



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## Research and Information Service Briefing Paper

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# General Election 2015: Gender Representation

## 1 Introduction

On 9 March 2015 the Northern Ireland Assembly approved the report of the Assembly and Executive Review Committee on Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly<sup>1</sup>. Recommendation 7 of that report states<sup>2</sup>:

*The Committee recommended that political parties may wish to consider the introduction of measures to increase the number of female candidates being put forward for election. However, the Committee recognised that the decision on which, if any, measures to introduce remained a decision for the political parties.*

A UK general election has been announced for Thursday 7 May 2015<sup>3</sup>. This paper briefly summarises the gender breakdown of the candidates for the general election.

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<sup>1</sup> Northern Ireland Assembly Official Report 9 March 2015:

<http://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/officialreport/report.aspx?&eveDate=2015/03/09&docID=226892>.

<sup>2</sup> Assembly and Executive Review Committee (2015) *Report on Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly*, Recommendation 7: <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/committees/assembly-and-executive-review/reports/report-on-women-in-politics-and-the-northern-ireland-assembly/>.

<sup>3</sup> Electoral Office for Northern Ireland, UK Parliamentary Election, Notice of Election, 1 April 2015: <http://www.eoni.org.uk/getmedia/4b39bfd4-5be2-4c5c-82a6-4a915949c2d4/Parliamentary-Elections-2015-Notice-of-Election>.

## 2 Female General Election Candidate Representation in Northern Ireland 2015

The following table summarises female representation among the general election candidates by party for the eighteen UK parliamentary election constituencies<sup>4</sup>.

	Workers Party	Cannabis is Safer than Alcohol	Alliance	Green	UKIP	SDLP	DUP	TUV	Sinn Féin	UUP	Conservatives	Independent	People Before Profit
Antrim E			M		M	F	M	F	M	M	M		
Antrim N			F		M	M	M	M	M	M	F	M	
Antrim S			M			F	M	M	M	M	M		
Belfast E			F	M		F	M		M		M		
Belfast N	F		M			M	M		M			M	
Belfast S	F		F	F	M	M	M		M	M	M		
Belfast W	M		M		M	M	M		M	M	M		M
Down N		M	M	M	M	M	M	M	F		M	F	
Down S			M		M	F	M		M	M			
Fermanagh South Tyrone			F	F		M			F	M			
Foyle			M		M	M	M		M	F	M		
Lagan Valley			M		M	M	M	M	F	M	M	M	
Londonderry E		M	F			M	M		F	M	F		

<sup>4</sup> Information is derived from Statements of Persons Nominated, Electoral Office for Northern Ireland, 10 April 2015:

<http://www.eoni.org.uk/Elections/Election-results-and-statistics/Election-results-and-statistics-2003-onwards/Elections-2015/UK-Parliamentary-Election-Candidates-Nominated> . .

		Workers Party	Cannabis is Safer than Alcohol	Alliance	Green	UKIP	SDLP	DUP	TUV	Sinn Féin	UUP	Conservatives	Independent	People Before Profit
Newry and Armagh				F		M	M	M		M				
Strangford				F		M	M	M	M	F	M	M		
Tyrone W			M	M	M		M	M		M	M	F	F	
Mid-Ulster	M			M		M	M	M	M	M	F	F		
Upper Bann	M	M	M	M			F	M		F	F	M		
<b>Total</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>F</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Percent Female</b>		<b>40%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>0%</b>

No parties are fielding more female candidates than males, or equal numbers of male and female candidates. The Workers Party and the Green Party have the highest representation of women candidates (40%) and 40% of independents are women. Four parties are fielding no female candidates at all: Cannabis is Safer than Alcohol, UK Independence Party, Democratic Unionist Party and People Before Profit Alliance.

Fermanagh and South Tyrone is the only constituency where there are more female than male candidates (three of five). West Belfast is the only constituency where there are no women standing at all. Across all constituencies, 24% of candidates are women.

For comparative purposes, the following table sets out the percentage of women candidates for recent elections in Northern Ireland<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Research and Information Service Briefing Note 48/14 *Candidates for the 2014 Elections in Northern Ireland by Gender*, 1 May 2014: [http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/raise/publications/2014/assembly\\_exec\\_review/4814.pdf](http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/raise/publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/4814.pdf), Research and Information Service Briefing Note 56/14 *Female Candidates in Local Elections in Northern Ireland*, 21 May 2014: [http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/raise/publications/2014/assembly\\_exec\\_review/5614.pdf](http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/raise/publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/5614.pdf), Research and Information Service Research Paper 9/14 *Women in the Northern Ireland Assembly* 3 September 2013, p.8: [http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/raise/publications/2014/assembly\\_exec\\_review/0914.pdf](http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/raise/publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/0914.pdf), BBC News Election 2010 web pages: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk\\_politics/election\\_2010/default.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/election_2010/default.stm).

<b><i>Election</i></b>	<b><i>Female Candidates</i></b>
General Election 2015	24%
Local Elections 2014	24%
European Election 2014	40%
Assembly Election 2011	17%
Local Elections 2011	24%
General Election 2010	19%

The proportion of female candidates for the 2015 general election (24%) has increased since the general election in 2010 (19%). The figure is the same as the last two local elections in 2014 and 2011 (24%) and has increased since the last election to the Northern Ireland Assembly in 2011 (17%).

## Appendix 1: Summary of Recommendations of the Assembly and Executive Review Committee Report on Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly

### **Recommendations for Political Parties in Northern Ireland**

1. The Committee recommended that political parties should consider developing targeted membership strategies to encourage more women to get involved and become members of their parties.
2. The Committee recognised that high profile female MLAs can act as positive role models and recommended that political parties should take this into account when making political appointments in the Assembly.
3. The Committee recommended that political parties should strive to develop mentoring programmes for aspiring politicians both at local government and within the Assembly.
4. The Committee recommended that initiatives designed to increase female candidacies are widely known and extensively promoted within a party, are given strong positive and public support by the party leadership and are communicated to supporters.
5. The Committee recommended that political parties review their internal media strategy to ensure greater visibility of female politicians.
6. The Committee recommended that, if not already provided, political parties should consider the introduction of diversity awareness training, advice and support available to party members involved in the candidate selection process.
7. The Committee recommended that political parties may wish to consider the introduction of measures to increase the number of female candidates being put forward for election. However, the Committee recognised that the decision on which, if any, measures to introduce remained a decision for the political parties.
8. The Committee recommended that political parties may wish to consider collecting and publishing anonymised diversity data on candidates.
9. The Committee recommended that if not already in place, political parties should develop policies relating to maternity and paternity leave for politicians and party staff.
10. The Committee recommended that political parties should develop procedures for dealing sexual harassment, discrimination and bullying if these are not already in place.

## **Recommendations for the Northern Ireland Assembly**

11. The Committee recommended that the Assembly should continue to engage with young women and school girls to discover why they are not engaging in political life and what positive initiatives could be brought forward as a result.

12. The Committee recommended that the Assembly should consider adopting measures from local, national and international best practice to create a gender sensitive Northern Ireland Assembly.

13. The Committee recommended that all initiatives designed to increase and support women in the Northern Ireland Assembly should be given strong support from the Assembly leadership.

14. Furthermore the Committee recommended that, where possible, the Assembly should consider how it can support political parties in implementing the recommendations from this Review.

15. The Committee recommended that the Assembly should establish a working group on a gender sensitive parliament. The working group should have equal membership of male and female MLAs.

16. The Committee recommended that the Assembly should conduct a gender survey across all Members to identify the key barriers and challenges and, based on the feedback received, develop a gender action plan with specific measures to help Members balance family life with their political career.

17. The Committee recommended that the Assembly should undertake a review of voting mechanisms used in other legislatures as a means of facilitating family friendly sittings.

18. The Committee recommended that following the next Assembly elections, the Assembly should carry out an anonymous survey of all candidates to identify the barriers and challenges they encountered.

19. The Committee recommended that the Assembly should continue to develop and deliver training and capacity building programmes to assist female MLAs in carrying out their role as elected public representatives.

20. The Committee recommended that the Assembly should consider targeted engagement with the media, civil society and schools to profile the work of female MLAs.

21. The Committee recommended that the Assembly should consider hosting at least one annual event to highlight the work of female politicians. This could coincide with either International Women's Day or during Parliamentary Week.

22. The Committee recommended that the Assembly should ensure, where possible, gender representation be considered when agreeing official delegations from the Assembly.

23. The Committee recommended that the Assembly should facilitate the creation of a women's parliamentary caucus.

24. The Committee recommended that the Assembly through Assembly Research and Information Services should assist Committees undertake gender based analysis of public policies and budgets.

### **Recommendations for the Northern Ireland Executive**

25. The Committee recommended that the Executive should ensure that its future childcare and gender equality strategies are designed, delivered and appropriately funded to enable women at all levels of society to balance their caring responsibilities with a career in politics.

26. The Committee recommended that the Executive should ensure improved information sharing, monitoring and accountability in the implementation of the new gender equality strategy across all departments to ensure that all strategic objectives are met within the agreed timescales and that lessons are learned from the implementation of the existing Gender Equality Strategy (2006-2016).

27. The Committee recommended that Executive Ministers should state their commitment to addressing gender inequality in Northern Ireland.

28. The Committee recommended that consideration be given to the implementation of gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting in Executive policies and legislation development.

29. The Committee recommended that the Executive should take steps to increase the diversity of public bodies and in particular introduce measures to address the gender imbalance in public appointments in Northern Ireland.