



New Zealand Parliament celebrates majority women MPs

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(New Zealand Parliament, 2022d)

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89 years after the first woman MP was sworn in, New Zealand Parliament has majority women members for the first time.



New Zealand Parliament MPs on 9 November 2022. Credit: Robert Kitchin | Stuff

Soraya Peke-Mason (<https://www.parliament.nz/en/mps-and-electoralates/members-of-parliament/peke-mason-soraya/>) was sworn into Parliament on Tuesday, 25 October, giving women 61 seats in the House of Representatives. She is Aotearoa New Zealand's 177th woman MP.

On Wednesday, 9 November the **Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians New Zealand Group** (www.parliament.nz/en/pb/parliamentary-relations/inter-parliamentary-organisations/commonwealth-women-parliamentarians/) celebrated the occasion with photos taken of available former Women MPs, and current MPs. Soraya Peke-

5th

Mason was presented with her camellia brooch at an evening function later that day.

In 1893 New Zealand became the first self-governing country in the world where women gained the right to vote, however women could not stand for Parliament until the passing of the Women's Parliamentary Rights Act in 1919.

- ▷ Three women stood for Parliament in 1919, and all were unsuccessful. It was not until 1933 that Elizabeth McCombs became New Zealand's first woman member of Parliament. Mabel Howard became the first woman Cabinet Minister in 1947.

Iriaka Rātana became the first Wāhine Māori MP in 1949 and in 1972 Whetū Tirikatene-Sullivan became the first Wāhine Māori Cabinet Minister. Whetū Tirikatene-Sullivan remains New Zealand's longest continuously serving woman MP, being in the role for 29 years from 1967 – 1996.

In 2020, the Women's Suffrage Room was opened at Parliament, celebrating the history of women's suffrage in New Zealand. The Women's Suffrage Room is one of our select committee rooms and can be visited on a **tour of Parliament** (<https://www.parliament.nz/en/visit-and-learn/visit/>) or when **making a submission** (<https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/sc/how-to-make-a-submission/>) to a select committee.



Available current and former women MPs on 9 November. Credit: Robert Kitchin | Stuff

Some woman firsts at Parliament:

- **1893:** Women gain the right to vote in New Zealand
- **1919:** Women can stand for Parliament – Rosetta Baune, Aileen Cooke and Ellen Melville were the first women to do so
- ▷ • **1933:** Elizabeth McCombs is the first woman MP
- **1947:** Mabel Howard is the first woman Cabinet Minister
- **1949:** Iriaka Rātana is the first Wāhine Māori MP
- **1972:** Whetū Tirikatene-Sullivan is the first Wāhine Māori Cabinet Minister
- **1984:** Fran Wilde is the first woman party Whip

- **2016:** Patsy Wong is the first Asian MP
 - **1999:** Gerogina Beyer is the first transgender MP and Winnie Laban is the first Pasifika woman MP
 - **1997:** Jenny Shipley is the first woman Prime Minister
 - **2005:** Margaret Wilson is the first woman Speaker of the House
 - **2022:** Women have the majority of seats in New Zealand Parliament for the first time
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-  **[Women members of the New Zealand Parliament, 1933 onwards](#)**
 -  **[Firsts for women in Parliament](#)**
 -  **[Women in New Zealand's Democracy quiz](https://www.parliament.nz/en/visit-and-learn/parliament-quiz/)** (<https://www.parliament.nz/en/visit-and-learn/parliament-quiz/>)
 -  **[Watch: Wāhine o te Pāremata Women of Parliament: A documentary short film](https://youtu.be/yA6R58ITE14)**
(<https://youtu.be/yA6R58ITE14>)
 -  **[Watch: Celebrating Women's Suffrage: The Opening of Select Committee Room 5](https://youtu.be/JNt4CNklcwg)**
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