

Gender and the Northern Ireland 2014 Local Elections

The 2014 local elections to 11 new councils will take place on 22 May, and the final candidate information is now available on Council websites. Of the 906 candidates, 222 (24.5%) are women (Table 1). Belfast City, with 43 women (31%) has the highest proportion of women running for election. Causeway Coast and Glens has the next largest number of women candidates, 23. Proportionally, though, it ties with Fermanagh and Omagh, as women making up 28% of candidates in both races. Fermanagh and Omagh has a smaller number of candidates, with 48 men and 19 women running for a council seat. Antrim and Newtownabbey offer voters the least choice in terms of candidate gender, numerically and proportionally. Only 13 women made it onto the ballot for this council, compared with 60 men. This makes women's share of candidacies just 18% - a long way from the now-accepted minimum threshold of 30%.

Table 1: Northern Ireland Local Election Candidates 2014, by gender

	Seats	Candidates	Men	Women	% Women
Belfast City	60	141	98	43	31
Fermanagh and Omagh	40	67	48	19	28
Causeway Coast and Glens	40	83	60	23	28
Armagh, Banbridge, Craigavon	41	83	62	21	25
Lisburn and Castlereagh	40	83	62	21	25
Mid Ulster	40	63	48	15	24
Newry, Mourne and Down	41	68	52	16	24
North Down and Ards	40	87	67	20	23
Derry and Strabane	40	74	59	15	20
Mid and East Antrim	40	84	68	16	19
Antrim and Newtownabbey	40	73	60	13	18
TOTAL	462	906	684	222	25

Source: Local Council and Electoral Office websites (1 May 2014)

The 11 councils contain 80 District Electoral Areas (DEA), 10 in Belfast City Council and 7 in the other 10 Councils. Two DEAs will have no women on the ballot: Larne Lough (Mid East and Antrim Council) and Rowallone (Newry, Mourne and Down Council). However, 12 DEAs will have 5 or more women seeking election (Table 2). In these areas, women comprise at least one-third of the candidates seeking election, and men make up at least 66%.

Table 2: District Electoral Areas with 5 or more women candidates, 2014

DEA	Candidates	Men	Women	% <i>Women</i>
Castle	12	6	6	50
Lisburn North	14	8	6	43
Balmoral	14	8	6	36
The Glens	12	7	5	42
Lagan River	12	7	5	42
Court	16	11	5	42
Lisnasharragh	12	7	5	42
Omagh	10	6	4	40
Coleraine	15	9	6	40
Newtownards	14	9	5	36
Waterside	15	10	5	33
Causeway	15	10	5	33
TOTAL	161	98	63	39

Source: Local Council and Electoral Office websites (1 May 2014)

Taking these DEAs together, an internationally-recognised 40:60 gender balance is achieved, with Castle DEA (Belfast City) reaching parity with 6 women and 6 men seeking election. Other DEAs have similar profiles, with fewer candidates. Only one DEA reverses the trend of men outnumbering women: in Omagh, 6 women and 4 men are competing for 6 seats.