

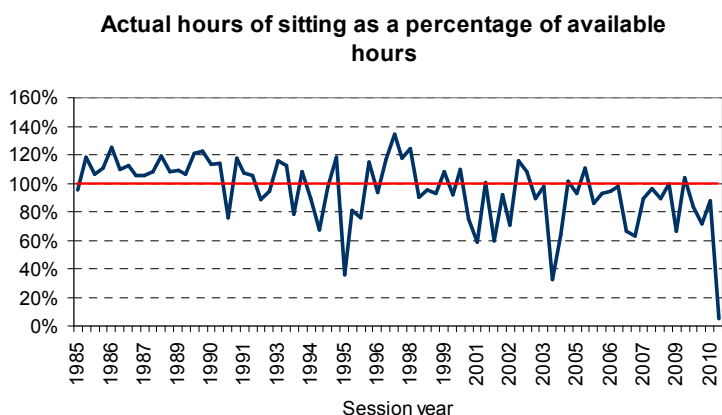
Vital Stats

Parliament in Winter Session 2010

Most sessions of Parliament in the recent past have started off with disruptions on some issues that a section of MPs felt agitated about. However, in each case, Parliament managed to find a way of evolving a consensus.

This session has been unique insofar that Parliament continued to be stalled throughout the duration of its sitting. We managed to access the *Resume of Work* for all sessions since the beginning of the 8th Lok Sabha (1985). The record of the current session is the worst among these 82 sessions.

The record of the current session is the worst in the past 25 years



Note: Sessions where Lok Sabha sat for less than five days have not been included in the data set.

- Both Houses saw protests over the government’s reluctance to constitute a JPC on the issue of 2G spectrum allocation. Lok Sabha worked for 7 hrs and 37 min, 5.5% of available time and Rajya Sabha for 2 hrs and 44 min, 2.4% of available time.
- The *Resume of Work* records the “number of actual sittings” and the “number of hours of sittings” in the session. Since Lok Sabha meets for six hours each day, this can be used to calculate the number of ‘available hours’.
- The 8th Lok Sabha, despite the Bofors issue, worked for more than 100% of the available time in 13 of the 14 sessions. In the 13th Lok Sabha, when issues such as the Ketan Parekh stock scam and Tehelka expose came up, the lowest percentage of working hours in a session was 59%.
- If we compare all sessions that sat for more than five working days along this metric, the current session has recorded the worst performance. Two other sessions that saw low performance were – 10th Lok Sabha, November 1995 (Sukhram telecom controversy) and 14th Lok Sabha, June 2004 (tainted ministers controversy).

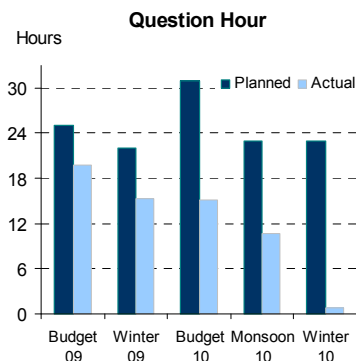
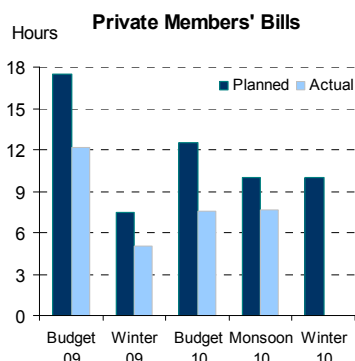
Four appropriation Bills were passed, all under five minutes

Table: Time spent on Legislation (Hrs:Min)

Bill	LS	RS
The Orissa (Alteration of Name) Bill and The Constitution (One Hundred and Thirteenth Amendment) Bill	01:06	--
The Appropriation (No. 5) Bill, 2010	00:02	00:03
The Appropriation (No. 6) Bill, 2010	00:02	00:02
The Appropriation (Railways) No. 5 Bill, 2010	00:02	00:02
The Appropriation (Railways) No. 6 Bill, 2010	00:02	00:01

- The government had planned to introduce 36 Bills this session; it introduced 13. Of the 35 Bills planned to be passed, four were passed.
- The Orissa (Alteration of name) and the accompanying Constitutional Amendment Bill were discussed together for about an hour in Lok Sabha. Four other Appropriation Bills were passed, each under two minutes.
- In Rajya Sabha, the four Appropriation Bills were passed without any debate.

No Private Members' business was taken up; Question Hour was held twice in Lok Sabha



- In Lok Sabha, the last two and a half hours of sitting on every Friday are generally allotted for transaction of Private Members' Business, i.e., Private Members' Bills and Private Members' Resolutions. This session, Private Members did not get an opportunity to discuss any of their Bills or Resolutions.
- Question Hour was held twice in Lok Sabha. A total of four starred questions were answered orally. Thus, of the 480 starred questions tabled during the session, 476 questions had to be marked for written replies.
- In Rajya Sabha, not even a single starred question was answered orally.

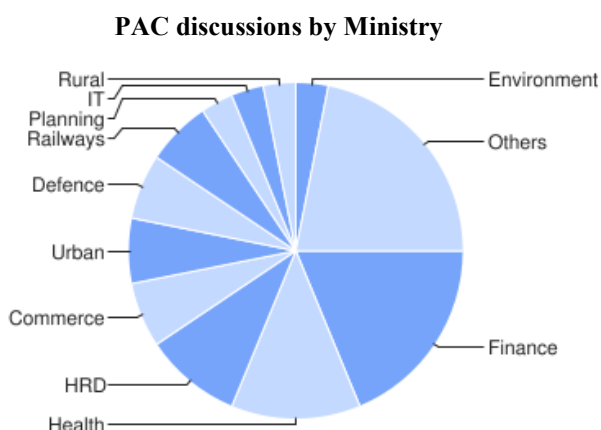
So far, four major JPCs have been formed by Parliament

Table: Major JPCs formed by Parliament

Year	JPC
1987	JPC on bofors contract
1992	JPC to enquire into irregularities in securities and banking transactions
2001	JPC on stock market scam
2003	JPC on pesticides, residues in and safety standards of soft drinks, fruit juice and other beverages

- The current stalemate in Parliament is rooted in perceived differences over the effectiveness of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) in investigating the issue of 2G spectrum allocation.
- The PAC is part of the structured committee system in Parliament and is constituted every year. Its main duty is to ascertain how the money granted (budget) by Parliament has been spent by the government.
- The JPC, on the other hand, is an ad-hoc body. It is set up for a specific objective and duration. The details regarding membership and subjects are also decided by Parliament.
- Like the PAC, JPC recommendations have persuasive value but the committee cannot force the government to take any action on the basis of its report.

During the last five years, PAC met 64 times and tabled 92 reports



- PAC is charged with a critical function of the legislature – overseeing government finances. The PAC holds ministries accountable to the audit reports of the CAG.
- By convention, the chairperson of the committee is a member of the opposition. Members are elected to the committee for a period of one year.
- Between 2005 and 2010, PAC prepared 92 reports examining ministries that cumulatively received around 80% of the budgetary allocations in these five years.
- Records show that on an average, 70% of PAC recommendations were accepted by the government.

Notes:

1. All data has been obtained from the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha websites and/ or the Resume of Work for different sessions.

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