



PRESS RELEASE – For immediate release: Tuesday 27 April 2010

1 million Commonwealth nationals could swing UK election

New figures published today by The Royal Commonwealth Society suggest that over 1 million Commonwealth citizens living in the UK could vote in next week's General Election.

Potentially representing more than 2 per cent of the UK electorate (roughly 45 million) and sometimes clustered in key marginal seats, these Commonwealth nationals could swing the election.

All adult citizens of Commonwealth countries who are resident in the UK (even if they are not British citizens) are eligible to vote in UK Parliamentary General Elections. By contrast, most citizens of the European Union (except those from Cyprus and Malta) are unable to vote in UK national elections.

The RCS estimates are based on data from the Labour Force Survey for the last quarter of 2009. The figure covers nationals of Commonwealth countries, of voting age, living in the UK. It does not include British citizens of Commonwealth origin.

The biggest groups of Commonwealth nationals resident in the UK come from India, Pakistan and South Africa. More than half a million citizens from these three countries alone are eligible to vote in the UK. These communities are concentrated largely in West London, with sizeable clusters in Leicester, Bradford and Birmingham. Key marginal seats, such as Hampstead and Kilburn or Ealing Central and Acton, could be decided by their votes. See table below for details.

This eligibility is based on long-standing ties between the UK and Commonwealth members. British citizens enjoy similar reciprocal rights in countries such as Jamaica, Malawi, New Zealand, and Trinidad & Tobago.

Dr Danny Sriskandarajah, Director of The Royal Commonwealth Society said:

"People often muse that the Commonwealth is no longer relevant to the UK but our research shows that it is very much alive - and voting.

Immigrants won't just be under the election microscope, they'll be wielding it too. A good million of them will be scrutinizing what British politicians can offer them ahead of next week's election.

While these voter rights represent the deep and important ties between Britain and the Commonwealth, they will almost certainly be included in any review of electoral reform by a new UK government."

Notes to Editors

	Nationality	Adults living in UK, Q4 2009	Likely geographical clusters
1.	India	270,000	Leicester, London (Ealing Southall; Felton & Heston; Brentford & Isleworth)
2.	Pakistan	139,000	Bradford West and North, Birmingham Sparkbrook & Small Heath
3.	South Africa	103,000	London (Wimbledon, Putney)
4.	Nigeria	90,000	London (Camberwell & Peckham, Bermondsey & Old Southwark, Hackney South & Shoreditch)
5.	Australia	66,000	London (Cities of London & Westminster, Hammersmith, Kensington)
6.	Jamaica	55,000	London (Tottenham, Hackney South & Shoreditch, Brent Central)
7.	Bangladesh	51,000	London (Poplar & Limehouse, Bethnal Green & Bow)
8.	Canada	51,000	London (Cities of London & Westminster, Chelsea & Fulham, Kensington)
9.	Ghana	50,000	London (Tottenham, Hackney South & Shoreditch, Vauxhall)
10.	New Zealand	49,000	London (Ealing Central & Acton, Hammersmith, Hampstead & Kilburn)
11.	Malaysia	33,000	London (Cities of London & Westminster, Kensington)
12.	Cyprus	29,000	London (Enfield Southgate, Enfield North)
13.	Kenya	15,000	London (Harrow West, Brent North) Leicester East
14.	Trinidad and Tobago	13,000	London (Tottenham, Hackney South & Shoreditch, Brent Central)
15.	Uganda	12,000	Leicester East, London (Harrow West)
16.	Mauritius	10,000	
17.	Zambia	8,000	Leicester East, London (Harrow West)
18.	Malta	7,000	
19.	Fiji	5,000	
20.	Gambia	5,000	
	Top 10 nationalities total		924,000
	Top 20 nationalities total		1,063,000
	All Commonwealth nationalities total		1,109,000

Data sources: The numerical estimates were generated by Landman Economics (www.landman-economics.co.uk) for the RCS from the quarterly Labour Force Survey (LFS). The LFS is a comprehensive survey of households conducted to collect information on the labour market but also includes questions on nationality. The data presented above is weighted and rounded to the nearest thousand. Because the LFS is a sample-based survey rather than a population census, data from it should be treated as estimates subject to standard errors.

Material from the Labour Force Survey is Crown Copyright, has been made available by National Statistics through the UK Data Archive and has been used by permission. Neither National Statistics nor the Data Archive bears any responsibility for the analysis or interpretation of the data reported here.

The geographical observations are indicative and based on country of birth data from Census 2001. More details of spatial distribution can be found at *BBC News Online's* 'Born Abroad: An immigration map of Britain' (www.bbc.co.uk/bornabroad) and *The Guardian's* guide to London's immigrant communities ('London: The World in one City' (www.guardian.co.uk/britain/london/0,,1394802,00.html)).

The Royal Commonwealth Society: Founded in 1868, the RCS conducts a range of events and activities aimed at promoting international understanding. Its educational, youth and cultural programmes include one of the world's oldest and largest schools essay competitions, and an innovative international youth leadership programme. HM Queen Elizabeth II is Patron and Peter Kellner is Chairman. Headquartered at the Commonwealth Club in London, the RCS has some 4000 members in the UK and a presence in 40 Commonwealth countries through a network of branches and Commonwealth societies. The RCS is a registered charity in England & Wales (226748) See www.thercs.org

The Commonwealth: The modern Commonwealth was established with 8 members in 1949. In 2010, it has 54 members with a total population of nearly 2 billion. It is an association of governments and peoples, built around shared language, institutions, challenges, aspirations and values. The Commonwealth promotes democracy, development, and diversity within its member countries and across the world.

Contacts:

For all media enquiries, please contact Joanna Bennett on +44 (0) 20 7766 9230 / +44 (0) 7816 221 568 / joanna.bennett@thercs.org, or Danny Sriskandarajah on danny@thercs.org.

Please note: The RCS and Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK are organising an unofficial Observation Mission to the UK General Election with observers from 12 developing Commonwealth countries. See contact details above for more information.