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Female Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly 1998-2016

1 Introduction

This paper briefly summarises the presence of female Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) in the Northern Ireland Assembly. The paper covers current and past female MLAs. The information given in this paper¹ updates the previous paper *Women in the Northern Ireland Assembly*². The information cut-off date is 1 February 2016.

The Assembly and Executive Review Committee (AERC) published the report on its review into women in politics in the Assembly in March 2015³. The Committee identified a range of barriers to women's participation in politics and considered mechanisms to increase the representation of women.

¹ The primary data source for this paper is the Assembly Information Management Systems (AIMS) (<http://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/default.aspx>).

² Research and Information Service Research Paper 9/14 *Women in the Northern Ireland Assembly*, 3 September 2013: http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/raise/publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/0914.pdf.

³ AERC (2015), *Report on Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly*, Belfast: NI Assembly: http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/reports/assem_exec_review/women-in-politics.pdf.

2 Women MLAs in the Northern Ireland Assembly

There have been 50 female MLAs sitting in the Northern Assembly since 1998. Brief details of these are at Appendix 1.

The numbers of successful women candidates in elections since 1998 are as follows:

| <i>25 June 1998</i> | <i>26 November 2003</i> | <i>7 March 2007</i> | <i>5 May 2011</i> |
|---------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| 14 (7.7%) | 18 (16.7%) | 18 (16.7%) | 20 (18.5%) |

The current number of female MLAs is 23 (20.3%), the anomaly with the 2011 election results being due to more female than male co-options since 2011.

There have been 241 MLAs in total since 1998. The 50 women therefore comprise 20.8% of the total number of MLAs during that period. Taken as an average across all four elections, women have comprised 16% of elected MLAs. This figure suggests that there is greater turnover (or 'churn') of female than male MLAs, i.e. women tend to sit for shorter periods than men. The table at Appendix 2 summarises details of all 50 female MLAs and illustrates their length of tenure.

The following table compares the number of terms (or parts thereof) served by female MLAs compared with male MLAs⁴.

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Females | 58% | 26% | 12% | 8% |
| Males | 42% | 27% | 17% | 14% |

Women are more likely to serve a single term and men are more likely to serve three or more terms.

One woman has been Speaker of the Assembly (Eileen Bell) and one Deputy Speaker (Jane Morrice). Thirteen female MLAs have held ministerial posts (26%), as follows:

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Martina Anderson | Junior Minister for OFMdFM 2011 – 2012 |
| Bairbre de Brún | Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety 1999 - 2002 |
| Arlene Foster | Minister for the Environment 2007 – 2008 Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment 2008 – 2015 |

⁴ Note: percentages do not add up exactly due to rounding.

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| | Acting First Minister 2010 and 2015 Minister for Finance and Personnel 2015 – 2016 First Minister 2016 - present |
| Michelle Gildernew | Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development 2007 - 2011 |
| Carmel Hanna | Minister for Employment and Learning 2001 - 2002 |
| Jennifer McCann | Junior Minister for OFMdfM 2012 - present |
| Michelle McIlveen | Junior Minister for OFMdfM 2015 Minister for Regional Development 2015 - present |
| Carál Ní Chuilín | Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure 2011 - present |
| Michelle O'Neill | Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development 2011 - present |
| Emma Pengelly | Junior Minister for OFMdfM 2015 - present |
| Margaret Ritchie | Minister for Social Development 2007 - 2010 |
| Brid Rodgers | Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development 1999 – 2002 |
| Caitríona Ruane | Minister for Education 2007 - 2011 |

By comparison, 34 men have served as ministers since 1998 (17.8%), suggesting a greater willingness to appoint women to such positions of leadership.

There have been three female party leaders (6%): Dawn Purvis (PUP), Margaret Ritchie (SDLP) and Arlene Foster (DUP)⁵. By contrast, 15 men have led parties in Northern Ireland since 1998 (7.9%).

Aside from executive bills moved by ministers, four female MLAs have moved Private Members' Bills (8%): Judith Cochrane (Licencing Bill), Joanne Dobson (Human Transplantation Bill), Dawn Purvis (Local Government (Disqualification) Bill) and Monica McWilliams (Children's Commissioner Bill). By comparison, 8.9% of male MLAs have moved Private Members' Bills.

⁵ Although Monica McWilliams is generally regarded to have been the leader of the Women's Coalition, there was no such post when the party was in existence.

Fourteen female MLAs have chaired committees (28%) and ten have been deputy chairs (20%), whereas 33.5% of male MLAs have chaired committees and 31.7% have been deputy chairs.

Four female MLAs have become Members of the UK Parliament: Michelle Gildernew, Naomi Long, Margaret Ritchie and Iris Robinson.

Three female MLAs have become Members of the European Parliament: Martina Anderson, Bairbre de Brún and Diane Dodds.

Appendix 1: Table of Female Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly 1998-2016

| Member and Party | Constituency | Committees and Ministries | Comment |
|------------------------|---|--|---|
| Martina Anderson (SF) | Foyle (07/03/2007 - 11/06/2012) | OFMdFM Junior Minister for OFMdFM (16/05/2011 - 11/06/2012) | MEP (12/06/12 -) |
| Pauline Armitage (UUP) | East Londonderry (25/06/1998 - 28/04/2003) | Public Accounts | |
| Norah Beare (UUP/ DUP) | Lagan Valley (26/11/2003 - 30/01/2007) | | |
| Eileen Bell (Alliance) | North Down (25/06/1998 - 30/01/2007) | Business (Chair) Ad Hoc Committee on Access to Justice EU Affairs Sub Committee Criminal Justice Reform (D Chair) Life Sentences (NI) Order 2001 (D Chair) Education OFMdFM Assembly Commission | Speaker (08/05/2007 – 08/05/2007) |

| | | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| | | | |
| Michaela Boyle (SF) | West Tyrone (05/05/2011 -) | Finance and Personnel Audit Public Accounts (Chair) Agriculture and Rural Development Health, Social Services and Public Safety Education | |
| Mary Bradley (SDLP) | Foyle (26/11/2003 - 25/03/2011) | Health, Social Services and Public Safety Social Development Education | |
| Paula Bradley (DUP) | North Belfast (05/05/2011 -) | Assembly Commission Assembly and Executive Review Committee Social Development Ad Hoc Committee to consider an AGNI Statutory Rule (D Chair) Health, Social Services and Public Safety (D Chair) | |

| | | | |
|----------------------------|---|---|---|
| | | <p>Procedures</p> <p>Standards and Privileges</p> <p>Ad Hoc Committee on Conformity with Equality Requirements, Welfare Reform Bill</p> <p>Environment</p> | |
| Pam Cameron (DUP) | South Antrim (05/05/2011 -) | <p>Ad Hoc Joint Committee on the Mental Capacity Bill</p> <p>Environment (D Chair)</p> <p>Health, Social Services and Public Safety</p> <p>Sub-Committee on Local Government Bill</p> <p>Social Development</p> | |
| Joan Carson (UUP) | Fermanagh and South Tyrone (25/06/1998 - 28/04/2003) | <p>Employment and Learning</p> <p>Health, Social Services and Public Safety</p> <p>Environment</p> | |
| Judith Cochrane (Alliance) | East Belfast (05/05/2011 -) | <p>Finance and Personnel</p> <p>Assembly Commission</p> | <p>Private Members Bill: Licencing Bill (69/11-16) (Committee Stage Feb 16)</p> |

| | | | |
|-----------------------|---|--|--|
| | | Agriculture and Rural Development Social Development | |
| Annie Courtney (SDLP) | Foyle (05/12/2000 - 28/04/2004) | Causeway Sub-Committee Health, Social Services and Public Safety Enterprise, Trade and Investment OFMdfM | |
| Bairbre de Brún (SF) | West Belfast (25/06/1998 - 27/10/2004) | Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety (29/11/1999 - 14/10/2002) | MEP (13/06/2004 – 03/05/2012) |
| Joanne Dobson (UUP) | Upper Bann (05/05/2011 -) | Audit (Chair) Ad Hoc Joint Committee on the Mental Capacity Bill Health, Social Services and Public Safety Regional Development Agriculture and Rural Development Education | Private Members Bill: Human Transplantation Bill (64/11-16) (Committee Stage Feb 16) |
| Diane Dodds (DUP) | West Belfast | | MEP (04/06/2009 -) |

| | | | |
|-------------------------|---|--|--|
| | (26/11/2003 - 30/01/2007) | | |
| Geraldine Dougan (SF) | Mid Ulster (26/11/2003 - 30/01/2007) | | |
| Marietta Farrell (SDLP) | Lagan Valley (09/01/2007 - 30/01/2007) | | |
| Megan Fearon (SF) | Newry and Armagh (02/07/2012 -) | Enterprise, Trade and Investment OFMdFM Finance and Personnel | |
| Arlene Foster (DUP) | Fermanagh and South Tyrone (26/11/2003 -) | Minister for the Environment (08/05/2007 - 09/06/2008) Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment (09/06/2008 - 11/05/2015) Acting First Minister (11/01/2010 - 03/02/2010 and 11/09/2015 - 20/10/2015) Minister for Finance and Personnel (11/05/2015 - 12/01/2016) | Executive Bills: Departments Bill (NIA Bill 70/11-16); Assembly Members (Reduction of Numbers) Bill (NIA Bill 76/11-16); Rates (Amendment) Bill (NIA Bill 75/11-16); Energy Bill (NIA Bill 23/09); Tourism (Amendment) Bill (NIA 30/09); Unsolicited Services (Trade and Business Directories) Bill (NIA 12/09); Debt Relief Bill (NIA 9/09); Local Government (Boundaries) Bill (NIA 14/07) |

| | | | |
|----------------------------|---|---|--|
| | | First Minister (11/01/2016 -) | DUP party leader 2015 - |
| Michelle Gildernew (SF) | Fermanagh and South Tyrone (25/06/1998 - 01/07/2012) | Health, Social Services and Public Safety (Chair) Employment and Learning Flags (NI) Order 2000 Social Development OFMdFM Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (08/05/2007 - 04/05/2011) | Executive Bills: Diseases of Animals Bill (NIA 22/07); Dogs (Amendment) Bill (NIA 20/09); Diseases of Animals Bill (NIA 22/07); Forestry Bill (NIA 11/08) MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (07/06/2001 – 30/03/2015) |
| Brenda Hale (DUP) | Lagan Valley (05/05/2011 -) | Regional Development OFMdFM Culture, Arts and Leisure Education | |
| Carmel Hanna (SDLP) | South Belfast (25/06/1998 - 15/01/2010) | Standards and Privileges (Chair) Assembly and Executive Review Committee Health, Social Services and Public Safety | |

| | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| | | Environment Minister for Employment and Learning (14/12/2001 - 14/10/2002) | |
| Claire Hanna (SDLP) | South Belfast (29/06/2015 -) | Environment Public Accounts Committee Regional Development | |
| Dolores Kelly (SDLP) | Upper Bann (26/11/2003 -) | Social Development Environment (Chair) Regional Development Agriculture and Rural Development (D Chair) OFMdFM Justice Employment and Learning (Chair) Health, Social Services and Public Safety Ad Hoc Committee on the draft Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2007 | |

| | | | |
|----------------------------|--|--|--|
| Patricia Lewsley (SDLP) | Lagan Valley (25/06/1998 - 19/12/2006) | Business Ad Hoc Committee on Disqualification Legislation Environment (D Chair) Finance and Personnel Financial Investigations (NI) Order 2001 Education Enterprise, Trade and Investment OFMdfM | Commissioner for Children & Young People 2007 - 2012 |
| Anna Lo (Alliance) | South Belfast (07/03/2007 -) | Employment and Learning Standards and Privileges (D Chair) Audit Environment (Chair) Sub-Committee on Local Government Bill (Chair) Regional Development Social Development | |
| Naomi Long (Alliance) | East Belfast (26/11/2003 - 05/07/2010) | OFMdfM (D Chair) | MP for East Belfast (06/06/10 – 30/03/15) |

| | | | |
|---------------------------|--|--|--|
| Jennifer McCann (SF) | West Belfast (07/03/2007 -) | Enterprise, Trade and Investment (D Chair) Business Public Accounts Justice Finance and Personnel (Chair) Ad Hoc Committee on the draft Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2007 Junior Minister for OFMdFM (12/06/2012 -) | |
| Rosaleen McCorley (SF) | West Belfast (02/07/2012 -) | Ad Hoc Joint Committee on the Mental Capacity Bill Health, Social Services and Public Safety Culture, Arts and Leisure Justice | |
| Bronwyn McGahan (SF) | Fermanagh and South Tyrone (02/07/2012 -) | Justice Employment and Learning Ad Hoc Joint Committee on the Mental Capacity Bill Ad Hoc Committee on Conformity with | |

| | | | |
|----------------------------|---|--|--|
| | | Equality Requirements, Welfare Reform Bill OFMdfM | |
| Claire McGill (SF) | West Tyrone (07/03/2007 - 25/03/2011) | Enterprise, Trade and Investment Health, Social Services and Public Safety Standards and Privileges Employment and Learning Social Development | |
| Michelle McIlveen (DUP) | Strangford (07/03/2007 -) | Education (Chair) Agriculture and Rural Development Culture, Arts and Leisure (Chair) Regional Development (D Chair) Social Development Junior Minister for OFMdfM (11/05/2015 - 10/09/2015) Minister for Regional Development (20/10/2015 -) | Executive Bill: Water and Sewerage Services Bill (NIA Bill 51/11- 16); |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Karen McKeivitt (SDLP) | South Down (05/05/2011 -) | Business Culture, Arts and Leisure | |
| Maeve McLaughlin (SF) | Foyle (18/06/2012 -) | Ad Hoc Committee on the Public Services Ombudsperson Bill Education Health, Social Services and Public Safety (Chair) Enterprise, Trade and Investment | |
| Monica McWilliams (Women's Coalition) | South Belfast (25/06/1998 - 28/04/2003) | Ad Hoc Committee on Access to Justice Criminal Injuries Compensation Life Sentences (NI) Order 2001 Business Employment and Learning Health, Social Services and Public Safety Committee to Advise The Presiding Officer | |
| Jane Morrice (Women's Coalition) | North Down (25/06/1998 - 28/04/2003) | Draft Firearms (Northern Ireland) Order 2002 | Deputy Speaker (01/02/2000 - 28/04/2003) |

| | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|---|---|
| | | Flags (NI) Order 2000 Public Accounts Enterprise, Trade and Investment | European Economic and Social Committee (2006 -) |
| Mary Nelis (SF) | Foyle (25/06/1998 - 15/07/2004) | Social Development Environment Criminal Justice Reform Culture, Arts and Leisure Employment and Learning | |
| Carál Ní Chuilín (SF) | West Belfast (07/03/2007 -) | Business Social Development (D Chair) Justice Ad Hoc Committee on the Private Security Industry Order Ad Hoc Committee on the draft Criminal Justice Order 2007 Health, Social Services and Public Safety Assembly and Executive Review Committee | |

| | | | |
|-----------------------|---|--|--|
| | | Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure (16/05/2011 -) | |
| Dara O'Hagan (SF) | Upper Bann (25/06/1998 - 28/04/2003) | OFMdFM Ad Hoc Committee on Disqualification Legislation (D Chair) Criminal Injuries Compensation Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Standards and Privileges Enterprise, Trade and Investment | |
| Michelle O'Neill (SF) | Mid-Ulster (07/03/2007 -) | Health, Social Services and Public Safety (D Chair) Education Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development (16/05/2011 -) | |
| Pat O'Rawe (SF) | Newry and Armagh (26/11/2003 - 30/01/2007) | | |

| | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Sandra Overend (UUP) | Mid-Ulster (05/05/2011 -) | Education (D Chair) Business Standards and Privileges Environment Enterprise, Trade and Investment Assembly and Executive Review Committee Employment and Learning OFMdfM | |
| Emma Pengelly (DUP) | South Belfast (28/09/2015 -) | Finance and Personnel Junior Minister for OFMdfM (28/10/2015 -) | |
| Dawn Purvis (Independent/ PUP) | East Belfast (29/01/2007 - 25/03/2011) | Public Accounts Finance and Personnel | PUP party leader (2007-2010) Private Member's Bill: Local Government (Disqualification) Bill (NIA 7/09) |
| Sue Ramsey (SF) | West Belfast (25/06/1998 - 03/11/2014) | Enterprise, Trade and Investment Health, Social Services and Public Safety (Chair) | |

| | | | |
|-------------------------|---|--|---|
| | | <p>Procedures (Chair)</p> <p>Employment and Learning (Chair)</p> <p>Ad Hoc Committee on the draft Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2007</p> <p>Business</p> <p>Proceeds of Crime Bill</p> <p>Financial Investigations (NI) Order 2001</p> <p>Public Accounts</p> | |
| Margaret Ritchie (SDLP) | South Down (26/11/2003 - 01/04/2012) | <p>Audit</p> <p>Assembly and Executive Review Committee</p> <p>Minister for Social Development (14/05/2007 - 23/05/2010)</p> | <p>SDLP party leader (2010-2012)</p> <p>Executive Bills: Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill (NIA 19/09); Welfare Reform Bill (NIA 13/09); Housing (Amendment) Bill (NIA 7/08); Pensions Regulator Tribunal (Transfer of Functions) Bill (NIA 4/09); Pensions (No. 2) Bill (NIA 2/08); Child Maintenance Bill (NIA Bill 17/07); Charities Bill (NIA Bill 9/07); Mesothelioma, etc., Bill (NIA Bill 16/07);</p> |

| | | | |
|-------------------------|--|--|--|
| | | | Carer's Allowance Bill (NIA 13/07) MP for South Down (06/05/2010 -) |
| Iris Robinson (DUP) | Strangford (25/06/1998 - 12/01/2010) | Health, Social Services and Public Safety (Chair) Ad Hoc Committee on the draft Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2007 Business | MP for Strangford (07/06/2001 – 13/01/2010) |
| Brid Rodgers (SDLP) | Upper Bann (25/06/1998 - 28/04/2003) | Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development (29/11/1999 - 14/10/2002) | |
| Caitriona Ruane (SF) | South Down (26/11/2003 -) | Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Assembly and Executive Review Committee Business Ad Hoc Committee on Conformity with Equality Requirements, Welfare Reform Bill Finance and Personnel OFMdFM | Executive Bills: Education Bill (NIA 3/08) |

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|--|--|--|
| | | Minister for Education (14/05/2007 - 04/05/2011) | |
| Kathy Stanton (SF) | North Belfast (26/11/2003 - 30/01/2007) | | |
| Claire Sugden (Independent) | East Londonderry (06/05/2014 -) | Employment and Learning | |

Appendix 2: Summary of Female MLAs and their Length of Tenure

| Elections: | 25/06/1998 | | 26/11/2003 | | 07/03/2007 | | 05/05/2011 | | | |
|--------------------|------------|-------------|------------|--------|------------|---------------------|------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|-------|
| Martina Anderson | | | | | x | | x | JM 2011-12 | r 2012 | MEP |
| Pauline Armitage | x | | | | | | | | | |
| Norah Beare | | | x | | | | | | | |
| Eileen Bell | x | | x | | | Speaker | | | | |
| Michaela Boyle | | | | | | | x | | | |
| Mary Bradley | | | x | | x | | | | | |
| Paula Bradley | | | | | | | x | | | |
| Pam Cameron | | | | | | | x | | | |
| Joan Carson | x | | | | | | | | | |
| Judith Cochrane | | | | | | | x | | | |
| Annie Courtney | | c 2000 | | | | | | | | |
| Bairbre de Brún | x | M 1999-2002 | x | r 2004 | | | | | | MEP |
| Joanne Dobson | | | | | | | x | | | |
| Diane Dodds | | | x | | | | | | | MEP |
| Geraldine Dougan | | | x | | | | | | | |
| Marietta Farrell | | | | c 2007 | | | | | | |
| Megan Fearon | | | | | | | | c 2012 | | |
| Arlene Foster | | | x | | x | M 2007-8 2008-15 | x | M 2015-16 | FM 2010, 2015, 2016 - | |
| Michelle Giddernew | x | | x | | x | M 2007-11 | x | | r 2012 | MP |
| Brenda Hale | | | | | | | x | | | |
| Carmel Hanna | x | M 2001-2 | x | | x | r 2010 | | | | |
| Claire Hanna | | | | | | | | c 2015 | | |
| Dolores Kelly | | | x | | x | | x | | | |
| Patricia Lewsley | x | | x | r 2006 | | | | | | NICCY |
| Anna Lo | | | | | x | | x | | | |
| Naomi Long | | | x | | x | r 2010 | | | | MP |
| Jennifer McCann | | | | | x | | x | JM 2012 - | | |
| Rosaleen McCorley | | | | | | | | c 2012 | | |
| Bronwyn McGahan | | | | | | | | c 2012 | | |
| Claire McGill | | | | | x | | | | | |
| Michelle McIlveen | | | | | x | | x | JM 2015 M 2015 - | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------|-------------|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|--------------------|--------|----|
| Karen McKeivitt | | | | | | | x | | | |
| Maeve McLaughlin | | | | | | | | c 2012 | | |
| Monica McWilliams | x | | | | | | | | | |
| Jane Morrice | x | D Speaker | | | | | | | | |
| Mary Nelis | x | | x | r 2004 | | | | | | |
| Carál Ní Chuilín | | | | | x | | x | M 2011 - | | |
| Dara O'Hagan | x | | | | | | | | | |
| Michelle O'Neill | | | | | x | | x | M 2011 - | | |
| Pat O'Rawe | | | x | | | | | | | |
| Sandra Overend | | | | | | | x | | | |
| Emma Pengelly | | | | | | | | c 2015 M 2015 - | | |
| Dawn Purvis | | | | c 2007 | x | | | | | |
| Sue Ramsey | x | | | C 2004 | x | | x | | r 2014 | |
| Margaret Ritchie | | | x | M 2007-10 | x | | x | | r 2012 | MP |
| Iris Robinson | x | | x | | x | r 2010 | | | | MP |
| Brid Rodgers | x | M 1999-2002 | | | | | | | | |
| Caitriona Ruane | | | x | | x | M 2007-11 | x | | | |
| Kathy Stanton | | | x | | | | | | | |
| Claire Sugden | | | | | | | | c 2014 | | |
| | 14 (7.7%) | | 18 (16.7%) | | 18 (16.7%) | | 20 (18.5%) | | | |

| SF | DUP | UUP | SDLP | Alliance | NIWC | PUP | Ind |
|----|-----|-----|------|----------|------|-----|-----|
| 20 | 8 | 5 | 9 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 |

Key

x = elected

r = resigned

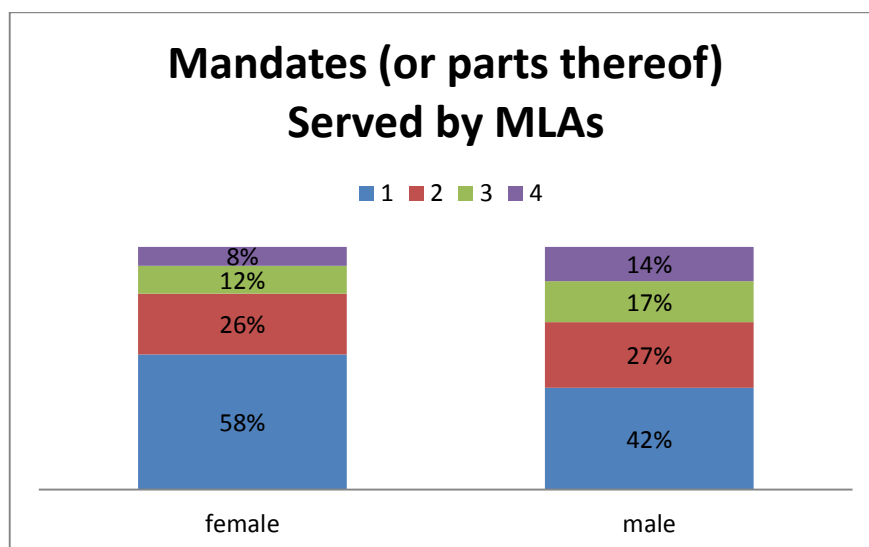
c = co-opted

M = Minister

JM = Junior Minister

FM = First Minister

3 Appendix 3: Comparisons of Male and Female MLAs



| Positions of Leadership | | | |
|-------------------------|---------------|------------------|----------------|
| | | % of Female MLAs | % of Male MLAs |
| Ministerial posts | | 26% | 17.8% |
| Party leaders | | 6% | 7.9% |
| Private Members' Bills | | 8% | 8.9% |
| Committee: | Chairs | 28% | 33.5% |
| | Deputy Chairs | 20% | 31.7% |