

This study day will explore the political participation of under-represented groups as **electors** and the **elected** within traditional political institutions in Britain. The focus will be on barriers to participation and especially the mechanisms employed by different actors to increase the participation and agency of those groups of people who tend to have (1) **lower electoral turnout rates** and (2) **lower rates of being elected**.

Numerous demographic categories, identity groups and communities are said to be under-represented in British electoral politics as voters and candidates. These include: young people, women, people from ethnic minorities and religious minorities, working class people, people from disadvantaged backgrounds, state-school educated people, LGBTQ people, single parents and disabled people.

The year 2019 marks just over a century since women aged 30 and over (owning property) were enfranchised for general elections, prior to all women obtaining the right to vote in 1928. It is also the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of when the minimum voting age was lowered from 21 to 18 for general elections, while the minimum candidacy age for MPs was lowered to 18 in 2007. Thus, various laws have been enacted that have opened out voting and candidacy to a greater proportion of the population. At the same time, various networks, pressure groups, advocacy groups and social movements have tried to make the House of Commons more representative of the population as a whole.

Statistics from official data and surveys show that specific groups have lower turnout rates in elections. These include 18 to 24-year-olds, people from lower social status groups, black and minority ethnic groups and people with lower levels of educational attainment. **What has been done and by whom to encourage under-represented groups to vote and what else could or should be done?**

The 2017 General Election brought to power the most diverse House of Commons ever. Media attention focuses on specific cases such as Preet Gill (Labour) who was the first ever female Sikh MP to be elected, Marsha de Cordova (Labour) who is registered blind, the former minister Justine Greening (Conservative) who openly defines herself as gay, as does Mhairi Black (SNP) who was re-elected an MP in 2017 age 22. Among the 650 MPs elected in the 2017 General Election, the average age is 51 years, 51% (328) attended a comprehensive school (Sutton Trust, 2017), 32% (208) are women, 15% (45) are openly gay, 12.5% (52) are from ethnic minorities and 4.5% (15) are Muslim. **What has been done and by whom to make the House of Commons more representative and what else could or should be done?**

Why have the political participation rates of electors and the elected evolved? What has been done to achieve change? Who is involved in bringing about higher turnout rates among under-represented groups? When did MPs and other elected representative become more diverse? How could participation and representation be improved? Which individuals, networks, lobbies, social movements and political bodies are acting to improve participation, representation and diversity? These are just some of the questions this study day aims to answer.

**If you have any questions, or would like to submit a proposal, please send an email to the addresses below.**

**Proposals should be around 250 words.**

**Please include the title of the paper proposal you are submitting and a short biography.**

**Deadline for proposals: 8 February 2019. Notifications by 28 February 2019.**