

Newsletter 35 / May 2010

WOMEN AND POLITICS - NEWS

General Election 2010

TAs the results flooded in from around the country in the early hours of 7th May, the Electoral Reform Society was busy monitoring the outcome. Unfortunately, in spite of claims to want more women in parliament, the main parties have simply not delivered enough.

The number of women in the House of Commons has increased to 142. This places the percentage of women in parliament at 22%, compared to 19.5% in 2005. The number of black and ethnic minority women in the Commons has also increased to 8 MPs. Labour have 81 women MPs, Conservatives have 48, the Liberal Democrats have 7, and 6 women MPs were also elected from the smaller parties. Although the number of Conservative women MPs has increased since the last election, the number of both Labour and Liberal Democrat women MPs has fallen.



There is huge variation in the number of elected women across the UK - the North East of England has the highest proportion of women MPs at 34.5% and the East of England has the lowest, at just 15.5%.

Our democratic processes, our political debate and our government are impoverished by the lack of women's representation. What we have seen is another election dominated by white, middle-class and middle-aged men. It's embarrassing and disappointing. No matter how good these men may be, they do not add up to a parliament that reflects the society they represent.

[Read more \(ERS website\)>>](#)

[Find out more \(Guardian website\)>>](#)

Shameful lack of women in Cabinet



The new coalition government under David Cameron and Nick Clegg has failed to place more women in the cabinet. Out of 23 cabinet members, only 4 women have been appointed. These women are: Theresa May – Home Secretary and Minister for Women and Equality; Caroline Spelman – Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; Cheryl Gillan – Welsh Secretary; and Baroness Warsi – Minister without Portfolio and Conservative party chair. Baroness Warsi has also made history by becoming the first Muslim woman to serve in the cabinet. However, none of the Liberal Democrat appointments to the cabinet are women. The UK is seriously lagging behind other European countries when it comes to women's representation in politics, and especially women in the cabinet.

[Read more \(Guardian Website\) >>](#)

Reform on the cards!

Talk of electoral reform and changes to the voting system have been at the front of the news in the past few weeks. Many organisations and individuals have joined together to call for fairer votes, and the new coalition government has now promised a referendum on reform of the voting system for the House of Commons.



The Electoral Reform Society has long argued that our voting system plays a big role in holding back women in politics. International comparisons show that, in the main, proportional systems produce more diverse parliaments.

We will keep you informed about the forthcoming referendum. In the meantime, if you want to learn more about the different systems, and arm yourself with more information, the links below provide some clear and useful explanations.

[Read More \(BBC News\) >>](#)

[Find out more \(Channel 4 Website\) >>](#)

Diane Abbot enters the Labour leadership contest



Diane Abbott became the UK's first black woman MP in 1987 and has now put her name forward in the Labour leadership contest. She is the sixth person to join the race and currently the only woman to declare her candidacy. The other contenders include David Miliband, Ed Miliband, Andy Burnham, John McDonnell and Ed Balls.

[Find out more \(BBC website\) >>](#)

NEWS FROM OTHER ORGANISATIONS



Take Back Parliament

Take Back Parliament is a coalition of organisations that have been demanding fair votes and rallying for reform. If you want to become part of the movement to help change Britain's broken voting system then go to the TBP website - wear purple, upload a photo, join a rally, and sign the petition.

[Visit the Take Back Parliament Site >>](#)



Watch full video of Fawcett's pre-election debate

On 27th April the Fawcett Society held a pre-election women's debate with Harriet Harman, Lynne Featherstone and Theresa May. It was a great chance for the audience to ask important questions about how the parties' policies will impact on women. If you didn't get the chance to go along, you can now watch the full event online.

[Watch the event \(LSE website\) >>](#)

GET INVOLVED



ERS membership

reform and fair votes are being discussed frequently in the media. If you want to get more involved in the campaign for reform, why not become a member?

www.electoral-reform.org.uk



ERS Women's Programme

Help build a movement! Please forward this newsletter to any friends who might be interested in the issues of women, politics and elections.

If you would like more information about the Society's Women's Programme please contact Alice Delemare 020 7928 1622 or email: women@electoral-reform.org.uk



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