



## Women in Parliament and Government

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This note shows how the number of women in Parliament has changed since 1918, when women first became eligible to be elected as MPs. It presents comparative data for women in Parliament and other elected bodies in the UK and internationally. It also looks at some milestones over the last 100 years for women in Parliament and Government in the UK.

Currently just over one in five Members of Parliament are women, compared with just over one half of the adult population. The 2010 General Election returned a higher number and proportion of female MPs than any previous general election. Prior to 1987 women had never made up more than 5% of MPs.

Historically, women found it difficult to be adopted as candidates by the main UK political parties and when they did find a seat, it was likely to be less winnable than those for which men were selected. In the 2005 and 2010 general elections, the all-women short-list policy appears to have helped change this for Labour and to have broken down the association of candidates' gender and seat marginality.

The UK has the fifteenth highest proportion of women MPs out of the 27 EU Member States. In global terms, the UK Parliament ranks 65<sup>th</sup> out of the 190 countries included in the Inter Parliamentary Union's 1 February 2013 monitoring report. 33% of UK MEPs elected in 2009 are women, compared to 35% of MEPs across all 27 EU Member States.

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# 1 Women and men in Parliament and elected bodies

## 1.1 Parliaments and devolved legislatures

143 women MPs were elected at the 2010 General Election, more than at any previous election. Currently there are 146 women in the House of Commons, just over one-fifth of all MPs (22%). Around one in five Members of the House of Lords are women.

Just over one-third (35%) of members in the Scottish Parliament are women, compared to two-fifths of members of National Assembly for Wales. Following the 2009 European Parliament elections, women comprised one-third of UK MEPs.

Table 1 shows the gender breakdown by party in the House of Commons and other elected bodies in the UK. For the House of Commons, MPs have been assigned to parties for which they contested the 2010 election or a subsequent by-election.

**Table 1 Men and women in the UK Parliament and devolved legislatures**

### Representatives by gender

	Con	Lab	LD	Other	Total
<b>Male</b>					
House of Commons	257	172	50	25	504
House of Lords	175	157	64	235	631
National Assembly for Wales	10	15	4	7	36
Scottish Parliament	9	20	4	51	84
Northern Ireland Assembly				88	88
London Assembly	8	7	1	1	17
European Parliament (UK Members)	19	8	5	16	48
<b>Female</b>					
House of Commons	47	85	7	7	146
House of Lords	39	63	26	52	180
National Assembly for Wales	4	15	1	4	24
Scottish Parliament	6	17	1	21	45
Northern Ireland Assembly				20	20
London Assembly	1	5	1	1	8
European Parliament (UK Members)	6	5	6	7	24
<b>% female</b>					
House of Commons	15%	33%	12%	22%	22%
House of Lords	18%	29%	29%	18%	22%
National Assembly for Wales	29%	50%	20%	36%	40%
Scottish Parliament	40%	46%	20%	29%	35%
Northern Ireland Assembly				19%	19%
London Assembly	11%	42%	50%	50%	32%
European Parliament (UK Members)	24%	38%	55%	30%	33%

#### Notes

1. Membership of the House of Commons in March 2013 (after taking account of the Eastleigh and Mid-Ulster by-election).
2. House of Lords membership in February 2013. Includes peers on leave of absence, suspended, or disqualified as senior of the judiciary or as an MEP (listed under 'Other').
3. Membership of devolved assemblies following May 2011 elections.
4. Membership of the European Parliament following the June 2009 elections.

#### Sources

House of Commons Library MP database

House of Lords Members' Names Information Service

House of Commons Library Research Papers RP11/41 Scottish Parliament Elections: 2011; RP11/42 Northern Ireland Assemblies Elections: 2011; RP11/43 National Assembly for Wales Elections: 2011; RP09/53 European Parliament Elections 2009

## 1.2 Local Government

### a. Current position

Women's representation in local government in England is higher than in Parliament. In 2010, 31% of local authority councillors in England were women. The proportion of female councillors was greatest in London boroughs (36.4%) and metropolitan districts (32.8%) and lowest in shire counties (24.6%).<sup>1</sup> In Scotland, 24.3% of councillors elected at the 2012 local government elections were women.<sup>2</sup> Women held 26.3% of council seats in Wales following the 2012 local elections.<sup>3</sup> In Northern Ireland in 2011, 23% of councillors in local government districts were women.<sup>4</sup>

### b. Historical background

Between 1869 and 1907 legislation was passed which extended the range of authorities to which women were eligible to stand for election. The *Municipal Franchise Act* of 1869 extended the vote to women ratepayers in local elections and also enabled women to serve as Poor Law Guardians. The 1870 *Education Act* allowed for married women ratepayers to stand as candidates to local school boards, the first contested election of which took place in Manchester on 1 December 1870.<sup>5</sup> The *Local Government Act 1894* allowed women to serve on parish and district councils, but it was not until the *Qualification of Women Act* was passed in 1907 that women (ratepayers) were permitted to be members of County and Borough Councils.<sup>6</sup> Three months after this Act was passed five women were elected to these bodies in England (Aldeburgh, Reading, Bewdley, Oxford and Oldham).<sup>7</sup> One of the successful women was Elizabeth Garrett Anderson in Aldeburgh where she went on to be the first female elected mayor in 1908.

In Scotland the *Qualification of Women (County and Town Councils) (Scotland) Act* was passed in August 1907. This allowed women to be elected as town and county councillors. Lavinia Malcolm was elected unopposed to the town and parish councils of Dollar (Clackmannanshire), the only woman in Scotland to be elected at that time.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> LGA, *National Census of Local Authority Councillors 2010*

<http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pagelid=15003600>

<sup>2</sup> Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe), *Local Government Elections 2012*

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefingsAndFactsheets/S4/SB12-38.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Electoral Reform Society, *Spotlight on Wales: Women and local government* <http://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/images/dynamicimages/file/Wales/Women%20and%20local%20government%20in%20Wales.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister/NISRA, *Gender Equality Strategy Statistics: 2011 Update* [http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/gender\\_equality\\_strategy\\_statistics\\_2011\\_update.pdf#page=124](http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/gender_equality_strategy_statistics_2011_update.pdf#page=124)

<sup>5</sup> *Votes for Women* Virago Book of Suffragettes, ed Joyce Marlow p19

<sup>6</sup> The 1907 Act followed years of uncertainty and confusion, which included challenges in the courts when women first tried to stand for the LCC, women losing their influence on education matters when free-standing boards were absorbed into councils, and losing their places on Urban District Councils when towns grew and sought borough status.

<sup>7</sup> *Ladies Elect: women in English local government 1865 to 1914*, Patricia Hollis

<sup>8</sup> *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, OUP, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/55608>, accessed 5 Feb 2008

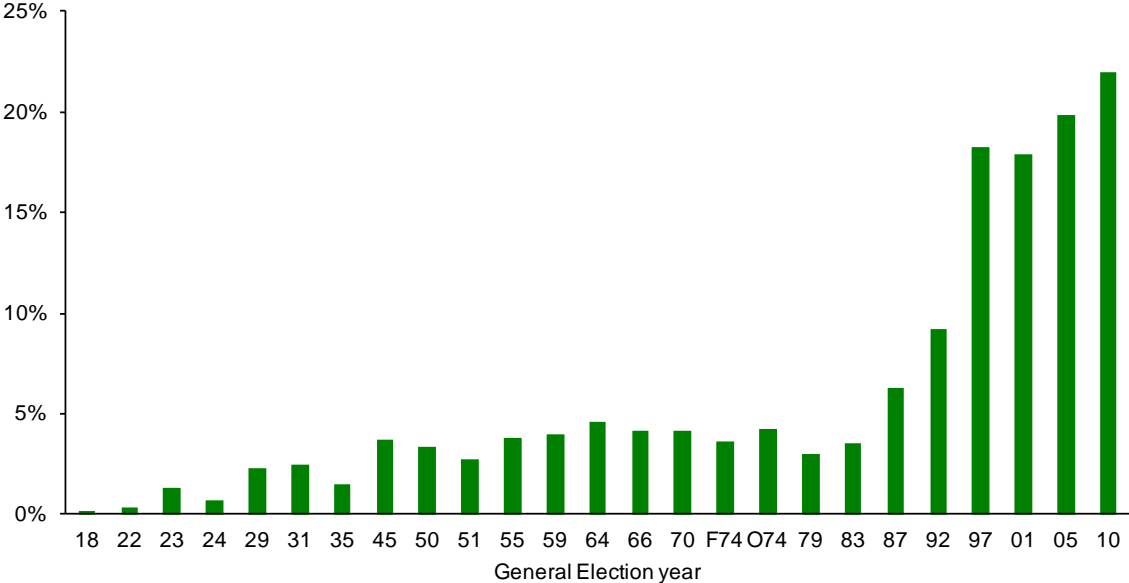
## 2 Women MPs since 1918

Since 1918, 368 women have been elected as Members in the House of Commons.<sup>9</sup> This is 7% of all MPs over the period. 222 women (60%) have been Labour MPs, defined as the party of first election.

Until 1997 women had never comprised more than 10% of all MPs, and until the 1980s the proportion had always been below 5%. The proportion rose to 18% following the 1997 General Election when 120 women were elected.

143 women were elected in the 2010 General Election, 22.0% of all MPs. Following by-elections the total number of female MPs rose to 146 in November 2012, 22.3% of the total; at the time, this was the highest number and proportion ever. Currently women still hold 146 seats in the House of Commons or 22.5% of the total.

Figure 1: Women MPs as percentage of total 1918-2010



<sup>9</sup> Two of these (Countess Constance Markievicz in 1918 and Michelle Gildernew in 2001) were elected as Sinn Fein MPs but did not take their seats.

**Table 2 Women MPs elected at General Elections by party 1918 to 2010**

	Con	Lab	LD	Other	Total	% MPs
1918	0	0	0	1	1	0.1%
1922	1	0	1	0	2	0.3%
1923	3	3	2	0	8	1.3%
1924	3	1	0	0	4	0.7%
1929	3	9	1	1	14	2.3%
1931	13	0	1	1	15	2.4%
1935	6	1	1	1	9	1.5%
1945	1	21	1	1	24	3.8%
1950	6	14	0	1	21	3.4%
1951	6	11	0	0	17	2.7%
1955	10	14	0	0	24	3.8%
1959	12	13	0	0	25	4.0%
1964	11	18	0	0	29	4.6%
1966	7	19	0	0	26	4.1%
1970	15	10	0	1	26	4.1%
1974(F)	9	13	0	1	23	3.6%
1974(O)	7	18	0	2	27	4.3%
1979	8	11	0	0	19	3.0%
1983	13	10	0	0	23	3.5%
1987	17	21	2	1	41	6.3%
1992	20	37	2	1	60	9.2%
1997	13	101	3	3	120	18.2%
2001	14	95	5	4	118	17.9%
2005	17	98	10	3	128	19.8%
2010	49	81	7	6	143	22.0%

Source: Rallings and Thrasher, *British Electoral Facts 1832-2006*; House of Commons Library Research Paper 10/36 *General Election 2010*

### 3 Women General Election candidates

In the 2010 General Election 874 women candidates stood across all parties; 21% of all (4,150) candidates. The number and proportion of women candidates was higher than at any earlier General Election. The previous record was in 2005, when 720 women stood for election.

**Table 3 Women candidates by party 1918 to 2010**

	Conservative		Labour		Liberal Democrat		SNP		PC		Other		All	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1918	1	0%	4	1%	4	1%	-	-	-	-	8	2%	17	1%
1922	5	1%	10	2%	16	3%	-	-	-	-	2	3%	33	2%
1923	7	1%	14	3%	12	3%	-	-	-	-	1	4%	34	2%
1924	12	2%	22	4%	6	2%	-	-	-	-	1	2%	41	3%
1929	10	2%	30	5%	25	5%	-	0%	-	0%	4	7%	69	4%
1931	16	3%	36	7%	5	4%	1	20%	-	0%	4	6%	62	5%
1935	19	3%	33	6%	11	7%	-	0%	-	0%	4	9%	67	5%
1945	14	2%	41	7%	20	7%	-	0%	1	14%	11	8%	87	5%
1950	29	5%	42	7%	45	9%	-	0%	-	0%	11	7%	127	7%
1951	25	4%	41	7%	11	10%	-	0%	-	0%	-	0%	77	6%
1955	33	5%	43	7%	14	13%	-	0%	1	9%	1	2%	92	7%
1959	28	4%	36	6%	16	7%	-	0%	-	0%	1	2%	81	5%
1964	24	4%	33	5%	24	7%	-	0%	1	4%	8	8%	90	5%
1966	21	3%	30	5%	20	6%	-	0%	-	0%	10	10%	81	5%
1970	26	4%	29	5%	23	7%	10	15%	-	0%	11	7%	99	5%
1974(F)	33	5%	40	6%	40	8%	8	11%	2	6%	14	5%	137	6%
1974(O)	30	5%	50	8%	49	8%	8	11%	1	3%	23	8%	161	7%
1979	31	5%	52	8%	52	9%	6	8%	1	3%	74	11%	216	8%
1983	40	6%	78	12%	75	12%	9	13%	6	16%	72	13%	280	11%
1987	46	7%	92	15%	106	17%	6	8%	9	24%	70	22%	329	14%
1992	63	10%	138	22%	143	23%	15	21%	7	20%	205	22%	571	19%
1997	69	11%	157	25%	140	22%	15	21%	7	18%	284	17%	672	18%
2001	92	14%	149	23%	139	22%	16	22%	7	18%	233	18%	636	19%
2005	122	19%	166	26%	144	23%	13	22%	4	10%	271	17%	720	20%
2010	153	24%	191	30%	134	21%	17	29%	7	18%	372	17%	874	21%

Source: Rallings and Thrasher, *British Electoral Facts 1832-2006*; House of Commons Library Research Paper 10/36 *General Election 2010*

At the 2010 General Election the number of female MPs increased to 143, which was the highest number and proportion ever. The Conservative and Labour Parties each had more women candidates than at previous elections, and the percentage of female MPs in each party increased. This was due in part to the Labour Party's continuation of all-women shortlists to replace retiring male MPs in regions of England and Wales with less than 25% female Labour MPs, as well as the Conservative Party's promotion of women candidates included in a candidate 'A-list'.

Women comprised 30% of Labour candidates and 31% of Labour MPs in 2010, but for the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats, women were under represented among MPs relative to candidates. 24% of Conservative candidates were women compared to 16% of those elected as Conservative MPs. 22% of Liberal Democrat candidates were women compared to 12% of their MPs.

**Table 4 Women candidates and MPs by party, 2010 General Election**




	% women	
	Candidates	MPs
 Conservatives	24	16
 Labour	30	31
 Liberal Democrats	22	12

Table 5 shows the balance of men and women candidates for each of the seats in England, Scotland and Wales in 2010 by marginality to their party at the previous general election. Marginality is measured as the difference in percentage vote share<sup>10</sup> of the party's candidate from the winning candidate or, in seats won by the party, from the candidate in second place at the 2005 election. A positive marginality means the party won the seat in 2005. Seats with a negative marginality are those that party did not win in 2005 – a seat with marginality between -0% to -10% should be easier for that party to win than one where the marginality is between -20% to -30%.

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<sup>10</sup> A notional 2005 vote share is used for constituencies in England and Wales, as the 2005 and 2010 General Elections were contested on different constituency boundaries.

**Table 5 Candidates by gender and party – Great Britain, 2010 General Election**

Marginality	Conservative		Labour		Liberal Democrat	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
<b>Number of candidates</b>						
<-40%	46	30	14	2	54	16
-40 to -30%	52	20	56	20	148	32
-30 to -20%	58	19	72	9	161	46
-20 to -10%	71	29	49	15	60	20
-10 to -0%	73	23	19	26	21	10
0 to 10%	40	10	53	35	20	8
10 to 20%	65	11	65	25	20	4
20 to 30%	64	6	47	33	6	0
>30%	12	1	66	24	4	0
All	481	150	442	189	494	137
<b>%men and women</b>						
<-40%	61%	39%	88%	13%	77%	23%
-40 to -30%	72%	28%	74%	26%	82%	18%
-30 to -20%	75%	25%	89%	11%	78%	22%
-20 to -10%	71%	29%	77%	23%	75%	25%
-10 to -0%	76%	24%	42%	58%	68%	32%
0 to 10%	80%	20%	60%	40%	71%	29%
10 to 20%	86%	14%	72%	28%	83%	17%
20 to 30%	91%	9%	59%	41%	100%	0%
>30%	92%	8%	73%	27%	100%	0%
All	76%	24%	70%	30%	78%	22%

For Labour, the proportion of women candidates was lower in less winnable seats. In the most winnable seats not currently held by the party (of marginality between -10% and 0%) the proportion of women candidates rose to 58%, very much above the party's average of 30%.

For the Conservatives, the proportion of women candidates tended to be higher in less winnable seats, so that their safest seats were less likely to have women standing as candidates.

The safest Liberal Democrat seats were also less likely to have women standing as candidates. However the proportion of women candidates rose to 32% in the most winnable seats not currently held by the party (of marginality between -10% and 0%) compared to the party's average of 22% women candidates.



## 4 Women ministers

Currently, 4 out of 22 Cabinet posts<sup>11</sup> (18%) are held by women. This compares to 5 female Cabinet Ministers immediately before the September 2012 reshuffle. There were 4 women in Gordon Brown's Cabinet after the June 2009 reshuffle and 8 women ministers in Tony Blair's final Cabinet.

Of 121 Government ministers, including the Cabinet, whips, Lords in waiting and 13 unpaid positions, 23 (or 19%) are women.<sup>12</sup> Prior to the 2010 General Election, 30% of ministers were women.<sup>13</sup>

Table 6 shows all women ministers who have been appointed to Cabinet posts. Margaret Bondfield was the first ever woman appointed to the Cabinet in 1929, having been previously the first woman non-Cabinet minister in 1924. Altogether 35 women have held Cabinet positions.

**Table 6 Women Cabinet Ministers, 1929 to 2012**

1929-31	Margaret Bondfield	2001-07	Patricia Hewitt
1945-47	Ellen Wilkinson	2001-07	Hilary Armstrong
1953-54	Florence Horsbrugh	2001-07 & 2009-10	Tessa Jowell
1964-70 & 1974-76	Barbara Castle	2003-07	Baroness Amos
1968-69	Judith Hart	2004-08	Ruth Kelly
1970-74 & 1979-90	Margaret Thatcher	2006-09	Hazel Blears
1974-79	Shirley Williams	2006-09	Jacqui Smith
1982-83	Baroness Young	2007-08	Baroness Ashton
1992-97	Virginia Bottomley	2008-10	Yvette Cooper
1992-97	Gillian Shepard	2008-10	Baroness Royal
1997-98	Ann Taylor	2010-12	Caroline Spelman
1997-98 & 2007-10	Harriet Harman	2010-12	Cheryl Gillan
1997-2001	Mo Mowlam	2010-12	Baroness Warsi
1997-2003	Clare Short	2010-	Theresa May
1997-2007	Margaret Beckett	2011-	Justine Greening
1998-2001	Baroness Jay	2012-	Maria Miller
2001-03	Helen Liddell	2012-	Theresa Villiers
2001-02	Estelle Morris		

Source: David Butler and Gareth Butler, *British Political Facts* (updated)

In 1979 Margaret Thatcher became the first British woman Prime Minister. At the same time the 1979 election returned the lowest number of women MPs for nearly thirty years. One other woman held Cabinet office during the time that Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister. This was Baroness Young, who was Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Lords in 1982-83.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Including Prime Minister; <http://www.number10.gov.uk/the-coalition/the-cabinet/>, accessed 3 October 2012

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.number10.gov.uk/the-coalition/the-government/>, accessed 3 October 2012

<sup>13</sup> Hansard

<sup>14</sup> House of Commons Factsheet M4, *Women in the House of Commons*

Table 7 shows the Ministers for Women since 1997, when the office was first made full-time by the incoming Labour administration. (Previously, Gillian Shephard had been given special responsibility for women's issues in 1992 while she was Secretary of State for Employment. She was followed in 1994 by Baroness Denton.) Both the Ministers responsible at Cabinet and junior level are shown.

**Table 7 Ministers for Women, 1997 to 2012**

	<b>Junior</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>
1997-98	Joan Ruddock (a)	Harriet Harman
1998-01	Tessa Jowell	Baroness Jay
2001	Baroness Morgan	Patricia Hewitt
2001-03	Barbara Roche	Patricia Hewitt
2003-05	Jacqui Smith	Patricia Hewitt
2005-06	Meg Munn (a)	Tessa Jowell
2006-07	Meg Munn	Ruth Kelly
2007-08	Barbara Follett (b)	Harriet Harman
2008-10	Maria Eagle (b)	Harriet Harman
2010-12	Lynne Featherstone (b)	Theresa May
2012-	Helen Grant (b)	Maria Miller

Source: David Butler and Gareth Butler, *British Political Facts*

(a) unpaid

(b) from 26 July 2007 Minister for Women and Equalities

## 5 Parliamentary and Political Firsts for women

Table 8 sets out a number of “firsts” and significant events over the last century for women in Parliament and political life.<sup>15,16</sup>

### **Table 8 Timeline of significant events since 1907**

- 1907 *Qualification of Women Act* allowing women to be County and Borough councillors – many stood in 1 Nov elections
- 1908 Elected Mayor in England (Elizabeth Garrett Anderson)
- 1918 Women able to stand for Parliament and those over 30 given the right to vote
- 1918 Member of Parliament elected (Countess Constance de Markievicz)<sup>17</sup>
- 1919 Member of Parliament to take seat (Nancy Astor)
- 1924 Minister (Margaret Bondfield)
- 1928 Vote given to women on same terms as men
- 1929 Cabinet minister, and privy counsellor (Margaret Bondfield)
- 1948 Chair of Committee of Whole House (Florence Paton)
- 1958 Life Peerages Act; first women life peers to take seats (Lady Reading and Baroness Wooton)
- 1964 Parliamentary Whip (Commons) (Harriet Slater)
- 1965 Parliamentary Whip (Lords) (Baroness Phillips)
- 1970 Deputy Speaker (Betty Harvie Anderson)
- 1975 Leader of the Opposition (Margaret Thatcher)
- 1979 Prime Minister (Margaret Thatcher)
- 1981 Leader of the House of Lords (Baroness Young)
- 1992 Speaker of the House of Commons (Betty Boothroyd)
- 1997 Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Margaret Beckett)
- 1997 Secretary of State for Social Security (Harriet Harman)
- 1997 Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mo Mowlam)
- 1997 Full-time Minister for Women (Joan Ruddock)
- 1998 Chief Whip (Ann Taylor)
- 2001 Secretary of State for Scotland (Helen Liddell)
- 2006 Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Margaret Beckett)
- 2006 First House of Lords Lord Speaker (Baroness Hayman)
- 2007 Secretary of State for Home Affairs (Jacqui Smith)
- 2007 Attorney-General (Baroness Scotland)
- 2009 EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs & Security Policy (Baroness Ashton)
- 2010 Secretary of State for Wales (Cheryl Gillan)

A list of women holding various posts in parliament, politics and public life is available from the [Centre for the Advancement of Women in Politics](#).<sup>18</sup> BBC Woman’s hour [Women’s history timeline](#) provides a list of key events by decade since 1900.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> COI, *Women in Britain*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1996

<sup>16</sup> Centre for Advancement of Women in Politics, <http://www.qub.ac.uk/cawp/index.html>

<sup>17</sup> Elected in the General Election but along with 72 other Sinn Féin MPs she did not take her seat.

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.qub.ac.uk/cawp/observatory.html>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/womanshour/timeline/timeline.shtml>

## 6 International context

### 6.1 National Parliaments

Data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union shows the proportion of women in the lower (or single) House of different countries' legislatures following the most recent elections. The UK is ranked joint 65th. Rwanda is ranked first (56%), followed by Andorra (50%), Cuba (45%) and Sweden (45%).

**Table 9 Women in National Parliaments, as of 1 February 2013**

Rank	Country	Lower or single House				Upper House or Senate			
		Elections	Seats*	Women	% Women	Elections	Seats*	Women	% Women
1	Rwanda	Sep-08	80	45	56%	Sep-11	26	10	38%
2	Andorra	Apr-11	28	14	50%	---	---	---	---
3	Cuba	Jan-08	586	265	45%	---	---	---	---
4	Sweden	Sep-10	349	156	45%	---	---	---	---
5	Seychelles	Sep-11	32	14	44%	---	---	---	---
6	Senegal	Jul-12	150	64	43%	---	---	---	---
7	Finland	Apr-11	200	85	43%	---	---	---	---
8	South Africa**	Apr-09	400	169	42%	Apr-09	53	17	32%
9	Nicaragua	Nov-11	92	37	40%	---	---	---	---
10	Iceland	Apr-09	63	25	40%	---	---	---	---
11	Norway	Sep-09	169	67	40%	---	---	---	---
12	Mozambique	Oct-09	250	98	39%	---	---	---	---
13	Denmark	Sep-11	179	70	39%	---	---	---	---
14	Netherlands	Sep-12	150	58	39%	May-11	75	27	36%
15	Costa Rica	Feb-10	57	22	39%	---	---	---	---
16	Timor-Leste	Jul-12	65	25	38%	---	---	---	---
17	Angola	Aug-12	220	84	38%	---	---	---	---
18	Belgium	Jun-10	150	57	38%	Jun-10	71	29	41%
19	Argentina	Oct-11	257	96	37%	Oct-11	72	28	39%
20	Mexico	Jul-12	500	184	37%	Jul-12	128	42	33%
21	Spain	Nov-11	350	126	36%	Nov-11	266	91	34%
21	United Republic of Tanzania	Oct-10	350	126	36%	---	---	---	---
23	Uganda	Feb-11	386	135	35%	---	---	---	---
24	Serbia	May-12	250	83	33%	---	---	---	---
25	Nepal	Apr-08	594	197	33%	---	---	---	---
26	Germany	Sep-09	620	204	33%	N.A.	69	19	28%
27	The F.Y.R. of Macedonia	Jun-11	123	40	33%	---	---	---	---
28	Ecuador	Apr-09	124	40	32%	---	---	---	---
29	New Zealand	Nov-11	121	39	32%	---	---	---	---
30	Slovenia	Dec-11	90	29	32%	Nov-12	40	3	8%
31	Algeria	May-12	462	146	32%	Dec-12	142	10	7%
32	Guyana	Nov-11	67	21	31%	---	---	---	---
33	Burundi	Jul-10	105	32	30%	Jul-10	41	19	46%
34	Switzerland	Oct-11	200	58	29%	Oct-11	46	9	20%
35	Portugal	Jun-11	230	66	29%	---	---	---	---
36	Trinidad and Tobago	May-10	42	12	29%	Jun-10	31	7	23%
37	Austria	Sep-08	183	51	28%	N.A.	61	19	31%
38	Ethiopia	May-10	547	152	28%	May-10	135	22	16%
39	Afghanistan	Sep-10	249	69	28%	Jan-11	102	28	27%

Rank	Country	Lower or single House				Upper House or Senate			
		Elections	Seats*	Women	% Women	Elections	Seats*	Women	% Women
40	France	Jun-12	577	155	27%	Sep-11	347	77	22%
41	Tunisia	Oct-11	217	58	27%	---	---	---	---
42	Lesotho	May-12	120	32	27%	Jun-12	33	9	27%
43	Belarus	Sep-12	109	29	27%	Aug-12	57	20	35%
44	South Sudan	Aug-11	332	88	27%	Aug-11	50	5	10%
45	El Salvador	Mar-12	84	22	26%	---	---	---	---
46	Bolivia	Dec-09	130	33	25%	Dec-09	36	17	47%
47	Iraq	Mar-10	325	82	25%	---	---	---	---
48	Lao People's Democratic Republic	Apr-11	132	33	25%	---	---	---	---
49	Canada	May-11	308	76	25%	N.A.	103	39	38%
50	Australia	Aug-10	150	37	25%	Aug-10	76	29	38%
51	Sudan	Apr-10	354	87	25%	May-10	28	5	18%
52	Lithuania	Oct-12	139	34	24%	---	---	---	---
53	Viet Nam	May-11	500	122	24%	---	---	---	---
54	Namibia	Nov-09	78	19	24%	Nov-10	26	7	27%
55	Kazakhstan	Jan-12	107	26	24%	Aug-11	47	2	4%
56	Singapore	May-11	99	24	24%	---	---	---	---
57	Liechtenstein	Feb-09	25	6	24%	---	---	---	---
58	Croatia	Dec-11	151	36	24%	---	---	---	---
59	Poland	Oct-11	460	109	24%	Oct-11	100	13	13%
60	Kyrgyzstan	Oct-10	120	28	23%	---	---	---	---
61	Latvia	Sep-11	100	23	23%	---	---	---	---
62	Bulgaria	Jul-09	240	55	23%	---	---	---	---
63	Philippines	May-10	284	65	23%	May-10	23	3	13%
64	Pakistan	Feb-08	342	77	23%	Mar-12	104	17	16%
65	United Kingdom	May-10	650	146	22%	N.A.	760	172	23%
66	Malawi	May-09	193	43	22%	---	---	---	---
67	Mauritania	Nov-06	95	21	22%	Nov-09	56	8	14%
68	= Czech Republic	May-10	200	44	22%	Oct-12	81	14	17%
68	= Eritrea	Feb-94	150	33	22%	---	---	---	---
68	= Uzbekistan	Dec-09	150	33	22%	Jan-10	100	15	15%
71	= Israel	Jan-13	120	26	22%	---	---	---	---
71	= Luxembourg	Jun-09	60	13	22%	---	---	---	---
73	Peru	Apr-11	130	28	22%	---	---	---	---
74	= Bosnia and Herzegovina	Oct-10	42	9	21%	Jun-11	15	2	13%
74	= Italy	Apr-08	630	135	21%	Apr-08	321	61	19%
76	China	Mar-08	2978	635	21%	---	---	---	---
77	Greece	Jun-12	300	63	21%	---	---	---	---
78	Cape Verde	Feb-11	72	15	21%	---	---	---	---
79	Estonia	Mar-11	101	21	21%	---	---	---	---
80	Dominican Republic	May-10	183	38	21%	May-10	32	3	9%
81	Cambodia	Jul-08	123	25	20%	Jan-12	61	9	15%
82	Saudi Arabia	Jan-13	151	30	20%	---	---	---	---
83	Republic of Moldova	Nov-10	101	20	20%	---	---	---	---
84	Bangladesh	Dec-08	350	69	20%	---	---	---	---
85	Honduras	Nov-09	128	25	20%	---	---	---	---
86	= Monaco	Feb-08	21	4	19%	---	---	---	---
86	= Tajikistan	Feb-10	63	12	19%	Mar-10	34	5	15%
88	Mauritius	May-10	69	13	19%	---	---	---	---
89	Slovakia	Mar-12	150	28	19%	---	---	---	---
90	Indonesia	Apr-09	560	104	19%	---	---	---	---
91	Sao Tome and Principe	Aug-10	55	10	18%	---	---	---	---
92	United States of America	Nov-12	433	77	18%	Nov-12	99	20	20%
93	United Arab Emirates	Sep-11	40	7	18%	---	---	---	---
94	Madagascar	Oct-10	366	64	17%	10 2010	164	20	12%
95	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Dec-10	23	4	17%	---	---	---	---
96	Montenegro	Oct-12	81	14	17%	---	---	---	---
97	Venezuela	Sep-10	165	28	17%	---	---	---	---
98	Morocco	Nov-11	395	67	17%	Oct-09	270	6	2%
99	Turkmenistan	Dec-08	125	21	17%	---	---	---	---
100	= Saint Lucia	Nov-11	18	3	17%	Jan-12	11	2	18%
100	= San Marino	Nov-12	60	10	17%	---	---	---	---

Rank	Country	Elections	Lower or single House			Upper House or Senate			
			Seats*	Women	% Women	Elections	Seats*	Women	% Women
102	Libya	Jul-12	200	33	17%	---	---	---	---
103	Azerbaijan	Nov-10	125	20	16%	---	---	---	---
104	Thailand	Jul-11	500	79	16%	Apr-11	149	23	15%
105	Gabon	Dec-11	114	18	16%	Jan-09	102	18	18%
106	Burkina Faso	Dec-12	127	20	16%	---	---	---	---
107	Albania	Jun-09	140	22	16%	---	---	---	---
108	Republic of Korea	Apr-12	300	47	16%	---	---	---	---
109	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	Mar-09	687	107	16%	---	---	---	---
110	Ireland	Feb-11	166	25	15%	Apr-11	60	18	30%
111	Zimbabwe	Mar-08	214	32	15%	Mar-08	99	24	24%
112	Chad	Feb-11	188	28	15%	---	---	---	---
113	Mongolia	Jun-12	74	11	15%	---	---	---	---
114	Turkey	Jun-11	550	78	14%	---	---	---	---
115	Chile	Dec-09	120	17	14%	Dec-09	38	5	13%
116	Guinea-Bissau	Nov-08	100	14	14%	---	---	---	---
117	Cameroon	Jul-07	180	25	14%	---	---	---	---
118	Djibouti	Feb-08	65	9	14%	---	---	---	---
119	Somalia	Aug-12	275	38	14%	---	---	---	---
120	Swaziland	Sep-08	66	9	14%	Oct-08	30	12	40%
121	Russian Federation	Dec-11	450	61	14%	N.A.	163	13	8%
122	Romania	Dec-12	412	55	13%	Dec-12	176	13	7%
123	Grenada	Jul-08	15	2	13%	Aug-08	13	3	23%
124	Guatemala	Sep-11	158	21	13%	---	---	---	---
125	Niger	Jan-11	113	15	13%	---	---	---	---
126	Bahamas	May-12	38	5	13%	May-12	16	4	25%
127	Jamaica	Dec-11	63	8	13%	Sep-07	21	5	24%
128	= Central African Republic	Jan-11	104	13	13%	---	---	---	---
128	= Dominica	Dec-09	32	4	13%	---	---	---	---
128	= Paraguay	Apr-08	80	10	13%	4 2008	45	7	16%
131	Sierra Leone	Dec-12	121	15	12%	---	---	---	---
132	= Colombia	Mar-10	165	20	12%	Mar-10	100	16	16%
132	= Uruguay	Oct-09	99	12	12%	Oct-09	31	4	13%
134	= Georgia	Oct-12	150	18	12%	---	---	---	---
134	= Jordan	Jan-13	150	18	12%	Oct-11	60	7	12%
134	= Syrian Arab Republic	May-12	250	30	12%	---	---	---	---
137	Suriname	May-10	51	6	12%	---	---	---	---
138	Zambia	Sep-11	157	18	11%	---	---	---	---
139	Togo	Oct-07	81	9	11%	---	---	---	---
140	India	Apr-09	545	60	11%	Jan-12	245	26	11%
141	Liberia	Oct-11	73	8	11%	Oct-11	30	4	13%
142	Cyprus	May-11	56	6	11%	---	---	---	---
143	Armenia	May-12	131	14	11%	---	---	---	---
144	Antigua and Barbuda	Mar-09	19	2	11%	Apr-09	17	5	29%
145	Cote d'Ivoire	Dec-11	249	26	10%	---	---	---	---
146	Malaysia	Mar-08	221	23	10%	N.A.	66	15	23%
147	Ghana	Dec-12	273	28	10%	---	---	---	---
148	Mali	Jul-07	147	15	10%	---	---	---	---
149	= Bahrain	Oct-10	40	4	10%	Nov-10	40	11	28%
149	= Barbados	Jan-08	30	3	10%	Feb-08	21	7	33%
149	= Equatorial Guinea	May-08	100	10	10%	---	---	---	---
152	Kenya	Dec-07	224	22	10%	---	---	---	---
153	Ukraine	Oct-12	445	42	9%	---	---	---	---
154	Democratic Republic of the Congo	Nov-11	492	44	9%	Jan-07	108	6	6%
155	Hungary	Apr-10	386	34	9%	---	---	---	---
156	= Kiribati	Oct-11	46	4	9%	---	---	---	---
156	= Malta	Mar-08	69	6	9%	---	---	---	---
158	Brazil	Oct-10	513	44	9%	Oct-10	81	13	16%
159	Bhutan	Mar-08	47	4	9%	Dec-07	25	6	24%
160	Panama	May-09	71	6	8%	---	---	---	---
161	Benin	Apr-11	83	7	8%	---	---	---	---
162	Botswana	Oct-09	63	5	8%	---	---	---	---
163	Japan	Dec-12	480	38	8%	Jul-10	236	43	18%

Rank	Country	Lower or single House				Upper House or Senate			
		Elections	Seats*	Women	% Women	Elections	Seats*	Women	% Women
164	Gambia	Mar-12	53	4	8%	---	---	---	---
165	Congo	Jul-12	136	10	7%	Oct-11	72	10	14%
166	= Nigeria	Apr-11	360	24	7%	Apr-11	109	7	6%
166	= Saint Kitts and Nevis	Jan-10	15	1	7%	---	---	---	---
166	= Tuvalu	Sep-10	15	1	7%	---	---	---	---
169	Maldives	May-09	77	5	6%	---	---	---	---
170	Kuwait	Dec-12	65	4	6%	---	---	---	---
171	Myanmar	Nov-10	431	26	6%	Nov-10	224	4	2%
172	Sri Lanka	Apr-10	225	13	6%	---	---	---	---
173	Haiti	Nov-10	95	4	4%	Nov-10	20	0	0%
174	Samoa	Mar-11	49	2	4%	---	---	---	---
175	Tonga	Nov-10	28	1	4%	---	---	---	---
176	= Belize	Mar-12	32	1	3%	Mar-12	13	5	38%
176	= Lebanon	Jun-09	128	4	3%	---	---	---	---
178	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	May-12	290	9	3%	---	---	---	---
179	= Comoros	Dec-09	33	1	3%	---	---	---	---
179	= Marshall Islands	Nov-11	33	1	3%	---	---	---	---
181	Papua New Guinea	Jun-12	111	3	3%	---	---	---	---
182	Solomon Islands	Aug-10	50	1	2%	---	---	---	---
183	Egypt	Nov-11	508	10	2%	Jan-12	270	12	4%
184	Oman	Oct-11	84	1	1%	Oct-11	83	15	18%
185	Yemen	Apr-03	301	1	0%	Apr-01	111	2	2%
186	= Micronesia (Federated States of)	Mar-11	14	0	0%	---	---	---	---
186	= Nauru	Jun-10	18	0	0%	---	---	---	---
186	= Palau	Nov-12	16	0	0%	Nov-12	13	3	23%
186	= Qatar	Jul-10	35	0	0%	---	---	---	---
186	= Vanuatu	Oct-12	52	0	0%	---	---	---	---

Notes:

\* Figures correspond to the number of seats currently filled in Parliament

\*\* South Africa: figures on the distribution of seats in the upper house do not include 36 special rotating delegates appointed on an ad hoc basis;  
all percentages are calculated on the basis of 54 permanent seats

Source: [Inter Parliamentary Union \(IPU\) - 1 February 2013](#)

### **Women Speakers of National Parliaments**

At 1 February 2013, 39 women presided over one of the Houses of the 190 existing national parliaments, 77 of which are bicameral. This represents 20.5% of the 274 posts of presiding officer. The relevant countries are:

Albania	Lithuania
Antigua and Barbuda (both chambers)	Mozambique
Australia	Netherlands
Austria	Pakistan
Bahamas	Poland
Barbados	Portugal
Belgium	Russian Federation
Bolivia (both chambers)	Rwanda
Botswana	San Marino
Bulgaria	Singapore
Czech Republic	Suriname
Dominica	Swaziland
Estonia	Switzerland
Gabon	Turkmenistan
Grenada	Uganda
Iceland	United Kingdom
India	United Republic of Tanzania
Lao People's Democratic Republic	Uzbekistan
Latvia	Zimbabwe

Source: Inter Parliamentary Union Women in National Parliaments, <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/speakers.htm>

### **6.2 Women Presidents and Prime Ministers**

At 1 March 2013, a woman holds the post of president or prime minister in 18 countries.<sup>20</sup>

- 9 countries have female presidents: Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, South Korea, Kosovo, Liberia, Lithuania, Malawi and Switzerland.
- 9 countries have female prime ministers: Australia, Bangladesh, Denmark, Germany, Iceland, Jamaica, San Marino, Thailand, and Trinidad & Tobago.

The [Centre for Women and Democracy](#) has also published international comparisons for the number of women Cabinet ministers, at September 2012.<sup>21</sup>

### **6.3 European Parliament**

In July 2009, 255 of 736 MEPs were women (35%). The proportion varied from 62% in Finland to 0% for Malta. One third of the 72 UK MEPs elected in 2009 were women, so that the UK had the 17<sup>th</sup> highest ratio of the 27 EU Member States.

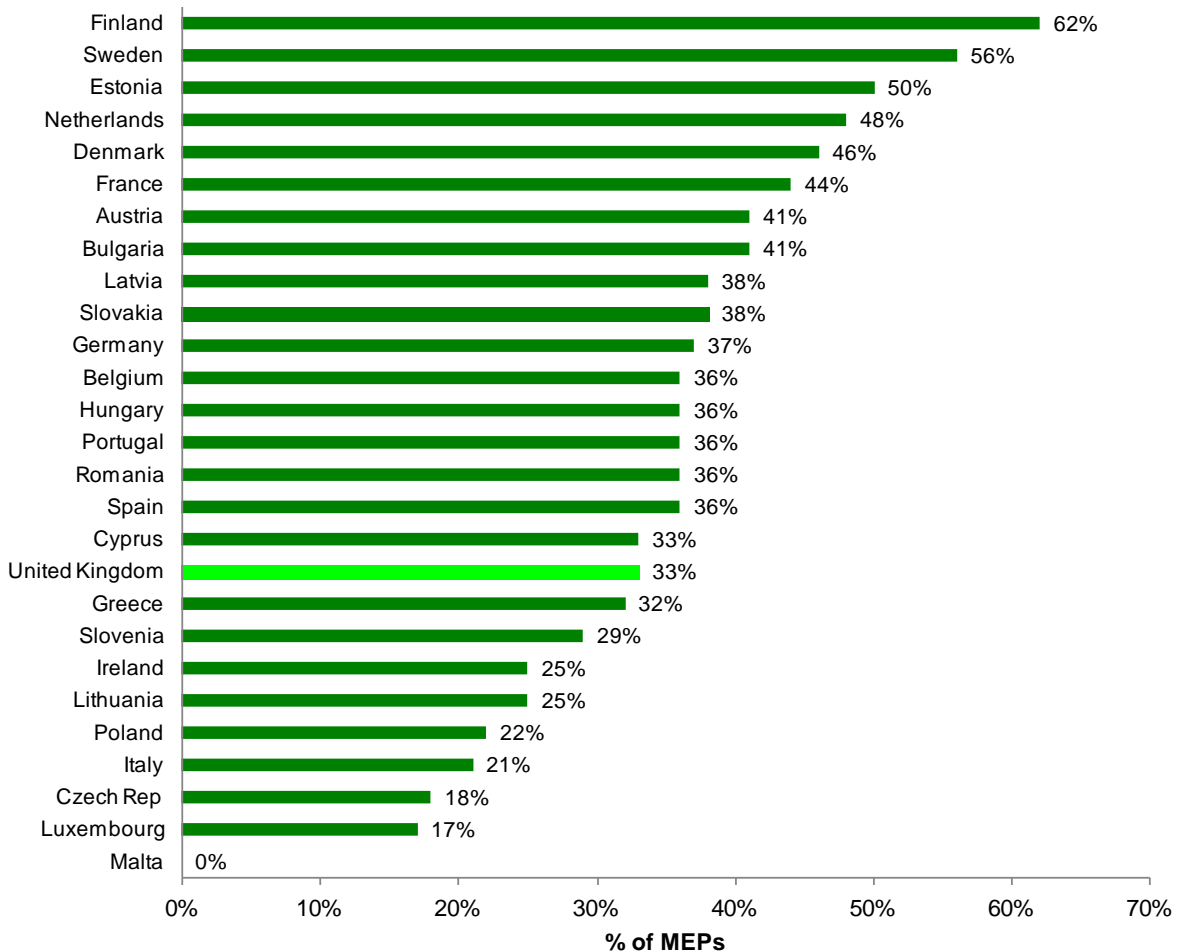
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<sup>20</sup> Centre for Women and Democracy, *Women Presidents and Prime Ministers August 2012 Factsheet* <http://www.cfd.org.uk/uploads/pdfs/WomenWorldLeadersAugust2012.pdf> , BBC Online Park *Geun-hye sworn in as South Korea president* 25 February 2013

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.cfd.org.uk/uploads/CabinetsInternationalSeptember12.pdf>



**Figure 3: % of women MEPs by country, July 2009**



Source: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/parliament/archive/elections2009/en/men\\_women\\_en.html](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/parliament/archive/elections2009/en/men_women_en.html)

## 7 Related Library publications

Further information on political representation of women and other groups can be found in the following Library publications:

- Women in public life, the professions and the boardroom  
[www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN05170](http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN05170)
- Women: International Women's Day 2013, background & statistics  
<http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN02936>
- Women in the House of Lords (House of Lords Library Note)  
<http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/LLN-2012-005>
- Ethnic minorities in politics and government  
[www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN01156](http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN01156)
- Social background of Members of Parliament  
[www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN01528](http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN01528)
- UK Election Statistics: 1918-2012  
[www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/RP12-43](http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/RP12-43)