



BRIEFING PAPER

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Women in parliament and government

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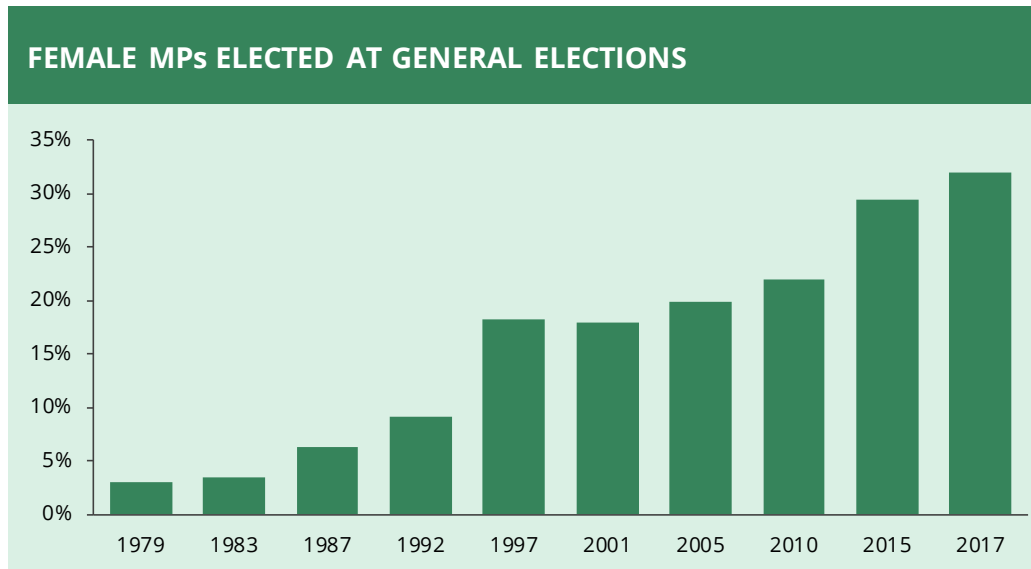
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Summary

UK Parliament and Government

There are 211 women Members of the House of Commons. At **32%**, this is an all-time high. The proportion of women grew slowly until it jumped in the 1990s, as shown in the chart below.



Sources: Rallings and Thrasher, *British Electoral Facts 1832-2006*, 2012. House of Commons Library Briefing Papers ([10/36](#)) [General Election 2010](#); ([7186](#)) [General Election 2015](#); ([7979](#)) [General Election 2017](#).

Since 1918, 494 women have been elected to the House of Commons; 58% were first elected as Labour MPs and 28% as Conservatives.

There are 207 female Peers – **27%** of the Members of the House of Lords.

Seven of the current members of the Cabinet (**30%**) are women. The highest proportion of women in Cabinet was 36% between 2006 and 2007.

Devolved legislatures and local government

47% of Members of the National Assembly for Wales are women, as are **36%** of Members of the Scottish Parliament and **32%** of Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

About **36%** of local authority councillors in England are women. **26%** of councillors in Northern Ireland are women, while the proportion rose to **29%** in Scotland after the 2017 elections and sits at **28%** in Wales.

40% of members of the London Assembly are women.

European Parliament

47% of UK Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) elected in 2019 are women. **41%** of all MEPs are women and the UK ranked 11th among the 28 EU member nations.

International comparisons

23 countries currently have a woman as president or prime minister, a record high. At 32%, the UK is in **39th** position in the proportion of women in the lower (or only) house of parliament. Rwanda has over 61%, and along with Cuba and Bolivia has a majority of women in parliament.

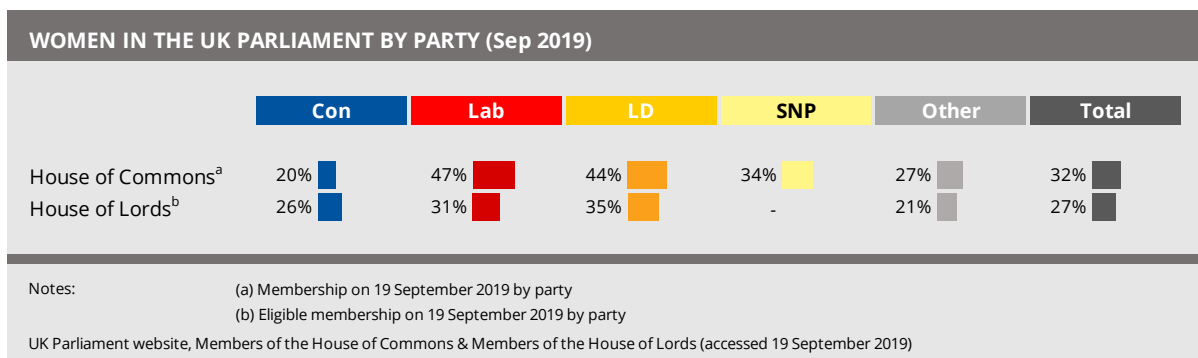
1. UK Parliament

As of September 2019, 211 Members of the House of Commons (MPs) are women. This is a record high, and 32% of all MPs. 208 were elected at the 2017 General Election, up from 191 in 2015. The two by-elections held in 2018 were both won by women. The three by-elections held in 2019 were also won by women.

Of the women MPs elected at the 2017 General Election, 119 were Labour, 67 Conservative, 4 Liberal Democrat and 12 SNP. 45% of Labour MPs elected in 2017 were women, compared with 21% of Conservative MPs, 33% of Liberal Democrat and 34% of SNP MPs.¹

As of September 2019, 207 (27%) of the 775 Members of the House of Lords are women.² Women were first admitted in 1958 and the proportion of women has varied with reforms over time. It had reached 20% by January 2009.³

The chart below summarises women's membership of both chambers as of September 2019.



1.1 Members of Parliament since 1918

494 women have been elected as Members of the House of Commons since first being permitted to stand in 1918.⁴

In that year Countess Constance Markievicz was elected to represent Dublin St Patricks, but as a member of Sinn Féin she did not take her seat. The next year Nancy Astor became the first woman to sit in the Commons after winning a by-election in Plymouth Sutton for the Conservatives.

¹ [House of Commons Briefing Paper \(6652\): Women Members of Parliament](#); UK Parliament website, [Members of the House of Commons](#) (accessed 19 September 2019).

² UK Parliament website, [Members of the House of Lords](#).

³ [Inter-Parliamentary Union](#) (accessed 28 February 2019). The IPU records snapshots of membership at particular points.

⁴ [House of Commons Briefing Paper \(6652\): Women Members of Parliament](#); UK Parliament website, [Members of the House of Commons](#) (accessed 19 September 2019).

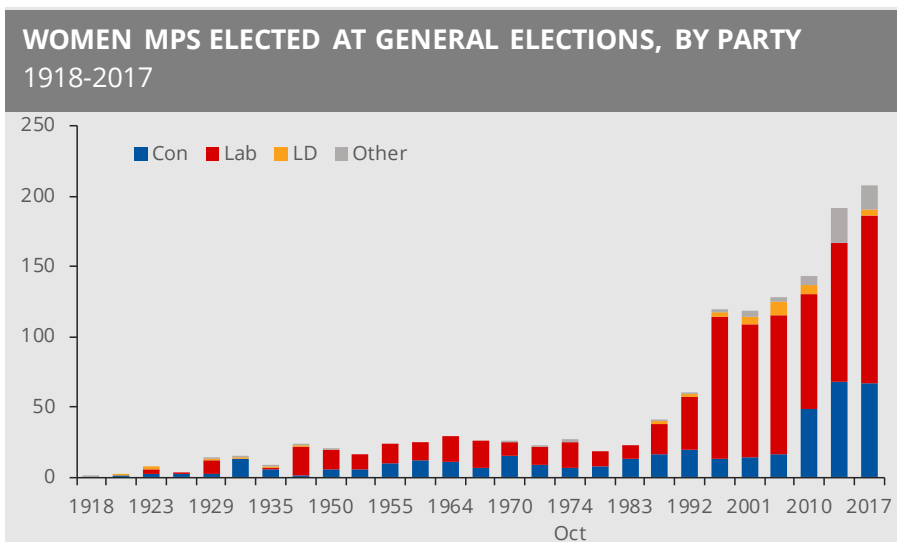
Of the 494 women MPs ever elected, 286 (58%) were first elected as Labour and 140 (28%) as Conservative MPs. A full breakdown appears in the table below.

WOMEN MPs ELECTED BY PARTY, 1918-2019		
Party	Number	% of total
Labour	286	57.8%
Conservative	140	28.5%
Liberal Democrats ^a	28	5.5%
SNP	25	5.1%
Sinn Féin	4	0.8%
Ulster Unionists	3	0.6%
DUP	2	0.4%
Alliance	1	0.2%
Green	1	0.2%
Independent	1	0.2%
Independent Unity	1	0.2%
Plaid Cymru	1	0.2%
SDLP	1	0.2%
Total	494	100%

Note: (a) Includes those from predecessor parties.

Sources: House of Commons Briefing Paper (6652) [Women Members of Parliament](#); UK Parliament website, [Members of the House of Commons](#) (accessed 19 September 2019).

The chart below shows the number of women MPs elected at general elections since 1918, by party.

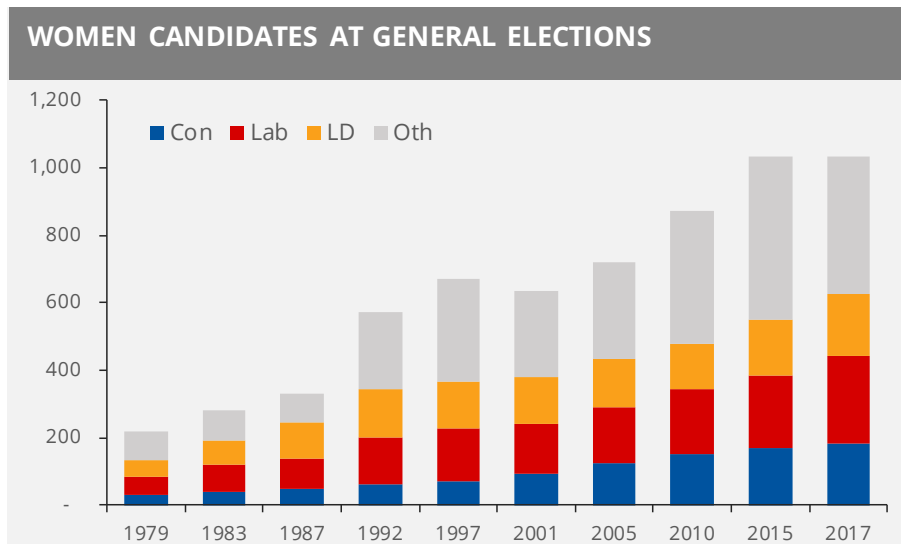


Until 1997 women had never made up more than 10% of all MPs; until the late 1980s the proportion had always been below 5%. The proportion rose to 18% following the 1997 General Election when 120 women were elected. The current level – 32% – is the highest ever.

1.2 Candidates in general elections

The number of women candidates has risen at almost every general election since 1966. The exceptions were 2001, when there were 36 fewer than in 1997, and in 2017, when 60 fewer women stood than in 2015. In the latter case, though, the proportion of female candidates rose from 26% to 29% as there were fewer candidates overall.

The chart below shows how the number of women candidates has increased since 1979.



Sources Rallings and Thrasher, *British Electoral Facts 1832-2006*, 2012. House of Commons Library Briefing Papers ([10/36](#)) [General Election 2010](#); ([7186](#)) [General Election 2015](#); ([7979](#)) [General Election 2017](#).

Women were first able to stand for Parliament in 1918, when 17 did so. There was one female Conservative candidate, four Labour, four Liberals and eight candidates for other parties.

Women did not make up more than 10% of candidates until 1979, when 11% of candidates were female. In 2005 the proportion of women reached 20% for the first time.

The 2017 General Election

In 2017, 973 women candidates stood across all parties – 29% of all 3,304 candidates. Although this is the highest proportion on record, the total number of women candidates was lower than the 1,033 who stood in 2015.

Labour had 256 women candidates, the highest number of any party in any general election. 41% of Labour's candidates were women, compared with 34% in 2015.

184 Conservative candidates (29%) were women – a 3 percentage point increase on 2015 and the highest number in the party's history. Similarly, 184 (29%) of Liberal Democrat candidates were women.

35% of Green Party candidates were women, as were 34% of Scottish National Party and 28% of Plaid Cymru candidates. Women made up 13% of UKIP candidates.⁵

⁵ Rallings and Thrasher, *British Electoral Facts 1832-2006*, 2012. House of Commons Briefing Papers ([10/36](#)) [General Election 2010](#); ([7186](#)) [General Election 2015](#); ([7979](#)) [General Election 2017](#).

2. UK Government

Currently, there are seven women in the Cabinet, which is 30% of the 23 cabinet posts.⁶ One of the eight ministers who additionally attend Cabinet is female, so 26% of those attending Cabinet are women. There are 37 Government Ministers and Whips who are women.⁷

In March 2019, Theresa May's Cabinet included five women (including the Prime Minister). In 2015, David Cameron appointed seven women to Cabinet; this was 30% (of 22 cabinet posts plus the Prime Minister). In 2010, David Cameron's first Cabinet included four women.

There were five women in Tony Blair's 1997 Cabinet, which was also the first to include more than two female ministers at one time. The highest number of concurrent women cabinet ministers was eight (36%), from May 2006 to May 2007.

The UK has had two female Prime Ministers, Margaret Thatcher and Theresa May.

The table below shows the 46 women who have ever been appointed to cabinet posts (as at 24 September 2019). The first was Margaret Bondfield in 1929. She had already been the first female minister outside the Cabinet.

WOMEN CABINET MINISTERS			
Minister	Years of service	Minister	Years of service
Margaret Bondfield	1929-31	Jacqueline Smith	2006-09
Ellen Wilkinson	1945-47	Hazel Blears	2006-09
Florence Horsbrugh	1953-54	Catherine Ashton	2007-08
Barbara Castle	1964-70 & 1974-76	Yvette Cooper	2008-10
Judith Hart	1968-69	Janet Royall	2008-10
Margaret Thatcher	1970-74 & 1979-1990	Caroline Spelman	2010-12
Shirley Williams	1974-79	Cheryl Gillan	2010-12
Lady Young	1981-83	Sayeeda Warsi	2010-12
Gillian Shephard	1992-97	Theresa May	2010-19
Virginia Bottomley	1992-97	Justine Greening	2011-18
Winifred Ann Taylor	1997-98	Maria Miller	2012-14
Harriet Harman	1997-98 & 2007-10	Theresa Villiers	2012-16, 2019-
Marjorie Mowlam	1997-2001	Elizabeth Truss	2014-17, 2019-
Clare Short	1997-2003	Nicola Morgan	2014-16, 2019-
Margaret Beckett	1997-2007	Tina Stowell	2015-16
Margaret Jay	1998-2001	Amber Rudd	2015-2018 & 2018-19
Helen Liddell	2001-03	Andrea Leadsom	2016-17, 2019-
Estelle Morris	2001-02	Karen Bradley	2016-19
Hilary Armstrong	2001-07	Natalie Evans	2016-
Patricia Hewitt	2001-07	Priti Patel	2016-17, 2019-
Tessa Jowell	2001-07 & 2009-10	Penelope Mordaunt	2017-19
Valerie Amos	2003-07	Esther McVey	2018-2018
Ruth Kelly	2004-08	Thérèse Coffey	2019-

Sources: [House of Commons Briefing Paper \(6652\): Women Members of Parliament](#); UK Parliament website, [Members of the House of Commons](#) (accessed 20 September 2019). Does not include those who attended Cabinet without holding a cabinet post.

⁶ GOV.UK; [Ministers](#) (accessed 19 September 2019)

⁷ [Ibid.](#) (accessed 19 September 2019)

3. Other elected bodies in the UK

Following elections in 2016, 8 out of 40 (20%) elected **Police and Crime Commissioners** in England were women.⁸ The next elections will take place in 2020.

3.1 Devolved legislatures and London Assembly

Since devolved legislatures were established from the late 1990s, women have generally made up 30 to 40% of members after each election. Notable variations are the Northern Ireland Assembly, where female membership has risen from 13% in 1998 to 32% in 2019, and the National Assembly for Wales, where at least 40% of AMs have always been women. Indeed, after a by-election in 2006, 31 out of 60 AMs – 52% – were women.⁹

The chart below shows the proportion of women elected to the devolved legislatures by party (as of September 2019). It also includes the proportion of women elected to the London Assembly.

WOMEN IN UK ELECTED BODIES BY PARTY									
	Con	Lab	LD	PC/SNP	Other	Total			
National Assembly for Wales	3 27%	15 52%	1 100%	6 60%	4 44%	28	47%		
Scottish Parliament	7 23%	11 48%	1 20%	27 44%	1 13%	47	36%		
Northern Ireland Assembly					29 32%	29	32%		
London Assembly	1 13%	6 50%	1 100%		2 50%	10	40%		

Sources: National Assembly of Wales, [Assembly Members](#); Scottish Parliament, [Current MSPs](#); London Assembly, [Assembly Members](#); Northern Ireland Assembly, ['Who runs Northern Ireland? Taking stock of gender and power in Northern Ireland'](#)

3.2 Local government

England

The Local Government Association reported that in 2018, **36%** of local authority councillors in England were women, as shown in the table below.¹⁰

⁸ House of Commons Briefing Paper [\(7595\) Police and Crime Commissioner Elections: 2016](#).

⁹ House of Commons Briefing Papers: [\(7599\): Scottish Parliament Elections: 2016](#); [\(7920\) Northern Ireland Assembly Elections: 2017](#); [\(7594\) National Assembly for Wales Elections: 2016](#).

¹⁰ LGA, [National census of local authority councillors 2018](#), 27 March 2019

COUNCILLORS IN ENGLAND			
Gender make-up by party when last elected, 2018			
Party	% female	% male	Total
Conservative	39%	54%	7,283
Labour	40%	27%	4,750
Liberal Democrat	14%	12%	1,975
Independent / residents' association	3%	3%	439
UKIP	1%	1%	145
Green	2%	1%	213
Other	1%	1%	204
Total	36%	64%	15,009

Source: Local Government Association, [National census of local authority councillors 2018](#), 27 March 2019

Scotland

29% of councillors elected in 2017 were women, as shown in the following table. This was up from 24% in 2012.¹¹

COUNCILLORS IN SCOTLAND			
Gender make-up by party, 2017			
Party	% female	% male	Total
Scottish National Party	39%	61%	431
Conservative	18%	82%	276
Labour	28%	72%	262
Independent/Other	18%	82%	172
Liberal Democrat	34%	66%	67
Green	47%	53%	19
Total	29%	71%	1,227

Source: The Scottish Parliament, [Local Government Elections 2017](#); further analysis by Hugh Bochel for the Electoral Commission (unpublished).

Wales

Women currently hold **28%** of council seats in Wales, up from 26% in 2012.¹²

Northern Ireland

In February 2019, **26%** of councillors were women, as set out in the table below.¹³

¹¹ The Scottish Parliament, [Local Government Elections 2017](#); further analysis by Hugh Bochel for the Electoral Commission (unpublished).

¹² Data provided by the [Welsh Local Government Association](#).

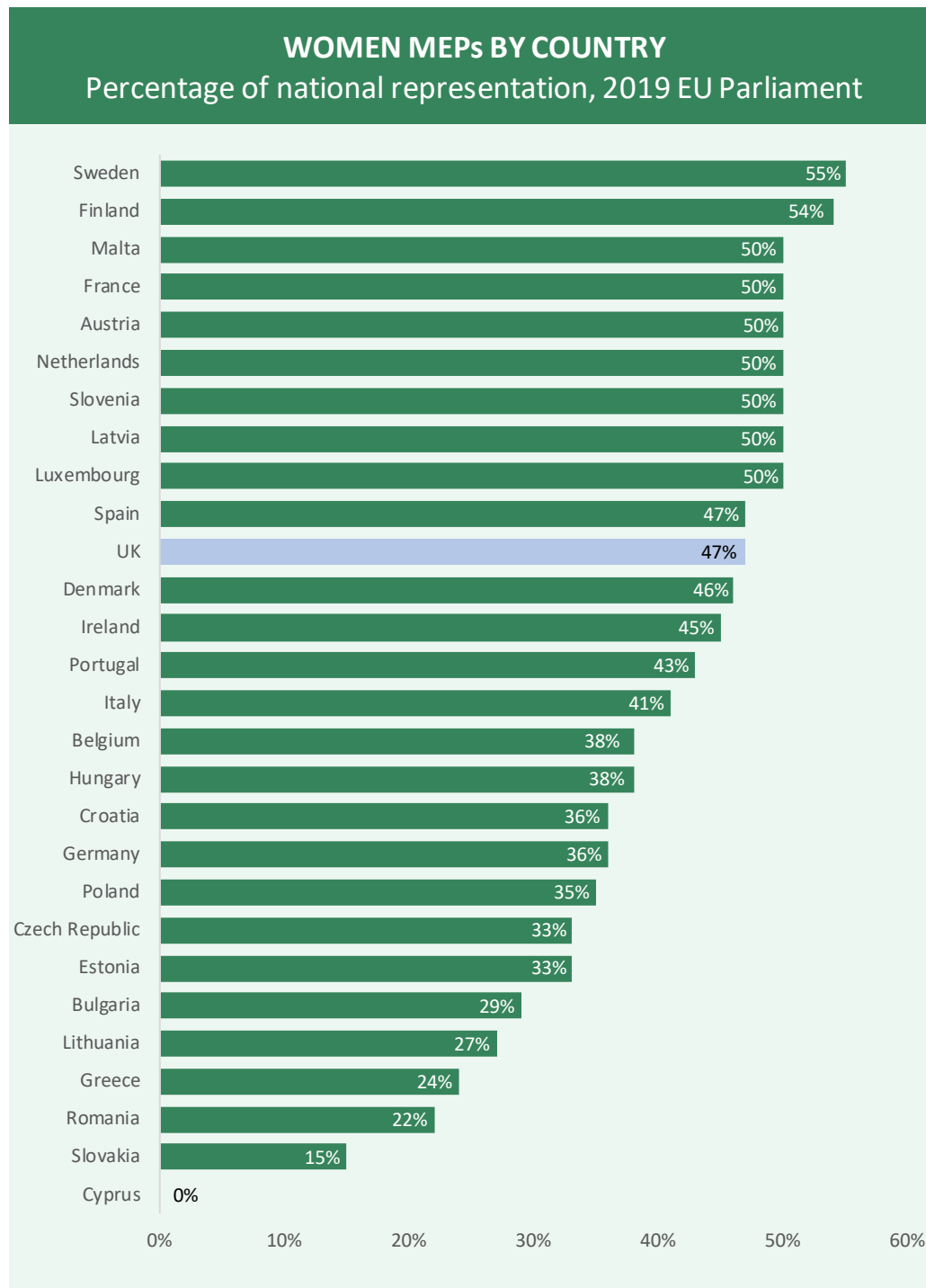
¹³ Data provided by the [Northern Ireland Assembly](#).

COUNCILLORS IN NORTHERN IRELAND			
Gender make-up by party, 2019			
Party	% Male	% Female	Total
Democratic Unionist Party	81%	19%	122
Sinn Féin	65%	35%	105
Ulster Unionist Party	81%	19%	75
Social Democratic and Labour Party	64%	36%	59
Alliance Party of Northern Ireland	60%	40%	53
Green Party	75%	25%	8
Traditional Unionist Voice	100%	0%	6
Independents/Other	88%	12%	34
Total	74%	26%	462

Source: Yvonne Galligan (Technological University Dublin), [The Northern Ireland local elections May 2019 – a gender analysis](#), Slugger O’Toole blog, 21 May 2019

4. European Parliament

Since 1979, the proportion of women MEPs (Members of the European Parliament) has increased from 16% to 41% in the 2019 election. As of the 2019 intake, female representation across Member States varies from 0% in Cyprus to 55% in Sweden. 47% of UK MEPs were women, so the UK had the 11th highest proportion of the 28 EU member countries.¹⁴ The following chart sets out the proportion of female national MEPs.



Source: European Parliament, [2019 European election results, MEPs' gender balance](#)

¹⁴ European Parliament, [2019 European election results, MEPs' gender balance](#)

5. Parliamentary and political firsts for women

The timeline below sets out a number of significant firsts for women in UK politics.¹⁵

- 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)
- 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 Wootton)
- 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)
- 2017** Black Rod (Sarah Clarke)

¹⁵ Central Office of Information, *Women in Britain*, 1996; [Centre for Advancement of Women in Politics](#); House of Commons Library analysis.

6. International context

6.1 Presidents and prime ministers

In June 2019, there were 11 women serving as Head of State and 12 serving as Head of Government.¹⁶

This is one more than the previous record set in 2017. As recently as 2005, there were only eight.¹⁷

The following table lists female presidents and prime ministers as of February 2019.¹⁸ Note that this list is no longer up to date and is included for illustrative purposes.

WOMEN PRESIDENTS AND PRIME MINISTERS (FEB 2019)		
Country	Name	In office since
Female presidents		
Croatia	Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović	2015
Estonia	Kersti Kaljulaid	2016
Ethiopia	Sahle-Work Zewde	2018
Georgia	Salome Zourabichvili	2018
Lithuania	Dalia Grybauskaitė	2009
Malta	Marie-Louise Coleira Preca	2014
Marshall Islands	Hilda Heine	2016
Nepal	Bidhya Devi Bhandari	2015
Singapore	Halimah binti Yacob	2017
Taiwan	Tsai Ing-wen	2016
Trinidad and Tobago	Paula-Mae Weekes	2018
Female prime ministers		
Bangladesh	(Sheikh) Hasina Wajed	2009
Barbados	Mia Mottley	2018
Germany	Angela Merkel	2005
Iceland	Katrin Jakobsdóttir	2017
Myanmar	Aung San Suu Kyi	2016
Namibia	Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila	2015
New Zealand	Jacinda Ardern	2017
Norway	Erna Solberg	2013
Romania	Viorica Dăncilă	2018
Serbia	Ana Brnabić	2017
United Kingdom	Theresa May	2016

Note: as of 15 February 2019

Sources: Centre for Women and Democracy, [Women Leaders Worldwide](#), 2017; Inter-Parliamentary Union, [Women in politics: 2019](#), March 2019; further House of Commons Library analysis.

¹⁶ UN Women, [Facts and figures: leadership and political participation](#) (accessed 25 September 2019)

¹⁷ Inter-Parliamentary Union, [Women in politics: 2017](#), 15 March 2017.

¹⁸ Inter-Parliamentary Union, [Women in politics: 2019](#), March 2019

The first non-hereditary female national leader was Sirimavo Bandaranaike, elected Prime Minister of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) in 1960.

International progress was slow until the 1990s. By February 2019, 70 countries (just over a third of all) had had at least one female president or prime minister. A handful had had several. Sri Lanka was the first country to have a female president and prime minister at the same time (from 1994).¹⁹ The table below lists the first woman to become a president or prime minister in each country.

FIRST WOMEN PRESIDENTS AND PRIME MINISTERS					
Name	Country	Year	Name	Country	Year
Sirimavo Bandaranaike	Sri Lanka	1960	Luísa Diogo	Mozambique	2004
Indira Gandhi	India	1966	Yulia Tymoshenko	Ukraine	2005
Golda Meir	Israel	1969	Angela Merkel	Germany	2005
Isabel Martínez de Perón	Argentina	1974	Ellen Johnson Sirleaf	Liberia	2006
Elisabeth Domitien	Central African Republic	1975	Michelle Bachelet	Chile	2006
Margaret Thatcher	United Kingdom	1979	Portia Simpson-Miller	Jamaica	2006
Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo	Portugal	1979	Han Myeong-sook	Republic of Korea	2006
Dame Eugenia Charles	Dominica	1980	Zinaida Greceanii	Moldova	2008
Vigdís Finnbogadóttir	Iceland	1980	Sheikh Hasina	Bangladesh	2009
Gro Harlem Brundtland	Norway	1981	Jadranka Kosor	Croatia	2009
Maria Lea Pedini-Angelini	San Marino	1981	Roza Otunbayeva	Kyrgyzstan	2010
Agatha Barbara	Malta	1982	Laura Chinchilla	Costa Rica	2010
Milka Planinc	Yugoslavia	1982	Kamla Persad-Bissessar	Trinidad and Tobago	2010
Corazón Aquino	Philippines	1986	Julia Gillard	Australia	2010
Benazir Bhutto	Pakistan	1988	Iveta Radičová	Slovakia	2010
Kazimira Prunskienė	Lithuania	1990	Dilma Rousseff	Brazil	2011
Violeta Chamorro	Nicaragua	1990	Cissé Mariam Kaïdama Sidibé	Mali	2011
Mary Robinson	Ireland	1990	Atifete Jahjaga	Kosovo	2011
Khaleda Zia	Bangladesh	1991	Yingluck Shinawatra	Thailand	2011
Edith Cresson	France	1991	Helle Thorning-Schmidt	Denmark	2011
Hanna Suchocka	Poland	1992	Joyce Banda	Malawi	2012
Tansu Çiller	Turkey	1993	Alenka Bratušek	Slovenia	2013
Kim Campbell	Canada	1993	Saara Kuugongelwa	Namibia	2015
Sylvie Kinigi	Burundi	1993	Ameenah Gurib	Mauritius	2015
Agathe Uwilingiyimana	Rwanda	1993	Bidhya Devi Bhandari	Nepal	2015
Claudette Werleigh	Haiti	1995	Hilda Heine	Marshall Islands	2016
Janet Jagan	Guyana	1997	Aung San Suu Kyi	Myanmar	2016
Jenny Shipley	New Zealand	1997	Tsai Ing-wen	Taiwan	2016
Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga	Latvia	1999	Kersti Kaljulaid	Estonia	2016
Mireya Moscoso	Panama	1999	Ana Brnabić	Serbia	2017
Tarja Halonen	Finland	2000	Halimah Yacob	Singapore	2017
Mame Madior Boye	Senegal	2001	Viorica Dăncilă	Romania	2018
Megawati Sukarnoputri	Indonesia	2001	Mia Mottley	Barbados	2018
Maria das Neves	São Tomé and Príncipe	2002	Sahle-Work Zewde	Ethiopia	2018
Beatriz Merino	Peru	2003	Salome Zurbishvili	Georgia	2018

Note: Includes the first female leader for each country; many have had several.

Source: House of Commons Library consolidated analysis.

6.2 Overseas parliaments

Speakers of national parliaments

In September 2019, the Inter-Parliamentary Union calculated that there were 278 Speakers for upper chambers, lower chambers and unicameral parliaments worldwide. Of these, 58 (21%) were women.

¹⁹ House of Commons Library consolidated analysis.

16 Women in parliament and government

In Ethiopia, Mexico, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uruguay, both the upper and lower houses were presided by women.²⁰

In 1927 Austria became the first country to elect a woman to the presidency of a parliamentary chamber; the next was Denmark in 1950. To date women have held one of those positions in 98 countries.

The UK became the 27th country to achieve this when Betty Boothroyd was elected Speaker of the House of Commons in 1992.

The following table shows the dates when the first woman became speaker or presiding officer in a national parliament.

FIRST FEMALE SPEAKER OR PRESIDING OFFICER					
Austria	1927	Ethiopia	1995	Rwanda	2008
Denmark	1950	Lativa	1995	Romania	2008
Hungary	1963	Peru	1995	Gabon	2009
Uruguay	1963	Malta	1996	Bosnia and Herzegovina	2009
Germany	1972	Poland	1997	Ghana	2009
Canada	1972	Bahamas	1997	India	2009
Argentina	1973	Suriname	1997	Bulgaria	2009
Iceland	1974	Netherlands	1998	Lithuania	2009
Switzerland	1977	Czech Republic	1998	Botswana	2009
Bolivia	1979	Venezuela	1998	Mozambique	2010
Italy	1979	Spain	1999	Tanzania	2010
Dominica	1980	Dominican Republi	1999	Laos	2011
São Tomé and Príncipe	1980	Lesotho	2000	Uganda	2011
San Marino	1981	Moldova	2001	Portugal	2011
Ireland	1982	Georgia	2001	Russian Federation	2011
Belize	1984	Chile	2002	Barbados	2012
Jamaica	1984	Liberia	2003	Singapore	2013
Costa Rica	1986	Estonia	2003	Bangladesh	2013
Australia	1987	Greece	2004	Equatorial Guinea	2013
Luxembourg	1989	Belgium	2004	Madagascar	2013
Grenada	1990	Saint Kitts and Nevi	2004	Fiji	2014
Nicaragua	1990	New Zealand	2005	Mauritius	2014
Finland	1991	Burundi	2005	Nepal	2015
Guatemala	1991	Albania	2005	United Arab Emirates	2015
Sweden	1991	Zimbabwe	2005	Vietnam	2016
Trinidad and Tobago	1991	Gambia	2006	Syria	2016
United Kingdom	1992	Israel	2006	Philippines	2018
Croatia	1993	Swaziland	2006	Andorra	2019
Japan	1993	Turkmenistan	2006	Bahrain	2019
Norway	1993	Saint Lucia	2007	Democratic Republic of the Con,	2019
South Africa	1994	USA	2007	Malawi	2019
Antigua and Barbuda	1994	Nigeria	2007	Togo	2019
El Salvador	1994	Uzbekistan	2008		
Mexico	1994	Pakistan	2008		
Panama	1994	Serbia	2008		

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union [New Parline](#) (accessed 24 September 2019); House of Commons Library

²⁰ Inter-Parliamentary Union [New Parline, Compare data on Parliament: Sex of the Speaker](#) (accessed 20 September 2019).

Proportion of women in national parliaments

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) reported that with 32% of MPs being women, the UK is currently ranked 39th in the proportion of women in the lower or only house (as of September 2019). Rwanda is first, with over 61%, while Cuba and Bolivia also have a majority of female members and exactly half the unicameral Parliament of Andorra is made up of women. Three countries in the IPU ranking have no women in their lower or single house, while 26 have fewer than 10%.²¹

The following tables give the top 50 rankings of participation by women in the lower or only houses of parliaments, and then in upper houses.

WOMEN IN NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS			
Top 50 countries by membership of lower or unicameral house			
Rank	Country	%	Rank Country %
1	Rwanda	61.3	26 Ecuador 38.0
2	Cuba	53.2	27 Serbia 37.7
3	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	53.1	28 Austria 37.2
4	Andorra	50.0	29 United Republic of Tanzania 36.9
5	Mexico	48.2	30 Burundi 36.4
6	Spain	47.4	31 Tunisia 35.9
7	Sweden	47.3	32 Italy 35.7
8	Finland	47.0	33 Portugal 35.7
9	Grenada	46.7	34 Uganda 34.9
10	Namibia	46.2	35 Belarus 34.6
11	South Africa	46.0	36 Monaco 33.3
12	Costa Rica	45.6	37 Nepal 32.7
13	Nicaragua	44.6	38 Switzerland 32.5
14	Belgium	42.7	39 United Kingdom 32.0
15	Senegal	41.8	40 Guyana 31.9
16	New Zealand	40.8	41 Zimbabwe 31.9
	“ Norway	40.8	42 Netherlands 31.3
18	France	39.7	43 Cameroon 31.1
19	Mozambique	39.6	44 El Salvador 31.0
20	North Macedonia	39.2	“ Trinidad and Tobago 31.0
21	Denmark	39.1	46 Germany 30.9
22	Argentina	38.9	47 Australia 30.5
23	Ethiopia	38.8	48 Angola 30.0
24	Timor-Leste	38.5	“ Latvia 30.0
25	Iceland	38.1	“ Peru 30.0

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union [New Parline](#) (accessed 24 September 2019).

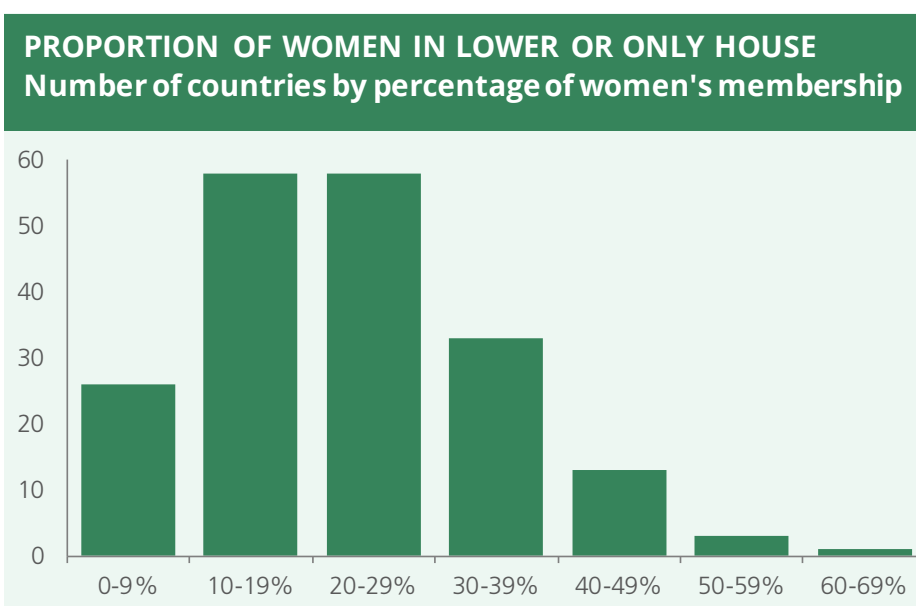
²¹ Inter-Parliamentary Union [New Parline](#) (accessed 25 September 2019).

18 Women in parliament and government

WOMEN IN NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS			
Top 50 countries by membership of upper house			
Rank	Country	%	Rank Country %
1	Antigua and Barbuda	52.9	26 Ireland 30.0
2	Mexico	49.2	27 Philippines 29.2
3	Australia	48.7	28 Saint Lucia 27.3
4	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	47.2	29 United Kingdom 26.4
5	Belgium	46.7	30 Cameroon 26.0
"	Canada	46.7	31 Uruguay 25.8
7	Burundi	46.2	32 Afghanistan 25.0
8	Bahamas	43.8	" United States of America 25.0
"	Zimbabwe	43.8	34 Somalia 24.1
10	Barbados	42.9	35 Jamaica 23.8
11	Argentina	41.7	" Namibia 23.8
12	Spain	39.5	37 Eswatini 23.3
13	Germany	39.1	38 Chile 23.3
14	South Africa	38.9	39 Japan 22.9
15	Netherlands	38.7	40 Bahrain 22.5
16	Rwanda	38.5	41 Lesotho 21.9
17	Nepal	37.3	" Tajikistan 21.9
18	Austria	36.1	43 Democratic Republic of the C 21.1
19	Trinidad and Tobago	35.5	44 Colombia 21.0
20	Italy	34.4	45 Bosnia and Herzegovina 20.0
21	France	32.2	" Paraguay 20.0
22	Ethiopia	32.0	47 Madagascar 19.4
23	Kenya	30.9	48 Pakistan 19.2
24	Grenada	30.8	49 Côte d'Ivoire 19.2
25	Belarus	30.4	50 Malaysia 19.1

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union [New Parline](#) (accessed 24 September 2019).

The majority of countries have between 10 and 30% female representatives, as set out in the chart below.



Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union [New Parline](#) (accessed 25 September 2019).

Entry of women into national parliaments

Nineteen women were elected in Finland in 1907, the first election after suffrage was extended to women in 1906. In doing so they became the first women ever to sit in a parliament. They made up 9.5% of the elected members, a level that the UK had still not reached in 1992.²²

FIRST WOMEN IN NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS

First 50 by year of election or entry

Rank	Country	Year	Rank	Country	Year
1	Finland	1907	26	Cuba	1940
2	Norway	1911	27	Philippines	1941
3	United States of America	1917	28	Dominican Republic	1942
4	Denmark	1918	"	Uruguay	1942
"	United Kingdom	1918	30	Australia	1943
"	Netherlands	1918	31	France	1945
"	Ireland	1918	"	Albania	1945
8	Austria	1919	"	Bulgaria	1945
"	Germany	1919	"	Hungary	1945
"	Poland	1919	35	Italy	1946
"	Luxembourg	1919	"	Romania	1946
12	Estonia	1920	"	Panama	1946
"	Lithuania	1920	"	Japan	1946
14	Sweden	1921	39	Pakistan	1947
"	Belgium	1921	"	Myanmar	1947
"	Canada	1921	"	Thailand	1947
17	Iceland	1922	"	Sri Lanka	1947
"	Russian Federation	1922	43	Venezuela	1948
19	Latvia	1930	"	Republic of Korea	1948
"	Spain	1931	"	DPR Korea	1948
21	South Africa	1933	46	Israel	1949
"	New Zealand	1933	47	Indonesia	1950
"	Brazil	1933	48	Argentina	1951
24	Portugal	1934	49	Chile	1951
25	Turkey	1939	50	Mongolia	1951

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union [New Parline](#) (accessed 19 February 2019).

²² University of Helsinki, [Centenary of women's full political rights in Finland](#).

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