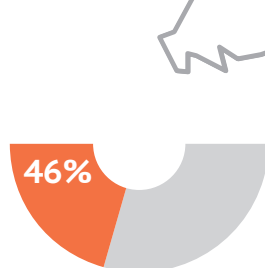
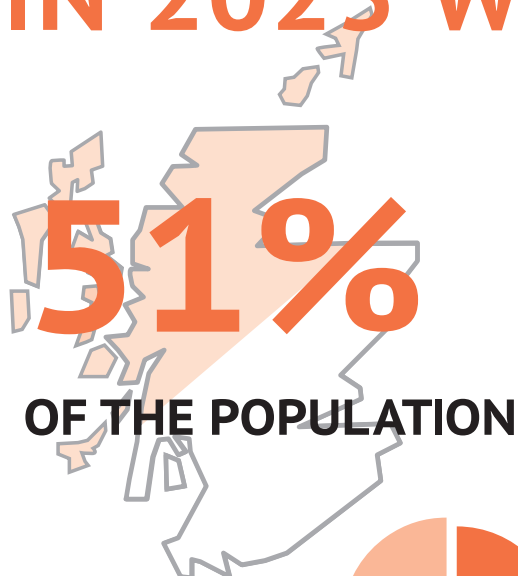




SEX & POWER IN SCOTLAND 2023

IN 2023 WOMEN ARE



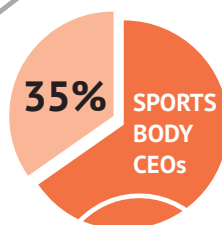
MSPs



LOCAL COUNCILLORS



COUNCIL LEADERS



35% PUBLIC BODY CHIEF EXECUTIVES



26% UNIVERSITY PRINCIPALS



22% SHERIFFS



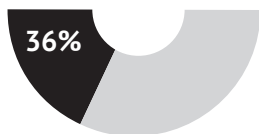
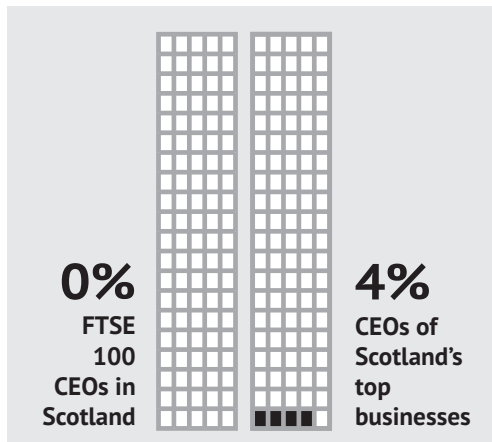
22% SENIOR POLICE OFFICERS



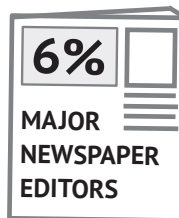
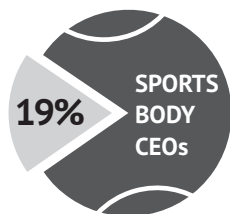
IN 2020 WOMEN WERE

52%

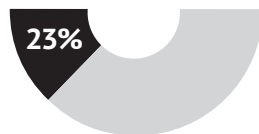
OF THE POPULATION



MSPs



LOCAL COUNCILLORS



COUNCIL LEADERS



MEPs

36% PUBLIC BODY CHIEF EXECUTIVES



32% UNIVERSITY PRINCIPALS



22% SHERIFFS



13% SENIOR POLICE OFFICERS

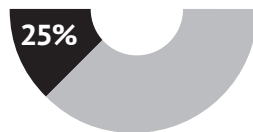
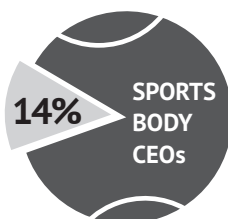


IN 2017 WOMEN WERE

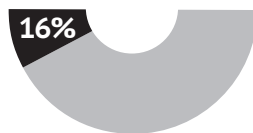
52%
OF THE POPULATION



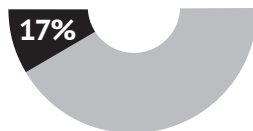
MSPs



LOCAL COUNCILLORS



COUNCIL LEADERS



MEPs

28% PUBLIC BODY CHIEF EXECUTIVES



26% UNIVERSITY PRINCIPALS



23% SHERIFFS



7% SENIOR POLICE OFFICERS



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WHAT IS SEX AND POWER IN SCOTLAND 2023?

Power. Influence. Authority.

Those who wield them shape our society. In most spaces where decisions are made, men are dominant, women are excluded, and sexism is perpetuated across public life.

This report depicts the extent of men's over-representation in positions of authority and influence in Scotland. Building on data published in 2017 and 2020, it paints a bleak picture of unequal access to power, decision-making and participation across society. This will undermine progress towards gender equality until major change is enacted. Women and men experience life very differently, partly due to structural inequalities, and have diverse perspectives that must be heard in the public and private sector bodies that impact enormously on our society and on all of our lives. Women are not able to participate fully in public life or to exercise equal citizenship with men when they do not have the same access to opportunities and power.

Intersectionality

This report simply counts the number of women and men employed in key decision-making positions in Scotland.¹ Limitations in available data prevent further detailed breakdown of numbers of Black and minority ethnic women, disabled women, LGBTI women, older and younger women or other groups. We know, however, that women facing intersecting discrimination are less likely to be promoted to positions of power, and are more likely to face discrimination and harassment in the workplace. This makes it highly likely that minoritised women

¹ The Gender Representation on Public Boards methodology ensures that non-binary people are not counted as either men or women for the purposes of ensuring gender-balance. However, no public or private body has yet reported any non-binary people in senior leadership.

are even more severely under-represented in the positions of power identified in this report.

It is vital to recognise that among women there are critical differences in access to power and influence. White women who are non-disabled, cis-heterosexual, middle class and were born in the UK do not encounter the intersecting systems of discrimination and exclusion that are experienced by minoritised groups. Where data allows, we identify trends and provide brief analysis of the intersections between sexism and racism, ableism and transphobia on women's access to decision-making and power.

Feminist leadership

Statistics can only ever show part of a story, and equal representation for women does not guarantee leadership that is focused on intersectional women's equality and rights. There are a range of examples in the public sphere that demonstrate women in leadership – as well as men – failing to invest in improving women's lives, particularly for those who are most excluded. Increasing diverse women's representation and working to eradicate barriers to participation in public life for minoritised groups of women are critical steps on the journey toward gender equality. Building feminist leadership amongst decision makers - both women and men - is also a vital part of the picture, to ensure that the work that is done in these institutional spaces breaks down the biases and structural inequalities that hold gender inequality in place.

Findings

The figures we present do not give much cause for celebration. Gains in some sectors, including politics and healthcare, are notable and welcome. However, these are mainly in areas accounted for by relatively small numbers of individuals. In other areas, particularly in education, justice and business, women's representation has stagnated or even regressed.

This report identifies 3383 positions of power in Scotland across our political institutions, public sector, media and cultural bodies, and corporate world. Women hold just 1222 of these positions – just over a third of the total. Men hold two-thirds of positions of power in Scotland and are over-represented in 33 of the 38 areas we examined. This unacceptable imbalance embeds inequality into the core of our society's structure. It demonstrates men's sustained dominance across all of these domains; controlling the decisions that are made, the culture we consume, the criminal convictions we see and the services we rely on.

HOW DID WE DO IT?

The list of organisations and positions identified in this report is not comprehensive, rather it is indicative of the current gendered balance of power and decision-making in Scotland. As ever, Scottish-level data is sometimes missing or difficult to find, and not all occupational categories included can be compared like for like, or in terms of organisational scale. The influence and reach of cultural production organisations, for instance, is likely to be substantial but cannot be easily measured. Sample sizes within this report are often small, but still indicate patterns within respective fields. Sources and the methodology used to define occupational categories are referenced in respective sections throughout the report.

The information presented here follows the research in Engender's reports 'Sex and Power 2017' and 'Sex and Power 2020'.² These built on a Great Britain-wide Sex and Power series published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission between 2003-2011,³ and work by the Counting Women Coalition. Since the last iteration of this report, the United Kingdom has left the European Union, meaning there are no longer MEPs in Scotland. There are therefore 38 areas of power represented in this report, where there were previously 39.

The information presented here was researched in December and January 2022/23 and represents a snapshot in time. Following the change in SNP leadership in March 2023, the figures on Scottish Government Cabinet, Scottish Government Ministers, Special Advisers, and Scottish Parliament Committee Convenors were updated. A small number of personnel across the 3383 positions accounted for may also have changed by the time of publication.

² Engender (2020) Sex and Power in Scotland 2020. Available at: <https://www.engender.org.uk/content/publications/Engenders-Sex-and-Power-2020.pdf>.

³ And its predecessor the Equal Opportunities Commission.

WHAT DID WE FIND?

Women are 51% of the population of Scotland and should be equally represented across the spectrum of civic life. Yet, gender parity in public spheres is far from becoming reality. Data is lacking, but we know that minoritised groups of women, including women of colour, disabled women and transgender women, are even more poorly represented.

From the 38 fields researched for this report, only five include at least 50% of women in leadership positions, leaving 33 dominated by men. Each of these five categories are comprised of small numbers of individuals,⁴ meaning that better gender representation over recent years does not necessarily reflect sustained and systemic progress.

Since 'Sex and Power 2020' was compiled, some progress has been documented across a number of areas, including:

Political institutions

- Members of the Scottish Parliament
- Scottish Government Cabinet and Ministers
- Local councillors
- Council leaders

Public sector

- Health service chief executives
- Health and social care joint integration board chairs

⁴ The Scottish Parliament Corporate Body (5 members), the Scottish Government Cabinet (10 members), Scottish Government Ministers (18), Scottish Parliament Committee Convenors (16), and Health and Social Care Joint Integration Board Chairs (30).

- Heads of transport bodies
- Trade Union general secretaries

Media and culture

- Editors of major newspapers
- Directors of national arts and culture bodies
- Chief executives of national sports bodies

This progress is encouraging. However, these headlines must be read with caution. Men remain over-represented in senior positions across all of these fields. In many cases, improved percentages mask marginal increases in the number of women in leadership, rather than a step-change in employment practices, organisational culture, or commitment to gender equality. In the business sector, for example, proportional improvement in representation reflects the achievements of one or two individuals in a space that is almost exclusively dominated by men. In large and geographically disparate sectors such as local government, progress can be uneven and vary substantially by location.

Other sectors have shown regression, minimal or no progress towards attaining gender balance since 2020.

- All national broadcasters are headed by men
- Only two women are CEOs of FTSE 100 and 250 companies in Scotland
- Women are only a quarter of heads of transport bodies and judges at the supreme courts
- Under 25% of the following positions are filled by women:
 - Temporary judges at the supreme courts
 - Sheriffs
 - Senior police officers

- Editors of major newspapers
- Political editors of major newspapers
- Directors of national arts and culture bodies
- CEOs of Scotland's 'top businesses'

Clearly, in many of Scotland's corridors of power, change to tackle gender inequality is not happening at the pace or systems level needed to achieve meaningful access and equal representation for current generations of women in Scotland.

SEX AND POWER: THE NUMBERS

POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS	% WOMEN 2017 SCOTLAND	% WOMEN 2020 SCOTLAND	% WOMEN 2023 SCOTLAND	
Members of the Scottish Parliament	34.9%	36.4%	45.7%	↗
Scottish Parliament committee conveners	42.1%	47.1%	50.0%	↗
Scottish Parliament corporate body	0.0%	50.0%	80.0%	↗
Scottish Government Cabinet	44.4%	50.0%	60.0%	↗
Scottish Government Ministers	41.7%	42.9%	50.0%	↗
Special Advisors (SPADS)	33.3%	28.6%	35.7%	↗
Local councillors	24.7%	29.1%	34.7%	↗
Council leaders	15.6%	22.9%	26.6%	↗
Local council committee conveners	18.7%	27.5%	31.0%	↗
Local council civic heads	25.0%	25.0%	34.4%	↗
Members of the UK Parliament	33.9%	30.5%	32.2%	↗
Members of the European Parliament	16.7%	50.0%	-	

BUSINESS	% WOMEN 2017 SCOTLAND	% WOMEN 2020 SCOTLAND	% WOMEN 2023 SCOTLAND	
CEOs of FTSE 100 and 250 companies	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	↗
	0.0%	0.0%	5.9%	↗
CEOs of Scotland's 'top businesses'	0.0%	4.0%	7.0%	↗

PUBLIC SECTOR	% WOMEN 2017 SCOTLAND	% WOMEN 2020 SCOTLAND	% WOMEN 2023 SCOTLAND	
Heads of public bodies	28.4%	35.8%	34.7%	↘
Local authority chief executives	40.6%	50.0%	46.9%	↘
Scottish Government strategic board	66.6%	55.0%	45.8%	↘
Senior civil service	45.0%	46.5%	47.4%	↗
Heads of secondary schools	41.1%	42.9%	44.1%	↗
Further education college principals	42.3%	40.7%	39.3%	↘
University principals	26.3%	31.6%	26.3%	↘
Health service chief executives	39.1%	30.4%	47.8%	↗
Health service board chairs	19.0%	39.1%	43.5%	↗
Health and social care joint integration boards	30.0%	40.0%	53.3%	↗
Heads of transport bodies	6.25%	12.5%	25.0%	↗
Judges at the supreme courts	29.4%	26.5%	25.0%	↘
Temporary judges at the supreme courts	8.7%	17.7%	23.1%	↗
Sheriffs principal	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%	=
Sheriffs	23.3%	22.2%	21.8%	↘
Senior police officers	6.7%	13.3%	22.2%	↗
Trade Union general secretaries	21.6%	27.0%	33.8%	↗
Trade Union Scottish secretaries	26.1%	17.4%	33.3%	↗

MEDIA AND CULTURE	% WOMEN 2017 SCOTLAND	% WOMEN 2020 SCOTLAND	% WOMEN 2023 SCOTLAND	
Editors of major newspapers	0%	5.9%	11.8%	↗
Political editors of major newspapers	8.3%	9.1%	23%	↗
Heads of national broadcasters	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	↘
Directors of major museums and art galleries	19.0%	16.7%	42.9%	↗
Directors of national arts and culture bodies	30.0%	22.2%	22.2%	=
Heads of production companies	0.0%	28.6%	28.6%	=
Chief Executives of national sports bodies	14.2%	19.1%	34.6%	↗

These statistics show that there are at least 471 women ‘missing’ from key positions of power in Scotland in 2023, the number needed to achieve gender parity in the areas of leadership we examined. Men’s over-representation in leadership sits at 64% overall.

POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

It is vital that democratic bodies represent the population, so that decision-making reflects the diverse needs and experiences of all of Scotland's communities. Women's representation across Scottish politics has continued to improve since 2020, correlating with concerted public campaigning for equal representation.⁵

This progress is encouraging, however men remain systemically over-represented in politics, especially within local councils and at Westminster.

⁵ The Equal Representation in Politics Toolkit: <https://www.equalrepresentation.scot/>; Women 50:50: <https://women5050.org/>; Elect Her: <https://www.elect-her.org.uk/>.

129 MSPs

59 Women



70 Men



Scottish Parliament

Women make up 45.7% of Scotland's MSPs, which would place Scotland 15th in the current global rankings of gender balance in national parliaments.⁶ This represents a substantial climb from 30th place in 2020, however still falls well short of Scotland's highest provisional placing of second in the world in 2003.⁷ This decline against the rankings, despite increasing representation for women at Holyrood, indicates that global progress towards gender equality in politics is occurring at a faster rate than in Scotland.

The 2021 Holyrood elections were the first in which gender-balancing mechanisms were adopted by all but one of Scotland's major political parties. This appears to have contributed to a record number of female MSPs being returned to the Scottish Parliament. However, without a legal requirement for parties to do so (statutory gender quotas), there is no guarantee that this progress will be maintained in future elections.

Meanwhile, the Parliament has shown a continued commitment to increasing women's representation within its structures, as reflected in numbers of women as Committee convenors and in the Corporate Body. The recent Gender-Sensitive Audit of the Scottish Parliament offers opportunities to enhance this further.⁸

The 2021 elections saw the first two women of colour elected to hold the office of MSP, as well as a record number of disabled MSPs elected. Four disabled women took office in 2021, including the first permanent wheelchair user elected to Holyrood, from a total of six MSPs who publicly identify as disabled.⁹ However, at least 13 disabled women MSPs would be needed to achieve representation for the approximately 500,000 disabled women in Scotland.¹⁰ It remains the case that no declared non-binary, transgender or intersex person has ever been elected to the Scottish Parliament. To fully understand the diversity of our representatives at all levels of government, an improved system for gathering data that enables secure and accurate recording of protected characteristics is needed.

	Women	Men	Total	% women
Members of the Scottish Parliament	59	70	129	45.7%
Committee conveners	8	8	16	50.0%
Corporate body	4	1	5	80.0%

Source: Scottish Government website

⁶ Scotland's relative ranking is mapped against global nation states, in which devolved governments are not included. Monthly Ranking of Women in National Parliament's (January 2023) Available at: <https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking?month=1&year=2023>.

⁷ Inter-Parliamentary Union (2003) Women in National Parliaments Archive. Available at: <http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/arc/classif310503.htm>.

⁸ Scottish Parliament (2023) A Parliament for all: Report of the Parliament's gender sensitive audit. Available at: <https://www.parliament.scot/-/media/files/spcb/gender-sensitive-audit.pdf>.

⁹ Inclusion Scotland (2020) Access to politics. Available at: <https://inclusionScotland.org/disabled-people-become-a-leader/civic-participation#:~:text=To%20have%20a%20representative%20Scottish,to%20the%20new%20Scottish%20Parliament>.

¹⁰ Ibid. Inclusion Scotland's analysis shows that 26 MSPs would be needed to represent one million disabled people in Scotland. Therefore *at least* 13 disabled women would be needed in the Scottish Parliament, as there are more disabled women in Scotland than disabled men.

The Scottish Government

In April 2023, following the change in political leadership in Scotland, the First Minister appointed the first Scottish Cabinet that is over 50% women. This demonstrates ongoing commitment to gender equality at the top of government, building on successive gender-balanced cabinets since 2014.

This gender balance is not matched, however, across Special Advisors to the Scottish Government, with almost two-thirds of these positions held by men. SPADs hold a crucial role in advising on government strategy and have substantial influence in shaping decision-making. The sustained over-representation of men in these advisory roles reflects the need for a systematic approach to ensuring gender balance at all levels of government.

Meanwhile, the number of women leading Scottish political parties has dropped substantially over recent years. In 2017, four of the five political parties represented in the Scottish Parliament were led or co-led by women. Now the co-leader of the Scottish Greens, secured by gender balancing mechanisms within the party, is the only woman represented at this level in Scotland.

	Women	Men	Total	% women
Scottish Government Cabinet	6	4	10	60.0%
Scottish Government Ministers	9	9	18	50.0%
Special Advisors (SPADS)	5	9	14	35.7%

Sources: Scottish Government website, Scottish Parliament website

Local authorities

The pace of change for women's representation at local councils remains extremely slow. In the 2022 elections, the number of female councillors increased by just 69 across the whole of Scotland, from a total of 1227 contested seats. This brings the overall percentage of women councillors to just over a third.

Local government delivers vital services that impact on women's daily lives, including education, public transport, leisure facilities, and social care. In addition to strategic decision-making, local councillors undertake case work, advocate in disputes, offer advice, and represent constituents' views in various spheres. It is unacceptable that this work is undertaken from a predominantly male perspective. Women are particularly poorly served by this imbalance in terms of violence against women services, healthcare, and a wide range of other sensitive issues. Additionally, standing in local government elections often acts as a springboard to standing for election at Holyrood and Westminster.

There has been some progress since our last report but this is extremely inconsistent across Scotland. Women's representation is as low as 7% (two women) in Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and 11% (three women) in South Ayrshire. In some areas, previous progress has even been reversed; five councils have fewer female councillors than at the 2017 election, and another five have shown no change at all in the same period. There are, however, pockets of success, with women totalling 48% of councillors in West Lothian¹¹ and double the number of women councillors elected in the Scottish Borders compared with 2017.

The picture is much the same within local government structures, with progress in some local authority areas, but inconsistency across regions and a slow overall rate of change. Nationally, only a quarter of council leaders are women, as opposed to a third of councillors. This reflects barriers to leadership that must be overcome to ensure that women across Scotland are represented equally, regardless of which area they reside in.

	Women	Men	Total	% women
Councillors	426	801	1227	34.7%
Council leaders	8.5	23.5	32	26.6%
Committee conveners	124.5	283.5	408	31.0%
Civic heads	11	21	32	34.4%

Sources: local authority websites, COSLA website, LGiU

Note: Where a position is held jointly, each office holder has been included in the data as 0.5

¹¹ Following the 2022 election, women councillors totalled 51% in West Lothian, however this figure fell to 48% after a by-election in December 2022.

UK Parliaments

Political culture at all levels in the UK continues to uphold sexist norms and working practices that alienate and disadvantage women representatives.

Nowhere is this more well-documented than at Westminster, which retains a reputation as a 'boys club'. In recent years archaic working practices that are incompatible with the needs of pregnant women, carers and disabled people - such as the need to travel to vote in-person and inflexible working hours that include late evenings - have been challenged by women within these roles. However, meaningful change is yet to materialise. As in other political institutions, increasingly toxic abuse is disproportionately targeted at female MPs, often in digital spaces. This is now frequently cited as a barrier to standing for office. The risk is greatest for Black and minority ethnic women in these roles.

It is unsurprising, therefore, that men remain dominant in the House of Commons. As of 2023, only 32% of MPs returned to Westminster from Scottish constituencies are women. This represents just one more woman elected to this office than in 2020, and there remains over double the number of men than women in these positions of power.

	Women	Men	Total	% women
Scotland's MPs	19	40	59	32.2%

Source: UK Parliament website

PUBLIC SECTOR

The same logic and imperatives around women's political representation apply across the spectrum of public life. Women's perspectives and contributions are vital to the equitable design and delivery of our public services and infrastructure, whether arms-length government bodies, the civil service, education and lifelong learning, health and social care, transport, justice or law enforcement. The key role of collective workplace bargaining, which is particularly relevant in the current cost of living crisis, must also represent all women if improved working conditions for all are to be realised. International evidence suggests that lack of gendered power balance in the wider public domain has a major impact on equality of outcomes across government.¹²

¹² Pande et al (2012) World Development Report 2012 Background paper: Gender quotas and female leadership. Available at: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/1d4402bd-40ce-58d6-a79a-b8f71704f44e/content>.

University principals

5 Women **14 Men**



Public bodies

Public bodies carry out a range of operational, advisory, regulatory and specialist functions, with varying degrees of independence and funding from central government.¹³ These governance bodies set policy, deliver services, administer justice, and safeguard rights across a huge range of areas that impact on women's lives and on gender equality, including social care, education, training, law enforcement, justice, housing, the environment, the arts, taxation, pensions and enterprise.

The overall percentage of women leading public bodies has decreased by around 1% since 2020, with certain categories performing worse than others. There are no women leading Scotland's public corporations and over 70% of commissioners and heads of ombudsmen are men. None of the categories of public bodies have gender balance across their leadership, and seven new roles were created within this period and filled by men.

In 2019, the Scottish Parliament passed the Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Bill which sets the quota for women on public boards at 50%. This should begin to redress the over-representation of men in strategic positions on public bodies, but attention must also be paid to broader diversity of board members. Unless boards include minoritised groups of women, including disabled women, women of colour, older women and women from a range of backgrounds and experiences, they cannot claim to be representative.

	Women	Men	Total	% women
Heads of public bodies¹⁴	30.5	57.5	88	34.7%

Sources: Scottish Government website, websites of individual public bodies

Note: When joint leaders are in role, each is recorded as 0.5

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ This section of the report accounts for 88 public bodies: all of those listed in the Scottish Government public bodies directory, apart from health boards and transport organisations (included later in this chapter) the National Galleries, National Museums, National Library, National Records of Scotland, Creative Scotland, and Historic Environment Scotland (included in later chapter on media and culture).

The civil service

In 2023, all the leadership roles within our metric for the civil service fell short of gender parity. The gender balance of the Scottish Government strategic board has declined for the second time since our initial report in 2017. Local authority chief executive posts have seen a drop in women's representation since 2020, from 50% to 47%. Given that 71% of the local government workforce are women, this is simply not acceptable.¹⁵ Similarly, women are 47% of senior civil service in Scotland despite accounting for 54% of the workforce more broadly. Embedded approaches to eradicate vertical occupational segregation¹⁶ are urgently needed in the civil service.

	Women	Men	Total	% women
Local authority chief executives	15	17	32	46.9%
Scottish Government strategic board	11	13	24	45.8%
Scottish Government senior civil service ¹⁷	180	200	380	47.4%

Sources: local authority websites, Scottish Government website, UK Cabinet Office

¹⁵ Scottish Government public sector employment web tables, available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/public-sector-employment-statistics-web-tables/>.

¹⁶ Vertical occupational segregation refers to disproportionate numbers of men and women across different staffing levels/ pay grades of an organisation.

¹⁷ UK Cabinet Office (2022) Civil Service Statistics 2022. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/civil-service-statistics-2022>.

Education

A similar story of vertical occupational segregation emerges across educational institutions. In Scotland, women are 66% of secondary school teachers but only 44% of head teachers.¹⁸ This gender gap has marginally increased since 2020. The gap in leadership of Scotland's further education institutions - both colleges and universities - has also widened slightly. Just over a quarter of Scotland's universities are led by women.

Meanwhile, female students are 59% of the student population in Scotland,¹⁹ but face deeply gendered barriers to accessing education and training, and many disciplines and occupational fields are overwhelmingly divided along gender lines. Whilst accreditation initiatives such as the Athena Swan charter are positive,²⁰ the pace of change is not rapid enough to meet the needs of the current generation of learners and educators.

Such initiatives must also incorporate a central focus on intersectional barriers to career progression. For instance, none of Scotland's universities are led by women of colour, although at least 10% of students are from a Black, Asian or minority ethnic background.²¹ Leadership should represent the diversity of the student population, and in doing so increase the prospect of more inclusive institutions.²²

	Women	Men	Total	% women
Heads of secondary schools	146	185	331	44.1%
Further education college principals	11	17	28	39.3%
University principals	5	14	19	26.3%

Sources: Teacher Census 2021, University and College websites and direct contact

¹⁸ Scottish Government (2019) Teacher Census 2021 supplementary data. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/teacher-census-supplementary-statistics/>.

¹⁹ University of Strathclyde (2022) Student Equality Monitoring Report (p.3). Available at: https://www.strath.ac.uk/media/ps/sees/equality/Student_Equality_Monitoring_Report_2022.pdf.

²⁰ The Athena Swan Charter is a global gender equality accreditation framework. Information available at: <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/equality-charters/athena-swan-charter>.

²¹ University of Strathclyde (2022) Student Equality Monitoring Report (p.3). Available at: https://www.strath.ac.uk/media/ps/sees/equality/Student_Equality_Monitoring_Report_2022.pdf.

²² Universities UK (2021) Tackling racial harassment in higher education. Available at: <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/sites/default/files/field/downloads/2021-08/tackling-racial-harassment-in-higher-education.pdf>.

Health and social care

Health and social care services, and decisions over how they are run, have a major impact on women. Women have distinct health needs and experience gendered health inequalities.²³ The barriers that diverse groups of women face to accessing appropriate healthcare are increasingly documented, including for LGBTI women, Black and minority ethnic women, disabled women, refugee and asylum-seeking women, women with experience of gender-based violence, and unpaid carers. Women are also the majority of those in receipt of social care in Scotland, the majority of carers supporting disabled and older people, and the overwhelming majority of the social care workforce.²⁴ Women's perspectives in positions of power across the health and social care system increase the prospect of services that are better designed, more accessible, and more responsive to the needs of different groups of women.

There are fourteen NHS regional health boards and nine specialist health boards in Scotland.²⁵ Notably, women are currently 48% of health service chief executives, compared to only 30% in 2020. However, this figure stood at 39% in 2017, pointing to the impact of staff turnover on women's representation if structures to ensure gender-balanced leadership are not embedded.

Furthermore, whilst 52% of health boards are led by male chief executives, only 23% of the overall NHS Scotland workforce are men,²⁶ representing a stark gender gap across staff grades within the organisation. Efforts to tackle occupational segregation across the health and social care sector, by Scottish Government and relevant bodies, must look at men's under-representation in caring professions, as well as barriers to career progression and leadership for women.

	Women	Men	Total	% women
Health service chief executives	11	12	23	47.8%
Health service board chairs	10	13	23	43.5%
Health and social care integration joint board chairs ²⁷	16	14	30	53.3%

Sources: Scottish Government website, Health Service websites

²³ Engender (2022) Engender briefing on women's health inequalities. Available at: <https://www.engender.org.uk/content/publications/Engender-briefing-on-womens-health-inequalities-for-Health-Social-Care-and-Sport-Committee.pdf>.

²⁴ Engender (2021) Response to Scottish Government's consultation on a National Care Service for Scotland. Available at: <https://www.engender.org.uk/content/publications/ENGENDER-RESPONSE-TO-SCOTTISH-GOVERNMENTS-CONSULTATION-ON-A-NATIONAL-CARE-SERVICE-FOR-SCOTLAND.pdf>.

²⁵ Scottish Government: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Government/public-bodies/about/Bodies>.

²⁶ NHS Workforce statistics can be accessed at: <https://turasdata.nes.nhs.scot/data-and-reports/official-workforce-statistics/all-official-statistics-publications/06-december-2022-workforce/dashboards/nhsscotland-workforce/?pageid=8102>.

²⁷ There are 31 joint integration boards in Scotland but there is currently no chair for the Highland health and social care partnership.

Transport

Use of Scotland's transport systems is highly gendered. Women are the majority of public transport users, and the minority of drivers and cyclists. Women also tend to make more complex and frequent journeys due to unpaid caring roles and working patterns.²⁸ However, public transport is predominantly designed to serve commuters who work from 9-5pm on weekdays, with 'radial' routes running between suburbs and urban centres. These services benefit men more than women, who are more likely to need a range of 'orbital' transport routes that fit with activities related to caring and timetables that correspond with irregular or part-time working patterns. Lack of accessibility on public transport affects the mobility and isolation of women who care for young children and disabled people. Fears about safety also influence women's decisions around travel, with women from ethnic minority backgrounds routinely experiencing racist incidents on public transport and younger women feeling particularly vulnerable to harm.²⁹ Women cite public transport as a 'hotspot' for gendered abuse and sexual harassment, and raise concerns about poorly-staffed services and termini, as well as services that are not well connected, especially at night.³⁰

However, management of Scotland's transport sector remains dominated by white men. There are sixteen transport authorities, public companies and regional transport partnerships in Scotland. Four of these sixteen bodies are now led by women, compared with only two in 2020. Nonetheless, this represents a gender gap of 50%.

	Women	Men	Total	% women
Heads of transport bodies	4	12	16	25%

Sources: Scottish Government website, transport body websites

²⁸ OECD (2018) Understanding urban travel behaviour by gender for efficient and equitable transport policies.

²⁹ Transport Scotland (2023) Women and girls' views and experiences of personal safety when using public transport. Available at: <https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/52984/womens-and-girls-views-and-experiences-of-personal-safety-when-using-public-transport-final-report-march-2023.pdf>.

³⁰ Engender 'Gender Matters' consultation. In consultation with women across Scotland, we set out routes towards women's equality by 2030 in our Gender Matters Road Map. Available at: <https://gendermatters.engender.org.uk/>.

Justice and law enforcement

Greater gender diversity, intersectionality, and feminist leadership are needed across Scotland's judiciary and police force to improve women's access to justice, to tackle violence against women, and to address institutional discrimination. Across the UK, high-profile cases have brought internal policing cultures into the public eye in recent years. In May 2023, the Chief Constable of Police Scotland made a statement on institutional discrimination, publicly acknowledging institutional misogyny, sexism and racism within the force.³¹ Between 2018 and 2022, 279 officers at Police Scotland have been investigated for "allegations involving a sexual circumstance",³² and 334 police officers have been linked to allegations "involving a racial element" during the same period.³³

At least one in five women in Scotland will experience domestic abuse in her lifetime and an average of three rapes are reported every day.³⁴ Disabled women experience especially high rates of men's violence. Yet rape has the lowest conviction rate of any crime in Scotland, and rates are consistently low for domestic abuse, trafficking of women for sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation. Many survivors of gender-based violence consider criminal justice proceedings to be too violating and traumatic to seek justice. Our research shows the justice sector to be one of the least representative spheres of public life in Scotland. Only a quarter of our most senior judicial office holders, senators of the College of Justice, are women.³⁵ The substantial majority of criminal and civil law court cases in Scotland are presided over by men, who are two-thirds of sheriffs principal and 78% of sheriffs.

There has been limited progress within Police Scotland since 2020, with four women currently in senior roles, compared with only two in 2017. Although 68% of police officers in Scotland are men,³⁶ this still reflects vertical occupational segregation within Police Scotland; women are 32% of officer level staff, but only 22% of senior leadership. "Positive action" may account for the increased number of police officers identifying as LGB in Scotland, though these figures are not disaggregated by sex. However, the number of Black, Asian or minority ethnic officers has fallen since 2020.³⁷

	Women	Men	Total	% women
Judges at the supreme courts	9	27	36	25.0%
Temporary judges at the supreme courts	6	20	26	23.1%
Sheriffs principal	2	4	6	33.3%
Sheriffs	27	97	124	21.8%
Senior police officers	4	13	18	22.2%

Sources: Judiciary of Scotland website, Police Scotland website

³¹ Police Scotland (2023) "Chief Constable statement on institutional discrimination". Available at: <https://www.scotland.police.uk/what-s-happening/news/2023/may/chief-constable-statement-on-institutional-discrimination/>.

³² This data is from a Freedom of Information response regarding sexual misconduct. Police Scotland advise that complaint or misconduct cases are not recorded as such and therefore provide data on cases with "a sexual circumstance".

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Rape Crisis Scotland (2019) Facts about sexual violence. Available at: <https://www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk/help-facts/>.

³⁵ These judges sit in the supreme civil court (the Court of Session) and the supreme criminal court (the High Court of Judiciary).

³⁶ Police Scotland (2021) Police Scotland Mainstreaming and Progress Report. Available at: <https://www.scotland.police.uk/what-s-happening/news/2021/may/police-scotland-and-spa-publish-new-joint-equality-outcomes-for-2021-2023/>.

³⁷ Police Scotland (2021) Police Scotland Mainstreaming and Progress Report. Available at: <https://www.scotland.police.uk/what-s-happening/news/2021/may/police-scotland-and-spa-publish-new-joint-equality-outcomes-for-2021-2023/>.

Trade Unions

Although trade unions are not funded by government, or subject to public sector equality laws, they are a vital component of public life in Scotland. Unions undertake collective bargaining and provide support on a range of issues that are critical to women's equality. These include equal pay, discrimination on the grounds of sex, pregnancy or maternity, flexible working, precarious work, childcare provision, and equal recruitment practices. Women are particularly affected by public sector cuts, as the majority of the workforce, service users, and those providing unpaid work when services are withdrawn.³⁸ Women are also particularly impacted by attempts to restrict employment rights, including access to employment tribunals.

The real wage stagnation at the root of much of the industrial action seen in Scotland in 2022/23 also has an uneven impact on women. Minoritised groups, including women of colour and disabled women, have even less access to secure incomes and are more likely to experience poverty. Trade unions' core function is to represent workers and it is crucial that women are represented at leadership level and that barriers for women representing marginalised groups are identified and removed.

There are currently 39 unions representing Scottish workers affiliated to the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC), including four that operate only in Scotland. At present only 32% of these are led by women. This is an improvement on the 17% representation rate recorded in 2020 but does not come close to reflecting the 43% average female membership of unions affiliated to the STUC when data was last made available.³⁹

	Women	Men	Total	% women
TU General Secretaries	12.5	23.5	39	32.0%
Scottish Secretaries	10	20	30	33.3%

Sources: STUC website and individual union websites

Note: Where a role is held jointly, each holder is listed as 0.5

³⁸ Women's Budget Group (2023) The gendered impact of the cost of living crisis on public services. Available at: <https://wbg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Gendered-impact-of-cost-of-living-crisis-on-public-services-1.pdf>.

³⁹ STUC (2016) Women's voices, women and work, Scotland 2016: women in the trade union movement in Scotland. Available at: <https://stuc.org.uk/files/downloads/WomensCommittee/Women%20in%20the%20Trade%20Union%20Movement%20in%20Scotland.compressed.pdf>.

MEDIA & CULTURE

Men dominate across the media and creative industries in the UK, outnumbering women by two to one in acting roles on screen, and three to one in children's television. Even in films that supposedly centre a female character, on average male characters speak more. The portrayal of women in media, culture and the arts is extremely limited, especially for disabled women, women of colour, older women, lesbian, bisexual and transgender women. Meanwhile, women's sport is chronically undervalued and underfunded when compared with men's sport, and the support girls receive to participate is shaped by gendered norms from primary school onwards.

All of this is driven by largely white, middle-class, non-disabled men in positions of power making creative, editorial and operational decisions across media, the arts and sport.



17.6%

MAJOR 
NEWSPAPER
EDITORS ARE
WOMEN

Media

Marginal progress has been made in Scottish newspapers, with three women in post as editors of major papers at the time of writing, compared to just one in 2020. This still represents, however, only 18% of the total. There are only three female political editors of major newspapers in Scotland, and no women heading up our national broadcasters. Moreover, women are more likely to be in precarious work as freelance journalists, while men predominate in salaried and named posts. Online harassment of women journalists in Scotland continues to disadvantage their career progression.⁴⁰

The negative impact of the media on women and on gender equality is profound. Stereotyping of women and an overwhelming lack of gender balance across all media platforms is ubiquitous. In 2020, UK-wide analysis of print and broadcast news sources showed that 82% of media and creative industry professionals, 86% of government spokespeople and 92% of sportspeople were men.⁴¹ A 2022 study of 67 political articles found that 58% of those quoted directly were white men, 23% white women, and 3% women of colour.⁴² Women of colour are routinely under-represented in Scottish news.⁴³

Women are also poorly represented in media content. Women are more likely to be described in terms of their age and family status,⁴⁴ while the saturation of sexualised imagery, gendered stereotypes, and harmful and racist beauty standards objectify and commodify women's bodies. This shapes sexist perceptions of women's value, negatively impacting on women and girls' body image, self-worth and health. The misrepresentation of men's violence against women often condones the actions of men and blames women victims of violence, particularly in news media. Reporting on gender inequality is itself low.⁴⁵

At the height of the pandemic, women's voices as experts were worryingly marginalised in news coverage. A study of 146,867 Covid-19-related articles in 2020 revealed that only 15% of economists, and just 5% of STEM experts mentioned were women.⁴⁶

	Women	Men	Total	% women
Editors of major newspapers	3	14	17	17.6%
Political editors of major newspapers⁴⁷	3	11	13	23%
Heads of national broadcasters	0	3	3	0.0%

Sources: newspaper websites and direct contact,⁴⁸ broadcaster websites⁴⁹

⁴⁰ Engender (2020). Gendered online harassment of women journalists: a review of research, employment laws and gender equality policies for Scotland. Available at: <https://www.engender.org.uk/content/publications/Gendered-online-harassment-of-women-journalists.pdf>.

⁴¹ Global Media Monitoring Project (2020) Who makes the news? UK National Report. Available at: <https://whomakesthenews.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/GMMP2020-UK-Rol-report-GMMP.pdf>.

⁴² Engender (2022) Reading Into the News: A review of gendered representations of politicians in Scottish election coverage in May 2022. Available at: <https://www.engender.org.uk/files/2.-reading-into-the-news.pdf>.

⁴³ Boyle, House, and Yaqoob (2022) Time to Pass the Mic: Gender and race in Scotland's news. Available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/14648849221128212>.

⁴⁴ Ross (2017) Gender, politics, news: a game of three sides.

⁴⁵ Kassova (2020) The Missing Perspectives of Women in the News. Available at: <https://www.iwmf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/2020.11.19-The-Missing-Perspectives-of-Women-in-News-FINAL-REPORT.pdf>.

⁴⁶ The Global Institute for Women's Leadership, King's College London (2020) Women's representation and voice in media coverage of the coronavirus crisis. Available at: <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/giwl/assets/covid-media-analysis.pdf>.

⁴⁷ An earlier version of this report stated that no political editors in Scotland are women. This was due to methodological error and has now been updated.

⁴⁸ National newspapers and regional newspapers with circulation of over 50,000:

Editors: Herald and Sunday Herald, National, Scotsman and Scotsman on Sunday, Daily Record, Scottish Daily Mail, Scottish Daily Express, Times Scotland, Telegraph Scotland, Scottish Sun, Courier, Press & Journal, Sunday Mail, Sunday National, Sun on Sunday, Sunday Post, Sunday Times Scotland, Scottish Sunday Express, Daily Mail and Scottish Mail on Sunday.

Political editors: Herald, Scotsman and Scotland on Sunday, Daily Record, Scottish Daily Mail, Scottish Daily Express, Times Scotland, Telegraph Scotland, Scottish Sun, Courier, Sunday Mail, Sunday Post, Scottish Mail on Sunday, Press and Journal.

⁴⁹ BBC Scotland, STV, BBC Radio Scotland.

The arts

‘The arts’ is a broad sector, which incorporates film and television, the performing arts, publishing, curation, and other creative industries. Across the sector in Scotland, women report endemic sexism across institutional recruitment and funding processes, sexual harassment, gendered assumptions, digital abuse, and gatekeepers (bookers, editors, producers) limiting opportunities for women.⁵⁰ Both diverse women’s leadership and feminist leadership are needed to help ensure that cultural content is more attuned to the population that consumes it.

This report focuses on major art museums and galleries, national arts bodies and large production companies based in Scotland, which represent a large proportion of the national cultural output. The proportion of women leading museums and galleries has increased to 43%, representing an encouraging improvement from 16% in 2020. This reflects double the number of women in post, as well as changes made in governance structures. The number of women heading production companies is unchanged since 2020, as is the number of women directors of national arts and culture bodies. Men’s over-representation persists at over 75% of leadership positions in these sectors. There is a pressing need to reduce well-documented structural barriers that prevent diverse women from progression in these fields, including a lack of guaranteed hours, frequent travel, expectations of undertaking unpaid internships, long inflexible shifts, and inadequate parental rights for freelancers.

	Women	Men	Total	% women
Directors of major museums and art galleries	6	8	14	42.9%
Directors of national arts and culture bodies	2	7	9	22.2%
Heads of production companies	2	5	7	28.6%

Sources: museum and gallery websites and direct contact,⁵¹ Scottish Government website,⁵² Film Bang, production company websites and direct contact⁵³

⁵⁰ Engender (2021) GEMS Roundtables on Women in the Media, Creative and Cultural Sectors. Available at: <https://www.engender.org.uk/content/publications/5-GEMS-Roundtable-Event-Review.pdf>.

⁵¹ National Galleries of Scotland (including Scottish National Gallery, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Scottish National Portrait Gallery) National Museums Scotland, National Library for Scotland, Glasgow Life, The McManus, V&A Dundee, Dynamic Earth, Glasgow Science Centre, The Hunterian, Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums, Edinburgh Museums and Gallery, Glasgow Museums, Inverness Museum and Art Gallery, Perth Museum and Art Gallery.

⁵² Scottish Ballet, Scottish Opera, National Theatre of Scotland, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Creative Scotland, Museum Galleries Scotland, Historic Environment Scotland, National Records Scotland.

⁵³ We have included production companies with 10 or more core staff in Scotland, as per company websites or phone calls. These are: STV Creative, 20/20 productions, IWC media, Metro Ecosse, Mallinson television productions, Purple TV, and Production Attic.

Sport

Women's sport is categorically undervalued and marginalised in Scotland, resulting in a lack of visibility that impacts girls' activity in schools and beyond. Girls withdraw from sport at a faster rate than boys, and teenage girls and women are significantly less likely to participate in recreational sport.⁵⁴ In turn, this has a negative impact on women's health and wellbeing.

Many gendered barriers prevent progress. Male-dominated sporting cultures, sexual harassment and abuse in sports venues, lack of appropriate facilities, negative experiences of PE and related self-esteem and body issues all contribute to girls and women dropping out of sport.⁵⁵ Research from Scottish Women and Girls in Sport found that 22% of articles on women's sport included perceived sexualised content.⁵⁶ Systemic transphobia and racism in sport also have particular implications for transgender and minority ethnic women, and a lack of opportunities limits participation for disabled women and girls.

The number of women leading governing sports bodies in Scotland has increased to 34.6%, from 19% in 2020. This is the result of four new leadership roles, all of which were filled by women. It is encouraging that expanding or emerging sporting fields have women in positions of leadership. However, sport remains overwhelmingly dominated by men. The last available data found that men were 83% of qualified sports coaches across the UK,⁵⁷ and even at community level investment in girls' sport is hugely unequal.⁵⁸ The salaries of professional sportsmen are much higher than those for women, and associated media coverage leads to additional opportunities for earning through advertising or other appearances. This represents a cycle of inequality that disincentivises women's participation and employment in sports sectors.

	Women	Men	Total	% women
Chief Executives of Scottish Governing Bodies of Sport	9	17	26	34.6%

Sources: sportscotland website and national body websites⁵⁹

⁵⁴ 50% of 13-15 girls participate in sport as opposed to 69% of boys, and 45% of women as opposed to 57% of men. Scottish Government (2015) Active Scotland outcomes: Indicator equality analysis.

⁵⁵ Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2014) Interim report of the government's women and sport advisory board. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/governments-women-and-sport-advisory-board-report-published>.

⁵⁶ Scottish Women and Girls in Sport Advisory Board (2019) An evaluation of participation levels and media representation of girls and women in sport and physical activity in Scotland. Available at: <https://api.actify.org.uk/asset/ef7e637f-e365-40fc-87bf-4ff7c2f238f0>.

⁵⁷ Sport Scotland (2017) 'Positive coaching Scotland' equality impact assessment. Available at: <https://sportscotland.org.uk/about-us/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/equality-impact-assessments/>.

⁵⁸ Research Scotland (2016) Equality and sport research. Available at: <https://sportscotland.org.uk/about-us/our-publications/archive/equality-and-sport-research/>.

⁵⁹ Scottish Athletics, Badminton Scotland, Basketball Scotland, Scottish Disability Sport, Bowls Scotland, Canoe Scotland, Cricket Scotland, Scottish Curling, Scottish Cycling, Scottish Football Association, Scottish Golf, Scottish Gymnastics, Scottish Hockey, Judo Scotland, Netball Scotland, The Scottish Orienteering Association, Scottish Rugby, Royal Yachting Association, Scottish Snooker, Snow Sport Scotland, Scottish Squash, Scottish Swimming, Tennis Scotland, Triathlon Scotland, Yoga Scotland.

BUSINESS

Progress towards women's leadership within the private sector has been extremely slow. This contributes to a vicious cycle of inequality in the corporate sphere, as businesses continue to discriminate against women and provide very limited support in recognition of gendered realities. Systemic pregnancy and maternity discrimination,⁶⁰ male-dominated working cultures and sexist norms, a lack of flexible working opportunities and quality part-time work, and onerous working models for senior staff are all barriers to women's career progression. This is despite the clear-cut business case for women's leadership. It is widely recognised that greater diversity across management and company boards improves organisational performance and access to resources.⁶¹

⁶⁰ The EHRC reports around 54,000 women are forced to give up their jobs annually in the UK; EHRC (2016) Pregnancy and maternity-related discrimination in the workplace: recommendations for change.

⁶¹ Scottish Government (2016) Increasing representation of women on private sector boards in Scotland.



Business

Lack of gender-sensitive working practices across the corporate sector is reflected in the astonishing fact that only 3.5 leadership positions within Scotland's 50 'top' companies are held by women.⁶² This annual 'top 500' ranking, identified by Scottish Business Insider, is based on a number of performance indicators, and covers a range of companies that operate in Scotland. Over 90% of Scotland's largest businesses, as defined by trading prices on the London Stock Exchange (the FTSE index), also have male chief executives.

Whilst the picture looks bleak, the shift in working practices necessitated during the Covid-19 pandemic may offer some hope. The pandemic forced businesses to adopt flexible working models and many have retained hybrid working practices, with one report calculating that a 50% increase in flexible working rates could be worth £18 billion to the UK economy.⁶³ Flexible working practices help to reduce women's labour market inequality, making it easier for carers to balance paid and unpaid work, for disabled women to work around inaccessible commuting or office working, and for women experiencing gender-based violence or trauma to fit work around practical and health needs.

	Women	Men	Total	% women
CEOs of FTSE 100 and 250 companies⁶⁴	2	20	22	9.0%
CEOs of Scotland's 'top companies'	3.5	46.5	50	7.0%

Sources: London Stock Exchange website, Scottish Business Insider, company websites

⁶² Scottish Business Insider (2022) Scottish Business Insider Top 500 Index. Available at:

<https://www.insider.co.uk/special-reports/insiders-top500-scottish-companies-list-26298301>.

⁶³ Pragmatix Advisory (2021) Flexonomics: The economic and fiscal value of flexible working. Available at: <https://www.motherpukka.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/2021-11-12-CONFIDENTIAL-Flexonomics-a-report-by-Pragmatix-Advisory-for-Sir-Robert-McAlpine-and-Mother-Pukka-2.pdf>.

⁶⁴ A.G. Barr, Aberforth Smaller Companies Trust, abrdn plc, abrdn Private Equity Opportunities Trust, Alliance Trust, Baillie Gifford Japan Trust, Capricorn Energy, Edinburgh Investment Trust, Edinburgh Worldwide Investment Trust, FirstGroup, Harbour Energy, Monks Investment Trust, Murray Income Trust, Murray International Trust, Natwest Group, Personal Assets Trust, Scottish American Investment Company, Scottish mortgage investment trust plc, SSE PLC, Virgin Money UK, Weir Group PLC, Wood Group.

WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

This Sex and Power report is a snapshot of men's over-representation in positions of power and influence in Scotland in 2023. To the best of our knowledge, 64% of the positions researched were held by men and 36% were held by women. This reflects a marginal increase in women's representation of 5% since Sex and Power 2020 was published. However, this means that 472 women remain 'missing' from leadership roles across politics, the public sector, media, culture, and business in Scotland. The occupational categories and methodologies that we have identified to present this picture are not comprehensive, but provide a clear illustration of the gender inequality in power and decision-making across a range of fields that are enormously influential in Scottish society.

In certain areas, there has been some progress in this period. The use of gender-balancing mechanisms by all but one of Scotland's major political parties in the 2021 Holyrood elections contributed to elected representation that is more reflective of society. We have seen sustained commitment and improvement at Ministerial levels within Scottish Government, and the 2022 elections saw more women returned to our local councils than in 2017. Although sample sizes are small, there have also been notable increases in women's leadership in local government and Scotland's health bodies. However, progress towards gender balance across senior levels of justice and law enforcement, transport, trade unions, media and culture, and business is either non-existent or unacceptably slow.

The diversity, quality and depth of women's representation are also critical. We need to see redoubled efforts in all sectors to improve intersectional representation for women of colour, disabled women, LGBTI women, older and younger women, women from minority faith communities, women from deprived areas, refugee women and other minoritised groups. This must involve systematic work to address intersecting structural barriers to participation in public life.

Whilst this report highlights the numbers, feminist leadership that is focused on improving outcomes for all women and girls is another crucial component of gender balance in positions of power.

White non-disabled men continue to make the majority of decisions in the public realm in Scotland, whether in the debating chamber at Holyrood, local council committee rooms, schools and universities, health boards, courts of law, trade unions, museums, newspapers, sporting institutions, or big business. The narrow perspective this affords does not represent or reflect the needs and desires of the Scottish population, weakens decision making and system design, and perpetuates inequality for women and other marginalised groups.

The pace of change is simply not fast enough and often represents the progress of individual trailblazers or success stories within a particular field. Tackling women's under-representation in positions of power, especially for minoritised groups, fundamentally means tackling the barriers that exclude women from participation in all levels of politics and public life. Targeted resources, strategic action and systems change are needed across all sectors to achieve the intersectional gender parity that we need to see.



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