

Women Candidates in the 2011 Mayoral Elections

21% of candidates for the five mayoral posts being contested on 5 May are women.

This represents a slight increase on 2010, but continues the underlying pattern of mayoral elections attracting fewer women candidates than council elections, in which around 30% of candidates are usually women.

2011 Mayoral Elections

There are mayoral elections taking place in 5 local authorities in May - Bedford, Mansfield and Middlesbrough (all of whom had elections in 2007), Torbay, last contested in 2005, and Leicester, which is electing a mayor for the first time.

Table 1: Gender of Candidates in 2011 Mayoral Elections in England

	Con	Lab	LibDem	Green	UKIP	Ind	Other
Bedford	m	f	m	m		m	
Leicester	m	m	m	m	f	m (3), f (2)	m
Mansfield	m	m	f		m	m	
Middlesbrough	m	m	m			m	
Torbay	m	m	m	m		m (3) f (1)	f

Mayoral Elections 2004 - 2011

The percentage of women candidates in mayoral elections varies greatly year on year.

Table 2: Percentage of Women Candidates in Mayoral Elections 2004-2011

Year	Authorities	% Women Candidates
2004	London	30%
2005	Doncaster, Hartlepool, North Tyneside, Stoke-on-Trent	16%
2005	Torbay (October)	21%
2006	Hackney, Lewisham, Newham, Watford	23%
2007	Bedford, Mansfield, Middlesbrough	29%
2008	London	20%
2009	Doncaster, Hartlepool, North Tyneside	30%
2009	Bedford By-election	17%
2010	Hackney, Lewisham, Newham, Watford	18%
2011	Bedford, Leicester, Mansfield, Middlesbrough, Torbay	21%

Because in all cases the main political parties (Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat) are less likely to field women candidates, the percentage of women standing overall can be significantly affected by the number of independent candidates in any one election. In addition, the very low number of mayoral elections in any one year means that events in one election can have a disproportionate effect on the overall picture. For instance, the unusually high level of women mayoral candidates in 2009 was caused entirely by 7 of the 13 candidates in Hartlepool having been women; only 1 of the 7 candidates in Doncaster that year was female, and 1 out of the 6 candidates in Middlesbrough.

In general, and unlike in local or general elections, women seem to be more likely to stand as Independent candidates for mayoral elections. In the 4 such elections in 2010 there was only one Independent candidate; in 2011 there are 12 across 5 authorities, and in the high point (for women candidates) of 2009 there were 10 across 3 authorities.

Background

12 English local authorities (plus London) are run by executive elected mayors. These are not councillors, but are directly elected by voters, and have wider decision-making powers within their local authority than council leaders. They are still required to work with local councillors (elections for whom continue as normal) and must agree budgets and annual plans for key services with the council. Hitherto, elected mayors have been instituted only after a 'yes' vote in a local referendum; the Localism Bill currently going through Parliament, however, contains provisions which would allow the Secretary of State to convert existing council leaders into shadow executive mayors, with the referendum being held at a later date.

There are currently 2 women elected mayors (in North Tyneside and Watford). Only one of the current council leaders likely to be converted into shadow mayors in January 2012 is female.

For Further Information

CFWD will be producing a full report on the Mayoral elections in May 2011; in the meantime, for further details please contact Nan Sloane at cfwd@cfwd.org.uk, or by phone on 0113 234 6500.