

Sex and Power 2011

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Missing women

The progress of women to positions of authority in Britain has been tortuously slow. This year's Sex and Power Report - an index of women in positions of power and influence - shows a trend which is not abating; while women make progress in some sectors, that progress regularly stalls or even reverses in other sectors. It is a trend of waxing and waning; not one of constant upward movement.

British women are better educated than ever before. They are attending university in ever increasing numbers and achieve better degree results than men¹. Intelligent, competent women are flooding the junior ranks of law firms, accountancies and medical practices.

These women step on the career ladder and work hard, with a position at the top firmly in sight. In their twenties they level peg with men and we would expect them to enter the management ranks at the same rate as men. However, several years down the track a different picture emerges – one where many have disappeared from the paid workforce or remain trapped in the 'marzipan layer' below senior management, leaving the higher ranks to be dominated by men².

These talented women are missing from the top jobs.

If women were to achieve equal representation among Britain's 26,000 top positions of power, the Commission estimates that 5,400 'missing' women would rise through the ranks to positions of real influence.

Findings

This survey measures the number of women in positions of power or influence in Britain in 2010/11.

This year 27 occupation categories were reviewed. The results show there were more women in top posts in 17 of the 27 categories compared to 2007/08. These include:

- members of the senior judiciary
- heads of professional bodies
- chief executives of national sports bodies
- senior police officers, and
- trade union general secretaries.

However, increases have been small in most areas and in many cases the increases are attributable to just one or two women joining senior posts. For example, one additional woman member of the Scottish Parliament meant that women rose from 34.1 per cent to 34.9 per cent. For senior ranks of the armed forces the increase of three women brought the percentage to only one per cent.

There have been drops in women's participation in 10 sectors, including:

- members of Cabinet
- National Assembly for Wales
- local authority council leaders
- public appointments
- editors of national newspapers
- chairs of national arts bodies, and
- health service chief executives.

In three of these cases, falls have been substantial. The number of female chairs of arts companies had reached four in 2007/8. This year, that figure has fallen to one - Zoë van Zwanenberg at the Scottish Ballet.

The proportion of women Cabinet ministers is currently 17.4 per cent - effectively four women. The number of female editors of national newspapers has declined from a peak of four to two in 2011 - Dawn Neesom at the *Daily Star* and Tina Weaver at the *Sunday Mirror*.

The results of this year's survey indicate that it will take another 70 years to achieve an equal number of women directors in the FTSE 100 and another 45 years to achieve an equal number of women in the senior judiciary. It will take another 14 general elections – that is, up to 70 years - to achieve an equal number of women MPs.

Sex and Power 2010/11 index

Women in selected 'top jobs' since 2003³.

	% women					
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007/8	2010/11
Politics						Women's average representation 26.2%
Members of Parliament ⁴	18.1	18.1	19.7	19.5	19.3	22.2
Members of the Cabinet ⁵	23.8	27.3	27.3	34.8	26.1	17.4
Members of the House of Lords ⁶	16.5	17.7	18.4	18.9	19.7	21.9
Members of the Scottish Parliament ⁷	39.5	39.5	39.5	38.8	34.1	34.9
Members of the National Assembly for Wales ⁸	50.0	50.0	50.0	51.7	46.7	41.7
Local authority council leaders ⁹	n/a	16.6	16.2	13.8	14.3	13.2
UK Members of the European Parliament ¹⁰	24.1	24.4	24.4	25.6	25.6	31.9

	% women					
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007/8	2010/11
Business						Women's average representation 10.2%
Directors in FTSE 100 ¹¹	8.6	9.7	10.5	10.4	11.0	12.5
Directors in FTSE 250 ¹²	n/a	n/a	n/a	6.6	7.2	7.8

	% women					
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007/8	2010/11
Public and voluntary sectors						Women's average representation 26.1%
Public appointments ¹³	35.7	35.9	35.0	35.5	34.4	32.6
Local authority chief executives ¹⁴	13.1	12.4	17.5	20.6	19.5	22.8
Senior ranks in the armed forces ¹⁵	0.6	0.8	0.8	0.4	0.4	1.0
Senior police officers ¹⁶	7.5	8.3	9.8	12.2	11.9	16.8
Senior judiciary ¹⁷	6.8	8.3	8.8	9.8	9.6	12.9
Civil service top management ¹⁸	22.9	24.4	25.5	26.3	26.6	29.2
Chief executives of voluntary organisations ¹⁹	45.2	45.4	45.2	46.0	46.4	48.0
Head teachers of secondary schools ²⁰	30.1	31.8	32.6	34.1	36.3	35.5
FE college principals ²¹	25.8	28.0	27.5	30.7	31.4	33.7
University vice chancellors ²²	12.4	15.0	11.1	13.2	14.4	14.3
Health service chief executives ²³	28.6	27.7	28.1	37.9	36.9	31.4
Trade union general secretaries ²⁴	18.3	16.9	22.4	23.0	20.7	27.3
Heads of professional bodies ²⁵	16.7	25.0	33.3	33.3	25.0	33.3

	% women					
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007/8	2010/11
Media and culture						Women's average representation 15.1%
Chief executives of media companies in the FTSE 350 and the DG of the BBC ²⁶	7.4	4.3	9.5	10.5	10.5	6.7
Editors of national newspapers ²⁷	9.1	9.1	13.0	17.4	13.6	9.5
Directors of major museums and art galleries ²⁸	21.1	21.1	21.7	17.4	17.4	26.1
Chairs of national arts companies ²⁹	27.3	27.3	33.3	33.3	33.3	8.3
Chief executives of national sports bodies ³⁰	14.3	6.3	6.7	6.7	13.3	25.0

Note: The statistics in this index have been selected to represent positions considered to have power or influence in Britain. As far as possible, these statistics relate to Great Britain or to the United Kingdom, with the obvious exceptions of the Scottish Parliament and the National Assembly for Wales. For each statistic included, the percentage of women has either been taken directly from the source, or it has been calculated from the actual numbers of women and men. A summary index has also been calculated for each of the four areas: politics, business, media and culture, public and voluntary sectors. The summary shows women's representation in each area, calculated as a simple average of the most recent percentage figures for each indicator within the area.

Missing in action

Women make up 51 per cent of the British population³¹. They are better educated than ever before, with girls routinely outperforming boys at both school³² and university.

These young, well-qualified women are entering the labour market in increasing numbers, as well as populating the ranks of middle management. Over 45 per cent of solicitors are now women³³ and it is predicted that there will be more female than male doctors by 2017³⁴. Women also account for the majority of full-time teachers across Great Britain.

However, these changes are not yet reflected in the senior ranks of the judiciary or health service. In political life, a record number of 143 women were returned to the House of Commons at the 2010 general election, but very few made it into the top posts. And, even in occupations where women have a long history of representation, they remain under-represented at the top. Women account for the majority of full-time teachers across Great Britain, but just over a third of secondary school head teachers.

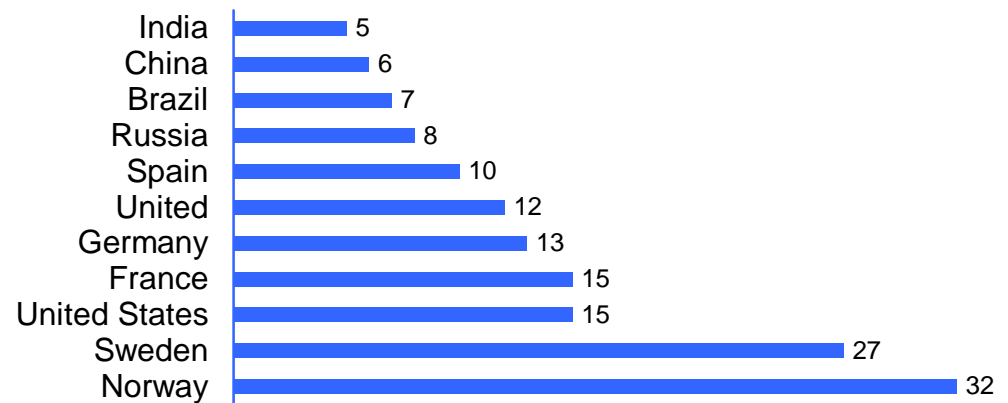
Excluding women already on FTSE 100 boards, the numbers of women directors and senior managers in all companies on the FTSE listings jumped once again from 2,281 in 2009 to 2,551 just one year later³⁵. This means that, despite the small incremental increase in women on FTSE 100 boards, there is a growing assemblage of potential women candidates to these seats.

This year's index shows that where women do find positions of power and influence, it is more likely to be in the public and voluntary sectors. For example, our index shows that the proportion of chief executives of voluntary organisations that are women now almost matches that of men.

The difference in female representation in the top posts of these sectors supports research published elsewhere that is suggestive of a growing gap between the public and the private sectors in terms of opportunities for women. Women in the public sector are more likely than those in the private sector to consider having or enlarging a family because of the relative job security, more flexible working hours and more generous family-friendly policies that tend to be available there³⁶, making it increasingly attractive to women who want a balance between their work and home lives.

Women's representation on the board of directors of the largest publicly listed companies across Europe³⁷

The UK lags behind the rest of Europe in terms of women's participation on corporate boards.



Source: *Women at the top of corporations: Making it happen 2010*

'Women are under-represented in all forms of leadership positions: political leadership, the senior civil service and corporate boardrooms. At the same time, the companies where women are most strongly represented are also the companies that perform best financially.'

The EU European Economic and Social Committee. October 2009

(Cited in *More Women in Senior Positions*, European Commission, 2010.)

An age-old problem

Outdated working patterns and inflexible organisations continue to be major barriers to women's participation in positions of authority. Company cultures where long hours are the norm and the unequal division of domestic responsibilities limit women's potential to find the time and energy these top posts demand.

Employees in the UK work some of the longest hours in Europe³⁸. The assumption that employees must work these hours in order to advance their careers imposes greater career penalties on women who often have to reconcile unpaid and paid work and want a balance between their work and home lives.

In the Inquiry into Sex Discrimination in the Finance Sector, the Equality and Human Rights Commission found that women are prominent in secretarial and administrative positions, but are significantly under-represented in managerial jobs and top posts³⁹. As in many other industries, the long hours culture that is prevalent in the finance sector – and particularly at senior levels - can make it difficult for employees who want to combine work and family life. Research with some of the female managing directors of London's top investment banks has found that nearly half were childless, and of those who did have children, a quarter had a partner who assumed the role of primary carer⁴⁰.

But this is not just a 'women's problem'. Men suffer too. Long hours are most common among married men with children⁴¹, but fathers are increasingly saying that they want to spend more time with their families and less time at work, and they want to play a more equal part in childcare⁴².

Women also face barriers because part-time work remains undervalued. For example, one survey of NHS nurses found that the career progression of part-time nurses lags considerably behind that of full-time nurses and that posts at the highest NHS grades are generally only advertised as full-time posts⁴³.

The fact that the rate of female employment-to-self-employment migration far outstrips the rate at which women are moving into senior management roles⁴⁴ suggests that women are seeking alternate ways to work. Women who are talented, bold and highly qualified are leaving corporate careers in their droves, many to set up their own business or work as consultants in their old field. The most commonly cited reasons for women's exit from corporate life are the desire for greater freedom, autonomy, work-life balance and professional development⁴⁵.

Missing women

This index shows that we still have a long way to go before there is an equal distribution of women and men in decision-making positions. There are over 5,000 women missing from Britain's top jobs. This includes:

- 2,129 missing from 12,210 public appointments
- 403 missing from the 1,076 directorships in the FTSE 100 companies
- 829 missing from the 1,966 directorships in the FTSE 250 companies
- 181 missing from the 650 members of Parliament
- 83 missing from the 250 senior police officers
- 245 missing from the 500 senior ranks of the armed forces

Note: Missing women equal half the total number of posts minus the number of posts held by women.

At the current rate of progress it will take another:

30 years to achieve an equal number of women senior police officers

70 years to achieve an equal number of women directors in the FTSE 100

45 years to achieve an equal number of women in the senior judiciary

14 elections, or up to 70 years, to achieve an equal number of women MPs

The challenge ahead

As Britain strives to recover from the economic slowdown, this index serves as an important reminder of why gender equality issues must remain at the forefront of the policy debate.

The squandering of talent is coming at a cost. We are losing out on what women can contribute, with the Women and Work Commission estimating that unlocking women's talent in the workplace could be worth £15 billion or more⁴⁶.

As a society we pour a fortune into educating girls. These girls devote time and effort to acquiring an advanced education and forgo income to do so. Denying business full access to their skilled labour leaves many women feeling frustrated and unfulfilled and provides a negative return on the investment that we make in their education.

As a society, we need to find a way to harness these women's skills and experience, partly because it makes good business sense. It has been suggested that greater diversity on corporate boards would improve business performance⁴⁷ and increase levels of corporate social responsibility⁴⁸.

Norway imposed a 40 per cent quota for women on corporate boards as the result of studies that showed that 'the more women there are at the top of a company, the better its financial performance'⁴⁹.

As a nation, we cannot afford to waste the talent available to run our national institutions. As well as the moral argument for gender equality in positions of power and influence, women's equal participation in public, political and cultural institutions can play a pivotal role in the advancement of women.

With little or no voice in the country's largest and most powerful organisations, the status of women will remain unchallenged. Likewise, the inclusion of women in decision-making positions in the areas of art, culture, sports, the media, education and law can have a significant impact on the diversity of those institutions, as well as their internal policies and procedures.

The slow pace of change in gender equality, and the sheer number of 'missing women' reflects structural and attitudinal barriers that need to be addressed if Britain is to succeed in the global marketplace.

NOTES

- ¹ Thompson, J et al (2009) Male and Female Participation and Progression in Higher Education.
- ² Davies, EM (2011) Women on Boards.
- ³ Indicator values for 2003-07/08 are repeated from *Sex and Power 2008*, except for amendments where noted below.
- ⁴ UK Parliament website Lists of MPs by gender. Accessed 26 July 2011.
- ⁵ UK Parliament website. Her Majesty's Government: the Cabinet. Accessed 26 July 2011.
- ⁶ UK Parliament website. Lords by party and type of peerage. Accessed 26 July 2011.
- ⁷ The Scottish Parliament (2011). SPICE briefing Election 2011. Accessed 26 July 2011.
- ⁸ National Assembly for Wales (2011). Member profiles. Accessed 26 July 2011.
- ⁹ Local Government Improvement and Development website, A-Z of local authorities; local government websites; COSLA website, Council Leaders; accessed 26-27 July 2011.
- ¹⁰ European Parliament Information Office in the UK website. Your MEPs, accessed 26 July 2011.
- ¹¹ Vinnicombe, S et al (2010). The Female FTSE Board Report 2010: Opening up the appointment process. Figures include executive and non-executive directors.
- ¹² Vinnicombe, S et al (2010). The Female FTSE Board Report 2010: Opening up the appointment process (and earlier reports). Figures include executive and non-executive directors. This indicator replaces the previous indicator 'small businesses with women the majority of directors'.
- ¹³ Cabinet Office (2010) *Public Bodies 2009*.
- ¹⁴ Local Government Improvement and Development website, A-Z of local authorities; local government websites; COSLA website, Chief Executives; all accessed 26-27 July 2011.
- ¹⁵ Defence Analytical Services Agency (2010) UK Regular Forces Rank Structure at 1 April 2010.
- ¹⁶ Dhani, A and Kaiza P (2011) Police Service Strength England and Wales, 31 March 2011, Home Office Statistical Bulletin 13/11; Scottish Police Force websites, numbers of Chief Constables, Deputy and Assistant Chief Constables in the eight Scottish Police Forces, accessed 1 August 2011.
- ¹⁷ Judiciary of England and Wales (2010) Statistics. Women judges in post as at 1 April 2010; Judiciary of Scotland website, Senators of the College of Justice, accessed 29 July 2011.
- ¹⁸ Civil Service (2011) Monitoring Diversity, accessed 29 July 2011.
- ¹⁹ Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations, full members at 19 May 2010.
- ²⁰ Department for Education (2011) School workforce in England, November 2010 (provisional); StatsWales, Full-time qualified teachers in Primary and Secondary schools, by category and sex, accessed 29 July 2011; The Scottish Government, 2011, Teacher Census, Supplementary data, accessed 29 July 2011.

²¹ Data from 1 October 2009 in email from Association of Colleges, dated 21 September 2010.

²² Universities UK website, list of university heads, accessed 29 July 2011.

²³ Websites of Special and Strategic Health Authorities in England, NHS Boards in Scotland (including Special) and Welsh Local Health boards, accessed 29 July 2011.

²⁴ Trade Union Congress, Britain's unions, accessed 29 July 2011.

²⁵ Websites of the Engineering Council, General Council of the Bar, General Dental Council, General Medical Council, General Optical Council, General Social Care Council, General Teaching Council for England, Scotland and Wales, the Law Society, Law Society for Scotland and Faculty of Advocates, accessed 29 July 2011.

²⁶ Websites of the BBC and the following media companies in the FTSE 350: Aegis Group, BSkyB, Daily Mail and General Trust, Euromoney Institutional Investor, Informa Group, ITE Group, ITV plc, Moneysupermarket.com Group, Pearson, Reed Elsevier, Rightmove, United Business Media, WPP Group and Performa Group, accessed 1 August 2011.

²⁷ Websites of national newspapers: *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Star*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Financial Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Glasgow Herald*, *The Independent*, *Morning Star*, *The Sun*, *The Times*, *Western Mail*, *Independent on Sunday*, *Mail on Sunday*, *The Observer*, *The Sunday People*, *Sunday Express*, *Sunday Mirror*, *Sunday Telegraph* and *Sunday Times*, accessed 29 July 2011.

²⁸ Websites of British Library, British Museum, Design Museum, Geffrye Museum, Horniman Museum and Gardens, Imperial War Museum, Museum of London, Museum of Science and Industry Manchester, National Coal Mining Museum in England, National Football Museum, National Gallery, National Maritime Museum, National Museums Liverpool, National Museum of Science and Industry, National Portrait Gallery, Natural History Museum, People's History Museum, Royal Armouries, Sir John Soanes Museum, Tate Gallery, Tyne and Wear Museums, Victoria and Albert Museum and the Wallace Collection, accessed 1 August 2011.

²⁹ Websites of the English National Opera, Royal National Theatre, Royal Opera House, Royal Shakespeare Company, South Bank Centre, Royal Ballet, English National Ballet, Birmingham Royal Ballet, Scottish Ballet, Scottish Opera, Welsh National Opera, Rambert Dance, accessed 1 August 2011.

³⁰ Websites of national sports bodies: UK Athletics, British Canoe Union, British Cycling, British Swimming, British Equestrian Federation, British Gymnastics, National Ice Skating Association, British Judo, Pentathlon GB, British Orienteering, British Rowing, Royal Yachting Association, National Small-Bore Rifle Association, British Ski and Snowboard, British Triathlon and British Water Ski and Wakeboard, accessed 1 August 2011.

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³⁶ Nazio, T (2009) Are storks striking for a contract renewal? Childbirth under changing employment, family and welfare arrangements: Full Research Report ESRC End of Award Report, RES-061-23-0127. Swindon: ESRC.

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⁴⁶ Women and Work Commission (2006) *Shaping a fairer future*.

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⁴⁹ Cormier, D (2007) Retaining Top Women Business Leaders: Strategies for Ending the Exodus. *Business Strategy Series* 8, 4: 263.

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