



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## Research and Information Service Briefing Note

Paper 47/14

1 May 2014

NIAR 298a-14

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# Women in Local Councils: Statistical Overview

## 1 Introduction

This Briefing Note supplements previous papers<sup>1</sup> written in the context of a review by the Assembly and Executive Review Committee review of the representation of women in the Northern Ireland Assembly. The Note gives figures for women's representation in local councils in England, Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland 1999-2012.

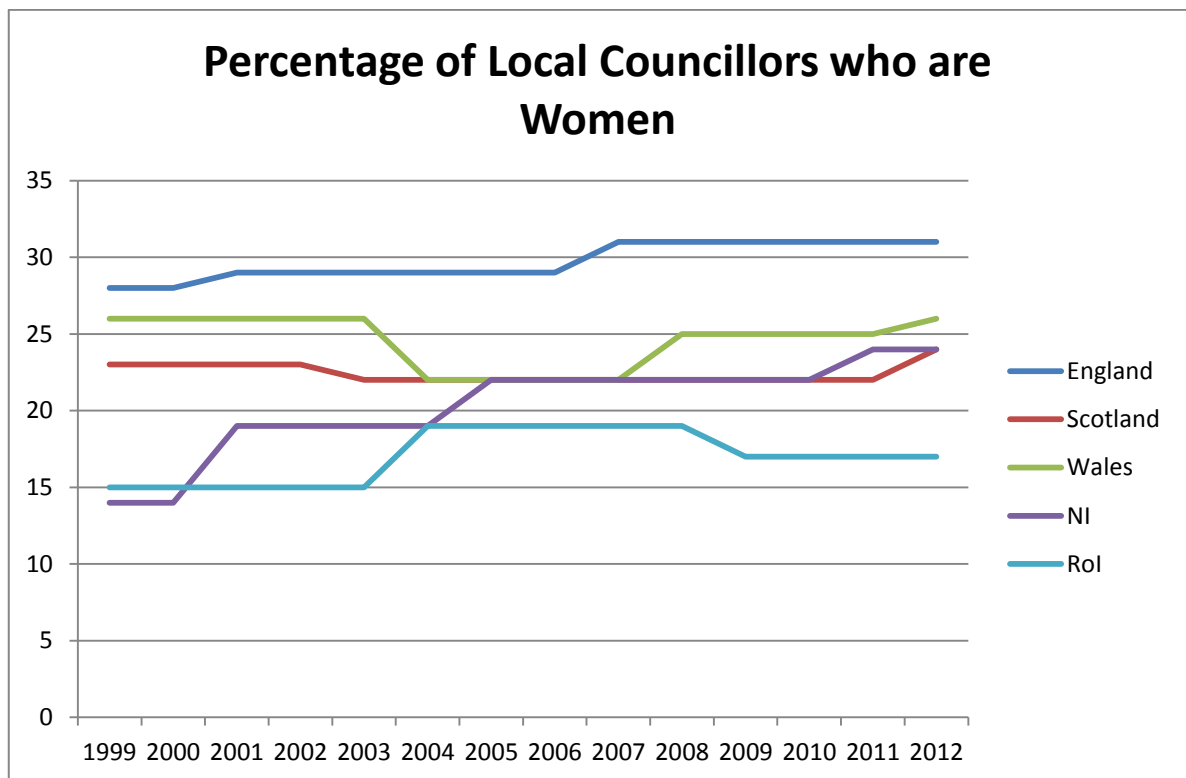
## 2 Comparative Female Representation at Local Councils

The following chart shows the representation of women in local government in England<sup>2</sup>, Wales<sup>3</sup>, Scotland<sup>4</sup> and the Republic of Ireland<sup>5</sup> in comparison with Northern Ireland<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Research and Information Service Research Paper 9/14 *Women in the Northern Ireland Assembly*, 3 September 2013: [http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly\\_exec\\_review/potter0914.pdf](http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/potter0914.pdf); Research and Information Service Briefing Note *Women in the Northern Ireland Assembly – Update*, 19 March 2014, tabled at the Committee 25 March 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Stuart Wilks-Heeg, Andrew Blick and Stephen Crone (2012), *How Democratic is the UK? The 2012 Audit*, London: Democratic Audit UK, p.374: <http://www.democraticaudit.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/auditing-the-uk-democracy-the->



The chart indicates that England has higher representation of women in local councils, levelling at around 31% over the past few years. Northern Ireland came from a low base of 14% in 1999 to a current high of 23.5%, currently below Scotland's 24.3% and the 26.3% for Wales. The Republic of Ireland maintains the lowest level of female representation, where a gender quota has been introduced for elections to Dáil Éireann, but not for local elections.

[framework.pdf](#); Electoral Reform Society (2007), *Local Authority Elections in England*, London: Electoral Reform Society, p.16: <http://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/downloadfile.php?PublicationFile=41>; Centre for Women and Democracy (2011), *Representative Democracy? Women in the 2011 Local Elections in England*, Leeds: CFWD, p.5: <http://www.cfd.org.uk/uploads/pdfs/RepresentativeDemocracyFinal.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Electoral Reform Society Wales (2012), *Spotlight on Wales: Women and Local Government*, Cardiff: ERSW, p.1: <http://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/images/dynamicimages/file/Wales/Women%20and%20local%20government%20in%20Wales.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Meryl Kenny and Fiona McKay (2012), 'Less Male, Pale and Stale? Women and the 2012 Scottish Local Elections' in *Scottish Affairs* 80, p.20; Electoral Reform Society (2007), *Local Authority Elections in Scotland*, Glasgow: Electoral Reform Society, p.58: <http://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/downloadfile.php?PublicationFile=47>; Esther Breitenbach and Fran Wasoff (2006), *A Gender Audit of Statistics: Comparing the Position of Women and Men in Scotland*, Edinburgh: Scottish Executive, p.36: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/172901/0048232.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Aodh Quinlivan and Fiona Buckley (2014), 'Lack of female local politicians in Ireland is a growing concern' in *The Guardian* 23 January 2014: <http://www.theguardian.com/local-government-network/women-leadership-blog/2014/jan/23/women-local-irish-politics-under-represented>.

<sup>6</sup> Yvonne Galligan (2014), 'Women in Politics', presentation to the Northern Ireland Assembly Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series, 20 March 2014: [http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaSe/knowledge\\_exchange/briefing\\_papers/series3/galligan200314.pdf](http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaSe/knowledge_exchange/briefing_papers/series3/galligan200314.pdf); Margaret Ward (2001), *Women and the Local Government Elections*, Belfast: Democratic Dialogue, available through the CAIN web service: <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/dd/papers/women-local.htm>; Department of Finance and Personnel (2011), *Women in Northern Ireland*, Belfast: DFP, p.22; Yvonne Galligan (2013), 'Gender and Politics in Northern Ireland: The Representation Gap Revisited' in *Irish Political Studies* 28 (3), p.417.