

Groundbreaker achievements

Taken together the achievements of our women MPs are noteworthy and as you listen and watch them speak you are transported back to a time when in the early 1970s there were far fewer women in Parliament. In the February 1974 General Election, 23 women were elected, 3.6 per cent of the House of Commons. In October 1974 and another General Election, the number of female MPs remained low at 3.6 per cent. Our Groundbreaker MPs, Baroness Helene Hayman recalls that time, as does another Baroness Margaret Beckett. These were important stories to capture particularly as their political careers in the Lords are still active today as is the case with our other Groundbreakers.

Following the July 2024 UK General Election 263 women were elected to the House of Commons making up 40 per cent of all MPs. This is the highest number of female MPs in the UK up from 220 in 2019. Many of these were new with 129 being elected for the first time. 46 per cent of the women are Labour MPs, compared to 24 per cent of Conservative MPs. This was a drop from 27 per cent in 2019.

Take a closer look at what they told us about their achievements. A small part indeed of their highly significant political careers.

Baroness Helene Hayman, Labour - From the Baby of the House to Lord Speaker of the House of Lords

Baroness Margaret Beckett, Labour - Breaking barriers to assume high offices of state and reforms.

Baroness Harriet Harman, Labour - Mother of the House. Equality for all, challenging misogyny and making Parliament more representative.

Baroness Emma Nicholson, Conservative - Breaking conventions, campaigning for Europe, fighting for international immunisation against Polio, and trying to protect Iraqi marshlands.

Baroness Gillian Shephard, Conservative - The Gang Labourers Act and fighting against modern day slavery.

Baroness Anne Jenkin, Conservative - Getting more Conservative women into Parliament and setting up W2W.

Baroness Virginia Bottomley, Conservative - Being a woman in the Cabinet and steering through health service reforms in the face of opposition.

Baroness Hilary Armstrong, Labour - Fighting for social justice and the excluded in society and reforms to tuition fees

Anne Campbell, Labour - The first MP to have a website and set up Scientists for Labour. Using technology to help with social issues and benefit mothers

Baroness Estelle Morris, Labour - Winning a marginal seat and helping some of the students she taught get a start in life

Baroness Margaret Hodge, Labour - Fighting the BNP and introducing with others Sure Start and Flexible working.

Dame Caroline Spelman, Conservative - Using her role as Agricultural Minister to put on the international agenda sustainable development goals

Baroness Susan Kramer, Liberal Democrat - Improving transport in London, supporting electric vehicles and working with others on new gay marriage laws.