

The Rt Hon Theresa May MP (née Brasier, Geography, 1974)



The Rt Hon Theresa May MP served as Prime Minister of the UK between 2016 and 2019 and Home Secretary between 2010 and 2016. She was elected Conservative MP for Maidenhead in 1997. She is the first and only woman to have held two Great Offices of State. She also served as the first female Chairman of the Conservative Party between 2002 and 2003.

Theresa came up to St Hugh's in 1974 to read for a degree in Geography. On graduating, she embarked on her career at the Bank of England before later moving to the Association of Payment Clearing Services as Head of the European Affairs Unit and then as Senior Adviser on International Affairs.

She began her political career by stuffing envelopes at her local Conservative Association before going on to be a councillor in the London Borough of Merton between 1986 and 1994. During this period, she served as Chair of Education and later as Deputy Group Leader and Housing Spokesperson.

Following her election as MP for Maidenhead in 1997, Theresa went on to hold several positions as a member of the Shadow Cabinet between 1999 and 2010 including, Education and Employment; Transport, Local Government and the Regions; Family; and Culture, Media and Sport. She served as the first female Chairman of the Conservative Party between 2002 and 2003, and Shadow Leader of the House of Commons between 2005 and 2009.

In 2010, following the formation of the Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition government, Theresa was appointed Home Secretary and Minister of State for Women and Equalities. She became the longest-serving Conservative Home Secretary for over a century. During this time, she oversaw significant reforms of the police and the introduction of the Modern Slavery Act.

Following David Cameron's resignation, Theresa was elected as Leader of the Conservative Party and appointed as Prime Minister on 13 July 2016. In office she led Brexit negotiations with the European Union; delivered the largest ever cash boost to the NHS; oversaw the largest expansion of mental health services in a generation; launched a 25-year Environment Plan; introduced legislation to end the UK's contribution to global warming entirely; established the first ever Race Disparity Audit to shine a light on injustices; and published a Modern Industrial Strategy to ensure that the jobs of the future are created across the whole country — not just in London. During her premiership, the UK's national debt fell, there were more people in work than ever before, and taxes were cut for 32 million people.

Since standing down from office in July 2019, Theresa has continued to serve in the House of Commons as a backbencher. She was re-elected as the MP for Maidenhead in 2019.

We are grateful to Lady May and her team for their assistance in preparing this profile.