

Gender Sensitizing Parliaments

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Gender Sensitive Parliaments: A Definition

A Gender Sensitive Parliament **values and prioritises gender equality** as a social, economic and political objective and **reorients and transforms a parliament's institutional culture, processes and practices, and outputs towards these objectives** (Childs and Palmieri 2023)



Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) 7 Dimensions of Gender Sensitive Parliament

Equality of participation

Gender Equality (GE) Champion via Equality Policy Framework

Mainstreaming GE

Gender-sensitive infrastructure & culture

Shared responsibility for GE

Political parties champion GE

Parliament Administration

IPU, GSP Checklists

Infrastructure (amenities)

Rules/Practices (Standing Orders)

Language/discourse in plenary

Language/discourse in informal settings

Sitting Hours

Dress Code

Maternity/Paternity Leave

Childcare facilities

Induction Training

Parliamentary Culture

Access to Resources

IPU Kigali Declaration, October 2022

Assess the level of gender-sensitivity of our parliaments twice to ensure progress

Create a gender-balanced steering committee to follow up on the findings and recommendations ...[with] the power, resources, and mandate to lead reforms

Recognize the individual differences among women and prioritize the inclusion of underrepresented groups such as young women, indigenous women and women with disabilities

Create, resource and empower a gender equality committee and a women's caucus

Adopt formal rules to establish gender-balance across all parliamentary leadership positions, ensure the parity of participation of women and men across all parliamentary activities, and prohibit single-sex committees and groups.

Engage men MPs and other men active in the parliamentary ecosystem to act as allies for gender equality

Ensure that gender sensitivity, gender equality and gender mainstreaming and budgeting guide parliament's work

Conduct gender audits of legislative, budgetary and oversight actions but also of initiatives ...eg.. Technological and green measures

Become caring parliaments by providing fully for the caring needs of men and women MPs and staff

Zero tolerance of violence against women, sexual harassment and bullying in parliament + independent and efficient grievance procedures with strong sanctions.

The Good Parliament's Underpinning Principles

A greater diversity of MPs should be present in parliament

Members equal and effective participation within the House

House plays a substantive and symbolic role – 'best practice' institution

House is an organism; Members are only one part

The responsibility of delivering a *Good Parliament* resides with the House of Commons qua institution.

The importance of Institutionalization

Successful institutionalisation involves not only determining necessary reforms relevant to a particular Parliament and its circumstances but in identifying the actors and means through which reforms are implemented, and GSP *Standards* maintained.

The responsibility to re-gender Parliaments can no longer be left as an additional burden for women Parliamentarians, nor to willing women and men Parliamentarians; it is for the Parliament as an institution, both political and administrative.



The UK House of Commons, 'Inviting Myself In'

Gender Adviser to the 2010 Speaker's Conference on Parliamentary Representation

Adviser to the 2014 Women in Parliament All Party Parliamentary Group

'Behind the scenes' work to establish the Women & Equalities Select Committee

Impact Acceleration Award

Secondment Strategy

Aims

Identify diversity insensitivities

Create reforms that address each insensitivity

Identify appropriate actors and institutions for each reform

Identify the means by which to authorize these to so act

Means

MPs Panel: cross-party, male and female, sympathetic MPs

Advisory Board: clerks & officials, Chaired by Mr Speaker

Critical Friends: Senior Clerks

'Feminist in Residence'



Four Dimensions of a Gender & Diversity Sensitive Parliament

Dimension 1 Equality of Participation within Parliament	How a diverse group of MPs might be selected for, and elected to, parliament and how, once present, they are enabled to become effective participants across parliament's core activities: representation and interest articulation, legislative scrutiny, and executive accountability.
Dimension 2 Parliamentary Infrastructure	The way in which parliament facilitates the work of Members and whether this privileges a particular type of MP – explicitly or implicitly...from the buildings and furniture of parliament to the official rules and working practices that underpin the array of Members' parliamentary activities.
Dimension 3 Parliamentary Culture	Acknowledges that the official, written-down rules never tell the whole story about how institutions function on the ground – this is what might be thought of as the 'normal way of doing things'. It is, admittedly, frequently hard to pin down informal institutional norms, practices and culture. That said ...parliamentary culture... is not fixed but an evolving phenomenon, subject to change.
Dimension 4 Gender Equality Policy/ Women's substantive representation	Subjecting the political work of parliament to gendered analysis - legislation, policy, scrutiny, and interest representation. It asks whether parliaments acknowledge the perspectives and address the needs and interests of women. Have women's experiences been taken into account? Are the gendered differentiated outcomes to women's disadvantage? Do they aim for gender equality between women and men? In so doing, such analysis will frequently be analysing a parliament's work in holding a government to account for its gender sensitivity.

Illustrative House of Commons Gender Insensitivities



Masculinized Brexit Politics

Real old-style House of Commons here, as the Chancellor himself gets to his feet at 01:17 to address the House, having sat through about 10 hours of Brexit questions and debate.

#endurance #BrexitDeal

A 'RAG' Analysis of the House of Commons 2015

Dimension	Measure	Red	Amber	Green
Equality of Participation	Number of MPs (sex, race and class)	Red		
	Women's House leadership positions	Red		
	Women's participation (internal structures; cmttes)		Amber	
Infra-structure	Standing Orders		Amber	
	Calendar & sitting hours	Red		
	Equalities & diversity body (policy)			Green
	Equalities & diversity body (institutional)	Red		
	Parliamentary buildings & spaces		Amber	
	Childcare & child-friendly provisions		Amber	
	Maternity & parental leave	Red		
Culture	House commitment & action plan	Red		
	Chamber culture (PMQs & 'set pieces')	Red		

Select Recommendations, Participation

9. Introduce prior to dissolution for the 2020 general election statutory sex/gender quotas to take effect for the 2025 general election

10. Sponsor a measure to gender balance MP membership of the House of Commons Commission

14. A rule change should be sought whereby any select committee witness panel of three or more must be sex/gender diverse if, by the end of the 2015 Parliament, select committees are not reaching a 40 percent sex/gender threshold amongst witnesses

15. Introduce sex/gender quotas for the election of select committee chairs prior to the 2025 general election if, by 2024, the percentage of women chairs is less than 40 percent

18. Support the production of comprehensive website materials showing that a diversity of people are, and can be, MPs

22. Immediately commence Section 106 of the Equality Act 2010 (which requires political parties to provide data relating to parliamentary candidates)

30. Prohibit single-sex/gender select committees, and encourage political parties to be mindful of wider representativeness in the election of members to committees

Select Recommendations, Infrastructure

32 & 33. Review the establishment of a 'division time'; trial 'normal business' hours

36. Trial new layouts in any decant Chamber, and review provision of a new Chamber for the return to the Palace of Westminster

37. Provide for flexible committee & other meeting rooms in a restored Palace

38. Provide for inclusionary social spaces for MPs in a restored Palace

39. Provide sufficient toilet capacity across the Parliamentary Estate

40. Abolish the '10-year dead' rule, whereby only individuals who have been dead for at least a decade are represented in the artworks in the Palace of Westminster

41. Commit to diverse artwork in a restored Palace of Westminster

Select Recommendations, Culture

1. Secure cross-party support for a concord regarding unacceptable and unprofessional behaviour in the chamber, and more widely in the House

2. The Speaker's Office should systematically and comprehensively monitor and report the speeches and interventions in debates, questions, private members' bills and other parliamentary activities by MPs' sex/gender and other major social characteristics

5. Initiate an IPU Gender Sensitive Parliament Audit

16. Revise the dress code to 'business dress' or 'national costume'

19. Revise the Parliamentary Identity Pass

29. Ensure House rules and structures, institutions and nomenclature and culture are diversity sensitive and inclusionary

The Commons Reference Group on Representation

Chaired by Mr Speaker

Cross-party, male/female, sympathetic MPs

Administrative support

Met every 4-6 weeks when House was sitting 2016-18

Programme of action

A RAG Analysis of the House of Commons, post *TGP*

Dimension	Measure	2015	Post <i>TGP</i>
Equality of Participation	Number of MPs (sex, race and class)		
	Women's House leadership positions		
	Women's participation (internal structures; cmttes)		
Infrastructure	Standing Orders		
	Calendar & sitting hours		
	Equalities & diversity body (policy)		
	Equalities & diversity body (institutional)		
	Parliamentary buildings & spaces		
	Childcare & child-friendly provisions		
	Maternity & parental leave		
Culture	House commitment & action plan		
	Chamber culture (PMQs & 'set pieces')		

18 Implemented Recommendations

Parlia Actor No.	DSP Dimension	Total No.	TGP Recommendation
The Speaker	Culture	4	1, 3, 5 + another that was not numbered (behaviour; children in the lobbies; IPU audit; znd infant feeding.
Commons Reference Group	Participation; Infrastructure; culture	5	6, 12, 13, 14, 16 (work/mat/pat leave; crèche; diverse Cmte witnesses; dress code
Commission	Participation; culture	4	17, 18, 19, 20 (Ref Group; website; MP prog; parlia ID pass)
Leader of the House	Infrastructure	1	25 (est of WEC)
Liaison Committee	Infrastructure; culture	1	29 (Diversity data cmte)
Procedure Committee	Infrastructure; culture	1	20 (DSP nomenclature)
Works of Art Committee	Infrastructure; culture	2	40, 42 (10-year dead rule; diverse artwork)

Gendered Thesis of Institutional Change

(i) Gendered parliamentarianism

(ii) A (partially) gendered Executive

(iii) Gendered administrative/political coalescence

Gendered Parliamentarianism

Gendered Parliamentarianism refers to a *shared sensibility and collaborative relations amongst women MPs working for women, qua members of the legislature*

The phenomenon in which women MPs from across different parties begin to think of themselves as sharing an interest and act together for its achievement

Gendered Executive

Affinity and collective mobilization amongst women backbenchers as a group and women members of government.

Administrative/Political Coalescence

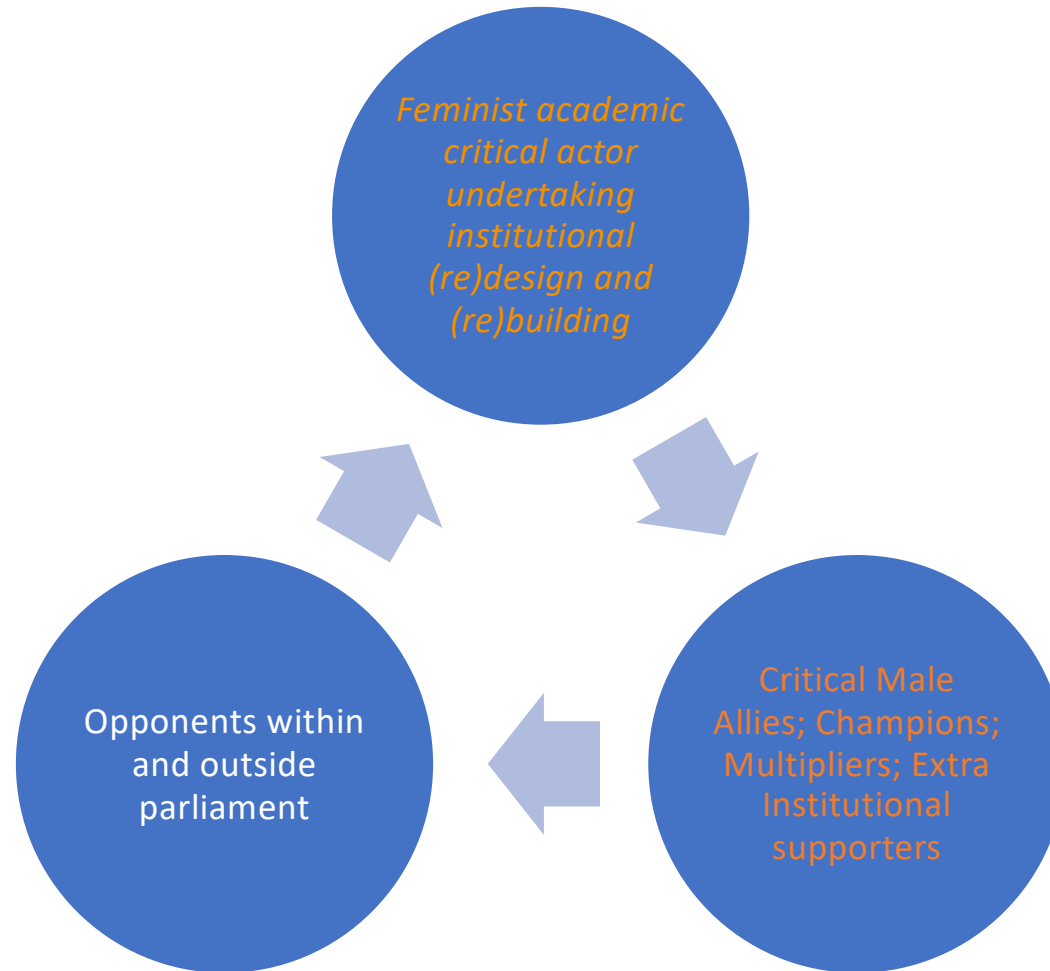
The emergence and formalization of a group of gender consciousness and feminist clerks and officials; formalized via a 'Workplace Equality Network', ParliGENDER (Women's WEN)

Women clerks and officials share the feminist critique of the Parliament with women MPs, having directly experienced and observed institutional and/or individual discriminatory behaviour.

Collaboration amongst Members and clerks and officials build on formal and informal relations that grow out of the everyday parliamentary, and especially Committee, interaction

Clerkly professionalism - defined as impartial in party political terms and as 'serving' the needs and preferences of politicians - is quite distinct from being impartial vis gender inequality and institutional gender insensitivities.

Gender Sensitive Parliament Power Struggles



A Key Success: Proxy Voting for Babyleave

- 1 February 2018, the House of Commons passed the following resolution:
 - That this House believes that it would be to the benefit of the functioning of parliamentary democracy that honourable Members who have had a baby or adopted a child should for a period of time be entitled, but not required, to discharge their responsibilities to vote in this House by proxy.



Process-tracing Proxy Voting for Babyleave

- **Cross party working:** Mother of the House; Leader of the House; Commons Reference Group; Procedure Committee; Mr Speaker
- **Parliamentary activities:** the Motion; The Back Bench Business Debate; Govt debate; Urgent questions
- **Extra-parliamentary pressure:** Fawcett; (women in the) media
- **The Trigger:** Jo Swinson (July); Tulip Siddiq (January); naming of Chief Whip (January)
- **The Debate:** critique of pairing; false opposition between representing constituency and being a good parent; Amendments & 'whatabouterry'
- **28 January 2019 11.14 pm Debate ends: no division but clapping**
- **Temporary:** 2020 Procedure committee inquiry;
- **Extension:** Covid-19 - time/reach
- **Permanent:** Standing Orders, Sept 2020

Gendered Bullying and Harassment

- Policy and Practice of Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme
 - ICGS consists of: (i) behaviour code; (ii) independent bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct Helpline and Independent Sexual Misconduct Advisory Service; (iii) Bullying and harassment policy and procedure; (iv) Sexual misconduct policy and procedure (v) independent investigators;
 - Independent Expert Panel absent MP involvement re: sanctions
 - Valuing Everyone training; Behaviour Code seminars for all new starters (staff MPs MPs' staff)
- Ongoing questions
 - Excluding MPs accused of serious sexual violence from the parliamentary estate
 - 'Third party reporting'
 - Length of time for investigations
- Gender Sensitive Ecosystem
 - Relationship between ICGS and Gender Sensitive Parliaments
 - Reducing incidences of gendered bullying and harassment
 - Supporting a culture of non-harassment and bullying
- Kigali 10 Acts include:
 - Zero tolerance; independent and efficient grievance procedures with strong sanctions

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Thank you
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