



## BRIEFING PAPER

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# Women in Parliament and Government

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Other House of Commons Library Briefings on Women in Parliament include:

Further historic and legislative background on Women MPs [Women in the House of Commons](#) Briefing Paper 6651 (16 Dec 2016)

A list of all women Members of Parliament since 1918 is available in [Women Members of Parliament](#) Briefing Paper 6652 (24 Feb 2017)

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## Summary

This briefing sets out key statistics for women in Parliament and other elected bodies in the UK.

### Parliament

208 women MPs were elected at the 2017 General Election, 32% of all MPs and a record high.

210 women, 26%, are Members of the House of Lords.

### Devolved Legislatures

Just over one-third (35%) of members in the Scottish Parliament are women, compared to just over two-fifths (42%) of members of National Assembly for Wales and 30% of Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

### UK MEPs

Following the 2014 European Parliament elections, women are 41% of UK MEPs.

### Local Government councillors

32% of local authority councillors in England are women, as of 2013. In Scotland, 24% of councillors are women. Women hold 26% of council seats in Wales. In Northern Ireland 25% of councillors are women.

### Women MPs since 1918

Since 1918, 456 women have been elected as Members of the House of Commons. In 1918 Constance Markievicz became the first women to be elected as an MP though, elected for Sinn Féin, she did not take her seat. Nancy Astor was the first women to take a seat in the House of Commons, in 1919. The total number of women to have been elected to the House since 1918 has now surpassed the number of men, 454 elected to sit in the current Parliament.

### Women ministers

Currently there are eight women in the Cabinet (including the Prime Minister) which is 36% of 22 Cabinet posts.

Margaret Bondfield was the first ever woman appointed to Cabinet, in 1929; Margaret Thatcher became the UK's first woman Prime Minister in 1979, and Theresa May the second in 2016.

### International comparisons

Globally, the UK's 30% ratio for women in the House of Commons puts it 49<sup>th</sup> in ranked list. Rwanda is first, followed by Bolivia, Cuba and the Seychelles. Three countries in the ranking have no women in their lower or single house, while 31 have fewer than 10%.

Currently a woman holds the post of president or prime minister in 16 countries. This is 9% of the 193 countries who are currently members of the United Nations.

At 1 January 2017, 53 women presided over one of the 193 Houses of Parliament, 77 of which are bicameral, which means that women occupy 19.1% of the posts of Presiding Officers of Parliament or of one of its Houses.

# 1. Women in Parliament and elected bodies in the UK

## 1.1 Parliaments and devolved legislatures

208 women MPs were elected at the 2017 General Election, 32% of all MPs and a record high. Women MPs by party included 119 Labour MPs, 67 Conservative and 12 SNP. 45% of Labour MPs are women, 21% of Conservative MPs and 34% of SNP MPs.

Currently, 210 (26%) of 804 Members of the House of Lords are women.

Just over one-third (35%) of members in the **Scottish Parliament** are women, compared to just over two-fifths (42%) of members of **National Assembly for Wales** and 30% of Members of **the Northern Ireland Assembly**. In the Scottish Parliament 27 (43%) of the SNP's 63 Members are women; in the House of Commons 20 (36%) of the SNP's 56 MPs elected in 2015 are women.

Following the 2014 **European Parliament** elections, women comprised two-fifths (40%) of UK MEPs.

### Women in the UK Parliament and elected bodies by party

#### % Women

	Con	Lab	LD	SNP	Other	Total
<b>% female</b>						
House of Commons	21%	45%	33%	34%	26%	32%
House of Lords	25%	32%	34%	-	20%	26%
National Assembly for Wales	27%	52%	0%	-	32%	42%
Scottish Parliament	19%	46%	0%	43%	17%	35%
Northern Ireland Assembly	-	-	-	-	30%	28%
London Assembly	13%	50%	100%	-	50%	40%
European Parliament (UK Members)	30%	55%	100%	-	37%	40%

#### Notes:

1. Membership of the House of Commons 23 June 2017.
2. House of Lords membership at 23 February 2017. Excludes peers on leave of absence, suspended, or disqualified as senior members of the judiciary, for example.
3. Membership of Scottish Parliament as of 5 May 2016 elections.
4. Membership of the European Parliament following the May 2014 elections.
5. Membership of the Northern Ireland Assembly as of 2 March 2017 elections.
6. Membership of the London Assembly as of 5 May 2016 elections.
7. Membership of the National Assembly for Wales as of 5 May 2016 elections..

#### Sources:

Houses of Parliament 'Members Names' database

House of Commons Library Briefings: CBP 7599 *Scottish Parliament Elections: 2016*; CBP7920 *Northern Ireland Assembly Elections: 2017*

CBP 7594 *National Assembly for Wales Elections: 2016*; RP14/32 *European Parliament Elections 2014*

Following elections in 2016, of 40 elected **Police and Crime Commissioners** in England, 8 (20%) are women.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> HC Library CBP 7595 [Police and Crime Commissioner Elections: 2016](#)

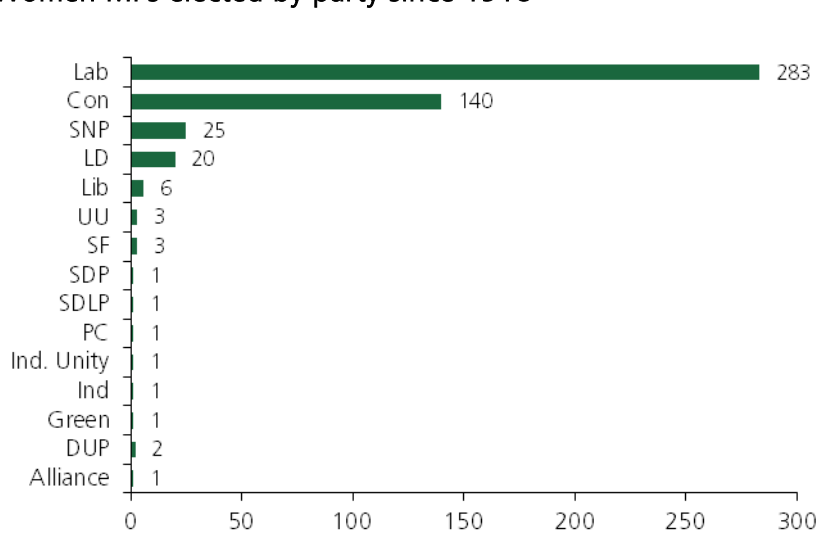


## 2. Women MPs since 1918

Since 1918, 489 women have been elected as Members of the House of Commons<sup>2</sup>. Three of them were elected as Sinn Féin MPs and did not take their seats, Countess Constance Markievicz (1918), Michelle Gildernew (2001) and Elisha McCallion (2017).

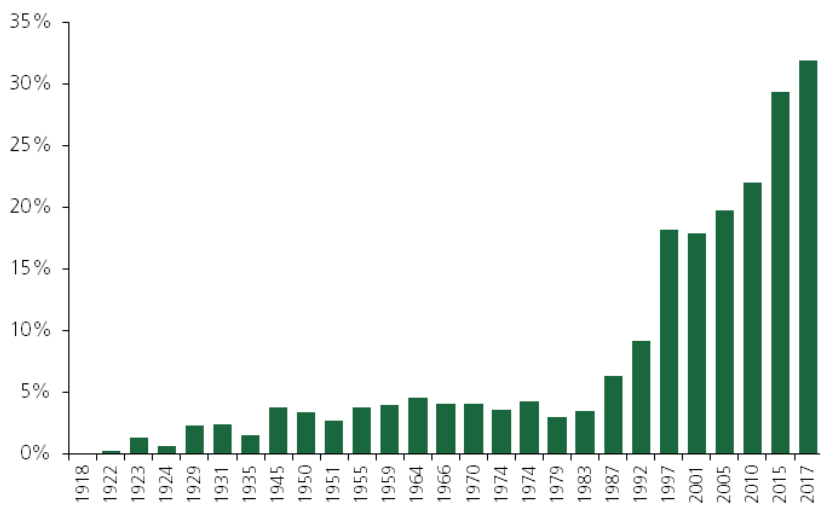
Of the 489 women, 283 (58%) were first elected as Labour MPs and 140 (29%) Conservative.

### Women MPs elected by party since 1918



Until 1997 women had never been more than 10% of all MPs, and until the late 1980s the proportion had always been below 5%. The proportion rose to 18% following the 1997 General Election when 120 women were elected. The highest ever proportion of women, 32%, elected at a General Election was in June 2017.

### Women MPs elected at General Elections as a percentage of total 1918 – 2017



For underlying data see Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> Includes women elected at General Elections and by-elections.

### 3. Women ministers

In July 2016, Theresa May became the second woman UK Prime Minister. Currently there are six women in the Cabinet (including the Prime Minister) which is 26% of 23 Cabinet posts.<sup>3</sup> There are five Ministers who also attend the cabinet, two of whom are women.

Of 114 individuals who hold posts as Government Ministers and Whips in the House of Commons or House of Lords 31 (27%) are women.

Previously, in 2015, David Cameron appointed seven women to one of the 22 Cabinet Posts; this was 30% (of 22 Cabinet posts plus the PM). In addition there were eight Ministers who also attended cabinet, three of whom were women.

In 2010, David Cameron's first Cabinet included four women.

Tony Blair's 1997 Cabinet had five women and was the first to include more than two female ministers at one time. The highest number of concurrent women Cabinet Ministers under Tony Blair was eight (36 per cent), under Tony Blair (then a record) from May 2006 – May 2007.

**Table 3** shows the 43 women 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.

**Table 3 Women Cabinet Ministers, 1929 to 2017**

1929-31	Margaret Bondfield	2004-08	Ruth Kelly
1945-47	Ellen Wilkinson	2006-09	Hazel Blears
1953-54	Florence Horsbrugh	2006-09	Jacqui Smith
1964-70 & 1974-76	Barbara Castle	2007-08	Baroness Ashton
1968-69	Judith Hart	2008-10	Yvette Cooper
1970-74 & 1979-90	Margaret Thatcher	2008-10	Baroness Royal
1974-79	Shirley Williams	2010-12	Caroline Spelman
1982-83	Baroness Young	2010-12	Cheryl Gillan
1992-97	Virginia Bottomley	2010-12	Baroness Warsi
1992-97	Gillian Shephard	2010-	Theresa May
1997-98	Ann Taylor	2011-	Justine Greening
1997-98 & 2007-10	Harriet Harman	2012-14	Maria Miller
1997-2001	Mo Mowlam	2012-16	Theresa Villiers
1997-2003	Clare Short	2014-16	Nicky Morgan
1997-2007	Margaret Beckett	2014-17	Elizabeth Truss
1998-2001	Baroness Jay	2014-16	Baroness Stowell
2001-03	Helen Liddell	2015-	Amber Rudd
2001-02	Estelle Morris	2016-	Baroness Evans
2001-07	Hilary Armstrong	2016-	Karen Bradley
2001-07	Patricia Hewitt	2016-17	Andrea Leadsom
2001-07 & 2009-10	Tessa Jowell	2016-	Priti Patel
2003-07	Baroness Amos		

<sup>3</sup> [Full list of new ministerial and government appointments](#)

## 4. Parliamentary and political firsts for women

The below timeline sets out a number of “firsts” and significant events over the last century for women in Parliament and political life.<sup>4</sup>

- 1907** *Qualification of Women (County and Borough Councils) 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 who met minimum property qualifications given the right to vote
- 1918** MP elected (Countess Constance de Markievicz)<sup>5</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)
- 1967** Deputy Speaker (Lords) (Baroness Wootton)
- 1970** Deputy Speaker (Commons) (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 Northern Ireland (Mo Mowlam)
- 1997** Leader of the House of Commons (Ann Taylor)
- 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** 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)
- 2014** First Minister of Scotland (Nicola Sturgeon)
- 2016** Lord Chancellor (Liz Truss)

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](#). BBC Woman’s hour [Women’s history timeline](#) provides a list of key events by decade since 1900.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> COI, *Women in Britain*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1996; [Centre for Advancement of Women in Politics](#)

<sup>5</sup> Elected in the General Election but along with 72 other Sinn Féin MPs did not take her seat.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/womanshour/timeline/timeline.shtml>

## 5. Women General Election candidates

### 2017 General Election

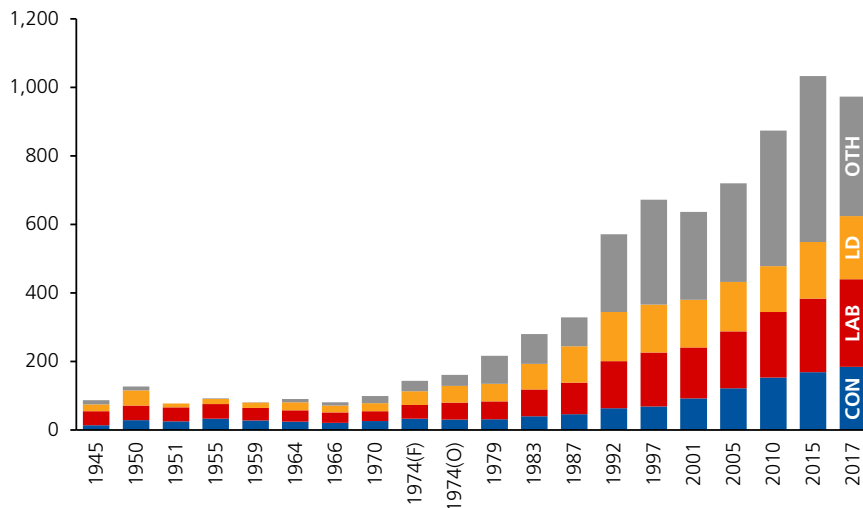
In the 2017 General Election 973 women candidates stood across all parties, 29% of all 3,304 candidates. Although this is the highest proportion on record, the number of women candidates was lower than at the 2015 General Election (1,033).

Labour had 256 women candidates, the highest number of any party at this or any other General Election. Women were 41% of Labour’s candidates, compared to 34% in 2015.

184 Conservative candidates, 29% of the party’s total cohort, were women – a 9% rise on 2015 and the highest number in the Party’s history. Similarly, 184 (29%) Liberal Democrats candidates were women.

35% of Green Party candidates were women, as were 34% of Scottish National Party candidates and 28% of Plaid Cymru candidates. Women comprised 13% of UKIP candidates. Women’s Equality Party fielded only female candidates at the 2017 General Election.

### Number of women candidates at UK General Elections 1945–2017



The table below shows the balance of men and women candidates for each of the seats in the 2017 election by marginality to their party at the previous general election. This shows how seats “safe” and less “safe” were contested by men and women candidates.

Marginality is measured as the difference in percentage vote share of the party’s candidate from the winning candidates or, in seats won by the party, from the candidate in second place at the 2015 election.

A positive marginality means the party won the seat in 2015.

Seats with a negative marginality are those that party did not win in 2015 – 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%.

## Candidates by gender, party and marginality of seat – 2017 General Election

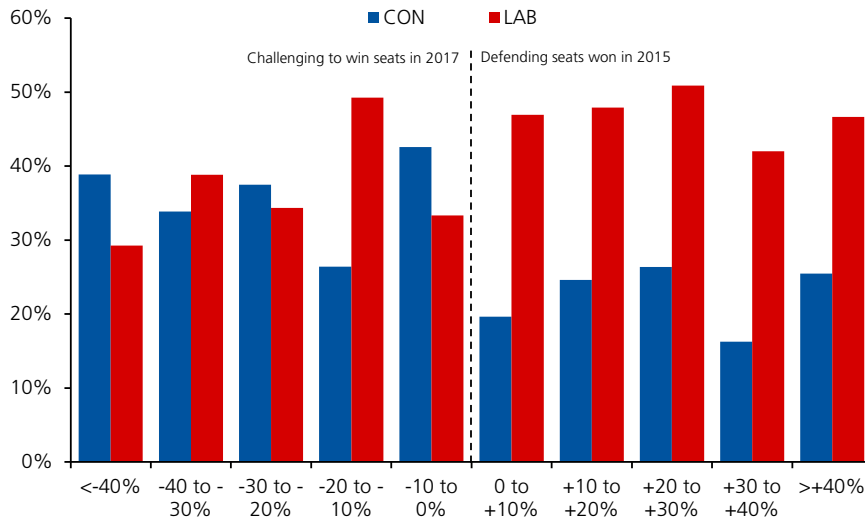
	Conservatives		Labour		Liberal Democrat	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
<b>Number of candidates</b>						
-40% > X	28	44	24	58	112	320
-40% = < X < -30%	22	43	40	63	45	79
-30% = < X < -20%	24	40	34	65	7	15
-20% = < X < -10%	14	39	33	34	10	16
-10% = < X < 0%	23	31	16	32	9	7
0% = < X < 10%	11	45	23	26	1	6
10% = < X < 20%	16	49	23	25	0	1
20% = < X < 30%	19	53	28	27	0	0
30% = < X < 40%	14	72	21	29	0	0
40% < X	13	38	14	16	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>454</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>444</b>
<b>% of all candidates</b>						
-40% > X	39%	61%	29%	71%	26%	74%
-40% = < X < -30%	34%	66%	39%	61%	36%	64%
-30% = < X < -20%	38%	63%	34%	66%	32%	68%
-20% = < X < -10%	26%	74%	49%	51%	38%	62%
-10% = < X < 0%	43%	57%	33%	67%	56%	44%
0% = < X < 10%	20%	80%	47%	53%	14%	86%
10% = < X < 20%	25%	75%	48%	52%	0%	100%
20% = < X < 30%	26%	74%	51%	49%	0%	0%
30% = < X < 40%	16%	84%	42%	58%	0%	0%
40% < X	25%	75%	47%	53%	0%	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>71%</b>

Note: Liberal Democrat totals include one non-binary candidate. Source: HC Library, General Election 2017 (CBP 7979), 11 July 2017

Labour had a higher proportion of women candidates in safer seats. In seats with a 20% to 30% majority, 51% of Labour candidates were women compared with 26% of Conservative candidates.

The Conservatives, on the other hand, had 43% female candidates in the most winnable seats (those with a 0% to 10% majority to be overturned), compared with 33% of Labour candidates. This represents a fall for Labour and rise for the Conservatives compared with 2015, when the opposite was true.

## Conservative and Labour candidates by seat marginality, % women, 2017 General Election



Note: Marginality is measured as the difference in percentage vote share of the party's candidate from the winning candidates or, in seats won by the party, from the candidate in second place at the 2015 election. A positive marginality means the party won the seat in 2015.

Source: HC Library, General Election 2017 (CBP 7979), 11 July 2017

Labour also had a higher proportion of women candidates in seats with the narrowest margin to hold. In seats with a 0% to 10% marginality, 47% of Labour candidates were women and 20% of Conservative candidates.

For the Liberal Democrats, the proportion of women was the highest in marginal seats (56%).

### Historic background

The number of women candidates has risen at every general election since 1966 except in 2001, when there were 36 fewer women candidates than in 1997. At the 2017 General Election there were 60 fewer women than in 2015, but their proportion increased relative to men.

Women were first able to stand for Parliament in 1918, when there were 17 women candidates. This comprised one Conservative candidate, four Labour, four Liberal Democrat and eight other.

Women as a proportion of all candidates did not rise above 10% until 1979, when 11% of candidates were female. In 2005 women as a proportion of total candidates reached 20% for the first time.

(For underlying data on candidates see Appendix)

## 6. Local Government

### Current position

In 2013, 32% of local authority councillors in **England** were women.<sup>7</sup> In **Scotland**, 24% of councillors elected at the 2012 local government elections were women.<sup>8</sup> Women held 26% of council seats in **Wales** following the 2012 local elections.<sup>9</sup> In **Northern Ireland** in 2014, 25% of councillors were women.<sup>10</sup>

The table below shows the number of local councillors by party and gender in England in 2013.

**Table 2: Councillors in England 2013, by party and gender**

Party	% Male	% Female	% Not known	Total
Conservative	70.0%	29.1%	0.9%	8,248
Labour	62.3%	36.7%	1.1%	5,697
Liberal Democrat	66.2%	33.4%	0.4%	2,625
Independent/ Resident's association	73.1%	26.4%	0.6%	869
UK Independence Party	88.6%	11.4%	0.0%	178
Green Party	59.5%	37.9%	2.6%	176
Other	73.7%	26.3%	0.0%	113
<b>Total</b>	<b>67.2%</b>	<b>31.9%</b>	<b>0.9%</b>	<b>17,906</b>

Source: Local Government Association, [National Census of Local Authority Councillors](#), 2013, additional analyses

### 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 women ratepayers to stand as candidates to local school boards, the first contested election of which took place in Manchester on 24 November 1870.<sup>11</sup>

The Local Government Act 1894 allowed women to serve on parish and district councils, but it was not until the Qualification of Women (County and Town Councils) Act was passed in 1907 that women (ratepayers) were permitted to be members of County and Borough Councils.<sup>12</sup> Three months after this Act was passed five women were elected to these bodies in England (Aldeburgh, Reading, Bewdley,

<sup>7</sup> LGA, [National Census of Local Authority Councillors 2013](#)

<sup>8</sup> Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe), [Local Government Elections 2012](#)

<sup>9</sup> Electoral Reform Society, [Spotlight on Wales: Women and local government](#)

<sup>10</sup> NISRA, [Women in Northern Ireland 2015](#)

<sup>11</sup> *Votes for Women Virago Book of Suffragettes*, ed Joyce Marlow p19

<sup>12</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.

Oxford and Oldham).<sup>13</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>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *Ladies Elect: women in English local government 1865 to 1914*, Patricia Hollis

<sup>14</sup> [\*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography\*](#), OUP, accessed 5 Feb 2008

## 7. International context

### 7.1 Women Presidents and Prime Ministers

As of October 2017 a woman holds the post of president or prime minister in 18 countries. This is 9% of the 193 countries who are currently members of the United Nations.

#### Women Presidents

Country	Name	In office since:
Chile	Michelle Bachelet	2014
Croatia	Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović	2015
Estonia	Kersti Kaljulaid	2016
Liberia	Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson	2006
Lithuania	Dalia Grybauskaitė	2009
Malta	Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca	2014
Marshall Islands	Hilda Heine	2016
Mauritius	Ameenah Gurib-Fakim	2015
Nepal	Bidhya Devi Bhandari	2015
Switzerland	Doris Leuthard	2017
Taiwan	Tsai Ing-wen	2016

#### Women Prime Ministers

Country	Name	In office since:
Bangladesh	(Sheikh) Hasina Wajed	2009
Germany	Angela Merkel	2005
Myanmar	Aung San Suu Kyi	2016
Namibia	Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila	2015
Norway	Erna Solberg	2013
Poland	Beata Szydło	2016
United Kingdom	Theresa May	2016

The list does not include hereditary heads of state or the prime ministers of dependent, devolved, autonomous or semi-autonomous territories.

Source: Centre for Women and Democracy [Women Leaders Worldwide March 2017](#)



## 7.2 Women Speakers of National Parliaments

At 1 June 2017, 55 women presided over one of the 193 Houses of Parliament<sup>15</sup>, 78 of which are bicameral. Women therefore occupy 19.8% of the total number of 278 posts of Presiding Officers of Parliament or of one of its Houses.

This is an increase on 45 women presiding officers in Parliaments at the start of 2015. The countries and chambers with women presiding officers or Speakers are<sup>16</sup>:

### **Women Speakers of National Parliament as of 1 January 2017**

Country	Chamber(s)
Antigua and Barbuda	Senate
Argentina	Senate
Austria	National Council & Fed Council
Bahamas	Senate
Bangladesh	Jatiya Sangsad
Barbados	Senate
Belguim	Senate
Belize	House of Representatives
Bolivia	Chamber of Deputies
Bosnia and Herzegovina	House od Representatives
Botswana	National Assembly
Denmark	Folketing
Dominica	House of Assembly
Dominican Republic	Chamber of Deputies
Equatorial Guinea	Senado
Fiji	Parliament
Finland	Eduskunta
Gabon	Senate
Germany	Bundesrat
Iceland	Althingi
India	Lok Sabha
Italy	Chamber of Deputies
Lao People's Democratic Republic	Saphs Heng Xat
Latvia	Saeima
Lesotho	National Assembly
Mauritius	National Assembly
Mexico	Camara de Disputados
Mozambique	Assembleia da Republica
Namibia	National Council
Nepal	Ryabasthapika Sansad
Netherlands	Eerste Kamer & Twede Kamer der Staten Generaal
Peru	Congress of the Republic
Lucia	House of Assembly
Russian Federation	Soviet Federatsii
Rwanda	Chamber of Deputies
Saint Lucia	House of Assembly
San Marino	Consiglio grande e generale
Serbia	Narodna skupstina
Singapore	Parliament
South Africa	National Assembly & National Council of Provinces
Spain	Congress of Deputies
Suriname	Nationale Assemblée
Swaziland	Senate
Syrian Arab Republic	Majilis Al-Chaab
Trinidad and Tobago	House of representatives and Senate
Turkmenistan	Mejilis
Uganda	Parliament
United Arab Emirates	Majilis Watani Itihadi
Viet Nam	National Assembly
Zimbabwe	Senate

<sup>15</sup> 193 reported by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/speakers.htm>

Historically, Austria was the only State to have elected a woman to the presidency of one of the Parliament's Chambers (the Bundesrat) before the Second World War. To date women have held one of those positions in 96 countries at least once.

Betty Boothroyd was the first woman Speaker of the House of Commons in the UK in 1992.

**Date at which, for the first time in the country's parliamentary history, a woman became Presiding Officer of Parliament or of one of its Houses<sup>17</sup>**

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Austria: 1927	El Salvador: 1994	Saint Lucia: 2007
Denmark: 1950	Mexico: 1994	United States of America: 2007
Hungary: 1963	Panama: 1994	Nigeria: 2007
Uruguay: 1963	Ethiopia: 1995	Uzbekistan: 2008
Germany: 1972	Latvia: 1995	Pakistan: 2008
Canada: 1972	Peru: 1995	Serbia: 2008
Argentina: 1973	Malta: 1996	Rwanda: 2008
Iceland: 1974	Poland: 1997	Romania: 2008
Switzerland: 1977	Bahamas: 1997	Gabon: 2009
Bolivia: 1979	Suriname: 1997	Bosnia and Herzegovina: 2009
Italy: 1979	Netherlands: 1998	Ghana: 2009
Dominica: 1980	Czech Republic: 1998	India: 2009
Sao Tome and Principe: 1980	Venezuela: 1998	Bulgaria: 2009
San Marino: 1981	Spain: 1999	Lithuania: 2009
Ireland: 1982	Dominican Republic: 1999	Botswana: 2009
Belize: 1984	Lesotho: 2000	Mozambique: 2010
Jamaica: 1984	Republic of Moldova: 2001	United Republic of Tanzania: 2010
Costa Rica: 1986	Georgia: 2001	Lao People's Democratic Republic: 2011
Australia: 1987	Chile: 2002	Uganda: 2011
Luxembourg: 1989	Liberia: 2003	Portugal: 2011
Grenada: 1990	Estonia: 2003	Russian Federation: 2011
Nicaragua: 1990	Greece: 2004	Barbados: 2012
Finland: 1991	Belgium: 2004	Singapore: 2013
Guatemala: 1991	Saint Kitts and Nevis: 2004	Bangladesh: 2013
Sweden: 1991	New Zealand: 2005	Equatorial Guinea: 2013
Trinidad and Tobago: 1991	Burundi: 2005	Madagascar: 2013
United Kingdom: 1992	Albania: 2005	Fiji: 2014
Croatia: 1993	Zimbabwe: 2005	Mauritius: 2014
Japan: 1993	Gambia: 2006	Nepal: 2015
Norway: 1993	Israel: 2006	United Arab Emirates: 2015
South Africa: 1994	Swaziland: 2006	Namibia: 2015
Antigua and Barbuda: 1994	Turkmenistan: 2006	Viet Nam: 2016
		Syrian Arab Republic: 2016

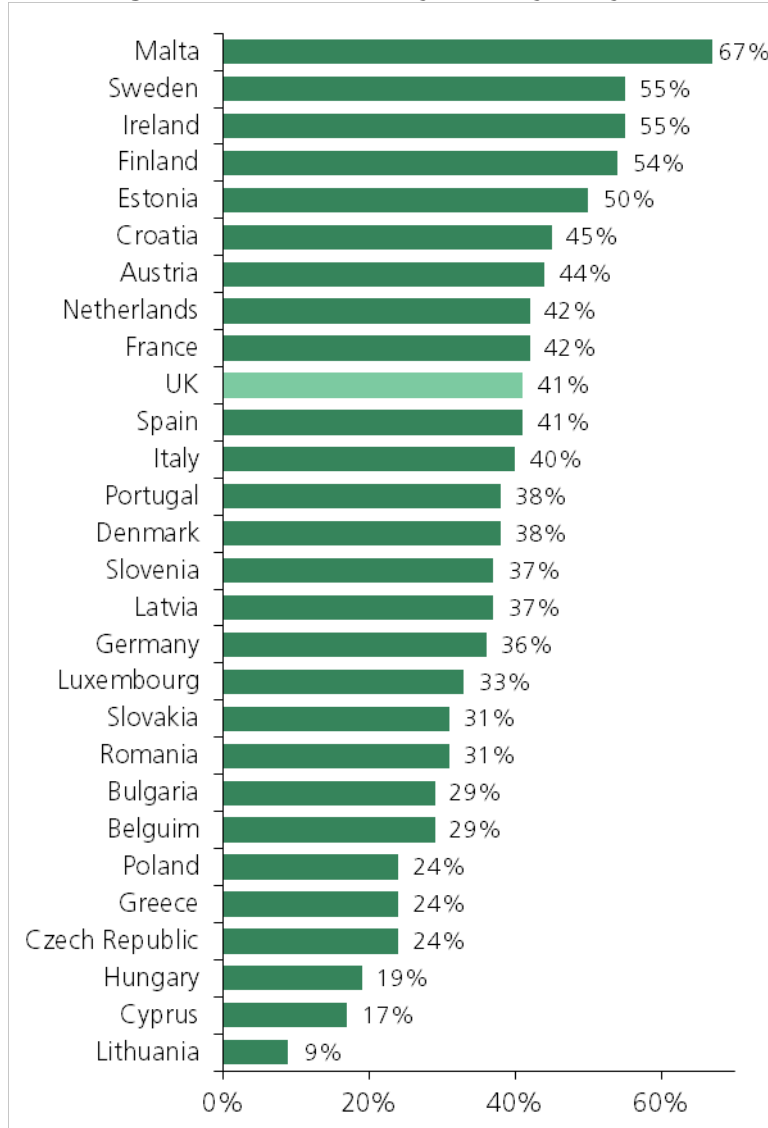
---

<sup>17</sup> IPU, <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/speakers.htm>

## 7.3 European Parliament

In May 2014, 37% of MEPs were women. The proportion varied from 67% in Malta to 9% for Lithuania. Two-fifths of the 73 UK MEPs elected in 2014 were women, so that the UK had the 10th highest ratio of the 28 EU Member following elections in May 2014.

### Percentage of women MEPs by country, May 2014



Source: European Parliament, [Results of the 2014 European elections](#)

## 7.4 Overseas 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 currently ranked 46<sup>th</sup>.<sup>18</sup> Rwanda is first, followed by Bolivia, Cuba and Iceland. Four countries in the ranking have no women in their lower or single house, while 27 have fewer than 10%.

<sup>18</sup> This refers to the number of women MPs in the 2015 Parliament, before the 2017 General Election.

## 17 Women in Parliament and Government

### Women in national Parliaments as at 1 January 2017

Inter-Parliamentary Union ranking, 193 countries

		Lower or single House			Upper House or Senate		
		Seats*	Women	% W	Seats*	Women	% W
1	Rwanda	80	49	61%	26	10	38.5%
2	Bolivia	130	69	53%	36	17	47.2%
3	Cuba	612	299	49%	---	---	---
4	Iceland	63	30	48%	---	---	---
5	Nicaragua	92	42	46%	---	---	---
6	Sweden	349	152	44%	---	---	---
7	Senegal	150	64	43%	---	---	---
8	Mexico	500	213	43%	128	47	36.7%
9	Finland	200	84	42%	---	---	---
10	South Africa 1	400	166	42%	54	19	35.2%
11	Namibia	104	43	41%	42	10	23.8%
12	Mozambique	250	99	40%	---	---	---
"	Norway	169	67	40%	---	---	---
14	Spain	350	137	39%	266	101	38.0%
15	Argentina	257	100	39%	72	30	41.7%
16	Ethiopia	547	212	39%	153	49	32.0%
17	Timor-Leste	65	25	39%	---	---	---
18	Angola	220	84	38%	---	---	---
19	Belgium	150	57	38%	60	30	50.0%
"	Ecuador	137	52	38%	---	---	---
21	Denmark	179	67	37%	---	---	---
22	Germany	630	233	37%	69	27	39.1%
23	Slovenia	90	33	37%	40	3	7.5%
24	Burundi	121	44	36%	43	18	41.9%
"	United Republic of Tanzania	393	143	36%	---	---	---
26	Netherlands	150	54	36%	75	26	34.7%
27	Costa Rica	57	20	35%	---	---	---
28	Portugal	230	80	35%	---	---	---
29	Belarus	110	38	35%	56	17	30.4%
30	Serbia	250	86	34%	---	---	---
31	Uganda	449	154	34%	---	---	---
32	New Zealand	120	41	34%	---	---	---
"	The F.Y.R. of Macedonia	120	41	34%	---	---	---
34	Grenada	15	5	33%	13	2	15.4%
35	Zimbabwe	270	88	33%	80	38	47.5%
36	Switzerland	200	65	33%	46	7	15.2%
37	Andorra	28	9	32%	---	---	---
"	El Salvador	84	27	32%	---	---	---
39	Guyana	69	22	32%	---	---	---
40	Tunisia	217	68	31%	---	---	---
41	Cameroon	180	56	31%	100	20	20.0%
42	Italy	630	195	31%	320	91	28.4%
"	Trinidad and Tobago	42	13	31%	31	9	29.0%
44	Austria	183	56	31%	61	19	31.1%
45	Sudan	426	130	31%	54	19	35.2%
46	United Kingdom	650	195	30%	805	207	25.7%
47	Nepal	595	176	30%	---	---	---
48	Philippines	292	86	30%	24	6	25.0%
49	Australia	150	43	29%	76	31	40.8%
50	South Sudan	383	109	29%	50	6	12.0%

50	South Sudan	383	109	29%	50	6	12.0%
51	Luxembourg	60	17	28%	---	---	---
52	Poland	460	129	28%	100	14	14.0%
53	Afghanistan	249	69	28%	68	18	26.5%
"	Peru	130	36	28%	---	---	---
55	Israel	120	33	28%	---	---	---
"	Lao People's Democratic Republic	149	41	28%	---	---	---
57	Kazakhstan	107	29	27%	47	3	6.4%
58	Dominican Republic	190	51	27%	32	3	9.4%
59	Estonia	101	27	27%	---	---	---
"	San Marino	60	16	27%	---	---	---
"	Viet Nam	494	132	27%	---	---	---
62	Canada	335	88	26%	100	43	43.0%
63	Algeria	462	119	26%	143	10	7.0%
"	France	577	149	26%	348	95	27.3%
"	Honduras	128	33	26%	---	---	---
"	Turkmenistan	124	32	26%	---	---	---
67	Suriname	51	13	26%	---	---	---
68	Iraq	328	83	25%	---	---	---
69	Mauritania	147	37	25%	56	8	14.3%
70	Dominica	32	8	25%	---	---	---
"	Lesotho	120	30	25%	33	8	24.2%
72	Somalia	275	67	24%	54	13	24.1%
73	China	2924	709	24%	---	---	---
74	Equatorial Guinea	100	24	24%	73	12	16.4%
75	Bulgaria	240	57	24%	---	---	---
"	Singapore	101	24	24%	---	---	---
77	Cabo Verde	72	17	24%	---	---	---
78	Montenegro	81	19	24%	---	---	---
79	Albania	140	32	23%	---	---	---
80	Republic of Moldova	101	23	23%	---	---	---
81	Ireland	158	35	22%	60	18	30.0%
"	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	167	37	22%	---	---	---
83	Eritrea	150	33	22%	---	---	---
84	Guinea	114	25	22%	---	---	---
85	Bosnia and Herzegovina	42	9	21%	15	2	13.3%
86	Lithuania	141	30	21%	---	---	---
87	Seychelles	33	7	21%	---	---	---
88	Monaco	24	5	21%	---	---	---
89	Romania	329	68	21%	136	19	14.0%
90	Pakistan	340	70	21%	104	19	18.3%
91	Morocco	395	81	21%	120	14	11.7%
92	Bangladesh	350	71	20%	---	---	---
"	Cambodia	123	25	20%	61	9	14.8%
94	Uruguay	99	20	20%	31	9	29.0%
95	Czech Republic	200	40	20%	80	15	18.8%
"	Slovakia	150	30	20%	---	---	---
"	United Arab Emirates	40	8	20%	---	---	---
98	Saudi Arabia	151	30	20%	---	---	---
99	Indonesia	560	111	20%	---	---	---
100	Kenya	350	68	19%	68	18	26.5%
101	United States of America	431	83	19%	100	21	21.0%
102	Kyrgyzstan	120	23	19%	---	---	---
"	Madagascar	151	29	19%	63	13	20.6%
104	Tajikistan	63	12	19%	32	7	21.9%
105	Colombia	166	31	19%	102	22	21.6%



## 19 Women in Parliament and Government

106	Croatia	151	28	19%	---	---	---
107	Greece	300	55	18%	---	---	---
"	Panama	71	13	18%	---	---	---
109	Sao Tome and Principe	55	10	18%	---	---	---
110	Armenia	105	19	18%	---	---	---
111	Zambia	167	30	18%	---	---	---
112	Cyprus	56	10	18%	---	---	---
113	Togo	91	16	18%	---	---	---
114	Jamaica	63	11	18%	21	5	23.8%
115	Gabon	117	20	17%	102	18	17.6%
"	Mongolia	76	13	17%	---	---	---
117	Niger	171	29	17%	---	---	---
"	Republic of Korea	300	51	17%	---	---	---
119	Azerbaijan	125	21	17%	---	---	---
120	Barbados	30	5	17%	21	5	23.8%
"	Malawi	192	32	17%	---	---	---
"	Saint Lucia	18	3	17%	11	3	27.3%
123	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	687	112	16%	---	---	---
124	Fiji	50	8	16%	---	---	---
"	Georgia	150	24	16%	---	---	---
"	Latvia	100	16	16%	---	---	---
"	Libya	188	30	16%	---	---	---
"	Uzbekistan	150	24	16%	100	17	17.0%
129	Chile	120	19	16%	38	6	15.8%
"	Russian Federation	450	71	16%	170	29	17.1%
131	Jordan	130	20	15%	65	10	15.4%
132	Egypt	596	89	15%	---	---	---
133	Turkey	549	80	15%	---	---	---
134	Paraguay	80	11	14%	45	9	20.0%
135	Guinea-Bissau	102	14	14%	---	---	---
136	Saint Kitts and Nevis	15	2	13%	---	---	---
137	Syrian Arab Republic	250	33	13%	---	---	---
138	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	23	3	13%	---	---	---
139	Bahamas	39	5	13%	16	7	43.8%
"	Chad	188	24	13%	---	---	---
141	Ghana	275	35	13%	---	---	---
"	Guatemala	158	20	13%	---	---	---
143	Malta	72	9	13%	---	---	---
"	Palau	16	2	13%	13	2	15.4%
145	Sierra Leone	121	15	12%	---	---	---
146	Liberia	73	9	12%	30	3	10.0%
"	Ukraine	423	52	12%	---	---	---
148	Liechtenstein	25	3	12%	---	---	---
149	India	542	64	12%	244	27	11.1%
150	Mauritius	69	8	12%	---	---	---
151	Antigua and Barbuda	18	2	11%	17	5	29.4%
152	Burkina Faso	127	14	11%	---	---	---
153	Djibouti	65	7	11%	---	---	---
154	Brazil	513	55	11%	81	12	14.8%
155	Cote d'Ivoire	255	27	11%	---	---	---
156	Nauru	19	2	11%	---	---	---
157	Malaysia	222	23	10%	68	15	22.1%
158	Gambia	58	6	10%	---	---	---
159	Myanmar	433	44	10%	221	23	10.4%
160	Hungary	199	20	10%	---	---	---

161	Samoa	50	5	10%	---	---	---
162	Botswana	63	6	10%	---	---	---
163	Belize	32	3	9%	13	2	15.4%
164	Japan	475	44	9%	242	50	20.7%
165	Brunei Darussalam	33	3	9%	---	---	---
"	Marshall Islands	33	3	9%	---	---	---
167	Democratic Republic of the Congo	492	44	9%	108	5	4.6%
168	Mali	147	13	9%	---	---	---
169	Central African Republic	140	12	9%	---	---	---
170	Bhutan	47	4	9%	25	2	8.0%
171	Bahrain	40	3	8%	40	9	22.5%
172	Congo	136	10	7%	72	14	19.4%
173	Benin	83	6	7%	---	---	---
174	Tuvalu	15	1	7%	---	---	---
175	Kiribati	46	3	7%	---	---	---
176	Swaziland	65	4	6%	30	10	33.3%
177	Comoros	33	2	6%	---	---	---
178	Iran	289	17	6%	---	---	---
"	Maldives	85	5	6%	---	---	---
180	Sri Lanka	225	13	6%	---	---	---
181	Nigeria	360	20	6%	108	7	6.5%
182	Thailand	250	12	5%	---	---	---
183	Tonga	26	1	4%	---	---	---
184	Kuwait	65	2	3%	---	---	---
"	Lebanon	128	4	3%	---	---	---
186	Papua New Guinea	111	3	3%	---	---	---
187	Haiti	118	3	3%	28	1	3.6%
188	Solomon Islands	50	1	2%	---	---	---
189	Oman	85	1	1%	85	14	16.5%
190	Micronesia	14	0	0%	---	---	---
"	Qatar	35	0	0%	---	---	---
"	Vanuatu	52	0	0%	---	---	---
"	Yemen	275	0	0.0%	111	2	1.8%

1.South Africa: the figures on the distribution of seats do not include the 36 special rotating delegates on an ad hoc basis, and all percentages given are therefore calculated on the basis of 54.

Source: [Inter-Parliamentary Union Women in National Parliaments World Classification](#) (1 June 2017)

## 8. Appendix

### Women and Men in Parliament and devolved bodies in the UK

Women in Parliament and other elected bodies, as of 10 July 2017

	Con	Lab	LD	SNP	Other	Total
<b>Male</b>						
House of Commons	250	143	8	23	17	441
House of Lords	191	138	67	-	198	594
National Assembly for Wales	8	14	-	-	13	35
Scottish Parliament	25	13	5	36	5	84
Northern Ireland Assembly				-	63	78
London Assembly	7	6	0	-	2	15
European Parliament (UK Members)	14	9	0	2	19	44
<b>Female</b>						
House of Commons	67	119	4	12	6	208
House of Lords	63	64	34	-	49	210
National Assembly for Wales	3	15	1	-	6	25
Scottish Parliament	6	11	0	27	1	45
Northern Ireland Assembly				-	27	30
London Assembly	1	6	1	-	2	10
European Parliament (UK Members)	6	11	1	-	11	29
	Con	Lab	LD	SNP	Other	Total
<b>% female</b>						
House of Commons	21%	45%	33%	34%	26%	32%
House of Lords	25%	32%	34%	-	20%	26%
National Assembly for Wales	27%	52%	0%	-	32%	42%
Scottish Parliament	19%	46%	0%	43%	17%	35%
Northern Ireland Assembly	-	-	-	-	30%	28%
London Assembly	13%	50%	100%	-	50%	40%
European Parliament (UK Members)	30%	55%	100%	-	37%	40%

**Notes:**

1. Membership of the House of Commons 23 June 2017.
2. House of Lords membership at 23 February 2017. Excludes peers on leave of absence, suspended, or disqualified as senior members of the judiciary, for example.
3. Membership of Scottish Parliament as of 5 May 2016 elections.
4. Membership of the European Parliament following the May 2014 elections.
5. Membership of the Northern Ireland Assembly as of 2 March 2017 elections.
6. Membership of the London Assembly as of 5 May 2016 elections.
7. Membership of the National Assembly for Wales as of 5 May 2016 elections.

**Sources:**

Houses of Parliament 'Members Names' database

House of Commons Library Briefings: CBP 7599 *Scottish Parliament Elections: 2016*; CBP7920 *Northern Ireland Assembly Elections: 2017*

CBP 7594 *National Assembly for Wales Elections: 2016*; RP14/32 *European Parliament Elections 2014*

## Women MPs elected at General Election by party 1918 to 2015

Women MPs elected at General Elections by party 1918 to 2017

	Con	Lab	LD	Other	Total	% MPs
1918	0	0	0	1	1	0%
1922	1	0	1	0	2	0%
1923	3	3	2	0	8	1%
1924	3	1	0	0	4	1%
1929	3	9	1	1	14	2%
1931	13	0	1	1	15	2%
1935	6	1	1	1	9	2%
1945	1	21	1	1	24	4%
1950	6	14	0	1	21	3%
1951	6	11	0	0	17	3%
1955	10	14	0	0	24	4%
1959	12	13	0	0	25	4%
1964	11	18	0	0	29	5%
1966	7	19	0	0	26	4%
1970	15	10	0	1	26	4%
1974	9	13	0	1	23	4%
1974	7	18	0	2	27	4%
1979	8	11	0	0	19	3%
1983	13	10	0	0	23	4%
1987	17	21	2	1	41	6%
1992	20	37	2	1	60	9%
1997	13	101	3	3	120	18%
2001	14	95	5	4	118	18%
2005	17	98	10	3	128	20%
2010	49	81	7	6	143	22%
2015	68	99	0	24	191	29%
2017	67	119	4	18	207	32%

**Source:**

Rallings and Thrasher, *British Electoral Facts 1832-2006*;

HC Library briefings 10/36 General Election 2010 CBP-7186 General Election 2015 and CBP-xxxx General Election 2017

## Table 7 Women candidates by party and as a percentage of all candidates by party 1918 to 2017

Women candidates at General Elections 1918 to 2017 by party

	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%
2015	169	26%	214	34%	166	26%	21	36%	10	25%	453	23%	1,033	26%
2017	184	29%	256	41%	184	29%	20	34%	11	28%	318	24%	973	29%

**Source:**

Rallings and Thrasher, *British Electoral Facts 1832-2006*; House of Commons Library Research Papers 10/36 General Election 2010, CBP-7186 General Election 201 and CBP-NNNN General Election 2017

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