

Diversity Sensitive Parliaments

Parliamentary Practice in Comparison, A briefing



DIVERSITY SENSITIVE PARLIAMENTS: PARLIAMENTARY PRACTICE IN COMPARISON

INTRODUCTION

This briefing presents a summary of information that was collected via a short questionnaire which was sent to a select group of Parliaments in the spring of 2016 (see Appendix 1). The Parliaments include: two sub-state national parliaments (Scotland and Wales), three Westminster-style parliaments (Australia, Canada, and New Zealand); and two western and three northern European parliaments (Germany and Spain, and Denmark, Finland and Sweden respectively), as well as the European Parliament. Here, I would like to formally thank those Clerks and officials from the Parliaments that completed the questionnaire on Parliamentary infrastructure and culture. In this briefing data on the UK Parliament is also included, increasing the Westminster-style parliaments to four. The briefing also includes discussion of select recommendations made in *The Good Parliament Report*¹ that directly pertain to the survey findings. A full list of the recommendations is provided in Appendix 1.

THE GOOD PARLIAMENT REPORT

The Good Parliament Report was the main output of a project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the University of Bristol.² The Report makes 43 recommendations to the UK House of Commons, and constitutes a blueprint for a more representative and inclusive House. Together the recommendations have the potential to make the membership of the UK Parliament more representative; enable Members to be more effective in their parliamentary work, both individually and collectively; and to enhance the representational relationship between the British public, Members, and the House of Commons as an institution. *The Good Parliament* is underpinned by an extensive body of international research that has analysed the under-representation of women in politics over more than two decades,³ as well as by newer work on political institutions.⁴ It was informed by recent UK parliamentary reports on representation, most notably, the 2010 *Speaker's Conference on Parliamentary Representation*,⁵ the 2014 Women in Parliament APPG report *Improving Parliament*,⁶ and the 2015 Report presented to the Administration Committee, based on a survey of women Members.⁷

From July 2015 to February 2016 Professor Sarah Childs was seconded to the House of Commons. She interviewed individual MPs, held meetings with groups of MPs, talked to individual and groups

¹ <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/news/2016/july/20%20Jul%20Prof%20Sarah%20Childs%20The%20Good%20Parliament%20Report.pdf>

² ESRC/UoB Impact Acceleration Award 2015-16, ES/M500410/1.

³ See for example, for the UK, Norris and Lovenduski 1995; Childs 2004, 2008; Childs and Webb 2012; Campbell and Childs 2015, and for global studies, Kittilson 2006; Hughes and Paxton 2016.

⁴ This Report does not seek to produce an account of the gendered nature of the UK House of Commons, see for example Crewe 2015a,b; Childs 2013c; Krook and Mackay 2011. www.femfiin.com. Joni Lovenduski (2005, 50 & 52-3): Both gender theory and institutional theory suggests that institutions have considerable capacity to reproduce their cultures. See also Crewe 2015a.

⁵ <https://parliamentsandlegislatures.wordpress.com/2015/07/29/what-is-a-good-ethnography-of-parliament/>

⁶ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/spconf/239/239i.pdf>. This strategy of establishing a Speaker's Conference was prompted by the 2005 Hansard Society *Women at the Top Report*. Sarah Childs was the gender adviser to the Speaker's Conference.

⁷ <http://appgimprovingparliamentreport.co.uk/download/APPG-Women-In-Parliament-Report-2014.pdf> Sarah Childs was an adviser to the APPG for this Report.

⁸ *Report for the House of Commons Administration Committee on the findings of the interview study with Members on women's experience in Parliament*. See also <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-committees/admin-committee/Interview-study-Members-leaving-Parliament-report%20-%20April%202016.pdf> *The Good Parliament Report* was also informed by the 2015 Report of the Speaker's Commission on Digital Democracy and the 2015 BBC TV series *Inside the Commons*.

of clerks and officials, observed House activities and interactions in Parliament's social spaces, and subjected a range of parliamentary publications to a gendered/diversity reading. An international conference was held in conjunction with the BG Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) to facilitate 'lesson learning' from the 'best practice' parliaments of Sweden and Finland. A subsequent meeting was held with representatives from leading UK civil society groups. In all these activities, and in the drafting of the recommendations, Professor Childs benefited from the formal advice of a small group of MPs, male and female from across the House, and an Advisory Board made up of officials and clerks, and chaired by Mr Speaker.

DIVERSITY SENSITIVE PARLIAMENTS

The Good Parliament draws on the IPU's globally influential 'Gender Sensitive Parliaments' framework that has been employed to identify international best practice. A Gender Sensitive Parliament (GSP) is a political institution that responds to the 'needs and interests' of both women and men in terms of its 'structures, operations, methods and work'.⁸ It will have removed the 'barriers to women's full participation' and offers 'a positive example or model to society at large'.⁹ *The Good Parliament* develops this framework, employing a Diversity Sensitive Parliaments (DSP) approach. This acknowledges that women are not the only group under-represented in politics and Parliament, and that these other exclusions should also be recognised and rectified. For a Parliament to be truly inclusive, attention to diverse exclusions and to intersectionality and within-group differences is necessary.

Three dimensions critical to realising a representative and inclusive House of Commons guided the development of the Report's recommendations (see Appendix 2):¹⁰

Dimension 1: Equality and Participation within the House. Dimension 1 asks the question of 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. This dimension addresses in particular the composition of the House of Commons, and MPs' participation across the House leadership, and in its various committees.

Dimension 2: Parliamentary Infrastructure. Dimension 2 takes a critical look at the way in which Parliament facilitates the work of Members and whether this privileges a particular type of MP – explicitly or implicitly. It covers everything from the buildings and furniture of Parliament to the official rules and working practices that underpin the array of Members' parliamentary activities.

Dimension 3: Commons Culture. Dimension 3 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 UK parliamentary culture, as elsewhere, is not fixed but an evolving phenomenon, subject to change.

⁸ IPU 2012, 2011.

⁹ IPU 2012, 40.

¹⁰ These are informed by the IPU's seven dimensions of a gender sensitive parliament.

SURVEY FINDINGS

DIMENSION 1, EQUALITY AND PARTICIPATION IN THE HOUSE

- **PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES**

The findings in relation to committee membership and chairs are unambiguous: there were no Parliaments that provided a *mechanism* to gender balance committee membership. Nor were there any Parliaments that provide a *mechanism* to gender balance Committee Chairs.

Considering the distribution of women and men across the UK committees, including House Committees, *The Good Parliament* Report made the following recommendations:

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

The monitoring of Committee witnesses and, or advisors was also limited across the Parliaments, as shown in Table 1 below. Only in Sweden is there evidence of formal monitoring: the Parliamentary Administration ‘follow up on gender statistics regarding the staff, including staff employed to support Committee Secretariats’. The Scottish Parliament gathers some data: individual committee teams keep the information and input statistic on a shared database. However, there is ‘no specific gender category for teams to update on the database’. At Westminster, as *The Good Parliament* notes: limited in-House and recent academic research has established that the composition of witnesses to select committees is highly skewed in men’s favour – just one-quarter are women. Some select committees, notably the Treasury, have witness compositions that are 90 percent male. That said, the data is neither systematic nor comprehensive. This limitation is accordingly targeted in *The Good Parliament*:

- Recommendation 28: Require the House Service to provide comprehensive and systematic diversity data in respect of select committees witnesses at the end of each session, and establish annual rolling targets for witness representativeness

The House Service should moreover be required to gather, evaluate, and produce annual reports documenting data for committee witnesses disaggregated by sex/gender and other major social characteristics, for each individual select committee, and overall. A league table of the best and worst ranking committees should be published each year. Rolling annual targets should be set for each committee until no sex/gender participates at levels of less than 40 percent, and until proportionality is achieved for other social characteristics.

- Recommendation 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

Table 1 Monitoring of Witnesses and, or Advisors to Committees, by Sex

Parliament	No monitoring of Sex witnesses and, or advisors to Committees	Informal or some data collection	(more) Formal data collection

Australia	X		
Canada	X		
Denmark	X		
European	X		
Finland	X		
Germany	X		
New Zealand	X		
Scotland	X		
Spain	X		
Sweden			X
Wales		X	
Westminster		X	

DIMENSION 2, PARLIAMENTARY INFRASTRUCTURE

- **MATERNITY AND PATERNITY LEAVE ARRANGEMENTS**

Table 2 below shows how Parliaments commonly respond to maternity, paternity, and parental leave based on IPU data. It reveals that provision for maternity leave is, in the majority of parliaments, the same as the national law, although more than one quarter of the Parliaments makes no provision. Paternity and Parental leave fare less well, suggesting that the ‘father MP’ is rarely recognised.

Table 2
Parliamentary Provision of Maternity, Paternity and Parental Leave

	No provisions	Same as National Law	Own Provisions
Maternity	26%	62%	12%
Paternity	49%	45%	6%
Parental	60%	39%	1%

Source: IPU¹¹

Table 3 finds that most of the Parliaments surveyed for *The Good Parliament Report – six* – have formal House leave arrangements, either general leave provisions or more specific maternity, paternity and parental leave provisions (Australia; Denmark; Finland; Germany; New Zealand; and Spain); *four* Parliaments have no formal provisions and rely on informal party arrangements (Canada, Scotland, Wales, Westminster, UK); and a *single* Parliament – Sweden – matches their country level provision.

Table 3 Maternity and Paternity Leave Arrangements, A comparison

Country	Maternity Leave
Australia	A motion to grant leave of absence does not require notice, states the cause and period of leave, and has priority over all other business. A Member who has been granted leave of absence by the House is excused from the Service of the House or any Committee
Canada	No formal process of either maternity or paternity leave
Denmark	An MP (male and female) may request up to 12 months paid leave (pregnancy, childbirth, adoption). Formally it is up to whole Parliament to grant leave – it is put on the agenda for plenary sitting; in practice it is always granted. An MP writes to the Speaker via the Legal Services office.
European	To be confirmed ¹²

¹¹ IPU 2011, 92-4.

Finland	According to section 48 of the Parliament's rules of Procedure a record of absence form a plenary session (illness, maternity, paternity or parental leave) shall be entered into the minutes of the plenary session. MPs receive full remuneration during maternal or paternal leave.
Germany	Members who are unable to be present on days when the Bundestag is sitting, or to attend recorded votes, notify the President of the Bundestag in writing. The reasons are not examined. ... While the law provides for deductions to be made from Members' monthly expense allowance in the event of their absence...no deductions are made if the absence is due to pregnancy, if it falls during the period of maternity protection, or if it is for the purpose of caring for an ill child under the age of 14.
New Zealand	There is a provision for members to apply to the Speaker for extended periods of leave, and this can be used for what would effectively be maternity or paternity leave. Members would receive their full salary while on this leave. In New Zealand MPs are not employees, and are therefore not subject to the provisions of the Parental Leave and Employment Protection Act 1987.
Scotland	There is no access to maternity or paternity leave for members; policies will be set by the individual parties
Spain	<p>According with the Standing Orders of the Congress of Deputies. Section 82 (modified by the Plenary Sitting on July 21th, 2011) Voting may be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) By assent to the Speaker's proposal. ii) Ordinary. iii) Public, by roll call. iv) Secret <p>2. In the event of pregnancy, maternity, paternity or serious sickness preventing a Member of Parliament from carrying out his or her functions and considered sufficiently justified taking into account the special circumstances, the Bureau may authorise in a motivated document the Member to cast his or her vote through the telematics procedure with identity verification, in plenary sessions, in a voting, that cannot be subject to fragmentation or modification, and which will be foreseeable in respect to the manner and moment when it will take place. For such purpose, the Member will issue the due application by means of a document addressed to the Bureau, which will inform him or her of its decision, specifying, if necessary, the voting and time period he or she will be allowed to cast the vote through this procedure. The vote casted through this procedure will have to be personally verified by means of a system established to this end by the Bureau and held by the Presidency of the Chamber prior to the beginning of the voting.</p>
Sweden	The same rules for parental leave are applicable to MPs as for the general public. The MP applies for parental leave also from Parliament; the application has to be approved by the Speaker. (Parental allowance of 480 days, of 390 compensated at 80 percent wage, and 90 days with minimum wage. 60 of the 390 are the 'daddy quota'. Father is entitled to parental allowance of 10 days in connection of the birth at 90 percent of wage. Temporal parental allowance for care of sick children is 120 days per child and year (Freidenvall undated, 33)).
Wales	There is no formal process; arrangements are made between the individual member and their parties. Some members have used 'pairing' arrangements via the party whips for one-off appointments.
Westminster, UK	Informal negotiations between MP and their party Whip

¹² Staff Regulations, article 58, 20 weeks of maternity leave 'on production of a medical certificate'; no paternity leave.

The Good Parliament takes the view that a reliance on informal arrangements between individual MPs and their party whips is unsatisfactory and that a House statement be devised:

- Recommendation 12: Produce a ‘House Statement’ on maternity, paternity, parental, adoption and caring leave. All parties represented in the Commons would be expected to sign up to this.

This recommendation is underpinned by the contention that to become a truly inclusive institution the House of Commons must accommodate and facilitate both the pregnant woman Member, co-parenting, and caring MP. It also acknowledges the ‘motherhood gap’ in the UK Parliament. Some 45 percent of women MPs compared with 28 percent of male MPs do not have children (Campbell and Childs 2014).

- **INFANT FEEDING**

As part of its consideration of maternity provision, thought should be given to whether Members of the UK Parliament be allowed to feed their babies in Committees and in the Chamber – or as one senior Clerk put it, the presence of infants in Committees and the Chamber. Globally, breastfeeding in Parliaments appears to be on the rise.¹³ In February 2016 the Australian House amended its Standing Orders to allow breast and bottle feeding.¹⁴ The Department of the House of Representatives currently holds Breastfeeding Friendly workplace accreditation from the Australian Breastfeeding Association. Breast and Bottle feeding is also permitted in the Chamber and Committees of the European Parliament. Elsewhere, it is frequently neither formally ruled in nor ruled out. This is the case in Canada, Denmark, Finland and New Zealand; in Germany despite formal procedure ruling it out (the presence of children in the plenary chamber), Members have in practice periodically taken their children in, although there is no precedent for infant feeding within the chamber. Once again, parliamentary practice regarding breastfeeding likely reflects the historic under-representation of women, and especially mothers of young children, in parliaments.

- **CHILDCARE PROVISION**

Table 4 Childcare Provision in and by Parliaments

Parliament	Childcare Provision	Hours	Age
Australia	On site 30 places to families who work in Parliament	7.30-9pm on parliamentary sitting days; 8-6 on other days	6 weeks to 3 years.
Canada	On-site For Members and their employees	7:45 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Sittings convene on Mondays at 11:00 a.m., on	18 months to 2½ years of age and pre-schoolers from 2½ to

¹³ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmhansrd/cm151110/halltext/151110h0001.htm> In January 2016 a Spanish MP breastfed her baby, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-35303171>

¹⁴ This change was effected by amending SO 257 to provide that ‘a visitor does not include an infant being cared for by a Member’. The change implemented a House Standing Committee on Procedure Recommendation, presented in December 2015. Personal correspondence. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-02-02/breastfeeding-politicians-allowed-to-bring-children-into-chamber/7133324>; <http://www.nationalpost.com/m/wp/blog.html?b=news.nationalpost.com//news/canada/canadian-politics/breastfeeding-mps-cause-a-stir-in-parliaments-around-the-world-but-with-more-women-running-than-ever-in-canada-it-should-be-the-new-norm>. This report cites case in Argentina and a Canadian MP carrying a baby in the chamber. Australian Parliament – Breastfeeding MPs can now be accompanied by their spouse or nanny on all official interstate travel. <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/parliament-moves-to-become-more-mumfriendly-as-breastfeeding-mps-win-more-travel-flexibility/news-story/d8b031bb33d36d262660949325b128f9>

	Parliamentarians' children given priority Full-time basis only and charges a monthly fee. Short-term (hourly rate), on call child care services for Members; can be provided in Members' offices, in their residence or at other premises they occupy	Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays at 10:00 a.m., and on Wednesdays at 2:00 p.m. The Chamber usually adjourns by 7:00 p.m., except on Friday when it rises at 2:30 p.m.	5 years of age. 3 months to 12 years
Denmark	No, day care is generally run by the municipalities		
European	Crèche (Brussels), ¹⁵ children of Members, officials other accredited workers	Reflect sitting hours	3 months until the 31 Aug in the year which they reach the age of 4
Finland			
Germany	In the immediate vicinity of the Bundestag open to Members' children. 'Drop in' childcare is not offered by the nursery.	Do not reflect the sitting hours, but they go beyond those offered by many other childcare facilities.	
New Zealand	Privately-run crèches are in close proximity	Do not reflect sitting hours. One particularly used by Parliamentary staff is only open for business hours (8am – 5.45 pm Monday to Friday)	
Spain	On-site nursery Open to MPs, House staff and staff of the parliamentary groups	8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. On sitting days, nursery remains open until plenary sitting is over	0 to 3 years
Scotland	Crèche - members use when they are required to vote	The hours reflect sitting Hours	
Sweden	There is a nursery to supplement MPs regular childcare provided in the constituencies.	The hours reflect sitting hours.	
Wales	Off-site crèche in close proximity	The hours reflect sitting hours	
Westminster, UK	On site, nursery for f/t care of up to 40 children; open to Members, their staff, House staff, lobby journalists and Whitehall civil servants	Do not reflect sitting hours. Hours are 8-6pm	Up to the age of 5

¹⁵ Other locations not noted for reasons of parsimony.

	No drop in creche		
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The survey sought to identify what, if any, childcare provision was made for Members and for visitors to the House. Terms are sometimes used in different Parliaments to refer to different kinds of provision. One can distinguish between full-time, permanent childcare (in the UK, the term used would be a nursery) and ad hoc short-term childcare (the term crèche would be used in the UK). The UK Parliament established a Nursery in 2010. This was an important symbolic and substantive reform to the Palace of Westminster. In *The Good Parliament*, Recommendation 13 calls for a review of the provision of a crèche facility on the Parliamentary Estate (in addition to the nursery), primarily for the use of visitors but also for Members on an ad hoc basis.

- **TOILETS**

In the UK the question of toilet provision is a longstanding concern for some women MPs who historically have considered that there has been under-provision. Indeed, in a Point of Order, in autumn 2015, one woman MP queried the apparent planned provision of transgender toilets over and above adequate provision for women; the media commentary linked to *The Good Parliament* Report fixated on this issue (along with breast feeding). Across the surveyed Parliaments, there is an indication that equal provision of toilets for men and women is the dominant position, but it is also the case that cultural norms play out here. Two Parliaments - Denmark and the European - do not provide toilets solely for the use of Members. This is true for the Westminster Parliament in Portcullis House where many Members have offices but this is not the case near the Chamber, where there are ‘Members only’ toilets. In Sweden the question of sex-specific toilets was met by a sitting Swedish male MP with much incredulity at the GB-IPU conference held at Westminster; there are ‘just toilets’ in the Swedish Parliament. In contrast, Denmark makes provision for some women-only toilets even though most are unisex. Given the ‘hot’ political debate over trans-rights playing out, the shared use of disabled toilets is notable – these are uniformly for all disabled people without distinction to sex or gender identity. The simple recommendation in *The Good Parliament* (Recommendation 39) is for ‘sufficient toilet capacity across the Parliamentary Estate’ in preparation for a future sex/gender parity and diverse Parliament (MPs, staff and visitors).

Table 5 Parliamentary Toilet Provision

Parliament	Ratio men’s women’s toilets in close proximity to the Chamber	Uni-sex/Gender Neutral Toilets
Australia	50:50	Some disabled toilets
Canada	50:50, follows National Building Code	Some unisex handicap accessible toilets
Denmark	No exclusively MP toilet provision	Most toilets are unisex or have unisex anterooms with hand-washing facilities but gender-specific stalls; in a few cases, combination of unisex and women-only stalls
European	50:50 provision, but no exclusively MP toilet provision	Disabled unisex toilets
Finland	Equal no.s of women and men’s toilet ‘complexes’; equal numbers of toilet bowls; men’s toilets have additional urinals	Disabled unisex toilet in the visitors centre
Germany	16 women; 12 men plus 12 urinals; 2 accessible	
New Zealand	50:50	
Spain	10 men, 9 women, 1 disabled	
Scotland	50:50	

Sweden	n/a	All gender neutral
Wales	50:50 across the parliamentary estate	Since late summer 2016, gender neutral toilet and shower facilities operational across the estate
Westminster, UK	Perception by women MPs of under-provision for women	Disabled toilets are gender-neutral

- **WOMEN'S ONLY SPACES**

Regarding the provision of specific 'women only spaces' within a Parliament, it seems the UK is one of two outliers, along with Finland. Westminster provides for a number of 'Lady Members Rooms', as Table 6 below shows. *The Good Parliament* recommends the retention of these (Recommendation 38), at least as long as the Parliament sits such late hours and whilst the membership of the House is so skewed in men's favour. Provision of family, and or nursing rooms is more widespread but remains limited to only four Parliaments (Australia, Canada, Wales, and the UK). The provision of *separate* nursing rooms is found in just three Parliaments - Australia, European, and Finland.

Table 6 Specific facilities for women MPs, such as designated 'women member rooms'

Parliament	Women Members' room	Family/Nursing Rooms
Australia		Family Room in the House of Representatives Wing & Nursing Mothers' room (members and staff, HofR wing); Members can also use the nursing mothers room in the Early childhood centre in Parliament House
Canada		Family Room near the Chamber, with facilities for nursing babies
Denmark	no	
European		Breastfeeding rooms inside the medical service premises, for staff and members
Finland	Women Members room	In B wing there is a toilet with separate space meant for breastfeeding and childcare
Germany	no	no
New Zealand	Dedicated family room for women MPs and women staff	Dedicated family room in which staff can breastfeed or feed their children; plus health rooms where women MPs and staff can breastfeed.
Spain	no	no
Scotland	no	no
Sweden	Exhibition Room 'The Women's Room' which contains pictures of women including the first female Speaker and works of art by female artists	There is a private room for both men and women that can be used for nursing and relaxing
Wales	no	Parent and Family Room
Westminster, UK	Lady Members' Rooms (and male Members room)	Family Room; only the Lady Members' room contain some nursing furniture

- **MPs' JOB SHARE**

There were no instances of job-share for elected members in any of the Parliaments. In Germany Federal Law does not provide for a mandate to be divided and it would be unconstitutional; similarly there is no provision for MP job-share under New Zealand Law; and the Government of Wales Act states that an individual is elected to office – the same position as the UK Parliament.¹⁶ The use of substitutes is a feature of two parliaments, Denmark and Sweden, although there is some limited substitution in Finland. In Denmark and Sweden the substitute would be the next person on the party list in the same constituency as the Member on leave. Finland, whilst considering the rights of MPs to be personal and not temporarily replaceable, permits alternate members for Committees. Both New Zealand and Australia make use of proxy voting (See appendix 3).

- **WOMEN’S AND GENDER EQUALITY INSTITUTIONS AND PROGRAMMES OF ACTION**

Table 7 Equality and Women’s Committees, Caucuses and Plans

Parliament	Women’s/Equalities Caucus	Women’s/Equalities Legislative Committee	Other Women’s/Equalities Group¹⁷	Equality Plan¹⁸
Australia	No officially recognised	Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights (addresses CEDAW); periodic standing committees conduct inquiries into women’s/equality issues	Parliamentary Friendship Groups e.g. Women and Work and Women in Science, Maths and Engineering	No
Canada	Informal all-party women’s caucus	Standing Committee on the Status of Women Special Committee on Pay Equity (est 2016)	Political party caucuses; IPU and CPA	No
Denmark	No ¹⁹	Gender Equality Committee (standing Committee)	No	No (as relates to MPs)
European	High Level Group on Gender Equality and Diversity est 2004, chaired by one of Parliament’s Vice-Presidents. Membership includes 2 additional VP, a Quaestor (Official), Chair of FEMM, Chair of Conference of	Committee on Women’s rights and gender Equality (FEMM Committee)	LGBTI inter-group (unofficial bodies bringing together MEPs from different political groups)	High Level Group on Gender Equality and Diversity Action Plan adopted April 2015-19

¹⁶ A stand alone pamphlet examining MPs’ job-share in the UK will be published in autumn 2016.

¹⁷ This does not include reference to extra-parliamentary groups, links, or activities.

¹⁸ This is a Parliament Equality plan and is distinct from any Government plan/gender mainstreaming effort across Government.

¹⁹ Formal parliamentary caucuses (as distinct from party groups and standing committees) are not really a feature of the Danish parliamentary system.

	Delegation Chairs. Main Goals: to promote and implement gender mainstreaming within Parliament's activities, structures and bodies.			
Finland	Network of Finnish women MPs est 1991, coordinated by the Employment and Equality Committee	Employment and Equality Committee		Gender Equality and non Discrimination plan of the Parliamentary office
Germany	no	Committee on Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (counterpart to Fed Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth).	Women's policy and gender equality assigned to one of the parliamentary groups' thematic working groups or address it as a cross-cutting issue	Parliament falls outside the 'Federal Act on Gender Equality'
New Zealand	Cross-parliamentary women's caucus under the auspices of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP)	Government Administration Committee has responsibility for Women's Affairs		No
Spain		Permanent Legislative Commission of Equality		no
Scotland		Equal Opportunities Committee		
Sweden	Speaker's Working Group For Gender Equality Issues est 1995; renamed Reference Group for Gender Equality 2006	Committee on Labour	No	Action Programme for each period since 2006
Wales	Women in Democracy Caucus est 2014	Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee		
Westminster, UK	Common's Reference Group on Representation and Inclusion established by Mr Speaker autumn 2016.	Women and Equalities Committee established in 2015; non-permanent Departmental Select Committee	Women in Parliament All-Party Parliamentary Group; party women's groups: Parliamentary Labour Party	Expectation that the Reference Group will draw up a programme of action, winter 2016.

			Women's Committee; Conservative Women's Forum	
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The presence of women's and or equality committees designed to address either institutional and, or political issues within parliaments varied. The political dimension fares better – all Parliaments either have a women's, equality or a n other committee that has responsibility for these issues. Regarding a women's/equalities legislative committee, the UK's new Women and Equalities Committee set up in 2015 is notably a non-permanent addition to the House of Commons. Consequently, *The Good Parliament Report* made the following Recommendation:

- Recommendation 25: Put before the House a motion to establish the Women and Equalities Committee as a permanent select committee of the House, by amending Standing Order No. 152

The institutional dimension fare less well. Formal women's caucuses are rare – Canada and Finland and, arguably, New Zealand; less formal and, or inter-party groupings are evident again in only a minority of the Parliaments: Australia, Canada, UK, and Wales. Formal groupings designed to address women's under-representation and marginalization and or to address gender inequality within Parliaments are found in Sweden, European the National Assembly for Wales and the UK Parliament. Moreover, the provision of 'programmes of action' or 'equality plans' for the Parliaments (as distinct from any Government programmes relating to women and, or equalities) are only evident in three: European, Finland and Sweden.

As Table 7 above documents, as part of the process preparing *The Good Parliament*, Mr Speaker accepted the argument for the establishment of a new group of MPs – The Commons' Reference Group on Representation and Inclusion. The new Reference Group provides the necessary political and institutional lead to deliver on the recommendations of *The Good Parliament*. Formally chaired by the Speaker, it is comprised of a small number of Members, male and female, from across the House. Its very existence symbolises that the House of Commons – as an institution – takes seriously diversity insensitivities and deficiencies, issues of representation and inclusion, and, indeed, parliamentary effectiveness and standing. Substantively, the Group's remit is to take the lead for delivering, in a systematic and sustained fashion, *The Good Parliament* agenda. It provides political and institutional leadership, and will act to ensure that individual parliamentary actors, as well as the House collectively, fulfil their roles in implementing necessary reforms. The Group will draw up Programme of Action for each parliament, and will report to the Speaker, taking the number of Parliaments with such equality plans to four.

DIMENSION 3, PARLIAMENTARY CULTURE

- **NON-SEXIST LANGUAGE AND BEHAVIOUR (BY AND AMONGST MPS)²⁰**

There was only a single Parliament that explicitly referenced gender equality, sexist behaviour and, or sexist language: the European Parliament. Here behaviour is to '*be based on the values and principles laid down in the basic texts on which the European Union is founded*'. These would include 'those stated in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union', namely, '*equality between women and men prevail*', and Article 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union '*Equality between women and men must be ensured in all areas, including employment, work and pay*'. Elsewhere there is reliance on Standing Orders for the code of conduct, and/or Rules of Procedure

²⁰ This question did not ask directly ask about codes of conduct for behaviour between MPs and their and other Parliamentary staff.

(Australia, Germany, New Zealand,²¹ Scotland, Wales, Westminster, UK), or the Constitution (Finland, section 31.2).²² The Speaker would also be relied upon to call Members to order for such behaviour (Denmark, Germany, New Zealand, and Westminster, UK).²³

To address parliamentary culture *The Good Parliament* made the following recommendation:

- Recommendation 1: Secure cross-party support for a concord regarding what constitutes unacceptable and unprofessional behaviour in the Chamber, and more widely in the House; formally restate the House's commitment to the highest standards of Member behaviour at the start of every parliamentary session; and improve sanctions against those who break the rules

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

DIMENSION 1

- *Parliaments do not provide either data about, or mechanisms to deliver, equality of participation of either women Members or women witnesses in respect of committees.* This suggests an institutional deficiency on behalf of both the political and administrative side. Systematic data gathering, monitoring, and targets for, witness diversity should be easy to implement by Parliaments; ditto, data on MPs' participation in committees and as Chairs; interventions to change the distribution of members in committees and in Chair positions should be at the very minimum become part of discussion amongst party leaderships within Parliaments.

DIMENSION 2

- *Most Parliaments make some provision for Members' caring responsibilities, albeit limited provision in most cases*
- Institutional childcare (unless the tradition is for local rather than place of work provision) provision within or in very close proximity to Parliaments is notably widespread. Questions remain however as to whether this meets the needs of users, most notably in terms of the hours of the childcare provision, but also in terms of the age of children provided for. There are also issues regarding childcare provision for visitors to Parliaments.
- Provisions for the pregnant and nursing Member are considerably more limited. This likely reflects the historical legacy of overwhelmingly male institutions. Yet, truly inclusive Parliaments will need to extend their provision. Parliaments should therefore reflect on the (in)adequacies of their maternity, paternity, parental, adoption and care leave – this should not be informal; they should also reconsider if they have ruled out, or consider if they have never decided upon, permitting infant presence (and accordingly feeding) in the Chamber and in Committees. Such permission would ensure that all members can participate at all times in parliamentary activities. This act will also have symbolic benefits beyond Parliament.

²¹ Sexist language is generally considered to be offensive language under SO 119. Where it occurs it would be appropriate for the Speaker to ask a member to withdraw and apologise. If a Speaker judged a member's conduct in the House to be highly disorderly, the member could be asked to withdraw from the Chamber (SO 89), and grossly disorderly conduct could result in a member being named and suspended (SOs 90-93). It is also possible for grossly disorderly conduct to be held as a contempt of the House (SO 96 and 401-410).

²² A Representative shall conduct himself or herself with dignity and decorum, and not behave offensive to another person.

²³ In Finland there is an 'atmosphere' survey undertaken every other year of the whole parliamentary staff. This does not include members.

Provision for separate breastfeeding rooms should also be made, as some members will prefer this (for example for pumping) and will need appropriate equipment.

- Diversity of toilet provision should be considered a technical rather than inherently political issue - Parliaments should ahead plan for parity parliaments and for members and visitors who have diverse needs.
- The question of job-share for MPs appears to be far from the agenda of most Parliaments. In a good few cases MP job-shares are specifically ruled unlawful and or unconstitutional. It is likely that where disability rights campaigns are vocal, that this issue will nonetheless become more prominent in the next few years.
- The presence of women and or equalities legislative committees (or where other committees have this agenda as part of their remit) is widespread. This meets one of the IPU's criteria of a gender sensitive parliament. Parliaments with such committees might hereafter be asked about the resources, powers and impact of these committees, and to ensure that they have the same capacity and effect as other committees.
- Parliamentary – or more precisely, institutionally-facing – committees leading on representation and inclusion are much less likely to be in place – the Swedish and Welsh case are leaders here; the new UK Commons' Reference Group on Representation and Inclusion will soon join this select group. Importantly, it is these groups that are linked to the provision of a parliamentary equality plan/programme of action. To see positive developments in the latter might then require the establishment in a greater number of Parliaments of similar bodies tasked with responsibility to deliver on diversity sensitivity.

DIMENSION 3

- There seems to be a clear deficiency here in how Parliaments conceive of their responsibility to monitor and ensure inclusion, for both Members and visitors to the House. Parliamentary culture also necessarily impacts on Parliamentary staff and officials. Parliaments too frequently rely upon general codes of conduct and, or the intervention of the Speaker. There are few mechanisms to even identify whether the parliamentary culture is experienced as exclusionary or inhospitable for some members. Procedures should accordingly be put in place to identify members' views and to reform if necessary extant codes of conduct.

Appendix 1

COMPARATIVE PARLIAMENTS DATA REQUEST

This short survey will generate comparative data that will be used as part of a study by Sarah Childs, Professor of Politics and Gender, at the University of Bristol, UK.²⁴ It is guided by the Inter Parliamentary Union's gender sensitivity framework and will inform Reports and briefings to be presented to the Commons in Spring 2016.

Sarah is very happy to share the data amongst participants if they agree for her to do so; she would also share this with academics from the relevant countries, again if permission is given. She would of course also ensure that her reports and briefings are made available. Please email responses to: s.childs@bristol.ac.uk or send to: Flat 2, 77 Larkhall Rise, London, SW4 6HS.

Women's participation in a Parliament's Committees

1. Are there any mechanisms in place to deliver gender balance or gender proportionality in Committees? If so, please describe.
2. Are there any mechanisms in place to deliver gender balance or gender proportionality for Committee Chairs? If so, please describe.
3. Are there any monitoring systems in place to record the sex of witnesses and advisers to Committees? If so, please describe.

Parliamentary Infrastructure

4. What is the ratio of women MPs' to men MPs' toilets in close proximity to the Chamber?
5. Are there any gender-neutral (unisex) toilets for MPs and, or for visitors?
6. Does your Parliament have any specific facilities for women MPs, such as designated 'women member rooms'? If so, what are they?

Child-friendly Parliaments

7. Is there a formal process of Maternity and, or Paternity leave? If so, please describe.
8. Is breast and bottle feeding permitted in the Chamber? And, or in Committees?
9. Is there a nursery (full time childcare) and, or a crèche ('drop in' childcare)? If so, do these reflect the sitting hours of the Parliament?
10. Are MPs in receipt of any childcare benefits over and above those provided for parents more generally? If so, please describe.

Job share

11. Is there a formal process of job share for MPs? If so, please describe.

Non-Sexist Culture

12. Are there any Parliamentary codes of conduct relating to sexist behaviour and, or sexist language?
13. Are there any Parliamentary procedures or activities in respect of which issues of sexist behaviour and, or women's marginalisation have been identified?

Equality and Women's Committees and Caucuses

14. Does your Parliament have a Women's and, or Equality Caucus? If so, please describe
15. Does your Parliament have a Women's, and or Equality legislative/scrutiny/policy committee?
16. Are there any other gender equality groups for members?
17. Does the Parliament have a gender equality plan (distinct from any Government plan/gender mainstreaming by Government)?

²⁴ <http://dbms.ilrt.bris.ac.uk/spais/people/sarah-l-childs/overview.html> s.childs@bristol.ac.uk

Appendix 2

The Good Parliament Report: Recommendations

The Speaker

1. Secure cross-party support for a concord regarding what constitutes unacceptable and unprofessional behaviour in the Chamber, and more widely in the House; formally restate the House's commitment to the highest standards of Member behaviour at the start of every parliamentary session; and improve sanctions against those who break the rules
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
3. Permit MPs to be counted at the 'door' of the division lobbies when accompanied by their children
4. Target a representative Parliamentary Press Gallery (Lobby journalists). Neither women nor men should be in receipt of less than 40 percent of lobby passes by 2020
5. Initiate an Inter-Parliamentary Union³ 'Gender Sensitive Parliament' audit in 2018

The Commons Reference Group on Representation and Inclusion

6. Publish a series of statements detailing and promoting the role and work of MPs, to both educate the public more about what it is that MPs do, and to explicitly signal the range of characteristics, skills, dispositions, and experiences relevant to the job of being an MP
7. Engage in various parliamentary and other activities to enhance the supply of, and demand for, diverse parliamentary candidates
8. Secure a cross-party concord regarding candidate selection for the 2020 Parliament following the boundary review:⁴ all political parties should seek to increase the percentage of its women MPs – at the *absolute minimum* all parties currently represented in the House should maintain existing percentages of women MPs
9. Introduce prior to dissolution for the 2020 general election statutory sex/ gender quotas to take effect for the 2025 general election if, three months prior to the 2020 general election, political parties currently represented in Parliament have failed to select at least 50 percent women in a party's 'vacant held' and 'target seats'. Introduce permissive legislation to allow for party quotas for other under-represented groups, where parties have failed to select proportional percentages of candidates from these groups
10. Sponsor a measure to gender balance MP membership of the House of Commons Commission
11. Commission a comprehensive diversity and equality audit of the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA), and submit its findings to the IPSA consultation (October 2016)
12. Produce a 'House Statement' on maternity, paternity, parental, adoption and caring leave
13. Undertake a review for the provision of a crèche facility on the Parliamentary Estate (in addition to the nursery)
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

16. Revise the dress code to ‘business dress’ or ‘national costume’

The House of Commons Commission

17. Recognise the House’s collective responsibility for enhancing representation and inclusion by formally taking note of the establishment of the Commons

Reference Group on Representation and Inclusion

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

19. Support the development of a residential ‘Introduction to being an MP’ Programme for under-represented groups

20. Re-design the parliamentary identity pass

21. Maximise Member opportunities, capacities and capabilities via Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

The Secretary of State for Education and Minister for Women and Equalities

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

23. Clarify the status and effectiveness of the Access to Elected Office Fund for supporting disabled people to stand for election as local councillors or MPs

The Women and Equalities Committee

24. Call the Secretary of State for Women and Equalities before the Committee regarding commencement of Section 106 of the Equality Act 2010

The Leader of the House of Commons

25. Put before the House a motion to establish the Women and Equalities Committee as a permanent select committee of the House, by amending Standing Order No. 152

26. Set the recess dates for each parliamentary session, at least one session in advance

27. Abolish party conference recess and sitting Fridays

Liaison Committee

28. Require the House Service to provide comprehensive and systematic diversity data in respect of select committees witnesses at the end of each session, and establish annual rolling targets for witness representativeness

Procedure Committee

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

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

31. Introduce greater predictability in the scheduling of House Business

32. Review the establishment of a ‘Division Time’, whereby multiple votes could be taken together at a particular point of the parliamentary sitting

In the context of the expected temporary decant from the Palace of Westminster for Restoration and Renewal:

33. Trial sittings of the House based around ‘normal business hours’

34. Trial opportunities for remote voting by MPs physically present on the Parliamentary Estate

35. Trial new formats for Prime Minister’s Questions (PMQs)

The new Restoration & Renewal Body

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 and 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

Works of Art Committee

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

The Women in Parliament (WIP) All Party Parliamentary Group

42. Campaign for male MPs to sign up to #nomoreallmalepanels

Political Parties

43. Engage in various activities to increase the supply of, and demand for, diverse parliamentary candidates

Appendix 3 Proxy Voting

Box 1

Australia Nursing Mothers and Proxy Votes²⁵

Members nursing an infant are able to give their vote by proxy for any division except that on the third reading of a bill which proposes an alteration of the Constitution. (This exemption is in recognition of the fact that bills proposing an alteration to the Constitution must be passed with an absolute majority in both Houses) (Constitution, s128) Government Members give their vote to the Chief Government Whip and non-government Members to the Chief Opposition Whip. (Resolution of the House, *Votes and Proceedings No. 1*, 12-13 February 2008, pp. 27-8)

The provisions for proxy voting are provided for by a resolution of the House agreed on 13 February 2008, the terms of which are appended to the standing orders titled *Special provisions for nursing mothers*.

Box 2

Proxy Voting in the New Zealand Parliament:

Standing Order 154 Proxy voting (1) A member may give authority for a proxy vote to be cast in the member's name or for an abstention to be recorded. (2) A proxy must state the name of the member who is giving the authority, the date it is given, and the period or business for which the authority is valid. It must be signed by the member giving it and indicate the member who is given authority to exercise it. (3) A member who has given a proxy may revoke or amend that proxy at any time before its exercise.

(4) The leader or senior whip of each party, or a member acting as the leader or senior whip of the party in the House for the time being, may exercise a proxy vote for any member of the party, subject to any express direction from a member to the contrary.

Standing Order 155 Casting of proxy vote (1) A proxy vote may be cast or an abstention recorded on a party or personal vote only by the person who has authority to exercise it. In the case of any dispute, the member exercising a proxy must produce the authority to the Speaker. (2) In the case of a party vote, proxies may be exercised for a number equal to no more than 25 percent of a party's membership in the House, rounded upwards where applicable. (3) A proxy may be exercised for a member, in addition to the number of proxies that may be exercised under paragraph (2), while that member is absent from the House with the permission of the Speaker granted under Standing Order 38(1). (4) In the case of a party vote, proxy votes may be exercised for a party consisting of up to five members, or an Independent member, only if at least one of the members of that party or that Independent member is— (a) present within the parliamentary precincts at the time, or (b) absent from the House with the permission of the Speaker granted under Standing Order 38(1). (5) Despite paragraph (2), there is no limit on the

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<http://www.aph.gov.au/~media/02%20Parliamentary%20Business/24%20Committees/243%20Reps%20Committees/Procedures/NursingMothers/FullReport.pdf?la=en>

number of proxy votes that may be exercised in the period from the declaration of a state of national emergency until that state of national emergency is terminated or expires.

Standing Order 38 Permission to be absent from the House (1) The Speaker may grant a member of a party consisting of one member, an Independent member, or any other member (following a request from a member's party leader or whip) permission to be absent from the House— (a) on account of illness or other family cause of a personal nature: (b) to enable the member to attend to public business (whether in New Zealand or overseas). (2) A leader or whip of a party consisting of more than one member may grant any member of that party permission to be absent from the House.

In 2013, the New Zealand Parliament adopted a sessional order to allow an MP to be absent from the Parliamentary precincts on compassionate grounds, but to be regarded as present for the purposes of casting party votes. The Standing Orders Committee subsequently recommended to the House this be incorporated the rules and procedures for members' attendance in the Standing Orders (ANZACATT20167A).

