Representative parliament

Contents

Sub-target 7 – Representative parliament ......................................................... 2

Indicator 7.1 – Electoral integrity ........................................................................ 3

Dimension 7.1.1 Voting and election rights ....................................................... 4
Dimension 7.1.2 Candidature, party and campaign rights and responsibilities .... 9
Dimension 7.1.3 Public authorities’ roles in elections ........................................ 14

Indicator 7.2 – Composition of legislature .......................................................... 19

Dimension 7.2.1 Representing diversity of political opinion ............................. 20
Dimension 7.2.2 Gender .................................................................................... 24
Dimension: 7.2.3 Youth ..................................................................................... 28
Dimension 7.2.4 Other under-represented groups ........................................... 32

Indicator 7.3 – Composition of parliamentary bodies ......................................... 36

Dimension 7.3.1 Composition of parliamentary leadership .............................. 37
Dimension 7.3.2 Composition of committees ................................................. 41
Dimension 7.3.3 Gender and age balance in the composition of parliamentary bodies ......................................................... 44
Sub-target 7 – Representative parliament

Representative parliament is one that:

- Reflects, to the extent possible, the diversity of society and political affiliation in its composition
- Ensures representation for all population groups through free and fair elections
- Reflects in its composition all population groups, particularly women, youth, and geographical and minority groups

This sub-target on representative parliament is the fourth element of Sustainable Development Goal target 16.7 – Responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative parliament.

Democratic parliaments need to be representative in the broadest sense of the notion. As parliament is a representative body, its composition should reflect the party/political situation within the country, geographical diversity through the inclusion of all regions and electoral districts, and an accurate representation of society as a whole, with due regard to population characteristics such as gender, age, disability, religion, language and ethnicity. The representative nature of the parliament is determined by multiple factors, including the legal framework on elections, electoral system, election regulations and administration, and parliamentary practices for the inclusion of the different societal groups in its work.

Free and fair elections ensure that the elected members of parliament reflect the choices of the public. The rights to vote and stand for elections, campaigning rules and the responsibilities assigned to public authorities are complex matters that are addressed in different ways across countries. However, there are common basic standards that provide for equal and fair opportunities to run for political office and succeed. The first indicator addresses the overall legal framework for elections established by the parliament, which serves as a basis for free and fair elections.

The second indicator concerns the representative nature of the legislature’s composition, with a primary focus on the representation of the diversity of political opinion, as well as women, youth and other population groups such as minorities and indigenous peoples. A parliament that does not adequately represent its society will leave some social groups and communities feeling disadvantaged or completely excluded from the political process. This in turn, is likely to impact the stability and legitimacy of the political system and the quality of public life in general.

The third indicator concerns the representative nature of the parliamentary bodies, including in the leadership or in other structures such as committees. When assessing the representative nature of the composition of parliamentary bodies, different aspects should be taken into account, including a political balance between the government and the opposition parties, the rules and practice of selecting committee chairs and members and the percentage of women, young MPs and contextually relevant population groups in the parliamentary leadership.

The sub-target on representative parliament comprises the following indicators:

- 7.1 Electoral integrity
- 7.2 Composition of legislature
- 7.3 Composition of parliamentary bodies
Indicator 7.1 – Electoral integrity

The role of parliament is central to ensuring that elections are free and fair, which constitutes the cornerstone for any democratic society. Elections should reflect the will of the voters, be transparent and inclusive, and provide voters, candidates and political parties with equal opportunities for participation, a level playing field and a safe environment.

This indicator covers the right to vote and the right to be elected, as well as the institutional mechanisms necessary to ensure these rights.

In order to maintain the credibility of the electoral process, it is necessary for electoral legislation to be stable and for the right and opportunity to participate in public affairs, vote and be elected to be safeguarded. This encompasses universal and equal suffrage, as well as opportunities for every eligible person to register as a voter and to cast a secret ballot without fear or interference. Democratic elections require people to be presented with a real choice in the elections. The right of every citizen to freely compete in elections as an independent candidate or as a member of a political party must be ensured in law and in practice.

Elections are administered by an independent electoral management body (EMB) that operates in a transparent, impartial, open and accountable manner. The EMB observes its duty of neutrality in the electoral process and enjoys independence in decision-making. Its role in conducting the electoral process is respected by the community.

The assessment of the indicator on electoral integrity comprises the following dimensions:

- 7.1.1 Voting and election rights
- 7.1.2 Candidature, party and campaign rights and responsibilities
- 7.1.3 Public authorities’ roles in elections
**Dimension 7.1.1 Voting and election rights**

Indicator: 7.1 Electoral integrity  
Sub-target: 7 Representative parliament  
Target: 16.7 Responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative parliament

**About the dimension**

This dimension outlines provisions by which the constitution and national legislation of a country establish an adequate basis for democratic elections. While the constitution contains fundamental electoral principles such as the election system, universal suffrage, periodicity of elections and voter secrecy, electoral legislation includes issues related to election management (composition of administration, boundary delimitation) and other procedural matters.

The stability of electoral legislation is crucial to the credibility of the election process. The recommendation based on the best international practice is for the legislation to be amended at least one year ahead of the subsequent elections,¹ to provide participants in the process (such as candidates, parties and voters) with adequate time to become familiar with and adapt to the electoral rules. Revising the legal framework should be an open and inclusive process, and provide an opportunity for public debate and consultation with stakeholders.

States guarantee constitutional recognition of universal suffrage (the right to vote and to be elected) and equal suffrage (equal voting rights and power) in a non-discriminatory manner. These rights are often subject to reasonable qualifications such as age, citizenship and residency requirements. The countries may also adopt diverse approaches to the limitation of voting rights, which need to be clearly listed and defined in electoral legislation.

Equality of access to registration and voting for all eligible persons, including women, ethnic minorities, citizens with disabilities and language minorities, is guaranteed. In order to ensure the exercise of the voting right of all societal groups, states provide, *inter alia*, accessible voting facilities, adapted polling stations for disabled people, and electoral materials that are translated into all national minority languages.

Enforcement of electoral rights requires the availability of effective remedies in the national legislation. Citizens, political parties and other civil society groups are provided with the opportunity to appeal to a competent and independent election management body and/or court when a violation of electoral rights has allegedly occurred.² To ensure the protection of voting rights, the law defines strict deadlines for the review of complaints, and mandates the election management body and courts to provide prompt decisions.

---


Every citizen enjoys the protection of universal and equal suffrage, equal access to voting in periodic elections and fundamental human rights that are especially relevant during elections, including freedom of opinion and expression, freedom of movement, peaceful assembly and association, and access to information. The electoral system allows voters to cast their vote individually and the secrecy of the ballot is ensured. Any limitations on these rights are clearly prescribed in the law in accordance with objectively verifiable criteria, in a non-discriminatory way, and are consistent with international obligations.

The legal framework provides for effective mechanisms and remedies for violations of the right to vote and to be elected. Citizens, political parties and other civil society organizations may appeal before the EMB or the courts. The detailed procedures are defined in the law(s).

**Assessment**

The dimension is evaluated on the basis of several criteria that should be assessed separately. For each criterion, select one of the six descriptive grades (Non-existent, Poor, Basic, Good, Very good and Excellent) that corresponds best to your parliament, and provide details of the evidence on which the assessment is based.

The evidence for assessment of this dimension might include:

- Specific articles of the constitution that define the periodicity of elections, voter secrecy and the election system
- Specific articles of the constitution that guarantee the universal and equal suffrage of every citizen of a certain age
- Established practice that demonstrates that the changes to the electoral law(s) take place at least one year in advance of subsequent elections
- Adapted facilities for disadvantaged groups (such as adapted polling stations and electoral material translated into minority languages)
- Specific articles of the constitution that uphold fundamental human rights
- Specific articles of electoral legislation
- Detailed legal provisions that ensure effective mechanisms and remedies for violations of voting rights
- Other rules that regulate electoral matters

If relevant, additional comments or examples that support the assessment (such as references to external national, regional or international surveys and reports) can be provided.

**Assessment criterion No. 1: Legal framework**

Constitutional and/or legislative provisions clearly define the main elements of elections, including the electoral system, periodicity of elections and voter secrecy. Legislative provisions are clear, consistent and unambiguous.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-existent</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 2: Stability of electoral law(s)**
Indicators for democratic parliaments, based on SDG targets 16.6 and 16.7

There is an established practice demonstrating that amendments to the main provisions of the electoral law(s) take place at least one year ahead of subsequent elections. Changes to the electoral legislation are conducted in an open and inclusive way, and public debate and consultations with stakeholders are ensured.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-existent</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 3: Universal suffrage**

There is evidence of constitutional and legal provisions that guarantee the right of universal and equal suffrage for all citizens who have reached the age of legal majority. Limitations or restrictions on the right of suffrage are clearly set out in the national legislation. Universal suffrage is exercised in a non-discriminatory manner and criteria such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status, do not result in any restrictions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-existent</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 4: Access to voting**

There is evidence of legislation ensuring that all eligible voters have access to registration and are provided with, *inter alia*, accessible voting facilities, adapted polling stations for disabled persons, and electoral materials that are translated into all national minority languages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-existent</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 5: Protection of fundamental human rights related to participation in elections**

There is evidence of constitutional and legal provisions that uphold the rule of law and guarantee respect for human rights with regard to the electoral process. This includes freedom of assembly, freedom of association, freedom of opinion and expression, freedom of movement, equal protection and accountability before the law, the right to security and freedom from all forms of violence, including violence against women in elections, and the right to ballot secrecy.
### Sub-target 7 – Representative parliament

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-existent</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 6: Rights to remedy**

Detailed legal provisions ensure effective mechanisms and remedies for the enforcement of electoral rights. Citizens, political parties and civil society groups are entitled to appeal before the competent election management body and/or court, and request prompt consideration of the case.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-existent</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Recommendations for change**

**Sources and further reading**

- International IDEA, Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and Stockholm University, [*Atlas of Electoral Gender Quotas*](link) (Sweden: International IDEA, 2013).
Dimension 7.1.2 Candidature, party and campaign rights and responsibilities

Indicator: 7.1 Electoral integrity
Sub-target: 7 Representative parliament
Target: 16.7 Responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative parliament

About the dimension

This dimension refers to the provisions under which the legal framework of a country guarantees the right of every citizen, whether individually or through a political party, to stand for elections and to conduct a campaign on an equitable basis.

States should guarantee the right of individuals and societal groups to establish political parties, subject to reasonable exceptions clearly stated by law. Once registered, the parties must have an equal opportunity to gain access to the ballot. The same protection should be provided for an eligible citizen to run as an independent candidate.

Granting ballot access to a political party or an independent candidate may be subject to some requirements such as: having a monetary deposit that is refundable if a candidate/party wins or gains a certain percentage of votes; collecting a specific number of validated signatures of registered voters and; winning a seat or achieving a minimum threshold of votes in the previous elections. All the procedures related to the practical implementation of these requirements must be clearly defined in the law and not be such as to unduly restrict possible participation in the electoral process.

National legislation may provide some specific provisions to promote the inclusion of under-represented groups, such as women and national and/or ethnic minorities in elected institutions. Such legislative provisions may refer to the implementation of quotas for under-represented groups in candidate lists, reserved seats, or may encourage the establishment of an internal party quota system for candidate selection.

In order to genuinely reflect the will of citizens in the representative government, all campaigning parties and candidates must enjoy freedom of expression and association, have an equal opportunity to reach out to voters at large, and to disseminate their messages, policies and programmes without fear. Access to the media and “equitable treatment in media owned or controlled by the state” must be guaranteed by the law.

Access to campaign financing is another right that should be protected by national legislation. It is essential that when public funding is provided, it is clearly regulated and the principle of equal opportunities is applied. Some states require public funding to political parties to be directed to women candidates’ campaigns. States allowing private contributions to the election campaign must ensure a level playing field for contestants with regard to the raising of private funds. Reasonable caps on campaign contributions/spending and a transparent system of disclosure of assets and expenditure should be detailed in the national legislation.

The national legislative framework should provide for the right to appeal regarding alleged violations of political and electoral rights that take place prior to, during and after elections, to a competent and independent election management body and/or court. While time limits for lodging appeals must be short, they should be long enough to make an appeal possible. The time for making decisions should be equally brief to allow the effective restoration of electoral rights.

3 See Indicator 7.2 Composition of legislature.
On the basis of a global comparative analysis of parliamentary practices and models in parliamentary development, an aspiring goal for parliaments in the domain of candidature, party and campaign rights and responsibilities would encompass the following:

The legal framework ensures that everyone has the right to stand for elections in the country on an equal footing with other candidates, including the right to join or, together with others, register a political party or organization to compete in elections. Whenever restrictions limit these rights, they are objective, non-discriminatory and consistent with international obligations, and are clearly stated in the legislation.

The legal framework ensures that candidates have the right and the opportunity to freely express their opinions to the electorate, and to campaign on an equal basis with other candidates and political parties. This includes the regulation of access to private or publicly-owned media.

Political funding is regulated and a policy of financial transparency is established with regard to election campaign funding. Where public funding is provided, it is clearly regulated and the principle of equality of opportunity applies. States allowing private contributions to the election campaign ensure that there is equality of opportunity for all candidates to raise private funds.

Legislative or other regulatory measures enable the mutual respect of rights and freedoms among candidates and political parties standing for elections, and the commitment to not engage in violence or improper interference in the campaigns of others.

Every elector, candidate and political party is protected by the law and has a right to a remedy by an independent and impartial authority for acts violating political and electoral rights. Where an individual or a political party has had their election rights obstructed or unduly restricted, they have the right to appeal to a competent authority and to have a prompt and effective remedy.

Assessment

The dimension is evaluated on the basis of several criteria that should be assessed separately. For each criterion, select one of the six descriptive grades (Non-existent, Poor, Basic, Good, Very good and Excellent) that corresponds best to your parliament, and provide details of the evidence on which the assessment is based.

The evidence for assessment of this dimension might include:
- Specific articles of the constitution ensuring the right of citizens to stand for elections as a candidate or as a member of a political party
- Specific articles of the electoral law defining all the criteria for participation in the elections
- Other rules that regulate electoral matters
- Rules that regulate political funding
- Rules that regulate the electoral dispute resolution system
- Reports and media coverage that show actual practice

If relevant, additional comments or examples that support the assessment (such as references to external national, regional or international surveys and reports) can be provided.

Assessment criterion No. 1: Right and opportunity to stand for elections

There are legal provisions that guarantee the right of an eligible citizen to stand for elections as an individual candidate or by joining/establishing a political party in order to compete in elections. All the restrictions for
participation in the elections are defined in the law and they are not discriminatory towards minorities, people with disabilities or based on religion, sex, ethnicity or race.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-existent</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion No. 2: Equal opportunity and freedom of expression

There are legal provisions and evidence of practice where candidates and political parties stand for elections campaign on an equal basis, including with the party that forms the existing government. This includes the freedom to reach out to voters and express political views, freedom of movement within a country to campaign for election, and access to private and publicly-owned media.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-existent</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion No. 3: Transparent political funding

There are legal provisions that clearly regulate the rules on the funding of candidates, political parties and electoral campaigns. Political funding is transparent and a process to monitor the financial status of candidates and political parties before and after their term in office is in place. Candidates and political parties have access to a level playing field for the raising of campaign funding, and the process is subject to supervision.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-existent</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion No. 4: Right to security and responsibilities of the candidates

There are legal provisions that ensure the security of the lives and property of candidates, and provide for sanctions when these provisions are violated. These also refer to the potential engagement of candidates and political parties in violence or improper interference in the campaigns of other candidates/political parties.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-existent</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Evidence for this assessment criterion:
Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion No. 5: Right to appeal

There are legal provisions that guarantee the right to appeal and to remedy for violations of human rights and electoral regulations. The appeal procedure, as well as the powers and responsibilities of the bodies involved, are clearly regulated. The time limits for lodging and deciding the appeals are reasonably short to effectively remedy the breaches of electoral rights in a timely way.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-existent</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Recommendations for change

Sources and further reading

Dimension 7.1.3 Public authorities’ roles in elections

Indicator: 7.1 Electoral integrity
Sub-target: 7. Representative parliament
Target: 16.7 Responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative parliament

About the dimension

This dimension outlines the provisions under which the legal framework of a country guarantees the rights of all eligible citizens to universal, equal, free and secret suffrage through the impartial, transparent and independent administration of elections by public authorities.

National legislation requires voter registration to be a simple, permanent and fully transparent process. Responsible public authorities ensure the completeness and accuracy of the electoral register, and allow electoral participants and voters to request changes and additions to the register which should be a systematically updated and publicly available document. The right to register as a voter may be subject to some requirements, such as age, nationality or residency. All the requirements should be clearly defined and not be subject to arbitrary decision or change.

Public authorities should observe their duty to remain neutral in the electoral process and guarantee the freedom of voters to form an opinion. Legislation obliges state institutions to “honour their duty of even-handedness, particularly where the use of mass media, billposting, the rights to demonstrate on public thoroughfares and the funding of parties and candidates are concerned”.

Ballot secrecy is crucial for ensuring free suffrage and for protecting voters from threats or interference that they might face during voting, whether this comes from the authorities or individuals. Ballot secrecy should be ensured and respected by public authorities, and applied to the entire electoral process, especially during the casting and counting of votes.

Proper administration of elections requires the election management body to be impartial and independent from political influence. While in some countries national and local government institutions are trusted to handle the electoral process, other countries establish an independent elections management body (EMB). The composition of the EMB, the procedures for the appointment and removal of EMB officials, their duties and responsibilities, and the guarantee for the election process to be conducted in an independent and impartial manner should be defined and protected by the law.

To increase the transparency and credibility of elections, many countries provide for the presence of observers, both domestic and international, in addition to the representatives of political parties, candidates and the media. Clear criteria, procedures and time-frames for election accreditation should be defined by the law.

Effective mechanisms and remedies for the enforcement of electoral rights must be guaranteed by national legislation. Citizens should be able to challenge the failure to comply with the electoral law before competent and independent authorities. The law should establish strict deadlines for reviewing complaints and mandating EMB, and for the courts to deliver prompt decisions.

Please see also dimension 7.2.1 on representing diversity of political opinion, and the sources for further reading.

---

On the basis of a global comparative analysis of parliamentary practices and models in parliamentary development, an aspiring goal for parliaments in the domain of public authorities' roles in elections would encompass the following:

Public authorities maintain a register of voters and ensure the registration and updating of details of voters in a fully transparent manner. The register is a permanent, public and accurate document, and an effective, impartial and non-discriminatory procedure for the registration of voters is guaranteed.

Public authorities ensure that the population is aware of electoral procedures and that the electorate has access to the lists and information on candidates standing for election.

Public authorities observe their duty to remain neutral in the electoral process and guarantee the freedom of voters to form an opinion.

The electorate is protected from threats or constraints that hinder its right to freely cast its votes, regardless of whether the interference derives from the actions of the authorities or other individuals. Ballot secrecy is ensured and respected by public authorities and applied to the entire electoral process, especially during the casting and counting of votes.

To increase the transparency and credibility of elections, national legislation provides for the presence of observers during the entire electoral process, from the pre-election period through to the delivery of final results.

There is an electoral management body in charge of administering and ensuring the proper conduct of the electoral process. The electoral management body operates on the basis of clearly defined rules, enjoys independence of decision-making and action, carries out its tasks impartially and transparently, and enjoys the trust and respect of the community.

Assessment

The dimension is evaluated on the basis of several criteria that should be assessed separately. For each criterion, select one of the six descriptive grades (Non-existent, Poor, Basic, Good, Very good and Excellent) that corresponds best to your parliament, and provide details of the evidence on which the assessment is based.

The evidence for assessment of this dimension might include:

- Specific articles of the law on the maintenance of the electoral register
- Specific articles of the electoral law mandating the public authorities to provide civic education and information programmes about the electoral procedure
- Specific articles of the electoral law on ballot secrecy
- Specific articles of the electoral law allowing for the presence of observers
- Legal authority and rules of the electoral management body
- Documents produced by election observers
- Reports and media that show actual practice

If relevant, additional comments or examples that support the assessment (such as references to external national, regional or international surveys and reports) can be provided.
**Assessment criterion No. 1: Electoral register**

National legislation provides for a permanent and public electoral register that is regularly updated. The criteria for voter registration (such as age, nationality and residency) are clearly defined and applied without discrimination of any kind. A procedure for making changes and additions is in place.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-existent ☐</th>
<th>Poor ☐</th>
<th>Basic ☐</th>
<th>Good ☐</th>
<th>Very good ☐</th>
<th>Excellent ☐</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 2: Equal access to information on the electoral process and candidates**

There are legal provisions for ensuring non-discrimination in the process of voter education and candidate presentation, such as by making the information available in the languages of national minorities. There are national programmes for civic education and publicity about the electoral process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-existent ☐</th>
<th>Poor ☐</th>
<th>Basic ☐</th>
<th>Good ☐</th>
<th>Very good ☐</th>
<th>Excellent ☐</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 3: Guarantee of the freedom of voters to form an opinion**

There are legal provisions ensuring the neutrality of public authorities in the electoral process. They provide equal opportunities for parties and candidates, and ensure the uniform application of the law to all. This includes the conditions for the use of media (especially publicly-owned media), billposting, the right to demonstrate on public thoroughfares, and access to public funding for parties and candidates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-existent ☐</th>
<th>Poor ☐</th>
<th>Basic ☐</th>
<th>Good ☐</th>
<th>Very good ☐</th>
<th>Excellent ☐</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 4: Guarantee of secret suffrage and the freedom of voters to express their opinion**

Public authorities are mandated to implement measures to ensure that ballot secrecy is respected during the whole electoral process, so that no voter can be identified when the votes are counted. There are legal provisions that prevent and sanction the violation of ballot secrecy and/or other practices intended to control the vote of a third person, including those carried out by the authorities or other individuals with the aim of preventing voters from freely casting their vote.
**Assessment criterion No. 5: Election observation and democratic practices**

There is evidence of legal provisions that ensure the integrity and transparency of the entire electoral process, including sanctions for electoral fraud. There is also evidence that those responsible for managing the electoral process are trained and act impartially, and that the presence of observers (national or international), party agents, candidates’ representatives and the media is allowed throughout the entire electoral process, including during voting and counting.

**Assessment criterion No. 6: Organization of elections by an impartial body**

Legal provisions mandate an electoral management body to administer the core aspects of the electoral process. They require the electoral management body to have clear and publicly available rules and procedures to ensure an inclusive and qualified composition and leadership, transparency of its actions, and effective communication with the public.

**Assessment criterion No. 7: Right to remedy**

There are detailed legal provisions that ensure effective mechanisms and remedies for the enforcement of electoral rights. Every citizen and electoral participant (political party, candidate, party agents, candidates’ representatives, local observers and the media) is entitled to appeal to the competent election management body and/or court, and request prompt consideration of the case.
Recommendations for change

Sources and further reading


Indicator 7.2 – Composition of legislature

A democratic parliament has the ability to reflect diversity not only in terms of political preferences, but also with regard to the different groups and segments of society. Democratic parliaments should represent the political will of voters as expressed in the elections, and the proportion of votes cast must be transformed into seats distributed in the legislature. Parliaments need to reflect the social diversity of the population in terms of gender, language, religion, ethnicity, or other significant characteristics. A parliament that is unrepresentative of its society will leave some social groups and communities feeling disadvantaged in the political process or even excluded from it altogether, with consequences in terms of the quality of public life or the stability of the political system and society in general.⁶

The representative nature of the parliament is determined by multiple factors, including the election system, regulations and administration, as well as existing parliamentary practices for the inclusion of different social groups in its work. Free and fair parliamentary proceedings, non-partisan delimitation of election districts, reasonable election thresholds, clarity of party registration rules and accessibility of election information are factors that contribute to the overall diversity of political opinion in the national legislature. Democratic parliaments are also responsible for promoting the representation of women, youth, minority or other disadvantaged groups or communities in the composition of parliament, by introducing temporary special measures if needed.

The assessment of the indicator on the composition of legislature comprises the following dimensions:

- 7.2.1 Representing diversity of political opinion
- 7.2.2 Gender
- 7.2.3 Youth
- 7.2.4 Other under-represented groups

Dimension 7.2.1 Representing diversity of political opinion

Indicator: 7.2 Composition of legislature
Sub-target: 7 Representative parliament
Target: 16.7 Responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative parliament

About the dimension

This dimension outlines the provisions by which the legal framework ensures the diversity of political opinions in national parliaments. The electoral system, the delimitation of electoral district boundaries and the procedures for registering political parties and independent candidates, as well as the powers attributed to different political groups and independent members in parliament determine the diversity of political opinion in the legislative process (indicator 7.1 Free and fair elections (electoral law) covers different aspects of representative parliaments, as well as other dimensions that address the powers of elected parties and members).

The electoral system (the rules defining the way votes are cast and counted) is fundamental in reflecting the overall preferences of voters in the allocation of parliamentary seats, and in ensuring proper representation.

The delimitation/redistricting of electoral district boundaries has a profound effect on the composition of the parliament. While delimitation/redistricting practices vary across countries, some universal principles are generally guaranteed in national laws. For example, the populations of constituencies are as equal as possible, and electoral district boundaries are drawn in a non-partisan manner and are not aimed at achieving a particular political outcome. The electoral boundary delimitation must avoid discrimination on the basis of race, colour, ethnicity, language, religion, or related status which could affect the composition of the legislative body. The delimitation of electoral districts has to be an inclusive and transparent process that is based on consultations of the political spectrum and other stakeholders.

National legislation must also guarantee clear and transparent procedures for registering political parties. Fairness of the registration process ensures equal treatment for all candidates and parties. Reasonable and transparent eligibility criteria, uniform procedures and feasible deadlines are also important for avoiding arbitrary decisions and ensuring the predictability and fairness of the process. Ambiguous and unduly restrictive procedures that could prevent political stakeholders from participating should be avoided.

Countries that have proportional electoral systems should establish a reasonable electoral threshold to ensure diverse political representation in the parliament.

On the basis of a global comparative analysis of parliamentary practices and models in parliamentary development, an aspiring goal for parliaments in the domain of representing diversity of political opinion would encompass the following:

The constitutional framework establishes an electoral system that ensures that the votes cast in elections are fairly translated into the seats won by the political parties and candidates, thus facilitating broad representation of political stakeholders in the parliament.

The guiding procedures for the delimitation of electoral boundaries are clearly defined in the national legislation. The practice of boundary delimitation excludes manipulations and discrimination against voters on grounds of race, colour, language, ethnicity, religion, or related status. Electoral boundaries are drawn in a manner that enables electoral districts to grant voters an equally weighted vote in the election of representatives.
The national legislation defines clear and transparent procedures for registering political parties and candidates for the elections. The law sets out reasonable eligibility criteria, consistent procedures and feasible deadlines.

The legal framework maintains a reasonable electoral threshold for political stakeholders to gain seats in the parliament, thus facilitating diverse political representation in the legislative institution.

**Assessment**

The dimension is evaluated on the basis of several criteria that should be assessed separately. For each criterion, select one of the six descriptive grades (Non-existent, Poor, Basic, Good, Very good and Excellent) that corresponds best to your parliament, and provide details of the evidence on which the assessment is based.

The evidence for assessment of this dimension might include:
- Specific articles of the constitution establishing an electoral system that allows different political opinions to be represented in parliament
- Specific articles of national legislation on the delimitation/redistricting of boundaries of electoral districts
- Specific articles of election law on party/candidate registration
- Specific articles of constitution or laws on election thresholds
- ODIHR election observation reports

If relevant, additional comments or examples that support the assessment (such as references to external national, regional or international surveys and reports) can be provided.

**Assessment criterion No. 1: Legal framework on the electoral system**

The constitutional and legal framework establishing the electoral system ensures the diversity of political opinions in national parliament. The votes cast in elections are fairly translated into the seats won by the political parties and candidates, thus securing a broad representation of political actors in the parliament.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-existent</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 2: Legal framework on the delimitation/redistricting of electoral districts**

The delimitation/redistricting of electoral districts is regulated by legislation, and arbitrary decisions are excluded. Boundary delimitation is an open, transparent and non-partisan process. In counties with a single district, a representation based on the entirety of the country as one jurisdiction/district is regulated by legislation, which ensures accessibility avenues for citizens living in rural or remote areas to allow effective two-way access between citizens and government and holistic representation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-existent</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21

Indicators for democratic parliaments, based on SDG targets 16.6 and 16.7
Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion No. 3: Legal framework on party/candidate registration

There are clear and detailed procedures for party/candidate registration. The law sets out clear eligibility criteria, uniform procedures and reasonable deadlines. Political parties/candidates have access to necessary information required for party/candidate registration.

Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion No. 4: Legal framework on election thresholds

The electoral threshold established by the law enables diverse political representation of the legislative institution.

Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion No. 5: Diverse political representation in parliament

There is evidence of the representation of diverse political parties in the parliament. No parties or candidates are arbitrarily prevented from participating in the elections or are deprived of their seats in the legislature.

Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Recommendations for change
Sources for further reading

- Venice Commission, *Report on thresholds and other features of electoral systems which bar parties from access to parliament*, (Strasbourg: 2010).
Dimension 7.2.2 Gender

Indicator: 7.2 Composition of legislature
Sub-target: 7 Representative parliament
Target: 16.7 Responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative parliament

About the dimension

Democratic parliaments are required to reflect society as a whole, and equal representation of women in parliament is essential to ensure inclusive decision-making and the systematic integration of women’s perspectives in legislative and policy work. While the number of women in parliaments worldwide has increased since the mid-twentieth century, gender balance in most parliaments is still far from being achieved. This dimension examines the legal framework and mechanisms to achieve gender parity in the composition of parliament and the means to make progress towards it.

Equal access to parliament positions, without discrimination on the basis of gender, religion, ethnicity, race, disability or other grounds, is determined by a country’s legal framework. The constitution and the electoral legislative framework should guarantee equal opportunities for the political participation of women as candidates, and an electoral environment that is free from barriers and violence. The type of electoral system can also be a determining factor for gender balance in parliament, with research demonstrating that proportional representation systems, particularly in combination with a closed-list system, are more conducive to the election of women than majority electoral systems.

Parliament can take the lead in legislating for temporary special measures (TSMs) such as candidate quotas or reserved seats to promote gender balance. Quotas for women MPs, when designed to include aspirational targets and sanctions for non-compliance and when supported by resources, political will, and commitment from parliamentary leadership, are proven to promote gender balance. Quotas can be voluntary or legislated, and their design and clear objectives are essential to achieving an impact. They should be tailored to a country’s electoral system. TSMs are intended to be withdrawn once they have achieved a sustainable political and societal change. Additional legislation and measures can incentivize political parties to increase women’s representation in leadership structures and set voluntary party quotas.

Parliamentary political parties can improve the gender balance of parliament by including quotas of women on party lists or women-only shortlists in constituency-based systems, and by ensuring that women are selected for ‘winnable’ seats. Both parties and MPs can promote the representation of women and persons of different SOGIE in parliament and hierarchies, and advocate against cultural and attitudinal barriers preventing women, persons of all SOGIE and marginalized groups in society from playing an active role in public life.

On the basis of a global comparative analysis of parliamentary practices and models in parliamentary development, an aspiring goal for parliaments in the domain of gender balance in the composition of the legislature would encompass the following:

---

7 As of 1 January 2021, the global share of women in national parliaments is 25.5 per cent, and with progress at the current rate, it would take another 50 years before gender parity is achieved in parliaments worldwide. Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Women in parliament in 2020: The year in review (IPU: 2021).
8 Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Gender-sensitive parliaments: A global review of good practice (IPU: 2011).
9 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).
10 In 2020, parliaments with quotas elected 11.8 per cent more women to single and lower chambers, and 7.4 per cent more women to upper chambers. Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Women in parliament in 2020: The year in review, (IPU: 2021).
11 Sexual orientation, gender identity and (gender) expression.
The legal framework including the constitution and electoral laws support equal representation of women and men in parliament. Restrictions on candidate eligibility are not based on gender or on other factors such as religion, ethnicity, race or disability. The electoral system promotes gender-balanced representation by gender in parliament. Violence against women candidates in elections is addressed in legal and policy measures.

Temporary special legal and policy measures are in place to strengthen the representation of women in parliament. Where quotas exist, they are well-designed, with aspirational targets and sanctions for non-compliance, and there are institutional bodies to supervise their implementation. These quotas are supported by measures to generate political and public support.

Mechanisms exist within parliament to advocate for and support measures to ensure gender-balanced representation, such as gender equality committees or cross-party caucuses. Such mechanisms have clear and permanent mandates, are well-resourced and engage with civil society and other stakeholders on a regular basis. Mechanisms against violence and harassment of women MPs are in place.

The parliamentary secretariat is clear in its support of women entering parliament. It provides women MPs with dedicated induction programmes and ongoing professional development to address common challenges faced by women MPs, and provides gender-sensitivity and mainstreaming training for all MPs. The parliamentary secretariat communicates with the public about the positive role of women in parliament, and organizes events and produces materials targeting potential women candidates, particularly from vulnerable and minority groups.

Assessment

The dimension is evaluated on the basis of several criteria that should be assessed separately. For each criterion, select one of the six descriptive grades (Non-existent, Poor, Basic, Good, Very good and Excellent) that corresponds best to your parliament, and provide details of the evidence on which the assessment is based.

The evidence for assessment of this dimension might include:

- Numbers of women and men holding seats in parliament (currently and in the recent past)
- Articles in the constitution highlighting the importance of equal opportunities for women’s political participation
- Specific articles in national electoral laws or other legislation that aim to promote a gender balance, such as TSMs in parliament
- Parliamentary committee reports indicating recommendations for the amendment and/or review of legislation that may create barriers for the political participation of women
- Laws legislating special measures such as quotas to promote gender balance in parliament
- A parliamentary strategic plan, department plans, service statements or other documents highlighting specific support for women MPs
- Parliamentary communication documents promoting women MPs’ work, including the parliamentary website
- Terms of reference of gender equality committees or cross-party caucuses

If relevant, additional comments or examples that support the assessment (such as references to external national, regional or international surveys and reports) can be provided.

Assessment criterion No. 1: Progress in achieving gender balance in parliament
Considerable progress in improving women’s representation in the parliament and in leadership positions is recorded over time, and is assessed against international data and against national and/or regional targets where they exist.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment criterion No. 2: Legal framework encourages gender representative parliament</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The legal framework does not create barriers for the participation of women. The constitution, electoral laws, political party laws, campaign financing laws and other legislation ensure that women are supported when running as candidates for election, and also provide for sanctions in the event of non-compliance (for example, the creation of barriers to women’s representation).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence for this assessment criterion:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment criterion No. 3: Measures to increase women’s representation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There are well-designed measures aiming for aspirational targets of woman representation set by parliament. Those measures might include gender-sensitive policies and special and temporary measures, such as legislated gender quotas in case of a significant imbalance between male and female MPs. Measures are aligned with the electoral system and are accompanied by sanctions for non-compliance or disciplinary actions, as well as introduced and communicated effectively to the entire institution and the public.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence for this assessment criterion:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment criterion No. 4: Addressing the issue of violence against and abuse of women candidates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parliament has passed or amended legislation related to issues of gender-based violence against and abuse of candidates, which is consistently implemented in practice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence for this assessment criterion:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Sub-target 7 – Representative parliament

Assessment criterion No. 5: Political participation of persons of different SOGIE and marginalized groups

There is evidence that the legal framework does not create barriers for the participation of persons of different SOGIE and any marginalized groups in society in public life. This includes provisions related to issues of violence against and abuse of candidates based on sexual orientation or expression.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-existent</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Recommendations for change

Sources for further reading

- International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and Stockholm University, *Atlas of electoral gender quotas* (Stockholm: 2013).
**Dimension: 7.2.3 Youth**

**Indicator:** 7.2 Composition of legislature  
**Sub-target:** 7 Representative parliament  
**Target:** 16.7 Responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative parliament

**About the dimension**

This dimension outlines the degree to which youth is represented in the composition of parliament. According to IPU data, "only 2.6 per cent of the world’s parliamentarians are under age 30."¹² Young women’s political representation is even less - only 1 per cent. The political participation of youth in the formal political process remains a challenge, and young women, in particular, are the least represented in leadership positions.

The global targets for youth participation in national parliaments set by the IPU Forum of Young Parliamentarians based on youth proportions in the global population, which are to be implemented by 2035 are as follows:

- 15 per cent of young parliamentarians under 30
- 35 per cent of young parliamentarians under 40
- 45 per cent of young parliamentarians under 45

While building the capacity of youth through the development of their civic knowledge and skills enables them to be active citizens, an enabling legal framework, free of restrictive barriers, is important for increasing the formal political participation of youth.

The alignment of the minimum voting age with the minimum age of eligibility to run for office is a considerable factor for formal youth participation. In the case of bicameral parliaments, it is also beneficial to equalize the eligibility age for both chambers. The age of eligibility to stand for public office is a key impediment to youth representation in parliament. In 69 per cent of countries in 2020, the voting age was lower than the legal age to hold parliamentary office.¹³

The introduction of voluntary political party quotas, the strengthening of party youth wings/organizations, the promotion of young women to run for office and the creation of a level playing field for youth (for example, by regulating/capping electoral campaign spending) can be other means of promoting youth political participation.

Some countries have also introduced a variety of mandatory quota systems, such as legislated candidate quotas or reserved seats.

Another important aspect of youth political empowerment is support for young MPs, especially young women MPs and the promotion of their work. This can be achieved through different means. In some cases parliaments form caucuses dedicated to youth issues or caucuses of young MPs, while in other cases they develop networks of young parliamentarians. Many parliaments have committees that work on youth issues.

Please also see dimension 5.1.5: Youth engagement.

---

¹² Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), *Youth participation in national parliaments* (2021).

¹³ Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), *Youth participation in national parliaments* (2021).
Constitutional or legal provisions stipulate a reasonable minimum voting age that is aligned with the minimum age of eligibility to run for political office.

Parliament has policies and actions in place to ensure that young parliamentarians are provided with the opportunity to represent their constituency and to be promoted to leadership roles/parliamentary positions, with a particular focus on young women MPs.

Parliament has established bodies mandated to address youth issues, whether these are committees, caucuses or networks of young parliamentarians. Parliament has developed a support package for young MPs to enable them to work effectively while considering work-life balance.

Training and mentoring support are available to young MPs. Contributions of young MPs in parliamentary work are promoted in parliamentary communications. Young MPs are welcome to contribute to the modernization of parliamentary operations.

Assessment

The dimension is evaluated on the basis of several criteria that should be assessed separately. For each criterion, select one of the six descriptive grades (Non-existent, Poor, Basic, Good, Very good and Excellent) that corresponds best to your parliament, and provide details of the evidence on which the assessment is based.

The evidence for assessment of this dimension might include:
- Specific articles of the constitution on the minimum voting age and the minimum age of eligibility to run for office
- Parliament’s policies, structure or other documents addressing the engagement of young MPs and the support provided to them
- The number of MPs under the age of 45
- Evidence of parliamentary communication promoting young parliamentarians’ work

If relevant, additional comments or examples that support the assessment (such as references to external national, regional or international surveys and reports) can be provided.

Assessment criterion No. 1: Alignment of ages for voting and eligibility for political office

There is evidence in constitutional or legal provisions of the alignment of the age for voting with eligibility to run for political office.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-existent</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion No. 2: Policies and actions ensuring the representation of young MPs

There is evidence that the parliament’s policies and actions ensure the engagement of young parliamentarians in decision-making and their promotion to leadership roles. Such policies include a special focus on young women parliamentarians.
### Indicators for democratic parliaments, based on SDG targets 16.6 and 16.7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment criterion No. 3: Bodies addressing youth issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There are established bodies that address youth issues, such as parliamentary committees and/or other bodies, including youth caucuses and networks of young parliamentarians.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment criterion No. 3: Enabling environment for young MPs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is evidence that parliament has developed a support package for young MPs to enable them to work considering work-life balance. This package may include, among others, childcare facilities, a flexible work schedule and remote working possibilities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment criterion No. 4: Supporting the work and promotion of young MPs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is evidence of training and mentoring support available to young MPs. The contribution of young MPs in parliamentary work is promoted in parliamentary communications. Young MPs are invited to contribute to the modernization of parliamentary operations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment criterion No. 5: Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

30

Indicators for democratic parliaments, based on SDG targets 16.6 and 16.7
There is evidence of both regulatory and institutional commitments to expanding youth representation in parliament. There is a progress over time (e.g. in the last 3 convocations) in the number and proportion of seats held by MPs who are under the age of 45, as well as MPs belonging to age groups under 30, 40 and 45 years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-existent</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Recommendations for change**
Dimension 7.2.4 Other under-represented groups

Indicator: 7.2 Composition of legislature
Sub-target: 7 Representative parliament
Target: 16.7 Responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative parliament

About the dimension

One of the criteria for democratic parliament is that it should reflect the diversity of the population in terms of gender, language, religion, ethnicity or other characteristics. Representation of minorities and indigenous peoples in politics and the decision-making process is an essential component of representative parliaments. Vulnerable groups in society often face marginalization and are disproportionately affected by poverty, unemployment, and limited access to quality education and healthcare. Fair representation of minority and indigenous peoples in the parliament is important for overcoming these challenges and ensuring overall equality.

The Lund Recommendations advise states to “guarantee the right of persons belonging to national minorities to take part in the conduct of public affairs, including through the rights to vote and stand for office without discrimination”. ¹⁴

Adequate representation of minority and indigenous peoples in the composition of the legislature is a challenge across countries. The electoral systems and rules have a major impact on both the nature and the extent of minority presence in the national legislature.

Different mechanisms for promoting minority participation are applied across different countries. In some systems that impose restrictions on the formation of political groups on the basis of ethnic, religious or linguistic identity, measures to mainstream political parties and improve their ability to ensure representation of minorities and indigenous groups are important. Special electoral measures for ensuring parliamentary presence of minorities and indigenous peoples are often used. ¹⁵ These special measures vary in their nature and sometimes voluntary internal party quotas are used.

Political representation of minority groups can be also affected by the boundaries of electoral districts, access to election proceedings and information in the languages of minority groups, the independent administration of elections, and fair regulations on the formation of political groups.

Parliamentary rules are another important instrument for ensuring the effective representation of minority and indigenous peoples by elected representatives. Parliament might be required to use more than one language in parliamentary proceedings or introduce other supporting practices to secure the effective engagement of these representatives in legislative work.

Parliaments frequently have specialized bodies that address minority/indigenous matters. In some cases, they may be a parliamentary body with a broader human rights mandate that includes minority/indigenous matters. ¹⁶ Other important mechanisms for promoting the effective representation of minority and indigenous peoples’ effective in the legislature include specialized committees, councils, caucuses, cross-party groups or any other formal or informal platforms within the parliament.

¹⁴ OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), The Lund Recommendations on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Public Life & Explanatory Note (OSCE, 1999), 8.
¹⁵ Dr. Oleh Protsyk, Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), The representation of minorities and indigenous peoples in parliament (Mexico: IPU and UNDP, 2010).
¹⁶ Dr. Oleh Protsyk, The representation of minorities and indigenous peoples in parliament (Mexico: IPU and UNDP, 2010).
On the basis of a global comparative analysis of parliamentary practices and models in parliamentary development, an aspiring goal for parliaments in the domain of other contextually relevant groups (for example, minorities and indigenous peoples) would encompass the following:

The constitutional framework guarantees the right of persons belonging to minorities or indigenous peoples to take part in the conduct of public affairs, including through the rights to vote and stand for office without discrimination.

Legal framework establishes special measures that promote the political representation of minority and indigenous groups in the composition of the legislature.

The electoral system facilitates minority representation and influence. Where there are different demographics or electoral systems, other elements may increase the representation of minorities, such as:

- The territorial concentration of minorities in the form of single member districts
- The existence of a proportional representation system, that is, where a political party’s share in the national vote is reflected in its share of the legislative seats
- The establishment of some form of preference voting, in which voters rank candidates in order of choice, which may also promote inter-communal cooperation.
- The existence of lower numerical thresholds for representation in the legislature

The geographical boundaries of electoral districts facilitate the equitable representation of national minorities.

Parliamentary rules provide opportunities for minority and indigenous representatives to engage effectively in parliamentary work, including through access to information in their own language, and the establishment of caucuses, formal or informal groups.

**Assessment**

The dimension is evaluated on the basis of several criteria that should be assessed separately. For each criterion, select one of the six descriptive grades (Non-existent, Poor, Basic, Good, Very good and Excellent) that corresponds best to your parliament, and provide details of the evidence on which the assessment is based.

The evidence for assessment of this dimension might include:

- Specific articles of the constitution guaranteeing the political rights of minority and indigenous peoples and prohibiting discrimination
- Specific articles of law on special measures targeting minority and indigenous peoples
- Evidence of parliamentary committee, caucus, council or minority and indigenous group representatives
- Statistical data on minority and indigenous representatives in the sitting parliament

If relevant, additional comments or examples that support the assessment (such as references to external national, regional or international surveys and reports) can be provided.

**Assessment criterion No. 1: Constitutional provisions**

There is evidence that the constitutional framework guarantees the right of persons belonging to minorities or indigenous peoples to take part in the conduct of public affairs, including through the rights to vote and stand for office without discrimination.

**Assessment criterion No. 2: Special measures**

There are special measures that promote the political representation of minority and indigenous groups in the composition of the legislature, or measures that encourage political parties to establish voluntary quotas for minority and indigenous groups in their own structures.

**Assessment criterion No. 3: Legal framework**

There is evidence that the geographical boundaries of electoral districts are delimited in a manner that facilitates the equitable representation of national minorities, or that the electoral system facilitates minority representation in other ways. Access to election proceedings and information in minority languages and the independent administration of elections are guaranteed in law and in practice.

**Assessment criterion No. 4: Parliamentary practice**

Parliament provides opportunities for minority and indigenous representatives to engage effectively in parliamentary work, including through access to information in their own language, and the establishment of caucuses or formal or informal groups.
Recommendations for change

Sources for further reading

Indicator 7.3 – Composition of parliamentary bodies

The parliament, as the main representative of diverse political opinions and different groups in society, which comprises equal members who have been elected directly by the citizens, has a unique way of organizing its work. The representative nature of a legislature requires this diversity to be reflected in the composition of all parliamentary bodies, whether in leadership structures or other formats such as committees.

Democratic parliaments ensure a political balance between the majority and minority parliamentary (party) groups in the governing bodies of the parliament (such as the bureau, conference of speakers and administrative and financial bodies). The representation of political parties in the parliamentary leadership is usually proportionate to political party representation, though special consideration may be given to smaller groups to ensure their effective engagement in parliamentary work.

In assessing the representative nature of the composition of parliamentary bodies, different aspects are to be taken into account, including a political balance between the majority and minority parliamentary (party) groups, the rules and practice of selecting committee chairs and members, and the proportion of women and young MPs (and other contextually relevant groups) in the parliamentary leadership.

The assessment of the indicator on the composition of parliamentary bodies comprises the following dimensions:

- 7.3.1 Composition of parliamentary leadership
- 7.3.2 Composition of committees
- 7.3.3 Gender and age balance in the composition of parliamentary bodies
Dimension 7.3.1 Composition of parliamentary leadership

Indicator: 7.3 Composition of parliamentary bodies
Sub-target: 7 Representative parliament
Target: 16.7 Responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative parliament

About the dimension

This dimension outlines the provisions by which the legal framework ensures political balance between the majority and minority parliamentary (party) groups in the governing bodies of the parliament (such as the bureau, conference of speakers and administrative and financial bodies). Parliament, as an institution that reflects society in the diversity of its composition, grants institutional recognition for the representation of opposition parties in the parliamentary leadership.

While the legal status of the opposition in national parliaments varies considerably by country, most legislatures guarantee institutional representation of the opposition in the governing bodies of the parliament, reflecting the proportionality of political party representation. If the system provides for deputy chairmanship, at least one deputy speaker’s seat must be guaranteed for the opposition.

National legislation, or the rules of procedure of the legislature, secures the deputy chairmanship of the parliamentary committees/sub-committees for opposition MPs. In many countries, the chairmanship of the standing committees is shared between the opposition and the majority parties in line with the principle of proportionality.

The establishment of parliamentary groups, which is the main instrument for the representation of the parties in parliamentary structures, is guaranteed by national legislation. The law enables opposition MPs to freely set up political groups, and requires a reasonable number of MPs for group formation. The law also contains no undue barriers that prevent the political parties from fully and easily engaging in parliamentary activities.

In order to achieve proper balance between the majority and the opposition in governing bodies of the parliament, the national legislation provides independent MPs with the same rights as those enjoyed by opposition members of the parliament. This includes the right to be represented in the leadership positions of standing committees and sub-committees (chair or deputy chair). Some legal systems allow independent MPs to set up parliamentary non-party groups, and grant them the right to be represented in the governing structures of the parliament.

On the basis of a global comparative analysis of parliamentary practices and models in parliamentary development, an aspiring goal for parliaments in the domain of composition of parliamentary leadership would encompass the following:

The constitutional and legal framework guarantees a political balance between the majority and minority parliamentary (party) groups in the composition of the parliamentary leadership. Opposition political parties are represented in the governing bodies of the parliament, such as the bureau, conference of speakers and administrative and financial bodies, in accordance with the principle of proportionality. At least one deputy speaker position is secured for opposition MPs.

National legislation guarantees the proportional representation of opposition MPs in the chairmanship of standing committees and sub-committees. The law ensures equal and proportional representation of opposition MPs as deputy chairs of the committees/sub-committees.
The rules of procedure of the parliament establish clear and transparent regulations for the formation of political groups in the parliament, including a reasonable minimum number of MPs.

The rules of procedure of the parliament entitle independent MPs to be represented in the parliamentary leadership. This includes the allocation of seats in the bureau, and in the leadership of standing committees and sub-committees.

**Assessment**

The dimension is evaluated on the basis of several criteria that should be assessed separately. For each criterion, select one of the six descriptive grades (Non-existent, Poor, Basic, Good, Very good and Excellent) that corresponds best to your parliament, and provide details of the evidence on which the assessment is based.

The evidence for assessment of this dimension might include:

- Specific articles of the constitution or national legislation defining the authority of opposition MPs to be represented in the governing structures of the parliament (such as the bureau, conference of speakers and administrative and financial bodies).
- Specific articles of the rules of procedure granting the seat of a deputy speaker to an opposition MP.
- Specific articles of the rules of procedure granting the leadership of the standing committees/sub-committees to the opposition MPs, in accordance with the proportionality principle.
- Specific articles of the rules of procedure granting independent MPs representation in the governing bodies of the parliament (such as the bureau, conference of speakers, and administrative and financial bodies).
- Specific articles of national legislation establishing clear and transparent procedures for the formation of political groups in the parliament.
- The number of opposition MPs represented in the governing bodies of the sitting parliament (such as the bureau, conference of speakers, and administrative and financial bodies).
- The number of opposition MPs chairing the standing committees/sub-committees in the sitting parliament.

If relevant, additional comments or examples that support the assessment (such as references to external national, regional or international surveys and reports) can be provided.

**Assessment criterion No. 1: Constitutional or legal framework**

There is evidence of constitutional or legal provisions by which MPs from minority parliamentary (party) groups are represented in the governing structures of the parliament (such as the bureau, conference of speakers and administrative and financial bodies).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-existent</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 2: Legal framework on the allocation of a deputy speaker’s position to the opposition**
There is evidence of legal provisions that guarantee at least one seat of a deputy speaker of the parliament for an MP from a minority parliamentary (party) group.

**Evidence for this assessment criterion:**

**Assessment criterion No. 3: Legal framework on the allocation of standing committee/sub-committee leadership roles for opposition MPs**

There is evidence of legal provisions that ensure the representation of MPs from minority parliamentary (party) groups in the leadership of standing committees/sub-committees in accordance with the proportionality principle.

**Evidence for this assessment criterion:**

**Assessment criterion No. 4: Legal framework on the representation of independent MPs in the governing bodies of the parliament**

There is evidence of legal provisions by which independent MPs are entitled to be represented in the governing bodies of the parliament (such as the bureau, conference of speakers and administrative and financial bodies). This encompasses the right to take up the position of chair in standing committees and sub-committees.

**Evidence for this assessment criterion:**

**Assessment criterion No. 5: Legal framework on the formation of political groups**

There are legal provisions establishing clear procedures for setting up parliamentary political groups, as well as a reasonable number of MPs required for the formation of a group.

**Evidence for this assessment criterion:**
Assessment criterion No. 6: Established practice of balanced political representation

In practice, there is balanced representation of minority parliamentary parties in the governing structures of the legislative branch (such as the bureau, conference of speakers and administrative and financial bodies). Balanced political representation can be reflected through the practice of sharing leadership roles between the majority and the minority parliamentary parties in accordance with the principle of proportionality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-existent</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Recommendations for change

Sources for further reading

Dimension 7.3.2 Composition of committees

Indicator: 7.2 Composition of parliamentary bodies
Sub-target: 7 Representative parliament
Target: 16.7 Responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative parliament

About the dimension

The committee is one of the key elements of the structure of the legislature, and has a vital role in the organization of parliamentary work. Parliaments are authorized to organize their work through committees by the standing order/rules of procedure and the committee statute. This dimension outlines only the rules and practices regarding the composition of committees, as the other aspects of committee work are addressed in dimension 1.4.4 Committees.

Committee membership is usually determined at the start of a parliamentary term, after an election. It is the right of an elected representative to engage in the thematic work of the legislature, in accordance with personal expertise and/or interest, as well as political party selection and decision-making processes. Legislatures usually require each representative to sit on at least one committee, while some legislatures also limit the number of committees on which each member can sit.

The individual members are usually assigned to committees by the party groups. While larger parties normally have more flexibility in the assignment of members to various committees, smaller parties or independent MPs may face difficulties. Generally, the composition of committees reflects that of the entire parliament. Special consideration may be given to smaller groups or independent MPs to ensure their proportional representation in committees. Parliaments often allow substitute members to represent the same political group as the member who is to be replaced. The rules of procedure also can provide for the representation of independent MPs or MPs from smaller party groups in particular committees.

The committee leadership is usually elected by and from the committee members after the composition of the committee is determined and, as a rule, these elections take place soon after the first gathering of the newly elected parliament. Different legislatures might have various rules for distributing committee leadership positions among political groups. In some systems, the party with majority seats obtains chairmanship of all committees, while in others, the committee leadership positions are distributed among various political groups based on the principle of proportionality.

In democratic parliaments the rules of procedure often explicitly assign leadership of some committees (such as a budget monitoring committee, human rights committee and/or other) to opposition MPs. Political plurality in the committee leadership must be defined by the rules of procedure, and the roles of committee chair and deputy chair should be assigned to representatives of different political groups. The distribution of the seats of committee chairs and deputy chairs may also be subject to political consensus. In any system, it is important for parliament to establish and follow a transparent and fair method for the composition of committees and the selection or election of the committee leadership.  

On the basis of a global comparative analysis of parliamentary practices and models in parliamentary development, an aspiring goal for parliaments in the domain of composition of committees would encompass the following:

Parliament has a clear constitutional or legal mandate to determine committee composition and leadership.

18 Please also see dimension 7.3.1 Composition of parliamentary leadership.
The law provides for transparent, fair and clear rules and procedures with regard to committee composition, as well as for the selection/election of the committee leadership.

The political proportionality of political representation is ensured when the composition of committees is defined and when committee chairs and deputies are selected.

Special consideration is given to smaller groups or independent MPs to ensure their representation in the committees, either as full members or as observers.

**Assessment**

The dimension is evaluated on the basis of several criteria that should be assessed separately. For each criterion, select one of the six descriptive grades (Non-existent, Poor, Basic, Good, Very good and Excellent) that corresponds best to your parliament, and provide details of the evidence on which the assessment is based.

The evidence for assessment of this dimension might include:
- Specific articles of the constitution or laws that regulate the composition and governance of committees
- Specific articles of rules of procedure on the distribution of committee leadership positions among political groups
- The number of committees or sub-committees chaired by opposition MPs

If relevant, additional comments or examples that support the assessment (such as references to external national, regional or international surveys and reports) can be provided.

**Assessment criterion No. 1: Legal framework on the composition of committees**

There is evidence of constitutional or legal provisions by which parliament defines the composition of committees, and ensures proportional political representation and transparency of the process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-existent</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Evidence for this assessment criterion:**

**Assessment criterion No. 2: Composition of the committee leadership**

There is evidence of the proportional distribution of committee leadership positions (chair and deputy chairs) among different political groups, with special consideration given to relatively small political groups and independent MPs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-existent</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Evidence for this assessment criterion:**
Assessment criterion No. 3: Practice

There is evidence that opposition MPs are elected/selected as chairs or vice-chairs of committees and sub-committees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-existent</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Recommendations for change
Dimension 7.3.3 Gender and age balance in the composition of parliamentary bodies

Indicator: 7.3 Composition of parliamentary bodies
Sub-target: 7 Representative parliament
Target: 16.7 Responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative parliament

About the dimension

Effective, accountable and inclusive parliaments should represent women, youth and other groups in society not only through their membership, but also in leadership positions within parliament and parliamentary bodies, thus directly influencing how the institution functions. This dimension outlines how a balance can be achieved in the representation of women and young MPs\(^1\) in key positions and in parliamentary bodies, including as speakers or deputy speakers, in the bureau or on the board, on administrative and financial bodies, as committee chairs and vice-chairs, and as members of different portfolio committees. This could also include the leadership of the parliamentary secretariat, such as the positions of secretary-general, deputies and assistants of the secretary-general, in parliaments where these political positions exist and are elected or appointed by the parliament.

Achieving a gender and age balance in the leadership and composition of parliamentary bodies enable women and young MPs to be in a position to influence the policies of parliament, assess and revise parliamentary procedure and practices, serve as role models to others, and provide varied perspectives in parliamentary debate. It also helps women and young MPs to achieve career progression inside parliament and hold positions with higher allowances and resources. Attaining such a balance helps to ensure that parliament functions as an institution that is fully representative of society, and can advance causes of gender equality and contribute to meeting the needs of young people and other groups.

At the highest level in parliament, relatively few women serve as speakers or presiding officers of their respective parliaments.\(^2\) While the number of women chairing committees has increased, the committees that they chair tend to specialize in specific ‘soft’ portfolio areas, such as women’s affairs, employment and education, rather than ‘hard’ policy areas such as foreign affairs, defence and finance.\(^3\) A balanced representation in different committees ensures different perspectives across all sectoral areas addressed by parliament.

Parliament should have strategic plans and policies that reflect the need to promote women and young MPs in senior positions in the parliament. Amendments to internal rules to create special measures, such as giving preference to women and young MPs where qualifications are equal, could also support more balanced representation. Other means that parliaments have used include the rotation of positions of parliamentary leadership between men, women and other groups, and dual leadership of parliamentary structures, for example, through the appointment of both a man and a woman.

On the basis of a global comparative analysis of parliamentary practices and models in parliamentary development, an aspiring goal for parliaments in the domain of gender and age balance in the composition of parliamentary bodies would encompass the following:

---

\(^1\) The IPU defines MPs as ‘young’ if they are under 45, due to the fact that some countries limit access to some houses of parliament to only men and women aged 45 or above. However, the IPU collects data on young MPs in three age ranges: under 30, under 40 and under 45 years old.

\(^2\) Globally, 58 women held speaker positions in national parliaments in 2020. Regarding young MPs, one speaker of parliament was under 30, 20 were under 40 (of whom one was a woman) and 34 were under 45 (two of whom were women). Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), *Youth participation in national parliaments* (IPU: 2021).

\(^3\) Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), *Women in parliament in 2020: The year in review* (IPU: 2021).
There is representation of different genders and ages of MPs in positions of parliament leadership, including as speakers or deputy speakers, in the bureau or on the board, on administrative and financial bodies, and as committee chairs and vice-chairs.

Measures exist to ensure that women and young MPs and other groups are represented across different portfolio committees.

The legal framework, rules of procedure, parliament’s strategic plan, policies or plans of action include measures to promote the representation of women and young MPs in different parliamentary bodies.

Parliament implements special measures or rule changes to help women and young MPs to take up leadership positions in parliamentary bodies, such as quotas in leadership structures.

**Assessment**

The dimension is evaluated on the basis of several criteria that should be assessed separately. For each criterion, select one of the six descriptive grades (Non-existent, Poor, Basic, Good, Very good and Excellent) that corresponds best to your parliament, and provide details of the evidence on which the assessment is based.

The evidence for assessment of this dimension might include:

- The number of women and young MPs holding senior positions in parliament
- The number of women and young MPs holding positions of committee chairs and vice-chairs
- A list of members of different portfolio committees in a parliament
- Articles in national legislation and/or parliament’s standing orders or rules of procedure that ensure a gender and age balance in parliamentary bodies and in the positions of chair and members of parliamentary committees
- Objectives and actions in parliament’s strategic plan and other policies outlining steps or special measures to ensure balanced representation of women and young MPs on parliamentary bodies
- Parliament’s communication material showcasing the positive role that women and young MPs play across parliament’s work

If relevant, additional comments or examples that support the assessment (such as references to external national, regional or international surveys and reports) can be provided.

**Assessment criterion No. 1: Presence of women MPs in leadership positions in parliament**

Women are equally represented in leadership positions in parliament, including as speaker or deputy speaker, in the bureau or on the board, in administrative and financial bodies, as committee chairs and vice-chairs and across different portfolio committees including in ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-existent</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 2: Presence of young MPs in leadership positions in parliament**
There are young MPs in leadership positions in parliament including as speaker or deputy speaker, in the bureau or on the board, in administrative and financial bodies, as committee chairs and vice-chairs and across different portfolio committees including in ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-existent</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 3: Measures to ensure a balance in composition of parliamentary bodies**

Parliament’s strategic plan, policies or action plans identify special measures or affirmative action to ensure that women and young MPs serve in leadership positions. Measures can include quotas, rotation of positions, or dual positions. Parliament has mechanisms to assess, report on and take action to address imbalances in leadership bodies and committees, including the encouragement of political parties to balance their selections for key parliamentary roles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-existent</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Recommendations for change**

**Sources for further reading**

- Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), *Youth participation in national parliaments* (IPU: 2021).