

GM4WOMEN2028

PARTICIPATION BRIEFING NOTE 2023

Key Scorecard Indicators - Participation in formal politics and the law

This year there is no change in our key indicator for women’s representation in formal politics. **The number of women with voting rights around the Mayor’s cabinet table remains at 18%** - after the May 2023 elections still only two of Greater Manchester’s boroughs are now led by women.

More than **half our Boroughs have women chief executives (70%)**, a higher rate than the national figure of 49%*.

We have a **higher percentage of women councillors across our region at 42%** (272 of 645 councillors) against a national average of 35%.

Representation of councillors who are women of colour has risen slightly to 6% - very slightly higher than the national figure of 5% and is lower than would be representative of women of colour by population. There is still significant variation between Greater Manchester councils in percentage of councillors who are women of colour.

For our second indicator, the percentage of women appointed as judges in the Northwest in 2022/23 was 36%, up one percent from last year. There were only 7% - up two percent - of ethnic minority appointments compared to 9% for England and Wales and the ethnicity data is not gender disaggregated. **

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

	No of women	% of all Councillors	No of women of colour	% of all cllrs
GM Councils 2021	255 (of 643)	40%	23	3%
GM councils 2022	268 (of 645)	41%	32	5%
GM Councils 2023	272 (of 645)	42%	30	5%
GM Councils 2024	272 (of 645)	42%	37	6%

*Source for comparator national data <https://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/sex-power-2022>

**Source – Ministry of Justice Official Statistics, Diversity of the Judiciary <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/diversity-of-the-judiciary-2023-statistics>

***Source – local authority websites accessed 21 January 2024 following methodology used by Operation Black Vote and the Fawcett Society in previous audits. We echo the 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 would urge councils to collect and make available better data on representation using self-identification.



The dial is sticking – why and what can be done to improve political representation in GM?

At just over the halfway point in GM4women2028's ten-year campaign to improve the indicators on political representation, progress is slow. In some cases, the dial is not only sticking but in the case of our key indicator – the number of women on the Mayor's GM cabinet – the disappointing fall to 18% seen last year has not improved after the 2023 elections.

The 2023 council elections did offer the hope for a step change in women's representation particularly as six of the ten authorities had 'all out' elections where every seat was contested. However, despite some improvements in some authorities, the number of women councillors in Greater Manchester stayed stubbornly at 272 or 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, this slight representation advantage has not translated into the representation of senior political leadership roles.

The figure on women's cabinet representation in Greater Manchester is very disappointing. Who sits round the Mayor's cabinet table is dependent upon the result of elections in the ten boroughs in Greater Manchester which then determines the party which takes control. Then also the internal elections within the councillor group of the party which has won control to select the leader of the council. It is important to point out that both these elections (the public vote and the party vote to select the leader) are beyond the Mayor's control.

The Mayor confirmed at a meeting of the Women and Girl's Equality Panel in November 2022 his commitment to a gender balanced cabinet. The GM constitution requires the GM local authorities to put forward gender balanced nominations for a lead and a deputy executive member for the GMCA cabinet to mitigate the over-representation of male council leaders and achieve gender balance. The deputy cabinet members attend cabinet and have speaking rights. The GM constitution also ensures statutory committees and other boards have balanced gender representation. The Mayor again appointed a woman Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, Kate Green who replaced Bev Hughes in this role. These mitigating arrangements are helpful but there is clearly an issue of underrepresentation of the talent, ambition, and contribution to be made by the region's leaders and one which the political parties need to address.

And it is crucial that the authorities in Greater Manchester monitor and publish diversity data to enable monitoring to take place.

If you are interested in political participation – please get in touch so we can link you with others sharing a determination to move that dial!

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