Women’s representation

Women are under represented in all areas of public life. This document sets out the current facts, and what the Government has done and is planning. Much progress has been made in recent years. The Equality Bill is a key driver to ensuring a fairer society allowing more women, and other under represented groups, to play their full role and bring their experiences to bear. Targets and positive action are combining to deliver better representation in all sectors. Inspiring women are making a difference in politics, public life and the private sector. Many have got to the very top of their occupations and there are no longer professions or institutions where women are not playing a role. However, there is still much more that can be done to ensure that woman’s talents and skills are fully harnessed whether that be in politics or in the private, public and voluntary sectors.

The goal of equality of representation is not just right in principle but key to creating a fairer society. Society as a whole will benefit from utilising the skills and talents of everyone and listening to the views of everyone. In this way decisions will better reflect the needs of everyone and help institutions become more in touch with the communities they serve.

Increasing women’s representation is therefore necessary for:

• **individuals**: everyone has the right to be treated fairly and to have the opportunity to fulfil their potential;

• **the economy**: a competitive economy draws on all the talents and abilities;

• **society**: institutions that are more diverse will make decisions that better reflect the needs of all in society and so offer services that are more in tune with the public.

**Fairness and equality** are the hallmarks of a modern and confident society.
**The case for diversity**

- **The Talent Pool:** Organisations which have relatively few women in senior roles are losing out on the widest range of talent available to them. To ensure we have the best people in place to lead, we must look outwards and realise there are many people with talent, ability and experience who are not ‘the usual suspects’.

- **Understanding your customers:** Whether public or private, organisations with a good balance of men and women at senior management level will be better at understanding the communities they represent and serve. Boards that reflect the face of modern Britain can make a real difference to both people and communities and to the future of public services.

- **Representing communities:** There is a real need to make political parties reflect the communities or the population they serve because governance will be better delivered when people feel that there is a representative voice for them within the democratic process. Women in Parliament and wider decision-making positions have a better understanding of what women need and want and can better represent their views and those of their families.

- **Promoting innovation and inclusion:** Political parties and boards that are composed of a narrow sector of the population are more likely to think in the same way and so make poor decisions. Diversity brings fresh perspectives, talent, new ideas and broader experience which leads to better decision making.

- **Work and life experience:** Political parties and boards need people with valuable work and life skills – not just experts in particular fields – in order to make our economy, society and communities better places to live and work.

- **Women’s rights:** Everyone has the right to be treated fairly and the opportunity to fulfil their potential. Despite making up over half the population, women are vastly under-represented in politics and our private and public boards.
Women in politics

Key facts

- **51%** of the population are women
- **19.4%** Members of Parliament (MPs) are women
- **30.8%** of local councillors in England are women
- **46.7%** of Welsh Assembly members are women
- **34.8%** of Scottish Parliament members are women

1. Parliament Website 14 Jan 2010
2. National Census of Local Authority Councillors 2008
4. The Scottish Parliament Website Jan 2010
13.9% of Northern Ireland Assembly members are women.5

33.3% of UK members of the European Parliament are women.6

Ethnic Minority Women in Politics

Key facts

5% of the population are Black, Asian and minority ethnic women.7

0.8% of local councillors in England are Black, Asian and minority ethnic women.

0.3% of MPs are Black, Asian and minority ethnic women MPs.8

5 Northern Ireland Assembly website as at 8 Feb 2010
6 UK office of the European Parliament Jan 2010
7 National Census of Local Authority Councillors 2008
8 2/644 as at Jan 2010
Government action to improve women’s representation in political life

What we’ve done
✓ changed the law to allow political parties to use all women shortlists in local, national and European elections;
✓ set up a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Women Councillors Taskforce to increase the number of BAME women councillors. Over 1000 women took part. 70% of those who gave feedback stated they were more likely to put themselves forward as a local councillor;
✓ provided tailored leadership courses to support women into civic roles in 18 Take Part pathfinder areas across the country.

What we’re planning
✓ extending all women shortlists to 2030;
✓ rolling out a national shadowing scheme across 51 local authority areas for BAME women who want to be councillors;
✓ responding later in March 2010 to the recommendations of the Speakers Conference which reported on 11 January 2010 with recommendations for Parliament, political parties and Government on how to improve representation of women, disabled, and minority ethnic people in the House of Commons, so that it better reflects society;
✓ making clear that political parties can reserve places on electoral shortlists for those with protected characteristics e.g. disabled people or those from an ethnic minority;
✓ changing the law through the Equality Bill to improve transparency of those standing for election;
✓ encouraging further take up of the Take Part programme outside existing pathfinder areas.
Women in public appointments

Key facts

- 51% of the population are women
- 32.6% of public appointments are held by women
- 6.9% of public appointments were held by members of minority ethnic groups. Of these, around 38% were women
- 3.5% of public appointments were held by disabled people. Of these, around 37% were women

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9 Cabinet Office – Public Bodies 2009
Government action to improve women’s representation in public appointments

**What we’ve done**

✓ set new cross government targets for the appointment of underrepresented groups to public appointments

✓ set up two mentoring schemes to increase the number of women in public appointments, with over 700 applications received to date;

✓ set up a network of 200 Ambassadors (people from a diverse range of backgrounds who currently hold public appointments) to raise awareness and encourage others to apply;

✓ delivered a media campaign to promote opportunities to participate in public bodies;

✓ developed a new public appointments website [www.direct.gov.uk/publicappointments] as a part of a digital strategy to raise awareness of opportunities.

**What we’re planning**

✓ continuing to monitor cross government targets with six monthly publication of progress made against them

✓ delivering two mentoring schemes to increase the number of women in public appointments

✓ increased use of the Ambassadors network to raise awareness of opportunities in public appointments

✓ cross-departmental communications events to help drive improved performance across government

✓ regional events to promote public appointments to a wider range of people

✓ building the evidence base on the barriers faced by under-represented groups applying for appointments, and their experience of the appointments process.

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Women on Boards

Key facts

51% of the population are women

5.2% of FTSE 100 executive directorships are held by women

12.2% of directors in FTSE 100 companies are women

14.7% of newly appointed FTSE 100 directors are women

25% of FTSE 100 companies have exclusively male boards

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Female FTSE Report 2009
Government action to improve women’s representation on private boards

What we’ve done
✓ brought together a panel of experts to analyse the obstacles to female board membership and advise on possible solutions;
✓ published research from Cranfield School of Management to understand why women are under represented and what is being done to address it;
✓ launched a new strategy to ensure a fair and family-friendly labour market where everyone has the ability to develop their skills and experience;
✓ provided financial support for the publication of the annual Female FTSE Report, which tracks the representation of women directors in FTSE 100 companies.

What we’re planning
✓ changing the positive action provisions in the Equality Bill so employers can take account of under represented groups when deciding between candidates who are as qualified as each other in terms of ability, competence and professional experience to undertake a particular job;
✓ working with business to explore the ways in which the barriers to women’s progression into senior management and the boardroom can be removed or overcome, engaging business leaders with the aim of finding a business-led solution;
✓ signposting businesses to programmes, networks and services they can access that are aimed at improving senior representation;
✓ engaging the Financial Reporting Council and others to improve transparency.

12 Female FTSE Report 2009
13 Female FTSE Report 2009
Women in the Public Sector

51% of the population are women

24.5% of women in top 200 for Civil Service\(^\text{14}\)

20.1% of local authority chief executives are women\(^\text{15}\)

12% of senior police officers are women\(^\text{16}\)

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\(^{14}\) Cabinet Office as at 31 March 2009

\(^{15}\) JNCs for Chief Executives & Chief Officers annual surveys – April 2008 for CE’s in England and Wales

\(^{16}\) Home Office Statistics as at 31 March 2009
Action to improve women’s representation in the public sector

What we’ve done
✓ delivered a Diversity Strategy for the Civil Service “Promoting Equality and Valuing Diversity” to improve representation of women in the Senior Civil Service;
✓ provided part-time, job-share and a range of other flexible working opportunities, such as flexi time, compressed hours, home working and term time working for staff and in May 2009 launched the first pan Civil Service job share website;
✓ launched in 2007 the cross Civil Service Leaders Unlimited scheme: a positive action tailored leadership development scheme to support talented women with potential in the feeder grades to the SCS;
✓ supported a range of other networks;
✓ the Leadership Centre for Local Government hosts a network of senior women leaders from across the country to share and exchange ideas on addressing the particular challenges faced by women working in local and national government;
✓ in February 2010, the Leadership Centre for Local Government launched a new network for the next generation of senior women leaders which aims to provide an environment of support for the development of women leaders in the public service in the next five to ten years. It is supported by the existing senior women leader’s network;
✓ the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) runs the Senior Positive Action Leadership Programme (PALP) for female police officers of senior rank. The overall aim of PALP is to increase representation of all minority groups at chief officer level in the police service by providing delegates with the opportunity, confidence and skills needed to succeed;
✓ in 2009 the NPIA, working with the British Association for Women in Policing (BAWP), launched the Good Practice Database. It is a comprehensive catalogue of good practice initiatives drawn from work undertaken by forces and provides a breakdown of interventions to improve diversity within the forces. These interventions include mentoring schemes, awareness raising of women’s issues, in-force leadership development schemes, recruitment familiarisation days and support networks.

What we’re planning
✓ set targets for 39% of Senior Civil Service and 34% in Top management Posts to be women by 2013;
✓ the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) is due to publish the Equality in Employment report 2010, which gives an overview of all the data on women in policing, including senior women and women from BME backgrounds. This will make recommendations to be considered for the improvement of recruitment, retention and progression in policing that will impact on the talent pool of women available at senior levels;
✓ using the Equality Bill to improve transparency across the public sector, including on the gender pay gap.
More information
For more information on the work of the Government Equalities Office visit www.equalities.gov.uk

Alternatively contact our general enquiries line on 020 3444 0000 or email enquiries@geo.gsi.gov.uk

Government Equalities Office
9th Floor
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London
SW1E 5DU

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