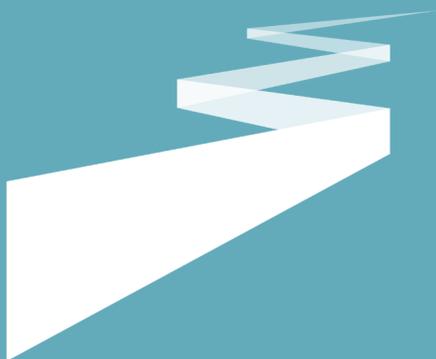


# Practising what we preach



DISCUSSION PAPER | DIVERSITY SERIES | WOMEN

Olivia Bailey | December 2015



**FACING  
THE  
FUTURE**

**FABIAN  
SOCIETY**

## ABOUT THE SERIES

This is the first of five discussion papers the Fabian Society will publish as part of a new series on representation. The other four papers will cover sexuality, race, disability and class. Labour Party members are encouraged to discuss the ideas in this document and make a submission with their ideas to [representation@fabians.org.uk](mailto:representation@fabians.org.uk). These submissions will be used in the development of a final report, which will be published in the summer of 2016. The objective of this project is to make practical recommendations to the Labour Party about how it can better reflect the country it seeks to represent by improving the diversity of its representatives, from officers in local parties through to parliamentarians.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Fabian Society would like to thank UNISON for supporting this series, as well as the numerous experts and activists who provided insights and comments on this briefing. In particular: Nan Sloane, Professor Sarah Childs, Professor Rosie Campbell, Fiona Mactaggart MP, Dawn Butler MP, Ann Limb, Barbara Follett, Emilie Oldknow, Anna Yearley, Katie Ghose, Emma Meehan, Cllr Claire Kober, Cllr Alice Perry, Ann Black, Ellie Reeves, Helen Pearce, Cath Speight, Diana Holland, Ayesha Hazarika, and Reema Patel. Thank you also to the thousands of Labour Party members who completed the online survey. The views expressed in this paper are the views of the author alone.

## METHODOLOGY

Research for this report was conducted through desk based research, interviews and a roundtable with experts, and a survey of Labour Party members. 3,107 self-identified Labour members began the survey, with 2,642 completing the last question. 40% of the respondents (1,159) identified themselves as a woman. The survey was open access; anyone with the link was able to complete it. We promoted the survey through a

range of different means in order to try to reach as wide a pool of Party members as possible, including Facebook adverts, media promotion, and emails to Fabian members. The questions in the survey were designed to be as neutral as possible, and parts were modelled on the British Representation Survey, which has been used at recent general elections. While respondents were asked to speak about their current views of their local Party, their reflections on being a candidate were not time limited, meaning that some of the experiences gathered may not have happened in the recent past. Full data tables for the gender breakdown of the survey results are available at [www.fabians.org.uk](http://www.fabians.org.uk).

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## INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

*“Women are very poorly represented at all levels of the Labour Party, particularly at the top. Why then, when the principle of equality is at the very centre of socialism, has the Labour Party failed so dismally to practice what it preaches?”*

**Quotas now: women in the Labour Party’, Fabian Tract 541, 1990**

These words have the same resonance now as they did 25 years ago. Women in the Labour Party are still under-represented, particularly at the top. Although women make up 44% of Labour’s membership and 43% of Labour’s MPs, they are just 30% of CLP Chairs, 16% of Labour council leaders, 11% of the most senior Labour Party staff and 0% of Labour’s Leadership team.<sup>1</sup> While All Women Shortlists and gender quotas have made an important difference, where positive action is not used women’s representation falls away. The Party still has a long way to go if it wants to practice what it preaches on women’s equality.

This discussion paper uses the insights of Labour Party members, experts and activists to provoke a debate about what the Party should do to improve the representation of women. It reveals a situation where women remain a minority, kept away from the levers of power, and suggests practical ways the Party can ensure more women are elected, selected and supported to become leaders.

As Labour’s National Executive Committee sets about another programme of Party reform, it is time to get serious about fair representation. Otherwise, the ‘new politics’ will look exactly like the old.

### THE PARTY SHOULD FIRST ACT TO REMOVE THE BARRIERS THAT MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR WOMEN TO BE SELECTED

**COST:** Our survey of 3107 Labour Party members revealed that 49% of women who have stood in a selection for parliament, Europe or a devolved assembly said they couldn’t afford what they needed for their campaign. This is in contrast to 27% of men. One in five (22%) women who stood for council selection said the same.

- We propose that the Party follows the recommendation of the Collins Review and urgently explores setting a cap on expenditure during selection campaigns. They should also introduce bursaries for under-represented groups, and

# 11%

The percentage of senior, appointed staff roles held by women in the Labour Party

review the length of the selection process.

**TRANSPARENCY:** Our survey also showed that women are 15 percentage points less likely than men to think the process of selection for a national or regional selection is easy to understand, and just 44% of women agree the process is transparent.

- The Party should consider overhauling the information it provides about selections and upcoming selections, making information easier to find and providing more detail about how the process works. They should also develop a training module to be rolled out by regional parties on how the selection process works.

**DISCRIMINATION:** Of the women surveyed who have stood for a national or regional selection, one in five (22%) faced questions that directly related to their gender, such as whether or not they might have children. This is in comparison with 8% of men. One in five (19% of women compared to 7% of men) also faced unwelcome scrutiny of their appearance, and one in three (31% of women compared to 11% of men) faced unwelcome scrutiny of their private life.

- We propose that the Party reviews the rulebook and selection guidelines to make it clear that gender discrimination is not permitted in either the formal or informal part of the selection process. They should also develop a training module on equality and diversity. This training should be compulsory for officers in local parties, who can then run the training themselves in their own parties.

**SUPPORT FOR ALL WOMEN SHORTLISTS:** Although All Women Shortlists have helped to increase the percentage of women Labour MPs to 43%, there is a bubbling discontent regarding their application.

- We propose the Party reviews how it communicates the benefits of All Women Shortlists to members, and considers providing information to members and local parties about the difference they have made. The arguments for positive action should also be included in a new training module on equality and diversity for local parties.

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# 31%

of women who stood for a national or regional selection faced unwelcome scrutiny of their private life

## THE PARTY SHOULD THEN FOCUS ON THE SUPPLY OF WOMEN PUTTING THEMSELVES FORWARD, REACHING OUT INTO THE COMMUNITY

**RETHINK LOCAL PARTIES:** There has been a dramatic influx of new members to the Party, and an increase in the proportion of women members from 39% at the end of 2014 to 44% now.<sup>2</sup> While women and men are participating in local Party activities in broadly equal measure, of those who attend, women are 8 percentage points less likely to enjoy meetings, 8 points less likely to be able to afford the costs of participating, and 10 points less likely to think people are treated fairly.

- We propose the Party reviews how local meetings are conducted, moving towards a more participative and informal approach. The Party should also ensure every local Party elects a women's officer, and is encouraged to have a women's forum.
- We also propose that the Party supports a new members' event for women in every region, with local Parties encouraged to hold events as well.

**ENCOURAGE WOMEN:** In our survey, women were 14 percentage points less likely than men to indicate that they might consider standing for a local or national selection in the future (35% women, 49% of men). 62% of the women who said they may want to stand for national or regional office in the future indicated that they might feel intimidated by the skills and experience of the other candidates. This is in contrast to 37% of men. Just one third of women who stood for national or regional selection said that they felt supported in the process.

- The Party should consider significantly expanding its training programme for future candidates, supporting local initiatives for future councillors as well. The Party should develop and pilot a mentoring scheme for women who would consider standing for national and regional selections. The Party should also consider a formal 'talent spotting' scheme that can operate both centrally and in the regions/nations.

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# 14

Percentage points.  
How much less likely women are than men to consider standing for selection

## THE PARTY MUST TACKLE ITS LEAKY LEADERSHIP PIPELINE WHICH MEANS THAT THE MORE SENIOR THE ROLE, THE FEWER WOMEN ARE IN POST

While Labour has made huge strides to increase the numbers of women represented at every level of the Party, without positive action those women are too rarely being chosen to become leaders. Women are 44% of Labour members, 30% of CLP Chairs, 16% of Council Leaders, 11% of the most senior Labour staff and 0% of Labour's Leader and Deputy Leader team.<sup>3</sup>

- The Party should develop a training programme for women who already hold elected office in the Party, building on the Labour Women's Network 'local women's leadership' training.

**SENIOR STAFF:** Just 1 of the 9 most senior appointed staff roles in the Labour Party (defined as Executive Directors, General Secretary, and Leaders' Chief of Staff) is held by a woman, and women only hold 2 of the 11 regional (or nations) director jobs.<sup>4</sup>

- Senior decision makers in the Party and in the Leaders' Office should think carefully about future appointments and the need for fairer representation of women, and should ensure all appointments are made through a transparent and open process.

**GENDER BALANCED LEADERSHIP TEAM:** No woman has ever been elected to lead the Party, and, of the 17 Deputy Leaders the Labour Party has ever had, only two have been women.

- The NEC should urgently review the rules around the selection of Leader and Deputy Leader to guarantee at least one woman in the top team.

**LEADERSHIP QUOTAS:** While it is positive that 43% of the Parliamentary Labour Party are women, and that the Shadow Cabinet is gender balanced, there is still a long way to go. 44% of Labour members are women, but 70% of CLP Chairs are men. 36% of Labour's councillors are women, but 84% of Labour's council leaders are men.<sup>5</sup> There have only ever been two women Chairs of the Parliamentary Labour Party, taking up between them just 6 of the 115 years the Labour Party has existed.

# 16%

The percentage of Labour Council Leaders who are women

- The Party should establish a working group to explore a new gender balanced leadership rule, where in internal elections every other chair would be a woman.

## **FINALLY, THE PARTY MUST MAKE GENDER EQUALITY AN ORGANISATIONAL PRIORITY.**

**RETHINK THE RULEBOOK:** The Labour Party rulebook has a number of requirements relating to women's representation, but, taken together, they are inconsistent, not well enforced and often not upheld transparently.

- The NEC should standardise rules on women's representation across the Party, abolishing the different levels of representation required and setting 50:50 representation as the benchmark.
- The Party should undertake a gender audit of all local parties, to explore evidence that shows that the current rules are not being applied properly. They should then empower regional offices to clamp down on problems where they are found.
- The NEC should publish clear and transparent guidelines for the implementation of All Women Shortlists, to counter the sense that they are used to keep certain candidates away from certain seats, or vice versa.

**SET TARGETS:** One of the best ways to ensure progress is to publish targets and be held to account on them.

- The Party should commence a five-year plan to achieve 50:50 by 2020, at every level of the Party from local executives through to the parliamentary Labour Party, and including Party staff. Within this, there should be monitoring and targets for LGBT, BAME, working class and disabled women.
- The Party should publish diversity data for candidates every six months in the run up to 2020.

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**70%**

The percentage of CLP  
Chairs who are men

- The Party should ensure that the proportion of women MPs does not fall as a result of the reduction in the number of parliamentary seats due to boundary changes. This should include considering increasing the number of All Women Shortlists used in retirement seats.

**A STRONGER VOICE FOR WOMEN:** Quotas, All Women Shortlists and other advances for women in the Party have only been secured as a result of women in positions of power pushing for them.

- The Party should consider how women's conference can have a formal feed in to the policy making process, and should create an elected women's representative on the NEC.

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## 2

The number of women who have been Chair of the Parliamentary Labour Party in 115 years

## **TELL US WHAT YOU THINK**

Please discuss and debate the ideas in this paper, and share your thoughts on the questions below by emailing [representation@fabians.org.uk](mailto:representation@fabians.org.uk). Your comments will feed in to the final report of this series, due to be published in the summer of 2016.

### **Removing barriers**

1. How can the Party best reduce affordability barriers in selection processes?
2. How should the selection process be made more transparent?
3. How can the Party better embed support for positive action in local parties?
4. What is the most effective way to prevent discrimination in the selection process?

### **Increasing the number of women coming forward**

1. How can the Party better support women's officers and women's fora in local parties?
2. How should the format and conduct of local Party meetings change?
3. What should a new programme of training for future candidates look like?
4. How can the Party improve its 'talent spotting', both nationally and locally?

### **Tackling the leaky leadership pipeline**

1. What is the best way to ensure representation for at least one woman in Labour's leadership team?
2. How should the Party ensure more women are elected in to leadership positions?

### **Prioritisation at the centre**

1. How can the Party best standardise the rules on equal representation across the Party?
2. What target should the Party set itself for women's representation, and how should it make sure it meets it?
3. How can the Party better embed women's voices in its structures?

**0%**

of Labour's  
Leadership  
team are  
women

**11%**

of the most  
senior Labour  
Party staff are  
women

**16%**

of Labour  
Council  
leaders  
are  
women

**30%**

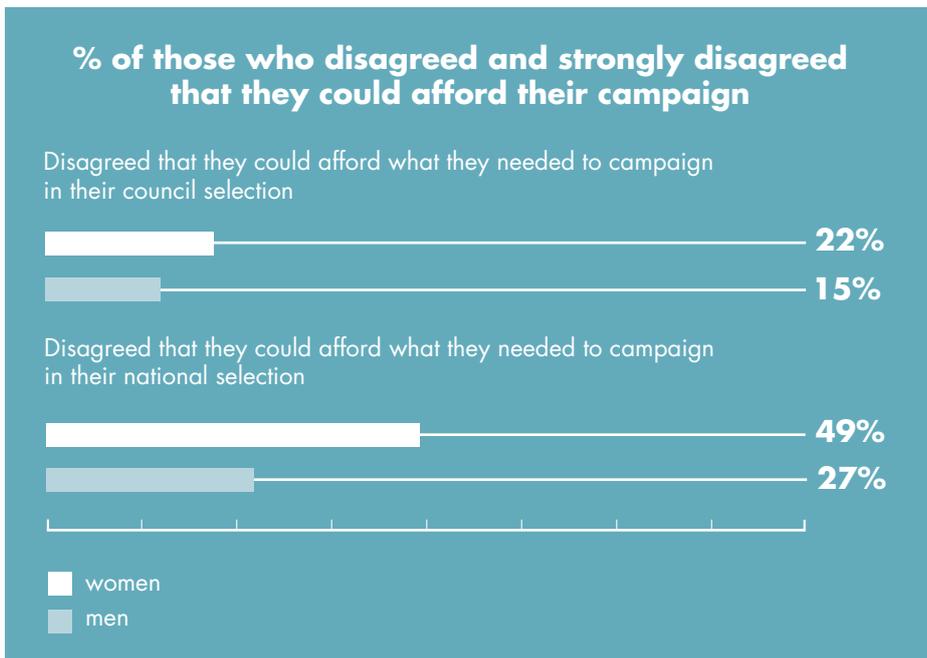
of CLP  
Chairs  
are  
women

## REMOVE BARRIERS IN THE SELECTION PROCESS

In order to increase the number of women standing for selection, the Party must first act to take down the barriers which unfairly affect women. It must reduce the cost of selections, demystify the process and ensure that no woman faces discrimination when she puts herself forward.

### CUT THE COST

Women are more likely to struggle to afford the cost of selections, both at a council and national level. 22% of women who have stood for a council selection disagreed that they could afford what they needed, and 49% of women who have stood in a selection for a regional or national selection said the same. In selections for full time posts, women were also 14 percentage points less likely than men to agree they were able take sufficient time off work to campaign.



Restricting the cost of selections for seats at Westminster would disproportionately help women, as well as all low and middle income candidates, and it has been advocated by a number of independent reviews into Party selection processes,<sup>6</sup> as well as the Collins Review in 2014.<sup>7</sup> Research just before the 2010 election estimated that candidates were spending a minimum of £4,000 on their selection,<sup>8</sup> and anecdotal evidence

suggests that the problem has worsened since then, with one former candidate arguing they have become “a glossy brochure arms race.”<sup>9</sup> While the Party does place some restrictions on candidates, including on the number of pieces of literature, the NEC has yet to respond to the Collins recommendation, which they must now do urgently. While an overall cap on spending could be difficult and time consuming to administer, it will help to level the playing field.

In addition to a cap on spending in selections, the Party should also consider bursaries for women and other under-represented candidates, an idea advocated recently by Labour General Secretary Iain McNicol.<sup>10</sup> This could follow the model of the Chris Smith list, administered by LGBT Labour, which provides financial support to LGBT candidates, and Bernie’s List, recently relaunched, which supports black candidates. Given national selections cost thousands of pounds, these bursaries will only be able to make a small dent in the costs required. They might have more effect for council selections where the costs required are lower, and where one in five said they can’t afford the costs.

There is an ongoing debate about the length of the selection process, which was set at 8 weeks in 2013, and its impact on work, families and childcare and cost. There are arguments in support of long and short selection periods, with the Collins Review and others recommending the NEC should ensure the process is as short as possible,<sup>11</sup> and others arguing that a longer process means that it is easier to fit the selection around work and family commitments, as well as provide an opportunity to dislodge more established candidates.<sup>12</sup> It has also been suggested that Labour should campaign for the law to change to enable people to have the right to request unpaid leave for political campaigning, a provision which already exists under the Employment Rights Act (1996) for people who want to undertake other forms of public service.<sup>13</sup> The NEC should conduct further research in to the impact of the length of the selection process, before commencing selections for this parliament.

The other impact on the finances of women candidates standing for parliamentary selections is how early the selection takes place. In the last parliament, a number of women were selected in marginal seats early, meaning they had to spend years with their career on hold, often getting into huge debt to keep up with the demands of the campaign. It would have been impossible for some women, perhaps without sufficient personal funds

or with childcare commitments, to take on that commitment.

As former candidate Jon Wheale has argued, candidates require “thousands of pounds, hundreds of hours on late-night trains, and significant strain on family life”.<sup>14</sup> There is limited evidence that having a candidate in a seat early increases their chance of election, with candidates that were selected early in Labour’s most marginal seats in the last parliament no more likely to win than those selected later. The Party should consider the timing of selections with the impact on candidates firmly in their minds.

## **MAKE THE PROCESS MORE TRANSPARENT**

In selections for national, regional and European elections, women are less likely to agree that the selection process is easy to understand (just 57% agree, compared to 73% of men), and less likely to think the process is transparent (just 44% agree, compared to 56% of men). There is also a sense that being successful depends on “getting the early tip off” and “profiting from getting in early”.<sup>15</sup> As one member of Party staff admitted, “by the time the timetable is out, it is too late”.<sup>16</sup> There is also evidence that the lack of transparency is discouraging women from coming forward, with 37% of women who are thinking about standing in the future feeling the process is not easy to understand.

The Party has made some effort to demystify the process, with training programmes such as the Future Candidates Scheme, and, by publishing online upcoming selections. There are also affiliated organisations who provide advice and training on the process, such as the Fabian Women’s Network and the Labour Women’s Network. But to improve the situation, there are a number of simple steps the Party could take. They should overhaul the information that is available online, making it easy to find and much more thorough. They should include information on how the selection process works, with information about the timetable and the usual rules. The Party should also publish, as a matter of course, the council and other selections that are approaching in each year so that people can plan ahead. The training provided on the process should also be widened, with a training module developed centrally on the process, which can be rolled out by regional offices.

## ZERO TOLERANCE FOR DISCRIMINATION

Perhaps the most startling finding from our survey is that 22% of the women who stood in regional and national selections were asked questions during the process that directly related to their gender, a problem that seems to be worse for BAME women, with half of the BAME respondents saying it has happened to them.<sup>17</sup> A number of responses to the survey addressed the issue:

*“Being asked about your marital status as a woman and about your partner by Labour Party members was a real shock”.*

*“As a woman standing for a winnable by-election seat, aged 30, married and childless, my age was raised on a number of occasions – to me and members of my team. Nothing was ever said that was explicitly negative – like whether this meant I would be taking time off to have children – but to my knowledge it wasn’t asked of the leading male candidate who was only a year older than me”.*

*“I discovered that my racial heritage was being negatively used against me (as I gained ground) from one member to another at a gathering during the selection process. Along lines of: ‘We can’t have someone of her background on the doorstep because of the UKIP threat’.”<sup>18</sup>*

Women were also more likely to say they’d faced unwelcome scrutiny of both their appearance and private life. Women who had been candidates for regional or national selection were 20 percentage points more likely than men to have faced unwelcome scrutiny of their private life. 31% of female respondents agreed it had happened to them. 19% of women also said they had faced unwelcome scrutiny of their appearance, compared to just 7% of men.

To tackle this problem, the Party must look at both the formal and informal parts of the process. The rulebook and selection guidelines should be reviewed to ensure it is clear that this behaviour is unacceptable, and that NEC representatives will stop it when it happens. This review should also consider how to enforce these guidelines in the informal part of the process, for example in ‘meet the candidates sessions’, where questions are not mediated. The Party should also develop a training module on equality and diversity for local parties, which it is compulsory for local Party executive officers to attend regionally, and which they can then deliver themselves in their local parties.

## EMBED SUPPORT FOR POSITIVE ACTION

Quotas and All Women Shortlists have a long history in the Party. A resolution calling for quotas in the Party was first adopted by Labour Women's Conference in 1989, which was then adopted at national conference in the same year.<sup>19</sup> It was the presence of women on key committees, as a result of this, which paved the way for the acceptance of All Women Shortlists in 1993.<sup>20</sup>

All Women Shortlists have made a significant difference to the representation of women in parliament, assisting with a jump in the number of women MPs in the Labour Party from 36 in 1992 to 101 in 1997, and enabling the 43% representation women now have in the Parliamentary Labour Party.<sup>21</sup> Quotas in local government, although not as ambitious and less well enforced, have had a similar effect, ensuring the number of women councillors remains above 30%.<sup>22</sup> And, the rule which states that women must be half of the officers in a CLP has ensured women have a voice in local parties, although it is worth noting that 70% of CLP Chairs are men.<sup>23</sup>

While quotas and AWS have improved the numbers of women, they have had a less clear impact on the culture in the Party, and there is a bubbling sense of discontent about the application of All Women Shortlists in particular. In the words of one former member of senior Labour Party staff, "they are a sticking plaster on a massive problem".<sup>24</sup>

There were a number of challenges to the use of All Women Shortlists during the last parliament, including one selection where the sitting MP reversed her decision to retire in protest. While the majority of local parties accept All Women Shortlists gladly, in some places women candidates face hostility and a tougher time from local members. One candidate for the election in May reported "abuse from members because it was an All Women Shortlist, including being chased off someone's property".<sup>25</sup> And, in one seat, the local MP intervened, writing to the NEC to complain the woman selected on the All Woman shortlist would lose the seat for Labour.<sup>26</sup>

One former regional director suggested that this bubbling resentment, combined with the fact that 50% representation in parliament is in sight, could bring a challenge to the policy.<sup>27</sup> The last time shortlists were challenged was in 1997. Shortlists were not used for the 2001 election and the number of Labour women MPs fell back, leading the Fawcett Society to conclude "without positive action, the Party members reverted to their customary unwillingness to select women for winnable seats".<sup>28</sup> It is also

important to note that women are very unlikely to win in open selections, with less than a handful being successful in the last parliament.

Unless people are bought into the principle of positive action, it is difficult to sell the practice. To support women standing for selection both now and in the future, the Party must renew its efforts to make the case for positive action, including All Women Shortlists. It should review how it communicates the benefits of positive action to members, and should consider providing information to members and local parties about the difference it has made. The arguments for positive action should also be included in a new training module on equality and diversity for local parties.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. How can the Party best reduce affordability barriers in selection processes?
2. How should the selection process be made more transparent?
3. How can the Party better embed support for positive action in local parties?
4. What is the most effective way to prevent discrimination in the selection process?

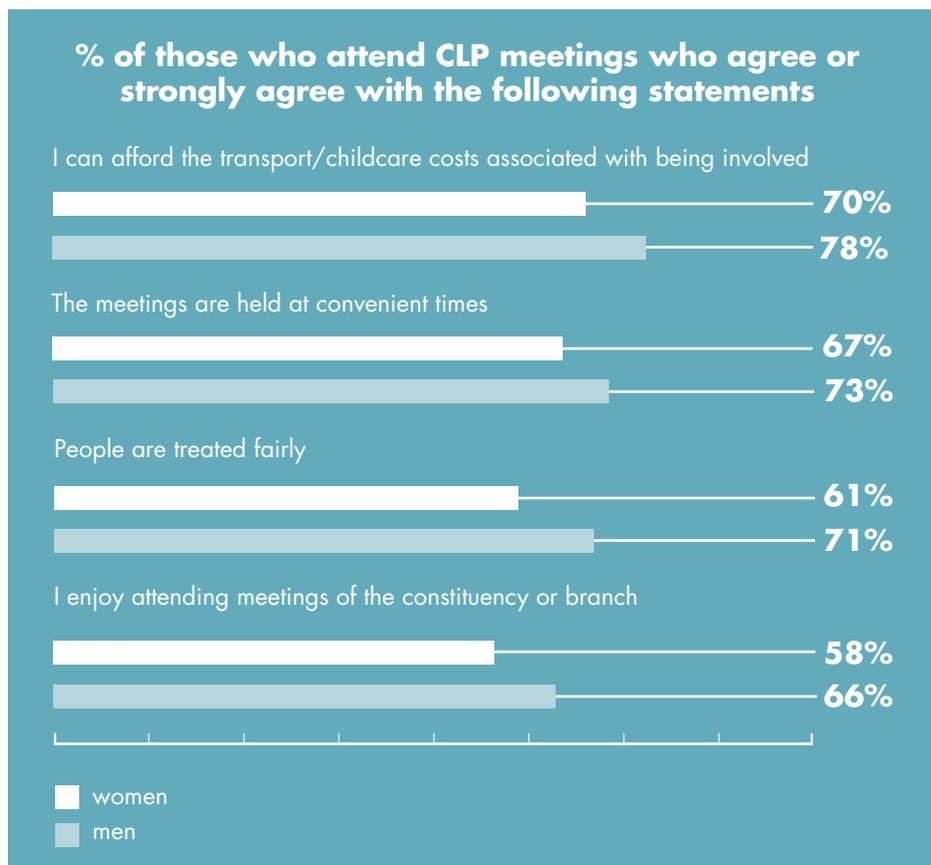
## ENCOURAGE WOMEN TO COME FORWARD

While women make up 44% of Labour's membership, they are less likely to put themselves forward to stand and, in the absence of positive action, less likely to be successful when they do. Often the use of quotas means that demand drives supply. This leads to unfortunate side effects such as women being seen as the 'token' woman on the list, and resentment when only a handful of women apply for an enforced All Women Shortlist. The relatively small pool of women putting themselves forward for national selection also leads to a more narrow 'type' of woman coming forward, often from middle class professions or political jobs. The more women that are encouraged to get involved in the Party, and to stand for selections, the greater the chance the Party has to improve women's representation, as well as diversity across the board.

While Labour has led the way on the 'demand side' by removing barriers and guaranteeing representation for women, other political parties have led the way on the 'supply side', by concentrating on finding women who want to stand. The A-list that the Conservative Party used in the run up to the 2010 election is a good example of this: it helped to more than double their number of women MPs.<sup>29</sup> The SNP, in addition to recently adopting All Women Shortlists and balanced lists for the upcoming elections,<sup>30</sup> were successful at finding local women who were active in the Independence campaign to be their candidates. One former Labour advisor said that both the Tories and the SNP are good at "ruthless talent spotting".<sup>31</sup>

## RETHINK LOCAL PARTIES

To increase the number of women putting themselves forward for election and selection, the Party must start by reforming how local parties operate. While our research demonstrates that women and men respondents are participating in local Party activities in broadly equal numbers, we also found that women who attend CLP meetings are less likely to enjoy them, less likely to be able to afford the transport or childcare costs, and less likely to think people are treated fairly.



While the vast majority of local parties are welcoming and inclusive places, a number of responses to the survey outlined the need for further cultural change:

*"I attended local meetings with my husband. I was the one who was really interested. The members of the local branch assumed that it was my husband who was most keen and proceeded accordingly. It was challenging but after many years I am finally established."*<sup>32</sup>

*"Where do I start? The culture within the local Labour Party is very male dominated and sexist. The power is in the hands of a few and it's virtually impossible to make changes."*<sup>33</sup>

There are two ways the Party should work to improve the culture for women in local parties. Firstly, they should rethink how local meetings are run. Arguments over resolutions between "lots of men called Brian",<sup>34</sup> and the increasing hostility from some sections of the movement, are combining to create intimidating and unwelcoming environment. Both proceduralism and hostility are likely to reduce the appetite of women, especially women

from the community with no previous experience of the Party, from deciding to get involved. The Party should therefore review how local meetings are conducted, encouraging a more participative and informal format.

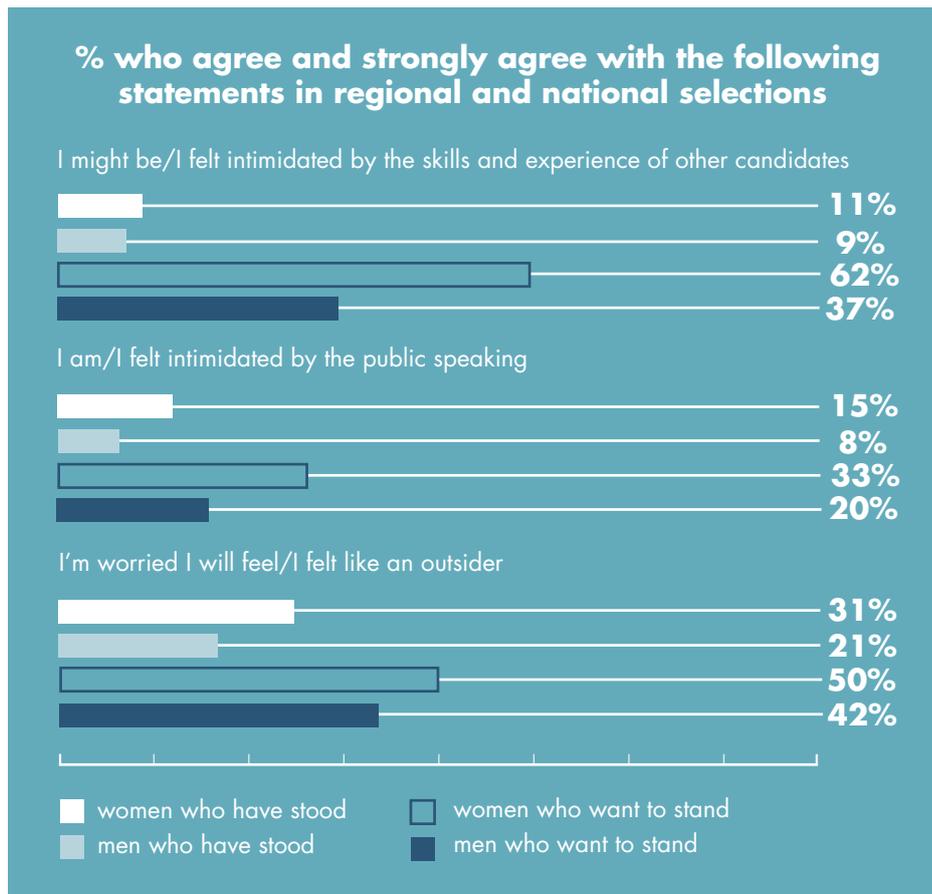
The Party should also think about how it can better support women's officers and women's fora, which can improve women's participation and attainment. One former MP explained how her local women's forum organises meetings on a Saturday morning, with childcare provided, and regularly organises social events.<sup>35</sup>

Given the influx of new members to the Party, and the increase in the proportion of women members from 39% at the end of 2014 to 44% now,<sup>36</sup> we propose that the Party supports a new members' event for women in every region, and encourages local Parties to hold their own events as well. We also propose that they ensure every local Party has a women's officer, providing better support and training for those women once they are elected, and is encouraged to have a women's forum.

## **ENCOURAGING WOMEN TO STAND FOR SELECTION**

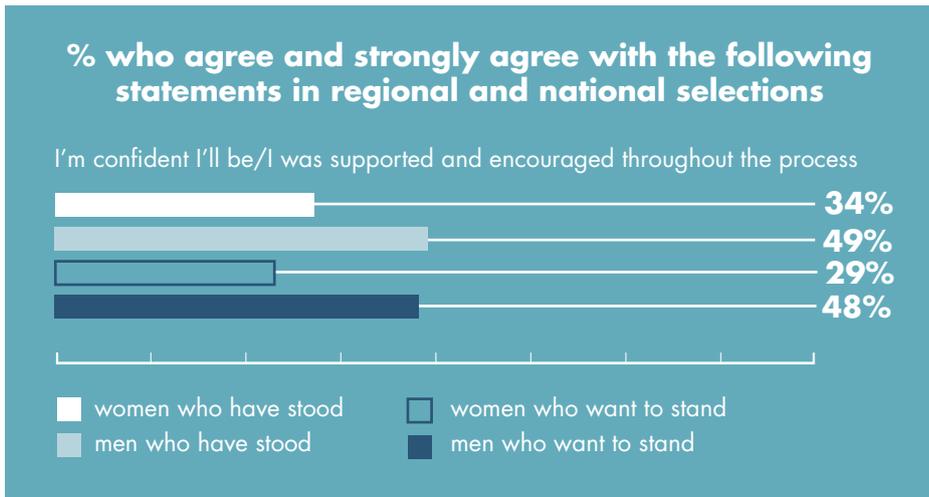
In addition to removing the barriers women face when standing for elected positions at any level of the Party, more must be done to encourage women to come forward. That means providing intensive training and support to encourage women through the process, and it means reaching much wider into the community to 'talent spot' potential councillors and MPs. In the words of one current MP, we have to "Recruit women", "train women", and give them "human support if they put their heads above the wall".<sup>37</sup>

Our survey revealed that women are 14 percentage points less likely than men to indicate that they might consider standing for a local or national selection in the future (35% women, 49% of men). It also revealed a substantial gender gap on statements relating to confidence (although only for future selections), public speaking and feeling like an outsider in regional and nation selections. This gap was significantly wider for women thinking about standing for selection in the future. This gap was also evident in council selections, but to a slighter lesser extent. For example, there is a 5 percentage point gap between men and women's likelihood to feel intimidated by public speaking.



In this parliamentary cycle, the Party should increase the time and resources it invests in the training and support of potential women candidates, building on the success of the Future Candidates programme. There is also a need for more localised training, or talent programmes, to help reach a wider pool of women for council selections, as often local parties struggle to find women to fill the designated quotas.<sup>38</sup>

Our survey findings demonstrate that women are unlikely to feel supported and encouraged during the selection process, with just a third of women who stood in selections for full time positions agreeing that they were supported. While there was no gendered difference at a council selection level, only 57% of candidates agreed that they felt supported.



One to one contact with senior women can make all the difference to women unsure about putting themselves forward. An evaluation of the Fabian Women's Network mentoring scheme demonstrates the difference that mentoring can make to women on a range of measures. As one participant said "meeting these women who were already successful made me realise I just needed to get on and do it. [It meant] a real shift in terms of how I was approaching everything."<sup>39</sup> The Party should consider piloting a mentoring or buddying scheme in parts of the country, both at a local level and for selections for full time positions.

Mentoring and training will make a vital difference to the confidence of women putting themselves forward for selection, but they must be accompanied by a well-resourced programme of talent-spotting. One Labour MP told of the lengths the Conservative Party are willing to reach to find talented and diverse candidates. Apparently, when MPs were sent a copy of the black power list, CCHQ picked up the phone to call those on the list.<sup>40</sup> While parties with less democratic structures find it much easier to promote candidates from the centre, there are lessons for the Labour Party to heed. Labour Party staff are not formally asked to identify talent in local communities, and if they did it is unclear where they would direct those people. Political leaders also have a responsibility here; MPs and councillors should prioritise bringing new talent in to the Party.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

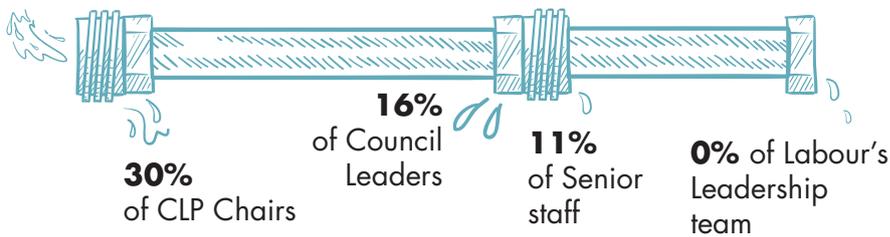
1. How can the Party better support women's officers and women's fora in local parties?
2. How should the format and conduct of local Party meetings change?
3. What should a new programme of training for future candidates look like?
4. How can the Party improve its 'talent spotting', both nationally and locally?

## TACKLE THE LEAKY LEADERSHIP

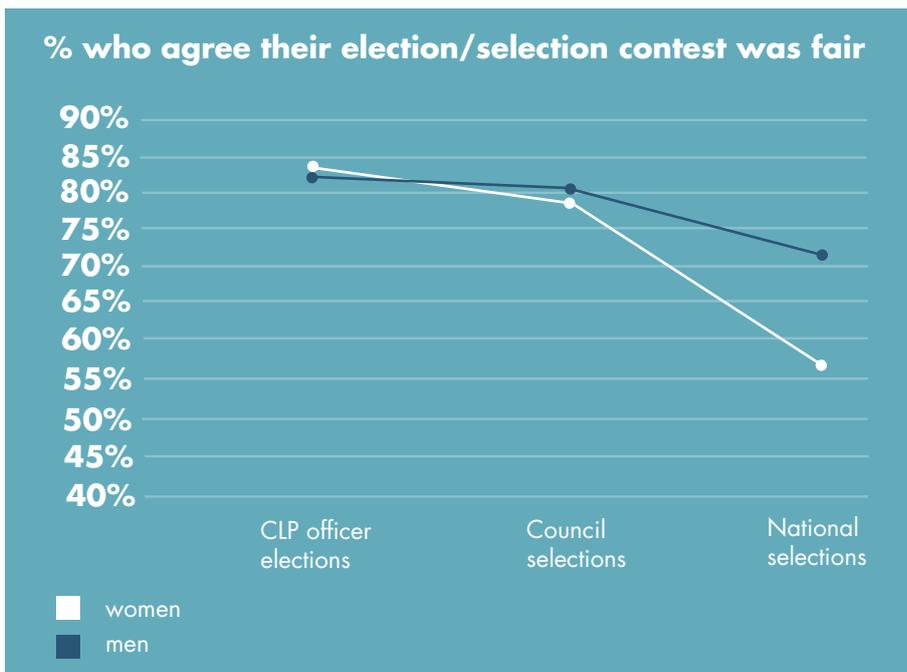
### PIPELINE

While Labour has made huge strides to increase the numbers of women represented at every level of the Party, it is increasingly clear that those women are not being chosen to become leaders. Women are 44% of Labour members, 30% of CLP Chairs, 16% of Council Leaders, 11% of senior Labour staff (defined as Executive Directors, General Secretary, and Leaders' Chief of Staff) and 0% of Labour's Leadership team.<sup>41</sup>

women are **44%**  
of Labour's members



This pattern is reflected in the difficulties women face when they are standing for selection. At the more local level of standing to be a CLP officer, women face fewer problems. At a council level, those problems increase slightly. In selections for full time, more senior positions, the gap widens dramatically.

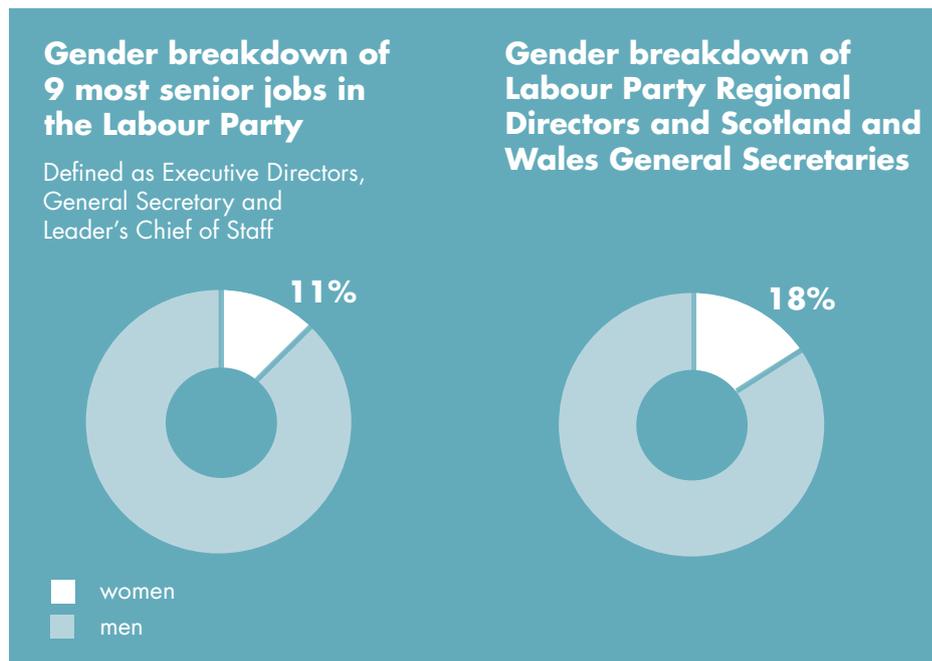


## LEADERSHIP SPECIFIC TRAINING FOR WOMEN WHO HOLD POSITIONS IN THE PARTY

The first thing the Party should do to improve this situation is run training specifically for women who already hold positions in the Party. This could follow a similar model to the Labour Women's Network 'local women's leadership' training, which intends to train women who are already councillors who might aspire to lead their group or take on senior cabinet positions.

## ACTION TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF SENIOR STAFF

The Party should also act to increase the number of women in senior staff positions. As it stands, just one of the most senior jobs nationally is held by a woman, and both the Leaders' Chief of Staff and the General Secretary of the Labour Party are men.<sup>42</sup> This is not much improved in the regions and nations, with just two regional directors women.<sup>43</sup>



One former senior member of Labour Party staff expressed the importance of having women around the top table. "I was almost always the only woman in the room" but "a woman in my job meant there was always a woman banging the drum".<sup>44</sup>

The Party has demonstrated it takes its responsibility to be an equal opportunities employer seriously and has taken action such as completing

gender pay audits.<sup>45</sup> But senior decision makers in the Party and in the Leader's Office must think very carefully about future appointments and the need to develop a better sense of balance, and should ensure all future appointments are made through a transparent and open process.

## **A GENDER BALANCED LEADERSHIP TEAM**

Following Labour's Leadership election, where two men were elected to the position of Leader and Deputy, there has been a renewed debate about the need for guaranteed representation for women in the top team. Although the Shadow Cabinet is now gender balanced, no woman has ever been elected to lead the Party, and, of the 17 Deputy Leaders the Labour Party has ever had, only two have been women.

In her speech to Women's Conference in September, Harriet Harman called for the Party to "review and renew the Party rules and organisation so that we have women at every level in the Party including in the leadership".<sup>46</sup> This followed the furor over the summer after Jeremy Corbyn appointed a male Shadow Chancellor, and men in all of the traditional 'great offices of state'. These events have reopened a debate that begun in the last parliament, when the Party was unable to reach agreement on a way to balance the team, despite an aspiration for gender balanced leadership being agreed by the Refounding Labour process.<sup>47</sup>

There are a number of ways to guarantee representation for women in the top team, including the creation of two deputies with one guaranteed space for a woman. The NEC should urgently review the rules around the selection of Leader and Deputy before any further leadership elections take place.

## **LEADERSHIP QUOTAS IN LOCAL PARTIES**

In addition to a guaranteed place for a woman in the Leadership team, the Party should also consider ensuring regular representation for women in leadership roles across the Party. While 44% of Labour members are women, 70% of CLP Chairs are men. While 36% of Labour's councillors are women, 84% Labour's council leaders are men.<sup>48</sup> There has only ever been two women Chairs of the Parliamentary Labour Party, taking up between them just 6 of the 115 years the Labour Party has existed.

The Labour Party rulebook states that the Chair of Young Labour must be a woman at least every other term. This rule also applies to the youth and student representative on the National Executive Committee. And, there is

a rule stating where a CLP may only send one delegate to conference, at least every other year that delegate must be a woman.<sup>49</sup> The Party should establish a working group to consider extending similar rules to internal leadership positions, from local parties through to council leaders, the PLP and the NEC.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What is the best way to ensure representation for at least one woman in Labour's leadership team?
2. How should the Party ensure more women are elected in to leadership positions?

## MAKE GENDER EQUALITY AN ORGANISATIONAL PRIORITY

Nothing suggested in this report can be achieved without the General Secretary, the Leader of the Labour Party and the Chair of the NEC deciding to make gender equality an organisational imperative. In the words of one senior member of staff, it is not just “a question of resources” but “a question of priorities”.<sup>50</sup> There are a number of actions the Party can take to make this possible.

### RETHINK THE RULE BOOK

The rulebook has a number of requirements relating to women’s representation. These include the rules that half of all CLP executive officers must be women, about a third of all councillors must be women, and that council cabinets must reflect the make-up of the group.<sup>51</sup> Taken together, these rules are inconsistent, not particularly well enforced and often not upheld transparently.

As the campaign group Lead for Women’s submission to the Refounding Labour process argued, it doesn’t make sense that there are different standards set for different parts of the Party on gender representation.<sup>52</sup> The NEC should consider standardising rules on women’s representation across the Party, with 50:50 representation as the benchmark.

It is also clear that existing rules are often not upheld. For example, council cabinets must reflect the make-up of the group but anecdotal evidences suggests this is not the case in a majority of councils. Respondents to the survey also reported their CLP failing to adhere to rules for the balance of executive officers.<sup>53</sup> The Party should undertake a gender audit of all local parties, to assess if current rules are being applied. They should then empower regional offices to clamp down on problems where they are found.

Finally, there is a widespread sense that positive action rules can be used for political ends, to keep certain candidates away from certain seats, or vice versa. This problem is particularly pronounced with the implementation of All Women Shortlists. The NEC should publish clear and transparent guidelines for their implementation.

## SET TARGETS AND MONITOR PROGRESS

One of the best ways to ensure progress is to set ambitious targets, and publish them in order to be held to account on progress. The Party should commence a five-year plan to achieve 50:50 by 2020, at every level of the Party from local executives through to the parliamentary Labour Party and senior Party staff. Within this, there should be targets for LGBT, BAME and disabled women, including considering how more diverse women are selected through All Women Shortlists. As part of this five-year process, it should comply with the Speakers' Conference recommendation to publish diversity data about candidates selected every six months, expanding it to local government as well.<sup>54</sup>

The Party should ensure that the proportion of women MPs does not fall as a result of the reduction in the number of parliamentary seats due to boundary changes. This should include considering increasing the number of All Women Shortlists used in retirement seats.

## EMBED A STRONGER VOICE FOR WOMEN IN THE PARTY STRUCTURES

*"Now we have a male Leader, male Deputy Leader, male London Mayoral Candidate and male General Secretary. These were all separate elections so it's not any of their fault – but we can't leave it as a clean sweep of men. We've got to sort it out so we've got women's leadership at the top of the Party – and that must include women who are chosen by and accountable to us women in the Party. Women who are strong enough to fight for women because they are elected."<sup>55</sup>*

Women's agency is crucial in ensuring that the Party prioritises women's representation.<sup>56</sup> Quotas, All Women Shortlists and other advances for women in the Party have only been secured as a result of women in positions of power pushing for them. The first motion for equal representation in the Party was secured by women's conference in 1989, and the policy was only adopted because women's conference had the ability to take the policy to national conference.

Calls at women's conference this year, including from Harriet Harman, argued that women's conference once again needs a constitutional footing. While it is not desirable to create an overly bureaucratic forum that could become an arena for factional splits, a formal role for women's conference

must now be seriously considered. The Party should create elected roles for women's representatives in the policy process and on the National Executive Committee. It should also consider reintroducing a national women's

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. How can the Party best standardise the rules on equal representation across the Party?
2. What target should the Party set itself for women's representation, and how should it make sure it meets it?
3. How can the Party better embed women's voices in its structures?

## ENDNOTES

1. Membership and CLP Chair figures were provided by the Labour Party; MP figures from *Sex & Power, Counting Women In Coalition* (2015); Council leader figure from Centre for Women and Democracy, research to be published in January 2016; staff figures calculated from published information. Senior staff is defined as Executive Directors, the General Secretary and the Leaders' Chief of Staff. Leadership team is defined as Leader and Deputy Leader
2. Figures provided by the Labour Party
3. See 1, and Labour councillor figures were provided by the Labour Party
4. Calculated from published information about current staff
5. See 1
6. *Party People*, Institute for Government (2011) and Final Report of the Speaker's Conference on Parliamentary Representation (2010)
7. *The Collins Review in to Labour Party Reform*, Ray Collins (2014)
8. *Labour's Selection Process: A representative deficit?*, Will Straw and Feni Ajumogobia (2009)
9. Roundtable discussion held in London in November 2015 with senior experts and activists
10. <http://labourlist.org/2015/11/these-are-the-challenges-labour-faces/>
11. *Collins Review* (2014) and arguments such as <http://www.progressonline.org.uk/2013/03/04/selective-memory/>
12. Roundtable
13. Speakers Conference (2010)
14. <http://www.progressonline.org.uk/2015/09/17/the-cost-of-being-a-candidate/>
15. Survey respondent
16. Roundtable
17. 10 survey respondents identified themselves as BAME and as having stood for selection for regional or national office. 5 of these women agreed or strongly agreed they'd been asked a question related to their identity
18. Respondent
19. 'Framing claims for women: from Old to New Labour', Lovecy, in Annesley, Gains, Rummery, *Women and New Labour* (2007)
20. *Party people* (2011)
21. *Women in Parliament and Government*, House of Commons Briefing Paper (2015)
22. Ibid.
23. Figures provided by the Party
24. Roundtable

25. Respondent to the survey
26. Roundtable
27. Ibid.
28. *Women and Candidate selection in British Political Parties*, Shepherd-Robinson and Lovenduski (2002) and *Party People* (2011)
29. General Election 2010, House of Commons Research Paper 20/36  
<http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/RP10-36/RP10-36.pdf>
30. <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/scotland-blog/2015/mar/29/snp-vote-all-women-shortlists-zipping-holyrood-election>
31. Roundtable
32. Survey respondent
33. Ibid.
34. Roundtable
35. Ibid.
36. Figures provided by the Party
37. Roundtable
38. Interview with leader of a Labour local authority in London
39. [https://fabianwomensnetwork.files.wordpress.com/2014/01/fwn\\_cracksintheglassceiling\\_web.pdf](https://fabianwomensnetwork.files.wordpress.com/2014/01/fwn_cracksintheglassceiling_web.pdf)
40. Roundtable
41. See 1
42. Senior staff defined as Chief of Staff, General Secretary and Executive Directors. Calculated from published information
43. Calculated from published information
44. Roundtable
45. Information provided by the Party
46. Harriet Harman's speech to women's conference (2015)
47. *Refounding Labour to Win*, Labour Party (2011)
48. See 3
49. Labour Party rulebook
50. Roundtable
51. Labour Party rulebook
52. <https://lead4women.files.wordpress.com/2011/06/refounding-labour-lead-for-women.pdf>
53. Roundtable and survey respondent
54. Speakers Conference (2010)

