



BRIEFING PAPER

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Women in Parliament and Government

By Richard Keen, Richard
Cracknell & Max Bolton

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Other House of Commons Library research papers on women in parliament include:

Further historic and legislative background on Women MPs [Women in the House of Commons](#) Briefing Paper 6651 (16 June 2017)

A list of all women Members of Parliament since 1918 is available in [Women Members of Parliament](#) Briefing Paper 6652 (18 January 2018)

And for information and statistics on women in business and public life see [Women in Public Life, the Professions and the Boardroom](#) (27 July 2017)

Contributing Authors:

Richard Keen; Richard Cracknell

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Summary

A record 208 women MPs were elected to the House of Commons at General Election 2017, a record high of 32%. As of January 2018 there are 206 female peers, making up 26% of Members of the House of Lords. There are currently six women in Cabinet including the Prime Ministers, 26% of the total 23 permanent Cabinet posts.

Parliament

208 female MPs were elected during the 2017 General Election – a record high and 32% of all MPs. This is up from 191 in the 2015 election and the highest proportion of any UK election to date.¹ There are 206 female peers, making up 26% of Members of the House of Lords.²

Devolved Legislatures and UK MEPs

Just over one-third (36%) of members in the Scottish Parliament are women, compared to just over two-fifths (42%) of members of National Assembly for Wales and 30% of Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly. Following the 2014 European Parliament elections, 41% of UK MEPs are women.

Local Government councillors

32% of local authority councillors in England are women, as of 2013. In Scotland, 24% of councillors are women. Women hold 26% of council seats in Wales. In Northern Ireland 25% of councillors are women.

Women MPs since 1918

Since 1918, 489 women have been elected as Members of the House of Commons.³ In 1918 Constance Markievicz became the first women to be elected as an MP though, elected for Sinn Féin, she did not take her seat. Nancy Astor was the first women to take a seat in the House of Commons, in 1919. The total number of women to have been elected to the House since 1918 has now surpassed the current number of men sitting in the House of Commons, 442.

Women ministers

Currently there are six women in the Cabinet (including the Prime Minister) which is 26% of 23 Cabinet posts (not including those who “also attend Cabinet”).⁴

Margaret Bondfield was the first ever woman appointed to Cabinet, in 1929; Margaret Thatcher became the UK’s first woman Prime Minister in 1979, and Theresa May the second in 2016.

International comparisons

Globally, the UK’s 30% ratio for women in the House of Commons puts it 49th in ranked list. Rwanda is first, followed by Bolivia, Cuba and the Seychelles. Three countries in the ranking have no women in their lower or single house, while 31 have fewer than 10%.

Currently a woman holds the post of president or prime minister in 16 countries. This is 9% of the 193 countries who are currently members of the United Nations.

At 1 January 2017, 53 women presided over one of the 193 Houses of Parliament, 77 of which are bicameral, which means that women occupy 19.1% of the posts of Presiding Officers of Parliament or of one of its Houses.

¹ House of Commons Library; [General Election 2017](#) (research briefing, 8 September 2017); section 3.4

² UK Parliament; [Members of the House of Lords webpage](#) (accessed 6 February 2018)

³ House of Commons Library; [Women Members of Parliament: Background Paper](#) (18 January 2018)

⁴ GOV.UK; [Ministers webpage](#) (accessed 6 February 2018)

1. Women in Parliament and elected bodies in the UK

208 female MPs were elected during the 2017 General Election – a record high, and 32% of all MPs. This is up from 191 in the 2015 election and the highest proportion of any UK election to date. Women MPs by party included 119 Labour MPs, 67 Conservative and 12 SNP. 45% of Labour MPs are women, 21% of Conservative MPs and 34% of SNP MPs.

As of February 2018, 206 (26%) of 793 Members of the House of Lords were women.⁵

Since January 2018's cabinet reshuffle, there are six female cabinet members, including Prime Minister Theresa May. This is 26% of the total 23 Cabinet ministers. 6 further ministers "also attend Cabinet", including four women. Taken together, 34% ministers who attend Cabinet are women.

Just over one-third (35%) of members in the **Scottish Parliament** are women, compared to just over two-fifths (42%) of members of **National Assembly for Wales** and 30% of Members of **the Northern Ireland Assembly**.

Following the 2014 **European Parliament** elections, women comprised two-fifths (40%) of UK MEPs.

Women in the UK Parliament and elected bodies by party						
% women						
	Con	Lab	LD	SNP	Other	Total
% Female						
House of Commons	21%	45%	33%	34%	25%	32%
House of Lords	25%	32%	34%	-	20%	26%
National Assembly for Wales	27%	52%	100%	-	32%	42%
Scottish Parliament	23%	46%	0%	43%	17%	36%
Northern Ireland Assembly	-	-	-	-	30%	28%
London Assembly	13%	50%	100%	-	50%	40%
European Parliament (UK Members)	30%	55%	100%	-	37%	40%

Notes 1. Membership of the House of Commons 23 June 2017. 2. House of Lords membership at 23 February 2017. Excludes peers on leave of absence, suspended, or disqualified as senior members of the judiciary, for example. 3. Membership of Scottish Parliament as of 5 May 2016 elections. 4. Membership of the European Parliament following the May 2014 elections. 5. Membership of the Northern Ireland Assembly as of 2 March 2017 elections. 6. Membership of the London Assembly as of 5 May 2016 elections. 7. Membership of the National Assembly for Wales as of 5 May 2016 elections.

Sources Houses of Parliament 'Members Names' database; House of Commons Library Briefings: CBP 7599 Scottish Parliament Elections: 2016; CBP7920 Northern Ireland Assembly Elections: 2017; CBP 7594 National Assembly for Wales Elections: 2016; RP14/32 European Parliament Elections 2014

Following elections in 2016, of 40 elected **Police and Crime Commissioners** in England, 8 (20%) are women.⁶

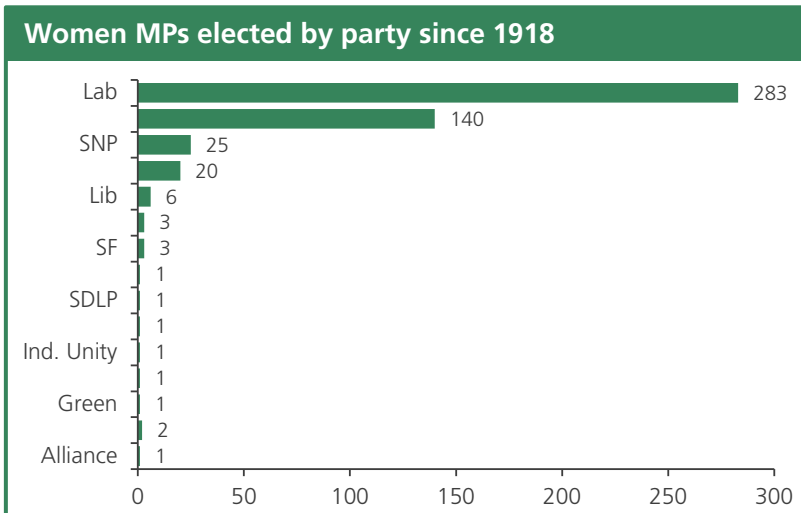
⁵ UK Parliament; [Members of the House of Lords webpage](#) (accessed 6 February 2018)

⁶ HC Library CBP 7595 [Police and Crime Commissioner Elections: 2016](#)

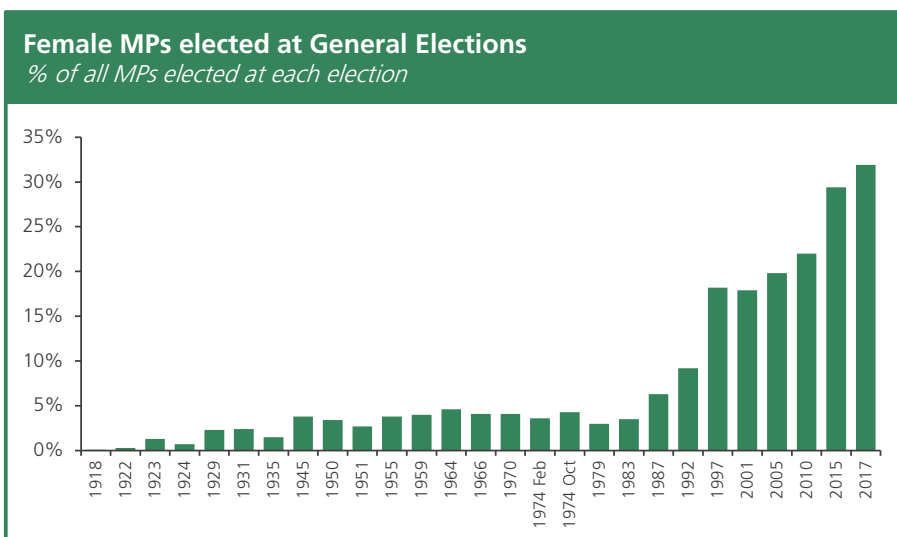
2. Women MPs since 1918

489 women have been elected as Members of the House of Commons since 1918.⁷ Three of them were elected as Sinn Féin MPs and did not take their seats, Countess Constance Markievicz (1918), Michelle Gildernew (2001) and Elisha McCallion (2017).

Of the 489 women, 283 (58%) were first elected as Labour MPs and 140 (29%) Conservative.



Until 1997 women had never been more than 10% of all MPs, and 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 highest ever proportion of women, 32%, elected at a General Election was in June 2017.



⁷ Includes women elected at General Elections and by-elections.

3. Women ministers

In July 2016, Theresa May became the second woman UK Prime Minister. Currently there are six women in the Cabinet (including the Prime Minister) which is 26% of 23 Cabinet posts.⁸ There are six Ministers who also attend the cabinet, four of whom are women.

Previously, in 2015, David Cameron appointed seven women to one of the 22 Cabinet Posts; this was 30% (of 22 Cabinet posts plus the PM). In addition there were eight Ministers who also attended cabinet, three of whom were women. In 2010, David Cameron's first Cabinet included four women.

Tony Blair's 1997 Cabinet had five women and was the first to include more than two female ministers at one time. The highest number of concurrent women Cabinet Ministers under New Labour was eight (36 per cent), from May 2006 – May 2007.

The table below shows the 45 women who have ever been appointed to Cabinet posts. Margaret Bondfield became the first ever woman appointed to the Cabinet in 1929, having previously become the first female minister (outside of Cabinet) in 1929.

Women Cabinet Ministers, 1929 to 2018			
Minister	Years of service	Minister	Years of service
Margaret Bondfield	1929-31	Jacqueline Smith	2006-2009
Ellen Wilkinson	1945-47	Hazel Blears	2006-2009
Florence Horsbrugh	1953-54	Catherine Ashton	2007-2008
Barbara Castle	1964-70 & 1974-76	Yvette Cooper	2008-2010
Judith Hart	1968-69	Janet Royall	2008-2010
Margaret Thatcher	1970-74 & 1979-1990	Caroline Spelman	2010-2012
Shirley Williams	1974-79	Cheryl Gillan	2010-2012
Lady Young	1981-1983	Sayeeda Warsi	2010-2012
Gillian Shephard	1992-97	Theresa May	2010-
Virginia Bottomley	1992-97	Justine Greening	2011-2018
Winifred Ann Taylor	1997-1998	Maria Miller	2012-2014
Harriet Harman	1997-1998 & 2007-2010	Theresa Villiers	2012-2016
Marjorie Mowlam	1997-2001	Elizabeth Truss	2014-2017
Clare Short	1997-2003	Nicola Morgan	2014-2016
Margaret Beckett	1997-2007	Tina Stowell	2015-2016
Margaret Jay	1998-2001	Amber Rudd	2015-
Helen Liddell	2001-2003	Andrea Leadsom	2016-2017
Estelle Morris	2001-2002	Karen Bradley	2016-
Hilary Armstrong	2001-2007	Natalie Evans	2016-
Patricia Hewitt	2001-2007	Priti Patel	2016-2017
Tessa Jowell	2001-2007 & 2009-10	Penelope Mordaunt	2017-
Valerie Amos	2003-2007	Esther McVey	2018-
Ruth Kelly	2004-2008		

Source House of Commons Library

⁸ GOV.UK; [Ministers webpage](#) (accessed 6 February 2018)

4. Parliamentary and political firsts for women

The timeline below sets out a number of “firsts” and significant events over the last century for women in Parliament and political life.⁹

- 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)¹⁰
- 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)

⁹ COI, *Women in Britain*, 2nd ed., 1996; [Centre for Advancement of Women in Politics](#)

¹⁰ Elected in the General Election but along with 72 other Sinn Féin MPs did not take her seat.

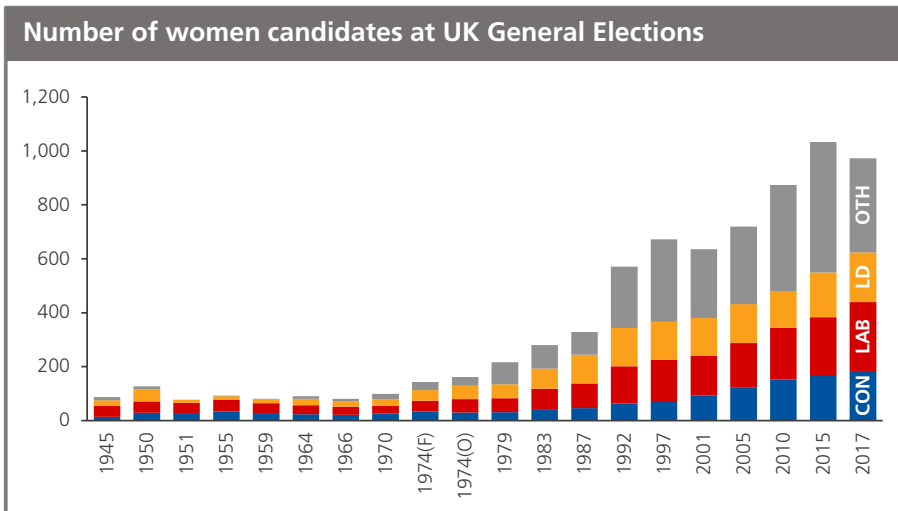
5. Women General Election candidates

In the 2017 General Election 973 women candidates stood across all parties, 29% of all 3,304 candidates. Although this is the highest proportion on record, the number of women candidates was lower than at the 2015 General Election (1,033).

Labour had 256 women candidates, the highest number of any party at this or any other General Election. Women were 41% of Labour’s candidates, compared to 34% in 2015.

184 Conservative candidates, 29% of the party’s total cohort, were women – a 9% rise on 2015 and the highest number in the Party’s history. Similarly, 184 (29%) Liberal Democrats candidates were women.

35% of Green Party candidates were women, as were 34% of Scottish National Party candidates and 28% of Plaid Cymru candidates. Women comprised 13% of UKIP candidates. Women’s Equality Party fielded only female candidates at the 2017 General Election.

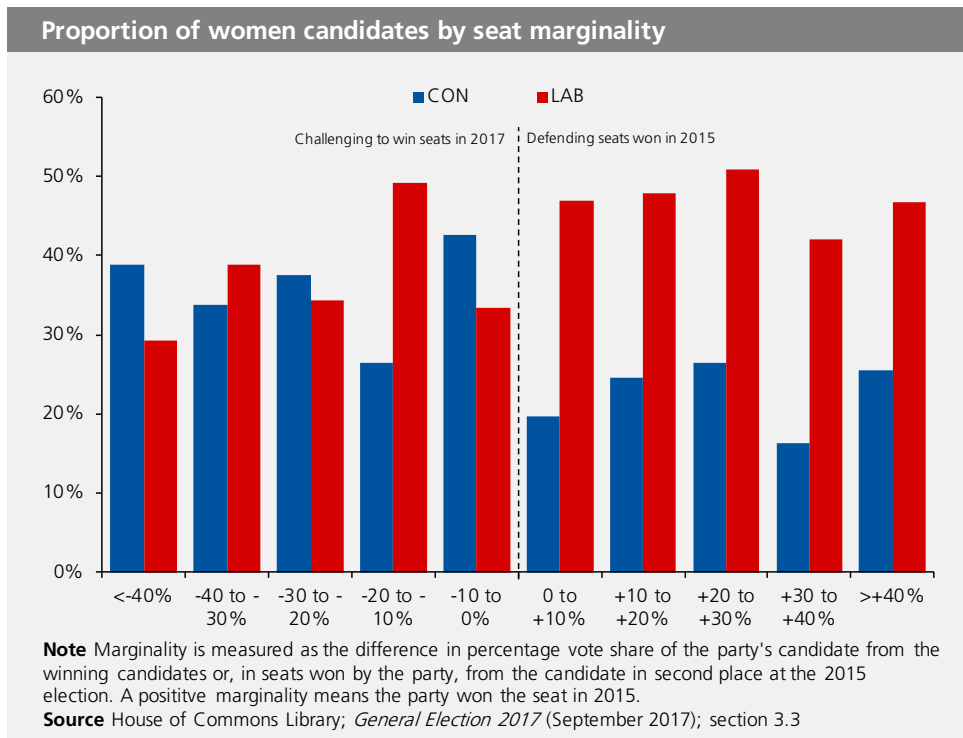


The chart below shows the balance of men and women candidates for each of the seats in the 2017 election by marginality to their party at the previous general election. This shows how seats “safe” and less “safe” were contested by men and women candidates.

Marginality is the difference in percentage vote share of the party’s candidate from the winning candidate – or, in seats won by the party, from the candidate in second place at the 2015 General Election.

A positive marginality means the party won the seat in 2015.

Seats with a negative marginality are those that party did not win in 2015 – a seat with marginality between -0% to -10% should be easier for that party to win than one where the marginality is between -20% to -30%.



Labour had a higher proportion of women candidates in safer seats. In seats with a 20% to 30% majority, 51% of Labour candidates were women compared with 26% of Conservative candidates.

The Conservatives, on the other hand, had 43% female candidates in the most winnable seats (those with a 0% to 10% majority to be overturned), compared with 33% of Labour candidates. This represents a fall for Labour and rise for the Conservatives compared with 2015, when the opposite was true.

Labour also had a higher proportion of women candidates in seats with the narrowest margin to hold. In seats with a 0% to 10% marginality, 47% of Labour candidates were women and 20% of Conservative candidates.

For the Liberal Democrats, the proportion of women was the highest in marginal seats (56%).

Historic background

The number of women candidates has risen at every general election since 1966 except in 2001, when there were 36 fewer women candidates than in 1997. At the 2017 General Election there were 60 fewer women than in 2015, but their proportion increased relative to men.

Women were first able to stand for Parliament in 1918, when there were 17 women candidates. This comprised one Conservative candidate, four Labour, four Liberal Democrat and eight other.

Women as a proportion of all candidates did not rise above 10% until 1979, when 11% of candidates were female. In 2005 women as a proportion of total candidates reached 20% for the first time.

6. Local Government

In 2013 (latest available data), 32% of local authority councillors in **England** were women.¹¹ In **Scotland**, 24% of councillors elected at the 2012 local government elections were women.¹² Women held 26% of council seats in **Wales** following the 2012 local elections.¹³ In **Northern Ireland** in 2014, 25% of councillors were women.¹⁴

The table below shows the number of local councillors by party and gender in England in 2013.

Councillors in England, 2013				
Party	% male	% female	% not known	Total
Conservative	70.0%	29.1%	0.9%	8,248
Labour	62.3%	36.7%	1.1%	5,697
Lib Dem	66.2%	33.4%	0.4%	2,625
Independent / resident's association	73.1%	26.4%	0.6%	869
UKIP	88.6%	11.4%	0.0%	178
Green Party	59.5%	37.9%	2.6%	176
Other	73.7%	26.3%	0.0%	113
Total	67.2%	31.9%	0.9%	17,906

Source Local Government Association; National Census of Local Authority Councillors, 2013; additional analysis

Historical background

Between 1869 and 1907 legislation was passed which extended the range of authorities to which women were eligible to stand for election.

The Municipal Franchise Act of 1869 extended the vote to women ratepayers in local elections and also enabled women to serve as Poor Law Guardians. The 1870 Education Act allowed for women ratepayers to stand as candidates to local school boards, the first contested election of which took place in Manchester on 24 November 1870.¹⁵

The Local Government Act 1894 allowed women to serve on parish and district councils, but it was not until the Qualification of Women (County and Town Councils) Act was passed in 1907 that women (ratepayers) were permitted to be members of County and Borough Councils.¹⁶ Three months after this Act was passed five women were elected to these bodies in England (Aldeburgh, Reading, Bewdley, Oxford and Oldham).¹⁷ One of the successful women was Elizabeth

¹¹ LGA, [National Census of Local Authority Councillors 2013](#)

¹² Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe), [Local Government Elections 2012](#)

¹³ Electoral Reform Society, [Spotlight on Wales: Women and local government](#)

¹⁴ NISRA, [Women in Northern Ireland 2015](#)

¹⁵ *Votes for Women Virago Book of Suffragettes*, ed Joyce Marlow p19

¹⁶ The 1907 Act followed years of uncertainty and confusion, which included challenges in the courts when women first tried to stand for the LCC, women losing their influence on education matters when free-standing boards were absorbed into councils, and losing their places on Urban District Councils when towns grew and sought borough status.

¹⁷ *Ladies Elect: women in English local government 1865 to 1914*, Patricia Hollis

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Garrett Anderson in Aldeburgh where she went on to be the first female elected mayor in 1908.

In Scotland the Qualification of Women (County and Town Councils) (Scotland) Act was passed in August 1907. This allowed women to be elected as town and county councillors. Lavinia Malcolm was elected unopposed to the town and parish councils of Dollar (Clackmannanshire), the only woman in Scotland to be elected at that time.¹⁸

¹⁸ [Oxford Dictionary of National Biography](#), OUP, accessed 5 Feb 2008

7. International context

As of October 2017 there are 18 women presidents or prime ministers in countries around the world and 50 women presided over 193 Houses of Parliament.

Data in this section is largely from the [Inter Parliamentary Union](#), an organisation of Parliaments established in 1889.

7.1 Women Presidents and Prime Ministers

As of October 2017 a woman holds the post of president or prime minister in 18 countries. This is 9% of the 193 countries who are currently members of the United Nations.

Women Presidents and Prime Ministers		
Country	Name	In office since
Female Presidents		
Chile	Michelle Bachelet	2014
Croatia	Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović	2015
Estonia	Kersti Kaljulaid	2016
Liberia	Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson	2006
Lithuania	Dalia Grybauskaitė	2009
Malta	Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca	2014
Marshall Islands	Hilda Heine	2016
Mauritius	Ameenah Gurib-Fakim	2015
Nepal	Bidhya Devi Bhandari	2015
Singapore	Halimah binti Yacob	2017
Switzerland	Doris Leuthard	2017
Taiwan	Tsai Ing-wen	2016
Female Prime Ministers		
Bangladesh	(Sheikh) Hasina Wajed	2009
Germany	Angela Merkel	2005
Myanmar	Aung San Suu Ky	2016
Namibia	Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila	2015
New Zealand	Jacinda Ardern	2017
Norway	Erna Solberg	2013
Peru	Mercedes Araoz Fernandez	2017
Poland	Beata Szydło	2016
Serbia	Ana Brnabic	2017
United Kingdom	Theresa May	2016

Source Centre for Women and Democracy, Women Leaders Worldwide October 2017

7.2 Women Speakers of National Parliaments

At 1 October 2017, 50 women presided over one of the 193 Houses of Parliament, 77 of which are bicameral. Women therefore occupy 18.1% of the total number of 277 posts of Presiding Officers of Parliament or of one of its Houses.¹⁹

This is an increase from 45 women presiding officers in Parliaments at the start of 2015, but a decrease from 55 in mid-2017.

Women Speakers of National Parliament (1 October 2017)	
Country	Chamber(s)
Antigua and Barbuda	Senate
Argentina	Senate
Austria	National Council & Fed Council
Bahamas	Senate
Bangladesh	Jatiya Sangsad
Barbados	Senate
Belguim	Senate
Belize	House of Representatives
Bolivia	Chamber of Deputies
Botswana	National Assembly
Denmark	Folketing
Dominica	House of Assembly
Equatorial Guinea	Senado
Fiji	Parliament
Finland	Eduskunta
Gabon	Senate
Gambia	National Assembly
Germany	Bundesrat
Iceland	Althingi
India	Lok Sabha
Italy	Chamber of Deputies
Lao People's Democratic Republic	Saphs Heng Xat
Latvia	Saeima
Lesotho	National Assembly
Mauritius	National Assembly
Mozambique	Assembleia da Republica
Namibia	National Council
Nepal	Ryabasthapika Sansad
Netherlands	Eerste Kamer & Twede Kamer der Staten Generaal
Panama	Asamblea Nacional
Russian Federation	Soviet Federatsii
Rwanda	Chamber of Deputies
Saint Lucia	House of Assembly
Serbia	Narodna skupstina
South Africa	National Assembly & National Council of Provinces
Spain	Congress of Deputies
Suriname	Nationale Assemblée
Swaziland	Senate
Syrian Arab Republic	Majilis Al-Chaab
Trinidad and Tobago	House of representatives and Senate
Turkmenistan	Mejilis
Uganda	Parliament
Uruguay	Senate
United Arab Emirates	Majilis Watani Itihadi
Viet Nam	National Assembly
Zimbabwe	Senate

Source Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) - as of 1 June 2017

¹⁹ All data from the [Inter-Parliamentary Union](#) (IPU)

Historically, Austria was the only State to have elected a woman to the presidency of one of the Parliament's Chambers (the Bundesrat) before the Second World War. To date women have held one of those positions in 96 countries at least once.

Betty Boothroyd was the first woman Speaker of the House of Commons in the UK in 1992.

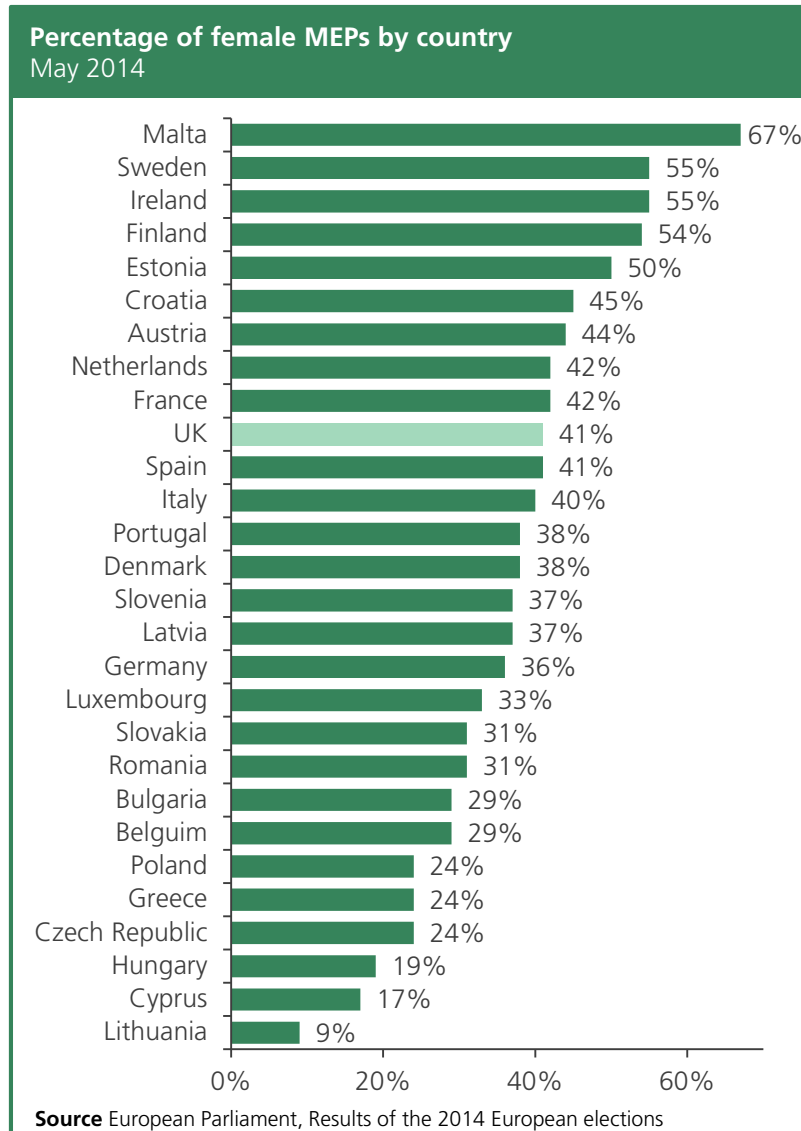
Date at which, for the first time in the country's parliamentary history, a woman became Presiding Officer of Parliament or one of its Houses

Austria	1927	El Salvador	1994	Saint Lucia	2007
Denmark	1950	Mexico	1994	United States of America	2007
Hungary	1963	Panama	1994	Nigeria	2007
Uruguay	1963	Ethiopia	1995	Uzbekistan	2008
Germany	1972	Latvia	1995	Pakistan	2008
Canada	1972	Peru	1995	Serbia	2008
Argentina	1973	Malta	1996	Rwanda	2008
Iceland	1974	Poland	1997	Romania	2008
Switzerland	1977	Bahamas	1997	Gabon	2009
Bolivia	1979	Suriname	1997	Bosnia and Herzegovina	2009
Italy	1979	Netherlands	1998	Ghana	2009
Dominica	1980	Czech Republic	1998	India	2009
Sao Tome and Principe	1980	Venezuela	1998	Bulgaria	2009
San Marino	1981	Spain	1999	Lithuania	2009
Ireland	1982	Dominican Republic	1999	Botswana	2009
Belize	1984	Lesotho	2000	Mozambique	2010
Jamaica	1984	Republic of Moldova	2001	United Republic of Tanzania	2010
Costa Rica	1986	Georgia	2001	Lao People's Democratic Republic	2011
Australia	1987	Chile	2002	Uganda	2011
Luxembourg	1989	Liberia	2003	Portugal	2011
Grenada	1990	Estonia	2003	Russian Federation	2011
Nicaragua	1990	Greece	2004	Barbados	2012
Finland	1991	Belgium	2004	Singapore	2013
Guatemala	1991	Saint Kitts and Nevis	2004	Bangladesh	2013
Sweden	1991	New Zealand	2005	Equatorial Guinea	2013
Trinidad and Tobago	1991	Burundi	2005	Madagascar	2013
United Kingdom	1992	Albania	2005	Fiji	2014
Croatia	1993	Zimbabwe	2005	Mauritius	2014
Japan	1993	Gambia	2006	Nepal	2015
Norway	1993	Israel	2006	United Arab Emirates	2015
South Africa	1994	Swaziland	2006	Namibia	2015
Antigua and Barbuda	1994	Turkmenistan	2006	Viet Nam	2016
				Syrian Arab Republic	2016

Source Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), October 2017

7.3 European Parliament

In May 2014, 37% of MEPs were women. The proportion varied from 67% in Malta to 9% for Lithuania. Two-fifths of the 73 UK MEPs elected in 2014 were women, so that the UK had the 10th highest ratio of the 28 EU Member following elections in May 2014.



7.4 Overseas Parliaments

Data from the [Inter-Parliamentary Union](#) shows the proportion of women in the lower (or single) House of different countries' legislatures following the most recent elections.

The UK is currently ranked 38th. Rwanda is first, followed by Bolivia, Cuba and Iceland. Five countries in the ranking have no women in their lower or single house, while 30 have fewer than 10%.

Of the 77 bicameral parliaments:

- 37 currently have a higher percentage of women in their lower or single house
- 38 have a higher percentage of women in their upper house
- 2 have the same proportion in both houses

Although there is a general positive correlation between the percentages of women in each house, there are a substantial number of outliers throughout the rankings, including Slovenia where women occupy 37% of the seats in the lower house but only 8% in the upper house, and the Bahamas where women occupy only 14% of the seats in the lower house but 44% of the upper house.

When the data are analysed by region Europe has the highest average percentage of women in lower houses of parliament (28%), whereas Oceania has the lowest, with an average 11% of seats occupied by women. A full breakdown is given opposite.

Of countries with bicameral parliaments, those in Africa, North America and Oceania have a higher average percentage of women in the upper house, whereas Europe and South America have a higher average percentage of women in the lower house. On average, EU member states currently have an average 28% of seats occupied by women in both the upper and lower houses.

WOMEN IN NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS - BY REGION		
Average (mean) % of women by house, 1 October 2017		
	Lower or single house	Upper house or senate
Europe	28%	26%
<i>of which EU</i>	28%	28%
Asia	16%	16%
Africa	21%	23%
South America	25%	24%
North America	24%	30%
Oceania	11%	28%

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Women in national parties							
<i>193 countries as at 1st October 2017</i>							
		Lower or single house			Upper house or senate		
		Seats*	Women	% W	Seats*	Women	% W
1	Rwanda	80	49	61%	26	10	39%
2	Bolivia	130	69	53%	36	17	47%
3	Cuba	612	299	49%	---	---	---
4	Iceland	63	30	48%	---	---	---
5	Nicaragua	92	42	46%	---	---	---
6	Sweden	349	152	44%	---	---	---
7	Mexico	500	213	43%	128	47	37%
8	South Africa(1)	395	167	42%	54	19	35%
9	Finland	200	84	42%	---	---	---
10	Senegal	165	69	42%	---	---	---
11	Norway	169	70	41%	---	---	---
12	Namibia	104	43	41%	42	10	24%
13	Mozambique	250	99	40%	---	---	---
14	Spain	350	137	39%	266	101	38%
15	France	577	225	39%	348	102	29%
16	Argentina	257	100	39%	72	30	42%
17	Ethiopia	547	212	39%	153	49	32%
18	New Zealand	120	46	38%	---	---	---
19	Belgium	150	57	38%	60	30	50%
"	Ecuador	137	52	38%	---	---	---
21	Denmark	179	67	37%	---	---	---
22	United Republic of Tanzania	393	145	37%	---	---	---
23	Slovenia	90	33	37%	40	3	8%
24	Burundi	121	44	36%	43	18	42%
25	Netherlands	150	54	36%	75	26	35%
26	Costa Rica	57	20	35%	---	---	---
27	Portugal	230	80	35%	---	---	---
28	Belarus	110	38	35%	56	17	30%
29	Serbia	250	86	34%	---	---	---
30	Uganda	449	154	34%	---	---	---
31	The F.Y.R. of Macedonia	120	41	34%	---	---	---
32	Grenada	15	5	33%	13	2	15%
33	Zimbabwe	270	88	33%	80	38	48%
34	Switzerland	200	65	33%	46	7	15%
35	Timor-Leste	65	21	32%	---	---	---
36	Andorra	28	9	32%	---	---	---
"	El Salvador	84	27	32%	---	---	---
38	United Kingdom	650	208	32%	805	207	26%
39	Guyana	69	22	32%	---	---	---
40	Tunisia	217	68	31%	---	---	---
41	Cameroon	180	56	31%	100	20	20%
42	Italy	630	195	31%	320	91	28%
"	Trinidad and Tobago	42	13	31%	31	9	29%
44	Angola	220	68	31%	---	---	---
45	Germany	709	218	31%	69	27	39%
46	Austria	183	56	31%	61	19	31%
47	Sudan	426	130	31%	54	19	35%
48	Nepal	595	176	30%	---	---	---
49	Philippines	292	86	30%	24	6	25%
50	Australia	150	43	29%	76	31	41%
51	South Sudan	383	109	29%	50	6	12%
52	Luxembourg	60	17	28%	---	---	---
53	Poland	460	129	28%	100	14	14%
54	Albania	140	39	28%	---	---	---
55	Afghanistan	249	69	28%	68	18	27%
"	Peru	130	36	28%	---	---	---

57	Israel	120	33	28%	---	---	---
"	Lao People's Democratic Republic	149	41	28%	---	---	---
59	Kazakhstan	107	29	27%	47	5	11%
60	Dominican Republic	190	51	27%	32	3	9%
61	Estonia	101	27	27%	---	---	---
"	San Marino	60	16	27%	---	---	---
"	Viet Nam	494	132	27%	---	---	---
64	Canada	335	88	26%	100	43	43%
65	Algeria	462	119	26%	143	10	7%
"	Honduras	128	33	26%	---	---	---
"	Turkmenistan	124	32	26%	---	---	---
68	Suriname	51	13	26%	---	---	---
69	Iraq	328	83	25%	---	---	---
70	Mauritania	147	37	25%	---	---	---
71	Dominica	32	8	25%	---	---	---
72	Somalia	275	67	24%	54	13	24%
73	China	2924	709	24%	---	---	---
74	Equatorial Guinea	100	24	24%	73	12	16%
75	Bulgaria	240	57	24%	---	---	---
76	Cabo Verde	72	17	24%	---	---	---
77	Montenegro	81	19	24%	---	---	---
78	Singapore	100	23	23%	---	---	---
79	Lesotho	118	27	23%	31	8	26%
80	Republic of Moldova	101	23	23%	---	---	---
81	United Arab Emirates	40	9	23%	---	---	---
82	Ireland	158	35	22%	60	18	30%
"	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	167	37	22%	---	---	---
84	Eritrea	150	33	22%	---	---	---
85	Guinea	114	25	22%	---	---	---
86	Kenya	349	76	22%	68	21	31%
87	Bosnia and Herzegovina	42	9	21%	15	2	13%
88	Lithuania	141	30	21%	---	---	---
89	Seychelles	33	7	21%	---	---	---
90	Monaco	24	5	21%	---	---	---
91	Romania	329	68	21%	136	19	14%
92	Pakistan	340	70	21%	104	19	18%
93	Morocco	395	81	21%	120	14	12%
94	Bangladesh	350	71	20%	---	---	---
"	Cambodia	123	25	20%	61	9	15%
96	Uruguay	99	20	20%	31	9	29%
97	Czech Republic	200	40	20%	80	15	19%
"	Slovakia	150	30	20%	---	---	---
99	Saudi Arabia	151	30	20%	---	---	---
100	Indonesia	560	111	20%	---	---	---
101	United States of America	433	84	19%	100	21	21%
102	Kyrgyzstan	120	23	19%	---	---	---
"	Madagascar	151	29	19%	63	13	21%
104	Tajikistan	63	12	19%	32	7	22%
105	Colombia	166	31	19%	102	22	22%
106	Croatia	151	28	19%	---	---	---
107	Greece	300	55	18%	---	---	---
"	Panama	71	13	18%	---	---	---
109	Sao Tome and Principe	55	10	18%	---	---	---
110	Armenia	105	19	18%	---	---	---
111	Zambia	167	30	18%	---	---	---
112	Cyprus	56	10	18%	---	---	---
113	Togo	91	16	18%	---	---	---
114	Jamaica	63	11	18%	21	5	24%
115	Gabon	117	20	17%	102	18	18%
"	Mongolia	76	13	17%	---	---	---
117	Niger	171	29	17%	---	---	---

19 Women in Parliament and Government

"	Republic of Korea	300	51	17%	---	---	---
119	Azerbaijan	125	21	17%	---	---	---
120	Barbados	30	5	17%	21	5	24%
"	Malawi	192	32	17%	---	---	---
"	Saint Lucia	18	3	17%	11	3	27%
123	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	687	112	16%	---	---	---
124	Fiji	50	8	16%	---	---	---
"	Georgia	150	24	16%	---	---	---
"	Latvia	100	16	16%	---	---	---
"	Libya	188	30	16%	---	---	---
"	Uzbekistan	150	24	16%	100	17	17%
129	Chile	120	19	16%	38	6	16%
"	Russian Federation	450	71	16%	170	29	17%
131	Jordan	130	20	15%	65	10	15%
132	Egypt	596	89	15%	---	---	---
133	Turkey	549	80	15%	---	---	---
134	Paraguay	80	11	14%	45	9	20%
135	Guinea-Bissau	102	14	14%	---	---	---
136	Saint Kitts and Nevis	15	2	13%	---	---	---
137	Syrian Arab Republic	250	33	13%	---	---	---
138	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	23	3	13%	---	---	---
139	Bahamas	39	5	13%	16	7	44%
"	Chad	188	24	13%	---	---	---
141	Ghana	275	35	13%	---	---	---
"	Guatemala	158	20	13%	---	---	---
143	Palau	16	2	13%	13	2	15%
144	Sierra Leone	121	15	12%	---	---	---
145	Liberia	73	9	12%	30	3	10%
"	Ukraine	423	52	12%	---	---	---
147	Liechtenstein	25	3	12%	---	---	---
148	Malta	67	8	12%	---	---	---
149	India	542	64	12%	244	27	11%
150	Mauritius	69	8	12%	---	---	---
151	Congo	151	17	11%	71	14	20%
152	Antigua and Barbuda	18	2	11%	17	5	29%
153	Burkina Faso	127	14	11%	---	---	---
154	Djibouti	65	7	11%	---	---	---
155	Brazil	513	55	11%	81	12	15%
156	Cote d'Ivoire	255	27	11%	---	---	---
157	Nauru	19	2	11%	---	---	---
158	Malaysia	222	23	10%	68	15	22%
159	Gambia	58	6	10%	---	---	---
160	Myanmar	433	44	10%	221	23	10%
161	Hungary	199	20	10%	---	---	---
162	Samoa	50	5	10%	---	---	---
163	Botswana	63	6	10%	---	---	---
164	Belize	32	3	9%	13	2	15%
165	Japan	475	44	9%	242	50	21%
166	Brunei Darussalam	33	3	9%	---	---	---
"	Marshall Islands	33	3	9%	---	---	---
168	Democratic Republic of the Congo	492	44	9%	108	5	5%
169	Mali	147	13	9%	---	---	---
170	Central African Republic	140	12	9%	---	---	---
171	Bhutan	47	4	9%	25	2	8%
172	Bahrain	40	3	8%	40	9	23%
173	Benin	83	6	7%	---	---	---
174	Tuvalu	15	1	7%	---	---	---
175	Kiribati	46	3	7%	---	---	---
176	Swaziland	65	4	6%	30	10	33%
177	Comoros	33	2	6%	---	---	---

178	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	289	17	6%	---	---	---
"	Maldives	85	5	6%	---	---	---
180	Sri Lanka	225	13	6%	---	---	---
181	Nigeria	360	20	6%	108	7	7%
182	Thailand	250	12	5%	---	---	---
183	Tonga	26	1	4%	---	---	---
184	Kuwait	65	2	3%	---	---	---
"	Lebanon	128	4	3%	---	---	---
186	Haiti	118	3	3%	28	1	4%
187	Solomon Islands	50	1	2%	---	---	---
188	Oman	85	1	1%	85	14	17%
189	Micronesia (Federated States of)	14	0	0%	---	---	---
"	Papua New Guinea	106	0	0%	---	---	---
"	Qatar	35	0	0%	---	---	---
"	Vanuatu	52	0	0%	---	---	---
"	Yemen	275	0	0%	111	2	2%

(1) South Africa: the figures on the distribution of seats do not include the 36 special rotating delegates on an ad hoc basis, and all percentages given are therefore calculated on the basis of 54

Source Inter-Parliamentary Union, Women in National Parliaments World Classification, 1st October 2017

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