



2026 Annual State of the Nation Report Summary

A wake-up call for the UK energy sector

Each year, POWERful Women tracks female representation across key leadership levels in the UK energy sector to bring visibility to progress, highlight areas of challenge, and encourage companies to take action.

A diverse and inclusive energy sector is essential to delivering a secure, affordable and sustainable energy system. The sector cannot meet its future obligations while drawing on only half of the available talent pool. Women bring critical skills and perspectives that strengthen decision-making, improve organisational performance and ensure companies reflect the communities they serve.

This year's analysis shows that progress at the top of the sector has slowed. Female representation on UK energy boards stands at 31%, a marginal increase of one percentage point. Beneath this flat headline, however, sits a more complex picture. There are clear areas of advancement: more women are reaching senior roles, and a growing number of companies are achieving the 40% leadership benchmark. This demonstrates what is possible when leadership commitment is matched with action.

Yet these gains are not translating into system-wide change. Talent pipelines have stalled, and more boards have lost women than gained them. With four years remaining to meet the sector's ambition of 40% female representation in leadership and middle management by 2030, the data indicates that current efforts are insufficient. The next generation of talent is making employment decisions based on culture, leadership and inclusion.

This report should therefore be read not as a routine annual update, but as a call to action. **Companies that act now will shape the next chapter of UK energy at a pivotal moment. Those that do not will fall behind.**

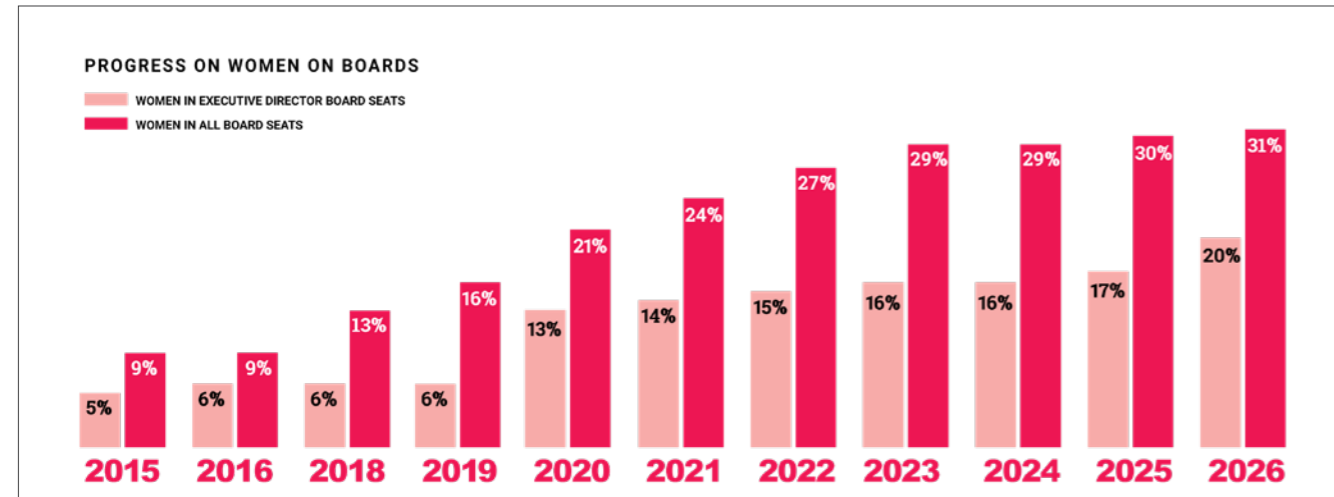


“Beneath the headline is a story that should concern every leader in the Energy Sector.”

Monica Collings OBE
Chair, POWERful Women

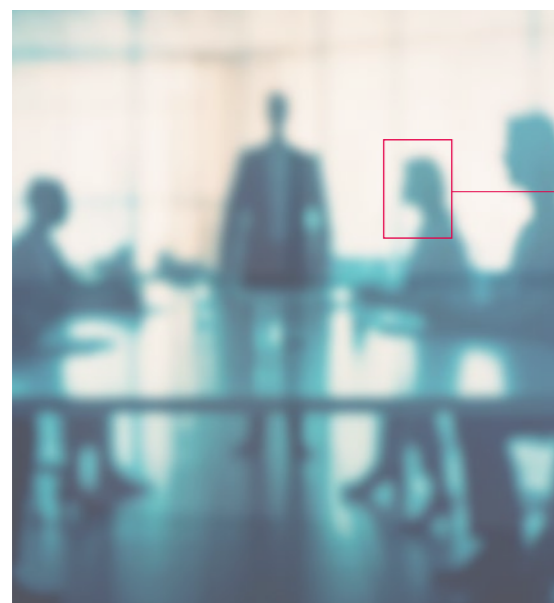
The wake-up call

While the surface numbers suggest steady, incremental progress, the activity beneath them has shifted decisively in the wrong direction. The “frozen middle” is setting in, and momentum is faltering where it matters most.



UK Energy Boards: Incremental progress

More than half of UK energy boards remain in this frozen middle. But there are signs of progress: 33 boards now meet the 40% target, up from 30 last year, and women now hold 15% of Chair roles (13 Chairs). The biggest gap comes from commitment. 71% of Leaders' Coalition members have reached the 40% board target, compared with 27% of non-members – clear evidence that when commitment is in place, accountability delivers results.



22

22 boards removed at least one woman

+17 (from 2025)

15%

Board Chair Representation

+5pp (from 10%)

63%

63% of companies below 40% have seen no progress in female board representation over the last 2 years

13

all male boards

The C-Suite and Executive Pipeline Gap

Executive Director roles rose slightly to 20%, but 78% of UK companies still have no female CEO or CFO, up 5% on 2025 – showing the operational pipeline is moving backwards. There was progress in the CTO role, now 25% female, but these gains are in specialist appointments like CTO and Chair, not in the P&L-owning roles that feed future CEOs. To shift this, companies need intentional succession planning and structured pathways for women into core operational leadership.

NO female Representation

78%

+5pp (from 73%)

COO Representation

13%

+4pp (from 17%)

CTO Representation*

25%

+6pp (from 19%)

HIGHEST

CFO Representation

18%

-3pp (from 18%)

CEO Representation

9%

+1pp (from 8%)

*This represents the highest representation levels achieved in CTO roles.

Women in Leadership: Progress Made

There's a stronger picture at the broader leadership tier – the Executive Committee and direct reports – where female representation has risen to 36%, up from 34% in 2024 and 2025. Companies hitting the 40% target have nearly doubled, from 8 to 14, and Leaders' Coalition members continue to outperform (42% vs 38%). But this progress raises a clear question: with a 36% leadership talent pool, why isn't it translating into board and C-suite appointments? The bottleneck is real – and structural.

Leadership

36%

+2pp (from 34% in 2024 & 2025)

Companies

40%

+8 reach target

14 companies hit target, up from 8 in 2025

LC member companies

42%

Hit 40% target

(compared to 38% non-members)

Middle Management

34%

=Static (for 2 consecutive years)

The Middle Management Warning Sign

Female representation in middle management has stalled at 34% for two years, making the bottleneck even clearer. This layer is the engine room of the sector – the pool from which future executives are drawn – and a flat 34% means the next generation of female leaders is no larger than today's. Boards can shift quickly, but talent pipelines cannot. The women in middle management now are the Exec Committees of 2028 and the boards of 2030. We cannot afford to let this pipeline leak.

AN ACTION PLAN

NOW

what every leader should do straight after reading this report:

We don't need long project plans to shift the trajectory. Leaders can act immediately:

1. **Elevate gender balance** as a risk – Position it as a core operational and delivery risk, not a side DEI issue.
2. **Equip line managers** – Mid-career is where the pipeline leaks; train managers to hold honest, supportive retention conversations.
3. **Measure what predicts change** – Go beyond headcount. Track application ratios, promotions, succession, attrition, and women in P&L roles.
4. **Embed inclusion daily** – Sponsor women into stretch roles, invest in mentoring, elevate role models, and enforce zero-tolerance for exclusionary behaviour.


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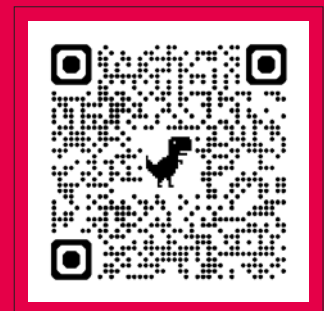
Hosted by the Energy Institute

NEXT

what every company should commit to over the next twelve months:

The fastest-moving companies are those where gender balance is a tracked, owned, board-level priority.

1. **Track female attrition** – the most revealing cultural health signal; it exposes friction points that representation alone hides.
2. **Audit P&L roles** – 40% women in middle management means little if they're all in support functions; operational P&Ls determine future CEOs.
3. **Publish action plans with pay-gap data** – turn compliance into workplace design.
4. **Make CEO & Chair accountable** – Bain's analysis shows their sponsorship is the strongest predictor of sustained progress.
5. **Publish a succession pipeline** – annual reviews with explicit development plans shift the conversation from "no women available" to "here is our talent and how we're preparing them."



Scan the QR code to download the full report