

# Record number of women in Parliament

(New Zealand Parliament, 2018b)

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**Published date:** 8 Mar 2018

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It's International Women's Day and New Zealand has a record number of women MPs in Parliament.

The 2017 general election saw 46 women elected to New Zealand's 52<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 125 years after New Zealand women won the right to vote.



*Governor-General Dame Patsy Reddy with students from St Matthew's Collegiate at the launch of Suffrage 125 yesterday.*

*Source: Government House*

We now have 120 members of Parliament, and 38% are women - the highest number New Zealand has ever had since women were first allowed to stand for Parliament in 1919. The previous record was in 2008, when 41 women were elected to the 49th Parliament.

At 75%, the Green Party has the highest percentage of women among its caucus. The Labour Party has the highest number of women in its caucus (21 out of 46).

Women also hold a number of significant positions in New Zealand Parliament including Governor-General Dame Patsy Reddy, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, Deputy Speaker Anne Tolley and Assistant Speaker Poto Williams.

Things have changed since women first claimed the right to stand for Parliament in 1919.

### **Elizabeth McCombs – New Zealand’s first woman MP**

When New Zealand’s first woman MP, Elizabeth McCombs, gave her maiden speech after she was elected in 1933, she raised the issue of women being left out of unemployment figures.

“The official figures—the latest I have, at any rate—for unemployment register eighty thousand unemployed. These figures do not include women. If we include women and youths we find that the number is practically double. If we take those and all their dependants, we will find that they constitute a very large proportion of the people of this country; but add to those the number of people who are in employment but who are working only half time or part time, and earning no more than relief rates of pay, and we will find that they total practically as many as the total registered unemployed. If we take those and add them to the number of unemployed with all their dependants, we will find that we have a quarter of the population of this country in such a position that they are unable to provide themselves and their dependants with a sufficiency of even the bare necessities of life.”

### **Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians**

Now, New Zealand is an active member of Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP), which works towards better representation of women in Parliament

- Last year New Zealand’s role included hosting a mentoring programme for women Parliamentarians from Fiji, Niue and Tonga
- Women MPs from the Cook Islands and New Zealand met with women aspiring to be candidates for the next general election in the Cook Islands to discuss issues and encourage more women to stand in future elections.
- A women in leadership breakfast took place in Tonga with visiting MPs from New Zealand including former CWP Vice-Chairperson and Pacific Chairperson Poto Williams MP.
- The CWP New Zealand Branch worked together on the Marriage (Court Consent to Marriage of

Amendment Bill and submitted to the Justice and Electoral Committee on the Family and Whānau Violence Bill.

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## RELATED LINKS



### **Suffrage 125 events and celebrations**

(<http://women.govt.nz/about/new-zealand-women/history/suffrage-125/events-celebrations>)



### **Marriage (Court Consent to Marriage of Minors) Amendment Bill**

(<https://www.parliament.nz/en/get-involved/topics/all-current-topics/can-we-better-protect-teens-from-forced-marriages/>)



### **Family and Whānau Violence Legislation Bill**

(<https://www.parliament.nz/en/get-involved/topics/all-current-topics/breaking-the-pattern-of-family-violence-in-new-zealand/>)

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