

Six thousand women missing from top jobs

Level 2 • Intermediate

1 Pre-reading 1

Look at the headline of the article: **Six thousand women missing from boardrooms, politics and courts.** What do you think it means?

1. Someone has kidnapped 6,000 women from these places.
2. 6,000 women are refusing to go to work in these places.
3. There are jobs for 6,000 women in these institutions.

2 Pre-reading 2

Which do you think has the lowest percentage of women in parliament: Afghanistan, Britain, Iraq, or Rwanda?

3 Key words

boardrooms glass ceiling flexible working headhunters
address the barriers ethnic minorities shortlist thrive

1. People paid to find excellent workers from other companies and employ them. _____
2. Something invisible that stops women getting promoted to the top jobs. _____
3. The final list of names when you choose someone (for a job, etc.). _____
4. To stay alive and do very well. _____
5. Places where company directors meet to discuss and make important decisions. _____
6. Look at and change the things that are stopping people. _____
7. Being able to choose or change the hours you work. _____
8. Small groups of people from a different race to most people in the country. _____

Now read the text quickly to see if you were right.

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Friday January 5, 2007

- 1 The glass ceiling is still stopping 6,000 women from getting any of the top 33,000 jobs in Britain, according to new research from the Equal Opportunities Commission. Thirty years after the introduction of the Sex Discrimination Act, women are badly “under-represented” in the country’s boardrooms, politics and courts.
- 2 Even if they have a nanny, it’s hard for successful women with children to continue their careers, the EOC research suggests, because men dominate the professions and they resist flexible working.
- 3 Women are moving into top jobs at a “painfully slow” rate, the report says, and in some areas, numbers are falling. The proportion of women in parliament has dropped in the 12 months since the EOC’s last ‘Sex and Power’ survey, and is now only 19.5% – lower than in Iraq, Afghanistan and Rwanda.
- 4 Although a woman is chief executive of the London Stock Exchange, and four senior judges are female, the proportion of women directors of top 100 FTSE companies has fallen to 10.4%, and only 9.8% of all judges are women.
- 5 Jenny Watson, chair of the EOC, said: “Today’s troubling findings show just how slow the pace of change has been in powerful British institutions. They suggest it’s time not just to send out the headhunters to find some of those ‘missing women’, but to address the barriers that stand in their way. Thirty years on from the Sex Discrimination Act, women rightly expect to share power. But as our survey shows, that’s not the reality.”
- 6 She said that everyone suffered when Britain’s top jobs were all male. Our democracy and local communities would be stronger if women from different backgrounds had an equal voice. And in business, we could not afford to look at only half the population to fill the best jobs.
- 7 The commission identified the 33,000 most influential jobs in the private sector, politics, the legal system and the public sector in Britain. To achieve a representative proportion, women, it said, should fill another 6,000.
- 8 At the current rate of improvement, it would take 20 years to achieve equality in the civil service, 40 years in the judiciary and 60 years among FTSE 100 companies. But it would take 200 years – at least another 40 elections – to achieve an equal number of MPs in parliament. By contrast, in the Scottish assembly, nearly 40% are women and 51.7% in Wales. The EOC said there was an argument for parties to use all-women shortlists, as in Wales.
- 9 But figures for women from ethnic minorities are worse. There are only two black women MPs, four non-white top 100 FTSE directors and nine top civil servants from ethnic minority backgrounds. “If we want our communities to thrive, this has to change,” concludes the report.
- 10 It says that more successful women have as much trouble getting the jobs they want as women in lower paid work. As for age, the pay gap between men and women in their 20s is 3.7%, rising to 10.7% in their 30s – because after childbirth, women’s earning power goes down. Men’s doesn’t.
- 11 The UK pay gap is one of the biggest in Europe – 17% for full-time staff and 38% for part-time – because part-time workers are more often low paid. Then, when they have children, women lose opportunities for promotion and earn even less, the Women and Work Commission found last year.
- 12 “Asking for flexible working still spells career death for too many women in today’s workplace,”

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said Ms Watson. So women with children often have to find less professional jobs to keep working. "Extending the right to ask for flexible working to everyone in the workplace would change that culture and enable more women to reach the top."

- 13** This is the last annual report from the EOC. Next year, with the Commission for Racial Equality and the Disability Rights Commission, it will be part of a new body called the Commission for Equality and Human Rights. This will be headed by the present chair of the CRE, and some people are afraid that women's rights may then

be pushed aside.

- 14** Katherine Rake, an equal rights campaigner, protested: "This research proves beyond a doubt that life at the top is white and male."
- 15** And Ms Watson summed up: "We haven't solved the problem of sex discrimination yet. There is so much more to be done."

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4 Scanning for information

Scan the text to find the percentages.

- The percentage of women in parliament: _____
- The percentage of women running top companies: _____
- The percentage of women judges: _____
- The percentage of women in the Scottish assembly: _____
- The percentage of women in the Welsh assembly: _____
- The pay gap between men and women in their 20s: _____
- The pay gap between men and women in their 30s: _____
- The pay gap between men and women in full-time work: _____
- The pay gap between men and women in part-time work: _____

5 General understanding

Match the beginnings and endings of these sentences.

1	Laws to give women better job opportunities	a	don't like women to choose their own hours.
2	A lot of top male bosses	b	gets worse if women start to work part-time.
3	Life for everyone would be better	c	is even worse than for whites.
4	The male/female balance in government	d	have not made much difference.
5	The situation for ethnic minority women	e	is much better in Scotland and Wales.
6	The difference in pay between men and women	f	if women had equal opportunities in all areas.

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6 Language development: Talking about numbers

Now match these percentages with the expressions below.

38% 9.8% 40% 10.4% 17% 19.5% 51.7%

1		a	just over half
2		b	just over a tenth
3		c	just under a tenth
4		d	nearly a fifth
5		e	nearly two fifths
6		f	exactly two fifths
7		g	just over a sixth

7 Vocabulary development: Synonyms

The writer sometimes uses words with similar meaning to avoid repetition. Match the words on the left with their equivalents on the right.

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| 1. the legal system | a. boardrooms, companies |
| 2. the private sector | b. our survey, the report |
| 3. the public sector | c. protested, summed up, found |
| 4. from ethnic minorities | d. the judiciary, courts |
| 5. the research | e. shows, suggests |
| 6. said | f. non-white, black |
| 7. says | g. the civil service, parliament, assembly, politics |

8 Discussion

1. What is the situation for women in your country?
2. Do many women have top jobs?
3. Is there a big pay gap between women and men?
4. What about women from ethnic minorities?
5. What do you think should be done to improve the situation?