

Comisiwn
Cydraddoldeb a
Hawliau Dynol

Equality and
Human Rights
Commission

Who Runs Wales? 2009

The road to equality for women





Getting more women into the fast lane

Who Runs Wales? 2009 paints a picture of life in Wales in which our boardrooms are overwhelmingly male and it is largely men who take the big decisions that impact on all of our lives. Women are more likely to be booking the meeting room and taking notes of the decisions.

On the world's stage there are new leaders from more diverse backgrounds. The United States elected Barack Obama and Johanna Sigurdardottir, Iceland's new Prime Minister, is the world's first openly lesbian Head of State. But these are exceptions.

Closer to home progress towards getting more women into positions of power is far too slow. In fact, this report shows that unless we take urgent action to increase the pace of change, we are in danger of travelling backwards.

This year we look at who our elected politicians are, and who runs our public authorities, private sector and media.

There are not enough women at the top of our NHS, and fewer women head teachers in our secondary schools than there were in 2006. Out of the 93 chief executives running Wales's most successful private sector businesses there are

no women. We have slightly more women councillors than in 2006 – but the increase only takes us to 25% of all councillors.

Taken as a whole, however, almost no progress has been made in achieving gender balance at Wales's decision-making tables since 2004.

In our view this isn't just a 'women's issue' but highlights a much wider failure to ensure the corridors of power in our institutions reflect the breadth of society and include people from under-represented groups, such as disabled people and ethnic minority people.

We draw a clear lesson from our findings – good intentions are not enough. Decisive action has to be taken for women to achieve positions of power in Wales. We want to move women into the fast lane as a matter of urgency. If this is an ambition you share we would like to work with you – so please get in touch.

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The driving seats of politics



As a result of the 2003 election we achieved gender balance in our representation at the Assembly. Following the 2007 election this has fallen slightly from 30 down to 28 women Assembly Members (47%). There are significant variations between parties – 70% of Labour AMs are women but only 8% of Conservative Party AMs are women.

The number of Welsh women MPs has been steadily increasing. At the 1992 general election only one woman was elected. In 1997 four women were elected and the same four women were re-elected in 2001. In 2005 the number of women MPs rose to eight. The increase was largely as a result of special measures in the Labour Party. Currently in Wales we have one female Liberal Democrat, seven Labour and no Welsh Conservative or Plaid Cymru women MPs.

This year political parties are taking decisions about who is chosen to represent Welsh constituencies and regions in the next Assembly election - due to take place in 2011. Parties will also be considering selection methods for future general elections.

After local government elections last year, we still only have two female council leaders and only one in four of our councillors are women. There are no black or Asian women councillors in Wales.

Clearly good intentions are not enough. Special measures, such as women-only shortlists, are a key mechanism for getting women both selected as candidates and elected.

We have a long way to go before our elected representatives reflect the diversity of people in Wales. We have an opportunity to take significant steps along the road. More diverse selection panels, coupled with special measures, can deliver a more diverse range of candidates for Westminster, Assembly and local government elections.

We will encourage political parties to use special measures to increase the number of female candidates who are selected for winnable seats. We will also work closely with the political parties, the Welsh Assembly Government and others to break down the barriers that women, ethnic minority and disabled people face in standing for public office.

Our elected representatives

Welsh Assembly Government Cabinet



National Assembly for Wales Members



Members of Parliament



Members of European Parliament



Council Leaders



Councillors



● Female
● Male

Why we need to change gear



The prospect of a world economic downturn has focussed attention on those taking decisions at the highest level. Some commentators have asked whether the banking crisis would have happened if boardrooms were more diverse.

Personal experience plays a major part in the decisions people take. So if those making the decisions are drawn from a narrow section of society, most people's needs will be overlooked. Poor decisions have an adverse impact on all of our lives.

Research, including evidence gathered in Wales, tells us that greater diversity at our top tables leads to different issues being put on the agenda and discussed at meetings. Decisions are more likely to take account of wider viewpoints and reflect our different needs.

Diversity helps organisations to be more in tune with the people they serve. Evidence shows that women bring with them a determination to reach decisions that have broader support.

So this isn't just about getting more women into top jobs, it's about changing the way we deliver services to take account of everyone's needs.

That's why it is important that the people making decisions that affect all of our lives are drawn from the whole population and not just a narrow section.



Picking up speed

We would like to see organisations take action to tackle the discrimination that holds women back. We really need to pick up speed in a number of ways.

First, we would like to see every employer advertise all vacancies openly, rather than relying on networks. Appointments will be fairer if there are clear and open selection criteria and procedures. Employers and public bodies could be much more creative in seeking applications from under-represented groups and in removing the barriers in their recruitment and promotion procedures.

Second, Wales' long working hours culture can prevent women from progressing. Women can be held back by outdated assumptions that commitment to the job is measured in the hours spent at work – a long hours, late hours, rigid hours culture. Rethinking this approach could mean more women progressing within the organisation.

Third, managing home and work is a challenge to us all but women are especially hard-pressed. In Wales where there are few childcare options, difficulties are even greater. Over 70% of carers leave jobs because work and care commitments clash. Women with family responsibilities often struggle to reach jobs at middle levels in the organisation let alone senior positions. But employers that are innovative in offering support for working parents and carers, and real flexible working opportunities, report that more women take on senior roles and that retention rates improve.

Stuck in second



Progress towards gender equality remains far too slow.

We contacted all of the businesses listed as Wales' top 100 companies. Ninety-three responded and none of these has a female chief executive. These shocking results highlight the overwhelming barriers that women still face in the private sector.

Despite the fact that women make up the majority of the public sector workforce progress is desperately slow in getting women into positions of power.

In the NHS, women make up 79% of the workforce but there are only 3 women out of 13 at chief executive level in our NHS Trusts. Since 2006, the number of women chief executives of local authorities in Wales has risen from 9% to 21%.

The number of women on the Boards of our Assembly Government Sponsored Bodies has decreased – down from 33% to 30%. Only 1 out of the 10 chief executives of the Sponsored Bodies is a woman.

Some parts of the public sector have made progress since our 2006 report. The new Head of the Welsh Assembly Government is a woman and its Management Board has seen a rise in women members from 12% to 30% in the last two years.

Little has changed in the field of education. The percentage of women secondary school head teachers has fallen from 19% to 16% since 2006.

The media portrayal of different groups in society has a big influence on how we see each other. That's why we think it is so important that the people making decisions in our media corporations are representative of society. Senior management teams of our major broadcasters in Wales are 44% female. But in terms of the newspapers we surveyed, only Welsh language weekly Golwg has a female editor.

Over the last three years we have seen very poor progress towards gender balance in our corridors of power. Wales is missing out on a pool of talent and the potential for more effective decision-making during an economic downturn when it can least afford to. Together we can change that.

2009 Gender balance in %

● Female
● Male

Health

Chief executives of NHS Trusts



All NHS staff



Local Government

Local authority chief executives



All staff in local authorities



Education

University vice-chancellors



Heads of further education colleges



Secondary school head teachers



All teachers



Welsh Assembly Government

Welsh Assembly Government Management Board



All Welsh Assembly Government staff



Sponsored Bodies

Chief executives of Sponsored Bodies



Board members of Sponsored Bodies



Police

Police Authority Chairs in Wales



Chief Constables in Wales



All Police Officers in Wales



Private sector

Chief executives of Wales's Top 100 private companies



Media

Chairs and controllers of major broadcasters



Senior management members of major broadcasters



Editors daily and weekly newspapers



Trade unions

Wales TUC Executive Committee



Wales TUC Annual Conference delegates



The Equality and Human Rights Commission aims to reduce inequality, eliminate discrimination, strengthen good relations between people, and promote and protect human rights.

You can find out more or get in touch with us via our website:

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This report and more information can be found at
www.equalityhumanrights.com/wales

Copies are available – **wales@equalityhumanrights.com**

Sources

All data was obtained in the period
December 2008 – February 2009

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