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### **“UK Parliament doesn't look or sound like the rest of the country: should this change and, if so, how?”**

For the duration of its instatement, all those 807 years ago, the role of Parliament has gained more and more prominence. Admittedly, to begin with, it worked more in favour of MPs, – particularly the Lords such as landed gentry – using their power to manipulate the system: from Rotten Boroughs to patronage. However, within the last 150 years, or so, this purpose has changed from one of monarchical focus to one of social focus. Today's Parliament, in particular, is more focused on representing the UK's wider population and their interests.

Firstly, what is the disparity between society and Parliament? Ethnic minorities make up 15% of the UK population; only 10% of Parliament is made up of ethnic minorities. Disabled people make up over 18% of the population; in Parliament they make up only 0.8%. Women make up roughly 50% of the population; only 34% of Parliament. Parliament is adamant that their purpose is “to represent our interests and make sure they are taken into account by the Government.” Yet the word ‘our’ feels out of place when it is clear the majority of Parliament is white, male, and privately educated – with 52% of MPs being privately educated and only 7% of the population having a private education. If Parliament want to live up to its [manifesto](#) this must change. The question is how?

A good answer comes from our friends on the other side of the globe: [New Zealand](#). Women make up roughly half of New Zealand's population; 48% of their Parliament is female. 16.5% of the population is an ethnic minority and 20% of Parliament is non-White. The answer lies in (voluntary) [political party quotas](#). These quotas are an idea of the makeup of the population which is considered when instating electorate MPs; these quotas began in 2015 when the Green Party embraced a 50/50 quota promising “half of Green Party Cabinet Ministers [will be] women.” These quotas are a way of ensuring that Parliament will reflect the people they ‘represent’.

Admittedly, a quota system has been tried in the UK ([Cameron's all-women shortlist](#)) and received backlash, but why is this? One element that must be considered is the who. Who is voting for these electorate MPs? The answer lies in the local constituencies; these are the people voting for these privately-educated white men. To reverse this we, first, need to ask: why are they voting for people who don't represent them? We also need to ask: how can we change this? The issue with the quota system is that it can't confirm the best candidates are being chosen; these quotas also – whilst they may guarantee diversity – don't confirm ideological diversity. A constituency can vote for a black Tory, (cough cough Kwasi Kwarteng) but when he is Eton-educated and a Cambridge alum, it is likely he holds the similar beliefs to this white majority, except he's black. We must also ask: what percentage of applications for electorate MPs are from minority citizens? If the numbers are low, then it must be found out why this is the case. A quota is great, but if the numbers of women in STEM (for example) are low then we need to find out why this is the case and reverse it at the source – schools.

UK Parliament is undeniably leaps and bounds closer to a true representation of its citizens than many other nations. Parliament has [come a long way since 1215](#), going from representing the interests of wealthy barons to this idea of ‘us’. However, there is still much work to be done to have a government that truly “represent[s] our interests.”