



Ethnic Minorities in Politics, Government and Public Life

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Author: John Wood & Richard Cracknell

Section Social and General Statistics Section

There are currently 27 minority ethnic MPs in the House of Commons; 4.2% of the total. The UK population is becoming increasingly diverse in terms of ethnicity. The 2011 Census showed 18% of the UK population reporting a non-white background. This compares with 8% ten years earlier. However, despite an increase of 15 minority ethnic MPs between the 2001 and 2010 general election, the diversity of MPs remains disproportionate to the population as a whole.

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Analysis of ethnic minority representation is difficult, because ethnicity is both sensitive, and difficult to define. Work such as this generally relies on self-definition. Analysis of ethnic minority representation is difficult, because ethnicity is both sensitive, and difficult to define. Work such as this generally relies on self-definition. The UK Census includes an 'Ethnicity' section, as do most staff surveys within major public services. However it is not a mandatory requirement for Members of the House of Commons or the House of Lords to disclose such information. Therefore gathering ethnicity data from Members is unlikely to completely accurate at any given time and is only an estimation based on multiple sources.

1 The population of the United Kingdom

The 2011 census shows 17.9% of the UK resident population in non-white groups and 82.1% white. It is the most reliable source for information on the make-up of the United Kingdom population.

Ethnic makeup of the United Kingdom (%)

	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland	United Kingdom
White	79.5	93.3	96.2	98.3	82.1
All ethnic minority groups	20.5	6.7	3.8	1.7	17.9

Source: 2011 census of population ONS, NISRA, GROS.

In recent years progress has been made in increasing the representation of black and minority-ethnic groups in many areas of public life. After the 2010 General Election there were 27 minority ethnic MPs, 12 more than in the previous Parliament. In total this equates to 4.2% of total MPs being of an ethnic minority. However Ethnic minority MPs are under represented when compared to the population as a whole.

2 Parliament

2.1 The House of Commons

Into the 20th Century

Struggles by religious minorities to gain representation in Parliament in the 19th Century have parallels with minority ethnic groups' efforts to increase their representation today. Daniel O'Connell was elected Member for County Clare in Ireland in 1828, but was unable to take his seat, as a Catholic. In 1829, the Catholic Emancipation Act was passed, which allowed Catholics to sit in the House of Commons.

Jews traditionally considered themselves a religious group rather than an ethnic one, and it was religion that stood in the way of them wishing to enter Parliament.¹ Lionel Rothschild was the first practising Jew to sit in the House of Commons. He was first elected in 1847 but refused to take the traditional Christian oath of allegiance. Rothschild was elected five times

¹ This is controversial, however. A [report](#) of the Institute for Jewish Policy Research recommended in 2005 that British Jews should present themselves as an ethnic minority.

but it was not until the House changed its rules and allowed him to swear on the Old Testament, as a Jew, that he finally took his seat.²

The history of non-white Members of Parliament probably begins with David Ochterlony Dyce Sombre, who was of mixed European and Indian descent. In 1841 he was elected as a Radical-Liberal to the seat of Sudbury, in Suffolk. In 1842, however, Parliament overturned the result citing 'gross, systematic, and extensive bribery' during the campaign, and he and the other Member for the Sudbury division, Frederick Villiers, lost their seats.³ It is possible that John Stewart, elected as MP for Lymington in 1832, was also from a mixed ethnic background.⁴

Dadabhai Naoroji, born near Mumbai in 1825, was a partner in the first Indian firm established in Britain. He was elected Liberal MP for Finsbury Central from 1892 to 1895. Naoroji was a critic of British rule in India and prominent pro-British Indians decided to put up their own candidate, Mancherjee Bhownagjee (later Sir Mancherjee). He was elected and represented Bethnal Green North-East from 1895 to 1905: the second Indian of unmixed parentage and the first minority ethnic Conservative to sit in Parliament. They were followed by Shapurji Saklatvala who was a Parsi born in Bombay and represented Battersea North for Labour from 1922 to 1923 and as a Communist from 1924 to 1929.⁵

After 1945

The first minority ethnic MPs since 1945 were elected in 1987: Diane Abbott (Hackney North & Stoke Newington), Paul Boateng (Brent South), Bernie Grant (Tottenham) and Keith Vaz (Leicester East). Diane Abbott was the first black woman MP. Since 1987 the number of non-white MPs has slowly risen, and non-white candidates have been elected by all three major parties.

² For more information on Jews and Parliament, see [The Greville Janner Jewish Tour of Parliament](#)

³ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004

⁴ [History of Parliament online, personal communication](#)

⁵ Biography of Shapurji Saklatvala *The Fifth Commandment* Sehri Saklatvala, Shapurji's daughter, originally published in the UK in 1991 by Miranda Press – available at <http://www.maze-in.com/saklatvala/index.htm>

Ethnicity of MPs elected at General Elections 1987 to 2010

	LAB	CON	LD	Other	Total
White					
1987	225	376	22	23	646
1992	266	335	20	24	645
1997	409	165	46	30	650
2001	400	166	52	29	647
2005	342	196	62	31	631
2010	242	295	57	29	623
Non-white					
1987	4	0	0	0	4
1992	5	1	0	0	6
1997	9	0	0	0	9
2001	12	0	0	0	12
2005	13	2	0	0	15
2010	16	11	0	0	27
Total					
1987	229	376	22	23	650
1992	271	336	20	24	651
1997	418	165	46	30	659
2001	412	166	52	29	659
2005	355	198	62	31	646
2010	258	306	57	29	650

Source: House of Commons Library Research Papers 08/12, 10/36

Until 2010, most minority ethnic MPs elected at general elections had been Labour. The Conservatives however increased their number of minority MPs from 2 to 11 in 2010; so now the Conservatives have 41% of the minority ethnic MPs. No Liberal Democrat MP has been elected at a general election, although Parmjit Singh Gill won a by-election for them in 2004 in Leicester South; he lost the seat at the subsequent general election.

At present there are reckoned to be 27⁶ non-white MPs elected to the House of Commons⁷ which is 4.2% of all 650 MPs. If the non-white population were represented proportionally in the House of Commons, there would be around 117 minority ethnic MPs.

⁶ 27 elected at 2010 General Election, plus December 2011 Feltham and Heston by election winner, Seema Malhotra, minus Marsha Singh of Bradford West who retired due to ill health.

⁷ [Operation Black Vote](#)

Minority ethnic Members of Parliament (Sept 2013)

Name		Constituency	Party
1 Abbott	Diane	Hackney North & Stoke Newington	Labour
2 Afriyie	Adam	Windsor	Conservative
3 Ali	Rushanara	Bethnal Green & Bow	Labour
4 Chishti	Rehman	Gillingham & Rainham	Conservative
5 Grant	Helen	Maidstone	Conservative
6 Gyimah	Sam	East Surrey	Conservative
7 Hendrick	Mark	Preston	Labour
8 Javid	Sajid	Bromsgrove	Conservative
9 Khan	Sadiq	Tooting	Labour
10 Kwarteng	Kwasi	Spelthorne	Conservative
11 Lammy	David	Tottenham	Labour
12 Mahmood	Khalid	Birmingham, Perry Barr	Labour
13 Mahmood	Shabana	Birmingham Ladywood	Labour
14 Malhotra	Seema	Feltham & Heston	Labour
15 Nandy	Lisa	Wigan	Labour
16 Onwurah	Chi	Newcastle Central	Labour
17 Patel	Pritti	Witham	Conservative
18 Qureshi	Yasmin	Bolton	Labour
19 Sarwar	Anas	Glasgow Central	Labour
20 Sharma	Alok	Reading West	Conservative
21 Sharma	Virenda	Ealing Southall	Labour
22 Ummuna	Chuka	Streatham	Labour
23 Uppal	Paul	Wolverhampton SW	Conservative
24 Vara	Shailesh	North West Cambridgeshire	Conservative
25 Vaz	Keith	Leicester East	Labour
26 Vaz	Valerie	Walsall	Labour
27 Zahawi	Nadhim	Stratford upon Avon	Conservative

2.2 Ethnic minority women in Parliament

Women from ethnic minorities have been particularly under-represented at Westminster. Prior to 2010, there had only ever been two black female Members and no Asian woman had ever been elected. The 2010 General Election saw the first Asian women MPs. The total number of minority ethnic female MPs increased by seven in 2010, and following the December 2011 by-election in Feltham and Heston the number of minority ethnic female MPs currently stands at 10⁸.

2.3 The House of Lords

Information for the House of Lords is more difficult to collate, and no definitive list of ethnic origins exists. In July 2000, The Earl of Listowel asked Her Majesty's Government for a breakdown of Lords membership by ethnicity. Baroness Jay replied as follows:

This information is not collected at present. In order to collect personal information such as this, the Information Office of the House of Lords would need the authority of a domestic sub-committee or the Offices Committee itself. It is for these committees whether they wish to consider the matter.⁹

⁸ 2 Conservative and 8 Labour.

⁹ House of Lords Hansard, 26.07.00, 616 c67WA

The first Indian peer and probably the first non-white peer, was Sir Satyendra Sinha, created Baron Sinha of Raipur, an hereditary peerage, in 1919.¹⁰ The first peer of African descent is widely reported to have been the Trinidadian cricketer and lawyer Learie Constantine, created Baron Constantine of Maraval and Nelson in 1969.

Based on information from various unofficial sources, including [Operation Black Vote](#), there are currently 44 minority ethnic members of the House of Lords, 5.4% of the total membership of 801 peers.¹¹

Ethnic minority Members of the House of Lords by gender and party/group

01 October 2013

	Female	Male	All
Conservative	3	3	6
Labour	3	8	11
Liberal Democrat	4	4	8
Independent	1	5	6
Crossbench	4	8	12
Bishops		1	1
All	15	29	44

The individuals included in this analysis are shown overleaf:

¹⁰ *Columbia Encyclopedia*, 6th edition, Columbia University Press, 2008

¹¹ Total includes peers on leave of absence, disqualified as senior members of the judiciary or as an MEP.

Ethnic minority Members of the House of Lords, October 2013

Peer	Party
1 Lord Adebowl	Crossbench
2 Baroness Afshar	Crossbench
3 Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon	Conservative
4 Lord Ahmed	Independent
5 Lord Alli	Labour
6 Baroness Benjamin	Lib Dem
7 Lord Bhatia	Independent
8 Lord Bhattacharyya	Labour
9 Lord Bilimoria	Crossbench
10 Lord Darzi of Denham	Labour
11 Lord Desai	Labour
12 Lord Dholakia	Lib Dem
13 Baroness Falkner of Margrave	Lib Dem
14 Baroness Flather	Crossbench
15 Lord Hameed	Crossbench
16 Lord Hastings of Scarisbrick	Crossbench
17 Baroness Howells of St Davids	Labour
18 Baroness Hussein-Ece	Lib Dem
19 Lord Hussain	Lib Dem
20 Baroness Lawrence of Clarendon	Labour
21 Lord Loomba	Lib Dem
22 Baroness Manzoor	Lib Dem
23 Lord Kakkar	Crossbench
24 Lord Morris of Handsworth	Labour
25 Lord Ouseley	Crossbench
26 Lord Parekh	Labour
27 Lord Patel	Crossbench
28 Lord Patel of Blackburn	Labour
29 Lord Patel of Bradford	Labour
30 Lord Paul	Independent
31 Lord Popat	Conservative
32 Baroness Prashar	Crossbench
33 Lord Rana	Crossbench
34 Baroness Scotland of Asthal	Labour
35 Lord Sheikh	Conservative
36 Lord Singh	Independent
37 Lord Taylor of Warwick	Independent
38 Baroness Uddin	Independent
39 Lord Verjee	Lib Dem
40 Baroness Verma	Conservative
41 Baroness Warsi	Conservative
42 Lord Wei	Conservative
43 York, Archbishop (John Sentamu)	Bishops
44 Baroness Young of Hornsey	Crossbench

2.4 International comparisons

In 2012, 1.5% of members of the French National Assembly were from an ethnic minority, compared with an estimated 12.6% of the general population¹². The latest figures for Germany in 2007 were 1.3% of members of the lower house representing 4.8% of the general population, and for the Netherlands 8% and 10.9%.¹³

In the 112th US Congress (2011-2012) of 435 members of the House of Representatives, 82 (6%) were minority ethnic as were 4 (4%) of the 100 Senate members.¹⁴ The 2010 US Census found for people reporting one race alone, 75 percent was white (3 percent reported more than one race).¹⁵

3 The Government and Cabinet

The first minority ethnic minister was probably Baron Sinha, who, after being the first Indian to serve in the Indian government and the first Indian to take silk and become a QC, was made Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for India in the House of Lords in 1919. The first black government minister was Paul Boateng, who went on to be the first black Cabinet Minister when he was appointed Chief Secretary to the Treasury in 2002. In 2010 he was appointed to the House of Lords.

There are presently three Ministers in the Cabinet from ethnic minorities; Shailesh Vara, Sajid Javid and Baroness Verma.

4 Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly

Two of the Scottish Parliament's 129 members (1.6%) elected in 2011 are minority ethnic, Humza Yousaf (SNP) and Hanzala Malik (Labour), both of whom were elected from the Regional List for Glasgow.

The number of minority ethnic Members of the National Assembly for Wales went from one to two following the 2011 elections. Vaughan Gething (Labour) joined Mohammad Asghar (Conservative) who had previously been elected for Plaid Cymru in 2007. Together they are 3.3% of the Assembly's 60 AMs.

5 Local Councils and the London Assembly

The 2010 census of local councillors in England showed that 4% came from an ethnic minority background and 96% were white.¹⁶ The highest representation for ethnic minorities was in London, with 15% of councillors being non-white. In Wales it was reported in 2004 that 99.2% of councillors were white and 0.8% had an ethnic minority background.¹⁷ For

¹² ['Record number of women and minorities in new French Parliament'](#), France 24, June 2012

¹³ 'Must the rainbow turn monochrome in parliament?', *Economist*, 25 October 2007

¹⁴ Congressional Research Service *Membership of the 112th Congress: A Profile* (21 June 2011)

¹⁵ <http://factfinder2.census.gov>

¹⁶ [National Census of Local Authority Councillors 2010](#) Local Government Association

¹⁷ [National Census of Local Authority Councillors 2004](#), Welsh Local Government Association

Scotland the percentage of non-white councillors was similar to that of its population at 3.4%¹⁸.

Just over 30% of councillors in England are women, but minority ethnic women are particularly under-represented. The 2010 census of councillors found around 2% of women councillors were non-white, this is around half the 4% rate for men.

Of the 25 members of the Greater London Assembly, there are five ethnic minority members (Jennette Arnold, James Cleverly, Murad Qureshi and Navin Shah, Onkar Sahota).

6 Civil Service

9.6% of civil servants in GB are from an ethnic minority¹⁹, but this proportion is strongly related to grade – for the senior civil service the proportion is 5.0%.²⁰

7 Other public sector organisations

7.1 Police

There were 6,537 FTE minority ethnic officers in the 43 English and Welsh police forces as at March 2013, 5.0% of total strength. The forces with the highest representation are the Metropolitan Police, with 10.5% minority ethnic officers, the West Midlands (8.3%), British Transport Police (7.5) and Leicestershire (7.1%).²¹

Despite the improvement in their overall representation in the ranks of the police, minority ethnic officers remain under-represented in the highest ranks, with only 3.3% of officers at Chief Inspector or above being from an ethnic minority, compared with 5.2% of Constables, the lowest rank.

7.2 Judicial Statistics

The 2013 figures from the Judiciary of England and Wales show that 4.8% of the total judicial workforce are of ethnic minority backgrounds; however the figures differ between grades. The most ethnic diverse grade at 7.6% of the workforce is Deputy District Judges for Magistrate Courts. Some less diverse judicial workforces such as Masters, Registrars and District judges have a 0% BME population²².

7.3 Teachers

In November 2012, only 6.6% of all teachers in publically funded schools in England were from non-white ethnic groups, up from 6.2% in 2010²³. The equivalent figure for headteachers is 6.6 %, up from 2.3% in 2010.²⁴

7.4 Armed forces

7.1% of the total service men and women in the regular forces are from ethnic minority backgrounds. However, only 2.4% of the officer ranks come from ethnic minorities, compared to 8.1% of other ranks.²⁵

¹⁸ [Improvement Service, Scotland's Councillors 2013](#)

¹⁹ For employees with a known ethnicity

²⁰ [Civil Service statistics 2013](#)

²¹ Home Office Statistical Bulletin 3/13, [Police Service Strength England and Wales](#), July 2013

²² [Diversity Statistics: Judiciary of England and Wales](#), October 2013

²³ DfE [School Workforce in England Nov 2010 \(Provisional\)](#)

²⁴ [DfE School Workforce In England Nov 2013](#)

7.5 National Health Service

The latest figures from the NHS staff census show that 41% of hospital and community service doctors are from ethnic minorities, although the proportion falls to 31% for the highest staff grade of consultant. Likewise 20% of all qualified nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff are from ethnic minorities, but only 6% of nurse consultants and 7% of matrons are from ethnic minorities.²⁶

7.6 National Fire and Rescue Service

Operational figures from the fire and rescue authorities in England show that in 2012, the proportion of ethnic minority staff was 3.8%; up from 3.2% in 2007. The total number of uniformed staff from ethnic minority backgrounds had increased from 1,200 in 2007, to 1,400 in 2012²⁷.

7.7 Ministerial Appointments

Statistics by the Commissioner for Public Appointments show that in 2012/13 5.5% of appointments were given to those from ethnic minority background. This figure has decreased from the previous year of 2011/12 where 7.2% of appointments were given to people from an ethnic minority²⁸.

²⁵ Figures relate to [UK Armed Forces Annual Personnel Report](#), May 2013

²⁶ NHS Information Centre workforce statistics as at September 2010: <http://www.ic.nhs.uk/statistics-and-data-collections/workforce/nhs-staff-numbers>

²⁷ [Operational Statistics for Fire and Rescue Services in England, 2012](#)

²⁸ [Commissioner for Public Appointments: Annual survey of ministerial Appointments and Reappointments](#)