



Indicator 7.3: Composition of parliamentary bodies

About this indicator

The composition of parliamentary bodies, and of parliament as a whole, should reflect the diversity of political opinions and of social groups within a country.

The representation of political groups in the composition of parliamentary bodies is usually proportionate to the representation of these political groups in parliament as a whole. Parliaments often give special consideration to smaller political groups and independent MPs to ensure their effective representation.

Rules and practice have a significant role in determining the composition of parliament's governing bodies, such as the presidium, committees and other parliamentary bodies, and the distribution of leadership roles.

This indicator comprises the following dimensions:

- Dimension 7.3.1: Composition of governing bodies
- Dimension 7.3.2: Composition of committees
- Dimension 7.3.3: Gender and age balance in parliamentary bodies

See also *Indicator 1.4: Parliamentary organization*.

The Indicators for Democratic Parliaments are a multi-partner initiative coordinated by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), in partnership with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), Directorio Legislativo Foundation, Inter Pares / International IDEA, the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UN Women and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD).

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Dimension 7.3.1: Composition of governing bodies

This dimension is part of:

- Indicator 7.3: Composition of parliamentary bodies
- Target 7: Representative parliament

About this dimension

This dimension concerns the provisions that ensure representation and balance among political groups in parliament's governing bodies, such as the presidium, the Conference of Speakers, and administrative and financial bodies. These provisions are typically set out in the legal framework and/or parliament's rules of procedure. They usually foresee the representation of all political groups in parliament's governing bodies in proportion to their representation in parliament.

The inclusion of political groups from the opposition or the political minority in the governing bodies is one form of institutional recognition of the political diversity of parliament. Many parliaments ensure that opposition or minority political groups also hold leadership positions, such as Deputy Speaker.

In parliaments where there are significant numbers of independent MPs, consideration should be given to ensuring their representation in parliament's governing bodies.

See also *Dimension 1.4.3: Presidium*.

Aspiring goal

Based on a global comparative analysis, an aspiring goal for parliaments in the area of "composition of governing bodies" is as follows:

The principles for the composition of parliament's governing bodies are clearly set out in the legal framework and/or parliament's rules of procedure. These provisions guarantee the representation of all political groups in the governing bodies and ensure an appropriate balance between them.

Parliament reserves leadership positions, such as at least one Deputy Speaker role, for the opposition or political minority groups.

Assessment

This dimension is assessed against several criteria, each of which should be evaluated separately. For each criterion, select one of the six descriptive grades (Non-existent, Rudimentary, Basic, Good, Very good and Excellent) that best reflects the situation in your parliament, and provide details of the evidence on which this assessment is based.

The evidence for assessment of this dimension could include the following:

- Provisions of the constitution and/or other aspects of the legal framework concerning the composition of parliament's governing bodies
- Provisions of parliament's rules of procedure granting at least one Deputy Speaker position to an opposition MP
- Provisions of parliament's rules of procedure granting independent MPs representation in parliament's governing bodies
- Provisions of the legal framework establishing clear and transparent procedures for the formation of political groups in parliament
- The number of opposition MPs represented in the current parliament's governing bodies

Where relevant, provide additional comments or examples that support the assessment.

Assessment criterion 1: Representation of all political groups

The principles for the composition of parliament's governing bodies are clearly set out in the legal framework and/or parliament's rules of procedure. These provisions guarantee the representation of all political groups in the governing bodies and ensure an appropriate balance between them.

Non-existent <input type="checkbox"/>	Rudimentary <input type="checkbox"/>	Basic <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Very good <input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>
Evidence for this assessment criterion:					

Assessment criterion 2: Leadership positions

Parliament reserves leadership positions, such as at least one Deputy Speaker role, for the opposition or political minority groups.

Non-existent <input type="checkbox"/>	Rudimentary <input type="checkbox"/>	Basic <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Very good <input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>
Evidence for this assessment criterion:					

Assessment criterion 3: Practice

In practice, there is balanced representation of political groups in parliament's governing bodies.

Non-existent <input type="checkbox"/>	Rudimentary <input type="checkbox"/>	Basic <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Very good <input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>
Evidence for this assessment criterion:					

Recommendations for change

Use this space to note down recommendations and ideas for strengthening rules and practice in this area.

Sources and further reading

- European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), [Report on the role of the opposition in a democratic Parliament](#) (2010).
- European Conference of Presidents of Parliament, [Majority and opposition – striking a balance in democracy](#) (2014).

- Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), [*Guidelines on the Rights and Duties of the Opposition in the Parliament*](#) (1999).

Dimension 7.3.2: Composition of committees

This dimension is part of:

- Indicator 7.3: Composition of parliamentary bodies
- Target 7: Representative parliament

About this dimension

This dimension concerns the rules and practice regarding the composition of parliamentary committees, including committee membership and leadership. It is important that MPs should be able to engage in committee work, in accordance with their personal expertise and interests and with the selection and decision-making processes of their political groups. Political groups often play a key role in committee assignments.

Committee membership is usually determined at the start of a parliamentary term. Generally, the composition of committees is proportionate to that of parliament as a whole. While there is considerable variation in committee structures, parliaments often require each MP to sit on at least one committee. Many parliaments allow MPs to be members of more than one committee, whereas some parliaments limit the number of committees on which each MP can sit.

Committee leadership roles – chairs and vice-chairs – are often elected by and from committee members after the composition of the committee is determined, soon after the first meeting of the newly elected parliament. In some systems, the majority party obtains chair positions for all committees, while in others, committee leadership positions are distributed among political groups based on the principle of proportionality.

Regardless of the system, it is important for parliament to establish and apply clear, fair and transparent rules and procedures for the composition of committees and the selection or election of committee leadership positions. Parliament's rules of procedure often explicitly assign leadership of some committees – such as the budget committee or the human rights committee – to the opposition. Special consideration may be given to small political groups and independent MPs to ensure their representation in committees, either as full members or as observers.

See also *Dimension 1.4.4: Parliamentary committees*.

Aspiring goal

Based on a global comparative analysis, an aspiring goal for parliaments in the area of “composition of committees” is as follows:

There are clear, fair and transparent rules and procedures for determining membership of committees and for the selection or election of committee leadership roles.

Special consideration is given to small political groups and independent MPs in order to ensure their representation in committees.

The expertise and interests of MPs are taken into consideration when assigning committee roles.

The composition of committees and committee leadership roles reflects that of parliament as a whole.

Assessment

This dimension is assessed against several criteria, each of which should be evaluated separately. For each criterion, select one of the six descriptive grades (Non-existent, Rudimentary, Basic, Good, Very

good and Excellent) that best reflects the situation in your parliament, and provide details of the evidence on which this assessment is based.

The evidence for assessment of this dimension could include the following:

- Provisions of the legal framework governing the composition and leadership of parliamentary committees
- Provisions of parliament's rules of procedure relating to the distribution of committee leadership positions among political groups
- The number of committees or subcommittees chaired by opposition MPs

Where relevant, provide additional comments or examples that support the assessment.

Assessment criterion 1: Rules and procedures for composition of committees

There are clear, fair and transparent rules and procedures for determining membership of committees and for the selection or election of committee leadership roles.

Non-existent <input type="checkbox"/>	Rudimentary <input type="checkbox"/>	Basic <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Very good <input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>
Evidence for this assessment criterion:					

Assessment criterion 2: Small political groups and independent MPs

Special consideration is given to small political groups and independent MPs in order to ensure their representation in committees.

Non-existent <input type="checkbox"/>	Rudimentary <input type="checkbox"/>	Basic <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Very good <input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>
Evidence for this assessment criterion:					

Assessment criterion 3: Expertise and interests of MPs

The expertise and interests of MPs are taken into consideration when assigning committee roles.

Non-existent <input type="checkbox"/>	Rudimentary <input type="checkbox"/>	Basic <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Very good <input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>
Evidence for this assessment criterion:					

Assessment criterion 4: Practice

In practice, the composition of committees and committee leadership roles reflects that of parliament as a whole.

Non-existent <input type="checkbox"/>	Rudimentary <input type="checkbox"/>	Basic <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Very good <input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>
Evidence for this assessment criterion:					

Recommendations for change

Use this space to note down recommendations and ideas for strengthening rules and practice in this area.

Dimension 7.3.3: Gender and age balance in parliamentary bodies

This dimension is part of:

- Indicator 7.3: Composition of parliamentary bodies
- Target 7: Representative parliament

About this dimension

This dimension concerns arrangements and practices relating to the representation of women and young MPs in leadership positions and in parliamentary bodies, including as Speakers or Deputy Speakers, in the presidium, on administrative and financial bodies, as committee chairs and vice-chairs, and as members of different committees.

Achieving gender and age balance in the leadership and composition of parliamentary bodies provides opportunities for women and young MPs to influence parliament's work and helps to ensure that parliament addresses the needs of women and young people.

It is important that women MPs, in particular, should have access to leadership roles in all policy areas, including as chairs of foreign affairs, defence and finance committees.

For gender and age balance in the parliamentary secretariat, see also *Indicator 5.2: Inclusive institutional practices*.

Aspiring goal

Based on a global comparative analysis, an aspiring goal for parliaments in the area of "gender and age balance in parliamentary bodies" is as follows:

Parliament takes measures to promote the equitable representation of women and young MPs in all parliamentary bodies, including in leadership positions.

MPs of different genders and ages are equitably represented in parliamentary leadership positions, including among committee chairs and vice-chairs.

Parliament monitors and reports on gender and age balance in the composition and leadership of parliamentary bodies.

Assessment

This dimension is assessed against several criteria, each of which should be evaluated separately. For each criterion, select one of the six descriptive grades (Non-existent, Rudimentary, Basic, Good, Very good and Excellent) that best reflects the situation in your parliament, and provide details of the evidence on which this assessment is based.

The evidence for assessment of this dimension could include the following:

- The number of women and young MPs holding leadership positions in parliament
- The number of women and young MPs holding committee chair and vice-chair positions
- A list of members of different portfolio committees in parliament
- Provisions of the legal framework and/or parliament's rules of procedure ensuring gender and age balance in parliamentary bodies and in the positions of chair, vice-chair and members of parliamentary committees
- Objectives and actions of parliament's strategic plan and other policies outlining steps or special measures to ensure balanced representation of women and young MPs on parliamentary bodies

- Parliamentary communication materials showcasing the positive role that women and young MPs play across parliament's work

Where relevant, provide additional comments or examples that support the assessment.

Assessment criterion 1: Measures to promote equitable representation

Parliament takes measures to promote the equitable representation of women and young MPs in all parliamentary bodies.

Non-existent <input type="checkbox"/>	Rudimentary <input type="checkbox"/>	Basic <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Very good <input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>
Evidence for this assessment criterion:					

Assessment criterion 2: Gender and age balance in leadership positions

MPs of different genders and ages are equitably represented in parliamentary leadership positions, including among committee chairs and vice-chairs.

Non-existent <input type="checkbox"/>	Rudimentary <input type="checkbox"/>	Basic <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Very good <input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>
Evidence for this assessment criterion:					

Assessment criterion 3: Monitoring and reporting

Parliament monitors and reports on gender and age balance in the composition and leadership of parliamentary bodies.

Non-existent <input type="checkbox"/>	Rudimentary <input type="checkbox"/>	Basic <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Very good <input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>
Evidence for this assessment criterion:					

Recommendations for change

Use this space to note down recommendations and ideas for strengthening rules and practice in this area.

Sources and further reading

- Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), [Gender-Sensitive parliaments: A Global Review of Good Practice](#) (2011).
- IPU, [Evaluating the gender-sensitivity of parliaments: A self-assessment toolkit](#) (2016).
- IPU, [Women in parliament in 2020: The year in review](#) (2021).
- IPU, [Youth participation in national parliaments](#) (2021).