

Characteristics of the new House of Commons

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High turnover has contributed to a House of Commons that is more representative of the population than ever before

Following the 2010 general election, 227 new MPs have taken their places in the House of Commons. They amount to 35% of total membership. The new intake has resulted in changes to the characteristics of MPs as a group.

GENDER AND ETHNICITY

142 women MPs were elected, the highest number ever and 14 more than in 2005. 48 of these women are Conservative, up from 17 in the 2005 election. Labour still accounts for a majority of female MPs, as it has at each general election since 1987.

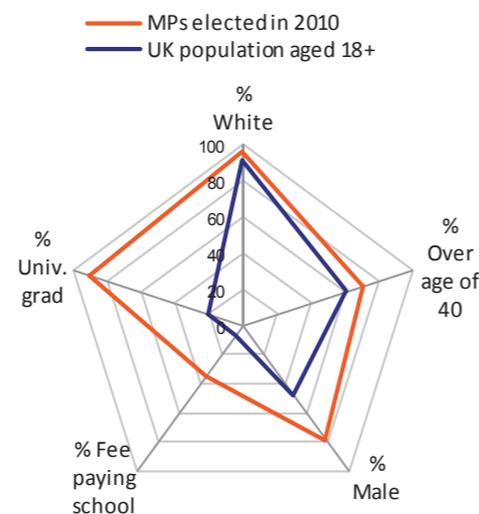
Women MPs make up 22% of the House. That proportion is higher than of judges or directors of FTSE 100 companies, but lower than of senior civil servants or Members of the Scottish Parliament and National Assembly for Wales.

The number of ethnic minority MPs has increased by nearly three-quarters to 26, or 4% of the total number of MPs. The first three Muslim female MPs have been elected, all of them Labour candidates: Shabana Mahmood, in Birmingham Ladywood; Rushanara Ali, in Bethnal Green and Bow; and Yasmin Qureshi in Bolton South-East. All ethnic minority MPs are either Labour (15) or Conservative (11).

AGE AND EXPERIENCE

The average age of MPs following the election has fallen slightly to 50 years old. Over the last 30 years the average age of MPs following elections has remained stable

MPs' characteristics differ from the population they serve



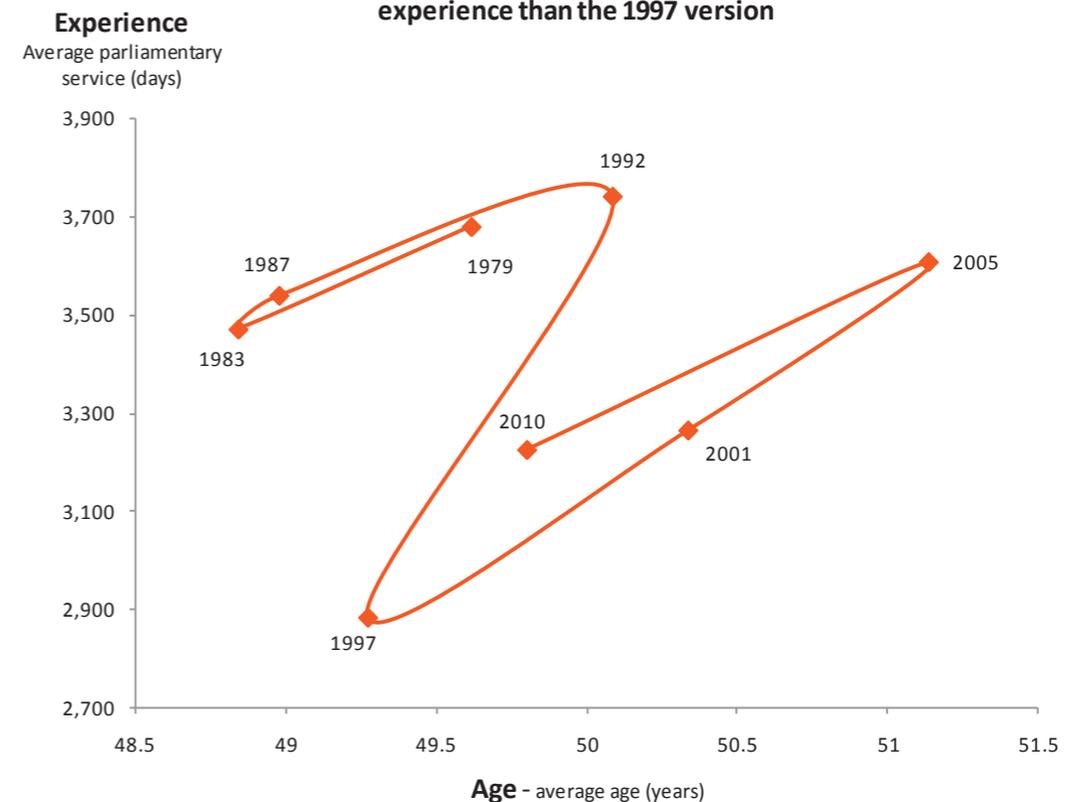
around this level, though perhaps contrary to the opinion of some long-serving Members, the new House is slightly older on average than those in 1979, 1983 and 1987.

Given the high turnover, it is unsurprising that the average parliamentary service of MPs has also fallen. The average service of MPs elected in 2010 is 3,226 days, over a year less than the average of 3,609 days following the 2005 general election. However, average service has not decreased by as much as it did following the 1997 general election.

HOW REPRESENTATIVE OF THE POPULATION ARE MPS?

Despite increases in the ethnic diversity of MPs, the number of women and a fall in the

The new House of Commons is older and has more Parliamentary experience than the 1997 version



average age, the 'population' of the House of Commons remains very different to the UK population it serves.

Some of the most marked differences between the UK population and MPs are seen in education. 90% of MPs are university graduates, compared with 20% across the adult population. Over a quarter of MPs went to Oxford or Cambridge.

More than one-third of MPs elected in 2010 attended fee paying schools (including

twenty Old Etonians), compared with less than 10% of the adult population.

The House of Commons is more reflective of the population it represents than ever before. However, it remains the case that more than 400 MPs, 62% of the total, are white men aged over 40.