

Women MPs of the world conference: strengthening visibility, driving change

Thursday 8 November 2018, House of Commons, Westminster

Group D: Countering backlash: how to deal with bullying and harassment, both online and offline? How to engage with men to change the narrative?

Committee Room

This session will look at strategies to counter the backlash that many women MPs experience.

Objectives

- Share examples of dealing effectively with harassment and abuse – as individuals, within parliaments and political parties, and as societies.
- Identify concrete actions that women MPs can take to prevent harassment and abuse, personally and collectively.

Key questions for discussion

- How do individual women parliamentarians deal with harassment and abuse?
- What can parliaments and political parties do to prevent harassment, abuse and bullying?
- How we address the practices, social norms and behaviours that facilitate violence against women in politics?

Please bring examples from your country, highlighting the successes as well as the learning that can be shared.

As we celebrate the increasing numbers of women who are elected to public office, we are also dismayed at the increasing levels of violence, harassment and abuse that those women endure, much of it specifically designed to undermine and threaten women because of their gender. Many of the parliamentarians joining this event will have experienced this personally. A recent *Inter-Parliamentary Union* (IPU) study showed that 81.8% of women parliamentarians surveyed had experienced some form of psychological violence from members of the public and fellow parliamentarians. Verbal abuse and harassment now also take place in online spaces, often anonymously, that are harder to regulate. Harassment and abuse undermine democratic cultures, threaten freedom of expression, and may deter other women from entering politics. The cost for many women is simply too high.

How do women parliamentarians cope with harassment and abuse, and what can they and others do to prevent it?

Additional reading

UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women: [Report on Violence against Women in Politics](#)
UN Women, Expert Group Meeting Report and Recommendations, March 2018, [Violence Against Women in Politics](#)

Westminster Foundation for Democracy: Stop Violence Against Women in Politics, [Conference Report and Submission to the UN Special Rapporteur](#)

National Democratic Institute (NDI), [#NotTheCost](#) campaign has reports, such as [No Party to Violence](#) and an incident reporting tool.

Inter-Parliamentary Union, [Sexism, Harassment and Violence Against Women Parliamentarians](#)