

THE FIFTIES: HIGH RANKING WOMEN AND THE POTENTIAL OF FEMALE POWER

Minutes



Date	29 January 2024
Time	16:00 – 17:00
Venue	The Jubilee Room, Houses of Parliament and via Zoom
Chair	Jess Phillips, Co-Chair of the Women and Work APPG and MP for Birmingham Yardley
Speakers	Adele Johnston, “The Menopause Coach” Sunaina Sinha, Global Head, Private Capital Advisory, Raymond James Eleanor Mills, Founder of Noon
Theme/ Background information	<p>Women make up nearly 40% of FTSE 100 top table roles, compared to 12.5% of 10 years ago. While there is still a significant way to go, this session will consider how an increasingly female-led workforce could reshape working practices from the top-down - to the benefit of present and future working women. We will also discuss how this stands to change our perceptions of midlife women in particular.</p> <p>This session will explore:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gender stereotypes and women entrepreneurs• Women’s leadership• What a women-led workplace looks like

NON-VERBATIM MINUTES

Baroness Uddin welcomed the attendees and provided background on the session's title, emphasising the growing recognition of menopause's impact on women and work.

Adele Johnston, the Menopause Coach, shared her personal journey. She recounted experiencing health issues at 33, which led to her exploration of menopause symptoms with private health care and eventual resignation from her career. Adele highlighted the lack of corporate reporting on women's health issues related to menopause and emphasised the challenges she faced as she sought support for her own symptoms, including the lack of sympathy from senior women. She advocated for action beyond conversations to address menopause-related challenges in the workplace, stressing the importance of raising awareness and implementing supportive policies. Adele also discussed her transition from corporate life to becoming a psychology coach and nutritionist, emphasising the importance of self-reinvention and empowerment during natural, midlife changes.

Sunaina Sinha discussed her experiences and shared her success in establishing a diverse leadership team in her global private equity business. Sunaina emphasised the importance of empathetic leadership and flexibility in retaining women in careers, especially during later stages. She stressed the need for proactive mental health support and investment in personal and team resilience, highlighting the positive impact it can have on overall workplace productivity and well-being. Sunaina also discussed her efforts to promote diversity and inclusion in her organisation, citing specific examples of policies and initiatives, such as flexibility, implemented to support women and ethnic minorities in leadership positions.

Eleanor Mills presented insights on women's representation and challenges in the media, such as being seen through the 'male lens'. She discussed the disparities in women's progression in the workforce, especially in senior positions, and highlighted the issue of gendered ageism.

Eleanor emphasised the need for a cultural shift to value the contributions of older women and the importance of flexibility and empowerment for women in midlife transitions. She shared examples from her own career, including her decision to leave an editor job at 49 to set up a media platform focused on women's issues. Eleanor also discussed the impact of societal perceptions on women's careers, highlighting the need for systemic changes to address gender disparities and promote women's advancement in the workplace.

Baroness Uddin invited attendees to engage in the discussion by posing questions, and noted that race and colour also play a part in these discussions.

In response to a question about career opportunities for women, **Baroness Jenkins** highlighted that politics and parliament as respective sectors are good places for women to work in their later careers as discrimination against women is not as prevalent.

A **guest** asked the panel about their roles as ambassadors for women.

Eleanor responded to the question by discussing the invisibility felt by many women and the consumer market's lack of representation of women's preferences. She raised concerns about why women seem to have slipped from the career starting points they share with men and emphasised the importance of not overlooking older women.

Baroness Uddin reminds attendees that while many present have achieved success and are actively engaged in discussions, it's crucial to acknowledge that not everyone has had the same opportunities. She then directed a question to Adele about her role as an advocate in her current position.

Adele expressed her commitment to advocating for women's empowerment and shifting the narrative surrounding women's experiences. She emphasised the importance of women sharing and celebrating their successes to create a positive ripple effect.

Sunaina discussed the role of women, especially women of colour, as ambassadors in driving change and improving management practices. She highlights how her male counterparts have recognised and adopted elements of her management style to create a more diverse and effective workforce.

Eleanor discussed the impact of social media in reaching women without interference. She emphasised the importance of purposefulness for women in midlife.

Baroness Uddin stressed the importance of women supporting each other in the face of significant challenges, such as violence. She underscored the need for solidarity among women.

Eleanor raised concerns about employers not considering the challenges faced by women in midlife transitions, such as menopause and caregiving responsibilities. She discussed the importance of women being in positions of power to effect change.

A **guest** posed a question about the balance between removing perceived negative feminine qualities, such as excessive apologising in emails, while maintaining authenticity.

Sunaina advised against trying to emulate male behaviour and encouraged individuals to embrace their authenticity while acknowledging and addressing any behaviours that may hinder their professional growth.

A **guest** highlighted disparities in career progression based on social class and advocated for collaborative efforts to address these inequalities.

Baroness Uddin highlighted the importance of prioritising women's issues and working collaboratively to address them, even in the face of other pressing matters. She concluded by thanking the panel for their contributions.

Eleanor raised the issue of internalised misogyny among women and the need to recognise and challenge societal expectations that contribute to self-criticism.

Adele advocated for positive psychology and emphasised the importance of self-awareness in managing one's well-being. She criticised the lack of focus among healthcare professionals on addressing women's health issues, such as menopause and contraception.

Baroness Uddin discussed biases in medical diagnostics and emphasised the need for diverse perspectives in developing AI algorithms.

Sunaina encouraged individuals to be proactive in driving change and asserted that boldness will attract followers in effecting positive transformations.