

PARLIAMENTARY BUREAU: GENDER BALANCE ON COMMITTEES

Introduction

1. The Conveners Group has written to the Bureau asking that further consideration be given to the matter of gender balance on committees. The text of the letter is included at annexe A to this note.

2. The letter notes that some committees that have either no or only one female Member (although since the letter was issued a membership change means that the SPPA Committee no longer falls into this category). The Conveners Group notes that the composition of the Parliament in this Session has improved gender balance compared to Session 5 and that “it would be helpful to try to reflect this balance in committee membership as far as possible. We appreciate that this will not always be possible, however as a minimum, it would be helpful if committee membership which is wholly male could be addressed.”

Current committee composition

3. Excluding Ministers and the Presiding Officer (who do not sit on committees) there are 101 MSPs who are able to take up committee places. The gender balance of those MSPs is—

- Male: 57 (56%)
- Female: 44 (44%).

4. The structure of committees agreed by the Parliament resulted in a total of 115 committee places being available. This necessitates some MSPs sitting on more than one committee. Overall committee membership is broadly reflective of this balance and is currently as follows—

- Male: 67 (58%)
- Female: 48 (42%).

5. The following table illustrates the gender balance of membership on each committee, highlighting those committees whose membership does not match the overall gender balance.

Committee	Total	Male	Female	Male	Female	Party				
COVID-19	6	5	1	83%	17%	3	2	1	0	0
CPPPC	5	5	0	100%	0%	2	2	1	0	0
CEEAC	7	4	3	57%	43%	3	2	1	1	0
CJ	8	3	5	38%	63%	4	2	2	0	0
DPLR	5	5	0	100%	0%	2	2	1	0	0
Economy	9	5	4	56%	44%	4	2	2	1	0
Education	10	8	2	80%	20%	5	2	1	1	1
Equalities	7	3	4	43%	57%	3	2	1	1	0
Finance	7	5	2	71%	29%	3	2	1	1	0
Health	10	3	7	30%	70%	5	2	2	1	0

Local Govt	7	4	3	57%	43%	3	2	1	1	0
NZET	7	3	4	43%	57%	3	2	1	1	0
PAC	5	4	1	80%	20%	2	2	1	0	0
RAINE	9	3	6	33%	67%	4	2	1	1	1
SJSS	8	4	4	50%	50%	4	2	2	0	0
SPPA	5	3	2	60%	40%	2	2	1	0	0
TOTAL	115	67	48	58%	42%	52	32	20	9	2

Decision

6. **Business Managers are invited to consider the issue of gender balance on committees, to discuss options that may be available to address the membership of any committees which are currently wholly male, and to note this as an issue for active consideration in relation to any future changes to committee membership that may be made over the course of this Session.**

7. **Business Managers are also invited to agree that the Presiding Officer should write to the Conveners Group confirming the outcome of the Bureau's consideration.**

**Parliamentary Business Team
December 2021**

**LETTER FROM CONVENERS GROUP TO THE PRESIDING OFFICER – 29
NOVEMBER 2021**

I am writing to you as chair of the Conveners Group to raise concerns with the Parliamentary Bureau regarding the gender balance on some committees.

You will be aware that this issue was raised at the start of session as the membership of some committees was wholly male. It was agreed that this was something that would be addressed.

Unfortunately, it appears that little progress has been made. Currently the membership of two of our committees is completely male (Citizens Participation and Public Petitions Committee and Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee) while the membership of a further three committees only includes one female MSP (Covid-19 Recovery Committee, Public Audit Committee and Standards Procedures and Public Appointments Committee).

This matter was raised at the Conveners Group. We all agree that having a balanced range of views on committees is essential in achieving effective scrutiny. While we recognise that gender is not the only factor in achieving this balance, it is an essential starting point in achieving diverse representation across the committees.

There has been an improvement in the gender balance of MSPs across the Parliament this session compared with the previous session. It would be helpful to try to reflect this balance in committee membership as far as possible.

We appreciate that this will not always be possible, however as a minimum, it would be helpful if committee membership which is wholly male could be addressed.

I would be grateful if you could raise these matters with the Bureau.

Yours sincerely

**Liam McArthur MSP
Chair of Conveners Group**