

Equality and Human Rights Commission  
Research report 124

**Diversity of candidates  
and elected officials in  
Great Britain**

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## Executive summary

Diversity of representation is important for the democratic principles of equality, effectiveness, fairness, justice and legitimacy. However, the lack of good quality and consistently defined data for most protected characteristics considerably hampers the monitoring of the diversity of political representation in Britain.

The aim of this report is to assess the quality of the available data on the diversity of candidates and elected officials at UK, national and local election levels and to identify where there are data gaps and limitations.

The report draws together the best currently available data on the protected characteristics of candidates standing in the 2016 and 2017 elections in Great Britain. The report also sets out recommendations for improving the monitoring of diversity of political representation.

Few data are available for most of the protected characteristics defined in the Equality Act 2010, and what is available is often drawn from reduced sample sizes. This reveals a fragmented picture with many gaps, making it difficult to assess confidently the diversity of political representation in Britain. Much of the current evidence relies on observation or self-reporting in surveys, and low response rates to those questions highlights the challenge of collecting this sort of information. However, the data that are available indicate that elected representatives in Great Britain remain unrepresentative of the population in their socio-demographic characteristics.

Our assessment of diversity is drawn from information available on the diversity of candidates and elected representatives in the House of Commons, the Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales and local elections. The focus is on six out of the nine protected characteristics listed in the Equality Act 2010 for which data were available: age, disability, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. No data were available for gender reassignment.

Section 106 of EA 2010 places a statutory obligation on political parties to collect and publish information relating to the protected characteristics of candidates for the

UK Parliamentary, European, National Assembly for Wales and Scottish Parliament elections. However, section 106 has not been brought into force.

## Data gaps

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There are significant shortcomings in the ways the data about candidates and elected representatives are currently collected, collated and reported:

- Data are not systematically gathered and so there is no consistency in data collection processes, resulting in a fragmented picture across protected characteristics with many gaps.
- The data available does not allow us to confidently assess the diversity of candidates and representatives in Britain. Data on age, race and sex are better covered than data on disability, religion or belief and sexual orientation, but this varies by nation. Data on some of the protected characteristics, like gender reassignment, are not available at all.
- As it is not mandatory, political parties are not reporting on the diversity of their candidates, and neither are the elected bodies (parliaments and councils) systematically collecting this information. The existing data are scattered, relying heavily on surveys by academic researchers and civil society organisations.
- In England and Scotland, there is no consistent or uniform attempt from local government authorities to collect data on diversity.
- Collection of this information is challenging. Surveys of candidates and elected representatives have low overall response rates in many cases. Response rates can be lower for questions about protected characteristics, which are answered by an even smaller number of respondents, and particularly low for questions relating to more 'sensitive' protected characteristics.

Data on the diversity of candidates and elected officials need to be collected in a consistent and transparent manner. Political parties, national parliaments, local authorities and public bodies could play a vital role in addressing the serious deficiencies in data collection, collation and publication.

## Diversity of candidates and elected officials

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There is evidence that the main political parties are taking steps towards selecting a more diverse group of candidates. Still, there is a long way to go before elected representatives truly represent the make-up of the country:

- Women and ethnic minorities remain under-represented among Parliamentary electoral candidates and MPs compared with the population in Great Britain.
- The pattern of under-representation of women and ethnic minorities is repeated at the national and local government levels.
- There are currently more openly lesbian, gay or bisexual politicians at UK level politics than in the past. Due to the lack of systematic and reliable data, this is an estimate based on multiple sources and should be treated with caution.

## Recommendations

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1. The UK Government should bring into force section 106 of the Equality Act 2010.
2. The UK Government should consider amending the Equality Act 2010 to include a statutory requirement to collect data on local election candidates.
3. The UK Government should work with relevant partners including the Electoral Commission, the Association of Electoral Administrators, the Office for National Statistics, the Scottish Government's Office of the Chief Statistician and other relevant stakeholders to establish a working group to develop guidance for political parties and representative bodies on how to collate and publish diversity data.

The House of Commons, Scottish Parliament, National Assembly for Wales and all local councils should adopt systems to gather, publish and use information about all the protected characteristics of elected representatives.

# 1 | Introduction

## 1.1 Scope of research

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The aim of this report is to assess the available data on the diversity of candidates and elected officials at UK, national and local election levels. It does so by examining data on the protected characteristics of candidates standing in the 2016 and 2017 elections in Great Britain. The protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010 (EA 2010) are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

Under the Act it is unlawful to discriminate, harass or victimise individuals because of their protected characteristics. The EA 2010 contains specific measures to encourage political parties to tackle under-representation, promote diversity in elected offices and increase participation in the democratic process.

Nevertheless, information about the diversity of candidates and elected officials is limited and inconsistent, revealing a fragmented picture with many gaps. Section 106 of EA 2010 would place a statutory obligation on political parties to collect and publish information relating to the protected characteristics of candidates for the UK Parliamentary, European, National Assembly for Wales and Scottish Parliament elections. However, section 106 has not been brought into force.

This report collates and presents the best available data on the diversity of candidates and elected officials in the House of Commons, the Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales and local elections. It focuses on six out of the nine protected characteristics, for which data were available.

While the EA 2010 provides legal definitions of the protected characteristics, these do not necessarily match the definitions used by data sources. In this report, we use terms as set out by the EA 2010 unless the diversity information collected in surveys use a different term.

The aims of this report are to:

- outline and examine available research data on the profile of candidates and elected officials in Britain, including official data sources (e.g. the Office for National Statistics (ONS), House of Commons data and reports), academic research (e.g. university-led projects) and policy-oriented research (e.g. civil society and charity organisation reports)
- provide an assessment of the present status of data availability on diversity and representation at all levels of elected office in Great Britain, and provide recommendations to address the significant gaps in information
- analyse the protected characteristics of those candidates<sup>1</sup> who stood for election at UK, national and local level elections and those who are elected into the UK Parliament, the Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales, and the local councils, and
- compare the profile of candidates and elected representatives with the population statistics for Great Britain, and also for England, Wales and Scotland separately.

## 1.2 Context

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There is a considerable body of academic literature addressing the representation of women and, to a lesser extent, ethnic minorities in British politics (e.g. Norris and Lovenduski, 1995; Dovi, 2002; Childs, 2004; Allen and Dean, 2008; Childs and Cowley, 2011; Allen, 2013a; Cutts and Widdop, 2013; Sobolewska, 2013; Campbell and Cowley, 2014; Campbell and Childs, 2015; Campbell, 2016). Much less is published about other under-represented groups in elected offices, for example lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and disabled people. Until very recently, research and data on the political presence of these groups has been limited or non-existent.

It was not until the publication of the Speaker's Conference on Parliamentary Representation report (2010) and the introduction of the EA 2010 that more attention began to be paid to issues of diversity in representation beyond the inclusion of women and ethnic minority groups. The EA 2010 prohibits discrimination and harassment in relation to nine protected characteristics and applies in a wide range of situations, including the activities of political parties and the relationship between

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<sup>1</sup> The data collected and analysed were for the candidates who were selected to contest elections at UK, national and local level elections, by the main parties in Great Britain: the Conservative party, the Labour party, the Liberal Democrats, the Scottish National Party (SNP), the UK Independence Party (UKIP) and the Green party of England and Wales/Scottish Green parties.

the party and its members. Section 106 requires political parties to publish information on the diversity of candidates, although it is not yet in force. The Speaker's Conference on Parliamentary Representation report highlighted barriers to representation and adopted many recommendations for political parties to increase diversity in Parliament (House of Commons, 2010).

Although the debate on diversity and representation is not new, political parties responded positively to the EA 2010 and the Speaker's Conference (Lovenduski, 2010) and increasing the diversity of political representation is now a shared goal of government and political parties. However, much work is needed for political parties to be more receptive to the inclusion of individuals with protected characteristics among their candidates (EHRC, 2018). To assess whether efforts to improve the diversity of political representation are effective, the diversity of candidates and elected representatives needs to be regularly monitored and measured.

Evidence from academic and third sector studies demonstrates that, at the national level, the political parties' commitment to increase representation of women and ethnic minorities in the House of Commons has been successful (Keen et al., 2018; Audickas and Apostolova, 2017; Audickas, 2016; House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee, 2016; Commission on Parliamentary Reform, 2017; Lamprinakou et al., 2017; British Future, 2015; Cutts and Widdop, 2013; Sobolewska, 2013). The concern is that without more formal mechanisms diversity might not continue to increase or could even fall. Some academics and political commentators have suggested that political parties need to step forward and formally commit to further actions that will alleviate inequality and lead to a more representative and fairer parliament (e.g. by committing to quotas or specific targets).

In 2017, the parties' strategic selection of minority candidates in 'safe' seats and the use of all-women shortlists led to the most diverse House of Commons ever. The number of ethnic minority MPs increased from 41 (6%) in the 2015 election to 51 (8%) (Barton and Audickas, 2017). There is more gender equality than ever before with the number of women MPs increasing by 9% to 208 in 2017 (Keen et al., 2018). The number of MPs who openly defined themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans saw a 40% increase (LGBT MP, undated).

Local government is a significant part of representative democracy and is often regarded as a possible stepping-stone for running for UK-level office (Norris and Lovenduski, 1995; Allen, 2013a and 2013b). Traditionally, women fared slightly better at local level elections compared with their presence at the UK level (Borisjuk

et al., 2007). For example, by 1986 16% of the councillors in England were women, while until 1997 women had never represented more than 10% of all MPs (Keen et al., 2018).

However, progress in local government has faltered (Local Government Commission, 2017; Game, 2009). As of 2017, just 33% of councillors in England and 28% in Wales are women, signalling a mere 1% increase from the 2013 elections in England, and 2% in Wales. Research and recommendations for how to improve diversity in local government for women focus on the factors that affect women's recruitment into politics (Local Government Commission, 2017; Kenny and Mackay, 2012; Briggs, 2000).

The introduction of gender quotas, the removal of structural barriers that hinder women's recruitment such as the lack of provisions for maternity leave or childcare and the elimination of abuse and harassment driven by sexist and misogynistic behaviour are some of the recommendations that, if implemented, could lead to more diverse and fair representation (Takhar, 2014; Borisyuk et al., 2007; Evans and Harrison, 2012; Game, 2009; Sundström and Stockemer, 2015; Briggs, 2008; Local Government Commission, 2017).

There is an increased commitment by the main political parties to diversity. Since 1997, parties have shown the political will to tackle the under-representation of women and ethnic minority candidates by ensuring that the number of women and ethnic minority candidates on the shortlists and those elected are at least on the rise (Keen et al., 2018; Campbell and Childs, 2015; Sobolewska, 2013; Lovenduski, 2010). Furthermore, the work of many organisations (the Fawcett Society, 50:50 Parliament, British Future, Operation Black Vote, etc.) ensures that the issue of diversity stays on the agenda and further steps are taken to foster equal opportunities for all.

However, the pace of progress is slow. Achieving equality and diversity in elected offices requires a range of government and party-led actions designed to improve effectiveness and further equality. A vital first step is the systematic monitoring of diversity, an issue this report will turn to now.

## 1.3 Methodology

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### Data collection

Collecting data on the protected characteristics of candidates and elected representatives is a challenging exercise. Partly, this is because some regard this information as sensitive and political candidates and representatives sometimes avoid disclosing such information. We have some evidence of this in the differential response rates to questions on the various protected characteristics in some of the surveys of candidates and elected officials set out in this report.

Our aim has been to choose the best (or only) available source of data for each of the protected characteristics and levels of representation, while recognising potential limitations of the data. One important limitation is that we rarely have information on the whole pool of candidates or of elected representatives, and we must rely on smaller samples of those who responded to the surveys or for whom data were available. Those who responded may not be representative of all candidates or elected representatives.

We collected data from academic research projects, as well as policy-oriented research from key governmental bodies and non-governmental organisations. These include both observational and self-reported survey data. The availability of these data ranges from access to the full databases with microdata on the candidates and elected officials, to aggregate data analyses and published reports.

The diversity of candidates and elected officials across six of the protected characteristics – age, disability, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation – were compared with population statistics from the Census 2011, the mid-2016 population estimates and the 2016 annual population survey. The initial aim was to include data also for the protected characteristic of gender reassignment but there are no dedicated data available on this particular characteristic at any level of elections.

The sources and data analysed cover the 2017 General Elections, the 2016 Scottish Parliament and National Assembly for Wales elections, and the 2016 and 2017 local elections in England, Scotland and Wales.

### **Challenges and limitations of the available data**

Collecting diversity data on candidates and elected representatives is a challenging exercise. Both observational and survey studies have their strengths and weaknesses.

Observational data that are collected from information that is made publicly available by candidates and public officials tends to have better coverage for characteristics

such as sex, age and race compared with surveys. However, there is a lack of publicly available information on more 'sensitive' protected characteristics such as disability, gender reassignment and sexual orientation.

Surveys are a method of collecting information on issues that respondents may not want to report publicly. This is particularly important in collecting information about more 'sensitive' protected characteristics. However, surveys can suffer from low response rates. Other response biases, as well as poorly designed questions, can also have an impact on the reliability of surveys.

Taking into consideration the advantages and limitations of both observational and survey data collection methods, there are challenges related to the availability and comparability of diversity data. An important limitation regarding the data analysed for this report is the lack of consistency, as different data are collected by various organisations that are employing different methods for collecting, coding and analysing the data. As a result, there is a fragmented picture with many gaps. The inconsistency in the approaches to data collection and the availability of data is most evident with respect to local elections.

The various sources have not always used the same definitions or categories of protected characteristics, despite efforts at standardisation, primarily among academic researchers. Survey questions on protected characteristics usually comprise a small part of each questionnaire to candidates and/or elected officials. Also, the wording of the questions – or the actual questions used – differ depending on the scope of the research. For example, some questions ask if someone belongs to an ethnic minority (with simple affirmative or negative categories as an answer) and others that ask respondents to define their ethnic group, either from a pre-defined list of categories or as an open-ended question for the respondent to define him or herself as desired.

The multiple ways that questions on protected characteristics and diversity more generally are asked can lead to problems of data comparability. For this report, we have aimed to use data that are collected using similar questions.

Finally, we had intended to include data from official registers (e.g. personnel forms or nomination papers) for the elected officials and the candidates. However, after making the necessary enquiries with the relevant public bodies that could potentially hold such official records of personal data, we found that they either do not exist or are limited to recording sex and age, and they were not always made available to us.

A detailed list of the protected characteristics analysed, the questions used and the available coverage rate for observational data, and response rate for survey data covering each characteristic for each of the datasets are provided in the Appendix.

Throughout this report, we compare the available data on diversity of candidates and elected officials with general population estimates. Population estimates for disability, religion or belief, and race are drawn from the 2011 census, for age and sex from 2016 population estimates, and for sexual orientation from the 2016 Annual Population Survey. At the time this work was carried out there were not more recent population estimates available for disability, religion or belief, or race. The measures used to assess diversity of candidates and elected officials are not always directly comparable to those used for population estimates and so comparisons should be treated with caution. More information about measures used can be found in the Appendix (see Table A.1).

## 2| Diversity in the UK Parliament

This section examines available data on the diversity of UK Parliamentary candidates and Members of Parliament.

The official data on Members of Parliament (MPs) and parliamentary candidates' protected characteristics available through the House of Commons and the Electoral Commission are very limited. The only data on protected characteristics that were collected by the House of Commons were on sex, race and age; and there is no official information on candidates available from the Electoral Commission. Most of the data on the diversity of these two groups of politicians come from academic research: a 2017 study of observational data (Hudson and Campbell, 2017) and a 2017 survey (Campbell, Hudson and Rüdig, 2017).

Data on the diversity of candidates and MPs are split by protected characteristics, with one study collecting data on age, race and sex through observational methods in 2017 and the other collecting data on disability, religion or belief, and sexual orientation through a 2017 survey of MPs and candidates.

2017 observational data were available on age, sex and race for almost all candidates and MPs, apart from the protected characteristic of age for which information was available for only 28% of candidates. The 2017 survey of MPs and candidates collected data on disability, religion or belief, and sexual orientation and gender reassignment, and had an overall response rate of 53%. This was lower for MPs (28%), and questions on disability and sexual orientation had particularly low response rates among MPs at only 8% – too low for safe inferences to be made from the data.

### 2.1 Parliamentary candidates

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The figures below show the diversity of parliamentary candidates standing for election in the 2017 general election. The analysis was performed by each of the protected characteristics for which data were available. Data for age, race and sex

were collected using observational methods. Data for disability, religion or belief and sexual orientation were collected through the 2017 parliamentary candidates survey study.

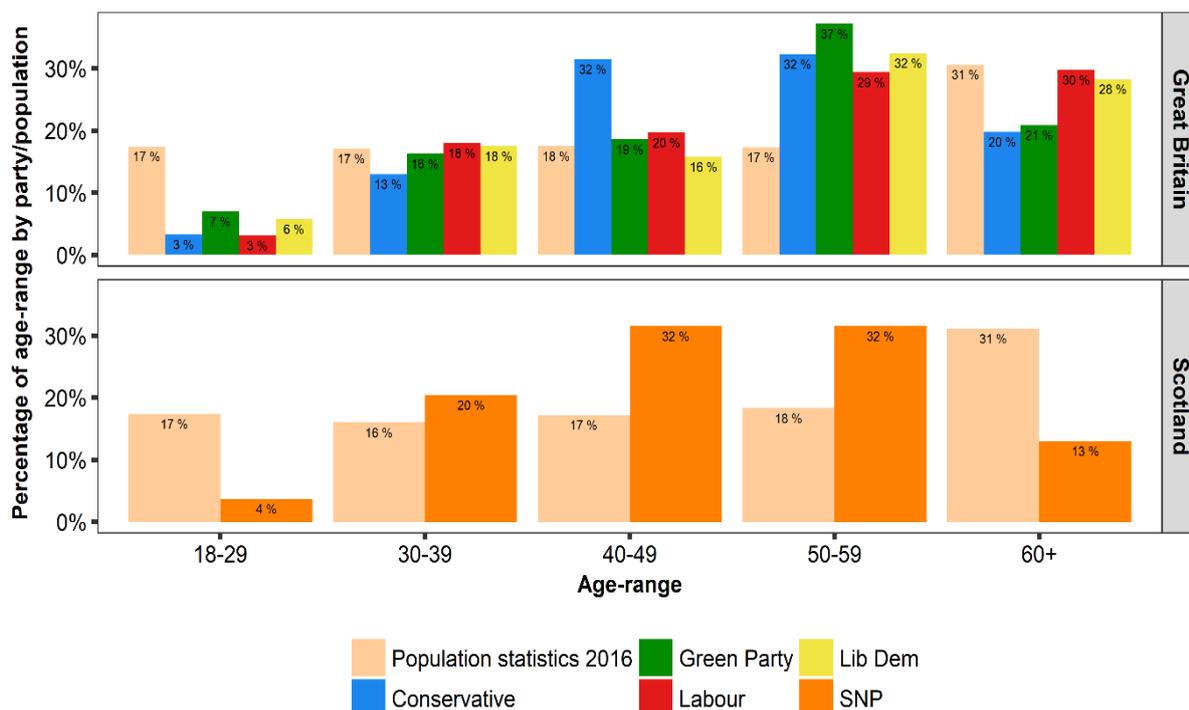
## Age

Observational data on age was available for only 907 out of 3195 candidates (28%) (Hudson and Campbell, 2017), meaning that these findings should be treated with caution. From the candidates for whom information is available:

- The average age was 50.5 years old.
- 56% of all the candidates standing for the main parties were over 50, compared with 48% of the general population (ONS, 2017a).
- The age pattern was the same when the data were broken down by country. For all three countries, parties selected more than half of the candidates from the 40–59 age groups (56% for England, 55% for Scotland and 56% for Wales).

Age distribution appears to differ by party (see Figure 2.1), but the number of responses is too low for some parties to make safe inferences about these results. Data for SNP candidates are displayed separately to enable comparisons with population estimates for Scotland.

### **Figure 2.1 Age distribution of the 2017 general election candidates by party compared with population data from the mid-2016 population estimates**



Source: Hudson and Campbell (2017); ONS (2017a). Data coverage: Observational data; 1) Percentage of data coverage for the whole study for Great Britain: 28% (907 out of 3195 candidates); 2) Data coverage by party on which percentages were based: Conservative = 368 out of 631 Conservative candidates; Labour = 289 out of 631 Labour candidates; Lib Dem = 120 out of 629 Lib Dem candidates; SNP = 54 out of 59 SNP candidates; Green party = 43 out of 460 Green party candidates.

## Race

Overall, 8% of all candidates in Great Britain were from an ethnic minority compared with 13% of the population. Observational data coverage for race was 100% (3195 candidates) (Hudson and Campbell, 2017; ONS, 2013).

Looking at these data by country, the percentage of ethnic minority candidates in England, Scotland and Wales was 9%, 2% and 2% respectively compared with their percentages in the general population of 15%, 4% and 5%.

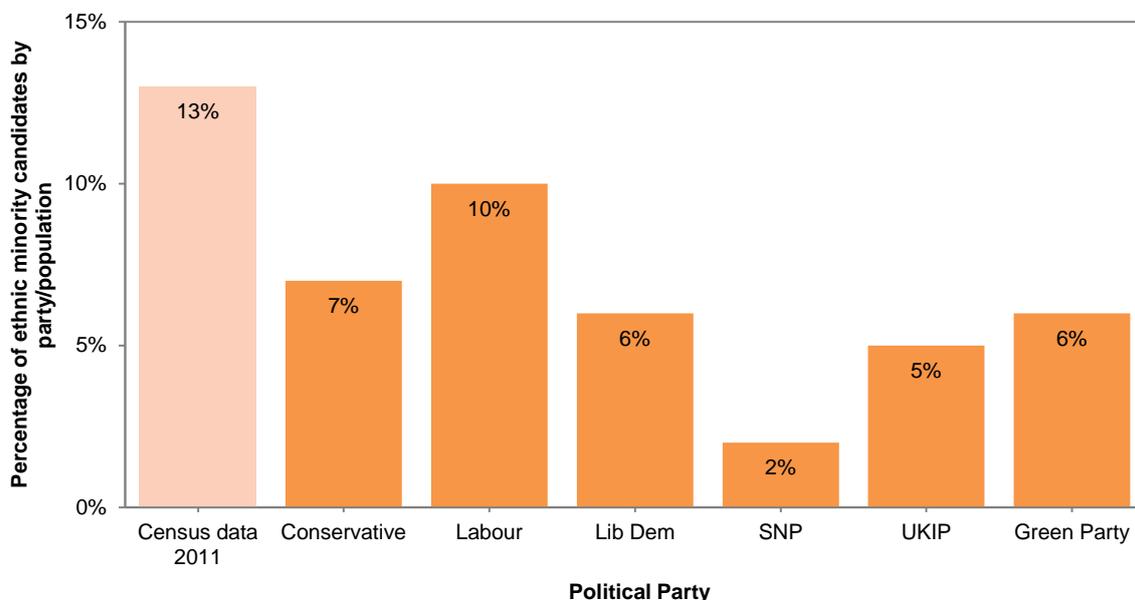
Figure 2.2 shows the percentage of the 2017 general election candidates who belonged to an ethnic minority by party compared with the population data from the 2011 Census.<sup>2</sup>

Statistical intersectional analysis of the data revealed that the age of candidates differed by ethnicity, with ethnic minority candidates more likely to be in their 40s and

<sup>2</sup> 2% of SNP candidates were from an ethnic minority, compared with 4% of the population in Scotland.

less likely to be in their 60s compared with white candidates. As we had data for age by ethnicity for only 28% of candidates, these findings should be interpreted with caution.

**Figure 2.2 Percentage of 2017 general election ethnic minority candidates by party compared with population data from the 2011 Census**



Source: Hudson and Campbell (2017); ONS (2013). Data coverage: Observational data; 1) Percentage of data coverage for the whole study for Great Britain: 100% (3195 out of 3195 candidates); 2) Data coverage by party on which percentages were based: Conservative = 631 out of 631 Conservative candidates; Labour = 631 out of 631 Labour candidates; Lib Dem = 629 out of 629 Lib Dem candidates; SNP = 59 out of 59 SNP candidates; UKIP = 378 out of 378 UKIP candidates; Green party = 460 out of 460 Green party candidates.

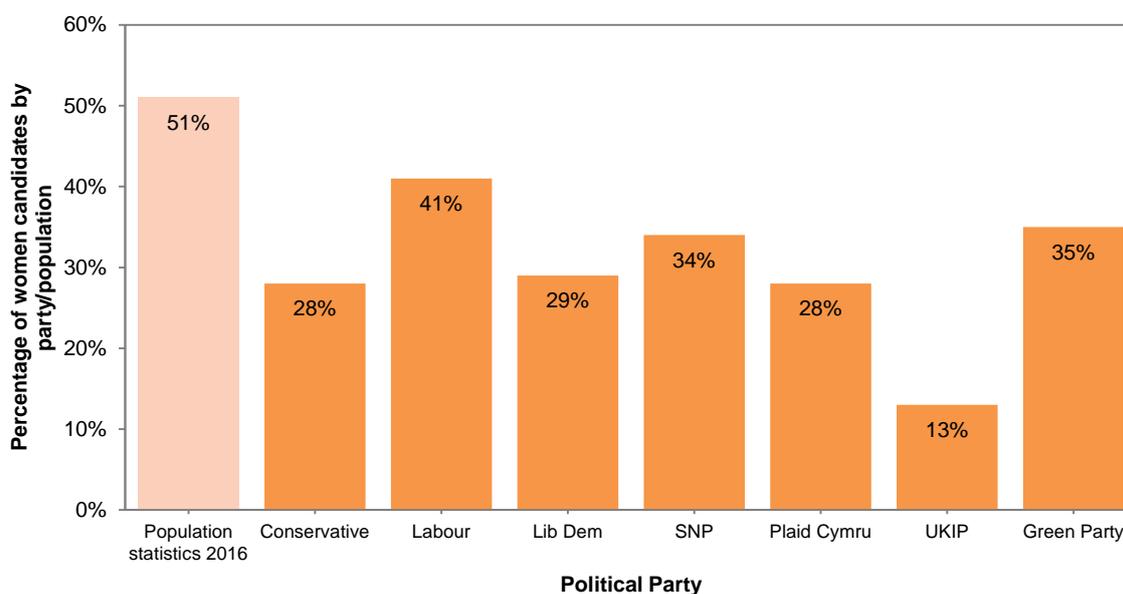
## Sex

Overall, 29% of candidates were women, compared with 51% of the population. Observational data coverage for sex was 99.9% (3191 of 3195 candidates) (Hudson and Campbell, 2017; ONS, 2017a).

Looking at these data by country, the percentage of female candidates in England, Scotland and Wales was 28, 36 and 30 respectively, compared with 51% of the population in those countries.

Figure 2.3 shows the percentage of women candidates who stood in the 2017 general election by party compared with the population data on women from the mid-2016 population estimates.

**Figure 2.3 Percentage 2017 general election female candidates by party compared with mid-2016 population estimates**



Source: Hudson and Campbell (2017); ONS (2017a). Data coverage: Observational data; 1) Percentage of data coverage for the whole study for Great Britain: 99.9% (3191 out of 3195 candidates); 2) Data coverage by party on which percentages were based: Conservative = 631 out of 631 Conservative candidates; Labour = 631 out of 631 Labour candidates; Lib Dem = 628 out of 629 Lib Dem candidates; SNP = 59 out of 59 SNP candidates; Plaid Cymru = 40 out of 40 Plaid Cymru candidates; UKIP = 378 out of 378 UKIP candidates; Green party = 457 out of 460 Green party candidates.

### **Disability, religion or belief, and sexual identity and gender reassignment**

Data on disability, religion or belief, and whether candidates considered themselves to be gay, lesbian, bisexual and/or transgender were drawn from a 2017 parliamentary candidates survey (Campbell, Hudson and Rüdiger, 2017).

The response rate for questions on disability and whether candidates considered themselves to be gay, lesbian, bisexual and/or transgender was 24% (681 out of 2825 candidates surveyed for both characteristics). For religion or belief it was 19% (548 of 2825 candidates). Table 2.1 sets out findings on disability and religion or belief by country. For the candidates who responded:

- 10% considered themselves to have a disability compared with 18% of the population (ONS, 2011a).
- 44% confirmed that they considered themselves as belonging to a particular religion compared with 72% of the population (ONS, 2011e-g).
- 11% considered themselves to be lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender. Although not directly comparable due to differences in question wording, 2%

of the general population identified as being gay or lesbian, bisexual or other (ONS, 2017b). A separate population estimate for gender reassignment was not available.

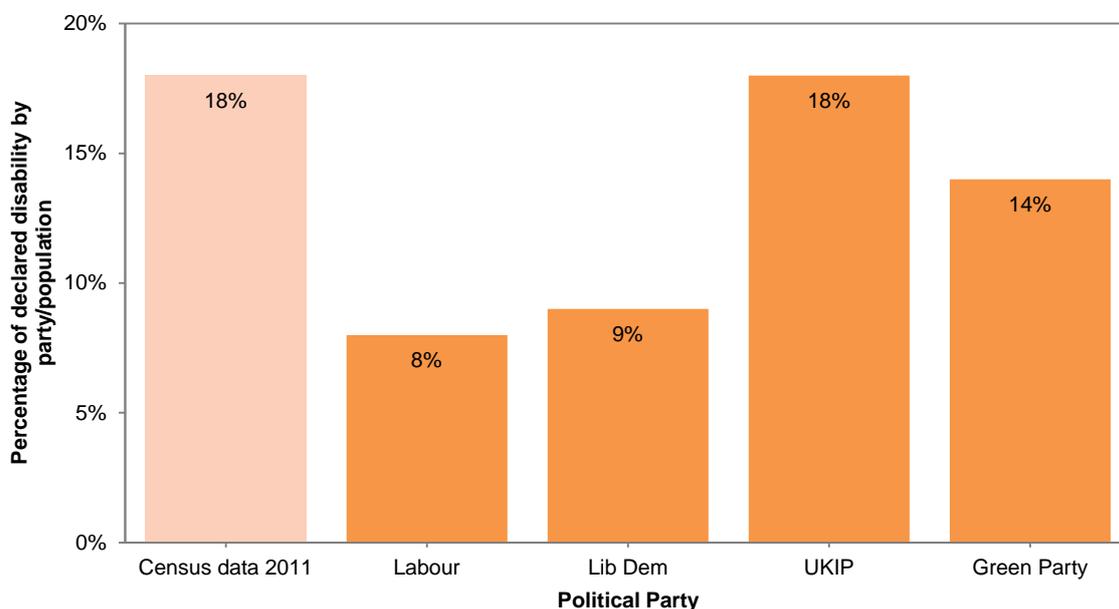
The way the population estimates for disability, religion or belief and sexual orientation were measured differed from the way these characteristics were measured for the 2017 candidates study, and so these are not directly comparable. Data on candidate diversity appear to vary by political party (see Figures 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6), but the response rate for some parties (particularly the Conservatives, Plaid Cymru and the SNP) is too low to make safe inferences about these results.

**Table 2.1 Percentage of 2017 general election disabled or religious candidates by country compared with population estimates**

	GB	England	Scotland	Wales
Candidate respondents who considered themselves to be disabled (%)	10	10	5	2
<i>Survey base (candidates who responded)</i>	<i>681</i>	<i>596</i>	<i>42</i>	<i>43</i>
General population (%)	18	18	20	23
Candidate respondents who considered themselves as belonging to a particular religion (%)	44	43	43	50
<i>Survey base (candidates who responded)</i>	<i>548</i>	<i>482</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>36</i>
General population (%)	72	73	61	65

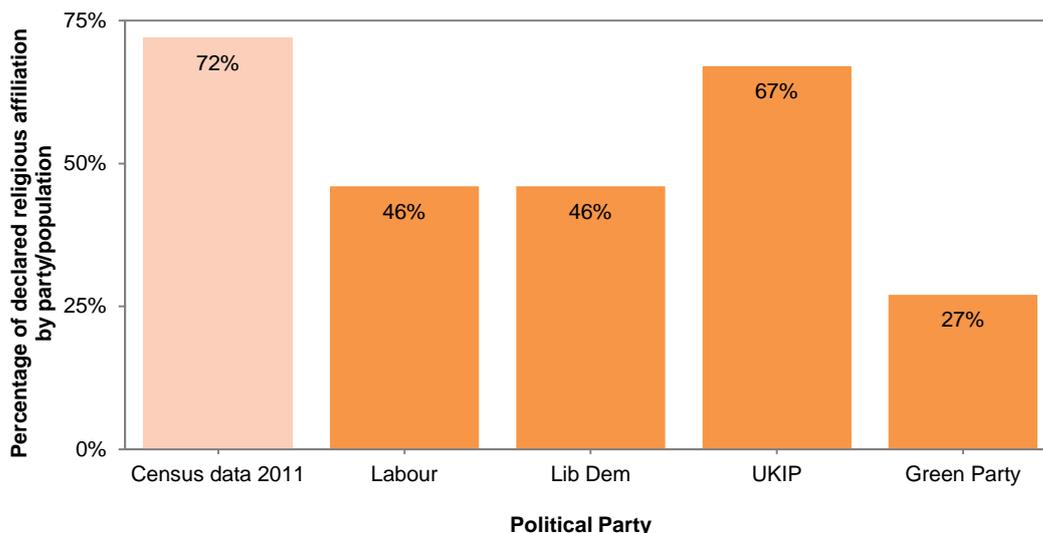
Source: Campbell, Hudson and Rüdig (2017); ONS (2011a-g). Note: The census question for the protected characteristic of disability was: 'Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?'. General election candidates were asked to answer 'Yes, No or Prefer not to say' to the following question: 'Do you consider yourself to have a disability?'. The census question for religion was: 'What is your religion?' (answers included: No religion; Christian; Buddhist; Hindu; Jewish; Muslim; Sikh; Any other religion). General election candidates were asked to answer 'Yes, No or Prefer not to say' to the question: 'Do you consider yourself as belonging to a particular religion?'.

**Figure 2.4 Percentage of the 2017 general election candidates who declared a disability by party compared with population data from the 2011 Census**



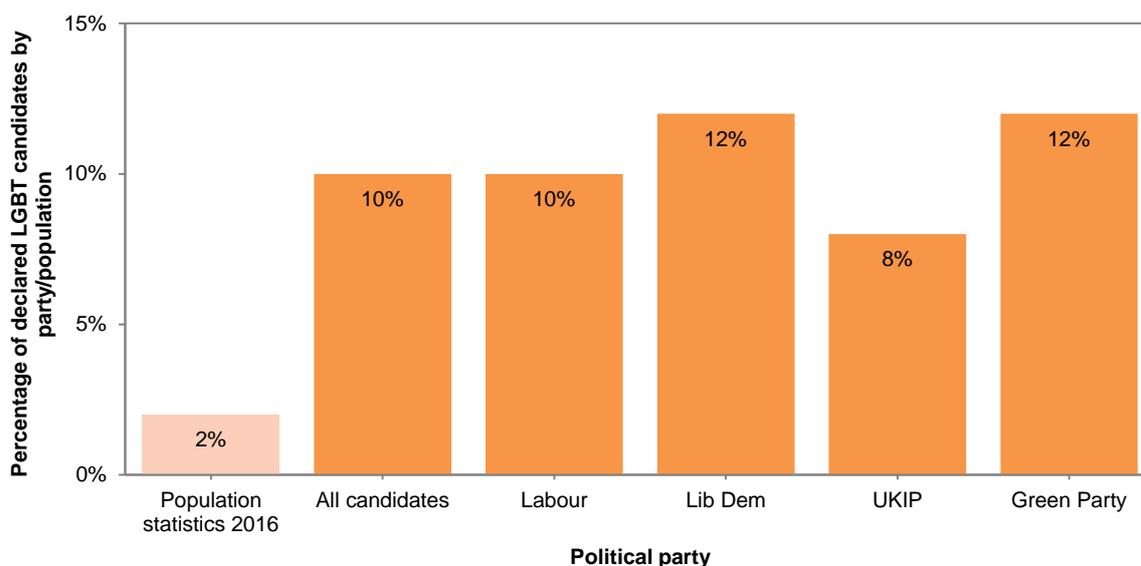
Source: Campbell, Hudson and Rüdig (2017); ONS (2011a). Data coverage: Survey data; 1) Response rate: 24% (681 out of 2825 candidates surveyed); 2) Number of responses by party: Labour = 179 out of 631 Labour candidates surveyed; Lib Dems = 222 out of 629 candidates surveyed; UKIP = 77 out of 378 UKIP candidates surveyed; Green party = 174 out of 457 Green party candidates surveyed. Excluded from the figure due to low response rates: Conservative = 9 out of 631 Conservative candidates surveyed; SNP = 9 out of 59 SNP candidates surveyed; Plaid Cymru = 11 out of 40 Plaid Cymru candidates surveyed.

**Figure 2.5 Percentage of 2017 general election candidates with a declared religious affiliation by party compared with population data from the 2011 Census**



Source: Campbell, Hudson and Rüdig (2017); ONS (2011e; 2011f; 2011g). Data coverage: Survey data; 1) Response rate: 19% (548 out of 2825 candidates surveyed); 2) Number of responses by party: Labour = 140 out of 631 Labour candidates surveyed; Lib Dem = 185 out of 629 Lib Dem candidates surveyed; UKIP = 64 out of 378 UKIP candidates surveyed; Green party = 143 out of 457 Green party candidates surveyed. Excluded from the figure due to low response rates: Conservative = 0 out of 631 Conservative candidates surveyed; SNP = 7 out of 59 SNP candidates surveyed; Plaid Cymru = 9 out of 40 Plaid Cymru candidates surveyed.

**Figure 2.6 Percentage of 2017 general election LGBT candidates by party compared with population data from the 2016 Annual Population Survey**



Source: Campbell, Hudson and Rüdig (2017); ONS (2017b). A separate population estimate for gender reassignment was not available. Data coverage: Survey data; 1) Response rate =

24% (681 out of 2825 candidates surveyed); 2) Number of respondents by party: Labour = 179 out of 631 Labour candidates surveyed; Lib Dem = 222 out of 629 Lib Dem candidates surveyed; UKIP = 77 out of 378 of UKIP candidates surveyed; Green party = 174 out of 457 Green party candidates surveyed. Excluded from the figure due to low response rates: Conservative = 9 out of 631 Conservative candidates surveyed; SNP = 9 out of 59 SNP candidates surveyed; Plaid Cymru = 11 out of 40 Plaid Cymru candidates surveyed.

## 2.2 Members of Parliament (MPs)

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This section analyses data compiled for the MPs who were elected in the 2017 general election. The data collected for the 2017 cohort of MPs were observational data and covered all the MPs of the main parties for which there were at least 20 MPs in the UK Parliament of 2017 (Conservative, Labour, and SNP). The 2017 observational data were used to analyse the protected characteristics of age, race and sex (Hudson and Campbell, 2017). We used data from the 2017 parliamentary candidates survey for the analysis of disability, religion or belief and sexual orientation (Campbell, Hudson and Rüdiger, 2017).

### Age

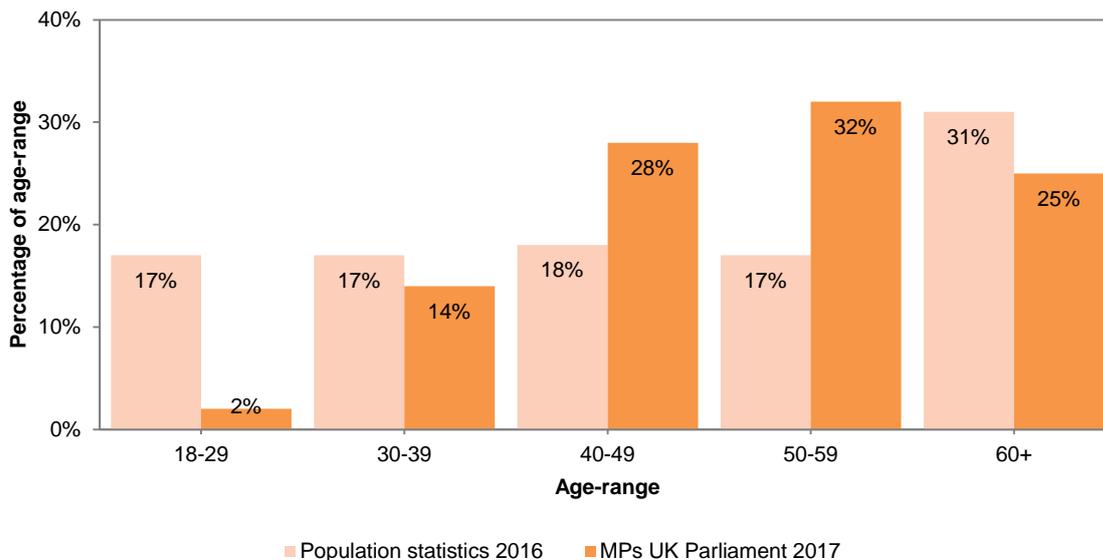
Observational data coverage for age was 92% (582 out of 632 MPs) (Hudson and Campbell, 2017).

- The average age of MPs was 51.5 years old.
- 32% of MPs were in their 50s and 28% were in their 40s. This compares with 17% and 18% of the respective population (ONS, 2017a).
- 25% of MPs were over 60 years old, compared with 31% of the population.
- 2% of MPs were under 30 years old, compared with 17% of the population.

In all three countries, over 30% of the MPs were in their 50s (32% in England, 31% in Scotland and 36% in Wales versus population percentages in the 50–59 age group of 17%, 18% and 18% respectively).

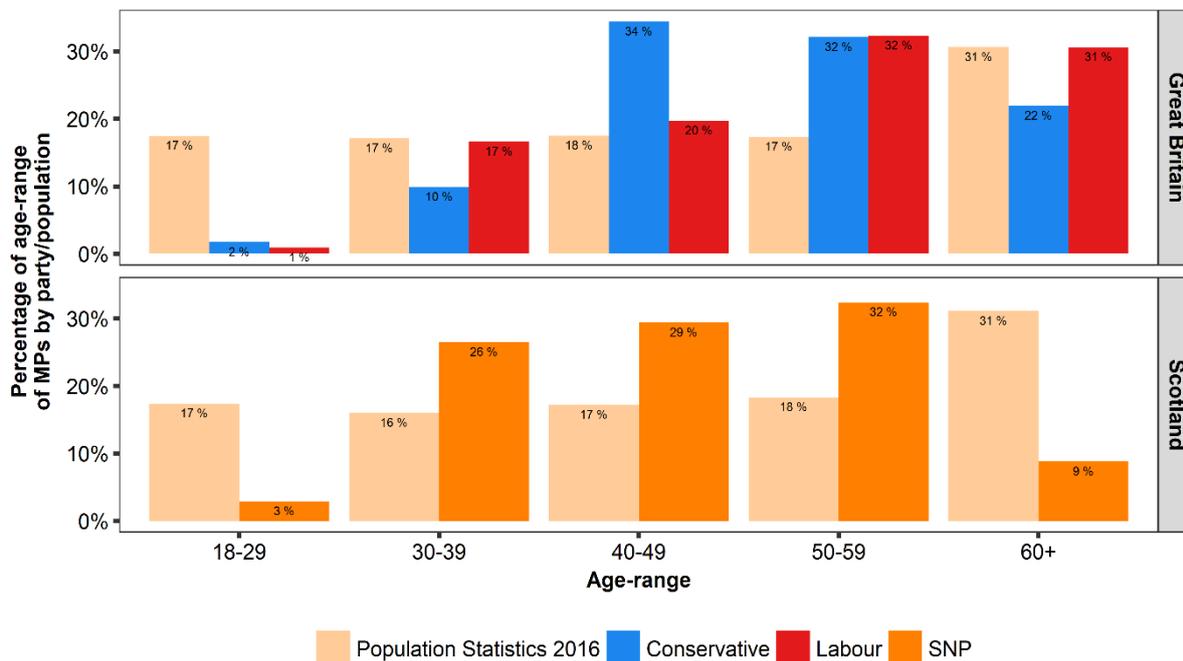
Figures 2.7 and 2.8 show the age distribution of MPs elected in the 2017 general election by party compared with the population data from the mid-2016 population estimates. Data for SNP candidates are displayed separately in Figure 3.5 to enable comparisons with population estimates for Scotland.

### Figure 2.7 Age distribution of the 2017 MPs compared with population data from the mid-2016 population estimates



Source: Hudson and Campbell (2017); ONS (2017a). Data coverage: Observational data; 1) Percentage of data coverage for the whole study for Great Britain: 92% (582 out of 632 MPs).

**Figure 2.8 Age distribution of the 2017 MPs by party compared with population data from the mid-2016 population estimates**



Source: Hudson and Campbell (2017); ONS (2017a). Data coverage: Observational data; 1) Percentage of data coverage for the whole study for Great Britain: 92% (582 out of 632 MPs); 2) Data coverage by party: Conservative = 302 out of 317 MPs; Labour = 229 out of 262 MPs; SNP = 34 out of 35 MPs. Data for other parties excluded from the figure due to low response rates.

## Race

The observational data coverage for race was 100% (632 of 632 MPs) (Hudson and Campbell, 2017).

- 8% of all MPs were from an ethnic minority background. The respective percentage of the population in Great Britain, according to the 2011 Census, was 13% (ONS, 2013).
- 12% of Labour MPs and 6% of Conservative MPs were from an ethnic minority.

Looking at the data by country, 8% of MPs representing constituencies in England were from an ethnic minority compared with 13% of the population in England. No ethnic minority MPs were elected in Scotland or Wales.

Statistical intersectional analysis of the data revealed that the age and sex distribution of MPs differed by ethnicity. Ethnic minority MPs were more likely to be in their 40s and less likely to be in their 60s compared with white candidates. Fewer white MPs were women than ethnic minority MPs (31% versus 51%).

## Sex

The observational data coverage for the sex of MPs was 100% (632 of 632 MPs) (Hudson and Campbell, 2017).

- 32% of MPs elected were women. This is highest percentage ever but well below the 51% of the population of Great Britain (ONS, 2017a).
- 46% of Labour MPs, 35% of SNP MPs, and 20% of Conservative MPs were women.
- 32% of MPs in England, 29% of MPs in Scotland and 24% of MPs in Wales were women.

## Disability, religion or belief, and sexual orientation and gender reassignment

Data on disability, religion or belief, and whether MPs considered themselves to be gay, lesbian, bisexual and/or transgender were drawn from the 2017 parliamentary candidates survey (Campbell, Hudson and Rüdiger, 2017). The survey response rate for disability was 8% (52 out of 632 MPs surveyed) and for whether candidates considered themselves to be gay, lesbian, bisexual and/or transgender it was also 8% (52 out of 632). These response rates were too low to make safe inferences from them.

For religion or belief the response rate was 5% (33 out of 632 MPs surveyed). We break down the data by country, although the number of responses is low and so should be interpreted with caution. The way the population estimates for religion or belief were measured differed from the way these characteristics were measured for the 2017 candidates study, and so these are not fully directly comparable. These figures appear to vary by political party but, again, the number of responses is too low to make safe inferences about these results and we do not plot them.

For the MPs who we have information about:

- 61% considered themselves to belong to a particular religion. Although not directly comparable, this compares with 72% of the population in Great Britain (ONS, 2011e-g).
- 62% of the MPs in England considered themselves to belong to a particular religion, as did 75% of the population in England. 60% of the MPs in Scotland and 50% of MPs in Wales considered themselves to belong to a religion compared with 63% and 68% in those populations, respectively.

## 3| Diversity in the Scottish Parliament

This section examines the data on diversity of Scottish Parliament election candidates and Members of the Scottish Parliament.

The diversity of the 2016 Scottish Parliament election candidates was assessed using data from a survey of 602 candidates. The characteristics for which data were available and analysed in this report were age, disability, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation (Rüdiger, 2016).

The diversity of those Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) elected in 2016 was assessed using observational data (English, Morales and Sobolewska, 2016). The protected characteristics for which data were available and analysed for the 2016 MSPs were age, race and sex.

### 3.1 Scottish Parliament election candidates

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The figures below show the diversity of parliamentary candidates who stood for the Scottish parliamentary elections held on 5 May 2016. Data were drawn from a survey of candidates with a response rate of 32% (190 out of 602 candidates contacted).

Data were available and analysed for six characteristics: age, disability, race, religion or belief, sex and whether the candidate considered themselves to be lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender (Rüdig, 2016). For many of these characteristics, the response rate was well below the 32% of the overall survey, and so results should be interpreted with caution. Comparisons with population estimates should also be treated with caution due to methodological differences. In addition, although these data were available by party, response rates were higher for the candidates of the major parties represented in parliament than for small parties and independent candidates. Because of this and overall low response rate, data are not presented here by party.

The highest response rate for questions on protected characteristics was for sex (27%, or 152 out of 602 candidates surveyed). Of those that responded, 36% were women.

The response rate among candidates for questions on age, disability and race were 22% (130, 133 and 132 of 602 candidates surveyed, respectively). For the candidates who responded to this question, the average age was 47 years old and 26% of the candidates were in their 50s. This compares with 18% of the Scottish population. Five per cent said that they considered themselves to be disabled, compared with 20% of the population in Scotland, and 5% were from an ethnic minority compared with 4% of the population in Scotland (ONS, 2017a).

The response rate among candidates for religion was 21% (126 out of 602 candidates surveyed). Of those that responded, 41% of candidates considered themselves as belonging to a particular religion. This compares with 61% of the Scottish population (ONS, 2011g).

The response rate among candidates for sexual orientation and gender reassignment was 20% (123 out of 602 candidates surveyed). For the candidates we have information on, 14% of candidates considered themselves to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender. Although not directly comparable due to differences in question wording, 3% of the Scottish population considered themselves to be

lesbian, gay or bisexual (ONS, 2017b). A population estimate for gender reassignment was not available.

## 3.2 Members of the Scottish Parliament

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The data available and analysed for the MSPs were from the 2016 Scottish Parliament and were observational data, gathered from publicly available, reliable sources such as MSPs personal websites, political parties' websites and the Scottish Parliament website (English, Morales and Sobolewska, 2016). The overall data coverage was 100% as data for all MSPs elected in 2016 and at by-elections were collected. The protected characteristics analysed were age, race and sex. Comparisons with population estimates should be treated with caution due to methodological differences.

Although data are available by party, we do not report on results for those that obtained fewer than 10 seats each. Although data on any public statements about religion by all MSPs were collected, the number of MSPs for which any information was found was too low to report on.

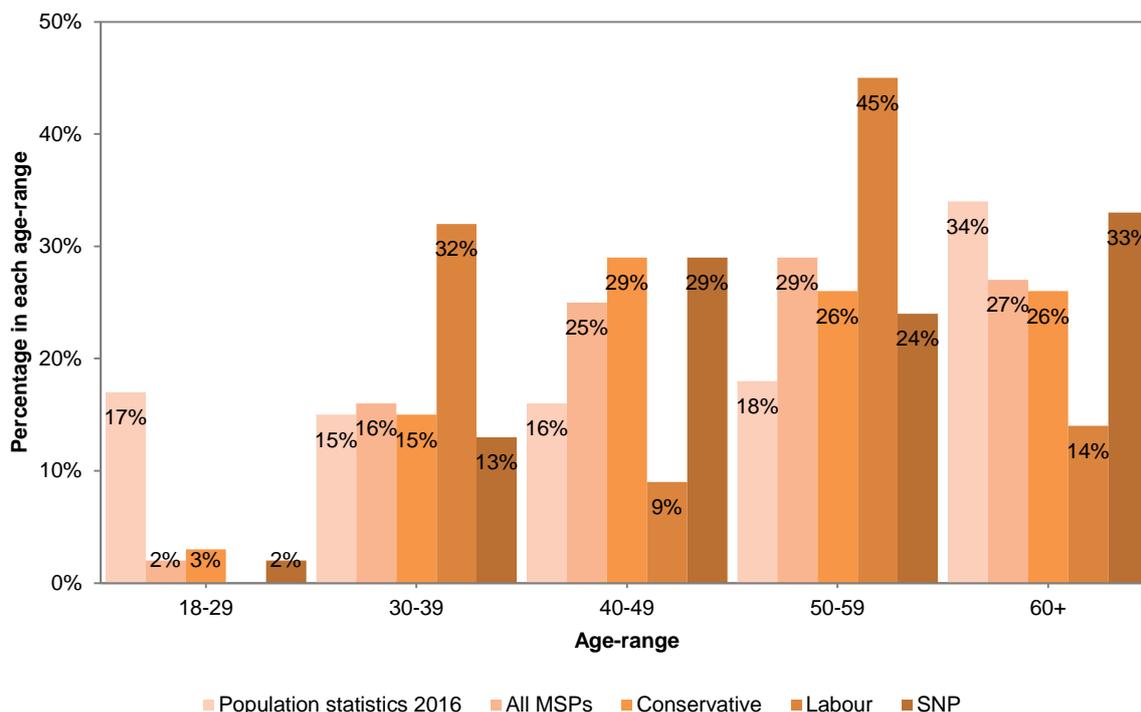
### Age

The data coverage was 92% (122 out of 132 MSPs including by-elections).

- The average age of MSPs was 50 years old. More than half (56%) of MSPs were aged over 50 years.
- 29% of MSPs were in their 50s and 25% were in their 40s. This compares with 18% and 16% of the respective population in Scotland (ONS, 2017a).
- 2% of MPs were under 30 years old, compared with 17% of the population.

Figure 3.1 shows the age distribution of MPs who were elected in the 2017 general election by party compared with population data.

### Figure 3.1 Age distribution of the 2016 MSPs by party compared with population data from the mid-2016 population estimates for Scotland



Source: English, Morales, Sobolewska (2016); ONS (2017a). Data coverage: Observational data; 1) Data coverage rate: 92% (122 out of 132 MSPs including by-elections); Data coverage by party on which percentages were based: Conservative = 31 out of 34 Conservative MSPs; Labour = 22 out of 22 Labour MSPs; SNP = 58 out of 65 SNP MSPs.

### Race

The data coverage for race was 100%. Two ethnic minority MSPs were elected in the 2016 Scottish Parliament (2% of the total); one Labour MSP and one SNP MSP. This compares with 5% of the Scottish population (ONS, 2013).<sup>3</sup>

### Sex

The data coverage for MSPs was 100%.

- 36% of MSPs were women compared with 51% of the population in Scotland (ONS, 2017a).
- 45% of Labour MSPs were women, 43% of SNP MSPs and 24% of Conservative MSPs were women.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Number of MSPs by party on which percentages were based: Conservative = 34 out of 34 Conservative MSPs; Labour = 22 out of 22 Labour MSPs; SNP = 65 out of 65 SNP MSPs

<sup>4</sup> Number of MSPs by party on which percentages were based: Conservative = 34 out of 34 Conservative MSPs; Labour = 22 out of 22 Labour MSPs; SNP = 65 out of 65 SNP MSPs

## 4 | Diversity in the National Assembly for Wales

The figures in this section examine the diversity of candidates that stood for election in 2016 for the National Assembly for Wales, as well as for those that were subsequently elected as Assembly Members (AMs).

The data compiled and analysed for the candidates were self-reported survey data (Trumm, 2016) and the overall response rate was 35% (159 candidates responded out of 457 candidates surveyed). The only protected characteristics for which data were available and analysed for candidates were sex and age.

The data analysed to ascertain the diversity of the 2016 AMs was observational data, obtained through the same source as for the Scottish Parliament (English, Morales and Sobolewska, 2016). The protected characteristics for which data were available and analysed for the 2016 AMs were age, race and sex. Data were also collected about religion, but the information for AMs was too scarce to allow robust and reliable analyses. Comparisons with population estimates should also be treated with caution due to methodological differences.

There was no sufficiently robust information for either candidates or elected AMs on the protected characteristics of disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation or gender reassignment.

### 4.1 National Assembly for Wales election candidates

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This section describes diversity among the candidates in the National Assembly for Wales 2016 elections, drawn from survey data. The overall response rate to the survey was 35% (159 valid responses out of 457 candidates surveyed). Data were available and analysed for two protected characteristics: age and sex (Trumm, 2016). Although these data were available by party, the number of responses was too low to report them.

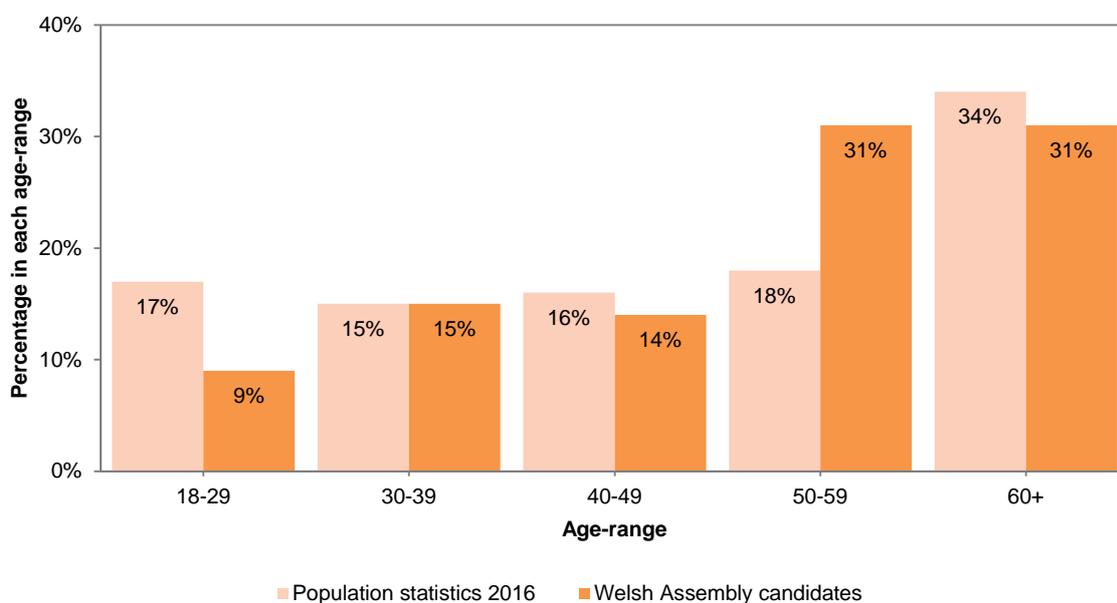
#### Age

The response rate for age was 28% (127 responses out of 457 candidates surveyed). For those candidates we have information on:

- The average age of candidates was 51 years. 31% were in their 50s compared with 18% of the Welsh population (ONS, 2017a).
- 15% of candidates were in their 30s and 9% were under 30 years old. This compares with 15% and 17% of the population in Wales, respectively.

Figure 4.1 shows the age distribution of the candidates to the National Assembly for Wales compared with the population data from the mid-2016 population estimates for Wales.

**Figure 4.1 Age distribution of the candidates to the 2016 National Assembly for Wales compared with mid-2016 population estimates for Wales**



Source: Trumm (2016); ONS (2017a). Data coverage: Survey data. 1) Response rate for age: 28% (127 out of 457).

## Sex

The response rate for sex was 35% (information for 158 of 457 candidates surveyed). For the candidates on whom we have information, 37% were women, compared with 51% of the female population in Wales (ONS, 2017a).

## 4.2 National Assembly for Wales Members (AMs)

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This section describes diversity of AMs in the National Assembly for Wales. The observational data covered all AMs who were elected in the 2016 election and at any by-election since then: 61 AMs in total, by the time this report was completed (English, Morales and Sobolewska, 2016).

The protected characteristics analysed in this section were age, race, and sex. Information about religion or belief was only available for five AMs, and the data are insufficient for further analysis. Although the data were available by party, the amount of data available for some characteristics was too low to report them.

### Age

The data coverage for age for AMs was 84% (information for 51 out of 61 AMs). The average age was 51 years.

### Race

The variable used for measuring the ethnicity of AMs was observational and based on whether the AM had publicly self-identified with any ethnic group on any form of public statement.

The data coverage for race was 100%. Among all 61 AMs for whom information was collected there were two ethnic minority AMs (3%). One for the Conservatives (which represents 9% of Conservative AMs) and one for Labour (which represents 3% of Labour AMs). This compares with 5% of the Welsh ethnic minority population (ONS, 2013).

### Sex

The data coverage for sex was 100%. 43% of AMs were women compared with 51% of the population in Wales (ONS, 2017a). There was variation across parties: 50% of Labour AMs, 27% of Conservative AMs and 33% of Plaid Cymru AMs respectively, were women.

## 5 | Diversity at the local level

### Data availability

The availability of data on local government representation was limited and the collection of data was not consistent. The analysis for this report came from a variety of sources. Comparisons with population estimates should be treated with caution for methodological reasons.

There is a lack of systematically collected data available on candidates and councillors in England. For the analysis of diversity of elected English councillors only observational data on sex were available. Data were based on names/photos of the candidates rather than public statements and should therefore be treated with caution. The data coverage rate is 100%. The data analysis here was based on the findings published in a report, as access to the raw data was not possible (Local Government Commission, 2017). We have also included observational data on the diversity of mayoral candidates in England, for which the data coverage rate was 100% (Local Government Commission, 2017).

The data used for the 2017 Scottish local election candidates were drawn from self-reported survey data on the 2017 Scottish local elections. All Scottish local election candidates (2572) were surveyed, and 870 valid responses were received (34%), although this was lower for questions on protected characteristics at around 29%. The protected characteristics analysed were age, disability, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation (Rüdig, 2017).

The information used for analysing the diversity of the elected councillors in Scotland was drawn from a survey (Improvement Service, 2017) with a response rate of 33% (408 responses out of 1227 councillors). The protected characteristics analysed were age, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Two sources were used to assess the diversity of Welsh local election candidates and councillors. Welsh Government survey data provided data on all candidates (3449) elected and unelected (1254), in the 2017 local elections in Wales (Welsh Government, 2017). This was the only example identified of a consistent or uniform attempt from local government authorities to collect data on diversity. The protected

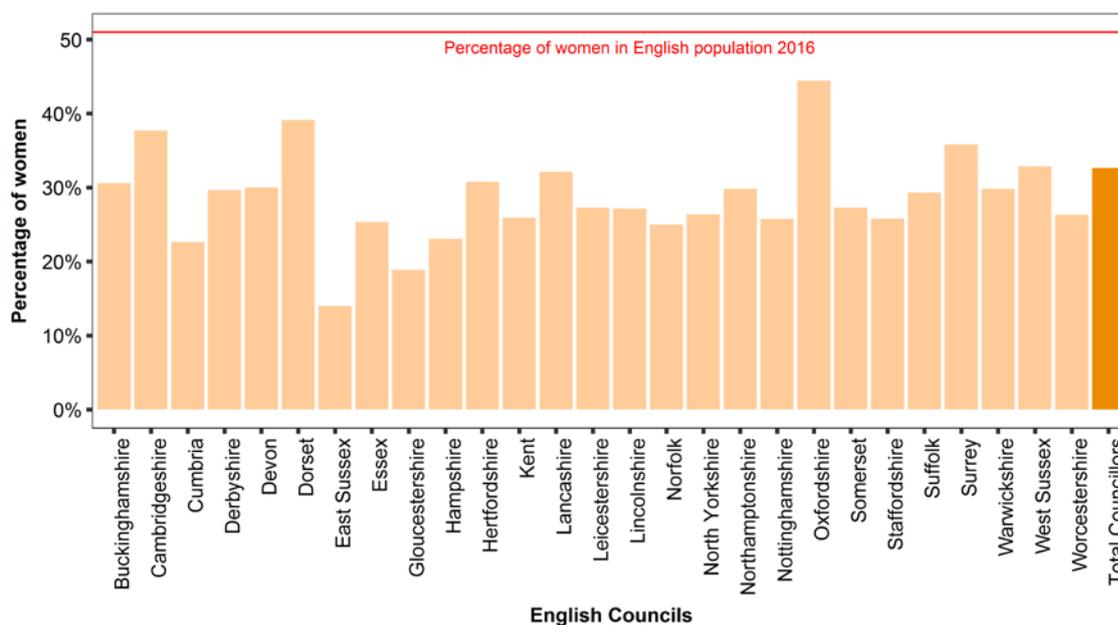
characteristics analysed were age, disability, race, sex and sexual orientation. Observational data on women councillors in Wales were also used (Local Government Commission, 2017).

### 5.1 Councillors and mayoral candidates in England local elections

Of the councillors elected in England, 32% were women, compared with 51% of women in the population in England (ONS, 2017a). This appeared to vary by local authority (See Figure 5.1), but in no counties did the proportion of women councillors approach 50%.

The percentage of women candidates in mayoral elections has fluctuated considerably since 2007 but it is typically around 20% (see Figure 5.2).

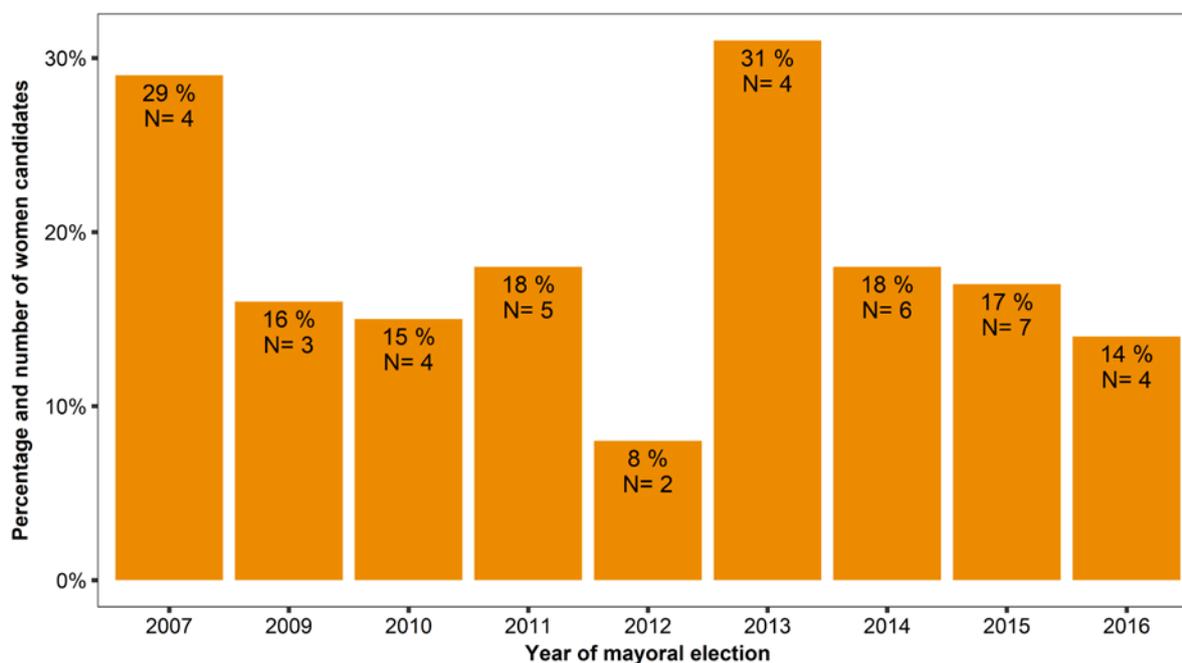
**Figure 5.1 Percentage of female county councillors elected in the 2017 local government elections in England compared with mid-2016 population estimates for England**



Source: Local Government Commission (2017); ONS (2017a). Data coverage: Observational data; 1) Data coverage: 100% (1787 out of 1787 county councillors); 2) Percentage/ Number of Women councillors per county council: 29% (511 out of 1787 county councillors elected); Number of women councillors per county council out of total number of councillors elected: Buckinghamshire = 15 out of 49; Cambridgeshire = 23 out of 61; Cumbria = 19 out of 61; Derbyshire = 19 out of 64; Devon = 18 out of 60; Dorset = 18 out of 46; East Sussex = 7 out of 50; Essex = 19 out of 75; Gloucestershire = 10 out of 53;

Hampshire = 18 out of 78; Hertfordshire = 24 out of 78; Kent = 21 out of 81; Lancashire = 27 out of 84; Leicestershire = 15 out of 55; Lincolnshire = 19 out of 70; Norfolk = 21 out of 84; North Yorkshire = 19 out of 72; Northamptonshire = 17 out of 57; Nottinghamshire = 17 out of 66; Oxfordshire = 28 out of 63; Somerset = 15 out of 55; Staffordshire = 16 out of 62; Suffolk = 22 out of 75; Surrey = 29 out of 81; Warwickshire = 17 out of 57; West Sussex = 23 out of 70; Worcestershire = 15 out of 57.

**Figure 5.2 Percentage of female candidates in mayoral elections in England, 2007–2016**



Source: Local Government Commission (2017). Data coverage: Observational data; 1) Data coverage: 100%.

## 5.2 Candidates and councillors in the Scottish local elections

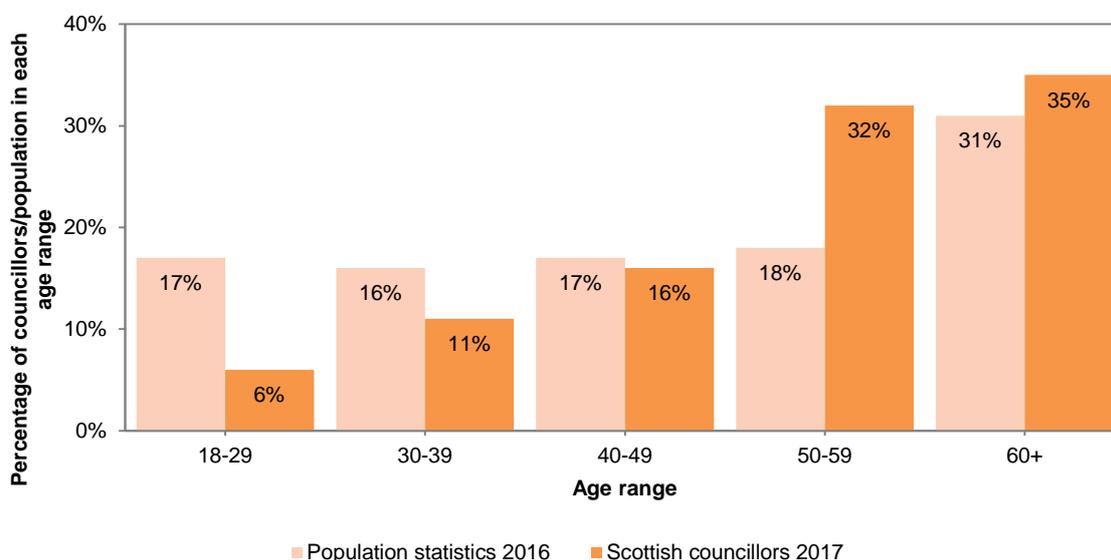
The average age of local candidates who responded to the survey was 54 years. Of candidates who responded (870 out of 2572 candidates surveyed):

- 44% were above 60 years old. This compares with 31% of the population in Scotland who are over 60 years old (ONS, 2017a).
- 29% of the candidates were women. This varied by political party.
- 10% of the candidates considered themselves to have a disability.
- 4% declared that they belonged to an ethnic minority.
- 7% considered themselves to be lesbian, bisexual, and/or transgender.

The average age of elected Scottish councillors who responded was 53 years old. Of councillors that responded (408 responses out of 1227 councillors surveyed):

- 32% were in their 50s. This compares with 18% of the population (ONS, 2017a), see Figure 5.3.
- 33% of councillors were women. This varied by political party.
- Less than 1% were from an ethnic minority background compared with 4% of the population (ONS, 2013).
- 59% said they belonged to a religion compared with 63% of the population in Scotland (ONS, 2011g).
- 8% declared to be gay, lesbian or bisexual compared with 3% of the Scottish population (ONS, 2017b), while 3% preferred not to say.

**Figure 5.3 Age distribution of the councillors in the 2017 Scottish local elections compared with mid-2016 population estimates for Scotland**



Source: Improvement Service (2017); ONS (2017a). Data coverage: Survey data; 1) Response rate for age: 33% (406 out of 1227).

### 5.3 Candidates and councillors in the Welsh local elections

The data for the Welsh Government survey made available by the Local Government Data Unit ~ Wales was not broken down by party. Of candidates who responded to the Welsh Government survey (811 responses out of 3449 candidates surveyed):

- 65% were above 50 years old and 42% were over 60 years old compared with 34% of the population in Wales (ONS, 2017a).
- 30% of the candidates were women.

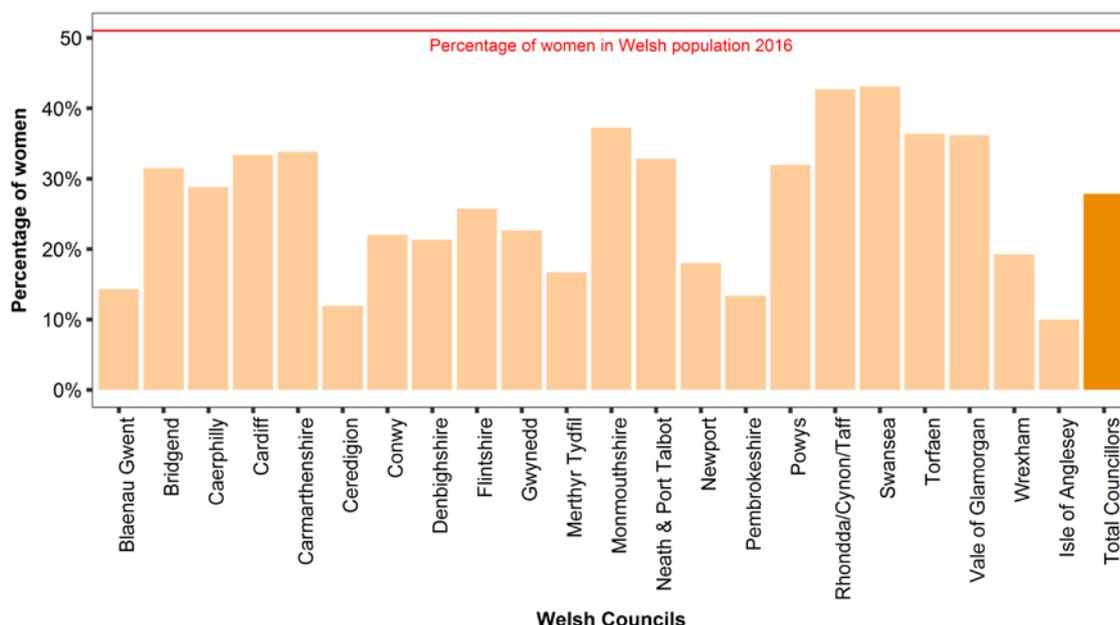
- 21% considered themselves to be disabled compared with 23% of the population in Wales (ONS, 2011d).
- 2% considered themselves to be from an ethnic minority, compared with 5% of the population in Wales (ONS, 2013).
- 63% belonged to a religion, compared with 65% of the population in Wales (ONS, 2011f).
- 8% declared to be gay, lesbian, bisexual or other. Although not directly comparable, the respective population percentage was 2% (ONS, 2017b).

Of councillors that responded to the survey:

- 8% were under 30 years old compared with 17% of the population and 47% were over 60 years old compared with 31% of the population (ONS, 2017a).
- 33% were women, compared with 51% of the population in Wales (ONS 2017a). This varied by local authority (see Figure 5.4).
- 18% considered themselves to be disabled, compared with 23% of the population in Wales (ONS, 2011d).
- 2% considered themselves as belonging to an ethnic minority, compared with 5% of the population in Wales (ONS, 2013)
- 65% had a religious affiliation, this is the same percentage as the population in Wales.
- 7% considered themselves to be gay, lesbian, bisexual or other. Although not directly comparable, this compares with 2% of the population in Wales.

Additionally, the data on the percentage of female councillors elected in the 2017 local elections in Wales (Figure 5.4) indicates that the representation of women in the Welsh councils is still on average below 30%, although in a few councils it reaches 40% (Local Government Commission 2017).

**Figure 5.4 Percentage of female councillors elected in the 2017 local elections in Wales compared with mid-2016 population estimates for Wales**



Source: Local Government Commission (2017); ONS (2017a). Data coverage: Observational and survey data; 1) Percentage of women councillors: 28% (348 out of 1250); 2) Number of women councillors per council: Blaenau Gwent = 6 out of 42; Bridgend = 17 out of 54; Caerphilly = 21 out of 73; Cardiff = 25 out of 75; Carmarthenshire = 25 out of 74; Ceredigion = 5 out of 42; Conwy = 13 out of 59; Denbighshire = 10 out of 47; Flintshire = 18 out of 70; Gwynedd = 17 out of 75; Merthyr Tydfil 5 out of 30; Monmouthshire = 16 out of 43; Neath & Port Talbot = 21 out of 64; Newport = 9 out of 50; Pembrokeshire = 8 out of 60; Powys = 23 out of 72; Rhondda Cynon Taf = 32 out of 75; Swansea 31 out of 72; Torfaen = 16 out of 44; Vale of Glamorgan = 17 out of 47; Wrexham = 10 out of 52; Isle of Anglesey = 3 out of 30.

## 6| Conclusion and recommendations

Diversity of representation is important for the democratic principles of equality, effectiveness, fairness, justice and legitimacy. Existing research has shown that equal representation has positive electoral consequences for the quality of democracy. Communication between the representatives and the represented is improved when they share a common social background, and electoral participation and turnout among the disadvantaged groups can be increased (Mansbridge, 1999; Banducci et al., 2004).

The focus of this report was to examine the available data on the diversity of candidates and elected representatives at UK, national and local elections and identify limitations and gaps. Where data existed, they covered six protected characteristics: age, disability, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

At the time of writing, all available data were compiled and analysed. Serious limitations and deficiencies were identified relating to the availability and quality of the data, the collection processes and the coverage of the various protected characteristics.

Overall, the compilation and analysis of the available data showed that women and minority groups are under-represented at all levels of government in Great Britain. In particular:

- In terms of sex, data confirmed that women remain under-represented at all levels of government. Women candidates and elected officials comprised around one third (30%) of all elected representatives in the House of Commons, the Scottish Parliament and the local level elections. There were more women elected in the National Assembly for Wales (43%). There was some variation by party, yet there is a long way to go before the number of women selected or elected in office is representative of the population.
- The pattern of under-representation was replicated with respect to race. Some parties had a percentage of ethnic minority candidates or elected officials approximately equivalent to the percentage in the population. Overall, however, the number of ethnic minority elected officials remained lower than in the population. In terms of selection, ethnic minority candidates were better represented among the pool of candidates at UK, national and local elections compared with the population. Nevertheless, this did not transfer to levels of representation in elected office that mirrored the percentage of ethnic minority individuals in the population.

- From the data that are available, disabled people are also under-represented. However, there were not enough data to systematically compare the representation of disabled people at all levels of elected office. The percentage of disabled candidates who were selected to run for UK parliament in 2017 by all parties, and elected MPs, was below the percentage in the population. The same applies to disabled candidates and elected representatives at the national and local level elections (where data are available for the latter).
- Those over 50 years old are over-represented, while the younger age groups are under-represented.
- Parties tend to select candidates who are religious at a rate that is representative of the population in Great Britain, yet those elected do not mirror the national population and are less likely to be religious.

This research has identified serious shortcomings in the way in which data about the diversity of candidates and elected representatives are currently collected, collated and reported.

- Data are not systematically gathered and so there is no consistency in data collection processes, resulting in a fragmented picture across protected characteristics with many gaps.
- The data available do not allow confident assessment of the diversity of candidates and elected representatives in Britain. Data on age, race and sex are better covered than data on disability, religion or belief and sexual orientation, but this varies by nation. Data on some of the protected characteristics, like gender reassignment, are not available at all.
- As it is not mandatory, political parties are not reporting on the diversity of their candidates, and neither are the elected bodies (parliaments and councils) systematically collecting this information. The existing data are scattered, relying heavily on surveys by academic researchers and civil society organisations.
- Surveys of election candidates and elected representatives typically have low response rates and are particularly ill-suited for capturing information about protected characteristics, especially when some of these characteristics are shared by small numbers of people (e.g. intersectional data).
- Inconsistent survey design often makes it difficult to make meaningful comparisons between different types of elected bodies, or between the

constituent countries of Great Britain, although academic research has moved towards standardisation of their survey questionnaires.

- Since there is no statutory requirement for surveys to be conducted (other than in the case of Welsh local elections), there is no guarantee that they will be carried out on a regular or continuing basis.
- While a great deal of supplementary information about election candidates and elected representatives has been collected by academic researchers and civil society organisations, such data can never cover all the relevant protected characteristics. It is also inappropriate to place the burden of monitoring equality on academic and civil society researchers.
- These academic and civil society sources also rely on extensive, time-consuming and funding-intensive data-gathering work and there are obvious doubts about their sustainability. Such studies will only be replicated and sustained over time where research funding or organisational capacity permits, thus the future availability of the data is not guaranteed.

Overcoming these deficiencies requires an entirely different approach to data collection, publication and use of information about the protected characteristics of candidates and elected representatives. However, requiring organisations to collect, publish and use equality monitoring information to address disadvantage or under-representation is not new. The specific equality duties for public authorities in England, Scotland and Wales all require the collection, publication and use of information relating to the diversity of their workforce. In addition, the diversity of public appointments is now monitored and data are published. We make four core recommendations to extend progress in this area into the political sphere, as follows.

- 1. The UK Government should bring into force section 106 of the Equality Act 2010.** In doing so, the UK Government should consult on draft regulations requiring political parties to publish information about the protected characteristics of candidates for the UK Parliamentary, National Assembly for Wales and Scottish Parliament elections. This information should include data on the protected characteristics of candidates and a statement about the proportion of candidates who provided this information. While we recognise that the government has been working with political parties to provide these data on a voluntary basis, there is no realistic prospect of data being provided consistently and transparently without some form of statutory requirement to do so.
- 2. The UK Government should consider amending the Equality Act 2010 to include a statutory requirement to collect data on local election candidates.**

The Government should consider setting up a short-life working group, and consult with relevant stakeholders, including the Scottish and Welsh Governments, to inform their decision on whether to extend section 106 to local government elections. We note that independent candidates are more numerous for local elections, and that political party selection processes for local elections are in the main decentralised. Therefore, the UK, Scottish and Welsh Governments should consider what role local councils, and representative bodies like the Local Government Association, COSLA and the Welsh Local Government Association can play in supporting the collation and publication of diversity data.

- 3. The UK Government should work with relevant partners including the Electoral Commission, the Association of Electoral Administrators, the Office of National Statistics, the Scottish Government's Office of the Chief Statistician and other relevant stakeholders to establish a working group to develop guidance for political parties and representative bodies on how to collate and publish diversity data.** There should be comprehensive, practical guidance available for political parties and representative bodies setting out standardised requirements on the collection, publication and use of diversity data, and on how to comply with data protection regulations on processing and handling personal information.

Working group activities could include designing voluntary standardised equality monitoring forms using harmonised categories similar to those used by public and private sector employers, to be included in the nomination pack for candidates; an assessment of resource implications and potential additional funding required from UK and national governments; and consideration of privacy and confidentiality issues to ensure that any data submitted are held in strict accordance with data protection regulations.

- 4. The House of Commons, Scottish Parliament, National Assembly for Wales and all local councils should adopt systems to gather, publish and use information about all the protected characteristics of elected representatives.** While there is no legal requirement on these bodies to monitor and report on diversity and equality it would be relatively straightforward for these bodies to collect and publish monitoring data on the protected characteristics of elected representatives, using the guidance and standardised forms proposed in recommendation 3. It would bring them into line with similar activities undertaken by public bodies in relation to workforce and public appointments monitoring and

would provide data that could be used to monitor progression from aspiring candidate to elected representative.

# Appendix

This section provides a description of the sources used and methods of data collection, including response rates for each level of elections. It also sets out details of the population estimates used in the report. Table A.1 sets out this information, and further details of the measured used, by protected characteristic.

## UK Parliament

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### **2017 UK Parliament candidate data were collected by Dr Jennifer Hudson (UCL) and Prof Rosie Campbell, Leverhulme project (RPG-2013-175).**

Academic research using observational data coded from candidates' personal websites, The Times Guide to the House of Commons and newspaper coverage. Data were collected for all candidates and MPs in Great Britain (3195 candidates and 632 MPs) who stood in the 2017 general election for the seven parties: Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrats, SNP, Plaid Cymru, Green and UKIP. The variables used for the analysis were sex, age and race.

### **Data on Candidates and MPs were collected by Prof Rosie Campbell (Birkbeck), Dr Jennifer Hudson (UCL) and Dr Wolfgang Rüdiger (University of Strathclyde). 2017 Survey of Parliamentary Candidates, Representative Audit of Britain, ESRC project, UCL & Birkbeck (ES/L016508/1).**

Academic research using self-reported data from a postal survey to all candidates in England, Wales and Scotland. The addresses were either provided by the parties (Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrats) or taken from the shared Electoral Commission Statements of the Persons Nominated database. Surveys were sent to candidates and MPs after the general election on 8 June 2017. The overall survey response rate was 53%, 1496 returned surveys in total out of 2825 candidates surveyed, including 179 from MPs. The variables analysed were disability, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

## Scottish Parliament

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**Data on candidates were collected by Dr Wolfgang Rüdig (University of Strathclyde) through a survey of Scottish candidates.**

Academic research funded by the University of Strathclyde, with final data coding and processing carried out for the purposes of this report. Self-reported survey data were used. All candidates (602) in the 2016 Scottish Parliament elections were contacted. The overall response rate (including the candidates who answered a special short survey sent out in early 2017) was 32% (190 valid responses). The response rate was higher from candidates of the major parties represented in parliament (37%) than from smaller parties and independent candidates. The variables analysed were: age, disability, race, religion, sex and sexual orientation.

**Data on MSPs were collected by Patrick English, Prof Laura Morales and Dr Maria Sobolewska through the project 'Pathways to Power: The Political Representation of Citizens of Immigrant Origin in Seven European Democracies (PATHWAYS), ESRC funded research (ES/L016664/1), University of Leicester, University of Manchester and Sciences Po.**

Academic research using observational data coded from the elected members' parliamentary and personal websites, their Facebook and Twitter profiles, newspaper interviews / reports, Wikipedia entries and any other publicly available reliable sources. The data collected and analysed were for 2016 Scottish Parliament members (MSPs). The variables available for analysis were: age, race, religion and sex.

## National Assembly for Wales

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**Data on candidates were collected by Dr Siim Trumm (Nottingham University) through a survey of National Assembly for Wales candidates.**

Academic research using self-reported survey data. Surveys were sent to all candidates in the 2016 National Assembly for Wales elections. The final response rate was 35% (159 out of 457 candidates who stood in both the regional list and for constituency office were accounted for only once). Information was available on sex and age only. It should be noted that the percentage of women in the sample was 37% (the percentage of women among all candidates was 34%) and the average age in the sample was 51 years.

**Data on AMs were collected by Patrick English, Prof Laura Morales and Dr Maria Sobolewska through the project ‘Pathways to Power: The Political Representation of Citizens of Immigrant Origin in Seven European Democracies (PATHWAYS), ESRC funded research (ES/L016664/1), University of Leicester, University of Manchester and Sciences Po.**

Academic research using observational data coded from elected members’ parliamentary and personal websites, their Facebook and Twitter profiles, newspaper interviews / reports, Wikipedia entries and any other publicly available reliable sources. Data were collected for 2016 National Assembly for Wales Members (AMs). The protected characteristics analysed for the National Assembly for Wales members were age, race and sex.

## Local Government

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**Data on candidates and elected councillors in Wales taken from the 2017 Welsh local elections candidate survey carried out by the Welsh Government.**

Self-reported survey data used for this report were early outputs provided by the Local Government Data Unit ~ Wales. All 3449 county candidates were sent a survey (23% maximum response rate for the characteristics analysed), and 1254 elected councillors were surveyed (26% maximum response rate for the characteristics analysed).

**Data on Scottish local election candidates are from the 2017 Scottish Local Election Candidates Survey conducted by Dr Wolfgang Rüdiger, University of Strathclyde, with funding from the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland (70718).**

Academic research using data from postal surveys sent to all Scottish local election candidates (2572). The response rate was 34% (870 out of 2572). Data were collected for the protected characteristics of: age, disability, race, religion, sex and sexual orientation.

**Data on Scottish councillors are from a 2017 survey of Scotland Councillors by the Improvement Service (IS), Scotland.**

Data are drawn from a pre-publication draft of the report as analysed at the time of writing. All 1227 Scottish councillors were surveyed. The overall survey response rate was 33% (408 responses out of 1227). Although raw data were not shared with us, we were provided with the response rate for each protected characteristic

analysed in the report. The protected characteristics analysed were age, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

**Data on women councillors are from a ‘Does local government work for women?’ Local Government Commission (2017) report. London: Fawcett Society.**

An analysis of women councillors in England and Wales in the 2017 local elections. Data were extracted from the report published by the Fawcett Society on women’s representation at various levels of government. The data in the report about women councillors were observational (based on names/photos of the candidates) collected by Nan Sloane, Centre for Women and Democracy. The coverage is 100%. The data analysis was based on the findings published in the report, as access to the raw data was not possible.

## Population estimates

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Census 2011 data are available online from the Office for National Statistics. These data cover all individuals living in England and Wales. The methodology used was household questionnaires by post and online, and door-to-door collection. There was a separate census for Scotland, covering all individuals living in Scotland at the time of census. The protected characteristics available were age, disability, race, religion, sex and sexual orientation.

2016 Mid-year population estimates are available online the Office for National Statistics. Mid-year population estimates are the official source of population sizes in-between censuses and are calculated rolling forward the population found by the previous census, one year at a time by accounting for births, deaths, international migration and internal migration. To accomplish this multiple registration, survey and administrative data sources are used, including the General Register Office (GRO), the International Passenger Survey (IPS), the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), the National Health Service Central Register (NHSCR) and the Ministry of Justice. Variables used are taken from their wording in the Census 2011. Other population data are drawn from the 2016 Annual Population Survey (APS). The APS combines results from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and the English, Welsh and Scottish Labour Force Survey boosts and provides rolling four-quarter labour market information for UK countries, regions and local areas. For Wales, the APS consists of a sample of about 18,000 households every year.

The protected characteristic available for analysis was sexual orientation. The questions used were from the Labour Force Survey questionnaire.

**Table A.1 Data availability by protected characteristic**

Protected characteristic	Level of representation for which data available	Type of data	Question wording and coverage
Age	2017 UK Parliament • Candidates and elected MPs	Academic research Observational data	Candidates and MPs: year of birth • Candidates: Data coverage rate: 28% • MPs: Data coverage rate: 92%
	2016 Scottish Parliament • Candidates and elected MSPs	Academic research Candidates: Survey data MSPs: Observational data	Candidates: 'In which year were you born?' • Response rate: 22% MSPs: year of birth • Data coverage rate: 92%
	2016 National Assembly for Wales • Candidates and elected AMs	Academic research Candidates: Survey data AMs: Observational data	Candidates: In which year were you born? • Response rate: 28% AMs: 'year of birth' • Data coverage rate: 84%
	2017 local government elections – Wales • Candidates and elected councillors	Policy-oriented research Survey data	Candidates and elected councillors: 'What age band were you in on your last birthday?' • Candidates: Response rate: 23% • Elected councillors: Response rate: 26%
	2017 local government elections – Scotland • Candidates and elected councillors	Academic research Candidates: Survey data Policy-oriented research Elected councillors: Survey data	Candidates: In which year were you born? • Response rate: 16% Elected councillors: What was your age last birthday? • Response rate: 33%
	Population data:	Mid-2016 population estimates: official statistics	Mid-2016 population estimates: date of birth

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mid-2016 population estimates</li> </ul>		
Disability	2017 UK Parliament <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidates and elected MPs</li> </ul>	Academic research Survey data	Candidates and MPs: ‘Do you consider yourself to have a disability?’ (Yes/No/Prefer not to say) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidates: Response rate: 24%</li> <li>• MPs: Response rate: 8%</li> </ul>
	2016 Scottish Parliament <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidates</li> </ul>	Academic research Survey data	Candidates: ‘Do you consider yourself to have a disability?’ (Yes/No/Prefer not to say) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Response rate: 22%</li> </ul>
	2017 local government elections – Wales <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidates and elected councillors</li> </ul>	Policy-oriented research Survey data	Candidates and elected councillors: ‘Do you have an illness or disability that limits your activities in any way’ (Yes/No/Prefer not to say) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidates: Response rate: 23%</li> <li>• Elected councillors: Response rate: 26%</li> </ul>
	2017 local government elections – Scotland <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidates</li> </ul>	Academic research Survey data	Candidates: ‘Do you consider yourself to have a disability?’ (Yes/No/Prefer not to say) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Response rate: 17%</li> </ul>
	Population data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2011 Census</li> </ul>	2011 Census: Survey data	2011 Census: ‘Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?’ (Yes, limited a lot / Yes, limited a little / No).
Race	2017 UK Parliament <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidates and elected MPs</li> </ul>	Academic research Observational data	Candidates and MPs: ‘white or BME’ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidates and MPs: Coverage rate: 100%</li> </ul>
	2016 Scottish Parliament <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidates and elected MSPs</li> </ul>	Academic research Candidates: Survey data MSPs: Observational data	Candidates: ‘Do you consider yourself to belong to an ethnic minority?’ (Yes/No/Prefer not to say) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Response rate: 22%</li> </ul> MSPs: ‘Does the MP self-identify as a member of an ethnic minority?’ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data coverage rate: 100%</li> </ul>

	<p>2016 National Assembly for Wales</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elected AMs</li> </ul>	<p>Academic research Observational data</p>	<p>AMs: ‘Does the MP self-identify as a member of an ethnic minority?’</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data coverage rate: 100%</li> </ul>
	<p>2017 local government elections – Wales</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidates and elected councillors</li> </ul>	<p>Policy-oriented research Survey data</p>	<p>Candidates and elected councillors: ‘What is your ethnic group?’ (answers included a long list of White, Mixed, Asian, and Black choices, and Other ethnic group)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Response rate: 23%</li> </ul> <p>Elected councillors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Response rate: 26%</li> </ul>
	<p>2017 local government elections – Scotland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidates and elected councillors</li> </ul>	<p>Academic research Candidates: Survey data Policy-oriented research Elected councillors: Survey data</p>	<p>Candidates: ‘Do you consider yourself to belong to an ethnic minority?’ (Yes/No/Prefer not to say)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Response rate: 17%</li> </ul> <p>Elected councillors: What is your ethnic group? (answers included a long list of categories)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Response rate: 33%</li> </ul>
	<p>Population data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2011 Census</li> </ul>	<p>2011 Census: Survey data</p>	<p>2011 Census: ‘What is your ethnic group?’ (Answers included a long list of categories: White / Mixed / Asian / Black, African, Caribbean, Black British / Other ethnic group)</p>
Religion or belief	<p>2017 UK Parliament</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidates and elected MPs</li> </ul>	<p>Academic research Survey data</p>	<p>Candidates and MPs: ‘Do you consider yourself as belonging to a particular religion?’ (Yes/No/Prefer not to say)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidates: Response rate: 19%</li> <li>• MPs: Response rate: 5%</li> </ul>
	<p>2016 Scottish Parliament</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidates and elected MSPs</li> </ul>	<p>Academic research Survey data</p>	<p>Candidates: ‘Do you consider yourself as belonging to a particular religion?’ (Yes/No/Prefer not to say)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Response rate: 21%</li> </ul>
	<p>2017 local government elections – Wales</p>	<p>Policy-oriented research Survey data</p>	<p>Candidates and elected councillors: ‘What is your religion?’ (answers: No</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Candidates and elected councillors</li> </ul>		Religion/Christian/Buddhist/Hindu/Jewish/Muslim/Sikh/Any other religion) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Candidates: Response rate: 23%</li> <li>Elected councillors: Response rate: 26%</li> </ul>
	2017 local government elections – Scotland <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Candidates and elected councillors</li> </ul>	Academic research Candidates: Survey data  Policy-oriented research: Elected councillors: Survey data	Candidates: ‘Do you consider yourself as belonging to a particular religion?’ (Yes/No/Prefer not to say) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Response rate: 17%</li> </ul> Elected councillors: What religion, religious denomination or body do you belong to? (answers included: None / Church of Scotland / Roman Catholic / Other Christian / Muslim / Buddhist / Sikh / Jewish / Hindu / Pagan / Other (please specify)) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Response rate: 33%</li> </ul>
	Population data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2011 Census</li> </ul>	2011 Census: Survey data	2011 Census: What is your religion? (Answers: No religion; Christian; Buddhist; Hindu; Jewish; Muslim; Sikh; Any other religion).
Sex	2017 UK Parliament <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Candidates and elected MPs</li> </ul>	Academic research Observational data	Candidates and MPs: ‘male or female’ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Candidates: Data coverage rate: 99.9%</li> <li>MPs: Data coverage rate: 100%</li> </ul>
	2016 Scottish Parliament <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Candidates and elected MSPs</li> </ul>	Academic research Candidates: Survey data MSPs: Observational data	Candidates: ‘Do you consider yourself to be ... male, female, other?’ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Response rate: 25%</li> </ul> MSPs: ‘Male’, ‘female’, ‘other’ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data coverage rate: 100%</li> </ul>
	2016 National Assembly for Wales <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Candidates and elected AMs</li> </ul>	Academic research Candidates: Survey data AMs: Observational data	Candidates: ‘Are you male or female?’ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Response rate: 35%</li> </ul> AMs: ‘Male’, ‘female’ or ‘other’ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data coverage rate: 100%</li> </ul>

	2017 local government elections – England • Elected councillors	Policy-oriented research Observational data	Elected councillors: whether elected councillor is a woman <sup>5</sup> • Data coverage rate: 100%
	2017 local government elections – Wales • Candidates and elected councillors	Policy-oriented research Candidates and elected councillors: Survey data Elected councillors (data on women only): Observational data	Candidates and elected councillors: ‘Are you ... male, female?’ • Candidates: Response rate: 22% • Elected councillors: 25% Elected councillors (data on women only): whether the elected councillor is a woman • Data coverage rate: 100%
	2017 local government elections – Scotland • Candidates and elected councillors	Academic research Candidates: Survey data  Policy-oriented research Elected councillors: Survey data	Candidates: ‘Do you consider yourself to be ... male, female, other?’ • Response rate: 17% Elected councillors: Which one of the following best describes your gender? (answers included: Female / Male / In another way / Prefer not to say / If you describe your gender with another term, please provide this here) • Response rate: 33%
	Population data: • Mid-2016 population estimates	Mid-2016 population estimates: official statistics	Mid-2016 population estimates: sex = ‘Male’ or ‘Female’
Sexual orientation and	2017 UK Parliament • candidates and elected MPs	Academic research Survey data	Candidates and MPs: ‘Do you consider yourself to be lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender?’ (Yes/No/Prefer not to say) • Candidates: Response rate: 24% • MPs: Response rate: 8%

<sup>5</sup> Data were collected by the Fawcett Society using name and picture and, where pictures weren’t available, web searches or an image.

gender reassignment	2016 Scottish Parliament	Academic research	Candidates: ‘Do you consider yourself to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender?’ (Yes/No/Prefer not to say) • Response rate: 20%	
	• Candidates	Survey data		
	2017 local government elections – Wales	Policy-oriented research		Candidates and elected councillors: ‘Do you consider yourself to be ... heterosexual or straight, gay or lesbian, bisexual, other?’ • Candidates: Response rate: 23% • Elected councillors: Response rate: 26%
	• Candidates and elected councillors	Survey data		
2017 local government elections – Scotland	Academic research	Candidates and elected: Survey data	Candidates: ‘Do you consider yourself to be ... lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender?’ • Response rate: 17% Elected councillors: Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation? (answers included: Heterosexual/Straight / Gay/Lesbian / Bi/Bisexual / Prefer not to say / If you prefer to use another term, please provide this here) • Response rate: 33%	
• Candidates and elected councillors	Policy-oriented research Elected councillors: Survey data			
Population data:	2016 Annual population survey	2016 Annual population survey: Sample-based survey	2016 Annual Population Survey: ‘I will now read out a list of terms people sometimes use to describe how they think of themselves’ (answers included: Heterosexual or Straight; Gay or Lesbian; Bisexual; Other)	
• 2016 Annual population survey				

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