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EY Senior Civil Service Women's Leadership Index 2016

UK

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Building a better working world

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Foreword



Björn Conway
UK Government &
Public Sector Leader, EY

For some years, the UK Civil Service has been working to increase the diversity of its senior management cadre, which contains much smaller proportions of women, ethnic minorities and disabled people than the workforce as a whole.

Women make up 54% of the workforce in UK Government and comprise 44% of the leadership 'feeder' grades of 6 and 7¹; hold less than 39% of senior civil service (SCS) jobs²; and head up just five of the 18 biggest and most important organisations in the civil service (which comprise the main departments of state, plus Number 10 and HMRC). As explained in the Hay Group report, commissioned by former Cabinet Office minister Francis Maude, "this means that the talent pool from which leaders can recruit is significantly smaller than it could be which, in turn, will be constraining performance."³

There has been extensive research and public commentary on the benefits of women leaders in businesses and on private sector boards. However, the corresponding research for the public sector has been relatively minimal. This is why, in 2012, EY commenced production of the first Worldwide Index of Women as Public Sector Leaders, setting out the proportion of senior government officials who are women in each of the G20 countries. We wanted to better understand the state of affairs for women in public sector leadership roles. Did years of public sector policies, supporting legislation, targets and/or quotas deliver women into senior leadership roles? Do we see the widespread diversity that is now so crucial?

To complement the publication of the 2015-16 Global Public Sector Women Leaders Index, we have commissioned this report from Global Government Forum, the team behind the Women Leaders Index. Using the Index, Office of National Statistics data, a review of recent publications and interviews with serving and former permanent secretaries, we have quantified recent progress on increasing the proportion of women in the SCS; examined the factors behind that progress; identified and explored some of the variations in departmental performance; and set out interviewees' beliefs about how to continue and hasten progress.

At EY we believe that diversity is a key driver of innovation, which in turn leads to better outcomes for society. We are committed to helping to drive debate and discussion on how women can and must play a more significant role in central government as well as business in the UK.

In 2016, our 'Fast Forward Programme' countdown clock showed that gender parity is still 117 years away. We hope that the findings of this paper will help reduce this number.

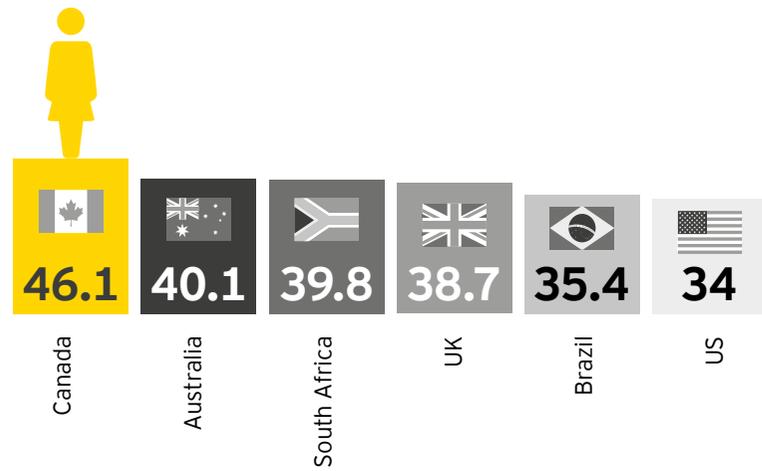
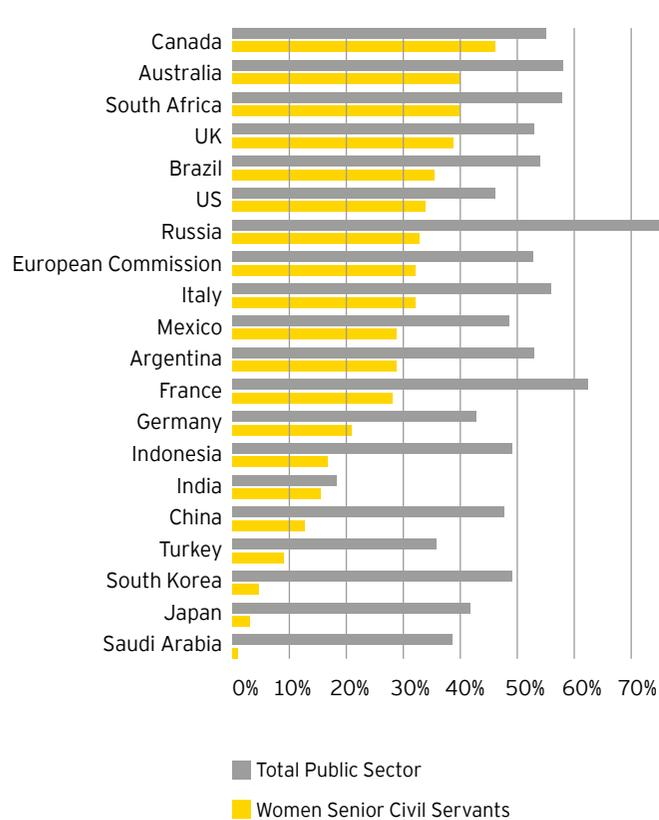


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The international stage: How the UK compares to other G20 nations

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Women in senior public sector roles in G20 (%)



The UK ranks fourth in the G20, and first amongst European G20 countries, on the proportion of women among its senior central government officials, with 38.7% – putting it 1.1 percentage points behind South Africa, 1.4 points behind Australia, and a more substantial 7.4 points behind the leader Canada.



Women make up **51%** of the world's population

In the G20 - they make up **50%** of the overall public sector workforce

BUT represent **25%** of senior public sector leaders

All G20 countries employ between **36-62%** women

but **NONE** have **50%** senior public sector leaders.



In Canada, women comprise 46.1% of public sector leaders. Canada has a long history of positive action on promoting under-represented groups. Since the early 1980s there have been voluntary affirmative action programmes in both the public and private sectors. In the 1990s these were given legislative force in the public sector, and later in industries regulated by the federal government.



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The European stage:

How the UK compares to other countries

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The second-highest ranked European G20 country is Italy, in eighth place overall with 32.0% (and tied with the European Commission itself) whilst France and Germany are well behind, in 12th and 13th places respectively with 28.0 and 21.0%.

However, in 2015, Italy and Germany saw leading growth of 4 percentage points in the number of women SCS. This was followed by France at 3 points with the European Commission growing by 4.5 points. The UK had the lowest growth of all the G20 European nations at 2.5 points. However, this must be viewed within the context of the UK having both the highest representation (38.7%) within Europe and the fastest growth among the top six nations of the index. This can be compared to Italy in eighth position at 32% representation, France in 12th position at 28% and Germany in thirteenth position, lagging at 21%.

UK Government leads the way in moving to gender equality in G20 but performance varies widely across departments



The UK has the highest proportion of women in senior civil service positions in Europe.

*Followed by Italy at **32%**.*

Read how...

France, Germany and the European Commission are aiming to close the proportion of gap on women Senior Civil Servants.

[Read more](#)



European Commission

The European Commission is taking action to promote gender balance throughout the administration as part of a comprehensive strategy for equal opportunities between men and women from 2010 to 2014. The strategy set mid-term and final targets for the proportion of women in senior, middle and non-management (administrative) positions by 2014 (25%, 33% and 43% respectively), recognising that in order for change to be sustainable it is necessary to boost representation of women from the bottom up in order to provide a pool of talent for later promotion. The targets are accompanied by corresponding recruitment objectives in order to increase the numbers of women at the rate required. In addition to the overall targets, each Directorate General has been assigned its own targets for middle management positions. By 1 October 2012, the percentage of women in management positions had increased to the extent that the European Commission had met or was on course to meet all three targets for 2012. It has been so successful in recruiting women in top jobs that on 1 October 2012 it had already exceeded its target for women in senior management for 2014.

France

In France, quotas introduced in 2012 to boost the number of women awarded senior positions in top public sector positions are already having an impact – with the proportion of women in top public sector jobs rising from 21.4% in 2013 to 28.0% in 2015. Observers expect to see further progress as quotas strengthen in 2015 and 2018. The targets have been set at 30 percent from 2015 to 2017 and 40 percent from 2018. Government bodies that do not reach the hiring targets will face financial penalties under the law. France also has the highest proportion of female ministers in cabinet of all the G20 members (48.6%), and ranks first for the percentage of women on company boards (29.7%).

Germany

The proportion of women in senior public sector roles in Germany has risen from 13.0% in 2013 to 21.0% this year. That picture is set to dramatically change with the advent of bold legislation. The German Act on Equal Participation of Women and Men in Leadership Positions in the Private and Public Sectors came into effect on May 1, 2015. Under the legislation, more than 100 listed companies will be required to set aside at least 30% of the new board seats for women from 2016. As of 2018, the proportion of women must be increased to 50%. About 3,500 medium-sized companies that are either listed or co-determinant are required to set their own target quotas for their boards of management and the two subsequent management levels. They must also set deadlines by which the target quotas are to be met by no later than June 30, 2017.

If the quota is not met, the companies will be required to fill any vacant positions with women or leave them empty. In accordance with the new law, the Federal Equal Opportunities Act and the Federal Act on Appointment to Federal Bodies has been amended to increase the proportion of women in management positions in government service. In the case of supervisory bodies to which the federal government can appoint at least three seats, a gender ratio of at least 30 percent of all new appointments will apply from 2016. This will increase this share to 50 percent from 2018.



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Gender parity performance varies widely across departments

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Una O'Brien, Permanent Secretary of the UK Department of Health:

"I don't think anybody can be satisfied until they hit 50% We've had over 40 years of equal opportunities legislation and policy, and it continues to be a great frustration that we can't get closer to 50%. We mustn't feel complacent because we're in the top five: we should keep asking why we have that gap."

October's ONS figures reveal that only three UK departments are close to parity between male and female SCS: the departments for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), and Health (DH). Impressively, DCLG has boosted its proportion of women leaders by 12 percentage points to 50% since 2011, despite shedding nearly half of its SCS.

DCMS also stands at 50%, though the department's small workforce makes the figures vulnerable to ONS's rounding of the statistics. DH, boosted by a big influx of health managers into its new national agencies, is on 49%.

The Welsh Government has shown impressive growth of nine points in its proportion of women leaders since 2011, putting it in fourth position with 47%. The Welsh SCS has grown by a net total of five men and 13 women.

In shared fifth place, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, the Treasury and the Department for International Development have all made fair progress, at 44% with gains of 5-6 points. Towards the foot of the table, the Department for Transport and Ministry of Defence have shown rapid improvement from a low base - with growth of 11 points since 2011 putting them on 33 and 27% respectively.

However, the Home Office and Department for Education (DfE) are slipping back - the Home office marginally but the DfE by 16 points since 2011. The DfE, at 43%, now forfeits its status as the only department with a majority-female SCS - it briefly reached 57% in 2011.

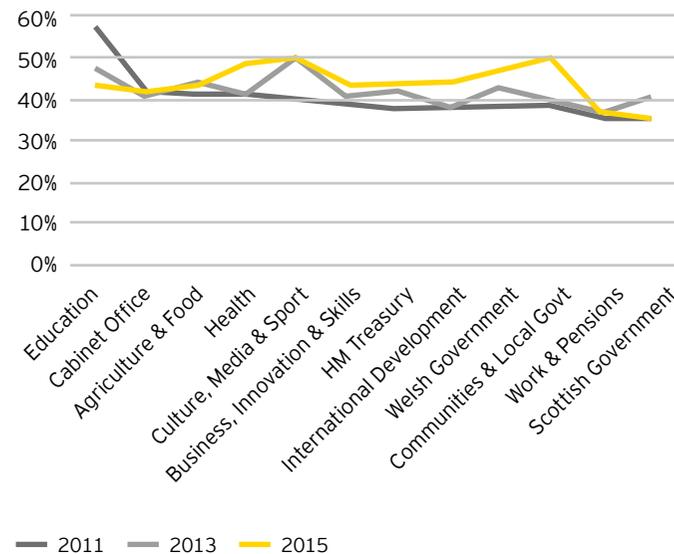
In 2015, The Scottish Government saw a drop of 5% of their women SCS returning the number to their 2011 number of 35%. Interestingly, in 2013, the proportion of women was 40%. In comparison to Wales and England, Scotland clearly lags behind. In 2015, The Welsh Government rose 9 percentage points to 47% from 38% in 2011. England's women SCS representation rose 4 points from 35% in 2011 to 39% in 2015.

Table 1. UK Women Senior Civil Servants 2015 Index by Government Department

Department	2015
Culture, Media & Sport	50
Communities & Local Government	50
Health	49
Welsh Government	47
Business, Innovation & Skills	44
HM Treasury	44
International Development	44
Education	43
Agriculture & Food	43
Cabinet Office	42
Defra	40
HMRC	39
Work & Pensions	37
Ministry of Justice	37
Energy & Climate Change	36
Scottish Government	35
Transport	33
Home Office	32
Ministry of Defence	27
Foreign & Commonwealth Office	26
Average	39.8

When comparing the percentage of women SCS across departments which had at least 35% representation of women SCS in 2011, it is interesting to note that the level of fluctuation is more volatile from 2013 onwards and into 2015. This could be attributed to the fact that before the Talent Action Plan was published in 2015, the most recent diversity strategy was published in 2008 but lapsed in 2013. The Plan, which includes the Cabinet Office's strategy on gender equality, was delayed, so momentum may have been lost during that time.

Chart 2. Changes to % of women Senior Civil Servants in government departments with at least 35% plus representation in 2011



In conversation with...



Lord Gus O'Donnell,
Cabinet Secretary and head of the civil service 2004-2011 on how the UK has increased its percentage of women SCS.

[Read more](#)

In conversation with...



Derek Jones,
Permanent Secretary, Welsh Government on how Wales has increased their women SCS representation by 9% since 2015.

[Read more](#)



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Pay differential varies widely by department

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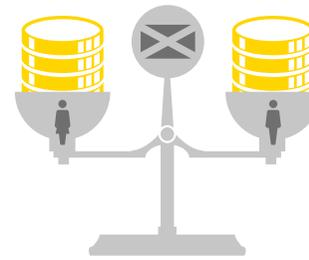
Across the Civil Service, the average SCS pay differential in core departments is 6.3%. The smallest gaps are at DCLG (0.2%), the Scottish Government (0.6%) and HMRC (2.5%). Defra is the only department whose SCS pay differential favours women, who on average earn 1.5% more than their male counterparts.

From mid-table up, it's noticeable that the SCS core department pay differential sometimes creeps above 10% – in the Ministry of Defence (MOD, 10.1%), Cabinet Office (13.9%) and Department for Energy and Climate Change (16.7%). The Treasury (9.6%) and DfE (9.3%) come close to that figure.

Table 2. Percentage pay gap of women SCS compared to men – largest to smallest

Department	2015 gap (%)
Energy & Climate change	16.7
Cabinet Office	13.9
Ministry of Defence	10.1
HM Treasury	9.6
Education	9.3
Transport	8.8
Work & Pensions	8.5
Foreign & Commonwealth office	7.9
International Development	5.8
Home Office	5.1
Ministry of Justice	5
Business, Innovation & Skills	4.6
Health	4.1
Welsh Government	4
Culture, Media & Sports	3.7
HMRC	2.5
Scottish Government	0.6
Communities & Local Government	0.2
Energy, Food & Rural Affairs	-1.5
Average	6.30

*Due to small size of this department, pay comparison has been excluded.



Scottish Government leads the way for equal pay for senior civil service leaders in UK

with a tiny **0.6%** discrepancy

UK Government's average pay differential for senior civil service women is **6.3%** but varies widely across departments



In conversation with...

Clare Moriarty, Permanent Secretary, Department for Environment and Rural Affairs, on how the department has achieved a 12 point increase in women SCS since 2011.

[Read more](#)



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EY recommendations for Government

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The introduction of the Talent Action Plan in 2015 by the UK Government clearly indicates that there is now a refreshed focus on the diversity agenda which extends to include gender, disability and ethnicity.

However, the recent NAO report, [Equality, diversity and inclusion in the civil service](#) shows that more still needs to be done. Drawing on this report, our SCS Index Analysis and by distilling the themes that came out through our interviews with senior leaders in the civil service, we have created a set of practical recommendations on how UK Government can continue to lead in the diversity agenda.

- ▶ Create greater accountability for delivering diversity plans (e.g. build in to performance measures for Permanent Secretaries)
- ▶ Focus on changing the culture at the top and current perceptions. Research shows current perceptions of some groups of staff in the civil service do not suggest an open and inclusive culture
- ▶ Tackle unconscious bias (e.g. by using data more effectively to explore the root causes of perceptions in the civil service)
- ▶ Engage senior leaders in coaching and mentoring at senior levels and reward role models
- ▶ Create the business case for diversity and focus on quantifying the benefits. This must be compelling in order to elevate it to become an organisational priority. Integrate diversity and inclusion into wider workforce planning to identify and develop the diverse skills, knowledge, experience and different ways of thinking that are needed to deliver government strategies
- ▶ Continue to develop practical policies that support inclusiveness and gender parity working (e.g. flexible working, job sharing, structured support networks)
- ▶ Develop platforms to showcase and share best practice across departments

In conversation with...

Dame Una O'Brien,
Permanent Secretary,
Department of Health on how
flexible working has contributed
to an increasing number of
women Senior Civil Servants.

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In conversation with ...

Derek Jones

Permanent Secretary, Welsh Government

How has Wales increased their SCS representation by 9% in 2015?

“We have been working to support staff in these ‘feeder’ grades. Our HR director has been meeting with high-performing women to talk about what is expected of the SCS compared to ‘executive band’ level, and what they should expect at sift and interview stage for SCS roles. At these sessions, we have specifically addressed some of the barriers to women progressing, including the so called ‘self-imposed’ ones.”⁵ Over the last two

years, the proportion of female applicants for internally-advertised SCS posts has risen from 36 to 44%.”

“The feedback from these sessions suggests that demystifying the process in this practical, face-to-face way has definitely encouraged some of our female colleagues to apply for roles they otherwise might not have applied for.”

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In conversation with ...

Clare Moriarty

Defra's Permanent Secretary and a former senior leader at Department for Transport.

How has Defra matched DCLG's 12 point gain since 2011?

"The department had pent-up supply: competent and capable women getting to grades 6 and 7, but not quite getting through to the SCS." So when the department renewed its efforts on diversity – by, for example, ensuring there were no all-male shortlists in recruitment processes – "a small shift in awareness created a big impact."

The department has also benefited from some continuity around the diversity agenda: it's the only one to have had three female permanent secretaries. "Organisations have surprisingly resilient cultures, despite lots of change at the top," comments Moriarty – but having three successive women leaders has, she thinks, helped to keep the pressure up.

Why does DfT, your former department still have only 22% female SCS in 2011?

"The transport industry is 70% male – so you're bound to get some of that flowing through." When she arrived there in 2009, she recalls, she set up a women's network with her fellow director general Bronwyn Hill (who subsequently moved to lead Defra before Moriarty's tenure). Eager to "increase the visibility of the [female] deputy director group", Moriarty and Hill helped arrange mentoring and support schemes. "That took off and didn't require much steering," she says. "And we had lots of good grade 6 and 7s who were ready and waiting – so once there was that recognition that we wanted to use their talents, they all came through." DfT is now the only department with a higher proportion of women in the SCS than the workforce as a whole.

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In conversation with ...

Lord Gus O'Donnell

Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Civil Service 2004-2011, is widely credited with catalysing Civil Service-wide progress on broadening the SCS demographic.

The Civil Service has worked hard to create networks of aspiring women leaders, and to support mentoring arrangements. Alongside these enabling tools, in 2008, it produced a diversity strategy⁶. This was a set of targets for boosting diversity, including the aim that by 2013, 39% of the SCS should be women.

The latest ONS statistics show that the proportion of women in the SCS has risen from 32.1% in 2007 to 38.7% in 2015, meaning the Civil Service is belatedly reaching its 2013 target⁷. When Sir Jeremy Heywood, the cabinet secretary, took on the additional role of head of the civil service in 2014, he replaced the lapsed targets with a new set of objectives built into permanent secretaries' performance appraisals.

How has the UK made such progress on addressing gender equality?

Leadership

"In the past, we defined leadership rather badly as being good at your previous job – as being an expert," he says. "But now we talk about leaders as people with EQ [emotional quotient] as well as IQ; who can bring people on; who can listen as well as talk."⁸

"It's not about you or the brilliant submission you wrote: it's about what you and your team delivers" – and as the model of good leadership has changed, so promotion and recruitment systems have evolved in ways that place greater weight on some of the characteristics in which women tend to be stronger than men. "It was put in place to improve the quality of leadership, and as it happens it's benefited women."

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In conversation with ...

Dame Una O'Brien

Permanent Secretary, Department of Health

Flexible working

We have to make sure that women (and men) who take career breaks for childcare have an equal chance to compete for more senior roles as their children grow up.

To be in that position you have to keep developing breadth and depth of experience in your twenties and thirties. So I see it as the employer's job to organise work so that people who need to work reduced hours can still get the range of experience they need - and that the department needs.

"That's why I've put a lot of effort into taking big, difficult jobs, and saying: 'This work can

be done by two people sharing it, each doing three days.'" There's an additional salary cost, she acknowledges, but "you're not paying for duplication on the overlap day: you're paying for better work and the benefit of two brains on the subject. To be honest I believe this is better overall than squeezing a tough job into four days because the pressure can be enormous."

O'Brien now has three female directors-general and four males, plus an SCS cadre that's 49% women.



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Methodology

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Research conducted by EY annually over a three-year period (2013-15) has been compiled to form a comprehensive Index measuring gender equality in senior public service leadership positions – defined as non-elected senior executives across federal or national governments – within the G20, and comparing that data to information on the proportion of women in

countries' legislatures, in ministerial jobs and on company boards.

Drawing from the global report, this report looks specifically at the UK statistics and context. UK data was collected from the Office of National Statistics, United Kingdom in the third quarter 2015, and interviews were conducted in November 2015.

Public Leaders are defined as non-elected senior executives across federal or national governments, or the executive ranks of the core civil service in central government.

This group constitutes approximately the most senior 10% of public officials.

The total public sector employment figures comprise the percentage of women among all persons who fulfil the requirements of delivering or managing public services. The data used is the most up to date data available at the time of collation, from the sources available at the time, and definitions of senior leaders are based as far as possible on data used in previous years to allow change to be tracked in each country for continuity.

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¹Institute for Government, 13 October 2015: <http://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/blog/12518/women-in-the-civil-service-2015/>

²Office of National Statistics, 8 October 2015: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/pse/civil-service-statistics/2015/stb-civil-service-statistics-2015.html>

³Women in Whitehall, Hay Group, May 2015: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/351195/Rpt-GMA-Cabinet_Office-Talented_Women-Final_Report___9.5.14_.pdf

⁴Interview, 9 November 2015

⁵Written Q&A with author, 21 November 2015

⁶Promoting Equality, Valuing Diversity, 2008

⁷Office of National Statistics, 8 October 2015: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/pse/civil-service-statistics/2015/stb-civil-service-statistics-2015.html>

⁸Interview, 9 November 2015

⁹Interview, 6 November 2015