

Report on Women Parliamentarians in Commonwealth Pacific Parliaments (2023-2024)

1. Data on the Number of Women Representatives

Statistics in Legislatures:

- As of 9th October 2024

Country	Number of women MPs	Total Members in Legislature	% Women	Increase or decrease from previous Parliament
New Zealand	57	123	46.3%	∨
Niue	6	20	30.0%	∧
Cook Islands	7	24	29.2%	∧
Samoa	7	54	13.0%	∧
Kiribati	5	44	11.4%	∧
Nauru	2	19	10.5%	
Fiji	5	55	9.1%	∨
Tonga	2	28	7.1%	
Solomon Islands	3	50	6.0%	∨
Papua New Guinea	3	111	2.7%	∧
Bougainville	5	41	12.2%	∧
Vanuatu	1	51	2.0%	∨
Tuvalu	0	16	0.00%	∨
Total for CPA Pacific region	101	636	15.88%	

Changes in Representation Following Elections:

- **Fiji:** Recent elections saw an increase in women representatives by 5%.
- **Niue:** 6 women representatives and 2 of the 4 Government ministers are women.
- **Samoa:** Maintained a steady representation of women in parliament. Only member in the CPA Pacific region with female head of government/Prime Minister.

Affirmative Action Policies:

- **Fiji:** Implemented quotas to ensure at least 30% representation of women in parliament.

- **Samoa:** Constitutional amendments to guarantee a minimum of 10% women representation.

Political Party Reforms:

- **Cook Islands:** Major parties have introduced reforms to promote women within party structures, including leadership roles.

2. Information on Elections Held This Year

Data on Women Members:

- **Kiribati:** Elections resulted in 5 women MPs in the House of Assembly, an increase of two.
- **Tuvalu:** No women were elected at this election, a decrease of one from the 2019 election.
- **Solomon Islands:** No significant change in the number of women MPs.

3. Status of the CWP in Regional Constitutions

Updates in Regional Constitutional Changes:

- **Kiribati:** Recent constitutional review includes provisions to enhance women's political participation.
- **Tuvalu:** No significant constitutional changes reported.

4. CWP Regional Structure

Updates on Changes to Regional CWP Structures:

- **Bougainville:** Established a new regional CWP office to support women parliamentarians.
- **Tonga:** Faced challenges in maintaining active CWP structures due to limited resources.

5. Regional Budget for CWP Activities

Updates on Regional CPA Budgets:

- **Kiribati:** Budget constraints have limited the scope of CWP activities.

6. Regional Conference – Role of CWP

Updates on Regional CWP Activities:

- **Fiji:** Hosted a successful regional CWP conference in October 2023 focusing on leadership training for women.
- **Samoa:** Faced logistical challenges in organising regular CWP meetings.

7. CPA International Executive Committee – Female Member Representation

Updates on Regional Representatives:



- The CWP Pacific region chair is held by Fiji, with Vanuatu and Cook Islands in deputy positions.
- **New Zealand:** Continues to have a female representative on the CPA International Executive Committee.
- **Tonga:** Also has a female representative on the CPA International Executive Committee

8. Initiatives Linked to CWP Mission Statement

Legislation and Resources:

- **Cook Islands:** Celebrated one year anniversary of new legislation to support gender-sensitive policies.
- **Tuvalu:** Launched a Gender Sensitive Parliament Self-Assessment initiative.

Inter-organisational Strategies:

- **Samoa:** Strengthened cooperation with civil society organisations to promote women's political participation.

9. Contribution of Women Parliamentarians to The Parliamentarian Journal

Articles and Contributions:

- **New Zealand:** Women parliamentarians contributed several articles on gender equality and leadership.
- **Fiji:** Highlighted in a feature article on successful women leaders in the Pacific.

10. Other activities

Strategies to Overcome Gender Inequality:

- **Papua New Guinea:** Implemented leadership programs for aspiring women politicians.
- **Solomon Islands:** Introduced childcare support for women MPs to balance family and political responsibilities.

Coordination with Other Women's Organizations:

- **Bougainville:** Collaborated with regional women's organisations to address political violence against women.

CPA Pacific region – Branch activities

FIJI

• 3rd Pacific Women in Power Forum

The CWP Fiji members attended the 3rd Pacific Women in Power Forum in Auckland, New Zealand in February 2024. The Forum was hosted after 4 years absence. The UNDP Pacific Office in Fiji convened a Pacific Women in Power Forum to allow Pacific women MPs to interact, and to engage on key issues relevant to their leadership roles and the Pacific context in general. The connections provided a great platform for interaction and sharing of best practices for Pacific women MPs who share common contexts and challenges. In this Forum, Hon. Lynda volunteered to be a mentor for young women MPs in the region.

• Sexism, Harassment, and violence against women in Parliaments Survey

The Deputy Speaker and Chairperson for the CWP Fiji Group, Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua and Deputy Chair, Hon. Premila Kumar participated in the Zoom Interview as part of the survey on the ‘*Sexism, Harassment, and violence against women in Parliaments*’ for a joint study conducted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) in May.

The Assistant Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation, Hon. Alitia Bainivalu and Secretary-General to Parliament, Mrs. Jeanette Emberson and Senior Media Officer, Ms. Bale also participate on the same Survey but on face-to-face mode during the IPU General Meeting in Geneva.

• Women in Parliament Booklet

The CWP Fiji Group is planning to publish a booklet on “*Celebrating women in Parliament from 1966-2024*”. The CWP Fiji Group with this booklet aims to increase women representation in Parliament by 30 percent in the 2026 General Election and empower women throughout the region. The group has requested for the funds for the booklet through CPA CWP regional funding.

• Women’s Mock Parliament 2024

The Fiji Parliament prepared for the Women’s Mock Parliament, and it was a success after a lapse of 7 years. It was a 3-day Event held from 29 – 31 July 2024 funded by UNDP Fiji Parliament Support Project. Fiji Parliament worked in collaboration with the UN Women, UNDP, the Ministry of Women, Children, and Social Protection, women organisations and NGOs. The holding of a Women’s Mock Parliament provides a practical forum to expose participants to the realities of policy-making and parliamentary engagement. The activity empowers women to be confident to stand for elections and the confidence to enter Parliament.

NEW ZEALAND

The New Zealand branch of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) in the 54th Parliament is actively advocating for enhanced security measures for women parliamentarians.

This call to action is underscored by a recent University of Otago study revealing a disturbing rise in harassment and threats against female MPs, with nearly all surveyed reporting some form of harassment and a significant portion facing threats of physical and sexual violence.

CWP NZ media release – April 2024

Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians acknowledge a University of Otago study released today highlighting that harassment of MPs is increasing, particularly for women.

Co-chairs Labour MP Cushla Tangaere-Manuel and National's East Coast MP Dana Kirkpatrick agree that this type of research is important to shine a light on harassment in politics, so it can improve.

“The research reflects the real experiences of women in politics, and I would like to acknowledge the mahi by the researchers in highlighting this,” Ikaroa-Rawhiti MP Cushla Tangaere-Manuel said.

“This is a concern for all Members of Parliament, but the attacks are more intense and personalised towards women.

“Encouraging anyone into politics is challenging, and in an environment where harassment is prevalent, representation of diverse views, especially those of women, is a threat to that representation and our democracy,” Cushla Tangaere Manuel said.

MP for East Coast Dana Kirkpatrick acknowledged the work of Professor Susanna Every-Palmer, of the Department of Psychological Medicine, who said there can be significant psychosocial costs, and a multi-pronged response is needed.

“Just like all workplaces, we need to work together across Parliament to ensure politics continues to be a safe and welcoming place for anyone who puts their hand up for the roles of representing their community in Parliament.

“As politicians we should be able to debate with maturity safe in the premise that we do so on policy and values, the current environment is challenging, and we acknowledge we all play a part in creating the appropriate parameters.

As co-chairs of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians, Cushla and Dana will work across parties to establish a plan for submission to the Speaker.

The Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians acknowledge the value of this report and looks forward to working on an all-of-Parliament response to these issues.

The CWP NZ branch has also participated in the “Sexism, harassment and violence against women in Parliaments” survey conducted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), which highlights the global prevalence of these issues and the urgent need for systemic changes to protect women in politics³⁴. Through these efforts, the CWP NZ branch aims to foster a safer and more inclusive environment for women in parliament.