

2020 GENERAL ELECTION: STATE AND REGION HLUTTAWs

AT A GLANCE

- **The National League for Democracy (NLD)** has improved on its landslide performance of 2015 and extended its share of state/region hluttaw seats. The NLD now holds 82 percent of all elected seats in the state/region hluttaws, and a majority of elected seats in 12 of the 14 state/region hluttaws. The NLD is now dominant in the seven region hluttaws. The party won the majority of the overall number of seats available in the state hluttaws.
- There have been significant increases in **women's representation** in the state/region hluttaws, with women representatives elected to all state/region hluttaws for the first time. Eighteen percent of elected state/region hluttaw representatives are women, compared with thirteen percent in 2015, and four percent in 2010. Despite the progress, women's representation continues to fall short. Further work is needed to address the particular barriers women face in participating in politics in Myanmar.
- **Ethnic and regional parties** continue to have a significant presence in the state hluttaws, winning one third of available seats. While the performance of ethnic and regional parties may be poorer than some had expected, all state hluttaws will include representatives from at least one ethnic and regional party, with 17 ethnic and regional parties represented overall. The performance of the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD), Arakan National Party (ANP), and Mon Unity Party (MUP) was particularly strong.
- In **Shan and Rakhine states**, the elections have resulted in hluttaws with the potential for significant political contestation. In Shan State, no party has a majority, with nine parties and two independents represented. Assuming the NLD will lead the state government (with the chief minister to be appointed by the President), the NLD will need support from other parties to pass legislation. In Rakhine State, the ANP won seven of 15 available seats. During the previous term, the state hluttaw was a significant source of criticism and challenge for the Rakhine State Government. This will likely continue over the current parliamentary term.
- The **Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP)** has performed poorly compared with 2015 and is arguably no longer a significant presence in the state/region hluttaws. The USDP now holds six percent of elected seats, with seats in only seven of the 14 hluttaws. With the exception of Shan State, the USDP is significantly outnumbered in all the states/regions in which it won seats.
- **The Tatmadaw** will continue to play a significant role in the state/region hluttaws. As per Article 161(d) of the 2008 Constitution, the commander in chief appoints military representatives equal to one-third of elected representatives. The addition of military-appointed representatives will affect the balance of power significantly in Kayah, Rakhine and Shan states. In the Shan State Hluttaw, for example, the Tatmadaw will have more seats than any single party.



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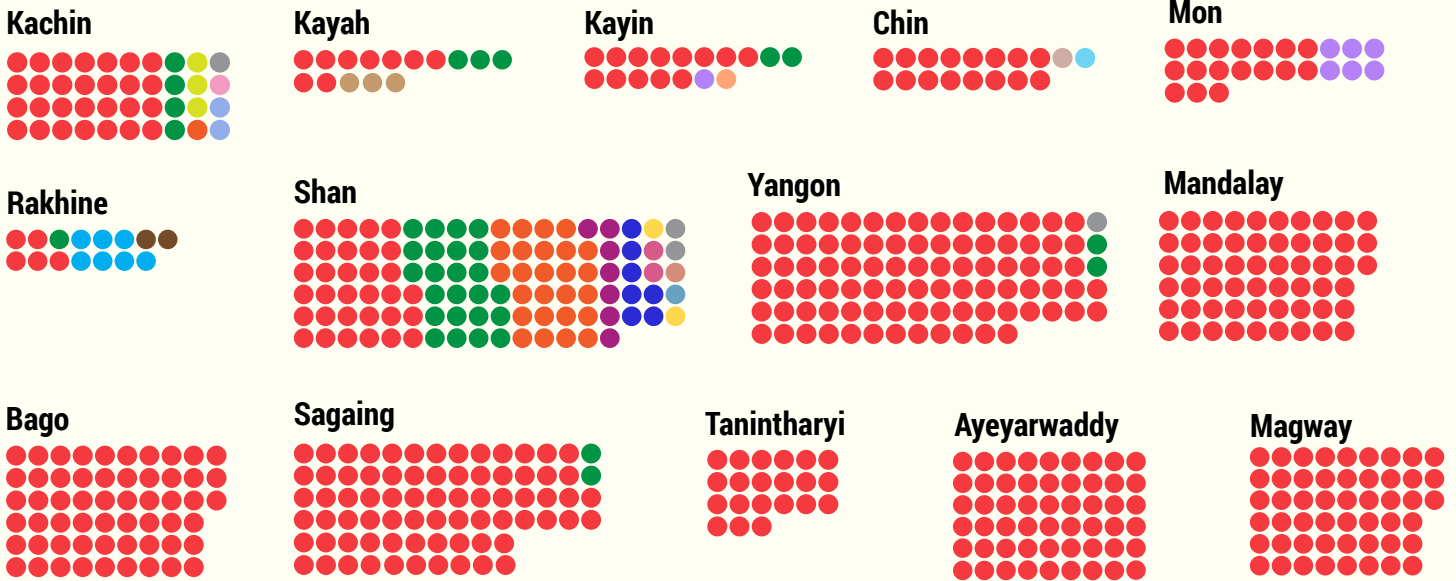
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Any faults in substance or analysis rest with the authors.

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State and region hluttaws composition (following 2020 General Election)



KEY

- National League for Democracy
- Union Solidarity and Development Party
- Shan Nationalities League for Democracy
- Ta-Arng (Palaung) National Party
- Arakan National Party
- Pa-O National Organisation
- Mon Unity Party
- Kayah State Democratic Party
- Kachin State People's Party
- Arakan Front Party
- Wa National Unity Party
- Lisu National Development Party
- Lahu National Development Party
- Kayin People's Party
- Kayan National Party
- Zomi Congress for Democracy
- New Democracy Party (Kachin)
- Chin National League for Democracy Party
- Shan Nationalities Democratic Party
- Independent

The hluttaw composition shown here comprises elected representatives and does not include military-appointed representatives

OF ELECTED PARLIAMENTARIANS, PERCENTAGE THAT IS :

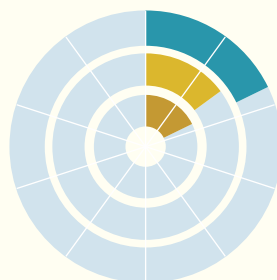
1. FROM THE NLD

- TOTAL - 82%
- STATES - 52%
- REGIONS - 99%



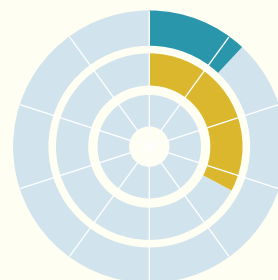
2. WOMEN

- TOTAL - 18%
- STATES - 15%
- REGIONS - 20%



3. FROM ETHNIC OR REGIONAL PARTIES

- TOTAL - 12%
- STATES - 33%
- REGIONS - 0%



BACKGROUND

- **Three general elections have now been held for the state and region hluttaws under the 2008 Constitution.** The creation of 14 state and region hluttaws was an historic step towards political decentralization under the Constitution. The introduction of hluttaws with elected representation that is closer to the electorate than their national counterparts provides opportunities for deepening democracy, and the participation of different political parties.
- **Following the 2010 elections, the USDP was the dominant party in the state/region hluttaws.** The USDP was the largest party in 13 of the hluttaws and held a majority in eight. The NLD boycotted the election.
- **The NLD became the leading party in the state/region hluttaws after the 2015 General Election.** The NLD won over three-quarters of all elected seats, becoming the largest party in 12 of the 14 hluttaws, and achieving a majority in 11. The USDP continued to have a significant presence, with 12 percent of the available seats and representatives in 12 hluttaws. Regional and ethnic parties performed strongly in the state hluttaws, where they held 32 percent of elected seats. Significant progress in women's representation was made, albeit from a low base, with 13 percent of elected seats won by women, a sizeable increase from the 4 percent in the 2010 election.

THE 2020 RESULTS¹

- **The NLD has improved on its dominant performance in the 2015 elections and extended its share of state/region hluttaw seats.**
 - The NLD now holds 82 percent of all elected seats in the state/region hluttaws, compared with 75 percent in the 2015 General Election. The party holds a majority of elected seats in 12 of the 14 state/region hluttaws.
 - The NLD is now dominant in the seven region hluttaws, winning all seats in five hluttaws, and all but two seats in Sagaing and all but three in Yangon.
 - In the state hluttaws, the NLD has increased the proportion of seats it holds from 45 percent to 52 percent. The NLD performed particularly well in Chin State, where it increased its share of elected representatives from 67 to 89 percent. The NLD's performance in Shan State is also notable, as it has displaced the USDP to become the largest party in the hluttaw. However, with 31 percent of elected seats, the NLD remains a long way short of a majority. The NLD also increased its share of seats in Kachin and Kayin.
 - However, the party did not increase its share in all state hluttaws, with a lower seat share in Kayah and Mon states. In Kayah, the NLD's share of elected seats has decreased from 73 to 60 percent. In Mon, this figure decreased from 82 to 74 percent.
 - The NLD also performed strongly in the elections for "national race" representatives, winning 23 of the 29 available seats (79 percent).
- **Compared with 2015, the USDP has performed poorly and is arguably no longer a significant presence in the state/region hluttaws.**
 - The USDP now holds six percent of elected seats, with seats in seven of the 14 hluttaws. Following the 2015 elections, the party held 12 percent of seats and had a presence in 12 of the hluttaws. With the exception of Shan State, the USDP is significantly outnumbered in all the states/regions in which it won seats.
 - The USDP's presence continues to be stronger in the state rather than region hluttaws, winning 15 percent of the seats in the state hluttaws. Most notably, the USDP will continue to be a significant force in the Shan State Hluttaw, where it is the third largest party and holds close to a quarter of all elected seats.
- **Ethnic and regional parties continue to have a significant presence in the state hluttaws, where they won one-third of available seats.**
 - All state hluttaws will include representatives from at least one ethnic and regional party, with 17 ethnic and regional parties represented. The proportion of seats won by ethnic and regional parties in state hluttaws has increased slightly from 32 to 33 percent, but the total number of ethnic and regional parties represented has decreased from 19.

¹ The analysis is based on the official results published by the Union Election Commission in its announcement letters (206/2020–264/2020). Numbers and percentages for state/region hluttaws include "national race" representatives. As per the Constitution, elected representatives for the state/region hluttaws include two elected members per township plus elected representatives for each "national race" with over 0.1 percent of the state or region's population that has not already "obtained" an ethnic state.

- The performance of regional and ethnic parties in state hluttaws was, however, poorer than was expected by a number of observers. A number of reasons for this poorer-than-expected performance has been posited, including the cancellation of voting in constituencies in Mon, Kayin, Kachin, Shan and Rakhine States and the incumbent advantage of the NLD.²
 - Most notably among the ethnic and regional parties, SNLD was able to increase its number of seats in the Shan State Hluttaw to 26 and the ANP won close to half of the available elected seats.
 - The performance of the MUP is also notable. The MUP, formed in 2018 by former members of the All Mon Region Democracy Part (AMRDP) and the Mon National Party (MNP), was created to avoid potential vote splitting between parties competing for Mon votes. Whereas the AMRDP and MNP only won three seats in total in the Mon State Hluttaw 2015, the MUP was able to win six seats in this election.
- **In Shan and Rakhine States, the elections have resulted in hluttaws with the potential for significant political contestation.**
 - In Shan State, no party has a majority. Nine parties and two independents will be represented. The three largest parties are the NLD, which secured 33 seats (31 percent), the SNLD, which secured 26 seats (25 percent), and the USDP, which secured 24 seats (23 percent). Crucially, once the military-appointed representatives are added, the USDP combined with Tatmadaw will fall short of an absolute majority. Assuming that the NLD will lead the state government (with the chief minister to be appointed by the President), the NLD will need to receive support from other parties in order to pass legislation (including the budget).
 - In Rakhine State, the ANP won seven of the available 15 seats, the NLD won five, the Arakan Front Party won two, and the USDP won one. During the previous hluttaw, the Rakhine State Hluttaw was a significant source of criticism and challenge for the Rakhine State Government. This will likely continue over the current parliamentary term. It is important to note that elections were not held in more than half of Rakhine's constituencies; should elections proceed at a later date, they may have a significant impact on the balance of power within the hluttaw.
- **There has been significant increases in women's representation in the state/region hluttaws, with women representatives in all state/region hluttaws for the first time.**
 - There has been significant progress in women's representation in state/region hluttaws. Eighteen percent of elected state/region hluttaw representatives are women, compared with 13 percent in 2015, and four percent in 2010. Whereas previously there were no women representatives in three state hluttaws, all state/region hluttaws have women representatives.
 - The representation of women continues to be higher in region rather than state hluttaws, with 20 percent representation in region hluttaws compared with 15 percent in states. However, state hluttaw women's representation has increased significantly from the low base of eight percent following the 2015 elections. Women's representation is highest in the Yangon Region Hluttaw (30 percent) and Mon State Hluttaw (26 percent), and lowest in the Chin State Hluttaw (6 percent) and the Mandalay Region Hluttaw (9 percent).
 - Despite the progress, women's representation continues to fall short of a level where women can play an equal role in the hluttaws. Further work is needed to address the particular barriers women face in participating in politics in Myanmar.
- **In accordance with the Constitution, the Tatmadaw will continue to play a significant role in the state/region hluttaws.**
 - As per Article 161(d) of the 2008 Constitution, the commander in chief appoints military representatives equal to one-third of elected representatives (and thus a quarter of the total).
 - The addition of military-appointed representatives will affect the balance of power in a number of hluttaws. In Kayah State, where the NLD won 60 percent of available seats, the inclusion of military appointees will reduce the proportion of seats held by the party to 40 percent, short of a majority. In Rakhine, the inclusion of military appointees reduces the proportion of seats held by the ANP from 47 to 35 percent. In Shan State, the military will hold 25 percent of seats, the NLD 24 percent, the SNLD 19 percent, and the USDP 17 percent.
 - One important consideration is the effect on women's representation of the addition of military representatives. Previously, just two of the 220 military-appointed representatives were women.

² Mi Kun Chan Non, Mi Sar Yar Poine, and Ashley South. 2020. The Hongsa flies: Why the Mon Unity Party won where other ethnic parties failed. Frontier, November 13, 2020. <https://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/the-hongsa-flies-why-the-mon-unity-party-won-where-other-ethnic-parties-failed/>.