

The Right Man for the Job? Bristol Fawcett Launch their report on gender and representation in Bristol

14 of the 15 candidates for the post of Bristol Mayor are men, although over 50% of Bristol's population are women. We ask: is there something about the role of Mayor that makes people think the job should be done by a man? How well are the candidates doing when it comes to understanding and talking about issues that matter to women?

As a part of their Counting Women In¹ Campaign, Bristol Fawcett² have gone beyond the mayoral race and the election for Police and Crime Commissioner to research the corridors of power in Bristol – looking at politics, business and the public sector – to discover how well women are being represented in leadership roles.

The results are shocking – and embarrassing for Bristol. Our city lags behind the national average in all sectors when it comes to equality of representation.

- 76% of Bristol City Councillors are male; 96% of Bristol City Councillors are white.
- Public Sector Boards based in Bristol are almost exclusively (16/17) led by white males, despite women being 65% of the public sector workforce.
- Private Sector Boards of Bristol-based companies are made up predominantly of men (79%) and at least ten of the largest employers in Bristol have Boards comprised entirely of men.

The report argues that the power-brokers of Bristol are routinely overlooking people from certain groups, preferring to keep power in the hands of white, middle-aged, middle-class men – and this is bad news for every citizen. Using factual data and survey data, supplemented with fourteen interviews with some of the city's key players, the report considers what is lost for the city and what might be gained by changing the current pattern of passing power between a select group of people.

A spokesperson from Bristol Fawcett said:

'Equal representation matters for democracy; it matters because without it those who are affected by big decisions have little input into the decision-making process; it matters for accountability; and it matters because the landscape of political decision-making could be improved by the equal inclusion of women and minority groups. We hope that the women of Bristol will be raising these issues with the Mayoral candidates throughout the campaign and at the Women's Question Time event on Wednesday 31st, and we encourage women to use what the candidates say to inform their vote.'

The report's recommendations stem from what the interviewees thought were the three crucial blockages to participation for women and other under-represented groups within the current set-up: Caring, Cash, and Culture.

Preethi Sundaram, Policy and Campaigns Manager at the Fawcett Society, said:

'The right man for Bristol' is a clear call to arms, painting a picture of a city where women, their needs and views, are not being properly heard or understood.

"This reports sets out clearly the action needed to improve women's representation and participation, current and future politicians would do well to take note."

The report can be downloaded from
<http://www.bristolfawcett.org.uk/Documents/CountingWomenIn/TheRightManForBristol.pdf>

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Notes:

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1. Bristol's Counting Women In campaign is coordinated by Bristol Fawcett, working with other individuals and women's groups in Bristol including Bristol Women's Voice. For more information on Bristol Fawcett and the Bristol Counting Women In campaign see:

www.bristolfawcett.org.uk/CountingWomenIn

Twitter: @wearstheshoes

Blog: <http://wearstheshoes.wordpress.com/>

2. Bristol Fawcett is a volunteer activist group for local members of The Fawcett Society. Fawcett is the UK's leading campaign for equality between women and men. Nationally, Fawcett is part of the Counting Women In coalition (www.countingwomenin.org) working with Centre for Women & Democracy; Electoral Reform Society; Fawcett Society; Hansard Society; Unlock Democracy. The aims of this national campaign are:
 - Change political culture – Charter for Equality
 - Political parties do more to recruit and promote women
 - Media must treat women in public life with respectThis report was produced in Bristol by Bristol Fawcett and is not a Fawcett Society publication.

3. Bristol Women's Voice have asked each of the candidates to answer a series of questions on issues that women in the city care deeply about. The answers are on their website at <http://www.bristolwomensvoice.org.uk/candidates-answers/>. As part of their work on the campaign, BWV are hosting a Women's Question Time Event at Broadmead Baptist Church on Wednesday 31st October at 7pm. More details are available here: <http://www.bristolwomensvoice.org.uk/womens-question-time/>