



## WE Party Conference

Kettering 7 – 9 September 2018

**Title:** The case for widening participation in elections

**Proposed by:** WE Milton Keynes

**Proposer of the motion:** Jane Whild

**Type of motion:** Policy Motion

**Motion text:**

1 The Women's Equality Party's second Conference notes that for the 2017 UK General Election, the  
2 reported 69% high voter turnout belies the fact that, still, 14.5 million of registered voters did not  
3 vote. On top of that, another 3.7 million of the adult population were not registered to vote and  
4 around 1.5 million of 16 to 17-year-olds were not eligible to vote.

5 The Women's Equality Party's Equal Representation policy calls for: i) diverse peoples to be better  
6 represented and ii) people with disabilities to be enabled to participate fully in our democracy.

7 The Women's Equality Party Milton Keynes branch move to amend the Women's Equality Party  
8 Policy Document, page 31, to add the paragraph at the bottom of this section between items:

9 'Efforts also need to be made to increase the diversity of the women and men elected to  
10 better represent the racial and ethnic diversity of the UK and to ensure people with disabilities  
11 participate fully in our democracy.

12 Politics itself also needs to change to enable a wider group of people to participate: WE call  
13 for changes to the working practices of Parliament, the devolved assemblies and local  
14 councils – starting with family-friendly working hours, electronic voting and formal parental  
15 leave.'

15 and

16 'Women on Boards':

17 'Finally, efforts are also needed to widen the participation of the population in elections: WE will  
18 campaign for change to the electoral system to facilitate maximum participation, including:  
19 automatic registration to vote, votes for 16 to 17-year olds and ensuring there are no barriers to  
20 voting for vulnerable people and people with a disability by supporting the recommendations from  
21 the Electoral Commission's Report 'Elections for Everyone.'

## Motion rationale:

22 This motion complements page 17 of the 2016 resolution<sup>1</sup>, 'The case for proportional  
23 representation' and is consistent with the WE Policy Objective for Equal Representation (pages 30  
24 – 31)<sup>2</sup>.

24 Election statistics show that despite the highest voter turnout since 1997 in the 2017 UK general  
25 election<sup>3</sup>, 15 million (31%) of registered electors did not vote. If we add and estimated 1.5 million for  
26 16 & 17-year olds who could not vote, this makes it 16 million people who were not represented in  
27 the electoral process. This number would likely be higher if the government's published statistics  
28 included the proportion of people who were eligible to register, but who did not do so.

29 According to the 'Votes at 16' campaign, 1.5 million 16 & 17-year olds are denied the right to vote<sup>4</sup>.

30 In November 2017, The Electoral Commission published a report entitled 'Elections for Everyone'<sup>5</sup>  
31 which sets out concrete recommendations for what should be done to help make elections more  
32 accessible for everyone. These include for example, making it easier for disabled people to register  
33 to vote, and for party election manifestos to be published in accessible formats at the same time.  
34 This report answers the Women's Equality Party's call for facilitating the participation of disabled  
35 people and should therefore endorse the recommendations while also calling for government to  
36 provide funding for their implementation.

37 Moreover, WE MK contend that:

- 38 ● The introduction of one or more of the electoral reforms / innovation proposed above are likely  
39 to result in increased participation from the 15 million registered electors who do not vote in  
40 2017 and / or from the 1.5 million 16 & 17-year olds who are currently denied the vote.
- 41 ● With such increased elector participation, the chances of success in persuading new voters,  
42 who did not vote in the previous election, to cast their vote for Women's Equality Party in the  
43 next election are likely to be higher than persuading electors who voted in the last election to  
44 shift from voting for the mainstream parties to vote for the Women's Equality Party.

45 Therefore, WE MK commend this policy amendment to Conference to increase our chance of  
46 winning more votes.

## References:

1. [http://www.womensequality.org.uk/conference\\_resolutions\\_2016](http://www.womensequality.org.uk/conference_resolutions_2016)
2. [https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/womensequality/pages/279/attachments/original/1487934933/WE\\_Policy\\_document\\_2017.pdf?1487934933](https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/womensequality/pages/279/attachments/original/1487934933/WE_Policy_document_2017.pdf?1487934933)
3. [https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/238044/The-administration-of-the-June-2017-UK-general-election.pdf](https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/238044/The-administration-of-the-June-2017-UK-general-election.pdf)
4. <http://www.votesat16.org/>
5. [https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/237194/Accessibility-report-call-for-evidence.pdf](https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/237194/Accessibility-report-call-for-evidence.pdf)