

III Women in Parliament and public service

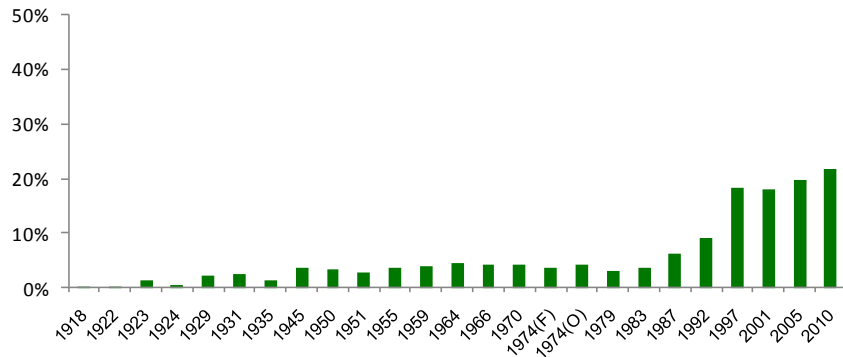
Women make up 51% of the population of the UK, but only 22% of MPs are women.

Women in the House of Commons

The first woman elected to Parliament was Constance Markievicz, a member of Sinn Fein, who stood for election for a seat in Dublin whilst in Holloway prison in London in December 1918. The first woman to be elected and take her seat was Nancy Astor in 1919.

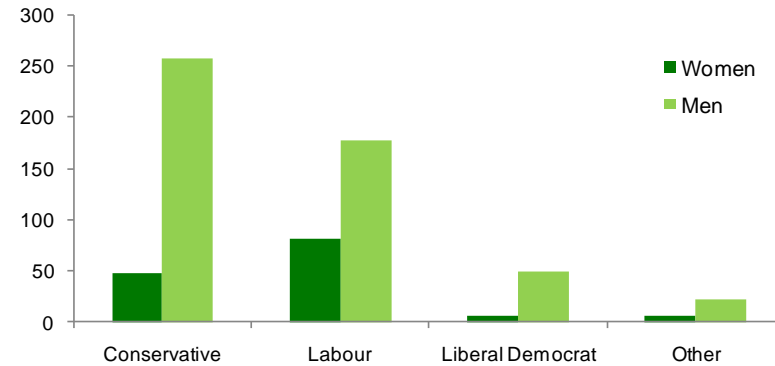
Of 649 MPs elected on 6 May 2010, 142 (21.9%) are women, the highest number and proportion ever. The largest jump in the number of women MPs was in 1997, when the number of women doubled.

Women MPs elected at each General Election



There are 48 Conservative women MPs, 31 more than in 2005. There are 17 fewer Labour women MPs than in 2005 although the proportion of Labour MPs who are women has increased to 31%. Of the three main parties, Labour has the highest proportion of women MPs; the Conservatives have 16% and Liberal Democrats 12%.

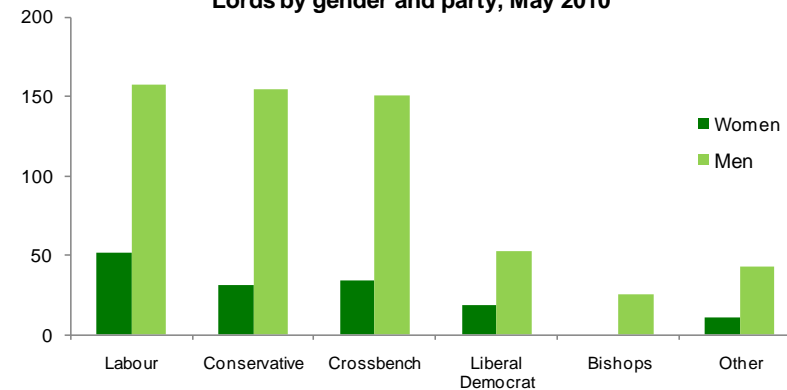
MPs by gender and party, General Election 2010



Women in 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. 20% per cent of members of the House of Lords are women. The parties with the highest proportion of women in the Lords are the Liberal Democrats (with 26%), Labour (25%) and the Democratic Unionists (33%).

Lords by gender and party, May 2010

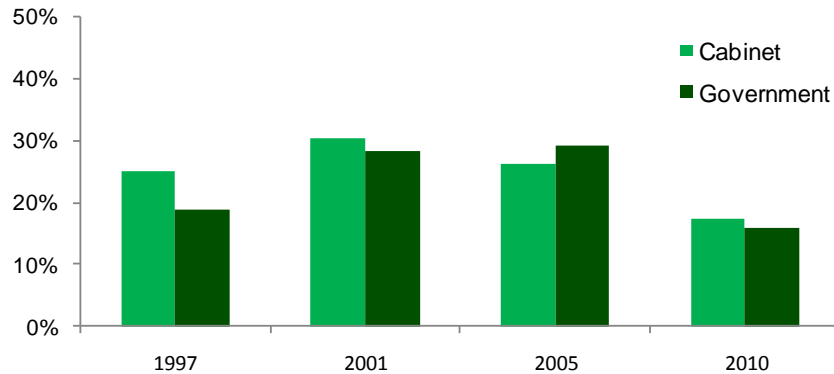


Women in government

The first woman minister was Margaret Bondfield in 1924, who was also the first ever woman appointed to the Cabinet in 1929 as Minister of Labour. She was followed by Ellen Wilkinson in 1945 and Florence Horsbrugh in 1953, with Barbara Castle the fourth ever women Cabinet minister in 1964.

There are currently four women Cabinet ministers and 19 ministers (16% of the total).

Percentage of members of Cabinet and government who are women, immediately following recent General Elections

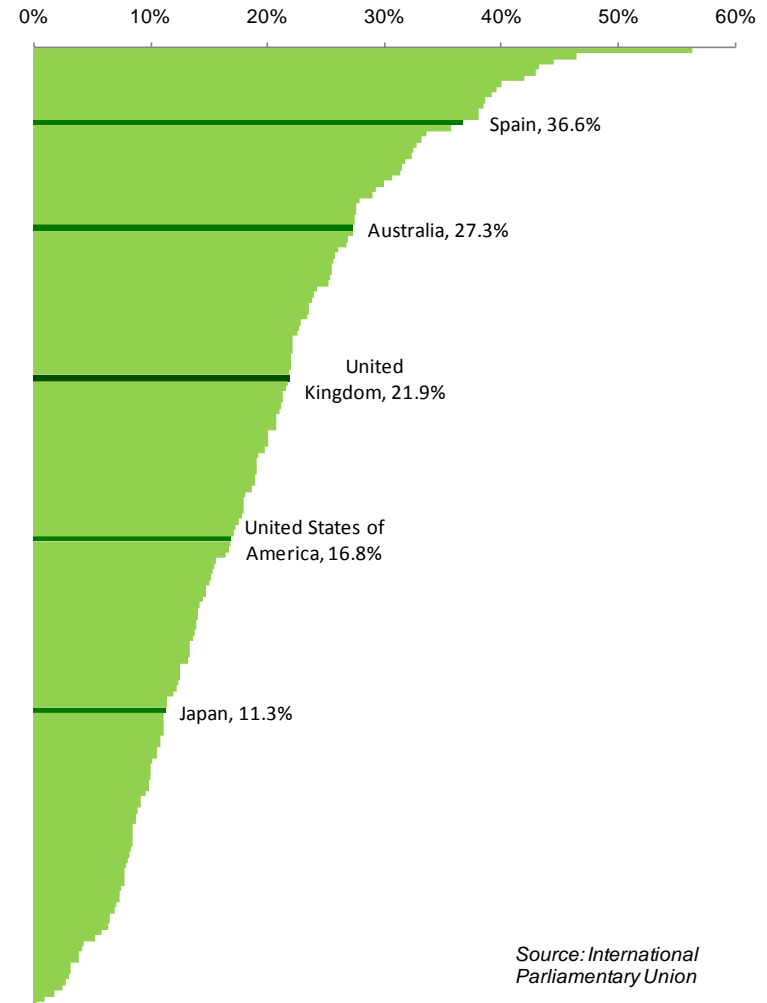


Women in other Parliaments

The Rwandan Chamber of Deputies has the largest proportion of women of any lower or single house national parliament in the world, with 56% women. There are ten countries where there are no women at all in the lower or single house.ⁱ

The UK is ranked 60th in the world in terms of the percentage of women in the lower or single house of parliament in each country.

Percentage of women representatives in the lower or single house of national parliaments

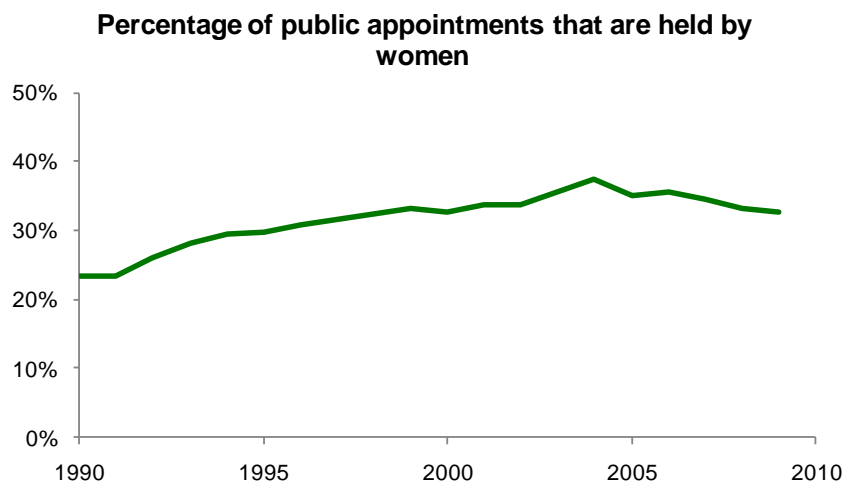


Source: International Parliamentary Union

Following the most recent elections, the Scottish Parliament had 33% women, the Welsh Assembly had 47% women and the Northern Ireland Assembly had 17% women.ⁱⁱ One-third of the representatives elected to the European Parliament in 2009 were women.

Women in other areas of public life

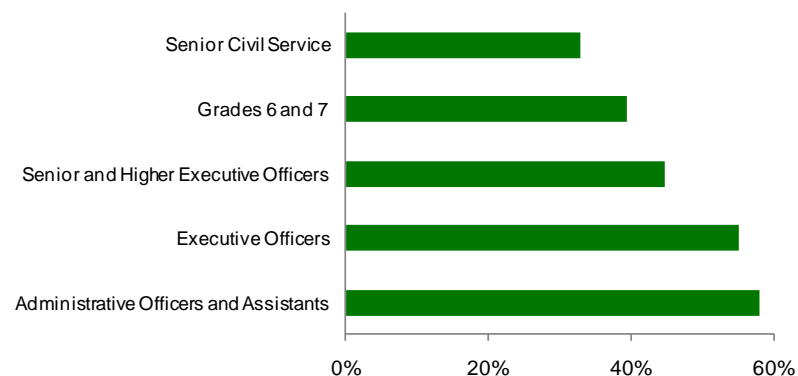
In 2009, women held 33% of public appointments (appointments to the boards of public bodies etc), down from a peak of 38% in 2004.ⁱⁱⁱ



31% of local councillors in England were women in 2008.^{iv} The very first female mayor in England was Elizabeth Garrett Anderson in 1908 (Elizabeth Garrett Anderson was also the first woman qualified in Britain to have her name entered on the medical register).^v

In March 2009, women made up 33% of the Senior Civil Service and 53% of civil servants as a whole; in 1950, 33% of all civil servants were women.^{vi} The first woman Permanent Secretary was Dame Evelyn Sharp in 1955.

Percentage of women at each level of responsibility in the civil service, by headcount, 31 March 2009



The first woman judge was appointed in England and Wales in 1945. By April 2009, 15% of judges in England and Wales were women.^{vii}

12% of officers in the UK regular forces were women at the beginning of March 2010.^{viii}

In 2009, 29% of hospital consultants and 46% of GPs in England were women.^{ix}

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ⁱ Inter-Parliamentary Union – the countries with no women are Belize, Comoros, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Oman, Palau, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Solomon Islands and Tuvalu
ⁱⁱ Scottish Parliament, National Assembly for Wales, Northern Ireland Assembly
ⁱⁱⁱ Cabinet Office: Public Bodies
^{iv} National Census of Local Authority Councillors
^v Oxford Dictionary of National Biography
^{vi} Office for National Statistics: Civil Service Statistics, www.civilservice.gov.uk
^{vii} Judiciary of England and Wales
^{viii} Defence Analytical Services and Advice
^{ix} Information Centre for Health and Social Care: Workforce Statistics