

**Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Steering Committee Meeting,
[Region] Report**

1. Data on the number of women representatives Including: Statistics in legislatures, executive, company boards Changes in representation following elections Affirmative Action policies, as they relate to quotas, constitutional, legislative, electoral changes Political Party Reforms and appointments of women within the Party Structures	CPA Branch						
	Last Election	No of Women Parliamentarians	Total No of Parliamentarians	Percentage	Next Election Due	% change since last election	
	Gibraltar	2023	4	17	24%	2028	= 100% (2019)
	Alderney	2025 ¹	2	10	20%	2026 ² (5/10)	= 100% (2022)
	UK						
	Commons	2024	263	650	40%	2029	↑ +18% (2019)
	Lords	n/a	260	836	31%		↑ +20% (2019)
	Parliament			35%			
	Guernsey	2025	11	38	29%	2030	↑ +37.5% (2020)
	St Helena	2025	4	12	33%	2029	↓ 20% (2021)
	Falkland Islands	2021	2	8	25%	2025	= 0% (2017)
	Scotland	2021	59	129	46%	2026	↑ +28% (2016)
	Wales	2021	26	60	43%	2026	↑ +4% (2016) ³
	Cyprus	2021	8	56	14%	2026	↓ -27% (2016)
	Isle of Man						
	House of Keys	2021	10	24	42%	2026	↑ +100% (2016)
	Legislative Council	2025 ⁴	5	11	45%		↑ +25%(2020)
	Tynwald ³		15	35	43%		
	Jersey	2022	21	49	43%	2026	↑ +50% (2018)

¹ 5 new Members were elected in 2025.

² 5/10 Members will be elected in the 2026 elections.

³ 2016 elections saw 25 women elected but membership changes meant 29 women were in office pre-2021 election, meaning a decrease in women's political representation.

⁴ 4 Members elected in 2025

Northern Ireland	2022	32 ⁵	90	35%	2027	↑+18.5% (2017)
Malta	2022	22	79	28%	2027	↑+108% (2017)
Sark	2025 ⁶	5	18	28%		

Jersey: Council of Ministers: 4/13 Ministers are now female, compared to 3 under previous administration, including Minister for Justice and Home Affairs and Minister for International Development.

- Now 5 Assistant Ministers and women chair (or Vice chair) 14 Committees and Panels.
- 50% of Reform Jersey's Elected Members are women (5/10)
- The 2022 election saw more women elected to Jersey's government than ever before - a total of 51% of the newly-elected deputies were women.

UK: Post-2024 election, gender-equal cabinet appointed with first female chancellor.

- September 2025 reshuffle led to the first all-female appointment of the "great offices of state": Chancellor, Home Office and Foreign Secretary.

Scotland: Of the 7 parties currently at Scottish Parliament, 1 party leader (Co-leader of the Scottish Green Party) is female and she is currently on maternity leave.

- At present, 14/23 of Scottish Government ministers are women, including the Deputy First Minister
- 6/16 Committees have female Conveners
- 2024 change in leadership resulted in female Deputy First Minister. Also led to a majority woman Cabinet – representing 8/10 of positions (up from 6).

Wales: First Minister Eluned Morgan became first woman in this role in 2024.

- Under Morgan, 50% Cabinet Secretaries are women and 4/5 Ministers are women.
- Senedd expansion from 60 seats to 96 – hoping to enable a more diverse Senedd.
- Welsh Government Diversity and Inclusion Guidance for political parties advised gender quotas to be taken up by the parties, but this will not be mandated.

Isle of Man: Council of Ministers has 4 women, as in 2021. A reshuffle in 2024 had led to 50/50 gender balance in the Cabinet.

Northern Ireland: The First Minister and Deputy Minister are women, as well as both Junior Ministers.

- 2025 appointment to Cabinet meant for the first time the Executive was majority women – at 58%.
- 36 seats are now held by women in the National Assembly, up from 32 in 2022 election.

⁵ There are now 36 women in the Northern Ireland Assembly

⁶ By-election in 2025 saw 4 men elected – last election in 2024

	Falkland Islands: The first female Chief Executive of the island was appointed in October 2024 and began in April 2025.
2. Information on elections that were held this year Including: Data on women Members that won and/or lost seats or appointed to new positions	Guernsey: 2025 elections led to first female Chief Minister. • All women elected participate in the executive, with 5 women parliamentarians as the Minister approximate. • A woman parliamentarian was appointed Chair of the House Committee. Two Committee memberships are now majority female, with 2020 having no female-heavy Committees. • Guernsey has one political party with three members and one member is a woman – 33.3%. • Three women Members lost their seats at the 2025 election and one chose not to stand. • Four were re-elected, six women were newly elected and one women who was a Member in 2016-2020 was successful at the election. • Of the 82 candidates that stood in the election, 27 (33.3%) were women, the highest percentage in Guernsey's history. St Helena: 2025 elections saw a female Chief Minister elected again (previous Chief Minister was a woman). • Elected Members appointed a female Speaker and female Deputy Speaker
3. Status of the CWP in regional constitutions Including: Updates in Regional Constitutional changes and/or challenges where applicable	The post of CWP Regional Representative is voted for by all delegates at the Regional Conference during the year the post rotates. Regional Conferences include a meeting of the BIMR Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Steering Committee – although branches are not mandated to include the CWP Steering Committee member in their delegations. BIMR CWP Conferences are held annually as long a branch in the region can host. This is separate from the main regional Conference. The 12th BIMR CWP Conference will be hosted by the Northern Ireland branch, in Belfast in February 2026. Each branch in BIMR can nominate two Steering Committee members. The Chair (CWP regional representative) is included in this allocation.
4. CWP Regional Structure	Some branches have found it difficult to allocate just two of its members to the Steering Committee, as it restricts wider exposure to the network. As such, some branches have allocated members on a rotation/job-share basis.

Including: Updates on changes and/or challenges to Regional CWP Structures	
5. Regional Budget for CWP Activities Including: Updates on changes and/or challenges to Regional CPA Budgets where applicable	No other budget is allocated to CWP beyond the Regional Strengthening Funds. Each branch is responsible for delegate travel costs to CWP activities. CWP Conference host branches are usually allocated regional strengthening funds to cover some of the Conference costs, but have to supplement this from their own budgets. The Regional Strengthening Funds had been changed to allow regions to apply for more than the previous limit and applications from branches, as well as regions, would also be considered. This would also now include multi-year bids for projects of up to three years.
6. Regional Conference – What role did CWP play? Including: Updates on changes and/or challenges to holding a regular CWP meeting at CPA Regional Conferences Updates on Regional CWP activities	As well as the Regional Steering Committee meeting taking place, the CWP Representative reports back to the AGM on the region's activities. When planning Regional Conference programmes branches are asked to either include a specific session on the role of and impacts on women in relation to the Conference theme, or to include speakers in session to provide this insight. At the 2025 Regional Conference in Cardiff, Wales, the Conference theme was Addressing the Needs of a Modern Parliament which looked at the democratic measures in place to safeguard diverse representation in parliaments, as well as the support and education available to parliamentarians themselves. Delegates discussed the importance of inclusion and the impact of lived experience on policy-making and democratic processes. Members of the Welsh Youth Parliament shared their experiences with delegates. The BIMR CWP Steering Committee was held in hybrid format during the Conference. On 17-18 March 2025, CPA BIMR held its 11th BIMR CWP Conference in Edinburgh, Scotland on the theme of “A parliament for all: the importance of women in politics” which sought to recognise the barriers present for women parliamentarians and the inclusive practices available to overcome them. Conference sessions included gender sensitive scrutiny and institutional change, hybrid working, equality networks and caucuses, and retention policies for women parliamentarians, with emphasis on a more in-depth education on the duties of representatives. The programme included contributions from young women across the region on how to make it more attractive for young women to go into politics. The following topics were discussed:

	• Gender Sensitive Measures: To ensure equal representation, parliaments need formalised gender sensitive mechanisms in place. These can include party-wide gender quotas and gender-sensitive scrutiny processes as well as party-specific all-women shortlists. • Equality networks and support: Women's Caucuses can provide integral support to women parliamentarians, including opportunities for stakeholder engagement and informal legislative scrutiny. Ensuring equality networks are prioritised and integrated into parliamentary business can help contribute to wider gender sensitive efforts. • Representation of Women in Parliament: It was noted that quota mechanisms should be adapted to fit each electoral system and reflect jurisdictions' contexts. Research was cited that found that an increase in women parliamentarians led to more gender sensitive policies and, in many cases, a higher calibre of political candidates overall. • Hybrid Working: Delegates recognised the stigma surrounding hybrid working in politics and the cycles of exclusion that this created. It was noted that the provision of family-friendly facilities and adjustments, such as standardised working hours, could help tackle this issue. • Education for the public and parliamentarians: Public understanding of the duties of women parliamentarians was seen as integral to female political representation and security. Further education for parliamentarians was also discussed, recognising the ongoing learning and development opportunities in this role. • Youth engagement in politics: The impact of a linear understanding of political participation was discussed alongside the inequities in political education and resources. Engagement with young women was seen as fundamental to promoting the next generation of women parliamentarians. In April-May 2025, women parliamentarians from the UK and Wales attended the CWP Workshop in Nassau, Bahamas on "Parliamentarians as Drivers of Women's Economic Empowerment. The workshop brought together Parliamentarians from across the Commonwealth to examine legislative, financial and social strategies to advance women's economic inclusion. In January 2025, the Regional Steering Committee held a webinar to consider different models and perspectives of gender quotas, reserved seats and other mechanisms used to address the under-representation of women in elected bodies. The aim of the webinar was to improve people's understanding of why some jurisdictions have introduced mechanisms to address gender disparity and how different models have been designed to suit different electoral systems. Hon Naomi Cachia, of Malta, shared her perspective on the quota system implemented in Malta in 2021.
7. CPA International Executive Committee – does your region have a female Member?	One out of three BIM Regional Representatives are women: Deputy Mary Le Hegarat (Jersey)

Including: Updates on changes to Regional Representatives to the CPA International Executive Committee	
8. Initiatives linked to CWP Thematic Priorities undertaken by Parliaments and/or Regions Including: Legislation, resources, Inter-organizational strategies, Intra-Ministerial and Civil Society Cooperation and all other strategies.	Cyprus: In 2025 alone, the following Laws related to CWP priorities were adopted or amended by the Cyprus House of Representatives: • The Prevention and Combating of Violence and Harassment in the Workplace Law of 2025 (April 2025). The new Law aims to prevent and combat workplace violence and harassment through both civil and criminal law provisions, as well as through extrajudicial mechanisms. Its scope covers acts or behaviours, including threats, that cause or may cause physical, psychological, sexual or economic harm, as well as repeated or serious conduct that creates a hostile or humiliating working environment. It applies to all sectors of employment, public and private, including the Armed Forces and Security Forces. Under this law, employers are now obliged to establish and implement a policy for the prevention and handling of workplace violence and harassment, to take all necessary measures to prevent and address such incidents, and to provide employees with information and training on their rights and obligations. • Amendment to the Law on the Prevention and Combating of Sexual Abuse, Sexual Exploitation of Children and Child Pornography (April 2025). The amendment introduced substantial provisions to close certain gaps concerning offences and procedures. Its central aim remains the protection and best interests of child victims, the prevention and protection of potential victims, and the effective supervision of convicted offenders upon their release. • Amendment to the Maternity Protection Law (May 2025). This amendment further extends the right of mothers to adjust their working hours for breastfeeding and childcare from nine to twelve months, thereby easing their work-life balance. • Amendment to the Law for Promotion and Protection of Breastfeeding (June 2025). The new amendment, which will come into effect in June 2026 (twelve months after its adoption), introduces obligations for employers to establish a breastfeeding room in workplaces. These spaces must be dedicated to breastfeeding and/or storing breast milk and must meet the technical and health standards defined by law. Employers must provide access to these rooms immediately upon a woman's recruitment or return from maternity leave, for as long as she chooses to breastfeed. In addition, it becomes mandatory to create breastfeeding facilities in public spaces such as airports, ports, shopping centres, higher education institutions, public libraries and museums, hotels, hospitals, cinemas/theatres, sports venues (stadiums, arenas, swimming pools), as well as public or semi-public service buildings. • At the executive level, the new National Strategy for Gender Equality came into force in January 2024 for three years. As decided by the Council of Ministers, coordination, monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy has been assigned to the Commissioner for Gender Equality, in close cooperation with all Ministries and Deputy Ministries. The Strategy's goals are the dismantling of stereotypes, the elimination of prejudices and the equal participation of men and women in all aspects of life. Its actions include, among others, the equal allocation of public resources, the equal access to employment, the promotion of gender-balanced representation in decision-making bodies, the closing of the gender pay and pension gap and the creation

of a gender-sensitive culture. Press releases are issued and published regularly on the Commissioner’s website, providing information on the progress of the Strategy’s implementation.

Guernsey:

- Updated domestic violence legislation came into force on 16th June 2025, namely the **Domestic Abuse and Related Provisions (Bailiwick of Guernsey) Law, 2024**. This modernised and consolidated domestic abuse and sexual offences laws. The approximate Junior Minister responsible for Domestic Abuse noted in the House that her work within the CWP had helped shape the legislation.
The Law created new offences including: stalking, non-fatal strangulation, disclosure of private sexual images (and the threats of disclosure), FGM. Drink-spiking became a specific criminal offence. With regard to child protect, the “reasonable chastisement” defence was abolished and a broader, definition of child cruelty was introduced. The Law established Domestic Abuse Protection Notices and Domestic Abuse Protection Orders and prevents the accused from cross-examining victims directly.

Jersey:

- Through the Diversity Forum, which is a sub-Committee of our Privileges and Procedures Committee (PPC), Jersey has been considering how it can implement the recommendations made by the **Gender-Sensitive Parliament Self-Assessment (2025_jersey_gsp_report_final.pdf)**.
- There are also ongoing discussions to establish a Women’s caucus group. Interested States Members have completed the CPA Parliamentary Academy course on 'Effective Women's Parliamentary Caucuses'. The Diversity Forum are currently working to produce a Terms of Reference for the caucus and have researched the structure of women’s caucuses across other jurisdictions to provide insight into the necessary considerations to embed a WPC structure within Jersey’s political system.

Scotland:

- **Criminal Justice Modernisation and Abusive Domestic Behaviour Reviews (Scotland) Bill** (currently at Stage 3)
- **Prevention of Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Bill** (currently at Stage 1)
- **Prostitution (Offences and Support) (Scotland) Bill** (currently at Stage 1)

UK:

	• An amendment to the Crime and Policing Bill, to decriminalise abortion in England and Wales, passed in June 2025. This change means women who terminate their pregnancy after 24 weeks will no longer be at risk of being investigated by police. This amendment marks the biggest change to abortion laws in England and Wales for nearly 60 years. • The Employment Rights Bill was introduced in October 2024 and has reached the final stages of the legislative process. The Bill will introduce several significant changes aimed at enhancing workplace protections and support for women. These include: strengthened protections against dismissal for pregnant women and new mothers, which will extend to six months after returning to work; the mandating of actions plans by large employers to support employees going through menopause; and more obligations for employers to prevent sexual harassment, including harassment by third parties such as clients or customers. The Bill will work to create a more equitable and supportive work environment for women. • The Crime and Policing Bill was introduced in 2025 and is currently going through the Lords. The Bill amends the Stalking Protection Act 2019 and the Sentencing Code to enable the courts to make a Stalking Protection Order (SPO) of their own volition on conviction or acquittal. Currently, SPOs are only available on application from the police to a magistrates' court, and so restraining orders are used in these circumstances, but these were not specifically designed to tackle stalking behaviour. • Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy (Autumn 2025): A new 10-year strategy is set to be published this autumn (2025) to support the UK Government's aim of halving VAWG in a decade.
9. The Contribution of women parliamentarians to The Parliamentary journal article	The Parliamentary Archives Women Speakers: Leading Roles

TheParliamentarian

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WOMEN SPEAKERS: LEADING ROLES

How are
Parliaments
legislating
on Assisted
Dying?

Security,
Disinformation
and Artificial
Intelligence

The impact
of hate
speech on
electoral
integrity

Promoting
Inclusive
Elections for
Persons with
Disabilities

Bilingual
Parliaments
in Multilingual
Jurisdictions

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OVERCOMING BARRIERS IN POLITICS

This is an extract from the CPA Podcast series: *'Parliamentary Conversations in the Commonwealth'* which gives a voice to Parliamentarians, civil society experts and activists across the Commonwealth to discuss common democratic challenges and share their ideas on what can be done to solve them. Listen to our Podcasts via the CPA website www.cpa.org.uk, on the CPA YouTube channel or on your favourite Podcast platform.

Rt Hon. Dame Emily Thornberry is the Labour MP for Islington South and Finsbury in the United Kingdom Parliament and has been an MP continuously since 5 May 2005. She is the current Chair of the UK Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee. Previous roles include Shadow Foreign Secretary, Shadow Secretary of State for International Trade, Shadow Attorney General.

Q: The Commonwealth is facing many challenges and questions over its role in geo-politics and reconciling its modern role with its past history. Is this the time for the Commonwealth as it has the opportunity to assert its influence around the work as a global organisation that doesn't include the USA, China or Russia as part of its membership? How do you see the future for the Commonwealth?

"I think the Commonwealth is so unique, it's just extraordinary where countries no matter what their size have a voice. You know, the smallest island has a voice and is treated as an equal partner. And countries of all types, all over the world are there together around a table listening to one another. As we say the world looks like it's going to 'hell in a handbasket' because of the behaviour of the large three powers, it is a time for multilateralism. It is a time for us to work together. It is a time for us to listen to one another, because actually collectively, we are a force in our own right, and this is a good place to be. This is where we get a chance to work together to listen to one another and to find a way through and the answers will not be found down below in China or in America or in Russia. There will need to be other voices that need to be heard, and we need to find a way through. Of course, the one thing that these three nations at the moment don't seem to talk about at all is the really important one, which is the threat to the world from climate change and that has to be a priority for the Commonwealth in a way that nothing else is."

Q: There will also be a transition in the leadership of the Commonwealth with the second female Commonwealth Secretary-General, this time from Ghana, who has just

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started in her new role. Why do many organisations still struggle to promote women into leadership positions?

"How long have you got? Each country will have its own history and its own culture. I can't really speak on behalf of all of them. I suppose the one thing that we all have in common is that to that women have the primary caring role in most cultures. I can't really think of a country around the world where men have stepped up and done that, because we bear the children and we look after the children because we're at home. We also look after the elders too. And because we're at home, we also have a leadership role in a community in a small way. We're the ones who organise things in neighbourhoods. And so, there's an approach that most women are expected to take because of that fundamental biological difference and I suppose it's just a question of how do you respond to that. I mean some in some places that's seen as a strength and actually women will end up being leaders in their own way of a small community. In other countries, there's been a conscious fight by women, saying yes, we can have children, but you know, men have children too. Yes, we have elderly parents, men have elderly parents too. Let's share out that caring responsibility too. And actually, women who may have been matriarchs at home want to be matriarchs in the big world too and so the world changes and it's hard because children continue to be born. Elders continue to need to be looked after, communities need to be organised. And so somebody's got to do that work and in cultures where men are just refusing to do that then women have to continue to do that as well as anything else they might want to do."

Q: The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, through its Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) network, campaigns for equal representation of women in politics. The UK Parliament is leading the way with 40.5% female representation in its current House of Commons. How do you view the progress on gender equality in Parliament?

"It is amazing that we have such a high proportion of women in the British Parliament, however I don't think that that means that we have 40% equality. It's all very well, being at the table but you need to be listened to and you need to be taken as seriously as a man. We have all had the experience of saying something in a meeting and nobody's seeming to listen and then some bloke says the same thing and everybody at that point thinks what a great idea it is. I mean that is how things are and it continues to be and so there is still much more work that needs doing. Just appreciating how women may approach politics differently but that doesn't mean that we aren't as



Rt Hon. Dame Emily Thornberry has been a Member of the UK Parliament since 2005.

INCLUSIVE PARLIAMENTS

'PARLIAMENT MUST WORK FOR PARENTS TOO — AND I'M HERE TO PROVE IT'

CPA's 2024 New Parliamentarian of the Year Award winner from Jersey explains why politics needs to be more inclusive.

Let's be honest—politics isn't always family friendly. While many of us in public life are logging policies, Committee meetings and constituency work, we're also negotiating school drop-offs, teething toddlers or teenage dramas. If we want truly representative Parliaments—where people from all walks of life, including parents, feel they belong—we must design systems that allow them not just to participate, but to thrive.

I was deeply honoured to be named the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's New Parliamentarian of the Year 2024—a recognition not just of my legislative work and reform campaigns, but of a growing shift in what modern governance must look like. Parliaments cannot simply reflect society through demographic diversity. They must function in ways that honour the real lives of those who serve and those they represent.

If we want more parents—especially mothers and caregivers—to enter politics and stay, we must stop pretending that being a good Parliamentarian and being a good parent are at odds. This isn't about lowering the bar—it's about widening the door.

When we model inclusive, realistic work cultures, we send a powerful message: Parliament is for parents too. Outside our manifesto, when meetings are scheduled during school drop-offs, late evenings, on bank holidays or with little notice—times when politicians may be on duty, but their dependent children are not considered—it's not just the children who are excluded. The Parliamentarians who are primary caregivers, especially single parents or

those without local family support, are also automatically excluded. How is that inclusive or representative? Progress has been made. Jersey has seen improvements—but it shouldn't feel like fighting for your basic rights as a parent. We need to start walking the walk more than talking the talk.

Collective Strength, Independent Thought
I'm proud to be part of *Reform Jersey*—a social democratic party with ten elected members in a States Assembly (elected Parliament) where independents sit from the majority. In Jersey, party politics is often met with scepticism, shaped by our islanders' tradition. Many fear that parties stifle individuality—but our model proves the opposite.

We co-develop our manifesto together. We commit to shared goals, but also run on our own name, our own work and constituency commitments. We are all equals, selected in the party by merit and public trust—not internal party politics.

Unlike party-list systems, voters in Jersey choose individuals, not pre-ranked party slates. Outside our manifesto, we debate, vote and speak independently. When we agree, it's because we've already debated and found common ground—not because we're instructed to. We give the party, sharing values, which naturally leads to more agreement than disagreement, but always through informed, voluntary decisions—not enforcement.



Rebekah Kovacs is a Deputy in the States Assembly of Jersey.

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN WALES

Harnessing the Power of the Media. A Member of the Welsh Parliament examines how the media can be utilised to promote women's economic empowerment.

It was a privilege to represent Senedd Cymru (the Welsh Parliament) at the recent CWP workshop in Nassau, The Bahamas. The theme of the workshop was 'Parliamentarians as drivers of women's economic empowerment'—and drawing on my professional experience as a former journalist, I explored the question of how we could use one of the most powerful national and cultural tools—the media—to communicate and promote women's economic empowerment.

Wales is a small nation which has been called 'England's first colony', a historic nation with a rich and unique culture, two official languages and a stated ambition to become a fairer, more equal country—able in many areas of devolved competence, but not always politically willing to do things differently from the rest of the UK to achieve that aim.

We know that when women thrive, economies thrive. In the UK, including Wales, it has been estimated that closing the gender pay gap could boost the economy by £150 billion by 2030. Wales's economy underperforms—it is one of the poorest parts of the UK—so this work is of course critical. Women generally are underrepresented in entrepreneurship and overrepresented in low-paid sectors like social care and retail. Only 20% of Welsh SMEs are owned

by women. Yet, we know that when women are given the opportunity and support, they don't just contribute to the economy—they redefine it. So how to use one of our greatest national tools—the media—to communicate and advance women's economic empowerment? Unique to Wales, we have a law that requires public bodies to think about long-term impacts—including gender equality—in decision-making. The *Well Being of Future Generations Act 2016*, which is ten years old this year, it makes *A More Equal Wales* a national goal. It defines this as 'a society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio-economic background and circumstances)'.

I think the Act has helped in increasing awareness of inequality—but has it resulted in change? Not in the way many had hoped perhaps. While policies matter of course, it is stories that move people and can create support for ensuring policy arms become reality. Stories change perceptions. Stories foster understanding and can create societal change. Stories—told well—can also transform systems.

First, we need to tell real, relatable stories of women's economic journeys through local and national media. For example, the story of a female refugee

in Cardiff who started her own food business through a microloan scheme, shared through community radio can reach other women who might not see themselves as 'economic actors'. Like the story of a single mother in the Rhondda Valleys who launched a tech startup and now mentors others. Her story can change not just how people see her, but how they see single mothers, rural tech and women in leadership. These types of stories challenge the old narrative and offer a new one: ordinary and diverse Welsh women as economic leaders, not exceptions.

Second, we must invest in media training for women, from business owners to carers, so they can speak on panels, give interviews, run podcasts and lead campaigns. We must support women to tell their own stories by investing in communication coaching and leadership-visibility programmes.

In Wales, *'Equal Power Equal Voice'* is a Government-backed mentoring programme which aims to increase diversity of representation in public and political life. From my involvement in this programme, I have seen how there exists massive social and intellectual capital that is untapped and intersectionally excluded from our public and political systems. This programme strengthens the knowledge and skills of those that



Hon. Siânad Williams, MS, was elected as a Member of the Senedd for South Wales West in May 2021.

"We know that when women thrive, economies thrive. In the UK, including Wales, it has been estimated that closing the gender pay gap could boost the economy by £150 billion by 2030."

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GENDER QUOTAS
IN PARLIAMENTS

GENDER QUOTAS

A recent CWP webinar examining the impact of gender quotas in Parliaments heard about the impact of a gender-corrective mechanism introduced in 2021 that has resulted in increased women's representation in the Maltese Parliament.

When the CPA Malta Branch hosted the 2024 British Islands Regional Conference of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) on International Women's Day, Malta's Gender Corrective Mechanism was a key focus of interest. It is the only Parliament in the BIM Region to have adopted such a mechanism to address the issue of persistently low women's representation in Parliament, which stood at 13% before the last election in 2022 and jumped to 28% when the mechanism was employed.

The mechanism is essentially a 'top-up' system which is triggered once results have been established following an election: if less than 40% of women win seats, a maximum of 12 additional seats are allocated to the best-performing women. The mechanism includes an unconditional sunset clause, so it expires after 20 years.

In 2022, more women ran for election, although the percentage of women elected was well below 40%, resulting in the mechanism being applied. Most of the 12 women taking up the additional seats were newcomers – including me. I believe that having more women in Parliament has had a very evident effect on the style of debates and the issues on the parliamentary agenda. This is the same in Parliamentary Committees, which have benefitted from a more diverse

composition. The result has been to give more women more exposure, and influence in decision-making.

The biggest obstacle is around public perception. The women elected under the mechanism can be seen as 'undeserving', and there was anecdotal evidence that many voters chose not to vote for women as 'they will be elected anyway'.

It is clear that not everyone in Malta is convinced. A recent Eurobarometer survey on gender stereotypes asked if temporary measures (e.g. quotas) are necessary to overcome the existing under-representation of women in politics, with 62% of Maltese respondents disagreeing (compared to an EU average of 36%).

The real test will be at the next election in 2027 to see how the public will react and if more women are elected under their own steam. There is also more work to do at a party level, to ensure that they field more female candidates.

I was pleased to share Malta's experience during CPA BIM's webinar on 'Gender Quota Mechanisms in Parliaments' (20 January 2025). The webinar was an output from the 2024 BIMR CWP Regional Conference in Malta, with many attendees expressing interest in finding out about different mechanisms used to address stubbornly low

representation of women in Parliaments across the world. British academic Professor Sarah Chidi, who has worked with CPA on its 'Gender Sensitising Parliaments Guidelines', spoke at the webinar making a strong case for structural interventions to enable diverse candidates to be elected. She argued that interventions can be tailored to fit different electoral systems and referenced the UK Labour Party's All Women's Shortlist policy which was used in vacant, target seats. This led to a doubling of Labour women MPs at the 1997 UK General Election. At the 2024 UK General Election, 46% of Labour MPs elected were women.

Wherever you live in the Commonwealth, it can still be a struggle for women in Parliament. During the webinar, Hon. Beatrice Elachi, MP from Kenya described the slow progress of the two-thirds gender rule to bring more women into Parliament. Kenya's 2010 constitution states that not more than two-thirds of the members of elective and appointed bodies shall be of the same gender.

Hon. Beatrice Elachi stated "What we need is to come up with a clear strategy. How are we going to lobby? How are we going to ensure we don't end up having the Bill left on the floor of the House?" She also went on to make a clear case for the importance



Hon. Naomi Cechia, MP is a Member of the Parliament of Malta, first elected in 2022.

DISINFORMATION
AND ARTIFICIAL
INTELLIGENCE

SECURITY, DISINFORMATION AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

A Security Perspective on Artificial Intelligence in our Information Landscape.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) truly has the power to transform our lives for the better – but we are currently at a crossroads. Readers of The Parliamentarian may not know that my first job was in the world of computer science, working as a computer programmer. Since then, I have maintained a strong focus on science and technology, especially AI, as its influence on our daily lives has grown rapidly in recent years.

During my time on the UK House of Commons Science, Innovation and Technology Select Committee, we scrutinised AI technology. We ensured the release of the vital AI report before the UK General Election in 2024 due to its pressing importance. What has struck me the most is that in the main we have no idea where the information has been gathered to build these systems. I was honoured and pleased to attend the

recent CPA UK AI in Security Workshop as a UK Delegate. The Workshop was designed to bring together Parliamentarians from across the Commonwealth to talk about this issue. As the long-time Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Jamaica, and as someone of proud Jamaican heritage, the Commonwealth and its values and contributions are incredibly important to me, and I hope to continue forging stronger relations with these nations.

Since I was first elected to the UK Parliament in 2005, I've seen the societal, economic and cultural changes experienced by my constituents at home, and watched how the world has changed beyond these shores. One of these deep shifts that cuts across everything is the increasing use of AI tools. As a Parliamentarian, I have an active interest in how Artificial Intelligence tools are used within our

society. In 2023, I raised the question during a backbench-led debate in the UK House of Commons about how organisations are sourcing and using data to train AI models. This was imperative because improper scrutiny of the process of sourcing and using data could lead to automated discriminatory biases within AI models. Since then, I have helped to launch the cross-party AI Parliamentary Scheme, led by Demos and in partnership with Google, which is designed to empower MPs with the knowledge they need to confidently engage in informed decision-making.

During the recent CPA UK AI in Security Workshop (pictured left), I chaired a roundtable on AI and its relationship with disinformation during elections around the world in 2024. Though we are familiar with the risks of AI-generated disinformation, it was important to have an open and candid discussion about the depths to which AI-generated content can impact the decisions made by individual voters. After all, we know that AI-generated content, such as deepfake videos and AI-enhanced images, have already been circulated during election cycles in some parts of the world, so where do we go from here?

Disinformation has always existed, and always will, whether it is produced by foreign actors or domestic threats. AI tools, however, lower the barrier to entry to produce content that is designed to misinform large groups of people. Today, AI-generated media appearing in social media feeds is accepted as normal. It is a feature of our information landscape. A portion of that landscape, however, is liable to disinformation. In other words, content produced to intentionally mislead or misinform is,



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Strategies to Overcome Gender Inequality Education Gender Quotas Leadership programmes Childcare Mechanisms to prevent political violence Equal access to Party resources Coordination with other like-minded Women's organizations	• The House's traineeship programme for university students, inaugurated in 2022, continued successfully this year. A total of 30 students, 17 of whom were female, completed a two-month internship period between June and July 2025. The participants came from both Cypriot and international academic institutions. As part of the programme, the students had the opportunity to observe a session of the House's Standing Committee on Human Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women, to meet with the Chairwoman of the Committee and with the Cyprus Commissioner for Gender Equality. Jersey: • As part of our 'Plan to Stand' initiative in advance of the 2026 elections next June, and to encourage more women to stand for election, an event entitled 'Your Legacy, Their Future' was held on International Women's Day 2025, whereby the stories of inspirational women including Ivy Forster and Caroline Trachy were shared. Current female Members also shared their stories of what inspired them to stand and provided guidance to prospective candidates. • Unconscious bias training will also be added to the 2026 Post-Election Induction training schedule for all States Members, and the induction programme will also be circulated in advance of the training period to ensure maximum uptake of events. The Code of Conduct (CoC) for Elected Members is currently under review and revisions to the CoC included definitions of bullying and harassment to set clear standards of behaviour. • To ensure further clarity for existing and new Elected Members, the Machinery of Government PPC Sub-Committee are currently producing a 'Role Profiles' guide, which outlines the nature of workstreams which can be expected with a number of different roles within the Assembly, from Leadership Positions to Backbenchers. Scotland: • Publication of the "Gender Sensitising Parliaments: A Practical Guide" (January 2025). The Guide sets out a six-step cyclical process to make parliaments more gender sensitive. • Regular publication of data on gender balance and member diversity to monitor progress. The latest available data is on the Gender balance of MSPs in the Scottish Parliament 2025 (as at 12 May 2025).
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