

Gender and the 2016 Elections

Election	Female Candidates in last election ⁱ	Female Candidates 2016 ⁱⁱ	Change	Women elected at last election	Estimated women elected 2016 ⁱⁱⁱ	Estimated Change
Scottish Parliament	28.8%	38.9%	+10.1%	35.2%	39.5%	+4.3%
Welsh Assembly	29.8%	33.9%	+4.1%	40%	43.3%	+3.3%
NI Assembly	17%	27.5%	+10.5%	19%	25%	+6%
London Assembly	33.6%	40%	+6.4%	32%	36%	+4%
Westminster	26%			29%		

The elections in May 2016 see significant jumps in female representation among candidates for the four devolved assemblies and parliaments in the UK. Concerns were raised when the proportion of women running for the same elections actually went down in 2011, particularly in Scotland and Wales, but 2016 sees a significant bounce back. Large jumps of 10+ percentage points in Scotland and Northern Ireland are most notable, with both showing all-time high levels of female candidates. In Northern Ireland, the proportion had consistently ranged between 17% and 19% since 2003, by a distance the lowest of any of the main elected bodies in the UK. The increase to 27.5% therefore sees a step change for women in Northern Ireland politics, and overtakes the proportion of women in the General Elections in 2015 (26%).

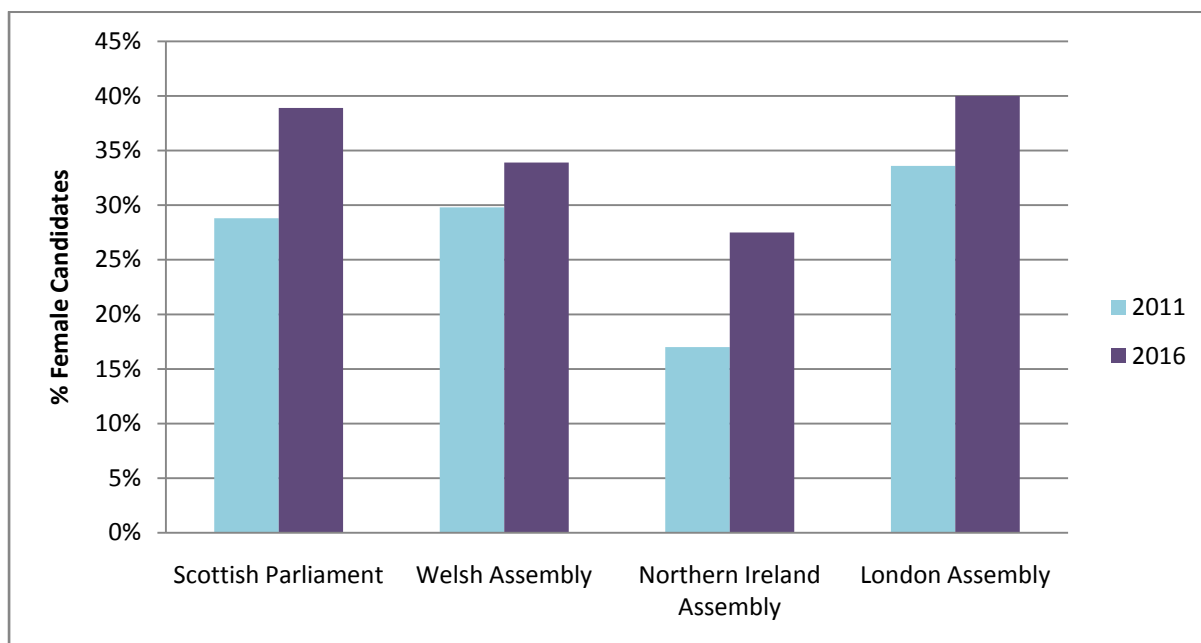


Figure 1. Proportion of female candidates, 2016 versus last election (2012 for London)

However, these across the board increases are likely to see more modest increases in actual elected female representatives in Edinburgh, Cardiff, Belfast and London. Taking into account the best available current forecasts for constituency and regional seats, and accounting for the placement of women on the parties' regional lists, increases in women representatives are likely to range between 3% and 6%, with Northern Ireland the main source of difference. As figure 2 shows, in Wales, Scotland and London, this will mainly go towards erasing previous decreases, but not moving into new territory, in contrast with the steady increases at Westminster over the last twenty years.

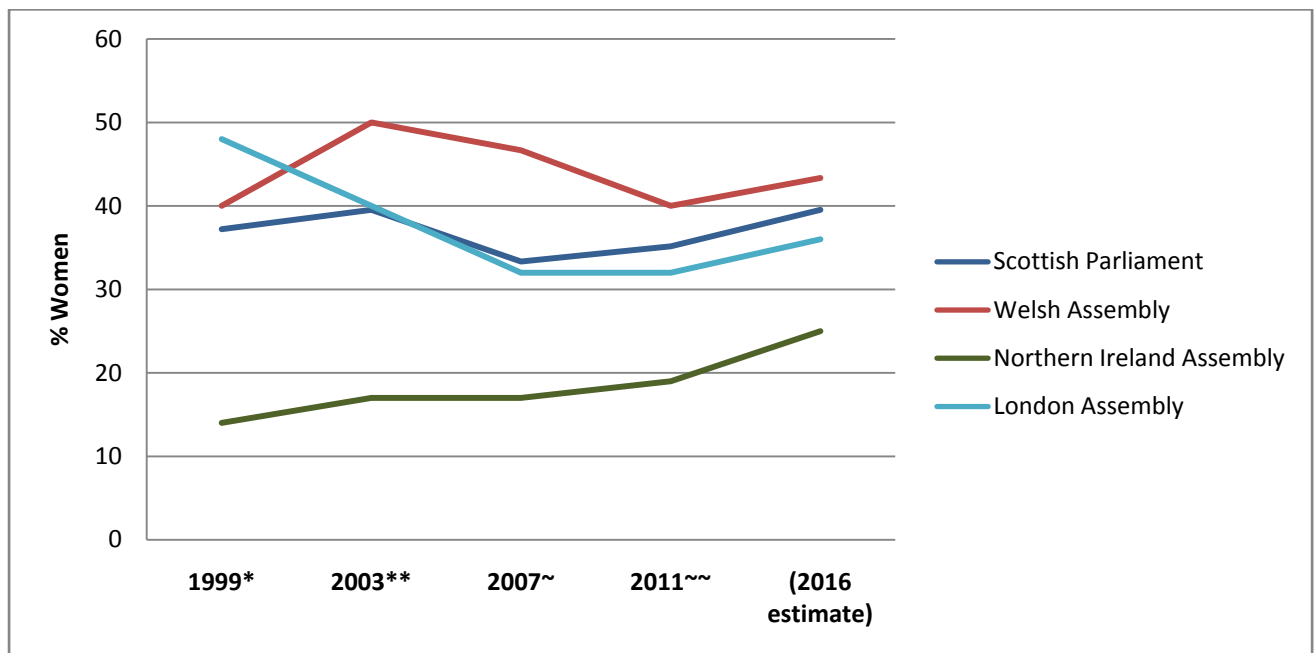


Figure 2. Proportion of women in elected bodies 1998 to present

*First devolved elections; 1998 in Northern Ireland, 2000 in London.

** 2004 in London

~ 2008 in London

~~ 2012 in London

Detailed Breakdowns

Traditionally, regional top-up lists have tended to be more gender balanced, compared to the first-past-the-post races. This remains the case in Scotland, Wales and London, though in Wales this gap is very small.

Both Wales and Scotland have seen large overall increases in the absolute number of candidates running, and thus in numbers terms there are a great deal more women running for office this time than last time around.

In Northern Ireland, while overall candidate numbers have not changed drastically, the number of women running has actually *doubled* since 2011.

Scotland

	2011	2016			Change
	Overall	Constituency	Regional	Overall	
Men	408 (71.2%)	201 (64.2%)	307 (59.2%)	508 (61.1%)	100 (-10.1%)
Women	165 (28.8%)	112 (35.8%)	212 (40.8%)	324 (38.9%)	159 (+10.1%)

Wales

	2011	2016			Change
	Overall	Constituency	Regional	Overall	
Men	184 (70.2%)	168 (67.7%)	197 (64.8%)	365 (66.1%)	181 (-4.1%)
Women	78 (29.8%)	80 (32.3%)	107 (35.2%)	187 (33.9%)	109 (+4.1%)

Northern Ireland

	2011	2016	Change
Men	180 (83%)	200 (72.5%)	20 (-10.5%)
Women	38 (17%)	76 (27.5%)	38 (+10.5%)

London

	2012	2016			Change
	Overall	Constituency	London-wide	Overall	
Men	66.4%	58 (67.4%)	65 (54.6%)	123 (60%)	-6.4%
Women	33.6%	28 (32.6%)	54 (45.4%)	82 (40%)	+6.4 %

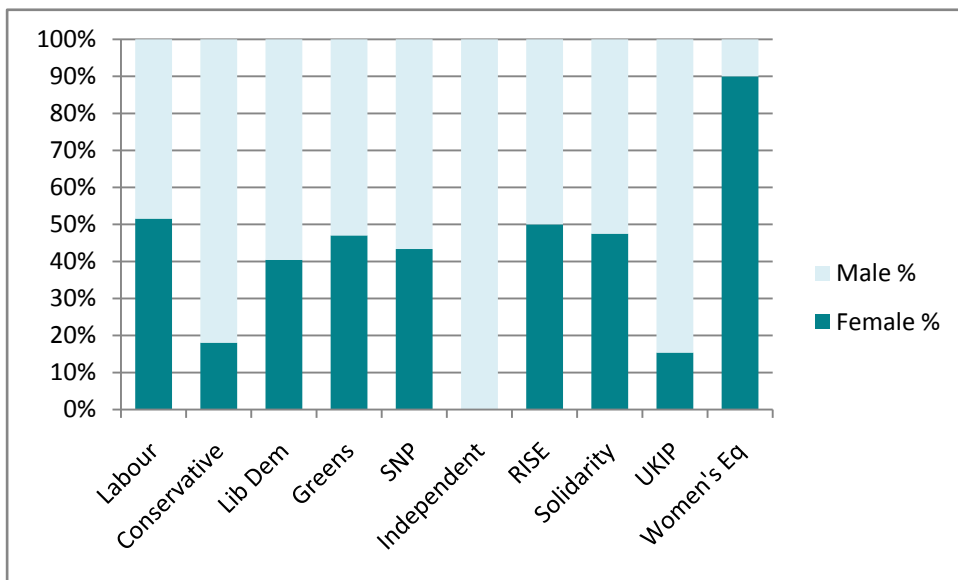
Gender and Political Parties

As can be seen in the tables, there is huge variation between parties in terms of candidate gender balance. Borne out by the fact that the large increases in women candidates are likely to result in modest increases in elected representatives, much of the increases are being driven by smaller parties, in particular the Greens, who are extremely gender balanced in all jurisdictions, and the recently formed Women's Equality Party.

Scotland

Scotland has seen big jumps in the gender balance of candidates in both the Labour Party, and the SNP, with the former now running more women than men in this year's Holyrood election. The number of female SNP candidates is up by almost 20 percentage points, which is significant given their likely strength in the polls on May 5th. Nonetheless, RISE, Solidarity and the Women's Equality Party are also major contributors to the increase in women this time around, all of whom will struggle to secure seats.

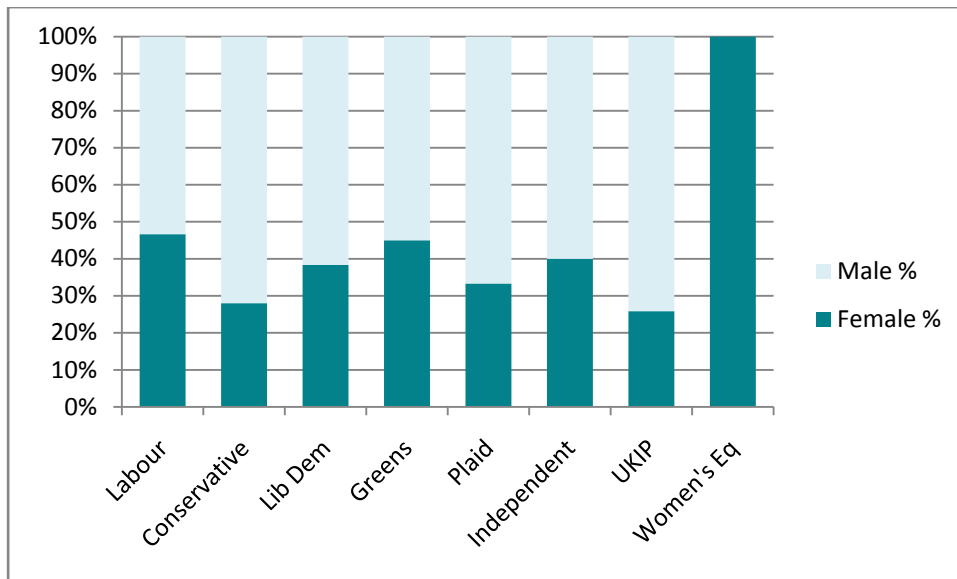
Party	Constituency		Regional		Overall 2016		Overall 2011	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male %	Female %	Male %	Female %
Labour	34	39	43	43	48.4%	51.6%	65.6%	34.4%
Conservative	60	13	58	13	81.9%	18.1%	83.7%	16.3%
Lib Dem	45	28	36	27	59.6%	40.4%	67.5%	32.5%
SNP	43	30	51	42	56.6%	43.4%	73.6%	26.4%
Green	2	1	34	31	52.9%	47.1%	54.5%	45.5%
Independent	8	0	3	0	100%			
RISE			20	20	50%	50%		
Solidarity			21	19	52.5%	47.5%		
UKIP			22	4	84.6%	15.4%		
Women's Equality			1	9	10%	90%		



Wales

In Wales, gender balance in Labour and the Greens is offset by the Conservatives and UKIP. Plaid Cymru lag behind somewhat also, particularly in comparison to the recent progress made by the SNP.

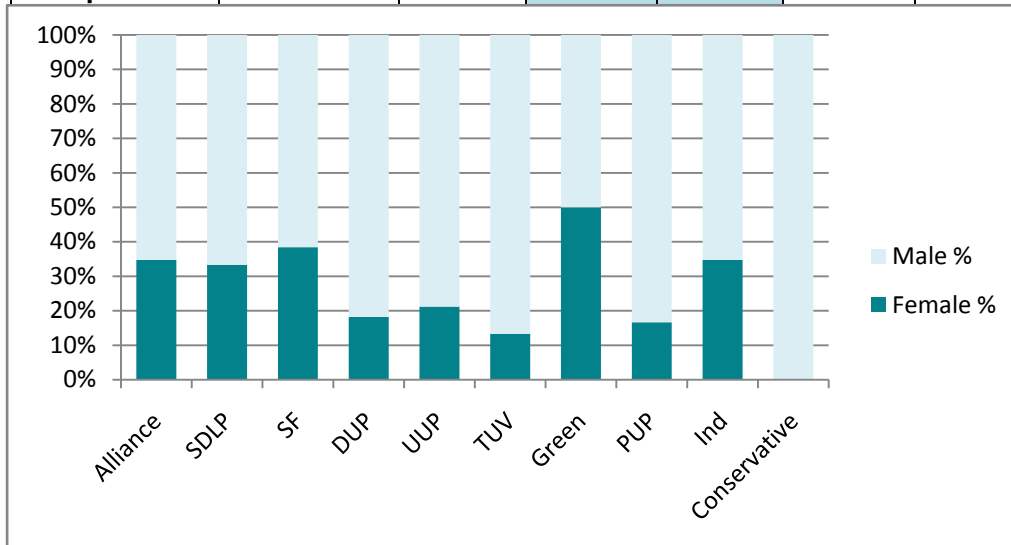
Party	Constituency		Regional		Overall	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male %	Female %
Labour	24	16	8	12	53.3%	46.7%
Conservative	31	9	23	12	72%	28%
Lib Dem	25	15	20	13	61.6%	38.4%
Plaid Cymru	29	11	37	22	66.7%	33.3%
Green	21	15	12	12	55%	45%
Independent	4	4	2	0	60%	40%
UKIP	29	9	14	6	74.1%	25.9%
Women's Equality			0	4		100%



Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland sees major changes to its candidate make-up in 2016. The increase in women is driven by the Greens, Sinn Féin, the SDLP and the UUP in particular. Many more female independents are also running in 2016.

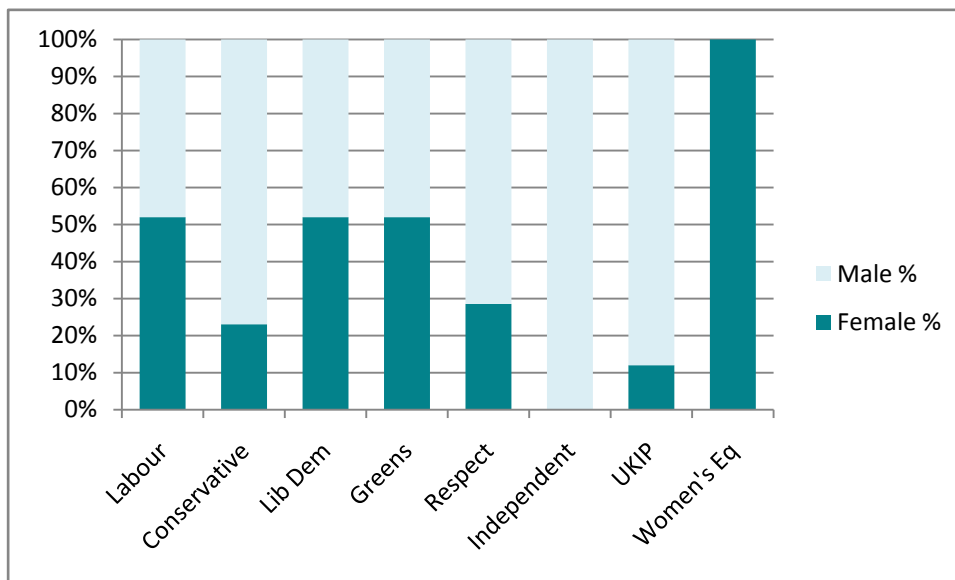
Party	2016 Candidates		2016 Percent		2011	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male %	Female %
Alliance	15	8	65.2%	34.8%	66.7%	33.3%
SDLP	16	8	66.7%	33.3%	85.7%	14.3%
Sinn Féin	24	15	61.5%	38.5%	72.5%	27.5%
DUP	36	8	81.8%	18.2%	83.7%	16.3%
UUP	26	7	78.8%	21.2%	90.0%	10.0%
TUV	13	2	86.7%	13.3%	83.3%	16.7%
Green	9	9	50.0%	50.0%	83.3%	16.7%
PUP	5	1	83.3%	16.7%	100.0%	0.0%
Conservative	12	0	100%	0%		
Independent	15	8	65.2%	34.8%	93.8%	6.3%



London

In London, traditionally one of the most gender balanced elected bodies in the UK, women form a majority of Labour, Lib Dem and Green candidates. This is offset however by UKIP and Respect in particular.

Party	Constituency		London-wide		Overall	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male %	Female %
Labour	7	7	5	6	48%	52%
Conservative	13	1	7	5	76.9%	23.1%
Lib Dem	8	6	4	7	48%	52%
UKIP	12	2	10	1	88%	12%
Green	6	8	6	5	48%	52%
Respect	3	0	7	4	71.4%	28.6%
Women's Equality			0	11	0	100%
Independent	1	0			100%	0



-Carl Cullinane, Democratic Dashboard 26/04/2016

ⁱ Historical figures from House of Commons Library, Guardian Datablog, and Electoral Reform Society Reports.

ⁱⁱ 2016 figures use candidate lists sourced by Democracy Club, with additional gender research by the Democratic Dashboard team, London School of Economics.

ⁱⁱⁱ Estimating results in STV and Additional Member System elections is highly difficult, due to the sensitivity of the systems to small changes in vote share. These numbers are to be seen as indicative estimates only. Figures are based on the best detailed forecasts available (UKElect.co.uk, ElectionForecast.scot), assuming the most likely outcome will happen in each case (i.e. each seat will be one by the favourite). Without equivalent forecast data for Northern Ireland, estimates extrapolate party trends from 2011, taking into account increased numbers of female candidates and adjusting for recent polling figures.