

Ethnic Minority Vote Stronger Than Ever But Massively Undervalued By Main Parties

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(PhysOrg.com) -- New research just published by Professor Muhammad Anwar, from The University of Warwick's Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations, shows that ethnic minority votes will be more important than ever in the forthcoming general election but ethnic minority voters are still massively undervalued and under-represented.

In his new book, *Ethnic Minorities and Politics* Professor Anwar notes that ethnic minorities voter registration is approaching levels of white voters and turnout is now higher than the national average. In the last general election the national average turnout was 61.4% yet for Bangladeshi voters it was 76% , Pakistanis 70% and Indians 67%. Black Africans matched the national average at 61% and only Black Caribbean voters were lower at 54%.

Professor Anwar says:

“Our research shows that the higher levels of turn-out among Asians and particularly Muslim groups are likely to continue in future. Since, in recent years, Muslims in Britain and elsewhere have become a focus of attention for politicians and the media, Muslims themselves have become more conscious of their rights and responsibilities as British citizens, including participation in the electoral process.”

He also notes that although nationally ethnic minorities are 10% of the population, there are actually 25 parliamentary constituencies where over 40% of the population were categorised as being from an ethnic

minority in the 2001 census. These include: East Harrow 66.3%, Birmingham Ladywood 64.9%, Birmingham Sparkbrook and Small Heath 64.8%, and Brent South 64.6% - full table in notes for editors below .

Professor Anwar is concerned however that while ethnic minorities are 10% of the UK population, the total number of ethnic minority origin MPs does not reflect that. To do so there should be over 60 MPs of ethnic minority origin when there are only 15. The ethnic minority representation in the House of Lords is over 30 although to reflect the [ethnic minority](#) population it should be over 70. Professor Anwar believes that this balance is unlikely to shift - particularly for Muslim minorities. He does note that at least Labour has selected three Muslim women for safe seats at the next general election but that the other parties have not selected Muslims for safe seats.

Professor Anwar argues that the shift in Muslim support from Labour to the Liberal Democrats caused by the Iraq war remains an important factor. He notes that many members and councillors defected from Labour to the Liberals between 2003 and 2007 and as a result many ex-Labour councillors represent the Liberal Democrats in places like Birmingham. Professor Anwar says his research indicates that that pattern is likely to continue into the next general election. It is clear however that the Labour Party are working hard to try and reverse this.

Finally Professor Anwar stresses:

“The effective representation of ethnic minorities in politics is crucial to the achievement of equality of opportunity across our society. There has been some progress but Britain has a long way to go in providing equality for ethnic minorities in the decision making process.”

More information: Details on book: The book is entitled Ethnic

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