



**Laidlaw Scholars Undergraduate Leadership and Research  
Programme**  
**Research Report**

**Why are there so few women as metro mayors?  
Exploring the gender disparity in local and devolved politics in  
England**

**Caitlin Prescott**

**Research Advisor: Syeda Ali**

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**UNIVERSITY OF  
CAMBRIDGE**

## **Abstract**

This project aimed to explore why so few of the metro mayors in England have been women, despite devolution occurring at a time where there was a concerted push for increasing the representation of women within politics. Metro mayors, and English devolution more broadly, remains a new and under-researched area, particularly regarding gender disparities. This project aims to address that research gap by analysing the causes of this underrepresentation and to put forward possible solutions to reduce the gender disparity within local politics.

This project uses a mixed methods approach to contextualise quantitative trends and explore real life experiences and insights, which informed a richer conclusion than would have been gained from sticking to a single method. Quantitative methods were used to analyse tenure and experience of previous metro mayors; this was coupled with qualitative personal interviews, reports and public statements that could offer a first-hand perspective in explaining the barriers women face in accessing regional leadership roles.

This research highlights how devolution has failed at multiple stages to be a process that is fair and representative for women; even as representation is finally increasing, trends regarding expected experience continue to exclude women from a political system built by and for men. These 'New Politics' institutions have reflected and reinforced structural and cultural barriers at a council level whilst overlooking women's inclusion in their creation. The set up of devolved institutions fostered an environment in which no woman was elected as metro mayor until 2021. Combined authority boards also resisted attempts to rebalance these gender divides, both the product and the tool of a culture in local politics that deprioritises the fair representation of women.

Addressing these issues require an acknowledgement of the systemic barriers embedded in devolved institutions but also proactive structural and cultural reforms to tackle the widespread underrepresentation of women in devolved politics. Bold reforms at both a council and devolved levels are needed if metro mayorships are to fulfil their democratic promise of fair, representative, and inclusive governance.

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Figure 1: An area graph to show the number of women as metro mayors in relation to the growth of the role over time.

## **Introduction**

English devolution heralded a new dawn of regional politics and an opportunity to reshape the demographics and male dominance of the political landscape. For the first time, directly elected mayors outside of London could exert authority over large combined authority areas; this opened the door for a new, more personal style of local politics. Executive powers and funding for strategic decisions could now be made by people in the regions impacted which allowed for a new wave of local politicians to rise to prominence.<sup>i</sup> Yet rather than breaking down the patterns of local government, devolution overwhelmingly reproduced them: the longstanding male dominance of council leadership roles carried over into the new mayoralties, sustaining the gender bias that has limited women's opportunities to become mayors.

Despite English devolution's emergence at a time of initiatives and pushes for women in politics, with the first elections for non-London Metro Mayors occurring in 2017, no woman was elected metro mayor in the first four years of these roles' existence. It was not until Tracy Brabin's 2021 assumption to the role of Metro Mayor of West Yorkshire that a woman held one of the new mayoral roles; as of the 2025 round of local elections, five of the fourteen Metro Mayors are women. Since their inauguration, only 10.4% of the aggregate time served by metro mayors has been served by a woman, demonstrating that the development of English devolution has been damaging to female representation within politics.<sup>ii</sup> Structural and cultural barriers in devolved politics must be addressed if women are to have fair and equal representation at a mayoral level. The 'devolution revolution' promised by the current government makes recognising these issues all the more important as Metro Mayorships are set to grow in prominence and extend across England (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2024).

This research examines factors that may contribute to this disparity at a devolved and local level, with the aim of identifying barriers to fairer democratic representation.

## **Methodology**

The main motivator for this project arose from the scarcity of research and data on the lack of women as metro mayors. This meant that the mixed-methods approach was adopted, integrating available reports, numerical data and oral history interviews with councillors; this analysis could then encompass both thematic and quantitative trends.

Quantitative data was collected from records of office tenure and public information regarding mayors' previous careers. The small sample size meant that all past and present Metro and London Mayors were included in the data set. This data was analysed and coded within Excel. Further data on local councils was extracted from reports and The Fawcett Society.

Qualitative data was gathered through semi-structured interviews, which explored gender and leadership, with councillors and council leaders. Participants were

selected through purposeful sampling based on leadership roles and wider council make-up. Personal perspectives were also collected through the media and public statements. Furthermore, reports and articles on the issues of gender in local politics have also been analysed to add to the depth of qualitative analysis.

The use of mixed methods allowed me to contextualise quantitative trends and realise day-to-day impacts that informed a richer conclusion than one method would have reached alone.

The data table that I assembled does take London into account despite the mayoral role arising separately from the English devolution within the 'Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016'. London's mayoral post over the Greater London Authority was established in 2000; the next sweep of mayors was only elected in 2017. My focus is on this later wave of devolution as systemic issues are better shown through the establishment of six new mayoralities rather than through the adaption of a single post. The fact London, the authority with the greatest population, has never had a woman as mayor is something that should be represented when looking at gender and mayorships. Therefore, it is in the data set, but the main discussion of this project looks at the creation and maintenance of mayoral posts outside of the capital.

With only five of the twenty-three metro mayors being women, sample size limits comparisons between the sexes. Nevertheless, differences in experience and tenure are sufficiently clear to allow some quantitative conclusions.

### **Difficult starting points**

Devolution arose from a difficult starting point regarding female representation; local and regional politics have long been heralded as 'blokey' and masculine with low numbers of women in councils and campaigns (Pidd, 2016). Throughout the 1980s, movements for local power rose in retaliation to Thatcher's sweeping cuts, especially in the North. Lucy Robinson, a historian who's specialises in identity politics and the political left, writes that regions responded with a 'working-class masculinity' being used as an identity challenge to Thatcher's Britain (Robinson, 2007, p.100). Groups, such as Liverpool's Militant movement, 'performed a working-class masculinity that became publicly recognisable' as standing in opposition to the Conservative government of the time (Robinson, p.100). Led by Derek Hatton, accused of 'bringing the macho, the street and the football stadium into the professional world of local government', Militant stood up for the working man but made little reference to women or gendered struggles (Robinson, 2007, p.140). It would be these movements for 'Northern Independence', local power and strands of socialism that would evolve into the calls in the 2000s for English devolution. This meant that these local movements that had traditionally excluded women and ignored gender discrimination, viewing it as more minor problem in the face of deeper regional and class divisions, were direct influences of the modern devolved system (Robinson, 2007). The present Labour

movement still heralds its roots 'in the traditionally male-dominated world of trade unions' that has embedded a 'macho' culture according to Sue Derbyshire, a Liberal Democrat leader of Stockport Council (Pidd, 2016). Statistics from other parties, including Derbyshire's own Liberal Democrat's, show that they are even worse in gender representation. But Labour's roots are significant as the areas that were first devolved were predominantly northern, working-class areas that Labour dominated. This meant that without a concerted challenge, this 'macho' culture carried through into the new combined authorities. The overrepresentation of men in both councils and later combined authorities is a symptom of this historic male-dominated culture of local politics.

### **Gender imbalance within councils**

The existence of this masculine domination at a local level is further encouraged by the disproportionate male command within councils both as council members but especially in council leadership. As of 2024, around 41% of English local authority councillors are women; this is higher than the UK average of 36% but still significantly less than gender parity (Buchanan, 2025). This representation is in tandem with the proportion of women within Parliament; however, it is growing at a much slower pace at a council level. The proportion of women in council roles has only risen by 2 percentage points since 2018 whereas in the House of Commons, it has risen by 8 percentage points (The Fawcett Society [Fawcett], 2023). Local systems that are dominated by incumbency and hierarchy networks have found gender rebalance more difficult than national parliaments in recent years. When addressing council leadership, the gender disparities become even more stark. Only 17% of UK local authority leaders and 33% of council chief executives are women (Fawcett, 2017). This is a direct cause of the low number of women as metro mayors as women are being denied leadership opportunities at a local level. This unrepresentative result is caused by cultural, structural and systemic issues that have consistently prevented women's representative parity at a local level.

Structural barriers prevent equal representation within councils as they deter women with families by making both the election and day-to-day role inhospitable to those with other responsibilities. In 2017, at the time when the first Combined Authorities were electing mayors, only 4% of councils had formal maternity, paternity or adoption policies (Fawcett, 2017). This has risen to 48% after a push from the local government authority but still leaves the majority of councillors unsupported in parental arrangements (Local Government Association [2024], 2024). This figure is also massively variable based on council type with only 35% of unitary councils having

policies in place (LGA, 2024); unitary councils cover larger areas predominantly in the North and the West of the England, where many areas now have devolution agreements. A lack of maternity cover is a component of the 'motherhood penalty' that leaves women struggling to juggle availability and high costs related to childcare which leaves 10% of women quitting completely and many more passing on career opportunities (Wood, 2023). The legacy of a lack of support for women councillors has therefore fed into these Combined Authorities. Due to British politicians not having statutory rights in their employment, as they are elected office-holders rather than employees, 'councillors exist in a unique grey area in regards to their employment status' that unless tackled, will continue to shut women out of local politics (LGA, 2024, p.2). When a councillor role is incompatible with starting a family, this drives down women's representation (LGA, 2024). Tracy Brabin, the first woman elected as metro mayor, identified a lack of compatibility of council roles with family life as one of the key reasons women are underrepresented in local politics (Fawcett, 2022). The structural problems in councils, that make parental and caring roles difficult in some councils and incompatible in others, are one cause of women's underrepresentation in local politics.

Incumbency's significant benefit to male councillors prevents another structural barrier to equal female representation within councils. Men are significantly more likely to remain as an incumbent in council elections with women significantly more likely to drop out after serving one term (Maguire, 2018). The chance of a councillor being re-elected to their seat in any given council is 80%; this means that redressing the male-dominated status quo is slow and difficult (Maguire, 2018). The Fawcett Society suggest that measures such as term limits are needed in order to remove this 'significant barrier to change' and to encourage women to run in a wider selection of seats (Fawcett, 2017, p.7). Incumbency and longer terms are critical in councillors building up networks with other councillors and external organisations. Leadership bids require broad party support and endorsement from other council figures, this means connections and networks are key to ascend to council leadership; if women are building less networks, then their ability to control a council is hindered. Structural barriers prevent women from becoming councillors, but cultural challenges and wider systemic problems also contribute.

Cultural barriers also play a significant role in preventing women running and then remaining as a councillor. A survey by the Fawcett Society (2017) found that 40% had faced sexist remarks from other councillors and that the varying councillor codes of conduct meant that there's was no requirement "to promote equality to prohibit sex discrimination". The report goes on to evidence "a macho, combative culture in many council chambers, which holds women back from contributing" (Fawcett, 2017). If a

culture, that has continued from the traditional 'macho' local politics, is enabled by a lack of recognition and punishment, then women are bound to be put off running both for election and reelection (Pidd, 2016). This culture requires challenging both through codes of conduct but also by example through leadership and broader representation of women. In my interviews with local councillors, women pointed to the generative impact of having women in leadership; both Cllr Dad and Mayor Tweddle pointed to be encouraged by other women leaders to originally apply to leadership positions (N. Dad, personal interview, 2025; N. Tweddle, personal interview, 2025).<sup>iii</sup> As council remain dominated by men, sexist culture and closed networks can discourage women councillors and mean peer-decided leadership enables the gender imbalance.

Systemic issues that more widely prevent women from standing for political positions also pervade council elections with limited financial resources coupled with societal expectations of caring responsibilities resulting in women lacking the resources to stand for office. Women are simultaneously less likely to be employed than men and make up 71% if part time workers; this results in median weekly pay for men being 15% higher than that of women (Francis-Devine et al., 2025). This leads to a lack of financial resources in comparison to men which inhibits the ability to run for office because campaigning can lead to reduced working hours that may require a reliance on savings (Maguire, 2018). A role as an office holder is not only dependent on financial resources but also the flexibility afforded by one's private life, which for women is often less than that of a man. The time required to campaign and then hold office is largely incompatible with the caring role often expected of women in society (Culhane & Olchawski, 2018). Meetings are often held in early evenings to allow working attendance but then clash with the schedules of many families; Fawcett's survey revealed 2/3rds of councillors believing that adapting these meeting times could bring in more women (Fawcett, 2017). Women are simultaneously less likely to have the financial resources or the flexibility in caring roles that allow them to run for a council role. All of these factors combine to create a council system in which it is difficult to be a woman and a councillor which then results in a gender imbalance.

### **Women & Council Leadership**

These barriers to women's membership of councils are intensified when it comes to leadership. The underrepresentation of women coupled with a 'macho' culture combines to help form these low statistics; council leaders chosen by their peers, reliant on informal networks and patronage that have traditionally excluded women. Whether a woman becomes council leader often relies on her respect in the workplace, which when working in a what can be a 'macho, combative culture' may present difficult

challenges (Fawcett, 2017). The structural issue of incumbency, as mentioned earlier, is another factor that keeps women out of leadership as councillors that have accumulated experience and networks over multiple terms are more likely to be promoted to leadership roles. This leaves women at a disadvantage when it comes to leadership opportunities, and this is only exacerbated by a male-dominated culture that fails to equally appreciate policy areas that are more commonly associated with women.

Women are a lot more likely to be pigeonholed as deputy leaders, their ability recognised but swayed away from the top job (Rustin, 2017). Judith Blake, the first woman to lead Leeds City Council, attributes this to women being seen as more suited to the deputy role, influenced by women's traditional experience in social and children's care as opposed to finance and regeneration that other councillors will prioritise when picking a leader (Rustin, 2017). Women do not become leaders of councils as they are often not seen to have enough experience and are excluded from male-led networks who preside over such decisions. Councillor Nosheen Dad, a member of Kirklees Council, explained that when she decided to run for a council position, she was met with an all-male group of the local Labour Party who resisted the proposal (personal interview, 2025). Even when women do have leadership and cabinet experience, it is more likely to be in the social and childcare roles that are less valued for leadership potential by fellow councillors as opposed to leadership in areas such as finance or infrastructure. This pigeonholing directly reduces women's access and ability to be considered by their peers for leadership roles related to the combined authorities.

When women do serve in cabinets at a council level, it is disproportionately in roles related to childcare, social care, community and education; this is opposed to the economic development which is a focus of the Northern powerhouse and early devolution agreements. This can be based on women's likelihood on having previous careers in this area but also perceptions on what a woman's nature will lend itself to. Taking the predominance of women in council cabinet roles relating to social care in comparison to other posts, it could be dictated by 83% of social care workers being women in England, in 2022, with this rising to 87.4% in children's services (Koutsounia, 2024). But councillors that I interviewed and wider studies also pointed to the widely held societal view that women are more caring and empathetic than men, therefore suiting these roles dealing with vulnerable populations (Schmader & Block, 2025). As Cllr Dad (personal interview, 2025) pointed out, it is not inherently a problem that women are fulfilling these leadership positions however, it becomes an issue if women are 'pigeonholed' into the leadership roles that did not translate to career opportunities within the Northern Powerhouse and combined authorities (Rustin, 2017). Economic

roles were the original focus of the Northern Powerhouse and that then translated into a similar focus of combined authority bodies; women had limited leadership opportunities in this area meaning leadership roles have repeatedly gone to more experienced men instead. This is clearly demonstrated with the Northern Powerhouse being signed exclusively by men and seeing 72% of senior leadership positions within the project go to men (Trenow & Olchawski, 2016). The Northern Powerhouse and later combined authorities had a predominant economic and industrial focus, an area which favoured men in leadership due to systemic access to experience and cultural perceptions of skill sets. This meant men dominated early combined authorities' leadership and would have the knock-on impact of shutting women out of combined authority boards entirely.

This lack of women in leadership roles within councils directly reduces women's representation on combined authority boards. For example, following the inaugural metro mayoral election in Liverpool, no woman sat on the board for a number of years (Lewis, 2017). Furthermore, Steve Rotherham's attempt to redress this imbalance by co-opting two women onto the board, as portfolio holders, in 2017 was rebuffed by other male board members; this was a clear demonstration of the lack of recognition for the necessity of female representation by inaugural members (Lewis, 2017). Devolved constitutions often statute that boards should be made up of council leaders which creates a representation problem because the number of women council leaders is disproportionately low. Mayors and boards do have tools available to redress gender imbalances with many constitutions enabling portfolio holders, non-council leaders with wider expertise, to also sit on these panels. However, as shown in Liverpool, attempts to do this broadly failed leaving the male-dominated leadership of councils to directly cause a lack of women's representation on combined authority boards. It has also starved women of experience that could have enabled them to run for a mayoral position in subsequent years. Women are not in mayoral roles, board roles or portfolio-holder roles leaving women's representation within the English devolution system to be disproportionately low.

### **Failure of 'new politics'**

All of these barriers to women's equal inclusion in local political positions are examples of how the new devolved era of English politics has not been designed with women in mind and has instead harmed female representation. Devolution and the phrase 'new politics' have often been used together to signal the opportunities newer institutions bring in upending informal networks and structures that have previously dictated who got elected (McMillan & Fox, 2010). However, a lack of recognition of women's absence and promotion of gender equality, these devolved structures can be seen to have

cemented existing structures instead (Fawcett, 2017). Devolution institutions and agreements were designed and agreed upon by men, often behind closed doors, excluding scrutiny that may have pressured action on female representation before (Pidd, 2016). Instead, Gemma Rosenblatt, Fawcett Society Head of Policy and Campaigns, said: 'Devolution is looking like old politics not new – with power in the hands of men' (Fawcett, 2019). Cat Smith, the Labour MP for Lancaster and Wyre, furthered this last year when she opposed a devolution model in her area because it “risked undoing” advances in women's political representation’ because mayoral positions are skewed to favour men (Millson, 2024). When devising English devolution, there was an institutional failure to recognise or address the limited representation of women at a local level and therefore a failure to promote gender equality when presented with an opportunity to.

This institutional failure built upon years of women being underrepresented within local politics and local industry initiatives caused the predominance of men in both metro mayorships, and their wider team. As seen in Figure 1, all of the inaugural metro mayors were men and this remained the case until 2021. The gender imbalance was compounded with 94% of the new Metro Mayor teams being male along with the original new 6 Metro Mayors (Lewis, 2017). This arose from the new mayors both ‘working with an intensely male-dominated local political scene’ but also a decision not to seek out female representation in metro mayors’ larger advisory staff (Lewis, 2017). This had a generative impact of shutting women out of potential experience opportunities that could have enabled them to rise to a mayorship role or sit on a combined authority board as a portfolio holder. The gender imbalance is slowly being redressed; however, years of men dominating the devolved system means that women are playing catch-up as new leadership trends for men emerge.

Change is occurring slowly with the representation of women in Metro Mayor positions with the last four years seeing five women elected to these roles. This has brought representation of women to 5 out of 14 metro mayors. However, a new trend of disparity is emerging. In elections of new eight new metro mayors since 2022, the elections following Brabin’s 2021 historic win, there is a stark difference in political experience between men and women. The four new male Mayors (Coppard, Skaith, Bowles and Campbell) have never served as MPs or councillors; breaking the trend of extensive experience of previous mayors, none of the four have come from political backgrounds. In contrast, all of the new woman elected as Metro Mayors (McGuinness, Ward, Jenkyns and Godwin) have served in either parliament or at council level with Ward and Jenkyns serving in both. Women candidates have greater expectations placed upon them in regard to experience, making it easier for men to be elected and sustain the gender imbalance; this is a trend becoming clearer at a metro mayor level.

This follows the trend throughout the Western world of women needing higher qualifications to gain confidence and support to seek office; this leaves female candidates more tied to their experience than their male counterparts (Bauer, 2020). This is a process simultaneously reinforced by female candidates being held, by voters, to more stringent qualifications whilst also having less confidence in their own ability to run for office (Bauer, 2020; Lawless & Fox, 2008). This has a knock-on impact on party selection as, if through the eyes of voters, women are seen as a riskier choice then this harms women's ability to run for office (Pansardi & Pinto, 2024). These factors come together to leave women to still rely on having a political background in the same institutions that women are traditionally underrepresented within. Having political experience when running for mayorship aids in voters trust in a candidate but when only one gender seems to be tied to this requirement, it becomes an active barrier that women face. This trend of inexperienced men increasingly being elected helps in maintaining the gender imbalance of mayorships. To combat this lack of women elected as metro mayors, a structural and cultural change is needed.

## **Potential Solutions**

Many structural solutions begin in reshaping councils and parliament, the breeding ground of all of the current women serving as metro mayors, to allow them to accommodate women with caring responsibilities and encourage leadership roles. Crèche facilities, more accommodating sitting hours and remote voting should be accommodated at a legislative level with women aided and supported into leadership and committee roles (Maguire, 2018). But the problem calls for reform beyond simply accommodation within existing institutions, women need to be actively promoted and encouraged into metro mayor roles to redress the discouragement they received when the roles were created. Job sharing, allowing two or more people to take on a mayoral role, is a more radical solution but this would allow both role flexibility and a chance to appeal to a broader voter base (Bauer, 2020). Women also need to be included in broader Combined Authorities boards through greater legal and constitutional ability to co-opt members onto these platforms; this would enable boards to redress their gender imbalance and members of boards should be actively encouraged to take up this opportunity (Lewis, 2017). Parties also need to be encouraged to get more women involved in politics at a local level, ending the chokehold male-dominated networks can still hold over local candidacy selection. Councillor Dad (personal interview, 2025) explained how she has experienced networks of men who have large control over candidate selection at a local level; it is only through initial catalyst from parties, e.g. women only shortlists, that challenge these networks and promote wider cultural change. Women only shortlists have aided this at a council level but are unsuitable when it comes to candidate selection for a single mayoral role so 'change has to come from altering the pipeline' of women getting to this point (Lewis, 2017). Systemic shifts need to occur to let women have a fair chance when it comes to candidacy for mayoral

roles, but these changes also need to be accompanied with fresh perspective on the societal role of combined authorities.

Change is also required in the cultural recognition and purpose of combined authorities as devolution evolves beyond the model set forward by the male-dominated Northern Powerhouse. Combined authorities were constructed by men, in private, to address the challenges raised in movements, that had also traditionally been led by men. The Fawcett Society was warning in 2016 that the Northern Powerhouse's physical infrastructure and STEM focus was leading to a male focus that, without challenge, would be translated into the devolution deals at the time (Trenow & Olchawski, 2016). As many care policies remain at a council level, women remain underserved by their combined authorities; Councillor Dad (personal interview, 2025) points to this as a reason combined authority powers should shift and expand to promote gender equality. Rather than have women fit into the expected mould of combined authorities, expansion of devolved powers could promote areas where traditionally women have more leadership experience. As devolution expands, taking on greater caring and educational roles, such as Greater Manchester's greater powers in education and young people, may allow for more women from councils to take up leadership positions that align with their previous roles and experience. As devolved power expands, it should look to how it can serve all its constituents rather than just the men that it was created by and for.

## **Conclusions**

Devolution has failed at multiple stages to be a process that is fair and representative for women and now, even as female representation is finally increasing, trends regarding expected experience continue to plague a political system built by and for men. English devolution and metro mayor roles were constructed almost exclusively by men, despite the Northern Powerhouse agreements occurring in the mid 2010s and overlooked the centuries of male-domination of local politics from where these new positions would arise. This ultimately curated an environment in which all metro mayors would be men until 2021. This male-dominated local landscape was only compounded by wider societal expectations of women in leadership that makes it more difficult for women to run for office. Combined authority constitutions were inflexible and unaccommodating to attempts to rebalance gender divides through portfolio roles; they were both the product and the tool of a culture in local politics that did not prioritise the fair representation of women.

English devolution and the creation of metro mayor roles were implemented within a political landscape historically dominated by men, reflecting and reinforcing structural and cultural barriers that have long limited women's participation in local politics. Combined authority constitutions and council networks have perpetuated male dominance by privileging prior political experience, informal male-led networks, and roles traditionally held by men. As a result, women have been systematically underrepresented in leadership positions, pigeonholed into social and care portfolios, and excluded from the economic and infrastructure roles that shape regional policy. While female representation has begun to increase in recent years, women continue to face higher experience expectations and limited access to leadership pathways, creating persistent inequalities in both opportunity and political influence. Addressing these disparities requires not only the acknowledgment of the systemic barriers embedded in devolved institutions but also proactive structural and cultural reforms, such as more flexible leadership pathways, targeted promotion of women candidates, and inclusive design of combined authority boards. Only through such reforms can devolution fulfil its promise of fair, representative, and inclusive governance, ensuring that women have both the opportunity and the support to participate fully in regional leadership.

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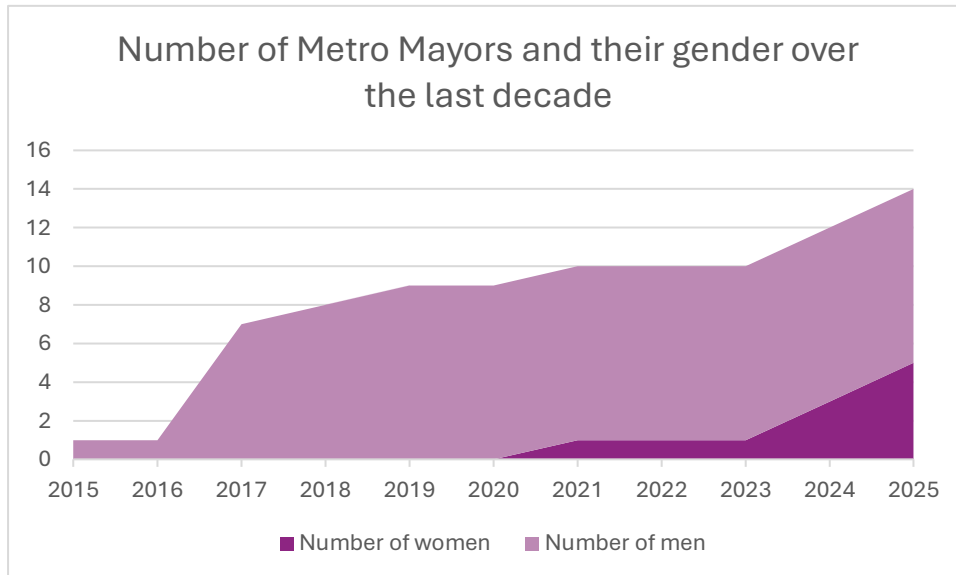
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## Figures

**Figure One**



*The gender of metro mayors over time*

## Appendices

## Appendix A

Name	Sex	Date	MP?	Years as an MP	Councillors?	Years as a Councillor	Childcare, Social Care, Education or Women-related role
Ken Livingstone	M	2000-2008	Y	14	Y	13	N
Boris Johnson	M	2008-2016	Y	7	N	0	N
Sadiq Khan	M	2016-	Y	11	Y	12	N
Andy Burnham	M	2017-	Y	16	N	0	Y
James Palmer	M	2017-2021	N	0	Y	10	N
Nik Johnson	M	2021-2025	N	0	Y	3	N
Paul Bristow	M	2025-	Y	4	Y	4	N
Steve Rotherham	M	2017-	Y	7	Y	7	N
Ben Houchen	M	2017-	N	0	Y	6	N
Andy Street	M	2017-2024	N	0	N	0	N
Richard Parker	M	2024-	N	0	N	0	N
Tim Bowles	M	2017-2021	N	0	Y	6	N
Dan Norris	M	2021-2025	Y	13	Y	2	N
Helen Godwin	F	2025 -	N	0	Y	6	Y
Dan Jarvis	M	2018 - 2022	Y	7	N	0	N
Oliver Coppard	M	2022 -	N	0	N	0	N
Jamie Driscoll	M	2019-2024	N	0	Y	1	N
Tracy Brabin	F	2021-	Y	5	N	0	Y
Kim McGuinness	F	2024-	N	0	Y	4	N
Claire Ward	F	2024-	Y	13	Y	3	N
David Skaith	M	2024-	N	0	N	0	N
Andrea Jenkyns	F	2025-	Y	9	Y	4	Y
Luke Campbell	M	2025-	N	0	N	0	N

The table that I assembled to track the sex, tenure and previous experience of all 23 former metro mayors. The ‘Childcare, Social Care, Education or Women-related role’ looked at all availed employment and political histories of mayors previous roles up until taking up mayorship.

<sup>i</sup> The Centre for Cities defines a metro mayor as: ‘A metro mayor is the directly-elected leader of a big city. They have executive powers and funding available to make strategic decisions over a range of issues including skills, public transport, planning, and in some cases crime and health. Metro mayors’ powers stem from being the chair of the city’s combined authority, which is a structure composed of the borough councils of each city that allows them to work together with the metro mayor. The Mayor of London has a similar role but a distinct governing structure.’ (“Everything you need to know about metro mayors, 2025).

<sup>ii</sup> Allowing for those elected in 2025 to have served a year, between all the metro mayors (inc London), 106 years of mayorship have been served. Only 11 of those years have seen women in the role meaning that 89.6% of time served has been by a man. As shown in Figure 1

<sup>iii</sup> Mayor Naomi Tweddle of Lincoln Council, in particular, spoke highly of the successful push for women’s representation in Lincoln Council that had enabled her to reach the position as council leader. The City of Lincoln Council has both a woman as mayor and deputy mayor and is situated within the Greater Lincolnshire Combined Authority that also bucks the national trend with a woman as metro mayor and deputy mayor.