



Strengthening Parliamentary Committees

For Prelims:

[Parliament Committees](#), [Article 105](#), [Article 118](#), [Rajya Sabha](#), [Lok Sabha](#), [Speaker of Lok Sabha](#)

For Mains:

Parliament Committees and its Significance, Related Challenges and Measures for their Effective Functioning.

[Source: IE](#)

Why in News?

Lok Sabha Speaker speaking at the **National Conference of Estimates Committees** emphasized that **Parliamentary Committees** are not adversaries but **complementary to the government**.

- He urged governments and officials to **treat committee recommendations with seriousness and implement them in letter and spirit**.

What are Parliamentary Committees?

About

- A **Parliamentary Committee** is a body constituted by the **Lok Sabha or Rajya Sabha**, or nominated by the **Speaker/Chairman**, to **carry out functions delegated by Parliament**. These committees:
 - Work under the direction of the **presiding officer**.
 - Present their reports to the **House or the Speaker/Chairman**.
 - Are serviced by the **Lok Sabha/Rajya Sabha Secretariat**.
- Parliamentary committees, originating from the **British Parliament**, in India derive their authority from the **Indian Constitution** under **Article 105 (powers and privileges)** and **Article 118 (regulation of business)**.

Types

- **Standing Committees:** They are permanent in nature, reconstituted every year under the **Rules of Procedure or Acts of Parliament** and their work is ongoing and regular. It includes:

Major Financial Committees of Parliament

Name of Committee	Number of Members	Tenure	Mode of Selection
Estimates Committee	30 (All from Lok Sabha)	1 year	Elected by the Lok Sabha
Public Accounts Committee (PAC)	22 (15 from Lok Sabha + 7 from Rajya Sabha)	1 year	Elected by both Houses of Parliament
Committee on Public Undertakings (COPU)	22 (15 from Lok Sabha + 7 from Rajya Sabha)	1 year	Elected by both Houses of Parliament

▪ Financial Committees

- **Departmentally Related Standing Committees (DRSCs)** which examine demands for grants, bills, and policy documents of various ministries.
- **Other Standing Committees such as** Committee on Petitions, Committee on Subordinate Legislation, Committee on Government Assurances.



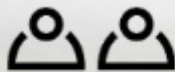
Departmental Standing Committee

The committee is to secure more accountability of the Executive (that is Council of Ministers) to the Parliament, particularly financial accountability.

24 Standing committees each consists of **31 members**



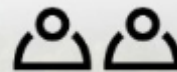
21 from Lok Sabha (LS)



Members of LS are nominated by the **Speaker** from amongst its members.



10 from Rajya Sabha (RS)



Members of RS are nominated by the **Chairman** from amongst its members.

- A **Minister** is not eligible to be nominated as a member of any standing committees.
- In the case of a member, after his nomination to any standing committee, is appointed as a minister, he then **ceases** to be a member of committee.

Out of 24 Standing Committee

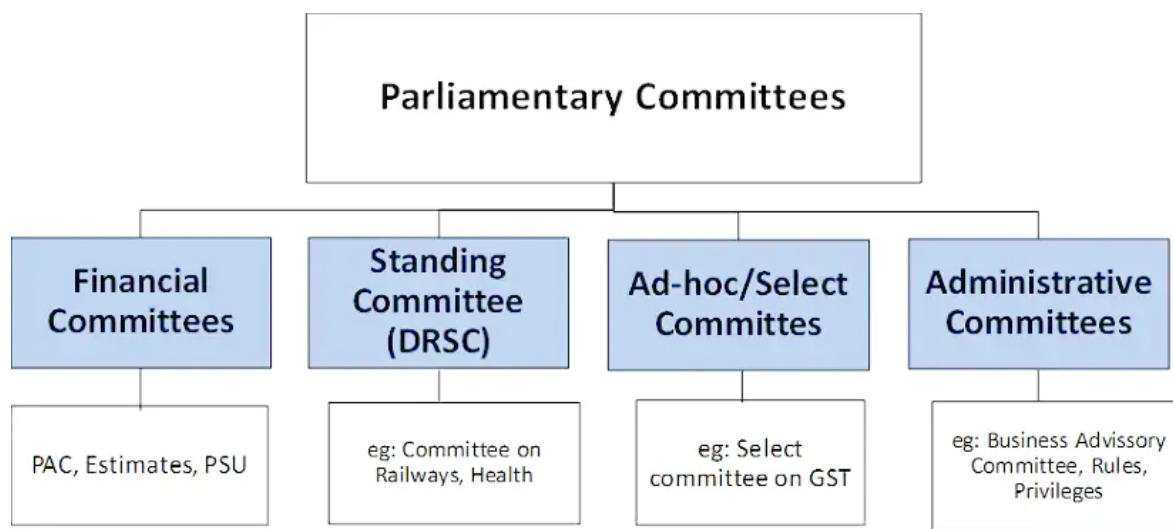
16 are under Lok Sabha



8 are under Rajya Sabha



- **Ad hoc Committees:** They are **temporary in nature** and are constituted for a **specific task**, and **dissolve upon completion of that task**.
 - Eg: **Select Committee on GST, Joint Parliamentary Committees (JPCs) on specific Bills, Railway Convention Committee etc.**
 - Their purpose is to transact the detailed business of Parliament that the full House may not have time or expertise to handle in depth.



What is the Significance of the Parliamentary Committee System?

- **Ensure Executive Accountability:** Though **committee recommendations are not binding**, their **detailed reports** create a **public record & opinion**, enhance **scrutiny of the executive** and pressure the **government to reconsider** controversial decisions.
 - Their **closed-door nature** enables **candid and collaborative discussions**, free from **political posturing**.
- **Facilitate Informed & Inclusive Lawmaking:** Committees serve as platforms for MPs to consult **experts, civil society, and officials**, ensuring **evidence-based deliberation**.
 - **Clause-by-clause scrutiny** of bills, **stakeholder consultations**, and **public participation** improve **legislative quality** and **democratic legitimacy**.
- **Mini-Parliaments with Bipartisan Representation:** With **proportional party representation** and **year-round functioning**, committees foster **non-partisan debate, inter-ministerial coordination**, and in-depth examination of **budgets, annual reports, and policy proposals**.
 - **Ad hoc committees** further support **focused inquiry** into specific issues.
- **Capacity Building & Governance Reform:** Committees provide **authentic insights** and **value-added recommendations**, strengthening **legislation and governance**.
 - They act as **informal training grounds** for **young MPs**, and function beyond **populist pressures** and **party whips**, reinforcing **parliamentary democracy**.

What are the Key Challenges Related to Parliamentary Committees?

- **Limited Powers & Weak Follow-up:** Parliamentary committees are **advisory bodies** with **non-binding recommendations**.
 - They lack **enforcement powers** and have **no institutional follow-up mechanism**, undermining their role in ensuring **executive accountability** and effective **policy implementation**.
- **Resource & Research Constraints:** Parliamentary committees face **staff and infrastructure limitations**, with technical support mostly confined to **secretarial tasks** like scheduling and note-taking.
 - The **National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (2002)** highlighted a critical deficiency in **specialist advisors** and **research support** for DRSCs, hampering **in-depth scrutiny** and **evidence-based analysis**.
- **Low Participation & MP Attendance:** The **attendance of MPs in committee meetings averages around 50%**, which is significantly **lower than the 84% attendance recorded during regular Parliament sessions**.
 - Factors such as **conflicting schedules, low incentives**, and **lack of interest** contribute to this limited participation, reducing the quality of deliberations.
- **Inadequate Parliamentary Time & Scrutiny:** The **decline in Parliamentary sittings** restricts

time for effective **committee oversight**. In the **17th Lok Sabha's first session**, Parliament sat for only **37 days** with a **10-year average (2009-19)** sitting of just **67 days/year**.

- As a result, key legislations and budgetary proposals often **bypass detailed scrutiny**, only **17% of the Union Budget** was discussed in the **16th Lok Sabha**.
- **Political Influence & Lack of Independence:** Parliamentary committees often face **political interference** from **party leadership** or **external pressures**, compromising their **impartiality**.
 - **Political considerations** in the **nomination of members** further dilute the **effectiveness** and **objectivity** of committee functioning.
- **Overburdened Committees & Fragmented Oversight:** **Department-related Standing Committees (DRSCs)** handle **multiple, often unrelated ministries**, resulting in limited **subject-specific focus** and **specialisation**.
 - Their **broad mandate**, along with **short one-year tenures**, hampers the development of **expertise** and limits **sustained, in-depth oversight**.

What Measures Should be Taken to Strengthen the Functioning of Parliamentary Committees?

- **Strengthen Institutional & Research Support:** Parliamentary committees need a **well-equipped secretariat** with access to **domain experts, research staff**, and **reliable data**.
 - Providing **adequate resources** and **modern technological tools** will enable **in-depth analysis**, ensure **evidence-based recommendations**, and enhance the **quality of deliberations**.
- **Institutionalize Accountability Mechanisms:** Ministries should be **mandated to submit Action Taken Reports (ATRs)** within a defined timeframe.
 - The **government must justify acceptance or rejection** of committee recommendations through **written explanations**, reinforcing **accountability**, and enhancing the **authority and impact** of committee reports.
- **Increase Referral & Specialization: Rules of Procedure** should be amended to make the **referral of all non-finance bills to committees** mandatory or strongly recommended.
 - Additionally, the **scope of each DRSC** should be rationalized by reducing the number of ministries per committee to ensure **focused oversight, coherence of subjects**, and promote **subject-specific expertise** among members.
- **Improve MP Participation & Capacity Building:** With **average MP attendance in committee meetings around 50% (vs. 84% in full sittings)**, targeted measures are needed—such as **incentives, penalties, or formal recognition**—to boost engagement.
 - Additionally, **regular training and orientation programmes**, especially for **new MPs**, can enhance awareness of the **importance of committee work** and strengthen their **legislative capacity**.
- **Promote Transparency & Citizen Engagement:** **Committee reports** should be **simplified** in language and structure for **public accessibility**.
 - Committees must leverage **digital platforms** for **e-consultations, crowdsourcing evidence**, and **live stakeholder interactions** during evidence-gathering, thereby enhancing **public trust, transparency**, and **participation** in the legislative process.

Conclusion

Parliamentary Committees play a **crucial role in legislative oversight, democratic accountability, and participatory governance**. Speakers **call** for greater respect and responsiveness to committee recommendations underscores the urgency to **revitalize these institutions**. As India advances toward **data-driven** and **transparent governance**, committees must evolve into the **engine of reform and accountability** at both **Union and State levels**, ensuring policies are not only well-crafted but also effectively implemented.

Drishti Mains Question:

Q. Discuss the role of Parliamentary Committees in promoting transparency and accountability in governance. Why has their effectiveness waned recently, and what steps can be taken to restore their

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Q. With reference to the Parliament of India, which of the following Parliamentary Committees scrutinizes and reports to the House whether the powers to make regulations, rules, sub-rules, by-laws, etc., conferred by the Constitution or delegated by the Parliament are being properly exercised by the Executive within the scope of such delegation? (2018)

- (a) Committee on Government Assurances
- (b) Committee on Subordinate Legislation
- (c) Rules Committee
- (d) Business Advisory Committee

Ans: (b)

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtiias.com/printpdf/strengthening-parliamentary-committees>

