

Commissions & Expert Mechanisms (Commissions)

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INCLUDING METHODS



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chapters:

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- Law firms
- Legal professional associations
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About:

Global 50/50 is an independent think tank that informs, inspires and incites action and accountability for gender justice. Global Justice 50/50 is part of this mission, assessing organisations' public commitments, workplace policies, leadership representation, and data reporting practices through a gender justice lens.

The full 2026 Global Justice 50/50 Report examines 171 global and regional law and justice organisations across 30 countries. Here we report on 19 organisations representative of commissions and expert mechanisms (see page 15 for full list).

**Panh-ô Kayapó, a voz da resistência
Brazil. 2025.**
Ester Menezes

Panh-ô Kayapó, chief of the Ngojamroti village in Pará, Brazil, holds a machete with the words "NO TO THE BILL." Her stance asserts the leadership of Indigenous women defending land, life, and justice.



At a glance

Our research reveals that leadership structures limit whose perspectives shape global justice, thus potentially weakening institutional legitimacy. Commissions committed to upholding rights and safeguarding justice cannot fully uphold those values until their own leadership reflects the fairness and equity they advocate externally.

Broad commitments:

Many commissions have public commitments to gender equality, but not all.

While over two thirds publicly state support, a significant minority operate without formal commitments, leaving gender equality unevenly prioritised. Public commitments are essential to making equality visible, setting expectations for accountability, and signalling that gender equality is a core institutional value.

Among 19 commissions



13 have a public commitment to gender equality

Partial policies:

Policies on gender equality, fairness and equity for commissioners are rare.

Very few commissions have publicly available policies guiding how commissioners are selected or how presidents, chairs, or working groups are chosen. Without clear, actionable policies, commitments risk being symbolic rather than transformative, limiting the ability of commissions to model gender-responsive governance.

Among 18 commissions



1 has gender equality policies for commission selections



1 has fairness and equity policies for commission workings

Concentration of power:

Gender parity found in nearly all commissions, but leadership remains heavily skewed by geography.

Nationals of high-income countries dominate decision-making positions, while women from low- and middle-income countries are significantly underrepresented. True equity requires both gender balance and geographic diversity in leadership.

Among 15 commission presidents



Among 252 commissioners



Data deficits:

Commissions show relatively stronger engagement in tracking gendered impacts, but room for progress remains.

Nearly half of the commissions have commitments to report sex-disaggregated data or have taken a public position recommending the disaggregation of data. While this is stronger than most other subsectors, there is still room to expand commitments to systematic reporting to ensure full accountability and transparency.

Among 19 commissions



9 have commitments to report sex-disaggregated data



Gender parity in the law and justice sector benefits everyone by:

**Delivering
Better Gender
Justice Outcomes**

**Improving the
Quality of Judicial
Decision-Making**

**Increasing
Public Trust
in the Sector**

**Enhancing
Organisational
Performance and
Profitability**

**Expanding Access
to Justice and Equity
in Service Delivery**

Assessing the commissions and expert mechanisms

Commissions and expert mechanisms are independent bodies established at regional and international levels to review, interpret, and provide guidance on legal norms and human rights standards. They may take the form of statutory commissions, treaty-based committees, or expert panels tasked with monitoring, evaluating, and advising on the implementation of laws and rights frameworks.

These organisations operate across multiple jurisdictions, reviewing laws, monitoring state compliance, issuing recommendations, and providing expert guidance to governments and international institutions. They play a critical role in advancing human rights, legal reform, and the protection of vulnerable populations, often

filling gaps where national legal systems or enforcement mechanisms are limited.

The 19 commissions in our sample were selected because they are structurally permanent, influential, and publicly documented, allowing meaningful and systematic comparison of leadership composition, policy frameworks, and gender equality commitments.

While commissions and expert mechanisms are distinct institutional entities serving different functions in the system, we are reporting on them together because they share comparable mandates to advise, monitor, and advance thematic areas of fundamental rights. Given these

shared features we are assessing their structures and outputs collectively. For simplicity, we use the umbrella term “commissions” to refer to both throughout this Report.

Global 50/50 only assesses publicly available information, a method that promotes transparency but is not without its limitations. Public commitments and policies do not always reflect internal practice, just as their absence does not necessarily indicate a lack of internal action, particularly in the context of the current global anti-gender backlash. The value of our approach, however, lies in offering a clear, comparative snapshot of how organisations publicly present their commitments and policies at a given moment in time.



Does the commission make a public commitment to gender equality?



Are gender equality and/or fairness and equity policies available in relation to:

Commission selection processes

Rules governing the workings of the commission



What is the gender and nationality of officials associated with the commissions in the sample:

INCLUDING

Commission presidents

Commissioners



Are policies available on reporting data disaggregated by sex or on undertaking gender analysis?



Box 1.

What we measure for each variable.

We assessed the websites of commissions and where relevant, their constitutive documents, for publicly available information on the following:

1 Public statement of commitment to gender equality	Commits to gender equality/equity, gender justice, or gender mainstreaming in policy and planning.
	Body works on women's rights, social justice, human rights, and/or access to justice, but makes no formal commitment to gender equality.
	No mention of gender or social justice.
2 Policies with specific measures to promote gender equality on the commission	Commission selections Policy with specific measure(s) to improve gender equality and/or support women's careers in the selection process.
	Stated commitment to consider gender equality and/or diversity in the selection process but no specific measure(s) to carry out commitments.
	No policy or commitment found.
Commission workings	Policy with specific measure(s) to improve gender equality and/or support women's careers in the appointment of the president/chair and/or working groups.
	Stated commitment to consider gender equality and/or diversity in the appointment of the president/chair and/or working groups but no specific measure(s).
	No policy or commitment found.



3

Policies with specific measures to promote fairness and equity on the commission

Commission selections



Policy with specific measure(s) to improve diversity, inclusion, fairness and or equality in the selection process.



Commitment to promoting fairness and equity in the selection process but does not state what specific measures are in place to promote equality/diversity.



No policy or commitment found.

Commission workings



Policy with specific measure(s) to improve diversity, inclusion, fairness and or equality in the appointment of the president/chair and/or working groups.



Commitment to promoting diversity and inclusion in the appointment of the president/chair and/or working groups but does not state what specific measures are in place to promote equality/diversity.



No policy or commitment found.

4

Gender parity on the commission



56-100% women represented.



45-55% women represented; or difference of one individual.



35-44% women represented.



0-34% women represented.

5

Gender and nationality of heads of commissions and commissioners

There is no traffic light scoring for this variable; we only report on the aggregate numbers.

6

Policy on sex-disaggregated data and gender analysis



Policy or commitment found to regularly report sex-disaggregated data and/or to undertake gender analysis; and/or public position taken recommending the reporting of sex-disaggregated data.



Project- or issue-specific commitments to report sex-disaggregated data and/or undertake gender analysis found.



No policy or commitment found.



Finding 1. Most, but not all, commissions publicly commit to gender equality

Public commitments to gender equality signal institutional recognition of the importance of equality and provide a foundation for accountability in practice.

Two thirds of commissions assessed (13/19; 68%) had a public commitment to gender equality.

Figure 1. Public commitments to gender equality found, commissions (n=19)



Box 2. Organisational examples

Example of commission commitment to gender equality

The equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all human rights is one of the fundamental principles recognized under international law and enshrined in the main international human rights instruments. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) protects human rights that are fundamental to the dignity of every person. In particular, article 3 of this Covenant provides for the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of the rights it articulates.

United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights¹

13/19
of commissions have a public commitment to gender equality



Finding 2. Publicly available policies on gender equality, fairness and equity are rare for commissions

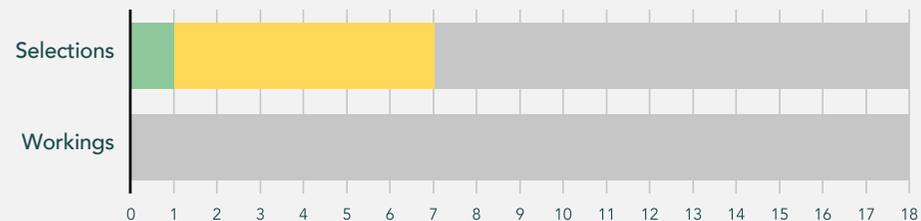
We assessed gender equality, fairness and equity policies with specific measures related to 1) the selection processes for commissioners, and 2) the workings of the commission.

Evidence of commitments and policies was often found in the founding instruments of commissions, or in the documents of the wider political organisations to which a commission is a consultative body. In these cases, such evidence was only counted where an explicit statement indicating that the document also applied to the commission in question was found.

Most commissions did not have gender, fairness or equity policies for commission selections or workings. One commission (1/18; 6%) had a gender equality policy with specific measures related to selections, and none had such a policy governing commission workings.

Figure 2. Gender equality policies found, commissions (n=18*)

- Gender equality affirmative policy with specific measures for selections or workings of the group
- Stated commitment to gender equality, but no specific measures
- Minimum legal requirement ("we do not discriminate")
- No public information found



* n=18 as one commission is structured differently and does not have independent commissioners.



1/18

commissions have publicly available gender equality policies for commission selections

0/18

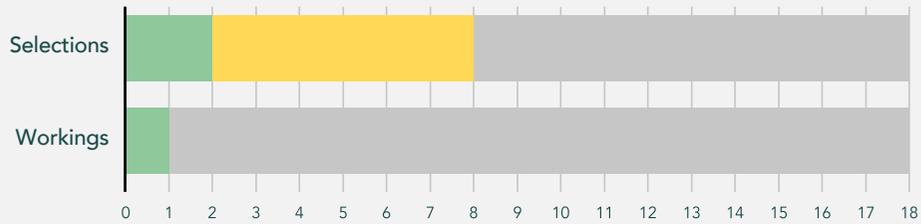
commissions have publicly available gender equality policies for commission workings



Fairness and equity policies were similarly limited: two commissions (2/18; 11%) had such policies for selections, and only one (1/18; 6%) for workings.

Figure 3. Fairness and equity policies found, commissions (n=18*)

- Fairness and equity policy with specific measures for selections or workings
- Stated commitment to consider fairness and equity, but no specific measures
- Minimum legal requirement ("we do not discriminate")
- No public information found



* n=18 as one commission is structured differently and does not have independent commissioners.



2/18

commissions have publicly available fairness and equity policies for commission selections



1/18

commissions have publicly available fairness and equity policies for commission workings

Brave
 Berlin, Germany. 2025.
 Anna Martynenko

A woman dangles over the edge of a wall, hovering above a cluster of cacti, close to pain, yet untouched. Suspended, she embodies tension, restraint, and quiet endurance in the face of potential harm.

**Box 3. Organisational examples****Examples of commission gender equality, fairness and equity policies****GENDER EQUALITY POLICY WITH SPECIFIC MEASURES FOR SELECTIONS:**

The Executive Council, 1. TAKES NOTE of the Report on the Implementation of the Criteria for Equitable Geographical and Gender Representation in the African Union Organs and the recommendations contained therein; 2. DECIDES as follows:

iii) At least one (1) member from each region shall be a woman;

African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)²

**FAIRNESS AND EQUITY POLICY WITH SPECIFIC MEASURES FOR SELECTIONS:**

Decides further that the Council shall consist of forty-seven Member States, which shall be elected directly and individually by secret ballot by the majority of the members of the General Assembly; the membership shall be based on equitable geographical distribution, and seats shall be distributed as follows among regional groups: Group of African States, thirteen; Group of Asian States, thirteen; Group of Eastern European States, six; Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, eight; and Group of Western European and other States, seven; the members of the Council shall serve for a period of three years and shall not be eligible for immediate re-election after two consecutive terms;

United Nations Human Rights Committee³

FAIRNESS AND EQUITY POLICY WITH SPECIFIC MEASURES FOR WORKINGS:

Rule 38: Election of the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson

4. The Chairperson of the Commission and his/her Deputy shall not be from the same region.

Rule 39: Commissioners

1. The Assembly shall appoint eight (8) Commissioners on the basis of equal geographical distribution. In this regard, the respective regions from which the Chairperson of the Commission and his/her Deputy shall be appointed, shall be entitled to only one (1) Commissioner each.

African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)⁴



Finding 3. Gender parity masks geographic inequities in leadership

Across the 19 commissions in our sample, gender equality is high. Where a president role is present within the commission structure, half (7/15; 47%) are held by women. For four of the 19 commissions, there is no president role due to their organisational structure. The same proportion of women held commissioner positions overall (121/257; 47%).

We collected gender data on 272 presidents and commissioners across 19 commissions. Eight (8/19; 42%) commissions have more women than men commissioners and presidents (55%+ women) and two (2/19; 11%) are at gender parity (45-55% women).

Figure 4. Proportion of men and women among power holders, commissions (n=272)

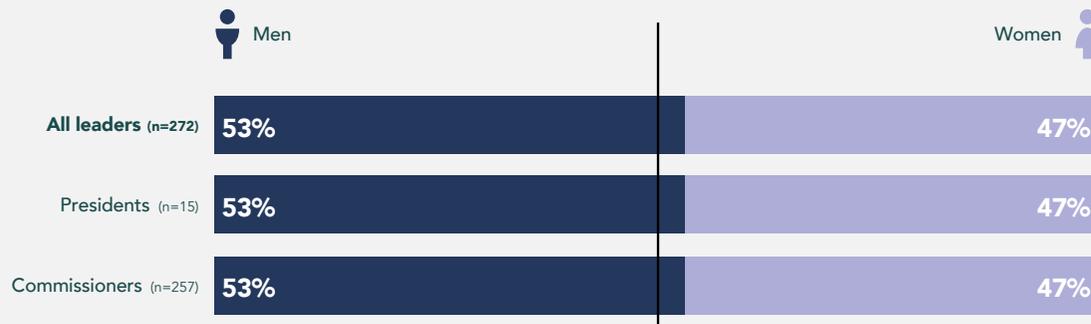
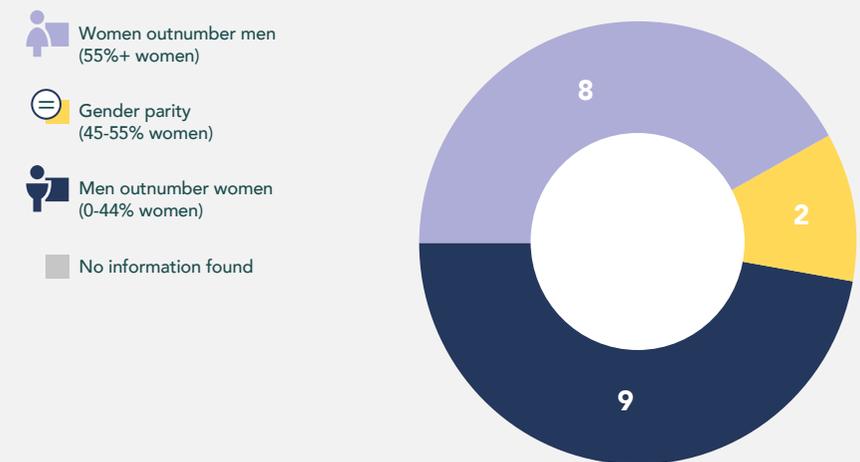


Figure 5. Proportion of commissions with gender parity among commissioners and presidents (n=19)

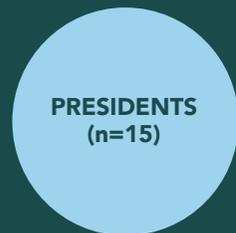




Distribution of gender and nationality across leadership roles in commissions

We reviewed the country of national origin of 15 presidents and 257 commissioners and classified these by World Bank income classification. Nationality classification was available for 15 presidents and 252 commissioners. Two of the 252 commissioners were classified as dual nationals.

While women’s representation is relatively balanced, leadership remains heavily skewed by geographical inequities. Among 15 presidents, seven (7/15; 47%) are nationals of high-income countries (HICs) and seven (7/15; 47%) are nationals of middle-income countries (MICs), while one (1/15; 7%) is a national of a low-income country (LIC). Among commissioners, over a third (91/252; 36%) are nationals of high-income countries and over half (145/255; 58%) are nationals of MICs, while 14 (14/252; 6%) are nationals of LICs.



PRESIDENTS
(n=15)

- HICs: 27%** (4) men and **20%** (3) women.
- MICs: 20%** (3) men and **27%** (4) women.
- LICs: 4%** (1) men and no women.



COMMISSIONERS
(n=252)

- HICs: 16%** (40) men and **20%** (51) women.
- MICs: 33%** (83) men and **24%** (62) women.
- LICs: 2%** (6) men and **3%** (8) women.

HICs: high-income countries
MICs: middle-income countries
LICs: low-income countries



Obsolescence
Lahore, Pakistan. 2014.
Mehreen Zain

An elderly woman squints in the warm light. In her hands she holds a piece of bread. She is caught in a system where resources are stretched thin and where those like her, who must resort to the streets for daily survival, are too easily perceived as a burden.



Finding 4. Sex-disaggregated data reporting is present but not universal

Sex-disaggregated data and gender analysis is critical for realising gender-responsive law and justice institutions and for ensuring accountability to equality commitments. In commissions, such data can cover commissioners, consultation participants, and the subjects or outcomes of cases or reports, helping to reveal patterns of participation, influence, and access to decision-making across gender lines. We examined whether the commissions had taken public positions recommending the disaggregation of data and gender analysis.

Nine commissions (9/19; 47%) had a public policy, commitment, or recommendation to report sex-disaggregated data or undertake gender analysis.

Figure 6. Policies or commitments to report sex-disaggregated data or undertake gender analysis found, commissions (n=19)



9/19

commissions have a commitment to publicly report sex-disaggregated data or undertake gender analysis



Box 5. Organisational examples

Example of commission policy to sex-disaggregate data or undertake gender analysis

In order to analyze trends and determine the level of advancement and empowerment of women and girls with disabilities it is important to collect and analyze appropriate and accurate gender- and disability- disaggregated data, set benchmarks and indicators. Further, States Parties must facilitate women and girls with disabilities to organize themselves to do advocacy for their rights and to ensure equal access to justice, including accessible legal aid and advice and procedures for dealing with complaints against multiple discrimination.

United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities⁵

Kurdish women
Diyarbakir, Turkey. 2024.
Mehmet Masum Suer

Tülay Hatimoğulları, Co-Chair of the People's Equality and Democracy Party, speaks in front of a group of Kurdish women holding placards and raising peace signs, an image of conviction and collective pride.

Towards a gender-equal global law and justice sector

Achieving gender justice in the law and justice sector demands more than incremental improvements. It requires a fundamental shift in how institutions confront power, accountability, and inclusion. As this chapter shows, progress is possible, but only when organisations commit to transparency, embed equity in workplace culture, and ensure leadership that reflects the diversity of the communities they seek to serve. The path forward

calls for bold action: adopting and publishing robust gender equality, fairness and equity policies, investing in disaggregated data, and putting commitments into practice.

Global 50/50 provides tools, evidence, and guidance to help organisations move beyond rhetoric towards systemic, sustained change. The moment for decisive action is now, and the sector has both the responsibility and the opportunity to lead.

EXPLORE RESOURCES
TO HELP YOU TAKE ACTION





Commissions in the Global Justice 50/50 sample

- African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)
- ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC)
- ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR)
- Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR)
- International Law Commission (ILC)
- United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL)
- United Nations Committee against Torture (CAT)
- United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR)
- United Nations Committee on Enforced Disappearances (CED)
- United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee)
- United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)
- United Nations Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (CMW)
- United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)
- United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
- United Nations Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Seas (DOALOS)
- United Nations Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development (EMRTD)
- United Nations Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP)
- United Nations Human Rights Committee (CCPR)
- United Nations Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (SPT)



Endnotes

- 1 UN. Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. (2005). General comment no. 16. The equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights (art.3 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights). <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/556125?ln=en&v=pdf>
- 2 African Union. (2016). Decision on the Modalities on Implementation of Criteria for Equitable Geographical and Gender Representation in the African Union Organs Doc. EX.CL/953(XXVIII). https://archives.au.int/bitstream/handle/123456789/3561/EX%20CL%20Dec%20907%20%28XXVIII%29%20_E.pdf
- 3 UN General Assembly. (2006). Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 15 March 2006. 60/251. Human Rights Council. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/60/251>
- 4 African Union. (2002). Rules of procedure of the assembly and the executive council, statutes of the commission and rules of procedure of the permanent representatives' committee. https://archives.au.int/bitstream/handle/123456789/6448/Rules%20of%20Procedure%20of%20the%20Assembly%2c%20Executive%20Council%2c%20PRC%20%26%20Statutes%20of%20the%20Commission%20_E.Pdf
- 5 UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (2015). General comment on Article 6: Women with disabilities. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/general-comments-and-recommendations/general-comment-no3-article-6-women-and-gjrls>