



**BRIEFING PAPER**

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# Women in Public life, the Professions and the Boardroom

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## Summary

How are women represented in public life, the professions and the boardroom? This note sets out key trends and statistics, covering politics, public appointments, civil servants the judiciary, the NHS, education and private sector professions. Most of these have seen the proportion of women grow over the short and longer term, although the rate of progress is slow in certain sectors and there remain areas where women are significantly under-represented. In very few of the sectors examined do women exceed the 51% of the UK population that they comprise.

The following table provides an overview of female representation in the public sphere across the UK:

	%
MPs (2017)	32
Lords (2017)	26
Cabinet (2017)	26
MSPs (2016)	35
AMs (2016)	42
MLAs (2017)	30
Board of public bodies (2016)	39
Senior civil service (2017)	41
Justice of the Supreme Court (2017)	9
GPs (2015)	54
NHS Consultants (2015)	34
Secondary head teachers (2015)	39
University Professors (2015-16)	24
FTSE 100 directors (2016)	26

# 1. Politics

## 1.1 Westminster

### Members of the House of Commons

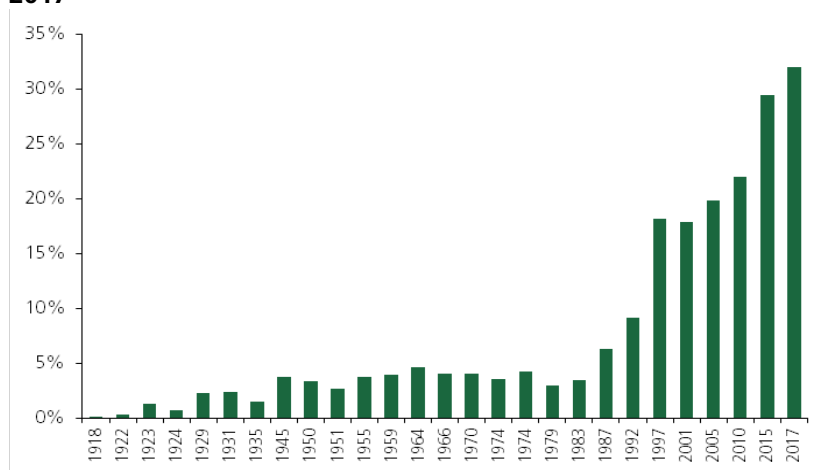
Following the *Representation of the People Act 1918*, which enfranchised women over the age of 30, and the subsequent *Parliament (Qualification of Women) Act 1918* that permitted women to stand for election, the first female MP was elected in the General Election of 1918. However, the first and only female MP to be elected in 1918 – Countess Constance Markievicz – opted, with other Sinn Fein MPs, not to take her seat. Viscountess Nancy Astor was the first woman to sit in Parliament, having won the Plymouth Sutton by-election in 1919.

Since 1918, 489 women have been elected as Members in the House of Commons (including by-elections). This is about 9% of all MPs elected over the period. 283 (57.8%) of the women have been Labour MPs, defined by the party of the first election.

At the 2017 General Election, 208 (32%) of all MPs elected were women, a record high. Of them 119 are Labour (57%) and 67 are Conservative (32%).

Chart 1 depicts trends in the proportion of female MPs, showing that between 1945 and 1983 the proportion of women MPs exhibited little change, before increasing in 1987 and 1992 and significantly rising in 1997. In fact, 1997 saw the number of female MPs almost double to 120; 101 were Labour MPs.

**Chart 1: Proportion of female MPs elected at General Elections, 1918-2017**



Gwyneth Dunwoody broke Barbara Castle's record for longest continuous service as a female MP. Mrs Dunwoody was elected in 1974 and served for thirty-four years until her death in April 2008.<sup>1</sup> Harriet Harman now holds the record for the woman MP with the longest continuous service, having served for over 34 years since the October 1982 Peckham by-election.

<sup>1</sup> Since Dunwoody was also an MP between 1966 and 1970, she served for thirty-eight years in total.

## Members of the House of Lords

Women were admitted to the House of Lords following the *Life Peerages Act 1958* – 40 years after they had been permitted to stand for the House of Commons. Baroness Barbara Wootton of Abinger was one of the first four Life Peers to be approved for admission to the House. Baroness of Swanborough was the first woman to actually take her seat in the House of Commons as a Life Peer in 1958. Baroness Strange of Knokin was the first woman to take her seat by virtue of being an hereditary Peer, in 1963.<sup>2</sup>

At July 2017, 26% of members of the House of Lords are women (210 of 803).<sup>3</sup>

## 1.2 Devolved bodies

Following the Labour Government's constitutional reforms in the late 1990s, a number of devolved bodies across the UK were established. Table 1 shows the proportion of women elected to each of these since devolution.

**Table 1: Women elected to devolved legislatures and London Assembly since 1998**

National Assembly for Wales				Scottish Parliament			
	Women	Total	As %		Women	Total	As %
1999	24	60	40%	1999	48	129	37%
2003	30	60	50%	2003	51	129	40%
2007	28	60	47%	2007	43	129	33%
2011	24	60	40%	2011	45	129	35%
2016	25	60	42%	2016	45	129	35%

Northern Ireland Assembly				London Assembly			
	Women	Total	As %		Women	Total	As %
1998	14	108	13%	2000	10	25	40%
2003	18	108	17%	2004	9	25	36%
2007	18	108	17%	2008	8	25	32%
2011	20	108	19%	2012	8	25	32%
2016	30	108	28%	2016	10	25	40%
2017	27	90	30%				

### Sources:

- Greater London Authority
- House of Commons Library, London Elections 2016 CBP-7598, Northern Ireland Assembly Elections 2017 CBP-7920

## Scottish Parliament

In the first elections to the Scottish Parliament in 1999, 48 of the MSPs elected to the 129-strong assembly were women (37%). The 2003 elections saw this number increase to 51, although the number subsequently declined in the 2007 elections when 43 women were elected to sit at Holyrood. After the 2011 elections the number of

<sup>2</sup> House of Lords, Library Note, [Women in the House of Lords](#)

<sup>3</sup> This figure excludes ineligible peers. See <http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/lords/composition-of-the-lords/> for details.

women MSPs rose slightly to 45 (35%) and remained the same at the 2016 elections.

### National Assembly for Wales

Since the first election to the National Assembly for Wales in 1999, women have had higher representation than in Westminster. In 1999, 24 of the 60 AMs were women. However, following the 2003 elections, this number reached 30 – exactly half of the Assembly. In a by-election on June 29, 2006, Trish Law took the seat of Blaenau Gwent in the Assembly. This resulted in women holding 31 seats out of 60, outnumbering the number of men in the Assembly for the first time. The number of women has since decreased to 28 at the 2007 elections and 24 at the 2011 elections. As of 2016, 25 women hold seats in the Assembly – 42% of the total.

### Northern Ireland Assembly

Of the devolved bodies, the Northern Ireland Assembly has consistently registered the lowest proportion of female representatives. The 1998 elections yielded only 14 women (13%) to an Assembly containing 108 MLAs. The subsequent elections in 2003 and 2007 both elected 18 female MLAs, but this rose to 20 after the 2011 elections (19% of all MLAs). The 2016 elections saw a record number of female MLAs elected (30). 27 women were elected in the 2017 elections – fewer than in 2016 but higher as a proportion (30%). This is because the total number of MLAs was reduced to 90 as a result of the [Assembly Members \(Reduction of Numbers\) Act \(Northern Ireland\) Bill 2016](#).

### Greater London Assembly

The first election to the Greater London Assembly, held in 2000, returned ten women to the 25-strong Assembly. However, the number of women declined to nine (36%) and then eight (32%) at the two subsequent elections in 2004 and 2008, remaining the same in 2012. It increased again to ten women at the 2016 elections, 40% of the total.

## 1.3 Ministers

To date, 43 women have held Government posts in the Cabinet. Margaret Bondfield was the first woman appointed to the Cabinet in 1929 (as Secretary of State for Labour), having become the first female Minister in 1924. She was followed by Ellen Wilkinson in 1945, Florence Horsbrugh in 1953 and Barbara Castle in 1964. Margaret Thatcher became the first female Prime Minister following her election victory in 1979, and served for 11 years and 209 days after winning three General elections. In July 2016, Theresa May became the UK's second female Prime Minister, after David Cameron resigned following the UK's vote to leave the European Union.

Currently, there are six women in the Cabinet (including the Prime Minister), comprising 26% of 23 Cabinet posts. There are five Ministers who also attend the Cabinet, two of whom are women. Of 114 Government ministers, including the Cabinet, whips, Lords in waiting

and unpaid positions, 31 (27%) are women.<sup>4</sup> Under the last Labour Government 30% of ministers were women, prior to the 2010 General Election.

## 1.4 Local government

The 2013 Local Government Association survey of England's councillors shows that 32% were female. Since 1997 the proportion of female councillors increased gradually. Table 2 also shows that in 2010 women were less well represented among Council Leaders or Deputy Leaders, making up only 21%.<sup>5</sup>

**Table 2: Female councillors, England, 1997-2013**

	1997	2001	2004	2006	2008	2010	2013
Councillors	27.8%	28.7%	29.2%	29.7%	31.0%	30.9%	31.7%
Leader/Deputy Leader				18.5%	20.7%	20.8%	

**Source:** Local Government Association, [National Census of Local Authority Councillors in England](#), various years

The proportion of female councillors was greatest in London boroughs (36%) and metropolitan districts (35%) and lowest in shire counties (27%).<sup>6</sup>

Women comprised 24% of councillors in Scotland and 26% of councillors in Wales following local elections in each country in 2012.<sup>7</sup> In Northern Ireland in 2015, women held 25% of council seats.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/ministers> (accessed 22 February 2016)

<sup>5</sup> LGA, [National Census of Local Authority Councillors 2013](#)

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> LGiU Scotland, [Where are all the women](#), July 2016

<sup>8</sup> Northern South Inter-Parliamentary Association, [Women in Public life](#), 27 November 2015



## 2. Public Bodies

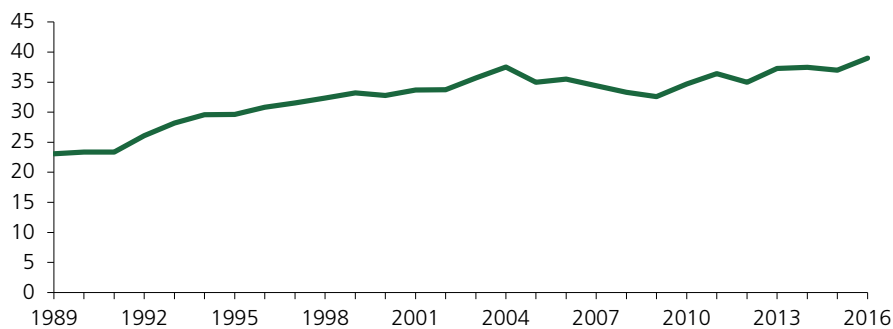
The *Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act 1919* permitted women to enter professions such as law, veterinary medicine and the civil service. The Act also allowed women to enter any royal chartered society and ensured that no university could refuse entry to women.

### 2.1 Public appointments

Information published on women and appointment to the boards of public bodies sponsored by the Cabinet Office showed that 17% of appointees were women in 1983.<sup>9</sup> The last Labour Government's target was for an even balance of men and women on such boards.<sup>10</sup> However, as Chart 2 shows, this was not achieved. The proportion of women holding positions on the boards of public bodies increased gradually to 38% in 2004, it fluctuated subsequently before reaching a high point of 39% in 2016.

**Chart 2: Women appointed to public bodies, 1989-2016**

%



Source: [Cabinet Office, Public Bodies](#), various years

### 2.2 Civil servants

In 1914, the 53,904 women employed in the civil service represented 21% of the total. Following the First World War, the presence of women in the civil service dramatically increased; by 1919, 56% of the 420,510 permanent staff were women.<sup>11</sup> However, as men returned from military service the proportion fell; in 1928 and 1938 women accounted for 25% and 27% of total employees respectively.<sup>12</sup> A contributing factor to this low figure was the exclusion of women from jobs which involved dealing with foreigners (the Foreign Office) and officers (the defence ministries), and particular jobs where they may

<sup>9</sup> Equal Opportunities Commission, *Women and Men in Britain a statistical profile*, 1985

<sup>10</sup> Cabinet Office, *Public Bodies 2002*

<sup>11</sup> Meta Zimmick, "[Strategies and Stratagems for the Employment of Women in the British Civil Service, 1919- 1939](#)", *The Historical Journal*, 27:4, December 1984, p.912

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.912



have been exposed to animal breeding (agriculture) or sexual offences (law).<sup>13</sup>

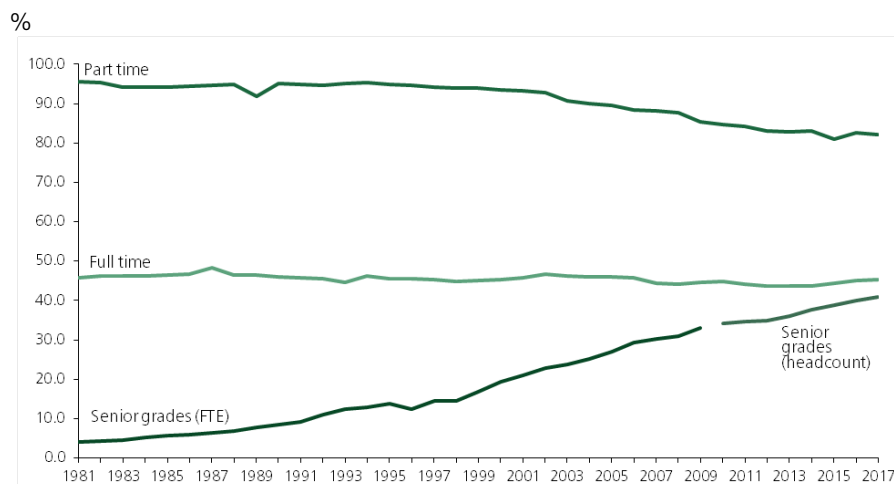
Additionally, until 1946, the UK Civil Service operated a “marriage bar” which forced women to leave their posts when they got married. Although the *1919 Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act* appeared to disallow such discrimination, this was not applied to the Civil Service: in 1921, an Order in Council limited posts to women who were either unmarried or widows. The Treasury justified this position by arguing, somewhat paradoxically, that a woman’s negative right to not be disqualified from holding these posts did not entail a positive entitlement to actually hold the posts.<sup>14</sup>

Chart 3 shows the proportion of women in full time, part time positions and in senior civil service grades between 1981 and 2017. Since 1981, there has been little change in the proportion of women, working full-time, fluctuating around 45%. In March 2017 women made up 45.4% of all full time employees.

In 1981 an overwhelming proportion of part-time civil servants were women (95.6%). This has been gradually decreasing since and reached 82.1% in 2017.

In March 2017 women made up 54% of all civil service employees (headcount basis).

**Chart 3: Women in the civil service, 1981-2017**



Source: ONS, [Civil service statistics](#), 2006 – 2017

The National Archives, [Civil service statistics](#), 1981-2005

Furthermore, despite better representation in the Civil Service, women have tended to be concentrated in the lower grades. In 1950, 8% of what was then called the “administrative class” – today’s Senior Civil Service plus principals and assistant principals – were women. In 1971, the Kemp-Jones Committee responded by making a number of recommendations that aimed to help women reach the higher echelons of the civil service. Although the number of women in senior roles did subsequently increase, progress was relatively slow until the 1990s and

<sup>13</sup> Rodney Lowe, *The Official History of the British Civil Service: Reforming the Civil Service*, Routledge, 2011, pp.75-76.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

particularly the twenty-first century when the proportion of female senior civil servants increased markedly, reaching 33% in 2009 (full-time equivalent basis).

Statistics on women in senior positions after 2010 are recorded on headcount basis and are not fully comparable with the historic data. The proportion of women in senior positions increased from 34% in 2010 to 41% in March 2017.

The first female permanent secretary – Evelyn Sharp – was in 1955. The number of grade 1 permanent secretaries had reached two in 1993.<sup>15</sup> In March 2016, 7 (20%) of the 36 permanent secretaries across the civil service were women.<sup>16</sup>

## 2.3 Judges

Although all judicial offices were open to women in 1919, it was not until 1945 that a female judge – Sybil Campbell – was appointed in England. Table 3 shows the proportion of women in various tiers of courts. Overall, 28% of judges in England and Wales were women at April 2017. However, the proportion is considerably lower at the higher reaches of the judicial profession: the first female Lord of Appeal (Dame Brenda Hale) was not appointed until 2004, while only one woman led a judicial division between 2001 and 2005. Baroness Hale of Richmond is also the first woman to become President of Supreme Court, expecting to take her post in October 2017.<sup>17</sup> Lady Justice Black will also join the Supreme Court as Justice in October 2017.

**Table 3: Female judges in England and Wales by post, 2001– 2017**

%	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Justice of the Supreme Court <sup>1</sup>	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.3	8.3	8.3	8.3	8.3	8.3	9.1	9.1	8.3	8.3	8.3	8.3	8.3	9.0
Heads of Division	25.0	25.0	25.0	20.0	20.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Lord Justices of Appeal	6.1	5.9	8.6	5.4	5.4	8.1	8.1	8.1	7.9	8.1	10.8	10.5	11.4	18.4	21.1	20.5	24.0
High Court Judges	8.1	5.6	5.7	7.6	9.3	10.3	9.3	10.0	13.8	14.8	15.7	15.5	16.7	17.9	19.8	20.8	22.0
Circuit Judges	7.9	9.3	9.4	9.5	10.5	11.3	11.4	13.3	14.4	14.9	15.9	17.1	18.5	20.5	22.8	25.6	27.0
District Judges	18.6	19.5	19.8	21.5	23.2	25.4	26.0	25.5	26.8	27.2	30.5	30.4	27.4	33.0	34.0	36.0	38.0
District Judges (Magistrates Court)	20.0	20.2	22.3	21.4	22.4	22.3	24.4	23.4	26.0	26.5	28.2	29.1	28.9	31.0	31.2	32.0	35.0
Recorders	12.3	12.2	12.7	13.3	14.2	14.2	15.1	14.9	13.7	16.3	16.5	16.3	17.4	16.5	15.9	20.0	20.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>14.1</b>	<b>14.4</b>	<b>14.9</b>	<b>15.8</b>	<b>16.9</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>18.7</b>	<b>18.6</b>	<b>19.0</b>	<b>20.1</b>	<b>22.3</b>	<b>22.6</b>	<b>24.3</b>	<b>24.5</b>	<b>25.2</b>	<b>27.5</b>	<b>28.0</b>

**Notes:** 1 Until October 2009 Lords of Appeal;

**Source:** [Judiciary Diversity Statistics](#), various years

In 2016 women accounted for 23% and 25% of judges in Scotland and Northern Ireland respectively.<sup>18,19</sup>

A report by the Council of Europe evaluated the proportion of women as professional judges in European countries.<sup>20</sup> In terms of female

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p21

<sup>16</sup> Civil Service, [Female leaders in the civil service](#), 13 March 2016

<sup>17</sup> The Supreme Court, [Lady Hale appointed next President of Supreme Court, alongside three new Justices](#), 21 July 2017

<sup>18</sup> Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service, [Salaried Judicial Complement](#), December 2016

<sup>19</sup> [2016 Judicial Diversity statistics- Gender and Age](#), 2 September 2016

<sup>20</sup> Council of Europe, [European judicial systems: Efficiency and quality of justice](#)

representation among professional judges, England, Wales and Scotland rank amongst the lowest countries in Europe. In 2014 only Azerbaijan and Armenia had fewer female professional judges. Twenty-five European countries had a majority female professional judiciary, and a further eight countries had female representation above 40%.<sup>21</sup> Note that these figures do not include the lay magistracy – in England and Wales, there are slightly more female magistrates than male (54%).

## 2.4 Armed forces

Until 2016, the Armed Forces were permitted to discriminate on gender grounds in its employment decisions. There was an exemption from the Equality Act 2010 for reasons of combat effectiveness and there were restrictions on females serving in close-combat roles.

Women were excluded from Ground Close Combat (GCC) such as the Royal Marines General Service, the Household Cavalry and Royal Armoured Corps, the Infantry and Royal Air Force Regiment.<sup>22</sup>

After a 2016 review by the Ministry of Defence, the then Prime Minister David Cameron lifted the ban on women serving in GCC roles. The Royal Armoured Corps (RAC) were the first to allow women to serve in certain roles from November 2016.<sup>23</sup>

In 2017 there were 15,270 women in the armed forces.<sup>24</sup> Table 4 gives the proportion of women in different roles and shows that at April 2017, 10% of the 149,370 personnel were women. The proportion has increased steadily from 7% in 1997. Of the three branches, the RAF – where women represent 14% – has the highest proportion of women. The army had the lowest representation of women, occupying only 9.1% of all army roles.

**Table 4: Women in the armed forces, 1997 – 2017**

%	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
<b>Army</b>																					
Officers	7.7	8.4	8.7	9.2	9.5	9.8	10.2	10.3	10.6	10.8	11.1	11.3	11.2	11.3	11.3	11.6	11.9	11.8	11.9	11.8	11.8
Other ranks	5.9	6.5	6.7	6.8	6.7	6.8	7.0	7.0	7.0	7.1	7.2	7.3	7.3	7.3	7.4	7.7	8.0	8.2	8.4	8.5	8.6
<b>All</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>7.6</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>7.8</b>	<b>7.8</b>	<b>7.9</b>	<b>8.0</b>	<b>8.2</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>9.1</b>
<b>Naval Service</b>																					
Officers	5.6	5.8	6.1	6.8	7.2	7.6	7.8	8.2	8.5	8.9	9.0	9.4	9.7	9.7	9.7	9.7	9.9	10.0	10.2	10.4	10.8
Other ranks	7.5	7.7	8.0	8.2	8.4	8.7	9.1	9.3	9.4	9.5	9.5	9.6	9.5	9.6	9.3	9.1	8.8	8.8	9.1	9.1	8.9
<b>All</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>7.3</b>	<b>7.6</b>	<b>8.0</b>	<b>8.2</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>8.9</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>9.2</b>	<b>9.3</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>9.6</b>	<b>9.6</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>9.2</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>9.3</b>	<b>9.3</b>	<b>9.3</b>
<b>RAF</b>																					
Officers	8.0	8.6	9.2	10.0	10.6	11.1	11.6	12.4	13.1	13.7	14.3	14.7	15.3	15.4	15.7	15.9	16.4	16.5	16.5	16.7	16.9
Other ranks	8.8	9.1	9.4	9.7	10.1	10.5	11.0	11.5	11.8	12.0	12.4	12.7	13.0	13.2	13.2	13.2	13.2	13.0	13.2	13.2	13.2
<b>All</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>9.3</b>	<b>9.8</b>	<b>10.2</b>	<b>10.6</b>	<b>11.1</b>	<b>11.7</b>	<b>12.1</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>12.8</b>	<b>13.2</b>	<b>13.5</b>	<b>13.7</b>	<b>13.8</b>	<b>13.8</b>	<b>13.9</b>	<b>13.8</b>	<b>13.9</b>	<b>14.0</b>	<b>14.0</b>
<b>Overall</b>																					
Officers	7.3	7.8	8.3	8.9	9.3	9.7	10.1	10.5	10.9	11.3	11.6	11.9	12.1	12.2	12.0	12.4	12.6	12.7	12.7	12.8	13.0
Other ranks	7.0	7.4	7.6	7.8	7.9	8.1	8.4	8.6	8.7	8.7	8.8	8.9	9.0	9.0	9.1	9.1	9.2	9.3	9.6	9.6	9.6
<b>All</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>8.0</b>	<b>8.1</b>	<b>8.3</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>8.9</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>9.3</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>9.6</b>	<b>9.7</b>	<b>9.7</b>	<b>9.8</b>	<b>9.9</b>	<b>10.1</b>	<b>10.2</b>	<b>10.2</b>

Source: [Defence Personnel Statistics, various years](#) as of April each year

<sup>21</sup> Council of Europe, op. cit.

<sup>22</sup> Gov.uk, [Women in Combat: Policy Paper](#), 1 November 2010

<sup>23</sup> Gov.uk, [Ban on women in ground close combat lifted](#), 8 July 2016

<sup>24</sup> UK Armed Forces Quarterly Manning Report.

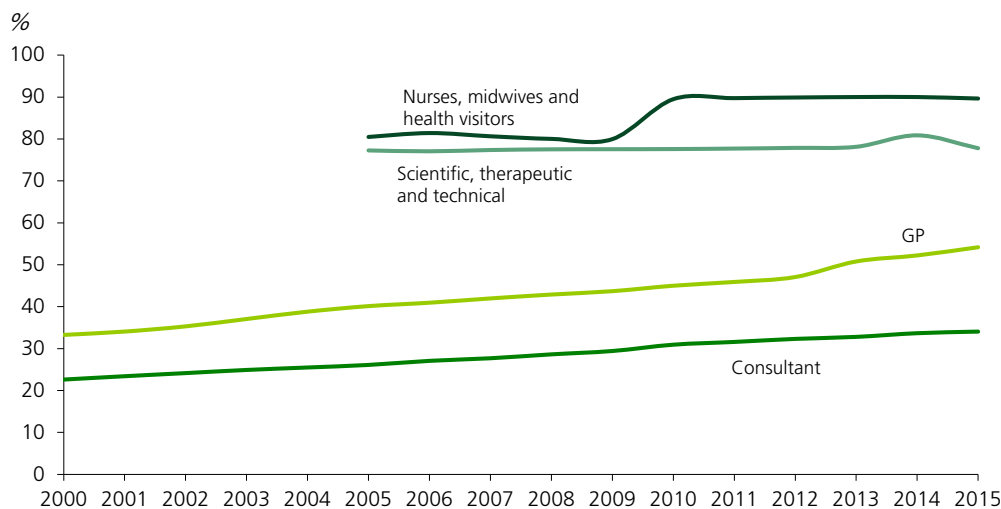
## 2.5 National Health Service

Representation of women is increasing in professions, previously dominated by men, as Chart 4 shows. In 2015 women represented 54.2% of General Practitioners (GPs), 34% of Hospital and Community Health Service consultants. Both increased by 21 and 11 percentage points, respectively since 2000.

A report on gender equality in NHS further suggests that in 2013 women were over-represented in lower-level roles, such as salaried GPs. Moreover, the report discovers gender variation between specialities, as women were under-represented in surgery and emergency medicine and a larger proportion of them were working in paediatrics and psychiatry.<sup>25</sup>

Women continue to make up a large majority – around 90% – of qualified nurses, midwives and health visitors and around 80% of other technical support positions.

**Chart 4: Women in the NHS (England), 2000 – 2015**



Source: NHS Information Centre, [NHS Workforce Statistics in England](#), various years

## 2.6 Teaching

Women represent a majority of teachers in English state-maintained nursery & primary education, as Chart 5 illustrates. The proportion of female teachers (as a whole) increased from 83% in 1997 to 85% in 2016. Note that a new kind of data collection was introduced in 2010 which is not entirely comparable to earlier figures.

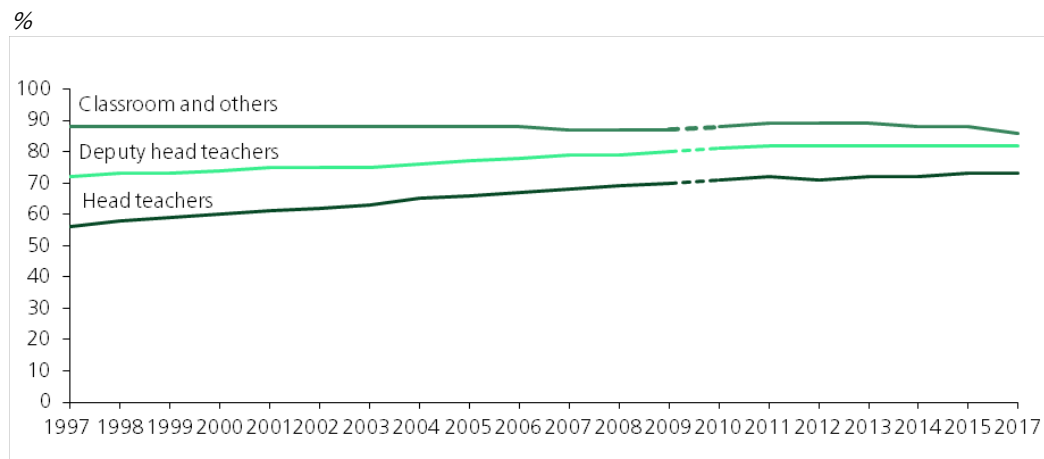
Although women continue to occupy proportionately fewer senior roles at both the early and secondary schooling levels, women are increasingly becoming head and deputy head teachers (see Chart 6). The proportion of women occupying head teacher roles increased from

<sup>25</sup> Penny Newman, [NHS women in leadership: Plan for action](#), December 2015

56% in 1997 to 73% in 2016 in nursery and primary schools and from 16% to 39% in secondary schools.

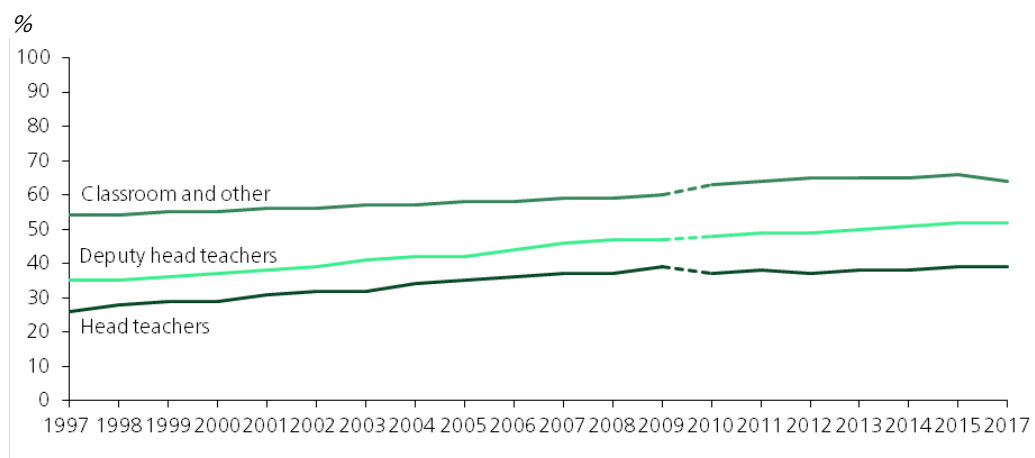
Increases in the number of female deputy head teachers were similarly marked at secondary level, while women already constituted more than 70% of deputy heads at early schooling levels in 1997. Despite these changes the share of women is lower at each level in secondary schools.

**Chart 5: Women in primary and nursery education, England, 1997 – 2016**



Source: [Department of Education, School Workforce in England, various years](#)

**Chart 6: Women in secondary education, England, 1997 – 2016**



Source: [Department of Education, School Workforce in England, various years](#)

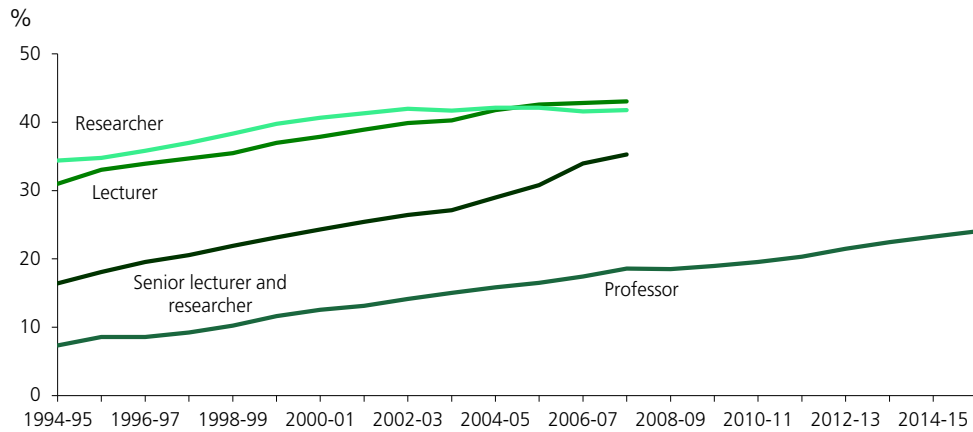
Women remain under-represented in higher education, although there has been a significant improvement since 1994-95 across all academic grades. Compared with 1994-95, the proportion of women was higher at all grades in 2007-08 (see Chart 7) – and by a substantial margin in some cases: the proportion of female professors rose from 7% to 19%. Meanwhile, the biggest gain of nineteen percentage points was registered among senior lecturers and researchers, of whom 35.3% were women by 2007-08. Among the lower ranks, women continue to be less well represented at university level than at secondary and particularly primary and nursery levels.

New definitions of staff were introduced in 2008-09 so only the data on professors can be compared. In 2015/16 women made up 24% of

## 14 Women in Public life, the Professions and the Boardroom

professors and 40% of all academic professionals in higher education institutions

**Chart 7: Women in full-time university academics by grade, 1994/95 – 2015/16**

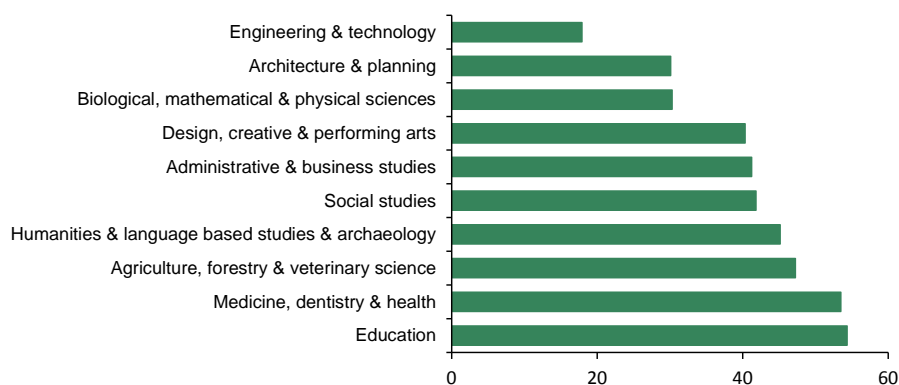


**Notes:** Grade categories – discontinued since 2008/09

**Source:** [Higher Education Statistics Agency, Academic staff, Table B](#), various years

Although the proportion of women in higher education has been increasing since 1994/5, there is high variation between academic disciplines. Chart 8 shows that in 2014/15 53% of full-time academics in Education studies were female, whereas women comprised only 17% of full-time academics in engineering and technology subjects. Furthermore, HESA reports that there is significant variation between institutions.

**Chart 8: Women as full-time university academics by subject area, 2014/15**



**Source:** [Higher Education Statistics Agency, Full-time academic staff by cost centre group, Table K](#)

HEi-know, higher education intelligence platform reported that between 2012 and 2015, 29% of newly appointed vice chancellors were women.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, the Department for Business Innovation & Skills cited findings by a survey, conducted by Women's Leadership Network

<sup>26</sup> University Business, [HEi-know, Female VCs now 29% of new appointments](#), 10 March 2016

(WLN), suggesting that in 2012 38% of college governors and 20% of Chairs were female.<sup>27</sup>

## 2.7 Police

Of the 123,142 officers in England and Wales in 2017, 35,498 (29%) were female. This figure includes Central Service secondments, but excludes the British Transport Police. Table 5 shows these figures from 2003 to 2017. The proportion of female police officers has steadily increased from 19% in 2000.

**Table 5: Women in the Police, England and Wales 2003-2017**

*As of March every year*

	Total	Female	
	Strength*	Number	% of total
2003	132,509	25,139	19.0
2004	138,468	27,925	20.2
2005	141,059	29,940	21.2
2006	141,523	31,520	22.3
2007	151,892	33,117	21.8
2008	141,859	34,332	24.2
2009	143,770	36,121	25.1
2010	143,734	36,998	25.7
2011	139,110	36,532	26.3
2012	134,101	35,962	26.8
2013	129,956	35,471	27.3
2014	127,909	35,653	27.9
2015	126,818	35,738	28.2
2016	124,066	35,498	28.6
2017	123,142	35,844	29.1

Source: [Police workforce, England and Wales, various years](#)

While 31% of constables in England and Wales were female, the proportion of female officers in more senior ranks was lower. Only 25% of those officers ranked chief inspector or higher were female, although this has increased from 14% in 2010.

The first female Chief Constable in England and Wales was Pauline Clare, who was appointed to Lancashire police force in June 1995. Currently there are seven police forces with a female Chief Constable: Cleveland, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Humberside, Staffordshire and West Yorkshire. Cressida Dick was appointed as the first female Met Police Commissioner in February 2017.

The most recent statistics on police workforce in Scotland show that at the end of March 2014, 29% of police officers and 37% of special constables were female.<sup>28</sup> As of January 2016, female representation in Northern Ireland's police service was 29%.

<sup>27</sup> Department for Business Innovation & Skills, [A review of further education and sixth form governance](#), July 2013

<sup>28</sup> Scottish Government, [Scottish Policing Performance Framework](#), sect. 4.



## 16 Women in Public life, the Professions and the Boardroom

In the 2016 elections for Police and Crime Commissioners, 8 women were elected (20%), while 29 (15%) of candidates were women.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> House of Commons Library, [Police and Commissioner Elections 2016](#), 19 May 2016

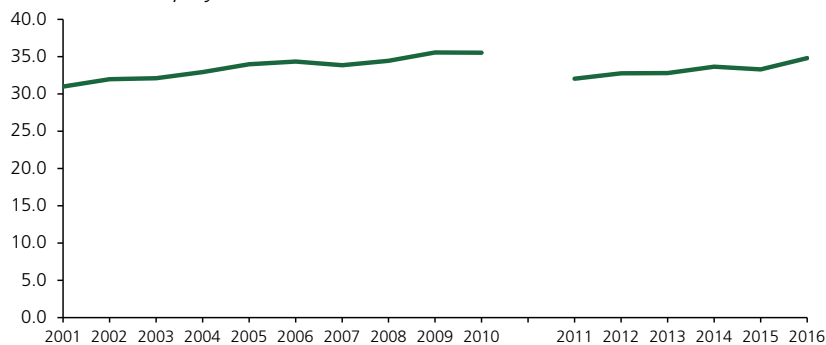
## 3. Enterprise and Employment

### 3.1 Managerial and senior positions

The proportion of women in managerial and senior positions has risen slightly over the last fifteen years. A change in the classification of professions was introduced in 2010 and so subsequent data is not comparable to earlier figures. In 2016 women occupied 35% of all managerial and senior positions.

**Chart 9: Women in managerial and senior positions, UK, 2001-2016**

*As % of all in employment*



**Notes:** Figures are for April-June each year

**Source:** ONS, [UK Labour Market, Employment by occupation](#), various years

This steady rise hides significant sectoral disparities, as can be seen in table below. Women remain poorly represented at the most senior levels of chief executives and senior officials (24%) and, despite recent increases, women represent only 38% of functional managers. However, they constitute a majority of HR managers and half of advertising/PR managers. Women also represent a majority of managers and directors in health and social services. In Table 6, deeper shading of a figure denotes a value closer to 50% - so the least equal sectors are those with the faintest shading.

**Table 6: Women in managerial and senior positions, UK, 2016**

*As % of all in employment*

	Women		Men		Total
	Thousands	as %	Thousands	as %	Thousands
All Managers, Directors and Senior Officials	1,176	34.8	2,205	65.2	3,381
Chief Executives and Senior Officials	22	23.6	71	76.4	93
Functional Managers and Directors	390	37.9	638	62.1	1,028
Financial managers and directors	122	39.6	186	60.4	307
Purchasing managers and directors	22	38.5	36	61.5	58
Advertising and public relations directors	18	49.6	19	50.4	37
Human resource managers and directors	110	65.1	59	34.9	169
Financial Institution Managers and Directors	36	37.4	61	62.6	97
Health and Social Services Managers and Directors	59	66.5	30	33.5	89
Managers and Directors in Retail and Wholesale	121	39.6	184	60.4	305
Managers and Proprietors in Hospitality and Leisure Services	127	42.5	172	57.5	299

**Notes:** Figures may not total 100% due to rounding

**Source:** ONS, [UK Labour Market, Employment by occupation](#), April-June 2016

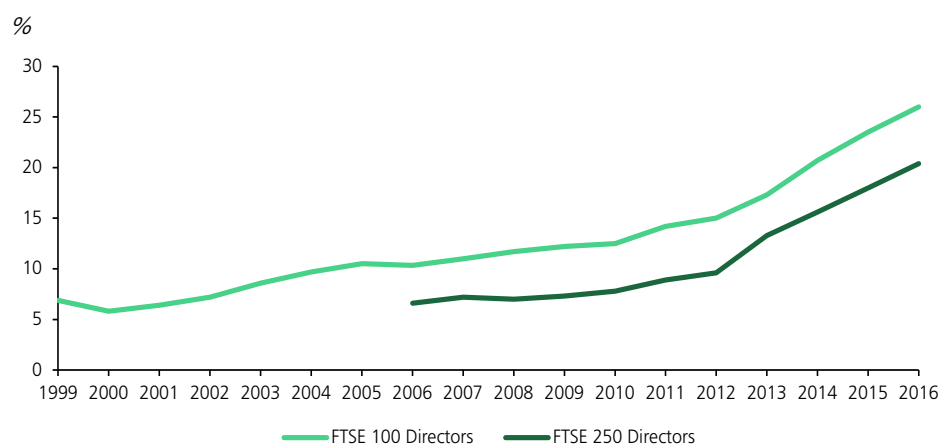
It is important to recognise that management covers an array of roles, seniority and remuneration both within and between sectors. Accordingly, the figures in Table 6 are not necessarily indicative of the state of female employment in the most senior positions. In fact, as the section below examining FTSE companies suggests, women appear to be represented more sparsely among the uppermost echelons of large businesses.

### 3.2 FTSE companies

In 2015, 25% of directors of FTSE 100 companies were women – reaching the target, previously set by Lord Davies in 2011, in response to poor representation of women as senior figures in the UK’s largest companies. He described the increase in the proportion of women on FTSE 100 boards as “truly amazing progress”.<sup>30</sup> In his report “[Improving the Gender Balance on British Boards](#)”, Lord Davies set a new target for women to comprise 33% of FTSE 350 boards by 2020.

As the chart below shows, the proportion of female directors of FTSE 100 companies experienced slow growth between 1990 and 2012 and has been increasing rapidly since – reaching 26% in 2016. In the FTSE 250 – the 250 next largest companies after those in the FTSE 100 – 20% of company directors were women in 2016, up from 13% in 2013.

**Chart 10: Female directors at FTSE 100 and FTSE 250, 1999-2016**



Source: [Sealy, et al., Female FTSE 100 reports, Women on Boards: Taking Stock of where we are](#)

### 3.3 The professions and associates

Table 7 provides an overview of the employment of women in professional occupations. Of the professional occupations shown, those with the highest proportions of women were librarians (78%) and involved in teaching and educational professions (68%). Those with the lowest proportions of women were engineering (8%), architects, town planners and surveyors (17%) and information and communication technology (18%).

<sup>30</sup> Gov.uk, [Lord Davies: FTSE 350 boards should be 33% female by 2020](#)

Of the associate professional and technical occupations, shown the highest proportions of women can be found in welfare and housing associate professions (72%) and human resources (65%).

In this table, deeper shading of a figure denotes a value closer to 50% - so the least equal sectors are those with the faintest shading.

There has been little change in the proportion of women working in finance occupations – 40% of business and finance associates were women in 2016, compared with 36% in 2010 - although they make up the majority in accounting related occupations and remain a significant minority of financial advisors and analysts.

**Table 7: Women in the Professions, UK, 2016**

*As % of all in employment*

	Women		Men		Total
	Thousands	as %	Thousands	as %	Thousands
<b>Selected Professional Occupations</b>					
Natural and Social Science Professionals	98	43.2	129	56.8	227
Engineering Professionals	37	7.7	438	92.3	475
IT and Telecommunications Professionals	173	18.2	777	81.8	950
Health Professionals	306	56.1	240	43.9	546
Teaching and Educational Professionals	1,073	68.4	496	31.6	1,569
Legal Professionals	109	46.1	127	53.9	235
Business, Research and Admin Professionals	293	40.6	428	59.4	721
Architects, Town Planners and Surveyors	46	17.3	222	82.7	268
Librarians	33	78.4	9	21.6	42
Media Professionals	79	48.0	86	52.0	165
<b>Selected Associate Professional and Technical Professions</b>					
Laboratory Technicians	40	52.8	36	47.2	77
Information Technology Technicians	40	21.2	148	78.8	188
Health Associate Professionals	102	62.7	61	37.3	163
Welfare and Housing Associate Professionals	209	72.2	81	27.8	290
Artistic, Literary and Media Occupations	170	42.8	227	57.2	397
Legal Associate Professionals	45	64.1	25	35.9	71
<b>Business, Finance and Associate Professionals</b>					
Finance and investment analysts/advisers	61	32.5	127	67.5	189
Taxation experts	14	45.8	17	54.2	31
Financial and accounting technicians	19	59.1	13	40.9	32
Financial accounts managers	89	54.3	75	45.7	164
<b>Sales, Marketing and Related Associates</b>					
Buyers and procurement officers	30	53.5	26	46.5	56
Marketing associate professionals	106	58.2	76	41.8	182
Estate agents and auctioneers	25	51.3	24	48.7	50
Public services associate professionals	276	52.8	248	47.2	524
Human resources and industrial relations	94	64.8	51	35.2	146

**Notes:** Figures for some professions are based on small numbers sampled, so should be treated with caution

Figures may not total 100% due to rounding

**Source:** ONS, [UK Labour Market, Employment by occupation](#), April-June 2016

### 3.4 Unions

Three of the largest ten unions in the UK have been led by women for some years. Furthermore, the Trades Union Congress (TUC) is led by Frances O'Grady, the first woman to hold the position of TUC general secretary. In recent years, female membership of the largest unions has remained relatively static.<sup>31</sup>

Table 8 (below) shows the percentage of women acting in various capacities in the ten largest unions. There has been little change in female membership in the top 10 UK union between 2014 and 2016. Women comprised a majority of members in 6 out of the top 10 largest trade unions. However, in 2016, representation of women on the national executive exceeded the female share of the membership in only two of the ten unions. Only three unions had a percentage of women full-time national officers which exceeded their share of female members.

**Table 8: Women's representation in top 10 UK unions**

As %

	Women as share of membership		Representation on national executive		Share of full-time national officers	
	2014	2016	2014	2016	2014	2016
Unite	25	25	31	29	26	29
UNISON	74	77	64	61	55	54
GMB	51	49	38	38	28	56
usdaw	56	55	59	50	50	50
NUT	76	76	38	41	36	66
NASUWT	72	73	28	28	30	30
PCS	60	58	44	40	24	23
CWU	20	19	26	31	17	10
ATL	74	74	n/a	50**	20	34
Prospect	24	26	21	26	32	37

**Notes:** UNISON 2014 NEC 64 figure would have been 69% but there were three vacant seats, including two reserved for women.

\*\* Includes officers but excludes three executive committee vacancies

**Source:** Labour Research, March 2016

<sup>31</sup> "Are women making progress?", *Labour Research*, March 2016.

## 4. Firsts for Women in UK Public Life

**The last 100 years have seen various firsts for women in public life:**<sup>32,33,34,35</sup>

- 1907 First woman **mayor** in England (Elizabeth Garrett Anderson) holding office in Aldeburgh in Suffolk for two terms (1907-1909)
- 1913 Britain's first official female **professor** Caroline Spurgeon appointed Professor of English Literature at London University
- 1919 Nancy Astor, first **Member of Parliament** to take seat in House of Commons
- 1929 **Cabinet Minister** (Margaret Bondfield)
- 1943 **President of the Trades Union Congress** (Anne Loughlin)
- 1945 **Prison Governor** (Charity Taylor)
- 1945 **Stipendiary magistrate** (Sybill Campbell)
- 1948 **University Vice Chancellor** (Prof Lillian Penson)
- 1949 **King's Counsel** (Rose Heilbron and Helena Normanton)
- 1955 **Civil Service Permanent Secretary** (Dame Evelyn Sharp)
- 1958 **Life Peer** (Baroness Wootton of Abinger)
- 1963 First **Hereditary Peer** to take seat in House of Lords (Baroness Strange of Knokin)
- 1964 **Parliamentary Whip** (Commons) (Harriet Slater)
- 1965 **High Court Judge** (Dame Elizabeth Lane)
- 1970 **Deputy Speaker** (Betty Harvie Anderson)
- 1973 First woman **Head of Mission** in the British Diplomatic Service (Eleanor Emery)
- 1973 **Director of a national museum** (the Science Museum)
- 1975 **Leader of the Opposition** (Margaret Thatcher)
- 1979 **Prime Minister** (Margaret Thatcher)
- 1981 **Leader of the House of Lords** (Baroness Young)
- 1984 **TUC General Secretary** (Brenda Dean)
- 1987 **Court of Appeal Judge** (Dame Elizabeth Butler-Sloss)
- 1991 **Head of MI5** (Stella Rimington)
- 1992 **Speaker of the House of Commons** (Betty Boothroyd)
- 1992 **Minister with special responsibility for women's issues** (Gillian Shephard)
- 1994 **Church of England priest** ordained (Angela Berners-Wilson)
- 1995 **Chief constable** (Pauline Clare)
- 1997 First full-time **Minister for Women** (Joan Ruddock)
- 1997 **Secretary of State for Northern Ireland** (Mo Mowlam)
- 1998 **Chief Whip** (Ann Taylor)
- 2001 **Secretary of State for Scotland** (Helen Liddell)
- 2004 **Lord of Appeal in Ordinary** (Dame Brenda Hale)
- 2005 **National Statistician & Registrar General** for England & Wales (Karen Dunnell)
- 2006 **Foreign Secretary** (Rt Hon Margaret Beckett)
- 2006 **House of Lords' Lord Speaker** (Baroness Hayman)
- 2007 **Home Secretary** (Jacqui Smith)
- 2007 **Attorney-General** (Baroness Scotland)

<sup>32</sup> COI *Women in Britain* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1996

<sup>33</sup> Centre for Advancement of Women in Politics, Queen's University of Belfast  
<http://www.qub.ac.uk/cawp/index.html>

<sup>34</sup> *Women In Diplomacy: The FCO, 1782-1999*  
<http://www.fco.gov.uk/Files/kfile/86cc078ary-2fwomen-2fwomen,0.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/womanshour/timeline/timeline.shtml>

- 2008 **Chief Secretary to the Treasury** (Yvette Cooper)
- 2009 **EU High Representative** for Foreign Affairs & Security Policy (Baroness Ashton)
- 2009 **Poet Laureate** (Carol Ann Duffy)
- 2010 **Secretary of State for Wales** (Cheryl Gillan)
- 2011 **Chief Medical Officer** for England (Professor Dame Sally Davies)
- 2011 **Royal Navy Warship Commander** (Lieutenant Commander Sarah West)
- 2013 **RAF Air Vice-Marshal** (Elaine West)
- 2014 **Dean of Norwich** (Canon Jane Barbara Hedges)
- 2014 **First Minister of Scotland** (Nicola Sturgeon)
- 2015 **Church of England Bishop** (The Right Reverend Libby Lane)
- 2016 **Lord Chancellor** (Liz Truss)
- 2017 **Metropolitan Police Commissioner** (Cressida Dick)
- 2017 **President of Supreme Court** (Baroness Hale of Richmond)



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