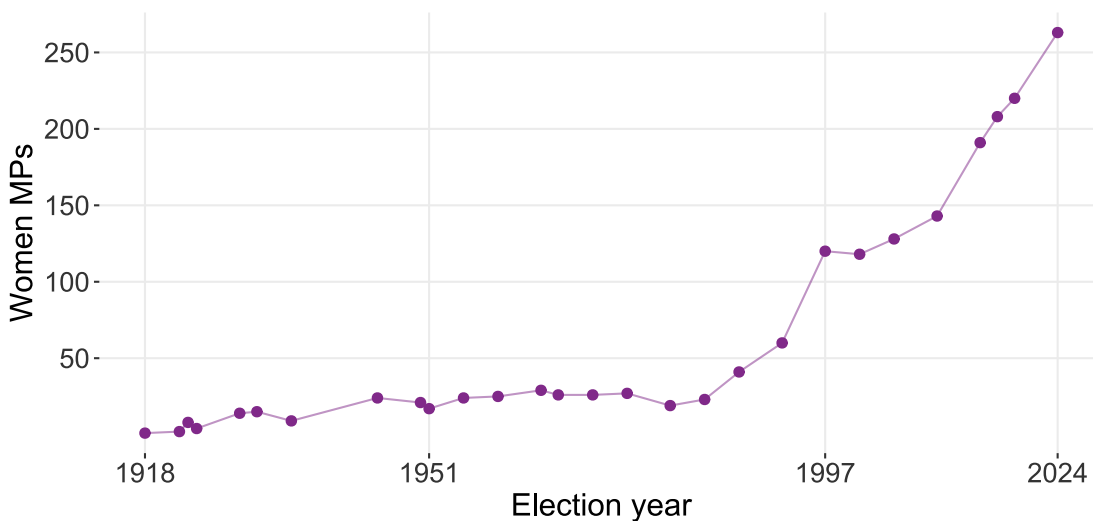
**Figure 1.** MPs in the House of Commons before and after the 2024 general election, by gender.



Each small rectangle represents 1 MP. Vertical lines indicate 50% of bar. Source: Fawcett analysis of election results from [BBC News](#) and [UK Parliament website](#).

**For the first time, there have now been more than enough women MPs in history – 693 in total – to fill the House of Commons.** As of the previous Parliament, there had been 564 women MPs elected ever, since the first woman was elected in 1918. This was not enough to fill all 650 seats in the House of Commons, and stands in contrast to the thousands of male MPs elected over history. But Thursday’s election saw **129** new women MPs, who have never been elected before.

**Figure 2.** Count of women MPs after each general election, 1918 to 2024.

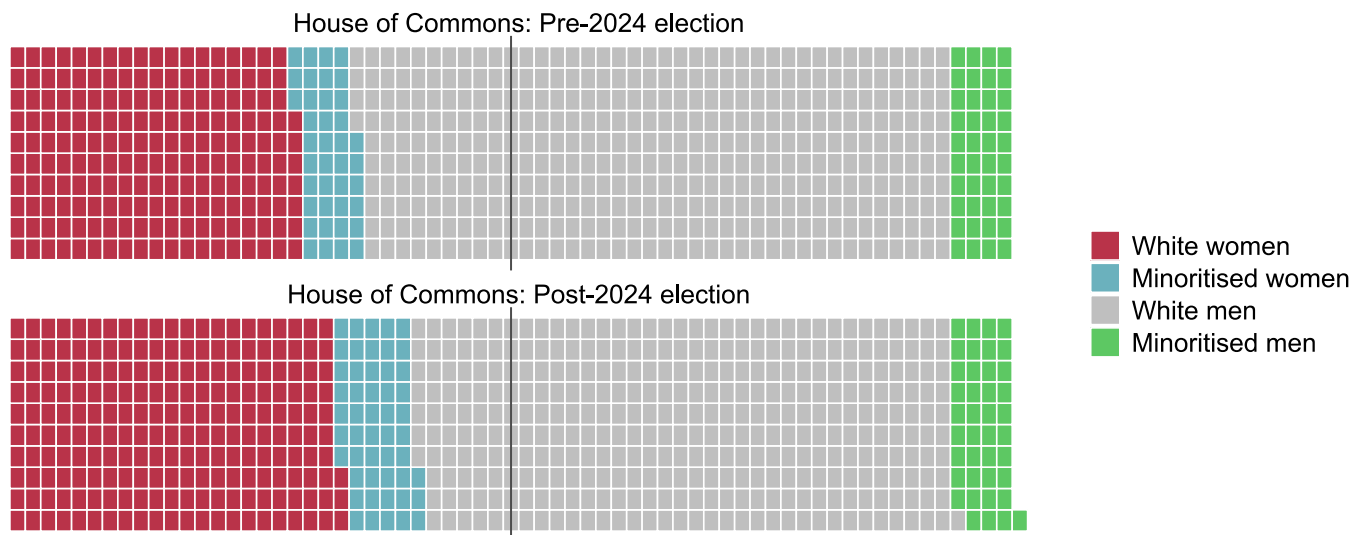


Sources: [House of Commons Library. UK Election Statistics 1918-2023](#), [UK Parliament, MPs and Lords](#) [accessed 8<sup>th</sup> July 2024].

<sup>1</sup> Fawcett analysis of [election results via BBC news](#), verified against [UK Parliament list of MPs and Lords](#).

There are now **50 Black and minoritised women MPs (7.7% of the House of Commons)**, according to data from [British Future](#). This compares to 40 Black and minoritised men in the current House of Commons, and reflects an increase from 39 Black and minoritised women MPs (6%) in the last Parliament, bringing us significantly closer to equal representation. If the House were representative of the UK population there should be 58 Black and minoritised women in Parliament.

**Figure 3.** MPs in the House of Commons before and after the 2024 general election, by gender and ethnicity.



Each small rectangle represents 1 MP. Vertical lines indicate 50% of bar. Source: [British Future](#).

**Nine out of the top 10 most common first names of MPs in the new Parliament are those of men.<sup>2</sup> However, the 2<sup>nd</sup> most common name is that of a woman – Sarah.** There are 14 women MPs called Sarah in Parliament, and 16 men called Chris (the most common first name).

**Figure 4.** Wordcloud of MPs’ first names after the 2024 general election. Names shown in larger font are more common.



Most common MP first names	
1	Chris
2	Sarah
3	Andrew
4	John
5	Alex <sup>2</sup>
6	David
7	James
8	Luke
9	Mark
10	Peter

Source: Fawcett analysis of election results from [BBC news](#).

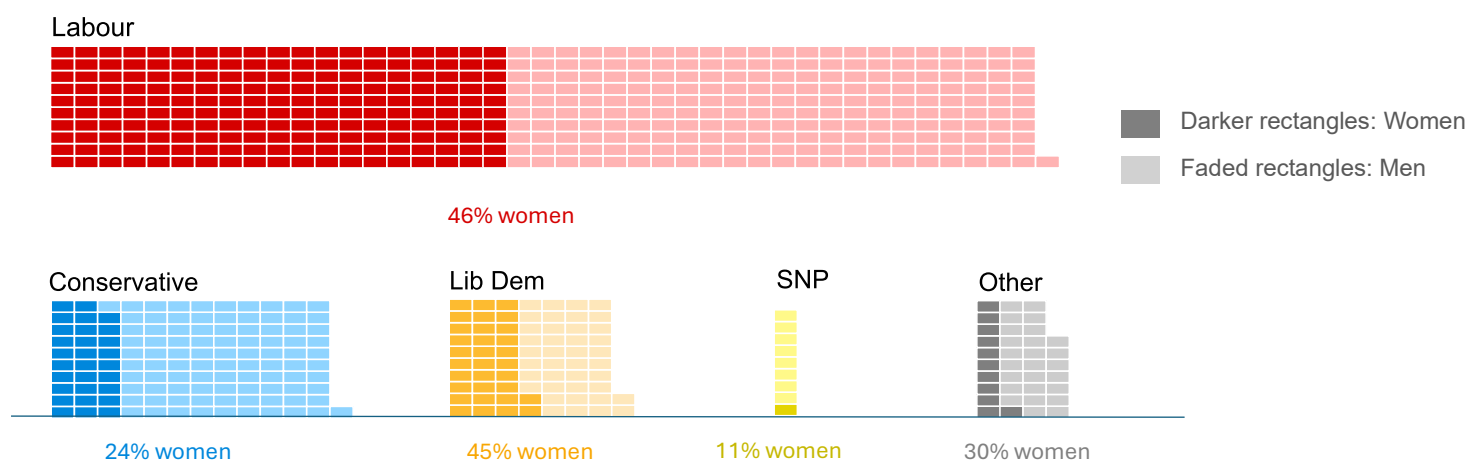
<sup>2</sup> 4 of the 11 MPs called Alex are women, whilst 7 are men.

**Representation varies significantly by party.** 46% of Labour MPs are women, followed by 45% of Liberal Democrat MPs, 24% of Conservative MPs, and 11% of SNP MPs. In comparison, at the last Parliament, 52% of Labour MPs, 67% of Liberal Democrat MPs, 25% of Conservative MPs, and 35% of SNP MPs were women.

Whilst the overall proportion of women in Parliament has increased, the proportion of women in each Parliamentary party has dipped or remained very similar to prior to the general election. This is due to the higher proportion of women among the Labour party's Parliamentary members in comparison with the Conservatives and some of the smaller parties.

Thus, in order to avoid progress stalling or reversing at future elections, it is crucial that all parties focus on women's representation, by reviewing their candidate selection processes in order to eliminate bias.

**Figure 5.** MPs in the House of Commons after the 2024 general election, by gender and party.

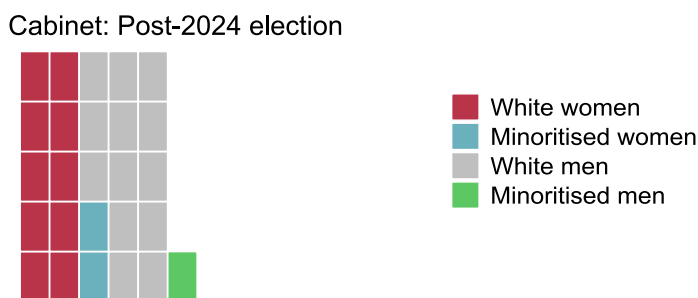


Each small rectangle represents 1 MP. Source: Fawcett analysis of election results from [BBC news](#).

**The new cabinet is the most gender-equal ever, with 12 women out of the 26 people (46%) who attend cabinet.** This compares to 10 women out of 32 (31%) attending the Conservative cabinet prior to the election.<sup>3</sup>

**However, the new cabinet only has 2 women of minoritised and mixed ethnicities (8% of the cabinet), and no Black women.**<sup>1</sup> Lisa Nandy joins the cabinet as Secretary of State for Culture, Media, and Sport, and Shabana Mahmood is Secretary of State for Justice and Lord Chancellor. The cabinet includes one Black man, David Lammy, who is Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs. This reflects little change since the pre-election cabinet, which also included 2 Black and minoritised women, but 2 men.

**Figure 6.** Gender and ethnicity of the cabinet after the 2024 general election.



Source: Fawcett analysis of Cabinet appointments from [BBC news](#) and [UK Government website](#).

<sup>3</sup> Correct as of 2pm on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> July 2024.

## What do the election results mean for women's concerns?

Whilst representation does not guarantee that women's interests are built into policy, women's presence in the House of Commons over the last 100 years has undoubtedly introduced and made lasting change on the issues that impact us most. For example:

- **Barbara Castle MP** successfully brought in the Equal Pay Act 1970 in response to the women sewing machinists who went on strike at the Ford Dagenham motor plant in 1968.<sup>4</sup>
- **Harriet Harman MP** brought forward the Equality Act 2010, which consolidated and extended anti-discrimination law to increase protections, particularly in the workplace.<sup>5</sup>
- **Maria Caulfield MP** introduced the first ever Women's Health Strategy in 2022, setting out a 10-year strategy to improve the health of women and girls.<sup>6</sup>
- **Wera Hobhouse MP** introduced the Worker Protection Bill in 2023, which ensures employer responsibility for protecting workers against harassment.<sup>7</sup>

These examples are by no means exhaustive, and we call for the new Government to expand upon these legacies to address many more issues that would dramatically improve women's lives, including:

**Affordable, high-quality childcare.** Fawcett's [10-point blueprint](#) for early childhood education and care reform would deliver a strong foundation for children at their most critical developmental stage - whilst providing parents with greater choice over their working lives. Key calls include substantial investment, a comprehensive workforce strategy, and taking steps to challenge stereotypes in the early years.

**Workplaces that work for women.** Introducing flexible work options in job adverts and redesigning parental leave would increase workplace access for many more women, especially women with disabilities. Similarly, protecting women against harassment from third parties at work, strengthening gender pay gap reporting, and increasing pay transparency would protect more women from the workplace discrimination and abuse which we know remains rife.

**Public services which are safe for women.** Public service reform must place women's needs and safety at its centre. Co-creating reform alongside Black women, whose experiences are most often not listened to, is crucial, as is conducting specific reviews into misogynoir within public institutions to understand the core issues at the intersection of racism and misogyny. Further, we must ensure that no women are sent to prison for seeking an abortion, that misogyny is made a hate crime, and that steps are taken to reduce the gender health gap.

## What can Government and parties do to ensure a fully representative Parliament by 2028?

These election results reflect historic progress, but we still do not have gender parity in Parliament. Ensuring equal representation across the political parties is crucial for sustaining balance across future Parliaments. That is, a lack of consistent female representation undermines democracy and has a real impact on the policies which affect women from all walks of life.

However, there are clear actions that parties and Government can - and must - take to address the causes of unequal representation - and ensure that by the Centenary of Equal Franchise in 2028, we are celebrating the first gender-equal Parliament:

- **Ensure women, especially disabled women and Black and minoritised women are being selected in winnable constituency seats.**
- **Review candidate selection processes** to ensure there are no structural barriers hampering the participation of underrepresented groups.
- **Introduce quotas to increase women's representation.** These must be accompanied by action plans.
- **Introduce proper parental leave policies for MPs.**
- **Commence s106 of the Equality Act 2010**, requiring political parties to collect and report candidate monitoring data.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/tradeindustry/industrycommunity/collections/equal-pay/barbara-castle/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.harrietharman.org/the-equality-act>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/womens-health-strategy-for-england/womens-health-strategy-for-england>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/news/the-worker-protection-bill-will-become-law>