

# Election 2010: Where the Women Candidates Are



A Report from the  
Centre for Women & Democracy

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## Election 2010: Where the Women Candidates Are

This report looks at the numbers and percentages of women candidates overall, and the number and percentage of women standing for each party and as Independents. In the case of the larger parties possible outcomes in terms of women MPs are projected, and in the case of smaller parties regional differences are indicated.

Detailed tables showing the figures for each party are in Appendix A of this report. Appendix B lists the smaller parties, and Appendix C deals with Independents and Others.

Candidates in the Thirsk and Malton constituency have been excluded from the study, since the death of the UKIP candidate after the close of nominations means that this election has been postponed.

### Key Findings

There are more candidates standing at this election than ever before (4,134).

There are more women candidates than ever before (877), constituting a greater percentage of candidates than previously (21% as against 20% in 2005, 18% in 1997 and 8% in 1979).

The Green Party has the highest percentage of women candidates (33%) followed by Labour (30%), the Conservative Party (24%) and the Liberal Democrats (21%).

Labour and the Conservatives are standing record numbers and percentages of women candidates, but the Liberal Democrats are standing fewer than in 2005.

50% of candidates standing for Labour or the Liberal Democrats in constituencies where the sitting MP has retired are women (51 out of 103 for Labour and 4 out of 8 for the Liberal Democrats). 25% of candidates in Conservative seats where the MP has retired are women (10 out of 41).

At the 2005 General Election there were 484 candidates standing for smaller parties or as Independents or others. 17% were women.

At this election there are 711 candidates in this bracket, of whom 14% are women (although there is a numerical rise from 80 to 103). 11% of Independent candidates are women,<sup>1</sup> 20% of candidates standing for smaller parties<sup>2</sup>, and 8% of Others<sup>3</sup>.

Women are significantly more likely to engage with and become a candidate for one of the larger parties; this makes those parties' approach to improving the balance of representation after the election of particular interest.

The Centre for Women & Democracy (CFWD) is predicting that the percentage of women in the next parliament will not reach 25%. In the last parliament it was 19.5%.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this report, 'Independents' are defined as individuals who define themselves as such, or who identify as local independents. See Appendix C for details.

<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of the report, 'Smaller Parties' are those fielding more than 2 candidates but fewer than 100. See Appendix B for list.

<sup>3</sup> i.e., any 'party' for whom there is only one candidate; see Appendix C for list

## Where the Women Candidates Are

The 2010 election has a record number of candidates, and a record number of women candidates.

There are a total of 4,134 candidates, of whom 877 - 21% - are women. The table below shows how this compares with general elections since 1974, and also gives the number of women elected at each election.

Year	Total candidates	Women candidates	% Women candidates	Women elected
1974 (Oct)	2305	161	7%	27
1979	2702	216	8%	19
1983	2551	280	11%	23
1987	2349	329	14%	41
1992	3006	571	19%	60
1997	3735	672	18%	120
2001	3319	636	19%	118
2005	3554	720	20%	128
2010	4134	877	21%	tba

As can be seen, the number of candidates standing at general elections has risen steadily over the last thirty years, and has been matched by an equally steady rise in both the number and the percentage of women candidates. This is largely accounted for partly by a rise in the number of smaller parties and Independents, and partly by the level of public interest in the election - thus candidate numbers are relatively high in 1979, 1997 and, now, 2010.

### Conservative Party

24% (151) of Conservative candidates are women, as opposed to 19% (122) in 2005 and 14% (92) in 2001.

Many of the Conservative women candidates are standing in marginal seats, but only 25% of candidates in seats where Conservative MPs are retiring are women.

CFWD is predicting that, as a result of the combination of a Conservative poll lead and an increased number of women candidates in winnable seats, the number of Conservative women MPs will double (from 18 to 36) as a minimum, and is more likely to treble (to between 50 and 60)

### Labour Party

30% (190) of Labour candidates are women, as opposed to 26% (166) in 2005 and 23% (149) in 2001.

Many Labour women are standing in marginal seats, especially 1997 gains, but 50% of candidates in seats where Labour MPs are retiring are women.

CFWD is predicting that, as a result of likely Labour losses being balanced by new women being elected in safer seats, the number of women MPs is likely to fall less than might otherwise have been expected, and may even remain static. It is unlikely to fall much below 85, but will not exceed 100; at the dissolution of the last parliament it stood at 94.

### Liberal Democrat Party

21% (134) of Liberal Democrat candidates are women, as opposed to 23% (144) in 2005 and 22% (139) in 2001.

A number of Liberal Democrat women are standing in marginal seats, but 50% of candidates in seats where Liberal Democrat MPs are retiring are women.

CFWD is predicting that, as a result of an unusually high Liberal Democrat vote, the number of Liberal Democrat women MPs could as much as double (from 9 to 18), and may rise even further. Had the Liberal Democrat vote remained at its earlier levels the number of Liberal Democrat women MPs would have remained static or, had the vote fallen below 20%, actually fallen.

### Green Party

33% of Green Party candidates are women at this election - 110 out of 337. This represents a record number of both candidates and women. In 2005 the Greens stood 203 candidates of whom 22% (44) were women.

60% of Green candidates in Scotland are women, but only 12% of candidates in the East Midlands.

It is possible that the Green Party may win one or two seats; in both of the most likely cases (Brighton Pavilion and Norwich North) the candidates are women.

### UKIP

15% (83) of UKIP's 557 candidates are women. This represents an increase from 13% in 2005.

26% of UKIP candidates in the North East are women, as opposed to just 2% in Scotland.

### BNP

16% (54) of the BNP's candidates are women; they are standing a record 337 candidates, more than three times their total of 119 in 2005, when 13% of the party's candidates were women.

24% (6) of BNP candidates in the Eastern region are women, as opposed to 9% in the East Midlands.

### English Democrats

9% (10) of the 107 English Democrat candidates are women. The party has candidates in only five regions, and in none does the percentage of women reach 20%.

### Scottish National Party

29% (17) of the 59 SNP candidates are women. This represents an increase from the 22% (13) fielded in 2005.

### Plaid Cymru

18% (7) of Plaid Cymru's 40 candidates are women, compared to the 10% (4) fielded in 2005.

### Northern Ireland

33% (6) of the Alliance Party's 18 candidates are women

28% (5) of the Social Democratic and Labour Party's 18 candidates are women, an increase of 1 on 2005.

18% (3) of Sinn Féin's 17 candidates are women; this is one fewer than in 2005.

18% (3) of the Ulster Unionist Party's 17 candidates are female; in 2005 only 1 of the party's candidates were women.

None of the Democratic Unionist Party's 16 candidates is female, although it stood 3 women in 2005.

### Independents and Others

In the 2005 General Election 559 candidates were either Independent or from smaller parties. Of this number 105 were female, (19% of the total).

Although the number of Independent and smaller party candidates standing in the 2010 election has risen dramatically to 708, the number of women candidates in this category has fallen sharply, with only 99 women standing (14% of the total).

Women are more likely to stand as a candidate for a smaller party rather than as a clear Independent - 19% of smaller party candidates are women, compared with just 10% of candidates identifying themselves as Independent.

19% of Independent candidates in London are women, as opposed to none at all in the South West.

25% of candidates for very small parties in the North East are women, compared with none in Northern Ireland or the East Midlands.

### Conclusions

Although the overall number of women candidates has risen, and is likely to produce an overall increase in the number of women in the next parliament, this increase is likely to be very small, and to leave the number of women MPs in the UK still falling short of 25% (19.5% in the last parliament).

The House of Commons will, however, look different, with women members more evenly distributed between the parties.

Women who stand as candidates demonstrate a clear preference for working within party structures; this makes it even more important that political parties of all kinds engage in work to increase the numbers of women candidates and demonstrate an open mind when it comes to examining mechanisms for achieving improvements.

**Centre for Women & Democracy**  
Leeds  
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[www.cfd.org.uk](http://www.cfd.org.uk)

## Appendix A - Tables

### 1: Larger Parties

Region	Seats	Con	Female	%	Lab	Female	%	LD	Female	%
Eastern	41	41	6	15%	41	10	24%	41	8	20%
East Midlands	47	47	11	23%	47	14	30%	47	8	17%
London	73	73	17	23%	73	30	41%	73	20	27%
North East	32	32	7	33%	32	12	38%	32	4	12%
North West	73	73	19	26%	73	25	34%	73	9	12%
South East	102	102	20	20%	101	22	22%	101	25	25%
South West	55	55	11	20%	55	16	29%	55	15	27%
West Midlands	56	56	14	25%	56	16	29%	56	14	25%
Yorkshire & Humber	53	53	15	28%	53	19	36%	53	11	21%
Wales	40	40	13	33%	40	12	30%	40	9	23%
Scotland	59	59	18	31%	59	14	24%	59	11	19%
Northern Ireland	18	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Total</b>	<b>649</b>	<b>631</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>629</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>630</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>21%</b>

Region	Seats	Green	Female	%	UKIP	Female	%
Eastern	41	29	9	31%	40	5	13%
East Midlands	47	17	2	12%	46	11	24%
London	73	73	27	37%	60	12	20%
North East	32	9	4	44%	27	7	26%
North West	73	23	10	44%	68	7	10%
South East	102	64	19	30%	98	12	12%
South West	55	40	12	30%	55	8	15%
West Midlands	56	24	5	21%	54	9	17%
Yorkshire & Humber	53	21	6	29%	41	7	17%
Wales	40	13	3	23%	40	3	8%
Scotland	59	20	12	60%	28	2	7%
Northern Ireland	18	4	1	25%	0	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>649</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>557</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>15%</b>

Region	Seats	BNP	Female	%	Eng Dems	Female	%
Eastern	41	25	6	24%	6	1	17%
East Midlands	47	34	3	9%	11	0	-
London	73	34	6	18%	27	2	7%
North East	32	32	5	16%	2	0	-
North West	73	35	6	17%	7	1	14%
South East	102	44	5	11%	27	4	15%
South West	55	19	2	11%	9	0	-
West Midlands	56	35	6	17%	5	0	-
Yorkshire & Humber	53	47	9	19%	13	2	15%
Wales	40	19	4	21%	0	-	-
Scotland	59	13	2	15%	0	-	-
Northern Ireland	18	0	-	-	0	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>649</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9%</b>

## 2: Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

Nation	Seats	Plaid Cymru	Female	%	SNP	Female	%	SSP	Female	%
Wales	40	40	7	18%	0	-	-	-	-	-
Scotland	59	0	-	-	59	17	29%	3	1	33%
<b>Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>33%</b>

Northern Ireland (18 seats)	Total	Female	%
UUP	17	3	18%
DUP	16	0	-
Alliance	18	6	33%
SDLP	18	5	28%
Sinn Fein	17	3	18%
<b>Total</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>20%</b>

Type	Candidates	Female	% Female
Small Party <sup>4</sup>	294	59	20%
Independents <sup>5</sup>	355	39	11%
Others	62	5	8%

<sup>4</sup> Defined here as any party fielding fewer than 100 candidates but more than 1 – see Appendix B for list

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix C for definition of Independent used for this paper

## Appendix B - Smaller Parties

<u>Party</u>	<u>Candidates</u>	<u>Women Candidates</u>
Alliance for Green Socialism	6	2
Animal Protection Party	4	2
Best of a Bad Bunch	2	0
Christian Peoples Alliance	15	3
Citizens for Undead Rights and Equality	4	1
Common Sense Party	2	0
Communist Party	8	1
Impact Party	3	0
Justice and Anti-Corruption Party	2	0
Libertarian Party	2	0
Magna Carta	3	1
Mebyon Kernow	6	2
Monster Raving Loony Party	26	0
Pirate Party	9	0
Respect	11	3
Scottish Jacobites	2	0
Scottish Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition	4	0
Scrap Members Allowances	2	0
Social Democrats	2	0
Socialist Alternative	4	2
Socialist Labour Party	23	5
Socialist Party	8	1
Christian Movement of Great Britain	2	0
Christian Party	71	20
Democratic Nationalists	2	0
Equal Parenting Alliance	2	0
Liberal Party	4	0
National Front	9	0
Peace Party	3	1
Trade Union and Socialist Coalition	31	10
Traditional Unionist Voice	10	1
Workers Revolutionary Party	7	1
You	2	1
Your Right to Democracy	3	0
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>59 (20%)</b>



## Appendix C - Independents & Others

### Independents

Independent candidates are divided into two groups, those identifying themselves just as Independents, and those identifying themselves as local Independents of one kind or another, of whom there may be more than one. These break down as follows:

	<b>Candidates</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Candidates identifying as Independents	343	37	10%
Blaenau Gwent Independent	1	0	
Independent Community & Health Concern	1	0	
Independent Queen Mary	1	0	
Lincolnshire Independent	3	1	33%
Mansfield Independent	1	0	
Medway Independent	1	0	
Neath Port Talbot Independent	1	0	
Solihull & Meriden Residents	2	1	50%
Staffordshire Independents	1	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>355</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>11%</b>

### Others

A number of individual candidates identify themselves as a party rather than an Independent; these are:

#### **Individual Male Candidates (57)**

All the South

Animals Count

Anti-Capitalist

Anti-War

Basingstoke Common Man

Blue Environment

Buckingham Democrat

Bus Pass Elvis

Cambridge Socialist

Christian People's Party

Clause 28: Children's Protection Christian Democrats

**Individual Male Candidates (57) cont'd**

Common Good

Community Needs Before Private Greed

Cornish Democrat

Cut the Deficit

Democratic Labour

English Independents

Fancy Dress Party

Free Public Transport

Get Snouts Out of the Trough

Go Mad And Vote For Yourself

Independent Leave EU Alliance

Integrity UK

Islam Zaad Binda Platform

Joy of Talk

Justice Party

Land is Power

Local Liberals

Middle England

National Liberal

Nationwide Referendum

New Millenium Bean Party

New Party

No Candidate Deserves Your Vote

Nobody

Northam Save Public Services

People Before Profit Alliance

People's National Democratic Party

People's Party of Essex

Radical Reform

Reduce Beer Tax

Reform 2000

Restoration

Restore Trust in Parliament

Save the King George Hospital

Science

Scotland Against Crooked Lawyers

Socialist Equality

**Individual Male Candidates (57) cont'd**

True English Party

Trust Party

TUSK Hazel

United Voice

Unity for Peace and Socialism

Virtue Currency Cognitive Appraisal Party

Vote Against Expenses Abuse

Wessex Regionalists

Youth Party

**Individual Female Candidates (5)**

Alliance for Workers' Liberty

Direct Democracy

Humanitarian

Lawfulness, Trustworthiness & Transparency

Money Referendum



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