



# Participation group Pankhurst-Fawcett Report

Author: Dr Rosie Shorrocks

---



# PARTICIPATION GROUP

## Scorecard - 2025

This year, Indicator 1 has not changed from last year, while Indicator 2 has increased by 2%.

27%

### Indicator 1: voting women in the GMCA

For the first indicator, there has been **no change** in women's representation in formal politics, which remains at 27% with three of Greater Manchester's boroughs led by women.

40%

### Indicator 2: judicial appointment

For our second indicator, the percentage of female judges in the North West in 2023/24 was 40%, **up two percentage points from last year** and slightly above the average for England and Wales of 39%.

## Politics

There has been no change in women’s representation in formal politics, measured as **the number of women with voting rights around the Mayor’s cabinet table**, which remains at 27% with three of Greater Manchester’s boroughs led by women.<sup>1</sup> If the (appointed) Deputy Mayor Kate Green is included, this figure rises to 33%. By comparison, the UK Cabinet is 44% women.

Who sits round the Mayor’s cabinet table is dependent firstly upon the result of elections in the ten boroughs in Greater Manchester which determine the party that takes control. Following that, internal elections within the councillor group of the party that has won control, select their leader. It is important to note that both these elections are beyond the Mayor’s control despite Andy Burnham’s commitment to a gender balanced cabinet. To address this anomaly, the Greater Manchester constitution makes arrangements **to ensure diversity in cabinet discussions via an arrangement** where each cabinet member is shadowed by someone of a different gender. However, these additional members do not have voting rights and this commitment is potentially contingent on the leadership’s commitment to gender parity.

More than half our Boroughs have women chief executives (60%), the same figure as 2025 and higher than the national figure of 49%<sup>1</sup> ([Fawcett Society](#)). The percentage of women councillors across our region is 40% (261 of 645 councillors), a small fall compared to the 42% reported last year(\*). This remains higher than the national average of 35%<sup>1</sup>, although it should be noted that the national data is increasingly out of date.

**Table 1: Political Representation in Greater Manchester – by Gender and Ethnicity**

	Number of women	% of all cllrs	Number of women of colour	% of all cllrs of colour
<b>GM Councils 2021</b>	255 (of 643)	40%	23	3%
<b>GM Councils 2022</b>	268 (of 645)	41%	32	5%
<b>GM Councils 2023</b>	272 (of 645)	42%	30	5%
<b>GM Councils 2024</b>	272 (of 645)	42%	37	6%
<b>GM Councils 2025</b>	270 (of 645)	42%	40	6%
<b>GM Councils 2026</b>	261 (of 645)	40%	49	8%

(\* ) Source – updated for 2025 from local authority websites accessed 16 Jan 2025 following methodology used by Operation Black Vote (OBV) and the Fawcett Society in previous audits. We echo caveats expressed by OBV and Fawcett with this method of data collection where self-identification was not possible as an imperfect method but necessary to monitor change. We urge councils to collect and share better data of representation using self-identification.

Representation of **councillors who are women of colour is now 8%**, up from 6% last year. This is lower than the proportion of people of colour in the Greater Manchester population – 28.7% according to the 2021 census. There is still significant variation between Greater Manchester councils in percentage of councillors who are women of colour.

**Table 1: Political representation across Greater Manchester councils – by gender and ethnicity**

Local authority	% women	% people of colour	% women of colour
<b>Manchester</b>	50%	31%	13%
<b>Salford</b>	32%	17%	7%
<b>Trafford</b>	43%	11%	5%
<b>Tameside</b>	39%	12%	7%
<b>Oldham</b>	32%	38%	7%
<b>Rochdale</b>	37%	23%	7%
<b>Stockport</b>	46%	3%	3%
<b>Bolton</b>	40%	25%	5%
<b>Wigan</b>	40%	2%	2%
<b>Bury</b>	41%	17%	7%



This indicates that **barriers to women’s political representation remain** in Greater Manchester. A key ask from the Participation group, as in previous years, is for **all GM authorities to adopt carer’s leave policies**. Caring responsibilities (of all kinds) impact on the ability of councillors to stay in office and build experience and expertise, and this is known to particularly affect the political careers of women.

In Greater Manchester, 8% of councillors are women of colour, but this percentage also varies significantly across the ten authorities. Additionally, data on women’s representation in local authorities, including women of colour, is poor, both at the national and GM level. It remains **crucial** that the **authorities in Greater Manchester monitor and publish diversity data to enable improved monitoring to take place**.

## The law

For our second indicator, **the percentage of female judges in the North West in 2023/24 was 40%, up two percentage points from last year** and slightly above the average for England and Wales of 39%. Ethnic minority appointments are up one percentage point from last year at 8%, compared to 11% across England and Wales as a whole. However, ethnicity data is not gender disaggregated and the data is not available specifically for Greater Manchester ([Ministry of Justice Official Statistics, Diversity of the Judiciary](#)).

Although the judicial appointments figures indicate that the North West broadly aligns with national trends in respect of women's representation, **the absence of data disaggregated to Greater Manchester – and the lack of gender-disaggregated ethnicity data within this** – limits the extent to which localised conclusions can be drawn. This reflects a wider structural issue in legal diversity data, where regional aggregation can obscure significant intra-regional variation.

At a national level, the most recent Diversity of the Judiciary statistics show that, as at **1 April 2025**, women constituted **39% of court judges and 54% of tribunal judges** across England and Wales. This distinction is significant, as it highlights how women's representation varies markedly between judicial roles and pathways, and cautions against treating "the judiciary" as a single homogeneous category when assessing progress. This breakdown is also not available within regions.

Looking further upstream in the legal profession, [Solicitors Regulation Authority \(SRA\)](#) workforce data published in **January 2025** demonstrates that women are now a clear majority within the solicitors' profession. Women account for **62% of solicitors working in law firms** in England and Wales. However, this numerical dominance does not translate into equivalent representation at senior levels: women comprise only **32% of full-equity partners and 47% of salaried partners**. This persistent seniority gap is particularly relevant when considering the pipeline into senior judicial and leadership roles, which often draw disproportionately from the upper tiers of private practice. At the Bar, women make up **41% of practising barristers** in England and Wales ([Ministry of Justice Official Statistics, Diversity of the Judiciary](#)).

Gender representation also intersects with economic outcomes. [An SRA analysis drawing on ONS data reports](#) that the overall **gender pay gap for legal professionals stood at 8% in 2025**. This underscores that disparities in the legal profession extend beyond appointment and participation rates, encompassing progression, reward and long-term career sustainability.

# Participation group calls to action 2025

## 1

**The Greater Manchester constitution makes arrangements to ensure diversity in cabinet discussions via shadowing arrangements to allow gender balance which effectively meaning our primary scorecard ask is technically fulfilled.**

This picture of a gradual positive increase in gender balance in the Greater Manchester authorities may not feed through to representation in the Mayor's cabinet to equal that of the current UK Government (and thereby meeting GM4Women2028's key representation demand) by 2028. However, the shadowing arrangements, built into the current GM constitution, are designed to ensure equal representation round the table so effectively fulfilling this ask. They also serve to build leadership capacity in the region.

## 2

**A secondary key ask is for all the GM authorities to adopt carer's leave polices.**

Despite improvements in some authorities, the overall number of women councillors in Greater Manchester fell slightly to 270 but the percentage of women councillors remains at 42%. This figure is higher than the national average probably reflecting the Labour Party's electoral dominance in Greater Manchester because that Party has some internal procedural rules to promote better gender balance in candidate selection. However, caring responsibilities (of all kinds) impact on the ability of councillors to stay in office and build experience and expertise.

## 3

**It remains crucial that the authorities in Greater Manchester monitor and publish diversity data to enable improved monitoring to take place.**

In Greater Manchester, 6% of councillors are women of colour however this percentage varies significantly across the ten authorities. Pushing for carer's leave and better diversity data should be the campaign focus for GM4Women2028 to make sure the small improvements reported here gain momentum and the data keeps improving.