

SEX & POWER 2020

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SUMMARY

Men dominate every sector of politics, public life and business. Parity for women in most areas of public life appears to be decades away. The picture is even worse for women of colour – who are simply missing altogether from the highest levels of many sectors.

However, the 2019 general election shows change is possible and that a willingness to intervene can bring parity for women. For the first time, women MPs are in the majority in the Labour and Liberal Democrat parties. Women of colour were also elected in greater numbers – now making up 17% of women MPs, in line with the population as a whole. Now is the time for all sectors to actively work towards enabling women in all their diversity to reach positions of power.

KEY FINDINGS

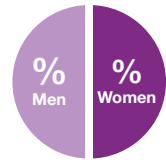
The data in this Index reveals the stark inequalities that persist in the UK today.

- **Politics:** Women now make up 34% of MPs and 30% of Cabinet Ministers - but progress is still too slow. There are no women of colour in the Scottish Parliament, National Assembly for Wales or Northern Ireland Assembly.
- **Civil Service:** Only a fifth of senior civil servants participating in the Civil Service Board are women (21%) and just over a third of permanent secretaries (35%). There are no women of colour in these roles.
- **The law:** Women make up around a quarter of those in senior positions in the judiciary – but this falls to 17% for the Supreme Court.
- **Business:** Women make up just over one in 20 CEOs of FTSE 100 companies (6%). None of these CEOs are women of colour.
- **Media and arts:** Women are a clear minority across almost all areas of the media and arts. Women make up only 21% of national newspaper editors – with just four women in the top jobs.

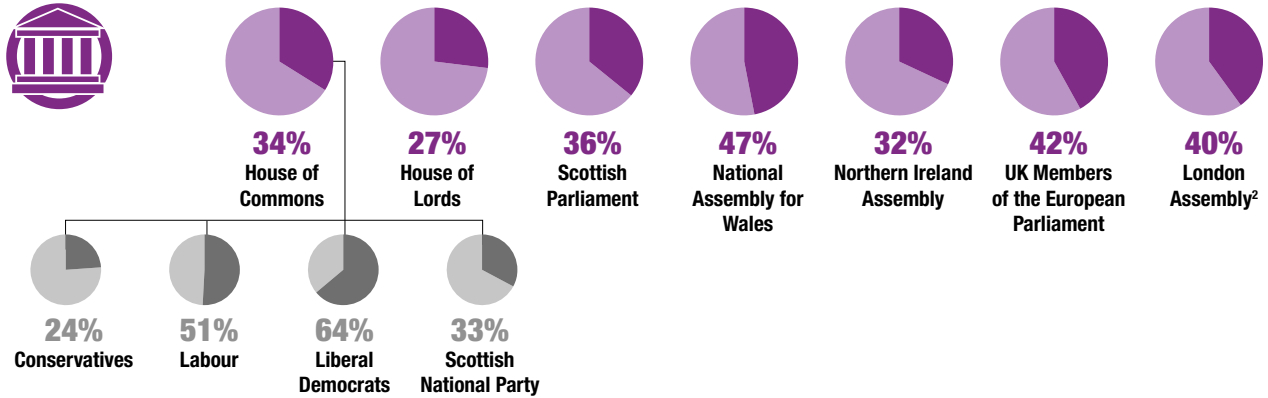
Women are also missing from the top jobs in trade unions, charities, professional bodies and sports bodies. Under-representation is consistent and persistent across sectors. Women of colour, disabled women, and LGBTQ+ people face intersecting barriers and discrimination meaning they may be even less likely to be represented.

The absence of women is not of their making. Women continue to face a combination of discrimination, harassment and structural barriers which keep them out of the top of the institutions that govern our public, political and economic life.¹ Without direct intervention – including quotas, targets, greater flexible working, the collection of intersectional data and improved pay gap reporting – progress will remain far too slow.

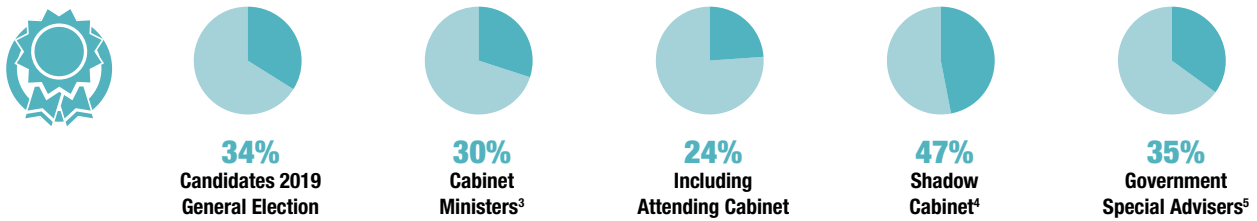
PERCENTAGES OF WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION



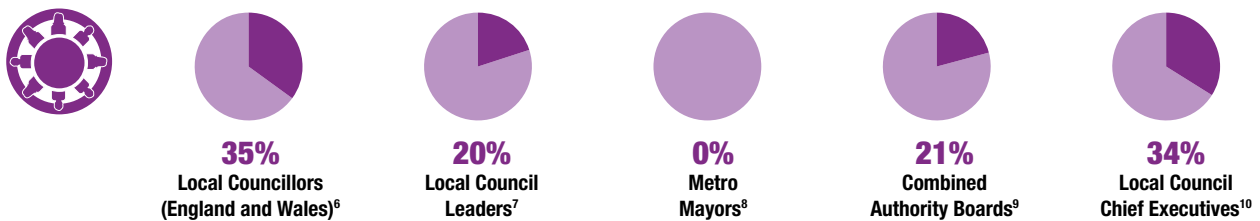
PARLIAMENTS



NATIONAL POLITICS

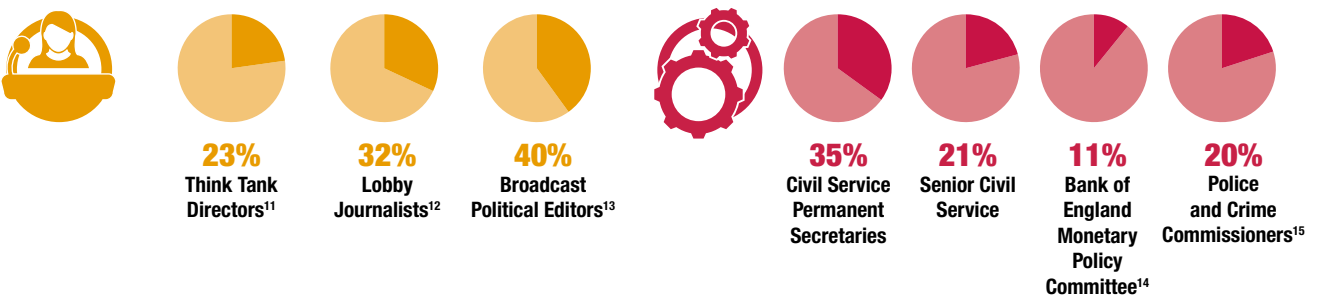


LOCAL POLITICS

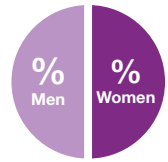


POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

PUBLIC SERVANTS AND APPOINTMENTS



PERCENTAGES OF WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION



THE LAW

EDUCATION AND HEALTH



17%
Supreme Court Justices



27%
High Court Judges



23%
Court of Appeal Judges



30%
University Vice-Chancellors



39%
Secondary Head Teachers



44%
NHS Trust CEOs

THE MEDIA AND ARTS



21%
National Newspaper Editors¹⁶



23%
Regional Newspaper Editors



80%
Mass Market Magazine Editors



20%
Social media company CEOs¹⁷



16%
British Film Directors¹⁸



32%
Cast in British Films



23%
Museum and Gallery Chairs



35%
Museum and Gallery Directors

BUSINESS

CIVIL SOCIETY



6%
CEOs of FTSE 100 Companies



32%
Directors of FTSE 100 Companies



32%
LEP Board Members¹⁹



36%
Trade Union General Secretaries



27%
Charity CEOs²⁰



36%
Chairs of Professional Bodies



23%
CEOs of Professional Bodies

SPORT

IMAGERY



20%
Sport Governing Body Chairs



21%
Sport Governing Body CEOs



4%
Premier League CEOs²¹



25%
Faces on Bank Notes²²



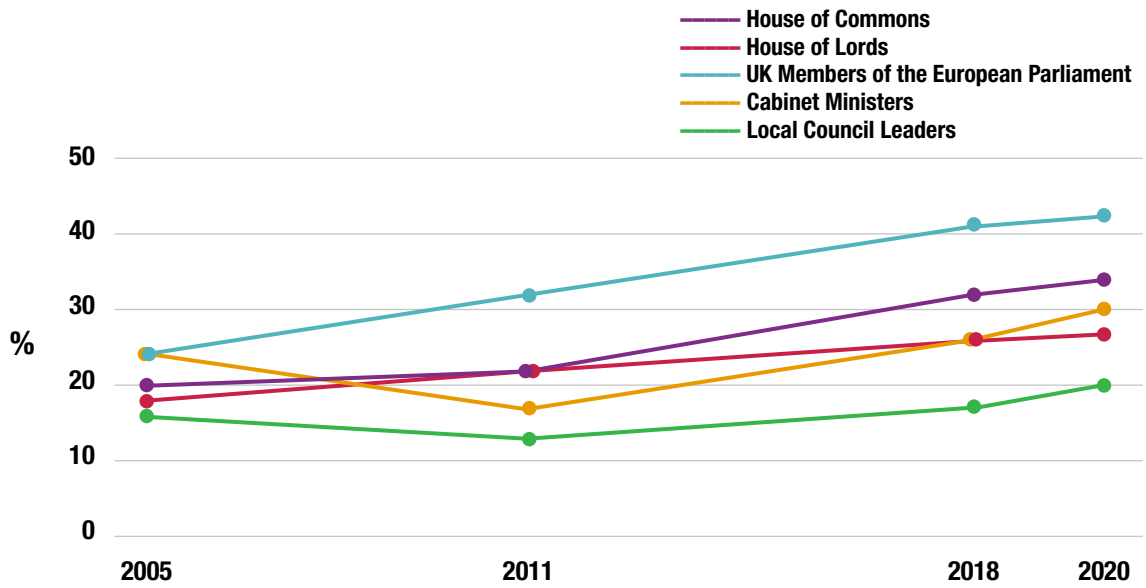
41%
Children's picture books – female characters in the text²³



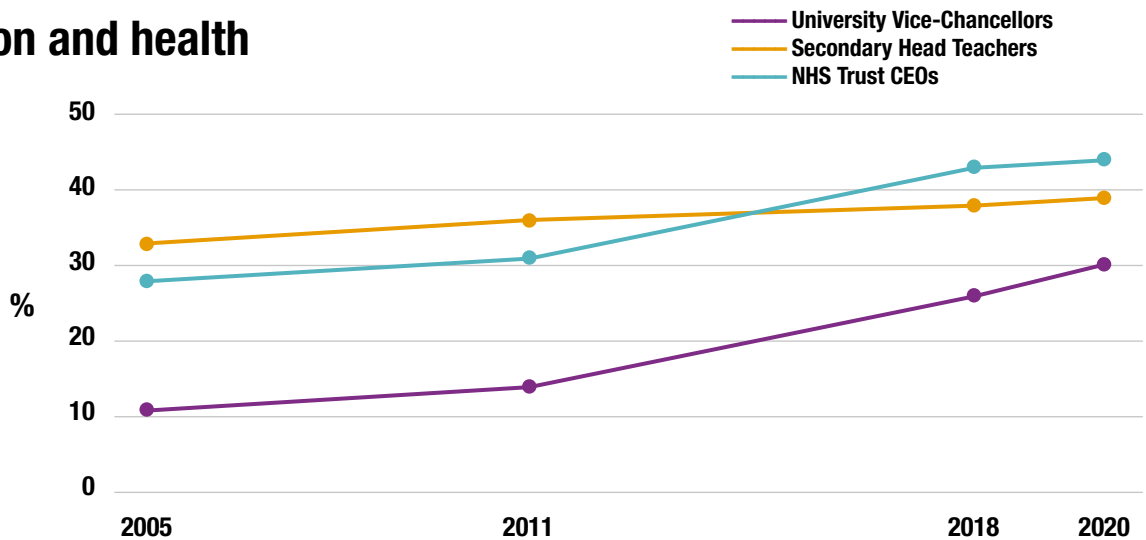
35%
Children's picture books – female speaking characters

CHANGE OVER TIME

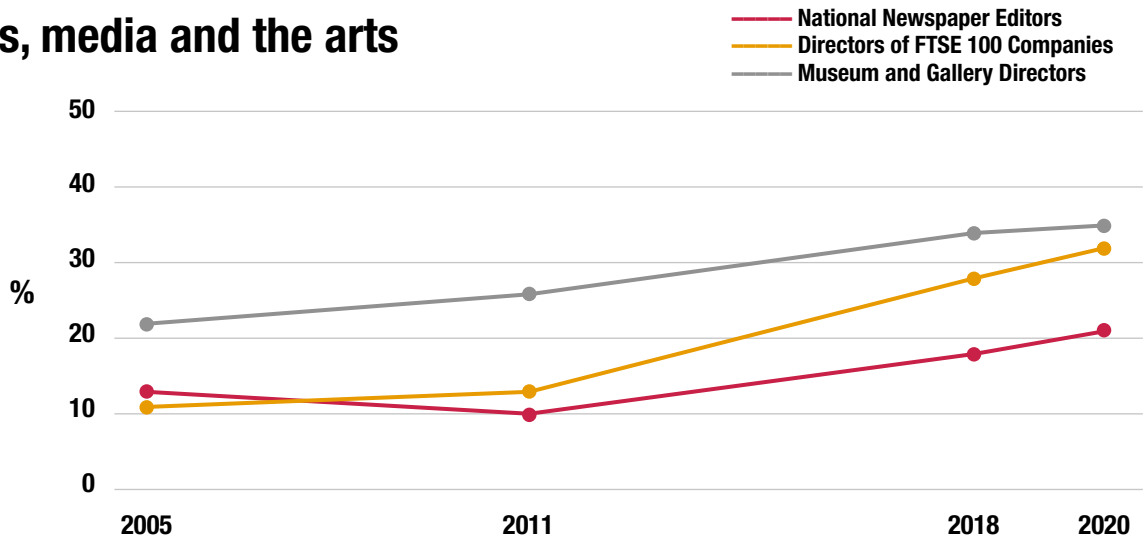
Politics



Education and health



Business, media and the arts



WOMEN IN POWER

Government

Three in ten Cabinet ministers are women (30%) – although women make up only 24% of those who attend Cabinet. There are 109 Ministers, of whom 29% are women. There are a further 24 members of Government in the Whips Office in the House of Commons and House of Lords, of whom 38% are women. While 35% of Government Special Advisers are women, this falls to 25% for advisers to the Prime Minister.²⁴

House of Commons

A record number of women were elected to the House of Commons following the 2019 general election. Women now make up 34% of MPs (220), up from 32% (208) in 2017. However, there is a stark difference in the proportion of women MPs across the party divide. The Conservative Party saw a modest rise from 21% to 24% (87). The Labour Party increased its proportion of women MPs from 45% to 51% (104) - meaning women MPs in the party outnumber their male counterparts. Women make up 64% of Liberal Democrat MPs (7), while the SNP have seen a slight decrease from 34% in 2017 to 33% (16). In Northern Ireland, four women were elected (22%), with all bar the SDLP returning fewer than a third of women MPs.

The new Parliament is the most diverse to date – with people of colour making up 10% of all MPs, up from 8% in 2017. Women of colour make up 17% of women MPs, which is parity with the proportion in the population as a whole. Looking at the different parties, six women of colour sit on the Conservative benches (making up 7% of Conservative women MPs), 29 on the Labour benches (28% of Labour women MPs) and two on the Liberal Democrat benches (29% of Liberal Democrat women MPs).²⁵

There are currently 50 MPs who identify as LGBTQ+ in the House of Commons. Of these, eight are women (16%).²⁶ Women with disabilities continue to be significantly under-represented – with fewer than 1% women MPs in Parliament who identify as disabled people. Ages of women and men MPs are broadly similar across political parties. Conservative women are on average 50 years old, and Labour women 51, while Conservative male MPs are on average 51 and Labour male MPs are on average 54.²⁷

Candidates

In 2019, women made up 34% of all general election candidates²⁸ – up from 20% in 2005, when the Sex and Power series began.²⁹ Representation varied across parties: Labour Party 53%; Green Party 41%; SNP 34%; Liberal Democrats 31%; Conservatives 30%; Plaid Cymru 25%; Brexit Party 20%.

House of Lords

There were 217 female peers out of 796 members of the House of Lords as of December 2019. At 27%, this is significantly lower than the Commons. The percentage of women in the Lords has increased by only seven percentage points in the last 10 years.³⁰

Women's representation in the Lords varies between different parties and groupings. The Conservatives have slightly better representation in the Lords than they do in the Commons, with 26% women. Labour have a lower proportion of women in the Lords than they do in the Commons, at 32%. Women make up 35% of Liberal Democrat peers. Political parties nominate peers to sit on their benches – so greater equality is within their gift.

Analysis by Operation Black Vote in May 2019 found that 45 peers (5.8%) were from ethnic minority groups. Of these, just 16 peers were women from an ethnic minority background (2%).³¹ None of the ten women made peers in 2019 were from an ethnic minority background. We are not aware of any data on disability in the House of Lords.

European Parliament

In the 2019 European elections, the UK returned 42% women MEPs, which is a slight improvement from 41% in 2014 and 33% in 2009. The newly formed Brexit Party holds the greatest number of UK seats at 29, but just eight (28%) of its MEPs are women.³²

Devolved Parliaments and Assemblies

Women make up 36% of Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs). At the time of our last report, all three of the largest parties' leaders at Holyrood were women. Now, only Nicola Sturgeon remains in post, and the leaders of the Scottish Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties are men.

The National Assembly for Wales (Senedd) was the first legislature in the world to reach a 50:50 gender balance in 2003. This was achieved via the use of a proportional representation system and positive action by the Labour Party. While the proportion of women on the Assembly has fluctuated since, the Senedd is now 47% female.³³

The Northern Ireland Assembly Executive at Stormont has been suspended since January 2017. The elections in May 2016 and March 2017 saw a shift in women's representation, increasing from 19.4% in 2015 to 32% currently.³⁴

EXCLUSION OF WOMEN OF COLOUR

House of Commons	6%
House of Lords	2%
Cabinet Ministers	4%
Shadow Cabinet	13%
Local Councillors (England)³⁵	5%
Trade Union General Secretaries	7%

N.b. The figures in the table are of women of colour as a percentage of the total group i.e. 6% of all MPs are women of colour.

There is an alarming lack of women of colour in the highest levels of many sectors. Where data is available, we know that women of colour are under-represented in almost every sector. In many areas, they are simply missing.

Before the 2010 election, Diane Abbott, Oona King, and Dawn Butler were the only three female women of colour MPs; the first women MPs of Asian origin were elected in 2010. Since then, steady progress has been made. The 2019 general election returned a record number of women of colour (37) in the Commons.

Women of colour are missing completely from the Scottish Parliament,³⁶ National Assembly for Wales³⁷ and Northern Ireland Assembly.³⁸ It seems there have never been any women of colour MSPs,³⁹ or, by our assessment, Welsh Assembly Members.⁴⁰ There has to date been one woman of colour in the Northern Ireland Assembly – Anna Lo – who stood down in 2016.

The data shows that women of colour are also missing from across the range of public and private sectors:

- there are no women of colour represented within the highest levels of the civil service;
- since its formation in 2009, there has never been a person of colour Supreme Court Judge;
- there are no women of colour among the CEOs of the FTSE 100;⁴¹
- women of colour make up just 1% of university vice-chancellors.⁴²

A major barrier in tackling the inequality facing women of colour is the lack of data, and this applies similarly to the lack of other intersectional data for protected characteristics – including religion, LGBTQ+ identity, disability, age - and class. More evidence on the inequality faced by specific groups is needed. Government, particularly the Office for National Statistics, should prioritise working with relevant sectors to collect and publish intersectional data to accelerate the pace of change.

MAKING PROGRESS

Progress is happening in some spheres, but often it is slow or at risk of retreat. Steps must be taken to speed up change, as the following examples show:

- Women's representation on the Supreme Court reached a quarter, with three women justices, in 2018. However, with Lady Hale stepping down from the court in 2020, there will again be only two women on the court.⁴³
- The next tier down, the Court of Appeal, has 23% women, and the High Court of England and Wales has just 27% women. The latter figure however has increased from 22% in 2017, and 45% of senior judicial appointments in 2018-19 were women.⁴⁴
- Within Local Government, there has been some progress in the number of women taking up leadership positions. Women now make up 34% of Local Council Chief Executives, rising from 18% in 2005 but by only 1% since our last report in 2018.
- There is a positive picture in some parts of the public sector. The number of women university vice-chancellors has improved from 14% in 2013 to 30% in 2019.⁴⁵
- There has also been positive progress within the NHS, with women making 44% of NHS Trust CEOs, which is a broadly positive trend from 28% in 2005.⁴⁶
- Within the business world, the number of women CEOs in FTSE 100 companies remains at 6%.⁴⁷ However, women make up 32% of FTSE 100 company directors, which marks a positive increase from 28% in 2017.⁴⁸ The next challenge will be extending this improvement to more powerful executive director positions.
- Looking at the art world, the 2008 Sex and Power report showed that women made up just 17% of museum and gallery Directors. The proportion of women has improved but remains well below equality, with 35% of those roles now filled by women.⁴⁹
- The unveiling of the Millicent Fawcett statue in Parliament Square in 2018 was one of a number of new statues of historical women to be unveiled since our last report. The Public Monuments and Sculpture Association has pledged to publish new data on this in 2020.⁵⁰

It cannot be left to chance that progress will continue. We need explicit policies to be introduced to ensure women reach parity.

SLIPPING BACK AND STAGNATING

We remain concerned about the following areas, outside of the world of politics, where there is a risk of losing the hard-won progress made in recent years.

- Senior civil service: Women remain outnumbered in the upper echelons of the civil service, and just 21% of the Civil Service Board are women.⁵¹ This has dropped from 31% when we last reported in 2018. There are no women of colour in these roles.
- Public appointments: The Public Appointments Commissioner is responsible for monitoring appointments to numerous arms-length bodies, such as the UK Statistics Authority, the Environment Agency and the Care Quality Commission. These bodies are key players in the way our country is run, yet the latest data from 2018-19 shows that the percentage of chair appointments made to women was just 31%, falling from 44% in 2017-18.⁵²
- CEOs of professional bodies: The role of professional bodies within civil society is vital. Most professional bodies, including many of the chartered institutes, have a combination of a representative, development, and regulatory function within their industries. Our analysis in 2019 found that just 23% of Chief Executives of these bodies were women. This has fallen from 30% when we last collected the data in 2018.⁵³
- Trade Union General Secretaries: The role of trade unions in our economy and on behalf of their members is vital. Taking the 13 trade unions with a membership of over 100,000, and including the TUC, just five out of 14 (36%) of General Secretaries are women.⁵⁴
- Secondary head teachers: Data shows that the pace of change in this area remains stagnant, with women making up just 39% of secondary head teachers in 2018.⁵⁵ This figure has risen by just 6% since 2005.
- Sport governing bodies: Within the sports industry, women make up 21% of national sport governing body CEOs, a drop from 26% in 2018.⁵⁶

These figures show that a significant amount of work is still needed to ensure the institutions that govern our public and political lives include women in senior roles.

OUR CALLS FOR CHANGE

The pace of change must be urgently accelerated to ensure that women in all their diversity are represented. We are calling for the following interventions:

- **The Government should improve gender pay gap reporting by reducing the threshold for reporting to 100+ employees, requiring employers to publish action plans and introducing reporting on the gender pay gap by ethnicity.** Employers not currently captured by pay gap regulations could voluntarily make that data available. Women currently do not have the data to understand intersectional inequality within their workplaces. It is vital that data on all people of colour is not presented as one homogenous group.
- **The Government should require political parties to collect and publish diversity data for candidates.** Data on the diversity of candidates in elections is not currently published by all political parties. Without the data we cannot seek to effectively tackle the under-representation of women within politics, particularly those from marginalised backgrounds. Section 106 of the Equality Act 2010 should be commenced to enable informed discussions about the diversity of candidates.
- **More evidence on the inequality faced by specific groups of women is needed.** Government, and the Office for National Statistics, should prioritise working with relevant sectors to collect and publish intersectional data to accelerate the pace of change.
- **Political parties should set targets for increasing women's representation and a clear action plan to achieve them.** Whilst the number of women MPs has increased from 32% to 34%, progress is still far too slow. It's time for legislation to accelerate this change. Evidence from all over the world demonstrates that quotas are effective at getting more women elected. Parties should commit to legislating for quotas if progress is not made.
- **Government should introduce time-limited quotas for use across public bodies and the boards of large corporate organisations.** The case for quotas remains strong. For other organisations we recommend the setting of targets and publishing an action plan.
- **We welcome the Government's intention in the Queen's Speech to legislate to make flexible working the default for job roles, unless there is a good reason for them not to be.**⁵⁷ Flexible work needs to be a route to the top, yet just 15% of jobs are advertised with flexibility.⁵⁸ In addition to this, more roles should be made available on a part-time or job-share basis.
- **Maternity, paternity and parental leave policies should be comprehensively reviewed.** It should be structured to presume equal responsibility for the care of children and ensure that both parents have leave entitlements in their own right. One parent's entitlement should not be dependent upon the other, and leave entitlements should be paid at a rate that they can afford to take.

APPENDIX

Methodology

This is the second Fawcett Society Sex and Power Index. The Equal Opportunities Commission started the series in 2003 and the Index has been published regularly since then. This Index updates statistics in the previous Sex and Power reports, with some additional indicators added.

The report cites intersectional data where possible – but in many instances this data is not available. There is a need for the authorities relevant for each sector, in some cases Government, to create an intersectional picture on protected characteristics.

The report uses data collected from September 2019 – January 2020. The data on women's representation was either taken from existing research or newly created from publicly available information. Where data has been collated using publicly available information, there is a risk of error – but any errors relating to individuals, while regrettable, are unlikely to have an effect at the aggregate level. We have assumed that the information on relevant websites will be accurate at the point of access.

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The Fawcett Society is the UK's leading membership charity campaigning for gender equality and women's rights at work, at home and in public life. Our vision is a society in which women and girls in all their diversity are equal and truly free to fulfil their potential creating a stronger, happier, better future for us all.

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