

# GM4WOMEN2028:

## PARTICIPATION GROUP BRIEF

### Participation, care and voice – an agenda for action

#### Participation in formal politics and the law\*

For our second indicator, the percentage of women appointed as judges has increased from last year by one percentage point to 32% in the North West, the same as the average for England and Wales. There were only 4% of BAME appointments compared to 8% for England and Wales and this data is not gender disaggregated.

This year there is no change on our key indicator for women’s representation in formal politics. The arrival of COVID led to the postponement of both the mayoral election and local council elections across Greater Manchester’s 10 boroughs.

As the figures (below) show, our key indicator – the number of women with voting rights around the Mayor’s cabinet table remains at 18% as still only two of Greater Manchester’s boroughs are led by women. We are fortunate that half of our Boroughs have women chief executives – a higher rate than the national figure.

We also have a higher percentage of women councillors across our region at 40% - higher than the average of 34%. However, representation from women of colour is only at 3% - lower than the national figure of 5% and much lower than would be representative of women of colour by population.

#### Updated Stats for Participation Group (as of Dec 2020)

- Nationally 20% of local authority leaders are women – in Greater Manchester 20% of our council leaders are women. So our headline figure of women on the GM executive remains at 18%
- Nationally 34% of local authority chief executives are women. In Greater Manchester 50% of chief executives are women.
- Nationally 34% of local authority councillors are women. In 2020 the Greater Manchester 40% of councillors are women (255 of 643).
- Nationally only 5% of local authority councillors are women of colour – In Greater Manchester this falls to only 3% (23 of 643)\*

#### Political Representation in Greater Manchester – by Gender and Ethnicity\*

	Number of women	% of all Councillors	Number of women of colour	% of all cllrs
GM Councils	255 (of 643)	40%	23 (3%)	3%

\*Source – local authority websites accessed 15 December 2020 following methodology used by Operation Black Vote and the Fawcett Society in previous audits. We echo the caveats expressed by OBV and Fawcett with data collection where self-identification was not possible.

#### Participation, Care and Voice – Agendas for action

The hiatus in formal representative politics due to elections being cancelled has allowed the Participation Group the chance to continue discussions started in our [‘Getting Women’s Voices in Policy Making’](#) workshop and publication last year. In particular, to focus on how women’s greater level of informal care work intersects with the ability, and possibility, for women to participate in politics either formally in representative politics, or informally through campaigning activity.



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## Women and care work

The recent Carers UK [survey](#) confirmed that 58% of unpaid carers are women compared to 42% of men and that caring responsibilities are more likely to last longer and be more intensive for women with consequent impacts on employment and financial security in older age.

This over-representation in care work is linked with huge time and emotional investment – resources also needed in bucket loads to exercise political voice – either through formal representation in political structures like being a councillor or through articulating and campaigning around issues.

This pressure on time arising from women's caring responsibilities is widely discussed in relation to women's ability to engage in labour markets and their productivity.

**The Participation Group want to highlight that unpaid care work also crucially impacts on women's ability to participate in politics and exercise voice.**

## COVID and Care work

The Carers UK 2020 survey also showed how the impact of COVID has only served to exacerbate the pressures arising from informal caring either for young children or adults who need help with their care during lockdown. Nationally the number of people providing unpaid care has risen to 13.6 million, with 4.5 million starting to provide care since the start of the pandemic. Of this 4.5 million, 62% are balancing their unpaid caring with paid employment. (In total, the research reveals that 26% of all workers are juggling paid work with unpaid caring). Naturally, this leaves very little time for any other commitments, including campaigning and activism. This is further impacted by the fact that people providing unpaid care since the start of the pandemic are more likely to be women, and women who have a dual role as a parent of a child aged under 18 years old.

## Women, care and voice – agendas for action

We see three specific issues that arise in relation to the ability for women to have voice and participate in politics because of the experience of care or caring:

- **Parental leave for councillors** – many women leave formal politics every year because the pressures of very young children, holding down a job and campaigning as a councillor are just too much. What can be done to support women, new parents and carers at key stages of family life?
- **Informal care and informal campaigning** – caring is often isolating, tiring and relentless, and leaves little in the tank for campaigning for policy change and resources, to support care work and the needs of those requiring care. What can be done to support carers to have a political voice?
- **The experience of care** – how are our most frail and vulnerable citizens supported to have voice in care settings? Especially during COVID when communication and access continue to be limited. Who speaks for those who are the most vulnerable – what advocacy is possible in these challenging circumstances?



Join the participation group to discuss the challenge of participation, care and voice going forward. Contact: [GM4Women2028@gmail.com](mailto:GM4Women2028@gmail.com)

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