

# GENDER (IN) JUSTICE?

An analysis of the gender-related policies and practices of 171 organisations across the global law and justice sector

# Acknowledgements

Global 50/50® is an independent non-profit. Global 50/50 (G5050) was co-founded by Professors [Sarah Hawkes](#) and [Kent Buse](#). It is staffed by a collective of researchers, strategists and communications experts. Govindi Deerasinghe guides the development of the Global Justice 50/50 Report. Collective members who contributed to the 2025 Report include: Daniel Anguah, Grace Arina, Imogen Bakelmun, Justyna Czarniecka, Natasha Donkin, Priscilla Forson, Ned Haslam, Amy Hsieh, Rebecca Landy, Sarah Lee, Zoë Old, Nicholas Opoku, Charlie Pelter, Aishwarya Rajeev, Lynsey Robinson, Sonja Tanaka, Katarina Zajacova and David Zezai. Kate Hate provided writing support.

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All images featured in this Report are drawn from [This is Gender](#), Global 50/50's collection of images and representations of gender. Most images are from the *Counter-Records: Imagining Law, Gender, and Justice* exhibition, an outcome of the This is Gender: Law & Justice Open Call. Spanning continents, legal systems, lived experiences, and visual practices, the works explore how law and justice is lived, contested, and reimagined through a gendered lens. For further information about This is Gender, please contact us at [info@global5050.org](mailto:info@global5050.org).

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**Disclaimer:** The views presented in this Report reflect those of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect those of Global 50/50's advisors, trustees, funders, or partners. All care has been taken to ensure the accuracy of the data reported, including by inviting organisations to validate their data prior to publication. However, if you believe that an error has been made, please contact: [info@global5050.org](mailto:info@global5050.org).

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Cover illustration:

**Developing your voice**  
*Iwaya, Lagos, Nigeria. 2021.*  
Ismail Odetola

*A woman draped in newspapers raises a speaker high in Iwaya, Lagos – a symbolic stand against erasure, claiming space and voice where they are denied.*



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## FOREWORD FROM HER EXCELLENCY

# María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés



Former President of the United Nations General Assembly and former Minister of Foreign Affairs and of Defence of Ecuador, Executive Director of GWL Voices

In 2018, in her Foreword for the inaugural Global Health 50/50 report, Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, urged that such accountability analysis be replicated across other sectors to advance the Sustainable Development Goals. That same year, I was honoured to serve as President of the United Nations General Assembly, the first woman from Latin America and the Caribbean to do so. During my term, the role and leadership of women were not only part of my priorities; it was my conviction: without women's full participation, the multilateral system cannot deliver on its promise.

Eight years later, it is timely to see the Deputy Secretary-General's call reflected in the justice sector – a domain where rights, protections, and freedoms are defined and upheld. For me, this report goes beyond an analysis of justice; it is a continuation of a shared vision, a step towards a system where women's voices are fully represented in defining, delivering, and upholding justice.

Why should we care about women's role in justice? Because the law is never far away. It reaches into our communities, our workplaces, and our homes. Laws create the frameworks that govern our rights and responsibilities; justice is their application in daily life. And so it matters profoundly who holds power in the justice sector and how decisions are made. Institutions may aspire to neutrality, yet they are rooted in history and culture. When inequality exists within systems designed to deliver justice, their legitimacy and the trust they depend on are called into question.

We see this pervasive thread of inequality not only in outcomes of legal processes, but also inside organisations that purport to serve justice; in hiring and promotion, in pay and workplace safety, and in governance and practices that often overlook women's experience, blocking entry, retention, advancement, and leadership. While women hold 40% of leadership positions across the sector, men still occupy 71% of top seats in global and regional courts and 80% in internationally operating elite law firms.

This inaugural Global Justice 50/50 Report comes at a defining moment. Against geopolitical tensions, weakening of independence of judicial systems, backlash against women's rights, and waning trust in institutions, justice organisations must live the values they defend. This is how institutions earn confidence and sustain legitimacy.

Based on rigorous analysis, this report sets out a clear and comparative picture of how organisations across the global law and justice ecosystem perform on gender justice, workplace fairness, and equity. It places commitments, policies, and practices side by side, making visible both progress and gaps. When we count, compare, and disclose, we create the conditions for accountability and for a fairer global order grounded in international law.

Leadership and participation are central to this goal. When women participate and lead, different perspectives are introduced, a wider range of harms is recognised, and jurisprudence and policy benefit from more diverse experiences. Decision-making is strengthened when the bench and bar, legal academia, multinational bodies, and oversight mechanisms include women at every level.

## FOREWORD

Perspective also matters. Across 171 organisations examined in the Report, 81% of the holders of highest office are nationals of high-income countries, while just 1% of these positions are held by women from low-income countries. The findings highlight how global justice is disproportionately shaped by a small segment of the world. Greater inclusion of leadership and ideas from the Global Majority is essential to ensure justice that is both participatory and universal.

Finally, delivery matters. The gap between high-level commitments and lived realities must be bridged. Policies that exist only on paper do not change outcomes. Institutions can use this Report to align policy with practice, allocate resources effectively, and measure progress over time.

This inaugural Global Justice 50/50 Report is both an invitation and a commitment. It invites law firms, bar associations, courts, civil society, and the multilateral system to test themselves against the evidence, to recognise what works, and to address what does not. The Global 50/50 [resource bank](#) offers practical tools to help turn evidence into action.

The value of this Report lies in using evidence to drive change. Use the data to ask difficult questions, to build pathways for diverse leadership, to remove the barriers that hold people back, and to share solutions that work.

The global justice community is encouraged to read, reflect, and act on this important Report, and to support the continuation of Global Justice 50/50 in tracking progress from this initial baseline.



**Action activism**  
El Alto, Bolivia. 2024.  
Miles Astray

*Mid-air and defiant, Benita rises above the ring as the crowd surges. In Cholitas wrestling, Aymara women restage and reverse unequal gender dynamics, reclaiming power publicly.*

# Reflections from the Global Justice 50/50 Advisory Council



*Gender justice is a human right and a driver of peace, development and economic growth. And yet, justice remains inaccessible for many women and girls globally. This report contributes to bridging the gender gap, by calling for increased commitment, action, and investment on justice for all women and girls.*

**Jan Beagle**  
Director-General, International Development Law Organization



*Justice systems are strongest when they reflect the societies they serve. Expanding women's leadership across law and justice, from all regions of the world, supports better decision-making, fairer outcomes, and public confidence. By combining leadership data with analysis of institutional policies, the inaugural Global Justice 50/50 Report shines a light on both progress and remaining disparities, providing a constructive basis for collective action.*

**Mark Ellis**  
Executive Director of the International Bar Association (IBA)



*Through clear data and compelling visuals, this landmark Report from Global Justice 50/50 offers a rare, accessible lens on gender gaps in global justice systems. It stands out in the sector by turning complex accountability questions into an urgent, practical call to action.*

**Hannele Hupanen**  
Former Strategic Partnerships & Resource Mobilisation Analyst, UNDP



*At a time when progress on gender justice is increasingly fragile, or often not visible, Global Justice 50/50 brings methodological clarity coupled with data-driven findings to a complex field by systematically tracking how justice institutions uphold, contribute to – or undermine – gender justice. This consistent, independent evidence-based approach provides policymakers, advocates, and global thought leaders with reliable insights they can act on. The next pragmatic step would be to widen access to accessible justice for all #allmeansall. This would increase public trust in the judicial system. At the same time, we also must work to enhance judicial integrity.*

**A.H. Monjurul Kabir**  
Senior Governance Adviser and Justice Expert



*As backlash against gender equality intensifies globally, independent initiatives like Global Justice 50/50 play a vital role in holding justice institutions accountable to their human rights commitments.*

**Stacey-Leigh Manuel**  
Deputy Director of the Women's Rights Division at Human Rights Watch



*Progressive law firms recognise that gender equality is fundamental. Clients demand diversity in the firms and teams they use, inclusive workplaces are more successful at attracting and retaining the best talent, and gender equality in leadership drives wider priorities, greater innovation and better decisions. Transparency and better data are essential if the legal sector is serious about addressing gender inequality – and that's what Global Justice 50/50 aims to deliver.*

**Matt Meyer**  
Managing Partner at Kingsley Napley



*Global Justice 50/50 exposes how justice systems can speak the language of equality while still reproducing inequality from within. This first Report sets a bold benchmark, and returning to this independent analysis in two years will be vital to track who holds power, who is still excluded, and whether institutions are truly becoming more credible and inclusive.*

**Khadija Moalla**  
Senior Human Rights and Gender Expert



*This analysis from Global Justice 50/50 provides a timely and unique contribution to accountability in the justice sector. It challenges institutions to move beyond rhetoric and take concrete, measurable action to build systems that are fair, inclusive, and credible.*

**Amina Oyagbola**  
Founder and Chairperson of WISCAR (Women in Successful Careers)



*Being a part of the justice system, a system that must represent all it governs, remains an exclusive and difficult industry to penetrate for so many. Understanding the obstacles to inclusivity is the only way that a chance to work in such a system becomes, not a privilege for the few, but an opportunity for all. This inaugural Global Justice 50/50 Report is an exciting key to unlocking that opportunity.*

**Joshua Purser**  
Barrister at No5 Barristers' Chambers



*Global Justice 50/50's inaugural Report lays bare systemic injustice by exposing who is missing from positions of power – particularly women from low- and middle-income countries. The Report underscores the urgent need to redistribute power, influence and resources within justice systems.*

**Melene Rossouw**  
Founder, Women Lead Movement



*Global Justice 50/50 shines a new light on how regionally grounded, context-specific approaches – such as those emerging across Africa – can strengthen justice institutions and inspire innovation globally.*

**Hon. Commissioner Janet R. Sallah-Njie**  
Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa and Vice-Chairperson of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

# About the Report

**Unveiling the Illusion: Chutni Mahato's Defiance**  
Jharkhand, India. 2025.  
Haider Khan

*In a dim courtyard, a tantrik lifts a torch over Chutni Mahato as she sits with her knees drawn close. Once persecuted, she now leads movements demanding justice and protection for women accused of witchcraft.*



# Examining gender equality in law and justice: first of its kind Report

Global 50/50 is an independent think tank that informs, inspires and incites action and accountability for gender justice in society. The Global Justice 50/50 Report, the first of its kind, provides a comprehensive review of the gender- and fairness-related workplace policies of 171 global organisations working in and/or influencing the field of law and justice. The initiative is focused on the intersection of several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including gender equality (5), reducing inequalities (10), and inclusive societies and institutions (16).

Gender equality is widely recognised as a core principle of justice and a fundamental human right that requires dignity, non-discrimination, meaningful participation and representation for all, with equitable access to resources, decision making, and influence.<sup>1</sup> The Report is inspired by a concern that too few global law and justice organisations walk the talk by embedding principles, policies and practices to advance gender equality and other aspects of fairness and equity in their own workplaces. The Report seeks to provide evidence of where the gaps lie and signpost guidance on how organisations can fill those gaps, while calling for sustainable progress towards equality and fairness in the sector.

## Rigorous methods prioritise transparency in a challenging global context

Through an examination of six variables (see Figure 1), the Report provides an in-depth look at the extent to which global organisations from seven subsectors have commitments and policies to promote gender equality and other aspects of fairness and equity, and who gains access to positions of power within organisations. Between February and August 2025, data were collected from organisations headquartered in 30 countries. We go beyond previous research in this field by examining publicly available commitments and policies to achieve gender equality and fairness and equity, as well as leadership characteristics, across a breadth of institutions.

**This Report provides an in-depth look at the extent to which 171 global law and justice organisations commit and take action to promote gender equality and other aspects of fairness and equity, and who gains access to positions of power.**

Global 50/50 relies on publicly available information in compiling our reports – a method that promotes transparency but is not without its limitations. One such limitation is the

potential disconnect between how an organisation speaks about itself publicly and how it operates behind closed doors. Many organisations, for example, have good practice policies in place, but their implementation and contribution to safe, equitable workplaces and working lives is highly variable. Amidst the current global anti-gender backlash, we are also aware that a lack of policies in the public domain does not mean that an organisation has stopped or slowed its equality activities internally. 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.

We have not included specific recommendations but intend to develop these collaboratively after the Report launch. If you would like to get involved in co-development of the recommendations, please contact us at [info@global5050.org](mailto:info@global5050.org).



# A new accountability mechanism for equity, fairness, and social justice

2025 marked the 30th anniversary of the Beijing 1995 Declaration, the landmark moment when governments across the globe pledged to eliminate discrimination against women and girls, embed gender equality across all structures of society, and achieve women's equal representation in positions of decision-making power.<sup>2</sup> Among the very institutions charged with applying and safeguarding rights, this anniversary provided an opportunity to reflect on the status of gender equality in the law and justice sector itself.

Recent events have underlined the importance – and frailty – of the law and justice sector in upholding principles of equity, fairness, and social justice in times of increasing authoritarianism. Independent accountability mechanisms, such as Global 50/50, play an important role in holding fast against anti-gender and anti-rights actors by upholding principles of transparency, accountability, and universality. This first Report from Global Justice 50/50 applies these principles to the justice sector and provides critical evidence to illuminate where power resides in the institutions that shape and interpret justice globally.

We are grateful to the 23 organisations that responded to our request to verify the accuracy of the data we collected. [Annex 1](#) details a glossary of the subsectors we included in the Report and [Annex 2](#) provides a list of organisations in the sample by subsector. Full details on data collection and analysis methods can be found in [Annex 3](#).

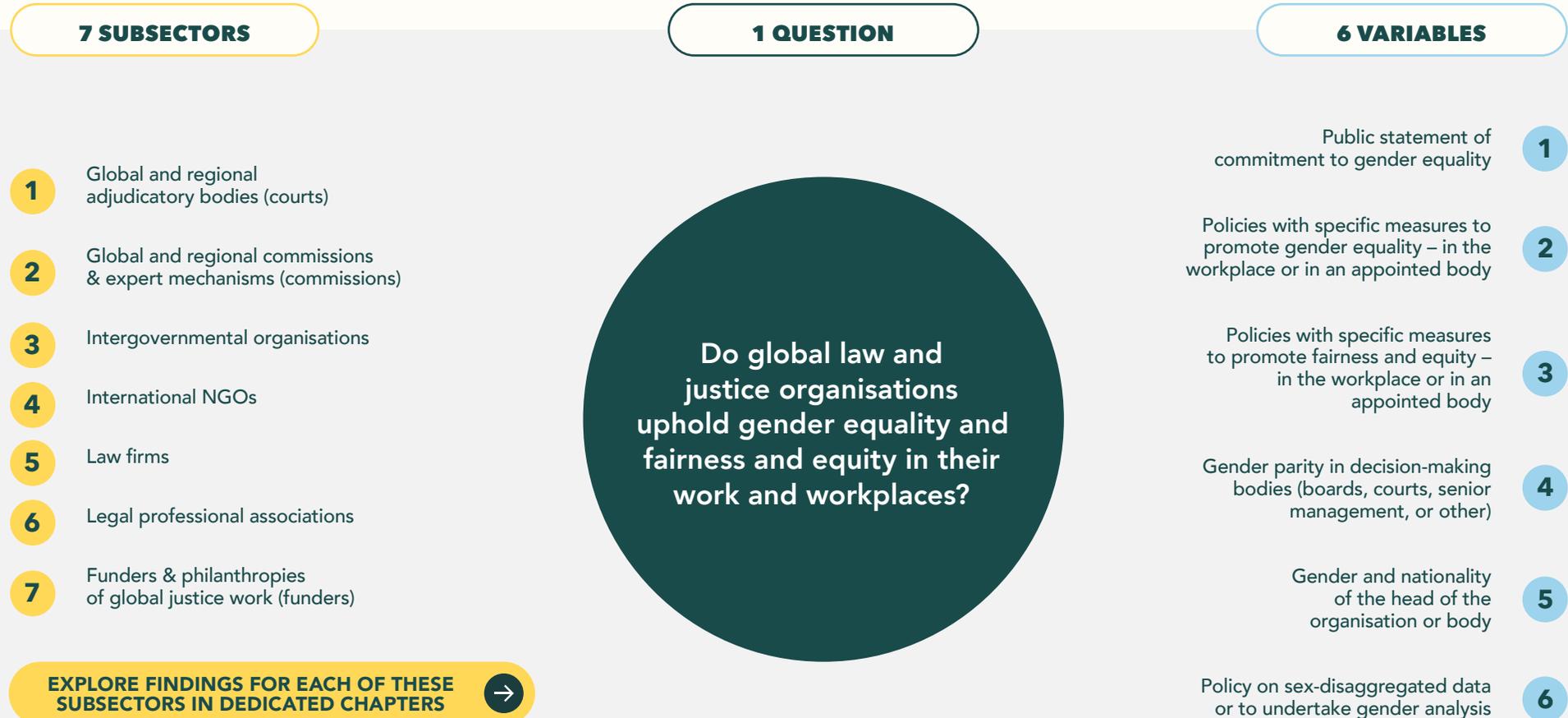
**The Old Calligrapher and the Spirit of Spring**  
Ha Noi, Vietnam. 2025.  
Pham Duc Toan

*An elderly calligrapher sits, surrounded by scrolls of his own making. Between ink, smoke, and fading light, he becomes a bridge between past and present, preserving culture in a moment of peace.*



## ABOUT THE REPORT

Figure 1. Variables assessed in the Global Justice 50/50 Report



G5050 defines these variables as the minimum policy and accountability requirements for a fair and inclusive workplace. Grounded in academic research, the framework advances progress towards SDGs 3, 5, 8, 10, and 16.

## ABOUT THE REPORT

### Box 1. How we score five of the variables

We assess organisations' websites for publicly available information on the following, with slight adaptations for specific subsectors (details in each chapter and Annex 3 for methods). **We do not score the findings on the gender and nationality of the head of the organisation or body; we only present the data.** Results for each organisation can be found in our Gender and Justice Index.

<b>1</b> Public statement of commitment to gender equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="color: green;">●</span> Commits to gender equality/equity, gender justice, or gender mainstreaming in policy and planning.</li> <li><span style="color: yellow;">●</span> Work on women's rights, social justice, human rights, and/or access to justice, but no formal commitment to gender equality.</li> <li><span style="color: red;">●</span> No mention of gender or social justice.</li> </ul>
<b>2</b> Policies with specific measures to promote gender equality – in the workplace or in an appointed body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="color: green;">●</span> Policy with specific measure(s) to improve gender equality and/or support women's careers.</li> <li><span style="color: yellow;">●</span> Stated commitment to gender equality and/or diversity in the workplace (above the legal requirement) but no specific measures to carry out commitments; and/or reports on gender distribution of staff.</li> <li><span style="color: red;">●</span> Policy is compliant with law but no more = "we do not discriminate".</li> <li><span style="color: grey;">●</span> No reference to gender equality or non-discrimination in the workplace found.</li> </ul>
<b>3</b> Policies with specific measures to promote fairness and equity – in the workplace or in an appointed body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="color: green;">●</span> Policy with specific measure(s) to improve diversity, inclusion, fairness, and/or equality.</li> <li><span style="color: yellow;">●</span> Commitment to promoting fairness and equity evidenced by a) aspirational comments and b) listing protected characteristics; and/or some reporting on characteristics among staff.</li> <li><span style="color: red;">●</span> Policy is compliant with law but no more = "we do not discriminate".</li> <li><span style="color: grey;">●</span> No reference to equality or non-discrimination in the workplace found.</li> </ul>
<b>4</b> Gender parity in decision-making bodies (boards, courts, senior management, or other)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="color: purple;">●</span> 56-100% women represented.</li> <li><span style="color: green;">●</span> 45-55% women represented; or difference of one individual.</li> <li><span style="color: yellow;">●</span> 35-44% women represented.</li> <li><span style="color: red;">●</span> 0-34% women represented.</li> </ul>
<b>5</b> Policy on sex-disaggregated data and gender analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="color: green;">●</span> Policy or organisational commitment found to regularly report sex-disaggregated data and/or to undertake gender analysis.</li> <li><span style="color: yellow;">●</span> Project-specific commitments to report sex-disaggregated data or to undertake gender analysis.</li> <li><span style="color: grey;">●</span> No policy or commitment found.</li> </ul>

# Word from the Collective

**The Luncheon**  
Satkhira, Bangladesh. 2022.  
Mohammad Rakibul Hasan

*In Satkhira, families gather around a table submerged  
in rising water, sharing what food remains.  
A counterpoint to the polished settings of law and  
policy luncheons, reminding us where decisions land.*



As this first Global Justice 50/50 Report goes to press, we do so in a moment of profound danger – and profound responsibility. Hard-won rights are being rolled back. Women’s rights are under sustained assault. Principles of fairness, gender equality, and social justice are being openly attacked. Courts alongside democratic and scientific institutions are being weakened, politicised, or dismantled. We are witnessing the weaponisation of law against human rights defenders, the erosion of civic space, and the deliberate silencing of those who stand for inclusive, democratic societies.

These are not isolated developments – they are connected, coordinated, and deeply consequential.

This is not a moment to remain silent. This is not a moment to look away.

At Global 50/50 we believe that defending social justice demands more than rhetoric – it requires evidence, transparency, and accountability – and the courage to confront power. When rights are stripped away through legal systems, the law itself becomes a battleground. And silence, in such moments, is complicity.

For decades, governments and institutions have committed – on paper – to gender equality and justice. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), and countless treaties and resolutions recognise women’s equal participation in decision-making as both a fundamental right and a prerequisite for equitable and sustainable development.

Yet, progress has been slow and uneven. A decade into the Sustainable Development Goals with their target of “women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life”,<sup>3</sup> women hold just 27% of national parliamentary seats,<sup>4</sup> and the rate of progress towards equality in parliamentary representation is slowing.

That is why Global 50/50 has extended our lens beyond global health to examine another vital pillar of fairness and equity: the law and justice sector itself. At a time when legal systems are increasingly used to entrench inequality rather than dismantle it, scrutiny is essential. This Report holds up a mirror to the global law and justice ecosystem. It asks hard questions: Who holds power? Who is excluded? Whose interests are protected and whose are ignored? What policies and commitments exist to advance fairness and equality – and where do they fall short?

This Report serves as both a diagnostic and a demand. It documents how injustice is reproduced within systems meant to deliver justice – and it provides evidence to

support reform. Through this analysis, and through the tools and resources available on our website, we aim to support those working to transform institutions from the inside and the outside.

Change requires collaboration across movements, disciplines, and borders. But above all, it requires resolve. It requires us to defend our principles fiercely. It requires us to say, clearly and collectively, that we will not go back.

Justice must not only be done; it must be understood to be fair, inclusive, and representative. Amid democratic backsliding and attacks on equality, justice organisations must model the rule of law internally – by setting fair leadership processes, transparent policies, and measurable targets.

This Report is an invitation to all who share that vision: policymakers, legal professionals, funders, advocates, researchers, and movements. Join us. Use the evidence. Demand accountability. The future of global justice depends on what we choose to defend today.

## Acknowledging the work of others

Our work builds on and complements the vital efforts of others – including the International Bar Association, the International Development Law Organization, the GQUAL Campaign, and more – in advancing gender equality, fairness and equity in the law and justice system. The first Global Justice 50/50 Report adds something distinctive: data on commitments, policies, practices and outcomes across the organisations, providing comparability and enhancing accountability.

We are profoundly grateful to our independent [Advisory Council](#), whose guidance and expertise have strengthened this work.

## What next?

Global 50/50 views this Report as the first step in a long-term commitment. With partners, resources and collaboration, Global Justice 50/50 will work to:

- Track progress over time, creating a longitudinal evidence base for reform;
- Support institutions to strengthen workplace gender equality, fairness and equity policies, and to measure their impact;
- Promote greater diversity and representation in leadership, especially of women from low- and middle-income countries; and
- Build a collaborative platform linking researchers, advocates, and justice professionals to share good practice and solutions.

# What we found:

## At a glance

**Crown of curse and light**  
Dhaka, Bangladesh. 2022.  
Jahid Apu

*Rahima Khatun stands in a beam of light inside a lentil factory, hands lifted as if against invisible restraints – a quiet reminder of decades lost to wrongful imprisonment.*

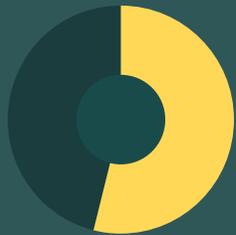


## AT A GLANCE

### POLICY GAPS

Not all organisations make commitments to gender equality – and policies are often entirely absent from public view. This underscores a disconnect between the recognition of gender equality as a fundamental legal right and its pursuit within the justice sector itself.

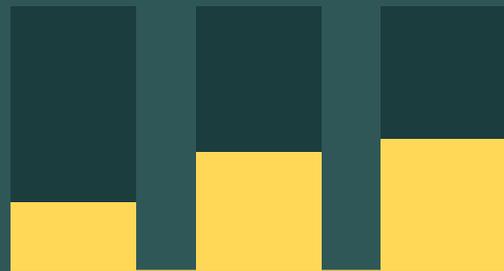
Detailed gender equality and workplace fairness and equity policies are also sparse: for example, many courts lack policies for judges, and commissions often lack policies for commissioners. This absence of publicly available policies prohibits efforts to hold these bodies accountable to advance representation and inclusion.



**54%**

OF ORGANISATIONS ASSESSED MAKE A PUBLIC COMMITMENT TO GENDER EQUALITY

LOWEST RATES OF PUBLIC COMMITMENTS AMONG:



**26%**

LAW FIRMS

**45%**

LEGAL PROF. ASSOCS.

**50%**

COURTS

### GENDER DISPARITY

While gender parity appears within reach across some subsectors, stark disparities are evident in traditional hubs of legal power.

Across 171 organisations, women hold 43% of senior roles and 40% of the top offices – close to parity overall – but the traditional

hubs of power and prestige (courts, legal professional associations, and law firms) lag behind. Gender parity, however, can help dismantle institutional cultures that have historically excluded women and marginalised groups, while diverse leadership can bring broader perspectives and improve the quality of legal reasoning and outcomes.

**40%**

OF HIGHEST OFFICES



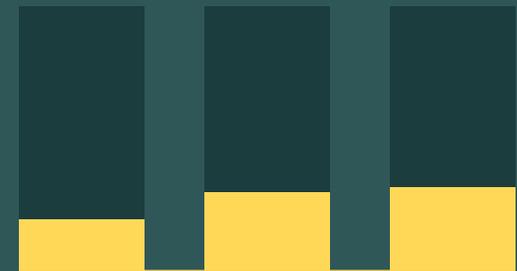
**43%**

OF SENIOR ROLES



HELD BY WOMEN

HIGHEST OFFICES HELD BY WOMEN, BY SECTOR:



**20%**

LAW FIRMS

**29%**

COURTS

**30%**

LEGAL PROF. ASSOCS.

## AT A GLANCE

### GEOGRAPHIC IMBALANCES

“Global” justice is overwhelmingly shaped by nationals from a small number of high-income countries – raising the question as to whether global law and justice bodies are correcting hierarchies of historical power, geography, and privilege, or reinforcing them.

Only 9% of 302 highest offices in our sample are held by women from low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), including just 1% by women from low-income countries (LICs), while almost a third are held by men from the US and UK.

#### WHO HOLDS THE HIGHEST OFFICES?



**1%**  
HELD BY  
WOMEN  
FROM LICs



**8%**  
HELD BY WOMEN  
FROM MICS



**32%**  
HELD BY MEN  
FROM THE US  
AND UK

### DATA DEFICITS

**Sex-disaggregated data is fundamental to achieving equitable access to justice, yet few organisations appear committed to understanding who is, and who is not, being served by their systems.**

Just 18% of organisations commit to collecting/reporting sex-disaggregated programmatic data or undertaking gender

analysis – information fundamental to Sustainable Development Goal 16.3 on equal access to justice and to knowing who is (and isn't) reached. Entire subsectors in our sample (e.g. bar associations) show no public commitment or policy to disaggregating data, making it impossible to diagnose inequities, target remedies, or measure progress over time.



**18%**  
OF ORGANISATIONS ASSESSED COMMIT  
TO COLLECTING/REPORTING **SEX-**  
**DISAGGREGATED PROGRAMMATIC DATA**  
OR UNDERTAKING **GENDER ANALYSIS**

EXPLORE FINDINGS FOR EACH  
OF THESE SUBSECTORS IN  
DEDICATED CHAPTERS →

EXPLORE ORGANISATIONAL  
PERFORMANCE  
IN THE GLOBAL JUSTICE  
50/50 INDEX HERE →

# Report Methods

**Beyond the First Step: A Girl's Journey  
through Barriers to Education**  
Badlapur, Maharashtra, India. 2023.  
Sandeep Rasal

*A young girl sits at a school desk against the vast backdrop  
of her village and surrounding mountains. Here, the promise  
of education meets the reality of distance, gendered  
expectations, and structural inequality.*



# Conceptualising the law and justice sector

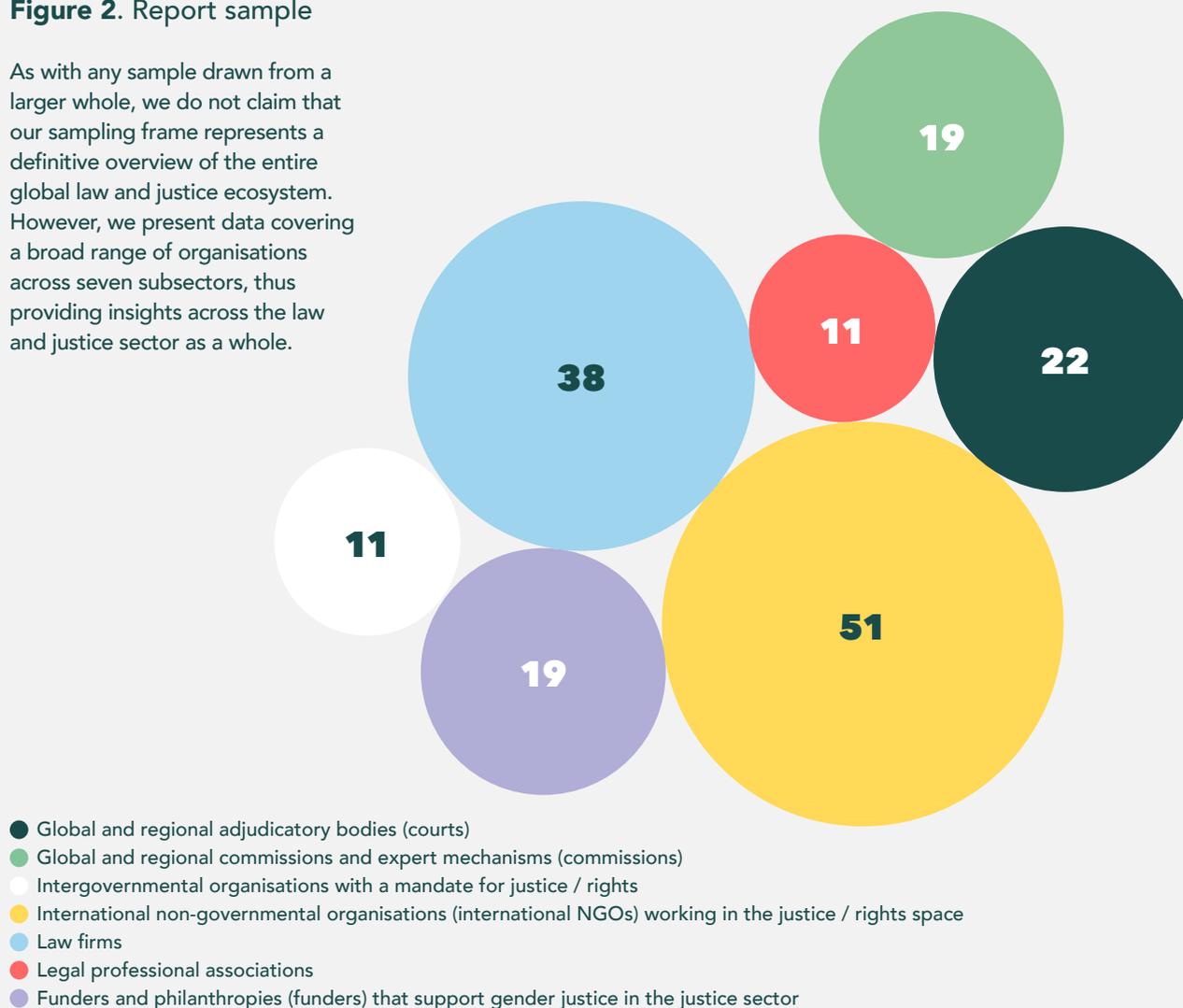
While domestic legal and justice systems are shaped by national laws, regulations, and governance structures, there is no single system that defines the international legal sphere, and a wide range of actors operate across a fragmented landscape to establish norms, standards, and precedents influencing multiple jurisdictions.

For the purposes of the Global Justice 50/50 Report, the law and justice sector is understood as a broad and interconnected set of institutions, actors, and mechanisms involved in the creation, interpretation, application, enforcement, and adjudication of laws, as well as the administration and delivery of justice. In the absence of a definition of the global justice sector, our understanding builds on a definition of the justice sector developed for the national level, but with lessons for understanding the global sector too: “all the agencies and actors, both state and non-state, involved in the provision, management and oversight of justice”.<sup>5</sup>

To identify a sample of organisations across global and regional levels, Global 50/50 commissioned a mapping of the ecosystem and development of sampling approaches. Various approaches were tested and refined – including through an [options paper](#), expert surveys, and targeted consultations. See Annex 3 for more details.

**Figure 2.** Report sample

As with any sample drawn from a larger whole, we do not claim that our sampling frame represents a definitive overview of the entire global law and justice ecosystem. However, we present data covering a broad range of organisations across seven subsectors, thus providing insights across the law and justice sector as a whole.



# Glossary

**Adjudicatory Bodies (Courts):** Courts, tribunals, and similar bodies that make binding legal decisions at global or regional level.

**Bench (Courts):** The collective body of judges in a court.

**Commissions & Expert Mechanisms (Commissions):** Independent bodies that monitor, investigate, or advise on justice and human rights issues. Commissions are typically standing bodies with a formal legal basis and institutional mandates, while expert mechanisms are usually independent, expert-led bodies that provide thematic or issue-specific analysis and recommendations.

**Funders & Philanthropies (Funders):** Organisations that provide financial support for initiatives advancing gender justice in the law and justice sector.

**Gender equality:** Gender equality refers to the achievement of equal rights, access, opportunities, treatment, and outcomes for men, women, girls and boys, and people of all gender identities. It is based on the principle that people of all gender identities should enjoy the same protections and opportunities. Advancing gender equality requires the removing discriminatory gender norms, roles and barriers, and ensuring fair participation and freedom from discrimination, in all areas of public and private life - including the workplace.

**Gender inequality:** Gender inequality refers to unequal rights, access, opportunities, treatment, safety, and voice, as well as unequal outcomes in representation and resources, between men, women, girls and boys (or people of all gender identities?). These inequalities are upheld and reproduced by gender norms, roles, and power relations.

Gender inequality is reflected in disparities such as pay gaps, unequal access to education or healthcare, under-representation in leadership, and unequal legal protections.

**Gender justice:** See page 22.

**Gender injustice:** Gender injustice refers to the laws, policies, institutions, and social norms that produce or reinforce discrimination, violence, exclusion, and unequal power on the basis of gender. It exists where people are denied safety, agency, participation, and access to rights, resources, opportunities, and decision-making because of their position in gender relations.

**Gender Parity:** 45-55% women. In current international practice, gender parity is increasingly recognised as 50%,<sup>6</sup> but the broader range used by Global 50/50 is intended to allow for practical variation in representation.

**Intergovernmental Organisations:** Formal organisations established by treaty or other international agreement between states, each with its own legal personality and a mandate to carry out functions, including in relation to justice, human rights, or the rule of law, as agreed by its member governments.

**International Non-Governmental Organisations (International NGOs):** Not-for-profit organisations working across countries to promote justice, human rights, or legal reform.

**Legal professional associations:** Membership-based organisations representing legal professionals and legal professional bodies, promoting professional standards, ethics, and the legal profession globally.

**Jurist:** A legal expert or scholar who studies, interprets, and applies the law, often influencing legal thought, policy, or judicial practice.

**Law Firms:** For-profit private legal practices, providing legal services and advocacy.

**Registrar:** The senior official heading the court registry, responsible for overseeing its administration, managing staff and resources, and ensuring the effective and independent operation of the court in support of judicial functions.

**Registry:** The administrative organ of a court responsible for case management, judicial support, records, filings, and the provision of legal, logistical, and operational services necessary for the court's functioning.

**Selections (Courts and Commissions):** The processes by which leaders such as judges or commissioners are nominated, reviewed, elected, or appointed.

**Subsector:** An analytically constructed grouping of organisations within the global justice system, categorised according to shared organisational characteristics, mandates, and/or functions.

**Workings (Courts and Commissions):** How courts and commissions operate internally, including decision-making, governance, staff selection, and policy implementation.

### Box 2. Defining gender justice and applying it to the Global 50/50 analysis

**Gender justice is about creating a world where people of all genders can live safely, participate equally, and thrive, by changing the systems and norms that create inequality and limit opportunity.**

Global 50/50 works to advance gender justice. Gender justice means creating the conditions in which people of all genders can live safely, participate fully, and thrive, regardless of their position in gender relations. It recognises diverse gender identities and experiences, and seeks the fair and equitable distribution of rights, resources, opportunities, and decision-making power, alongside equality and non-discrimination in law and in practice.

Grounded in international human rights law (including the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, core UN treaties, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women), gender justice requires more than formal legal equality. As both a goal and an approach, gender justice requires transforming the laws, policies, institutions, and social norms that produce or reinforce discrimination, violence,

exclusion, and inequality, including patriarchy and other intersecting systems of power and disadvantage. It advances the universal rights of all people; ensures inclusive leadership and meaningful participation in decision-making; protects choice and agency; and commits to monitoring progress and holding decision-makers and power-holders accountable.

Gender justice in the workplace is the realisation of substantive and transformative equality in employment, ensuring that all workers – particularly women and gender-diverse people, and those facing intersecting forms of discrimination – can access, participate in, and advance within the workplace on equal terms, and can effectively claim remedies when their rights are violated.

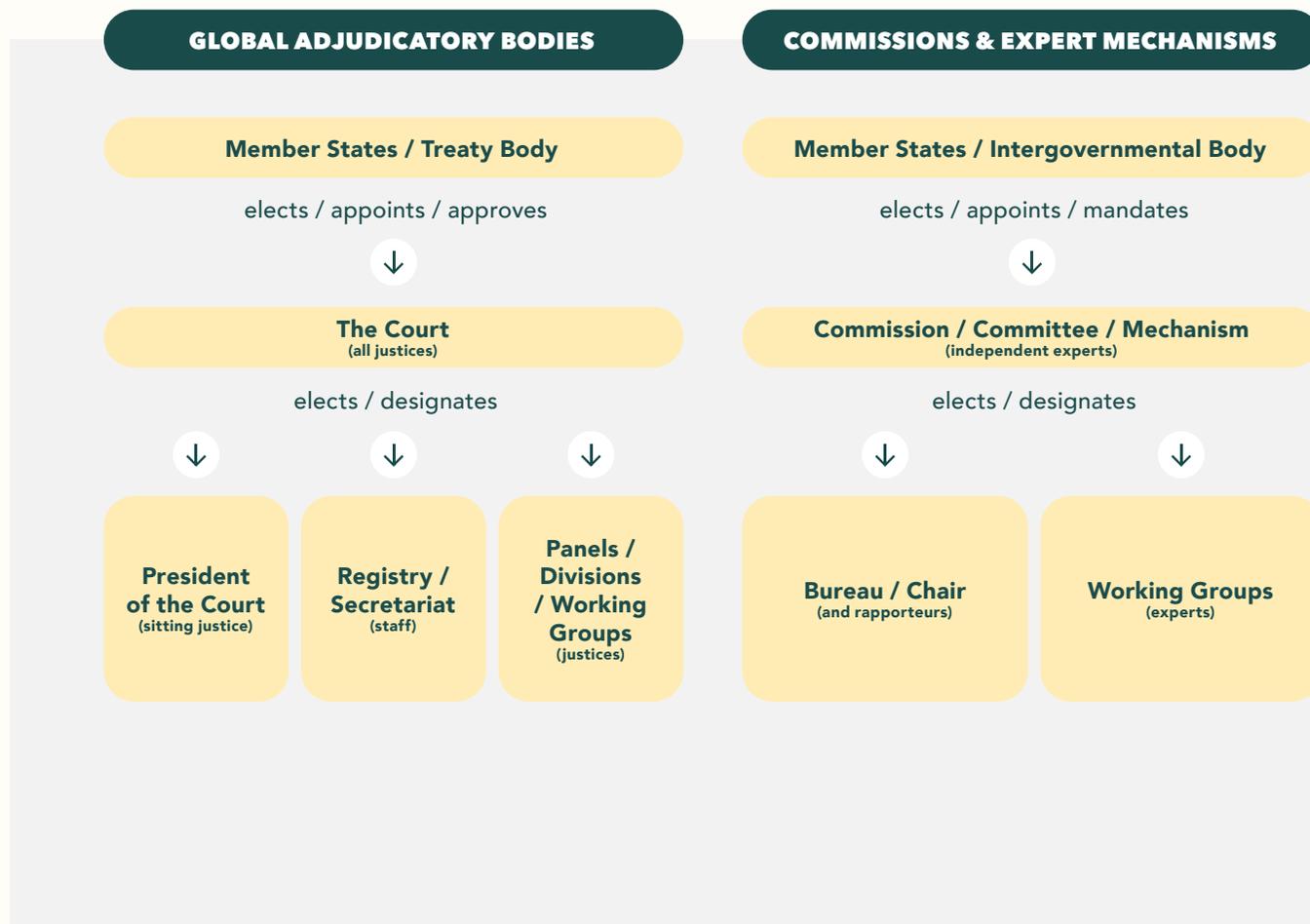
Gender equality and gender justice are closely related, but they are not interchangeable. Gender equality refers to the principle that all people should enjoy the same rights, opportunities, and treatment regardless of gender. Gender equality focuses on outcomes and parity (such as equal pay, equal representation, or equal legal rights).

Gender justice is concerned with how equality is realised, enforced, and sustained, especially in contexts of structural inequality. It recognises that identical treatment under the law is often insufficient where historical discrimination, power imbalances, and intersecting forms of disadvantage exist. Gender justice therefore prioritises substantive and transformative equality, requiring justice systems to actively identify and dismantle discriminatory laws, practices, and norms, and to provide effective remedies when rights are violated.

The work of Global 50/50, including Global Justice 50/50, contributes to the goal and approach of gender justice through accountability and advocacy. As part of that approach, our core variables measure and evaluate every organisation's commitments and policies to promote gender equality, non-discrimination and fair workplaces for all, and we analyse our findings within a framework of gender justice.

# What we assessed in each subsector

Figure 3. Organograms of typical structures in each subsector



Organisational structures differ across subsectors, with variations in governance, decision-making processes, and career pathways, including nominations and appointments. Understanding these structural distinctions was important in designing our research framework and tailoring the policies and bodies we reviewed to each subsector. Commissions, for example, do not commonly have staff (and hence no staff policies to assess), while law firms often do not have corporate governing boards, but are rather overseen by their equity partnership. Courts, on the other hand, have benches and registries, and thus we assessed both bench and staff policies. The variable frameworks for each subsector are presented in detail in each subsector chapter.



## Data collection and validation

Global 50/50 uses a systematic methodology to assess commitments, policies and outcomes towards gender justice, workplace fairness and equity across organisations. Each data item is independently extracted by at least two reviewers, with a third reviewer verifying the data. Any discrepancies are discussed until consensus is reached. Data are coded using a pre-established evaluation and grading system, and visually represented as colours of traffic lights. All data are drawn from publicly available sources (such as websites, annual reports, or corporate/organisational policies). Confidential or commercially sensitive information is not requested to assess our core variables, and identities of individuals (e.g. CEOs, board chairs, etc) are not recorded beyond publicly available information generally collected from social media and professional websites (i.e. gender and nationality).

All organisations are contacted at least twice during data verification: first to inform of the study and request nomination of a focal point, and subsequently to review preliminary results and provide any additional information or propose revisions. Organisations may request amendments to their scores if evidence is publicly available. Results are shared with the CEOs of organisations prior to publication. The methods described above have been approved by the ethics committee of University College London, where Global 50/50 (formerly Global Health 50/50) was previously housed, and subsequently by the [Social Research Association](#), UK.

# Gender injustice in the justice sector:

## Why it matters

**Four decades in exile**  
*Northern Region, Ghana. 2025.*  
Claire Thomas

*At the doorway of her home in the Gambaga camp, Bachalbanueya holds our gaze. Banished after a witchcraft accusation, she has lived here for over four decades – a stark reminder of the cost of injustice.*



Gender equality and non-discrimination are fundamental human rights principles and core to the rule of law. The first two articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights establish that all people are equally entitled to the rights and freedoms set forth in the Declaration. Yet the institutions tasked with upholding these principles do not consistently reflect them. Within the law and justice sector itself, gender inequality remains deeply embedded in workplace cultures, career progression, and leadership structures.

Despite decades of rising numbers of women law graduates since the 1970s, advancement into leadership remains more limited.<sup>7</sup> As this Report shows, women occupy 40% of the highest offices in the organisations reviewed – and far fewer among courts, bar associations and law firms.

Women in the law and justice sector face professional barriers familiar across many sectors: constraints of gendered family and childcare responsibilities, structural sexism that restricts women from leadership positions, and gendered occupational segregation. For example, women are often overly represented in lower-status and lower-paid specialisations such as family law – in 2023, membership for the UK network of family law professionals, Resolution, was 76.8% female<sup>8</sup> – while

men are more represented in higher-prestige and often higher-earning fields such as commercial law.<sup>9</sup>

These inequalities are global. In Africa, women increasingly enter law but may confront entrenched ‘old boys’ clubs’.<sup>10</sup> Latin America has also experienced rising female judicial participation through enhanced equity policies and training, though outcomes vary.<sup>11</sup> In Asia, women join the profession in growing numbers but rarely reach court or ‘elite’ firm leadership.<sup>12</sup> In the Middle East and North Africa, despite more women choosing a career in the field and the first appointments of women judges, leadership roles held by women remain limited.<sup>13</sup>

We see inequalities driven by more than gender – geography and history also play a role. The two dominant legal traditions in the world today are civil law and common law. Both were imposed on many regions through European imperial expansion and were embedded in colonial governance structures.<sup>14</sup> After independence, many nations retained the legal systems they had inherited, in part because they shaped institutions, jurisprudence and systems of training.<sup>15</sup> This history underpins some of the findings in our Report where we see a continuing dominance of European and American legal education systems, jurisprudence, and global professional networks.

# How gender parity contributes to a better law and justice sector

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**

The following analysis draws on research and evidence compiled in a scoping review of peer-reviewed literature undertaken for this report by the [Ladysmith Collective](#). The question addressed in the literature review was “Does diverse and inclusive representation in the law and justice sector result in better outcomes for people?”

## Delivering better gender justice outcomes

Research shows that when women – especially those with a feminist orientation – serve as judges and legal decision-makers, outcomes may more effectively address gender justice outcomes.<sup>16</sup> Diverse and gender inclusive panels

of judges on international and civil society tribunals in Japan, Rwanda, and the former Yugoslavia “challenged gender-based stereotypes to change the way women’s experiences of war and conflict are conceived under international law.”<sup>17</sup> Their commitment to gender justice ensured that crimes such as rape were treated as grave crimes “equal to torture and other war crimes and crimes against humanity, not just as a crime against a woman’s honour as had been previously accepted.”<sup>18</sup>

Women judges may also impose harsher sentences when it comes to crimes that affect women and girls differently based on their gender. For example, women jurists on

panels at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia imposed more severe sentences on defendants who committed sexual violence against women than did their male colleagues.<sup>19</sup> Women judges have contributed significantly to shaping jurisprudence on rape as a weapon of genocide, torture, and crimes against humanity, helping broaden legal interpretations in ways that more accurately reflect victims’ lived realities.<sup>20</sup>

However, gender parity in law and justice does not necessarily lead to the substantive representation of women’s interests.<sup>21</sup>

## WHY GENDER JUSTICE MATTERS

Recent research finds that women's presence on the bench may make a difference but only so long as they have a feminist orientation.<sup>22</sup> At the same time, the effectiveness of gender-sensitive outcomes depends not only on the individual orientations of judges but also on broader institutional and advocacy mechanisms within the sector. For instance, the Women's Caucus on Gender Justice played a critical role in integrating gender representation and gender-based crimes into the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, demonstrating how civil society actors, professional networks, and advocacy coalitions can help shape both policy and legal outcomes.<sup>23</sup>

### Improving the quality of legal and judicial decision-making

Greater diversity in the law and justice sector means that lawyers, judges, and court staff contribute varied perspectives shaped by their lived experiences.<sup>24</sup> Research shows that having more diversity among judges and lawyers present can help check implicit bias<sup>25</sup> and promote fairer, more nuanced, and innovative rulings,<sup>26</sup> enhancing judicial performance. For example, the presence of women judges can alter the deliberations and perspectives of their male colleagues on panels that hear cases about sexual harassment or discrimination,<sup>27</sup> as feminist-oriented judges must work with their peers and convince them of the relevance of the gender justice elements of each case.<sup>28</sup>

Geographic diversity is also critical. Research in investor-state arbitration demonstrates that arbitrators' national backgrounds and development-status affiliations influence their interpretive tendencies and legal outcomes, with mixed-nationality panels better guarding against structural and ideological biases.<sup>29</sup>

### Increasing public trust in the law and justice sector

Inequality and discrimination within the justice sector "give rise to scepticism as to whether a legal system that is rife with inequality and violence can deliver justice" notes human rights lawyer Melissa Upreti, member of the UN Working Group on discrimination against women and girls.<sup>30</sup>

When the composition of lawyers and judges is more diverse, communities see the legal system as fairer and more objective. People may feel that the perspectives of people 'like them' are seen as valid, and trust, for example, that judges can better appreciate the full context of the cases before them.<sup>31</sup> This representation combats historical alienation and distrust in the justice system,<sup>32</sup> including along gender and nationality lines.<sup>33</sup> In other words, increasing diversity leads to growing trust and greater support for the law and justice sector, which is essential for maintaining the rule of law and promoting public trust in legal decisions.<sup>34</sup>

### Enhancing organisational performance and profitability

Evidence shows that law firms that establish inclusive cultures where women feel heard and supported see higher retention rates and commitment, with lawyers willing to work harder for their company.<sup>35</sup> Law firms' commitments to fairness and equality, including making appropriate accommodations for different needs, "send a strong message that the firm cares about you",<sup>36</sup> which in turn boosts employee commitments and job performance.<sup>37</sup>

For example, when people are happier and feel more valued in their workplace, they tend to do a better job overall and to stay for longer,<sup>38</sup> which contributes to the firm's economic success and profitability.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, clients increasingly value – and even demand – diversity, which gives more diverse firms a competitive advantage when compared to others.<sup>40</sup>

### Expanding access to justice and equity in service delivery

When the people working in the law and justice sector come from diverse backgrounds, they are better able to understand the real-life problems that people bring to court. They can help clarify slow and confusing processes, explain legal rights in a way that is easier to understand, and increase access to legal aid.<sup>41</sup> Gender-diverse teams, particularly women judges, prosecutors, and investigators, are more likely to pursue sexual and gender-based violence cases and engage sensitively with survivors, improving investigative and prosecutorial outcomes.<sup>42</sup> Embedding intersectional perspectives helps courts recognise harms that might otherwise be overlooked and reduces procedural barriers for marginalised populations.<sup>43</sup>

Diverse and gender-sensitive practices also broaden the range of issues addressed. Evidence shows that diverse staffing, procedural accommodations, and targeted outreach make legal services more accessible and responsive, enabling individuals to engage effectively with the justice system.<sup>44</sup>

# Findings:

## Assessing gender justice, fairness and equity in 171 law and justice organisations

**In glitter**  
Ibadan, Nigeria. 2024.  
Mayowa Oyewale

*Egbiameje Omole performs against the horizon, body adorned and in motion. Holding a pankere—a cane commonly used to discipline children—they explore how law and social violence are carried in the bodies of queer and non-binary Nigerians.*



## FINDINGS

This section presents findings on G5050's six core variables across seven subsectors of 171 global law and justice organisations. Subsector-specific findings are reported in subsequent chapters.

G5050 core variables:



Public statement of commitment to gender equality



Policies with specific measures to promote gender equality – in the workplace or in an appointed body



Policies with specific measures to promote fairness and equity – in the workplace or in an appointed body



Gender parity in decision-making bodies (boards, courts, senior management, or other)



Gender and nationality of the head of the organisation or body



Policy on sex-disaggregated data or to undertake gender analysis

# Finding 1.

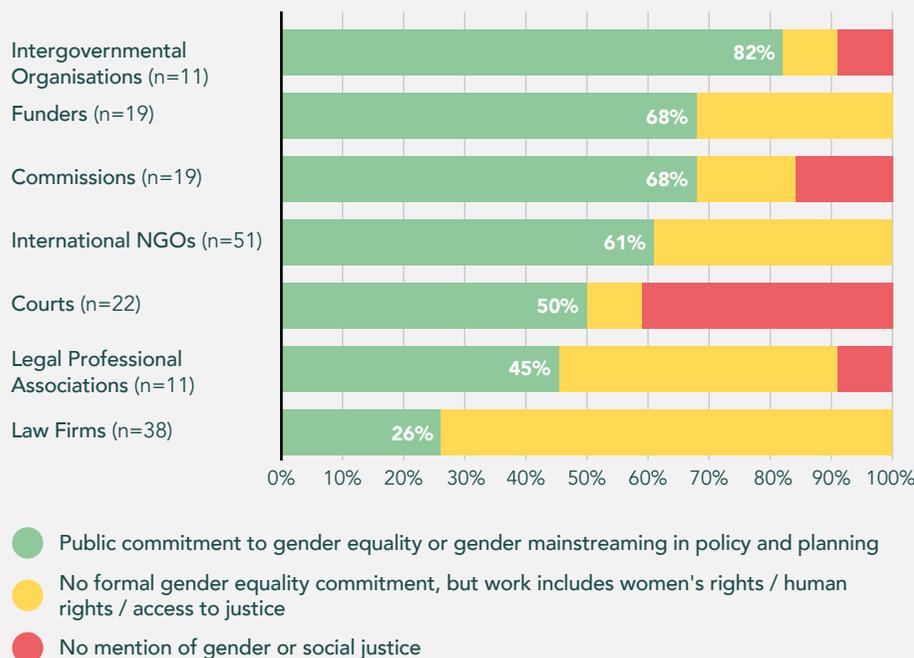
Half of 171 global law and justice organisations state a public commitment to gender equality, but policies to advance these commitments are frequently absent



## Public commitments

A public commitment to gender equality was found for 92/171 (54%) organisations, a proportion that varies across subsectors: 9/11 (82%) intergovernmental organisations to 11/22 (50%) courts, 5/11 (45%) bar associations, and 10/38 (26%) law firms.

**Figure 4.** Public commitments to gender equality, by sector (n=171)



**54%**

of the world's 171 most influential law and justice organisations have made a public commitment to gender equality

## FINDINGS



### Gender equality, fairness and equity policies for staff

Legal frameworks exist to protect workers against discrimination, yet this is not enough to counteract individual bias and structural discrimination. G5050 assessed which organisations had publicly available policies with specific measures in place to guide and monitor progress.

44% (66/150) of organisations (those with at least 10 employees) had publicly available gender equality policies, and 41% (62/150) had publicly available fairness and equity policies. Courts had the lowest proportion of gender equality or fairness and equity policies, while law firms and intergovernmental organisations had the largest.

Figure 5. Workplace policies, by sector (n=150\*)



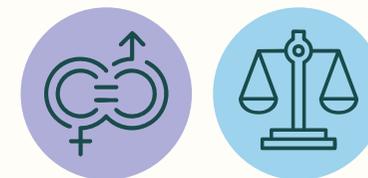
\* n=150 as 19 commissions and 2 funders are excluded due to their organisational structure or size (i.e. no staff, or fewer than 10 full-time employees).

**44%**  
of organisations have publicly available gender equality policies

**41%**  
of organisations have publicly available fairness and equity policies

## Finding 2.

Few appointed bodies – courts, commissions or boards – have policies to guide gender equality, fairness and equity



Among 22 courts,



**Three (14%)** have a gender equality policy for bench selections.

**Two (9%)** have a gender equality policy for bench workings.

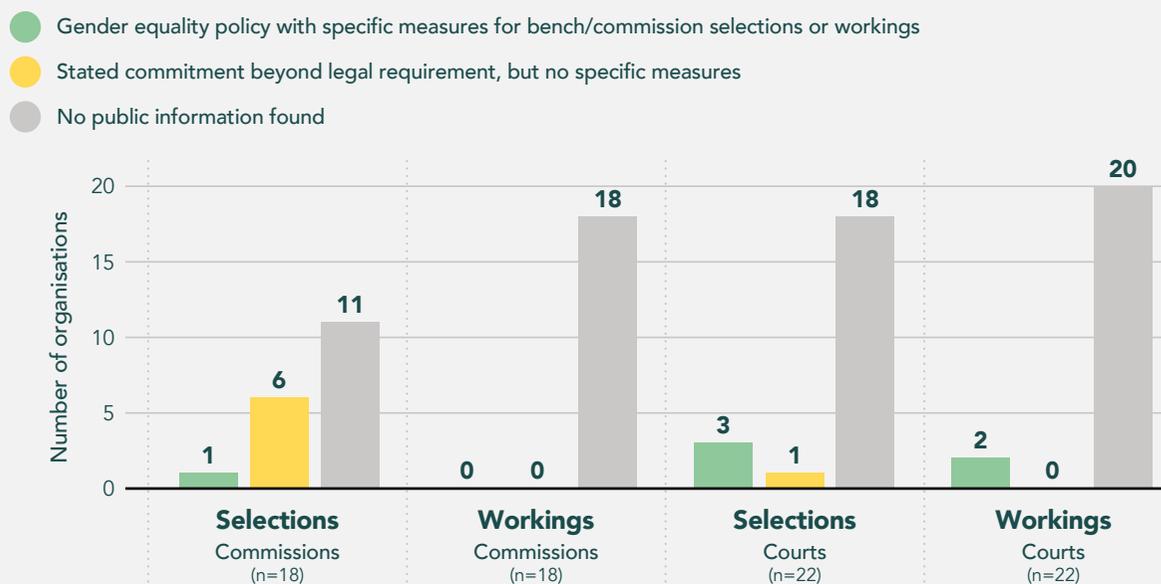
Among 18 commissions,



**One** commission has a gender equality policy for selections.

**None** have a gender equality policy for commission workings.

**Figure 6.** Gender equality policies for courts and commissions (n=40\*)



\* n=40 as one commission is structured differently and does not have independent commissioners.

## FINDINGS



Among 22 courts,



**Four (18%)** have a fairness and equity policy for bench selections.

**Two (9%)** have a fairness and equity policy for bench workings.

Among 18 commissions,



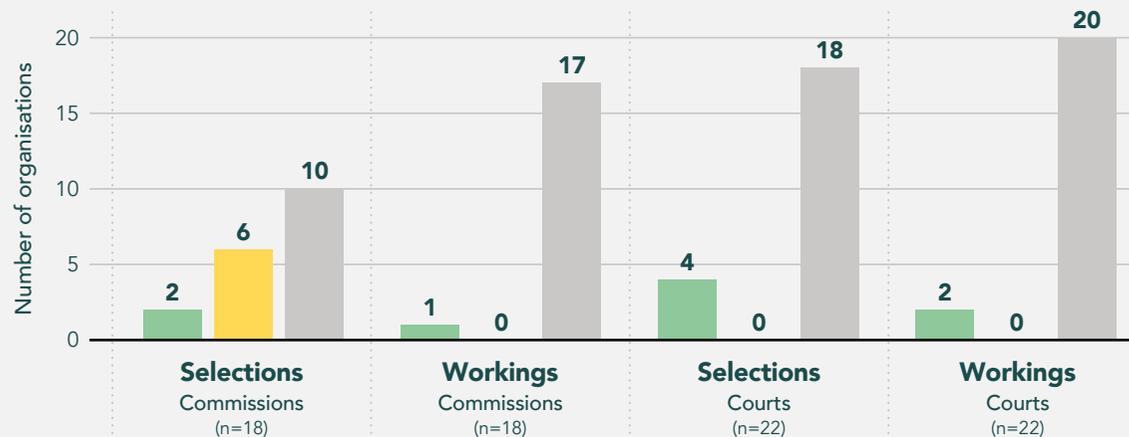
**Two (11%)** have a fairness and equity policy for commission selections.

**One** has a fairness and equity policy for commission workings.

Overall, this suggests that where gender equality policies exist, they are more frequently embedded in selection processes than in the broader institutional practices of both courts and commissions (e.g. how Presidents and Vice Presidents are elected, or the composition of working groups).

**Figure 7.** Fairness and equity policies in courts and commissions (n=40\*)

- Fairness and equity policy with specific measures for bench selections or workings
- Stated commitment beyond legal requirement, but no specific measures
- No public information found



\* n=40 as one commission is structured differently and does not have independent commissioners.



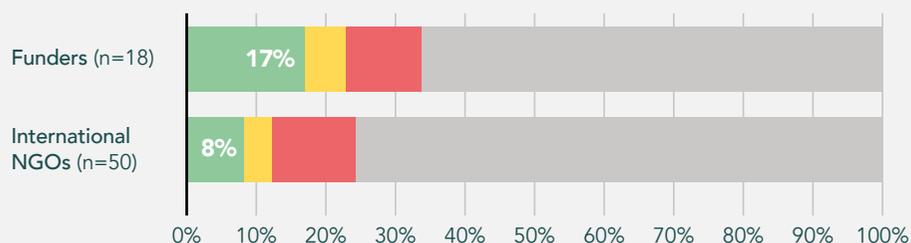
### Board representation and inclusion policies

Organisational governance is concerned with how power and control over resources and decision-making are distributed among various actors through formal structures and processes. Governing boards often represent the locus of power in organisations where decisions on leadership, strategy, finance, and programming are made that influence the career opportunities of people around the world.

We explored how many international NGOs and funders had representation and inclusion policies for their governing boards in the public domain, and which of those have specific measures, such as targets, to promote equality and diverse representation.

Four international NGOs (4/50; 8%) and three funders (3/18; 17%) had publicly available policies on board representation and inclusion with specific measures. Across the sector, concrete steps for inclusive governance at the highest decision-making levels remain limited.

**Figure 8.** Governing board representation and inclusion policies in international NGOs and funders (n=68\*)



- Inclusion and representation policy with specific measures
- Stated commitment to inclusion and representation, but no specific measures
- No commitment to inclusion and representation
- No information found on board policy or rules

\* n=68 as no boards were found for one funder and one intergovernmental organisation. Courts, commissions, and law firms do not have traditional boards and are not included. Bar associations and intergovernmental organisations are excluded due to their differing structures and lack of comparability across boards, where present.

**10%**  
of organisations have publicly available board representation and inclusion policies

# Finding 3.

With women constituting 43% of power holders, gender parity appears within reach across the sample – but this hides greater disparities in traditional hubs of legal power such as courts and law firms

We recorded the gender identity of 5,224 power holders across the 171 organisations in our sample: 43% are women.

Among 5,224 power holders, **43%** are women

Among 302 highest office holders, **40%** are women

## Box 3. Populations we assessed

Throughout the Report, leadership findings draw on assessments of different populations of individuals. We use different terms interchangeably to refer to different groups:

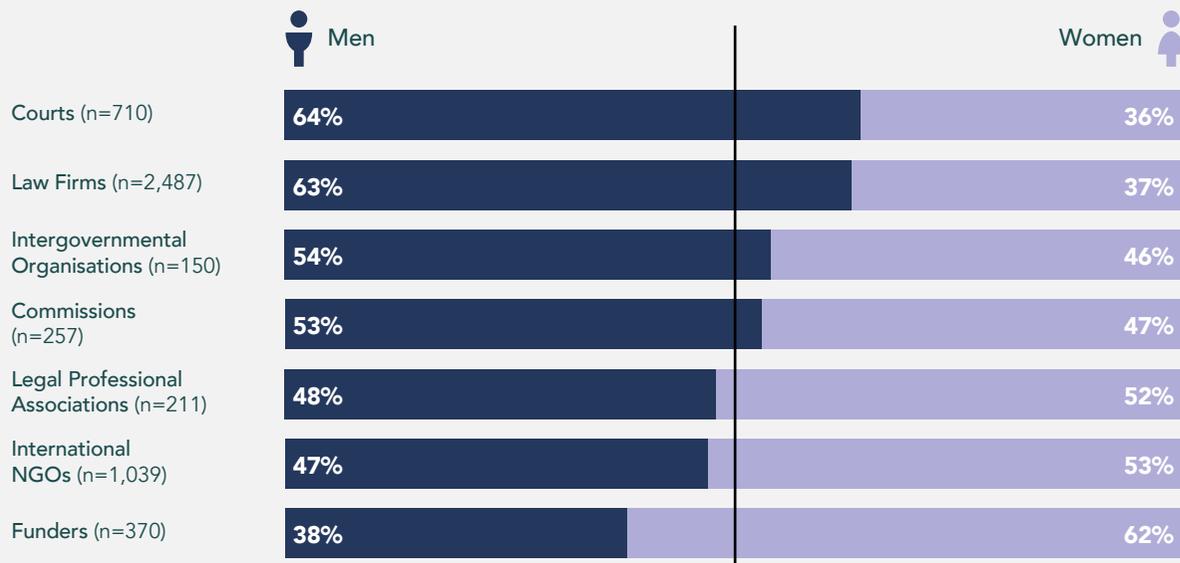
### 302 HIGHEST OFFICES

Board chairs, CEOs, court presidents, head commissioners, and managing partners

### 5,224 POWER HOLDERS

Advocates general, arbitrators, board members, commissioners, deputy directors, justices, prosecutors, registrars, and vice-presidents

Figure 9. Gender identity of power holders, by sector (n=5,224)

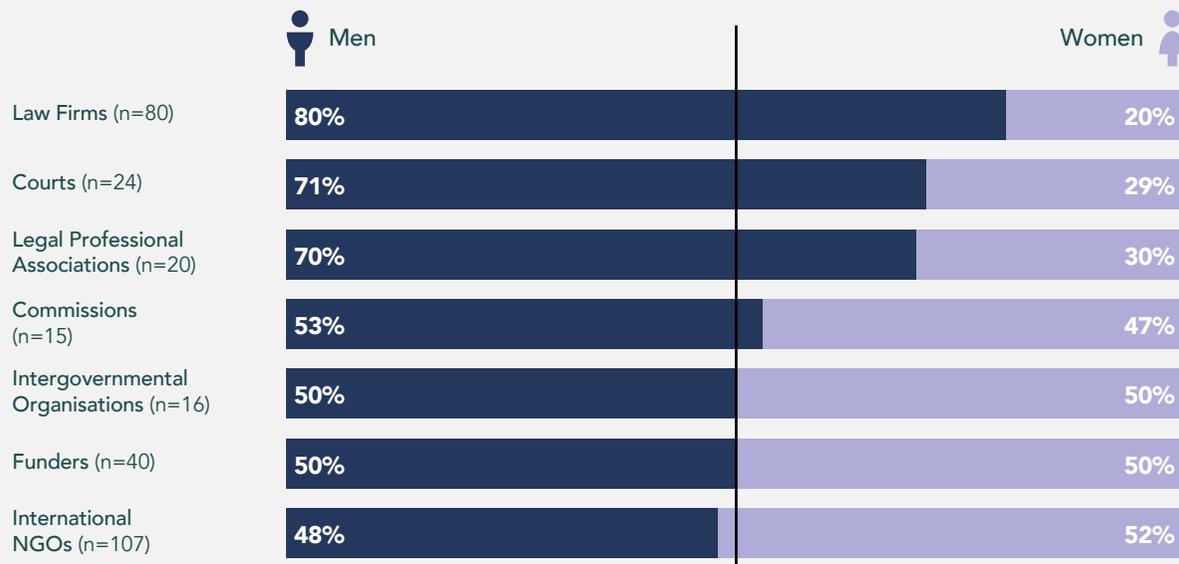


## FINDINGS

Among the 302 highest offices, 40% are held by women. The picture is far from uniform in different parts of the sector. While four of the seven subsectors assessed have reached or are approaching gender parity in the highest

offices, traditional hubs of legal power – law firms, courts, and bar associations – remain stark outliers. At the highest level of these subsectors, women account for only 20, 29% and 30% of leaders respectively.

**Figure 10.** Gender identity of holders of the highest offices, by sector (n=302)



**40%**

of highest offices are held by women

**INCLUDING**

**20%**

in law firms

**29%**

in courts

**30%**

in legal professional associations

## FINDINGS

# Finding 4.

## Fewer than 1% of 302 highest offices are held by women from low-income countries

Across the sector, formal power remains heavily concentrated among nationals of high-income countries. Across the 302 highest offices in 171 organisations, 24/294 (8%) are held by women from middle-income countries (MICs), while 2/294 (1%) held by women from low-income countries (LICs).\*

Over half of the highest offices (154/298; 52%) are held by nationals from two countries: the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK), including 95/298 (32%) held by men from these countries. By contrast, representation from other major jurisdictions, such as the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa), is almost absent.

### Box 4. Dual nationals

Seven of the 298 highest office holders where nationality data was found were dual nationals, as were 55 power holders. Of these 62 dual nationals, 14 are nationals of two high-income countries, 47 are nationals of at least one high-income country. Only one individual was a dual national of two countries, neither of which being high-income countries.

\* Note on denominators: Nationality data was collected for 298 of the 302 individuals in the highest offices. Income classifications were identified for 294 of the 302 individuals, as the World Bank has classified two countries as NA.

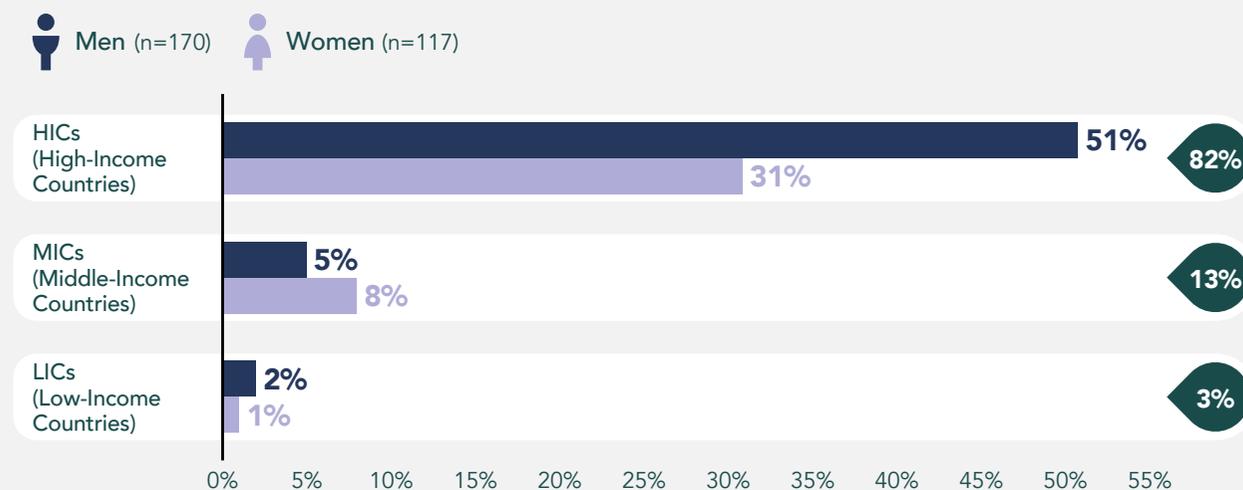


of highest offices in 171 law and justice organisations held by women from low-income countries



of highest offices held by men from the United States

**Figure 11.** Distribution of highest office holders in 171 organisations by gender and country income classification (n=287\*)



\* n=287 as nationality could not be found for four individuals, four further individuals are nationals of countries with no World Bank income classification, and seven dual nationals were excluded.

Figure 12. Most represented nationalities in the highest offices of 171 organisations (n=298\*)

NATIONALITY	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL
United States	73 (25%)	49 (17%)	122 (41%)
United Kingdom	22 (7%)	10 (3%)	32 (11%)
Canada	9 (3%)	0 (0%)	9 (3%)
France	6 (2%)	3 (1%)	9 (3%)
Germany	5 (2%)	1 (0%)	6 (2%)
Switzerland	5 (2%)	1 (0%)	6 (2%)
Denmark	3 (1%)	2 (1%)	5 (2%)
Ireland	3 (1%)	2 (1%)	5 (2%)
South Korea	4 (1%)	1 (0%)	5 (2%)
Australia	2 (1%)	2 (1%)	4 (1%)
<b>56 additional countries</b>	<b>48 (16%)</b>	<b>48 (16%)</b>	<b>96 (32%)</b>

\* n=298 as nationality could not be found for four individuals.

**Box 5.**

The World Bank assigns countries to four income groups – low, lower-middle, upper-middle, and high – based on the gross national income per capita of the country, and two countries assigned to an additional NA category. In 2025, among the 217 economies assessed by the World Bank,

**12%** were low-income,  
**23%** were lower-middle,  
**25%** were upper-middle, and  
**40%** were high-income.<sup>45</sup>

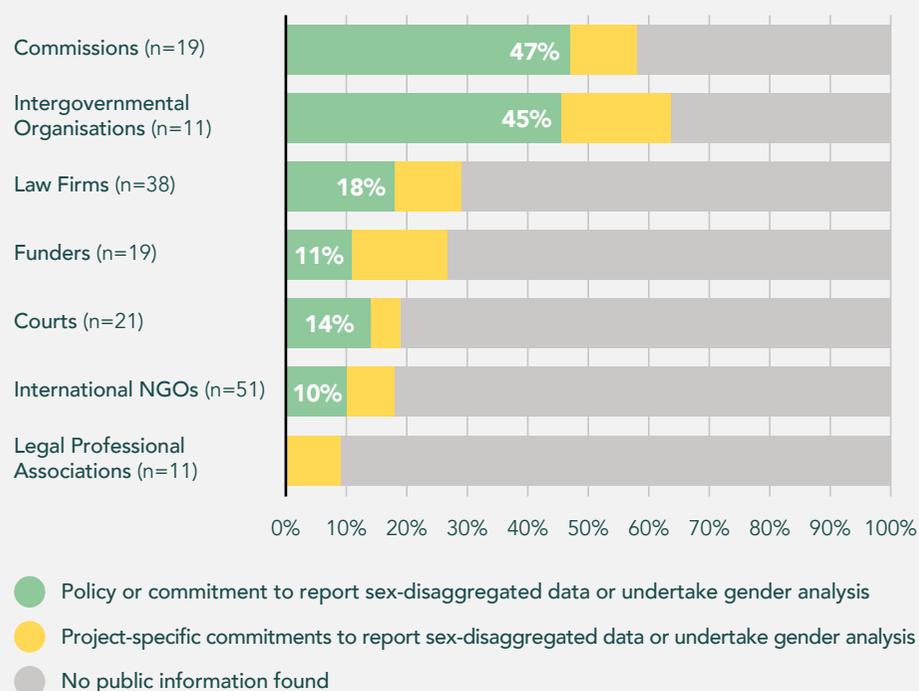
# Finding 5.

Fewer than one in five organisations assessed are committed to understanding who is, and who is not, being served by their systems

Sex-disaggregated data is fundamental to achieving equitable access to justice – Sustainable Development Goal Target 16.3 – yet few institutions appear committed to understanding who is being served by their systems.

31/170 (18%) organisations had a public commitment or policy to regularly collect and report sex-disaggregated data on who they reach or to undertake gender analysis of their programmatic data. These proportions varied widely between sectors – from just under half of commissions/expert mechanisms in the sample to fewer than one in five law firms (7/38; 18%) courts (3/21; 14%) or funders (2/19; 11%), to only project-specific commitments found for bar associations.

**Figure 13.** Organisations with a commitment or policy to disaggregate programmatic data by sex or to undertake gender analysis, by sector (n=170\*)



\* n=170 as one organisation reported during the validation process that it does not collect data on natural persons.

**18%**

of organisations had a public commitment to collect and report sex-disaggregated data on who they reach

# Endnotes

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# Global and Regional Adjudicatory Bodies (Courts)

READ THE FULL REPORT, INCLUDING METHODS →

Read findings on other subsectors:

- Commissions
- Intergovernmental organisations
- International NGOs
- Law firms
- Legal professional associations
- Funders

## 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 22 global and regional courts (see page 61 for full list).

### First Judge

Abdeen Court, Cairo, Egypt. 2019.  
Mohamed Samer El Raai

Counselor Fatima Qandil stares into the lens, seated among her male colleagues on the bench of Egypt's Criminal Court. She is the first woman to ascend this platform, a space long reserved for men.

# At a glance

Our research reveals that the institutions responsible for upholding fairness and equity globally have yet to embody those very principles within their own ranks. The legitimacy of the global justice system depends on who gets to participate in shaping it – and whose perspectives remain outside its walls.

## Limited commitments:

**Public commitments to gender equality are far from universal.**

Only half of the adjudicatory bodies (courts) examined have made a public commitment to gender equality – a minimal foundation for accountability in institutions that shape international norms.

### Among 22 courts



**11** have a public commitment to gender equality

## Policy gaps:

**Few courts have gender equality or fairness and equity policies governing who sits on the bench or in the registry.**

Even among the most high-profile courts, few have institutionalised measures to ensure fairness and equity in judicial selections or to promote gender-responsive workplace practices for staff.

### Among 22 courts



**4** have fairness and equity policies for judicial selections



**4** have workplace gender equality policies for staff

## Concentration of power:

**Women from low- and middle-income countries are largely absent from global justice leadership.**

Only a small fraction of justices, registrars and arbitrators are women from LMICs, and women from low-income countries are almost entirely missing. This underscores systemic barriers to representation. Power remains concentrated among men from high-income countries.

### Among 617 justices, registrars, and arbitrators



**9% (57/617)** are women from MICs

**2% (11/617)** are women from LICs

## Data deficits:

**Data for accountability are missing.**

Most courts do not commit to collecting or publishing sex-disaggregated data, or undertaking gender analysis, limiting visibility into who participates in, and benefits from, global justice. Yet, what is not measured cannot be changed. Data transparency is the foundation for accountability in international justice.

### Among 21 courts



**3** have a commitment to report sex-disaggregated data or undertake gender analysis

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



## **Assessing the global and regional courts**

Global adjudicatory bodies, from international and regional courts to tribunals and arbitration panels, stand at the forefront of the international legal order. They interpret treaties, settle disputes, and shape norms that bind states and impact the lives of people globally.

These bodies vary widely in form, mandate, and jurisdiction. The 22 adjudicatory bodies in our sample represent the world's most influential forums for international and regional justice. They include courts and tribunals that adjudicate human rights, trade, investment, and maritime disputes, as

well as administrative and economic law across all global regions and the multilateral system.

These institutions were selected because they are structurally permanent, influential, and with public websites, allowing comparison of leadership composition, policy frameworks, and gender equality commitments.

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.

## COURTS

Table 1. Variables reviewed: Courts



Does the court make a public commitment to gender equality?



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

Bench selection processes

Rules governing the workings of the bench

Court staff



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

INCLUDING

Court presidents

Justices

Registrars

Arbitrators



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

**Box 1.** What we measure for each variable and how we assess the findings

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

<b>1</b>	<b>Public statement of commitment to gender equality</b>	 Commits to gender equality/equity, gender justice, or gender mainstreaming in policy and planning.
		 Work on women's rights, social justice, human rights, and/or access to justice, but no formal commitment to gender equality.
		 No mention of gender or social justice.
	<b>Bench selections</b>	 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 measures(s) to carry out commitments.
		 No policy or commitment found.
<b>2</b>	<b>Policies with specific measures to promote gender equality on the bench or for court staff</b>	<b>Bench workings</b>
		 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).
	<b>Court staff</b>	 No policy or commitment found.
		 Policy with specific measure(s) to improve gender equality and/or support women's careers.
		 Stated commitment to gender equality and/or diversity in the workplace (above the legal requirement) but no specific measures to carry out commitments; and/or reports on gender distribution of staff.
		 Policy is compliant with law but no more = "we do not discriminate".
		 No reference to gender equality or non-discrimination in the workplace found.

<p><b>3</b> Policies with specific measures to promote fairness and equity on the bench or for court staff</p>	<p><b>Bench selections</b></p>	<p>● Policy with specific measure(s) to improve diversity, inclusion, fairness and/or equality in the selection process.</p>
		<p>● Commitment to promoting fairness and equity in the selection process but does not state what specific measures are in place to promote equality/diversity.</p>
		<p>● No policy or commitment found.</p>
	<p><b>Bench workings</b></p>	<p>● Policy with specific measure(s) to improve diversity, inclusion, fairness and/or equality in the appointment of the President/Chair and/or working groups.</p>
		<p>● Commitment to promoting fairness and equity 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.</p>
		<p>● No policy or commitment found.</p>
	<p><b>Court staff</b></p>	<p>● Policy with specific measure(s) to improve diversity, inclusion, fairness and/or equality.</p>
		<p>● Commitment to promoting fairness and equity evidenced by a) aspirational comments and b) listing protected characteristics, but does not state what specific measures are in place to promote equality/diversity; and/or some reporting on characteristics among staff.</p>
		<p>● Policy is compliant with law but no more = "we do not discriminate".</p>
<p>● No reference to equality or non-discrimination in the workplace found.</p>		
<p>● 56-100% women represented.</p>		
<p><b>4</b> Gender parity on the bench and in the registry</p>	<p>● 45-55% women represented; or difference of one individual.</p>	
	<p>● 35-44% women represented.</p>	
	<p>● 0-34% women represented.</p>	
	<p>● 0-34% women represented.</p>	
<p><b>5</b> Gender and nationality of court presidents, justices, registrars, and arbitrators</p>	<p>There is no traffic light scoring for this variable; we only report on the aggregate numbers.</p>	
<p><b>6</b> Policy on sex-disaggregated case data and gender analysis</p>	<p>● Policy or organisational commitment found to regularly report sex-disaggregated case data and/or to undertake gender analysis.</p>	
	<p>● Project- or issue-specific commitments to report sex-disaggregated data and/or to undertake gender analysis.</p>	
	<p>● No policy or commitment found.</p>	

# Finding 1. Organisational commitments to gender equality are present but not widespread

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

Half of all courts assessed (11/22; 50%) had a public commitment to gender equality on their websites or in their governing documents.

Figure 1. Public commitments to gender equality found, courts (n=22)



## Box 2. Organisational examples

### Example of court commitment to gender equality

*[T]he development, adoption and implementation of the [ICC Gender Equality and Workplace Culture] Strategy by 2025 reflects the Court's commitment, as part of the many organisations engaged in the Generation Equality movement, to catalyse tangible progress towards gender equality during the UN Decade of Action (2020-2030) to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals, including Sustainable Development Goal 5, on Gender Equality.*

**International Criminal Court (ICC)<sup>1</sup>**

**50%**

of courts have a public commitment to gender equality



## COURTS

In many instances, evidence of commitments and policies were found in the constitutive instruments of courts, or in the documents of the wider political organisations of which a court is a constituent organ. In these cases, such evidence was only counted where an explicit statement indicating that the document also applied to the court in question was found.

Most courts did not have gender equality, fairness or equity policies for bench selections or workings, and performed similarly poorly on both gender equality and fairness and equity workplace policies.

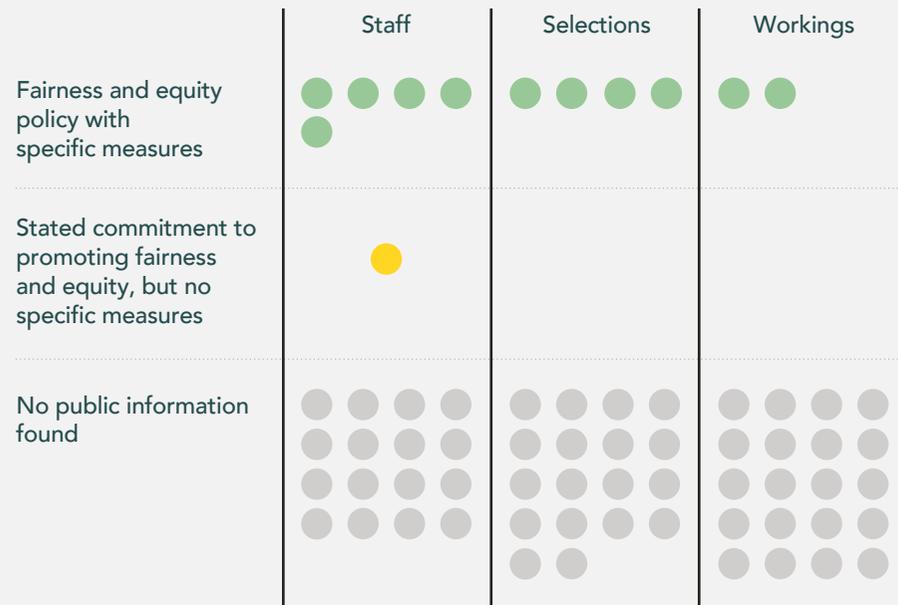
### Box 3. Distinguishing between bench and staff policies

Courts are comprised of actors who are selected in distinct ways, play different roles, and are governed by separate rules. Treating them as interchangeable would obscure the unique power dynamics that shape these positions.

We thus distinguished between “bench” and “staff” policies and have presented findings on these separately (see examples in following box).

We also reviewed and included two types of bench policies: those governing how justices are appointed to the court (bench selections), and those governing appointments that are under the control of the courts themselves (bench workings). This dual lens acknowledges that while some courts may have limited control over judicial appointments, they can – and some do – take proactive steps to foster gender equality internally.

**Figure 3. Fairness and equity policies found, courts (n=22)**



of courts have publicly available gender equality policies for staff



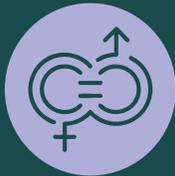
of courts have publicly available gender equality policies for bench selections



of courts have publicly available gender equality policies for bench workings

**Box 4. Organisational examples**

**Examples of court gender equality, fairness and equity policies**



**GENDER EQUALITY POLICY WITH SPECIFIC MEASURES FOR BENCH SELECTIONS:**

*Article 12: Due consideration shall be given to adequate gender representation in the nomination process.*

*Article 14: In the election of the judges, the Assembly shall ensure that there is adequate gender representation.*

**African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (AfCHPR)<sup>2</sup>**

**GENDER EQUALITY POLICY WITH SPECIFIC MEASURES FOR BENCH WORKINGS:**

*Rule 10: In the composition of the Bureau, the principles of gender parity, representation of the principal legal traditions and main regions of the continent and a rotation system, shall, as far as possible, be observed.*

*Rule 26: The Court may establish such committees and working groups to facilitate its work as it deems necessary, taking into account, as much as possible, representation of gender, language and regions.*

**African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (AfCHPR)<sup>3</sup>**

**GENDER EQUALITY POLICY WITH SPECIFIC MEASURES FOR STAFF:**

*In the composition of the Registry, gender parity and representation of different regions and legal traditions shall be observed. In appointing the Registrar and Deputy Registrar in accordance with Rule 17 and 18 of these Rules, the Court shall, as far as possible, consider gender and language.*

**African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (AfCHPR)<sup>4</sup>**



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

No two members may be nationals of the same State and in the Tribunal as a whole it is necessary to assure the representation of the principal legal systems of the world and equitable geographical distribution; there shall be no fewer than three members from each geographical group as established by the General Assembly of the United Nations (African States, Asian States, Eastern European States, Latin American and Caribbean States and Western European and Other States).

**International Tribunal  
for the Law of the Sea  
(ITLOS)<sup>5</sup>**

**FAIRNESS AND EQUITY  
POLICY WITH SPECIFIC  
MEASURES FOR BENCH  
WORKINGS:**

**Rule 25: Setting-up of Sections**

Each judge shall be a member of a Section. The composition of the Sections shall be geographically and gender balanced and shall reflect the different legal systems among the Contracting Parties.

**European Court of  
Human Rights (ECtHR)<sup>6</sup>**

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

**Pillar III: Gender Parity and Equal Opportunities**

This Pillar includes 6 rubrics:

- Strengthen recruitment outreach by advertising diversity and inclusion;
- Mitigate bias in the selection process;
- Strengthen accountability for selection decisions and compliance with diversity targets;
- Redesign job descriptions and vacancy announcements, application forms and processes to maximize diverse candidate pools;
- Provide a consistent culture of growth and development for all staff;
- Utilize temporary special measures, when applicable.

**International Criminal  
Court (ICC)<sup>7</sup>**

# Finding 3. Women from low- and middle-income countries are under-represented across all parts of courts

We reviewed the gender identity (man, woman, or non-binary) and country of national origin among 674 power holders across the 22 courts in the sample – including court presidents, justices, registrars, arbitrators, advocates

general, and prosecutors. Gender identity information was available for all 674 and nationality classification for 655. Of these 655, three individuals – one president and two justices – were classified as dual nationals.



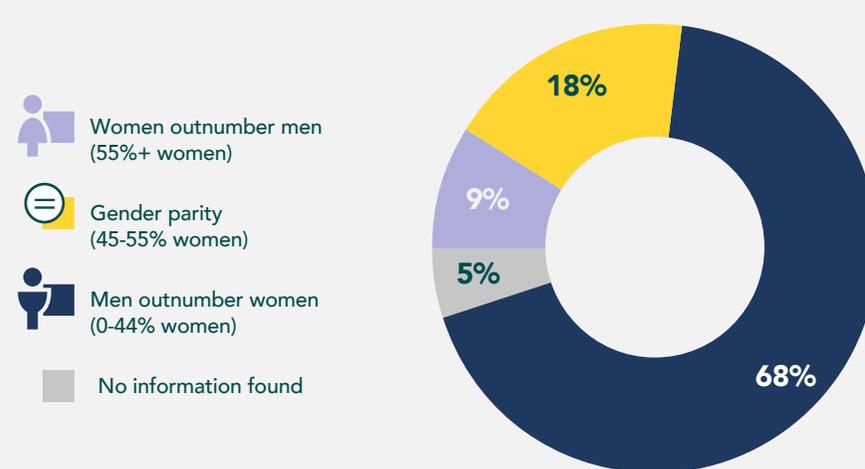
**2% of 655**  
power holders across 22 courts were women from LICs

**Figure 4.** Proportion of men and women among power holders, courts (n=674)



\*Other leaders includes the following power holders specific to individual courts: Advocate Generals and Prosecutors.

**Figure 5.** Proportion of courts with gender parity on their benches (n=22)



## COURTS

### Distribution of gender and nationality across leadership roles in courts

ALL LEADERS  
(n=655)

- HICs:** 36% (238) men and 19% (126) women.
- MICs:** 29% (192) men and 9% (60) women.
- LICs:** 4% (25) men and 2% (11) women.

**All leaders** includes court presidents, justices, registrars, arbitrators, and other leaders holding roles specific to individual courts.

COURT PRESIDENTS  
(n=24)

- HICs:** 42% (10) men and 21% (5) women.
- MICs:** 17% (4) men and 8% (2) women.
- LICs:** 8% (2) men and no women.

**Court presidents** are senior justices who oversee court administration and manage resources. They may be elected by their peers or appointed by an external authority, depending on each court's rules.

JUSTICES  
(n=282)

- HICs:** 32% (90) men and 20% (55) women.
- MICs:** 27% (75) men and 12% (34) women.
- LICs:** 6% (16) men and 4% (10) women.

**Justices** hear cases, interpret the law, and issue binding decisions. They are appointed according to each court's select processes and have protected tenure to ensure judicial independence.

REGISTRARS  
(n=22)

- HICs:** 36% (8) men and 18% (4) women.
- MICs:** 23% (5) men and 18% (4) women.
- LICs:** 5% (1) men and no women.

**Registrars** manage court calendars, budgets, staffing, and recordkeeping, ensuring that the judicial machinery functions. Unlike justices, registrars are employees, meaning courts control how they are recruited, promoted, and supported.

ARBITRATORS  
(n=313)

- HICs:** 39% (121) men and 19% (59) women.
- MICs:** 34% (107) men and 6% (19) women.
- LICs:** 2% (6) men and 0% (1) women.

**Arbitrators** differ from judges and registrars because they are neither employees nor officeholders, but ad hoc appointees selected by disputing parties. All arbitrator data were collected from the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), which provides administrative support and maintains rosters of arbitrators for state-to-state, investment, and commercial cases, making it a key source for who participates in global arbitration.

OTHER LEADERS  
(n=14)

- HICs:** 64% (9) men and 21% (3) women.
- MICs:** 7% (1) men and 7% (1) women.
- No men or women from LICs.

**Other leaders** includes the following power holders specific to individual courts: Advocate Generals and Prosecutors.

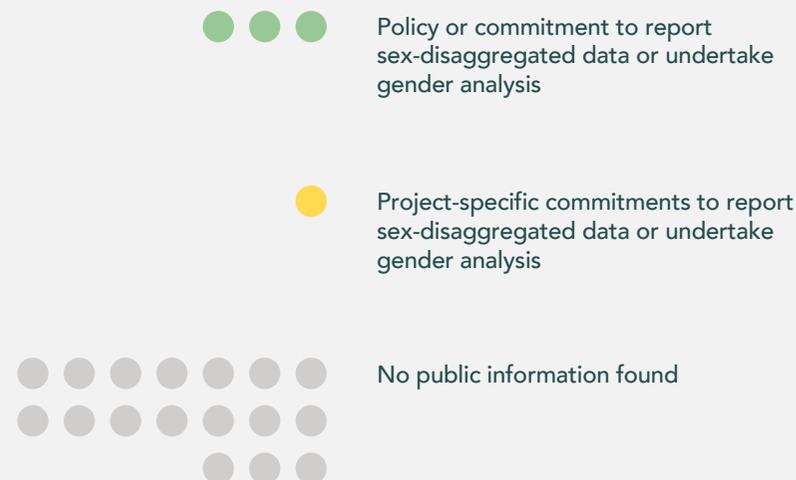
HICs: high-income countries  
MICs: middle-income countries  
LICs: low-income countries

## Finding 4. The potential of data disaggregated by sex is still unrealised among most courts assessed

Sex-disaggregated data and gender analysis is critical for realising gender-responsive law and justice institutions and for ensuring accountability to equality commitments. For courts, even those without individual litigants, disaggregation of data can be applied to cases through the examination of, for example, presiding judges, legal counsel, expert witnesses, and courtroom staffing, to reveal gendered patterns of participation and influence. Where courts engage directly with individuals, as in the case of many human rights bodies, data on complainants, victims, and case outcomes helps identify who accesses justice and whose claims are heard.

Three (3/21; 14%) courts in our sample had a policy or commitment to publicly report sex-disaggregated data or undertake gender analysis of cases. One court reported during the validation process that it does not collect any data on natural persons.

**Figure 6.** Policies or commitments to report sex-disaggregated data or undertake gender analysis found, courts (n=21\*)



\*n=21 as one court reported during the validation process that it does not collect data on natural persons.



of courts had a commitment to publicly report sex-disaggregated data or undertake gender analysis

Box 5. Organisational examples

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

21. *The Office of the Prosecutor aims to integrate a gender perspective consistently into all aspects of its work, noting that all crimes under the Rome Statute are potentially gendered in motivation, form, meaning, or impact. Adopting a gender perspective also enhances the Office’s ability to interact sensitively and effectively with individuals from affected communities.*

22. *A gender perspective is developed, in part, through conducting an intersectional, gender-competent analysis from the preliminary examination stage and then throughout the Office’s work on a given Situation.*

**International Criminal Court (ICC)<sup>8</sup>**

**Maiden nun**  
Tibet, China. 2018.  
Jian Luo

*A young Buddhist nun looks back toward the camera amid a sea of red robes at Yarchen Gar, one of the world’s largest centres for Buddhist nuns.*

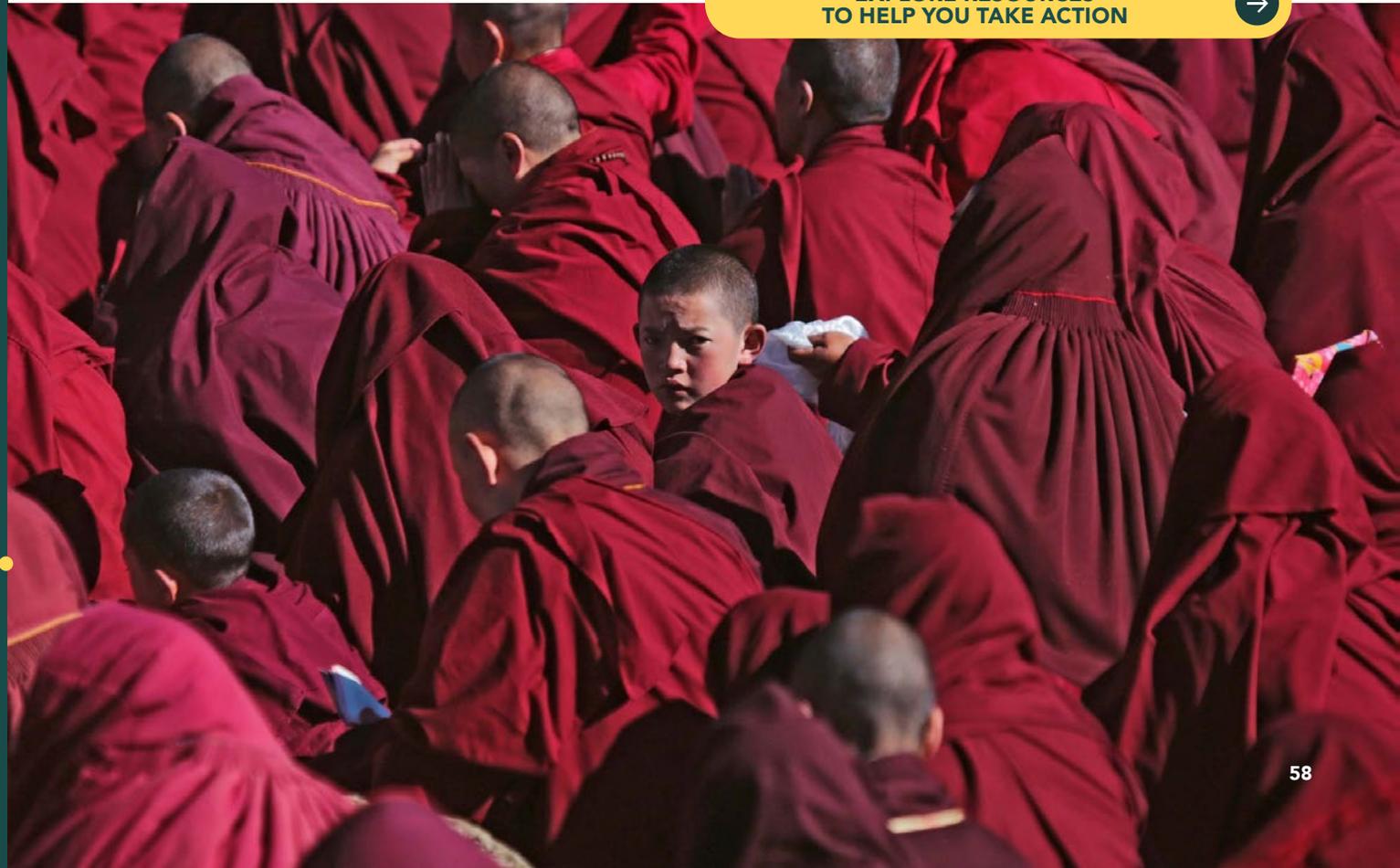
**Towards a gender-equal global law and justice sector**

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**





## **Hon. Nyambura L. Mbatia, FCIArb**

Registrar of the COMESA Court of Justice

*At the COMESA Court of Justice, we see gender equality as essential to building a justice system that is fair, trusted, and representative of the people it serves. As a regional court operating across multiple jurisdictions, we are tasked with interpreting the law in ways that uphold the principles of the COMESA Treaty, including equitable integration, sustainable development, and the rule of law. That work demands a diversity of perspectives and experiences, including gender, to ensure our decisions reflect the realities of the region and deliver justice that is not only legally sound but socially relevant. Gender is considered in judicial nominations and across our institutional practices, and we are committed to formalising and making these efforts visible. Because justice must be accessible to all and rooted in the lived experiences of the people.*



The Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) serves as the apex Court for five CARICOM Member States and as an international court with exclusive and compulsory jurisdiction to interpret and apply the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas.

**An indigenous Caribbean judicial institution committed to gender equality, the CCJ's impact is rooted in progressive, human rights-focused jurisprudence. It interprets discriminatory laws to uphold equality and non-discrimination, expands protections for vulnerable persons, and asserts the dignity of women, girls, and gender-diverse individuals.**

### Advancing equality, rights, and inclusion through law and leadership: the Caribbean Court of Justice

The CCJ Bench is currently comprised of five men and two women, appointed by an independent body guided by an explicit policy of non-discrimination. Internally, the CCJ has developed policies and codes of conduct to enable inclusivity. A Code of Judicial Conduct emphasises impartiality, equality, and sensitivity to gender diversity. In addition, the Judicial Reform and Institutional Strengthening (JURIST) Project, rolled out by the CCJ with input from UN Women and funded by Global Affairs Canada, played a vital role in integrating gender diversity into Caribbean justice systems through gender responsive training for judicial officers, gender equality protocols and guidelines for sexual offence cases, and gender audits and data collection initiatives to assess barriers to access to justice for women and girls.

The Court's decisions are also anchored in progressive jurisprudence and a gender-sensitive adjudicatory perspective. In *Nicholson v Nicholson* [2024] CCJ 1 (AJ) BZ, the Court drew attention to the unequal realities women face in land ownership. In *OO v BK* [2023] CCJ 10

(AJ) BB, the CCJ underlined previous changes to domestic violence laws, widening the scope for victims, which meant the appellant was entitled to apply for a Protection Order. This approach is further reflected in *McEwan v Attorney General of Guyana* [2018] CCJ 30 (AJ) GY, a landmark judgment affirming protections against discrimination on the basis of gender identity and expression and reinforcing equality under the law.

Externally, the CCJ actively uses its online platforms to promote gender justice, placing a spotlight on the vital role played by women in the delivery of equitable justice. In 2023, the CCJ held key stakeholder engagement sessions for Human Rights Day, including a focus on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

In this way, the CCJ harnesses its adjudicatory power, institutional platform, and regional partnerships to eliminate gender-based discrimination in its application and defence of the rule of law.

# Courts in the Global Justice

## 50/50 sample

- African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (AfCHPR)
- Benelux Court of Justice (BCJ)
- Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ)
- Central American Court of Justice (CACJ)
- Common Court of Justice and Arbitration of the Organization for the Harmonization of Business Law in Africa (CCJA)
- Court of Justice of the Andean Community (TJCA)
- Court of Justice of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA Court of Justice)
- Court of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU Court)
- East African Court of Justice (EACJ)
- Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court (ECSC)
- Economic Community of West African States Community Court of Justice (ECOWAS Court of Justice)
- European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR)
- European Free Trade Association Court (EFTA Court)
- European Nuclear Energy Tribunal (ENET)
- Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACtHR)
- International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID)
- International Court of Justice (ICJ)
- International Criminal Court (ICC)
- International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS)
- Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA)
- United Nations Office of Administrative Justice (UNOAJ)

# Endnotes

- 1 International Criminal Court. (2022). Strategy on Gender Equality and Workplace Culture for the International Criminal Court. <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/2022-12/gender-strategy.pdf>
- 2 African Union. (2008). Protocol on the Statute of the African Court of Justice and Human Rights. <https://au.int/en/treaties/protocol-statute-african-court-justice-and-human-rights>
- 3 African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights. (2020). Rules of the Court. <https://www.african-court.org/wpafc/documents/>
- 4 African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights. (2020). Rules of the Court. <https://www.african-court.org/wpafc/documents/>
- 5 International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. (nd). Members. <https://www.itlos.org/en/main/the-tribunal/members/>
- 6 European Court of Human Rights. (2025). Rules of Court. [https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/d/echr/rules\\_court\\_eng](https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/d/echr/rules_court_eng)
- 7 International Criminal Court. (2022). Strategy on Gender Equality and Workplace Culture for the International Criminal Court. <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/2022-12/gender-strategy.pdf>
- 8 International Criminal Court, The Office of the Prosecutor. (2023). Policy on Gender-based Crimes. <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/2023-12/2023-policy-gender-en-web.pdf>

# Commissions & Expert Mechanisms (Commissions)

READ THE FULL REPORT,  
INCLUDING METHODS 

Read six other subsector  
chapters:

- Courts
- Intergovernmental organisations
- International NGOs
- Law firms
- Legal professional associations
- Funders

## 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 77 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:



## 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.

## COMMISSIONS



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:

<b>1</b> 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.
<b>2</b> Policies with specific measures to promote gender equality on the commission	<b>Commission selections</b>
	 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.
<b>Commission workings</b>	 No policy or commitment found.
 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.	

<p><b>3</b> Policies with specific measures to promote fairness and equity on the commission</p>	<p><b>Commission selections</b></p>	<p>● Policy with specific measure(s) to improve diversity, inclusion, fairness and or equality in the selection process.</p>
		<p>● Commitment to promoting fairness and equity in the selection process but does not state what specific measures are in place to promote equality/diversity.</p>
		<p>● No policy or commitment found.</p>
	<p><b>Commission workings</b></p>	<p>● Policy with specific measure(s) to improve diversity, inclusion, fairness and or equality in the appointment of the president/chair and/or working groups.</p>
		<p>● 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.</p>
		<p>● No policy or commitment found.</p>
<p><b>4</b> Gender parity on the commission</p>	<p>● 56-100% women represented.</p>	
	<p>● 45-55% women represented; or difference of one individual.</p>	
	<p>● 35-44% women represented.</p>	
	<p>● 0-34% women represented.</p>	
<p><b>5</b> Gender and nationality of heads of commissions and commissioners</p>	<p>There is no traffic light scoring for this variable; we only report on the aggregate numbers.</p>	
<p><b>6</b> Policy on sex-disaggregated data and gender analysis</p>	<p>● 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.</p>	
	<p>● Project- or issue-specific commitments to report sex-disaggregated data and/or undertake gender analysis found.</p>	
	<p>● No policy or commitment found.</p>	

# 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 Rights<sup>1</sup>**

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

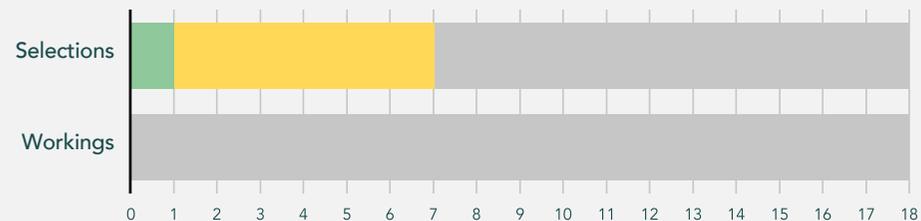
We assessed gender equality, fairness and equity policies with specific measures related to 1) the selection processes for commissioners, and 2) the workings of the commission.

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

## COMMISSIONS

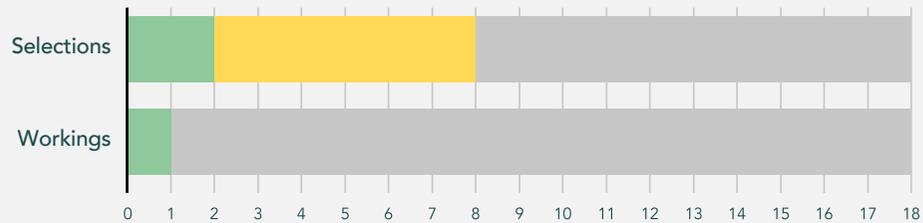


GENDER (IN)JUSTICE?

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.

**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.*



**2/18**

commissions have publicly available fairness and equity policies for commission selections



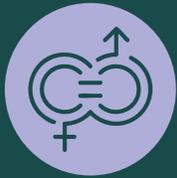
**1/18**

commissions have publicly available fairness and equity policies for commission workings

## COMMISSIONS

### 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:

**African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)<sup>2</sup>**

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



##### 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 Committee<sup>3</sup>**

##### 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.

**African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)<sup>4</sup>**

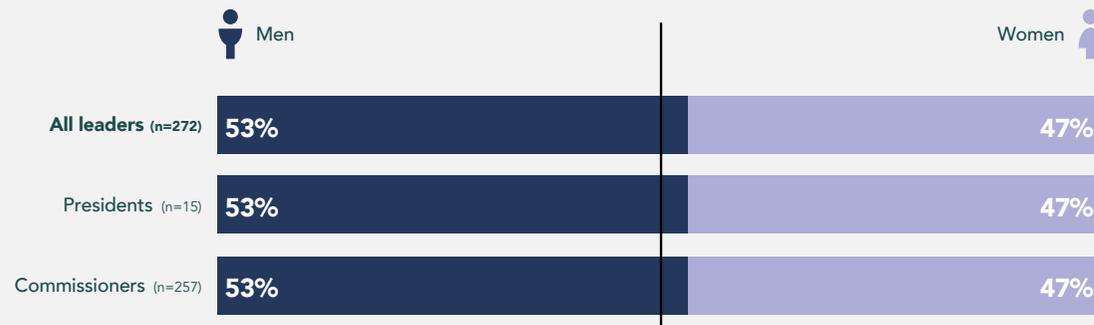
Rule 39: Commissioners  
1. The Assembly shall appoint eight (8) Commissioners on the basis of equal geographical distribution. In this regard, the respective regions from which the Chairperson of the Commission and his/her Deputy shall be appointed, shall be entitled to only one (1) Commissioner each.

# Finding 3. Gender parity masks geographic inequities in leadership

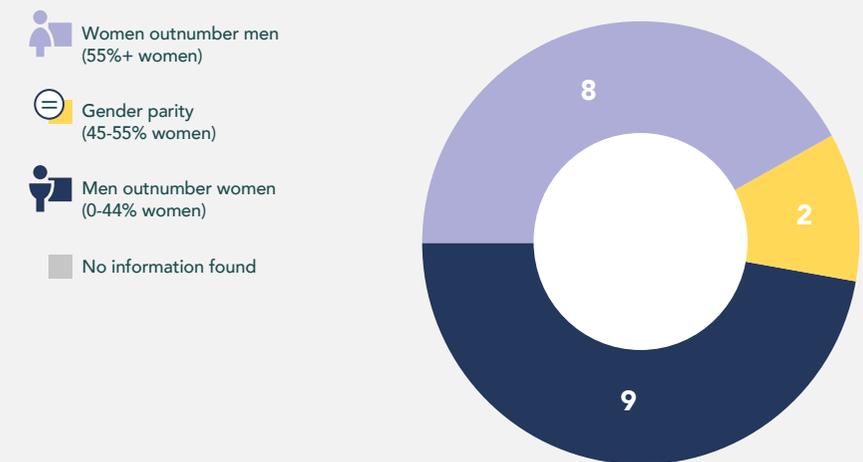
Across the 19 commissions in our sample, gender equality is high. Where a president role is present within the commission structure, half (7/15; 47%) are held by women. For four of the 19 commissions, there is no president role due to their organisational structure. The same proportion of women held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



## COMMISSIONS

### 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

GENDER (IN)JUSTICE?

**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

## COMMISSIONS

### 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 Disabilities<sup>5</sup>

**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.

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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](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](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-girls>

# Intergovernmental Organisations

READ THE FULL REPORT,  
INCLUDING METHODS



Read six other subsector chapters:

- Courts
- Commissions
- International NGOs
- Law firms
- Legal professional associations
- Funders

## 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 11 intergovernmental organisations in the sample (see page 91 for full list).

## Prayer and in war zones

*Iran. 2007.*

Ahmad Khatiri

*A mother and daughter kneel beside the rusted remains of a destroyed tank in southern Iran, heads bowed in mourning. A quiet image of war's aftermath and the gendered burden of remembrance.*

# At a glance

Our research reveals that decision-making remains concentrated among a narrow set of actors, constraining whose perspectives shape policies that affect global justice. To uphold principles of fairness and equity, the multilateral system must ensure its own structures are as inclusive as the commitments it promotes externally.

## Widespread commitments:

Intergovernmental organisations broadly recognise the importance of gender equality, but room remains for more organisations to formalise commitments.

While most publicly support gender equality, some still make no formal commitments.

## Among 11 intergovernmental organisations



9 have a public commitment to gender equality

## Partial policies:

More than half of intergovernmental organisations have gender equality, fairness and equity policies with specific measures.

Commitments alone are not enough; specific measures are needed to drive progress. Yet many organisations still lack detailed workplace policies needed to make equality real. Many intergovernmental organisations publish workplace policies on gender equality, and half have public policies on fairness and equity. Room remains however for a more standardised approach across organisations.

## Among 11 intergovernmental organisations



8 have gender equality workplace policies



6 have fairness and equity workplace policies

## Concentration of power:

Leadership is concentrated among nationals of high-income countries, and women from low- and middle-income countries are underrepresented in top roles.

Even where gender balance exists in senior management, geographic inequities persist, highlighting ongoing barriers to inclusive leadership.

## Among 11 holders of highest office



1 is a woman from an MIC

## Data deficits:

While half of international organisations recognise the importance of sex-disaggregated data, many still lack policies or commitments to regularly report such data or undertake gender analysis.

Without consistent collection, reporting, and analysis, it remains difficult to track who participates in programmes, who benefits, and where gender gaps persist, limiting accountability and the ability to address gendered outcomes effectively.

## Among 11 intergovernmental organisations



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

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 intergovernmental organisations

Intergovernmental organisations play a central role in the global justice system, setting international standards, providing technical guidance, facilitating cross-border cooperation, and implementing programmes that support justice, human rights, and rule of law initiatives. They conduct research on legal systems, monitor compliance, and advise states and other organisations on best practices. They shape global policy agendas, influence national and regional decision-making, and support capacity building in justice systems worldwide, wielding significant soft power to advance accountability and equitable legal frameworks.

Intergovernmental organisations are created by treaties or agreements among sovereign states and possess their own legal personality, enabling them to operate independently of their member states. This legal status distinguishes intergovernmental organisations from other entities such as global campaigns or networks, allowing them to enter agreements, implement programmes, and hold responsibilities in their own right.

The organisations in our sample were selected for their transnational reach and active engagement in the global law and justice sector. Assessing these organisations provides insight into the structures, practices, and leadership dynamics that shape legal and justice agendas.

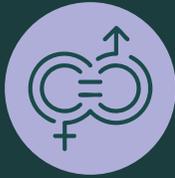
Global 50/50 only assesses publicly available information, a method that promotes transparency but is not without its limitations. Public commitments and policies do not always reflect internal practice, just as their absence does not necessarily indicate a lack of internal action, particularly in the 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.

## INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

Table 1. Variables reviewed: Intergovernmental organisations



Does the organisation make a public commitment to gender equality?



Are workplace gender equality and/or fairness and equity policies publicly available?

Are policies on board representation and inclusion publicly available?



What is the gender and nationality of leaders,

INCLUDING

Secretaries-general

Senior managers

Board chairs

Board members



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

### Box 1.

What we measure for each variable and how we assess the findings.

We assessed organisations' websites for publicly available information on the following:

<b>1</b> Public statement of commitment to gender equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="color: green;">●</span> Commits to gender equality/equity, gender justice, or gender mainstreaming in policy and planning.</li> <li><span style="color: yellow;">●</span> Works on women's rights, social justice, human rights, and/or access to justice, but no formal commitment to gender equality.</li> <li><span style="color: red;">●</span> No mention of gender or social justice.</li> </ul>
<b>2</b> Policies with specific measures to promote gender equality in the workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="color: green;">●</span> Policy with specific measure(s) to improve gender equality and/or support women's careers.</li> <li><span style="color: yellow;">●</span> Stated commitment to gender equality and/or diversity in the workplace (above the legal requirement) but no specific measures to carry out commitments; and/or reports on gender distribution of staff.</li> <li><span style="color: red;">●</span> Policy is compliant with law but no more = "we do not discriminate".</li> <li><span style="color: grey;">●</span> No reference to gender equality or non-discrimination in the workplace found.</li> </ul>
<b>3</b> Policies with specific measures to promote fairness and equity in the workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="color: green;">●</span> Policy with specific measure(s) to improve diversity, inclusion, fairness and/or equality.</li> <li><span style="color: yellow;">●</span> Commitment to promoting fairness and equity evidenced by a) aspirational comments and b) listing protected characteristics; and/or some reporting on characteristics among staff.</li> <li><span style="color: red;">●</span> Policy is compliant with law but no more = "we do not discriminate".</li> <li><span style="color: grey;">●</span> No reference to equality or non-discrimination in the workplace found.</li> </ul>

### 4 Gender parity in senior management

-  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 the head of the organisation

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 organisational commitment found to regularly report sex-disaggregated data or to undertake gender analysis.
-  Project-specific commitments to report sex-disaggregated data or to undertake gender analysis.
-  No policy or commitment found.

# Finding 1. A majority of intergovernmental organisations recognise gender equality as a priority

Public commitments to gender equality signal institutional recognition of its importance and provide a foundation for accountability in practice. We reviewed whether intergovernmental organisations had stated such a commitment on their websites. Nine (9/11; 82%) intergovernmental organisations had a public commitment to gender equality.

**Figure 1.** Public commitments to gender equality found, intergovernmental organisations (n=11)



## Box 2. Organisational examples

### Example of intergovernmental organisation commitment to gender equality

*[The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights] works to strengthen gender-equality institutions, identify discriminatory laws and policies, and increase women's participation in politics and electoral processes. Through gender equality training for parliamentarians, civil society and security sector personnel, and by encouraging women's recruitment and promotion within the security ranks, ODIHR supports effective institutions, policies and programmes that reflect the needs and interests of both men and women.*

**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) – Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)<sup>1</sup>**

9/11 organisations have a public commitment to gender equality

## Finding 2. Most intergovernmental organisations publish workplace policies on gender equality, and half do so on fairness and equity in the workplace

Workplace policies on gender equality, fairness and equity with specific measures set clear standards and translate commitments into concrete, accountable actions. 8/11 (73%) intergovernmental organisations had published policies on gender equality with specific measures, and 6/11 (55%) had published policies on fairness and equity with specific measures.

Specific measures for promoting gender equality included: gender-responsive recruitment and hiring processes; mentoring, training, and leadership programmes; targets for women’s participation at senior levels; gender analysis and action in staff performance reviews and staff surveys; regular reviews of organisational efforts towards gender equality; and/or reporting back to all staff.

Specific measures for advancing fairness and equity included: inclusive recruitment processes; mentoring, training, and leadership programmes; targets for representation; fairness and equity analysis and action in staff performance reviews; regular reviews of organisational efforts towards fairness and equity; and/or employee resource groups.

**Figure 2.** Gender equality and fairness and equity policies found, intergovernmental organisations (n=11)



**8/11**

organisations have publicly available gender equality policies



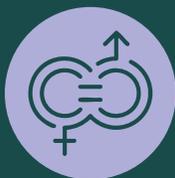
**6/11**

organisations have publicly available fairness and equity policies

## INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

### Box 3. Organisational examples

#### Examples of intergovernmental organisation gender equality, fairness and equity policies



##### GENDER EQUALITY POLICY WITH SPECIFIC MEASURES:

1. This policy supplements efforts on equality of opportunity and treatment for women in the International Labour Office, and is a crucial step towards implementation of gender equality and equity throughout the Organization.

4. An Office-wide target has been set of 50 per cent of Professional posts to be filled by women, with particular care to be given to gender balance in senior posts. Career development opportunities for General Service staff will be expanded and specific measures will be taken to create a family-friendly and enabling working environment for all staff, both men and women.

**International Labour  
Organization (ILO)<sup>2</sup>**



##### FAIRNESS AND EQUITY POLICY WITH SPECIFIC MEASURES:

In order to strengthen geographical diversity amongst [UN Office on Drugs and Crime] staff, the office has implemented the UN Secretariat's Geographical Diversity Strategy and an organisation-specific Geography Action Plan. In line with Article 101.3 of the UN Charter, "the paramount consideration in the employment of the staff and in the determination of the conditions of service shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence, and integrity. Due regard shall be paid to the importance of recruiting the staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible."

To improve accessibility and inclusion for persons with disabilities, the organization follows the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy as well as a tailored UNODC Disability Inclusion Action Plan. UNODC is committed to providing reasonable accommodation. When prompted to indicate their disability status in the online application form, candidates are invited to provide information on the need for reasonable accommodation.

**United Nations Office  
on Drugs and Crime  
(UNODC)<sup>3</sup>**

# Finding 3. Gender parity masks the under-representation of women from low- and middle-income countries in leadership roles

Across 11 intergovernmental organisations, five (5/11; 45%) highest offices were held by women.

We collected gender data on 92 senior managers across eight intergovernmental organisations. Three (3/11; 27%) intergovernmental organisations have more women than men in senior management (55%+ women) and four (4/11; 36%) are at gender parity (45-55% women).

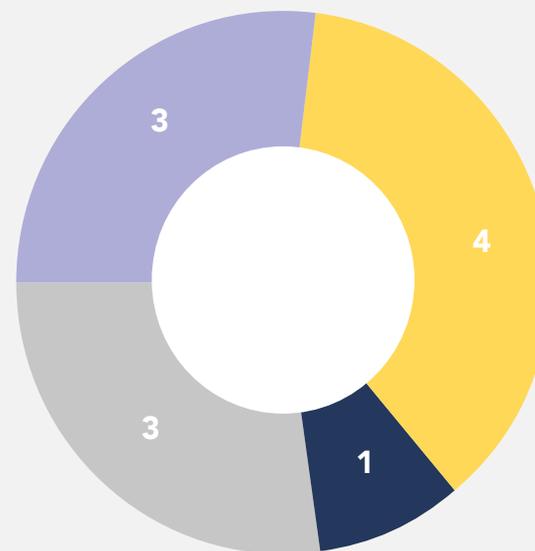
Leadership remains heavily skewed by geography. Most holders of highest office (9/11; 82%) are nationals of high-income countries (HICs). One (1/11; 9%) is a woman from a middle-income country (MIC), with no representation of women from low-income countries (LICs).

### Box 4.

We attempted to collect data on board members of intergovernmental organisations. However, we were able to identify board chairs for only four organisations and board members for four organisations. For this reason, we have not reported this data.

**Figure 3.** Proportion of intergovernmental organisations with gender parity in senior management (n=11)

-  Women outnumber men (55%+ women)
-  Gender parity (45-55% women)
-  Men outnumber women (0-44% women)
-  No information found



**5/11**

of top leaders were women

## Finding 4. Half of intergovernmental organisations recognise the importance of sex-disaggregated data and gender analysis, but commitments to regularly report are not universal

Sex-disaggregated data and gender analysis is essential for understanding who benefits from programmes, who participates in initiatives, and where gender gaps persist. For intergovernmental organisations, disaggregation of programmatic data by sex enables tracking of whether resources, support, and opportunities reach women and men equitably, supports accountability to gender equality commitments, and informs more effective, inclusive programming. Without such data, assessing the gendered impacts of interventions remains largely speculative.

Across 11 intergovernmental organisations, half (5/11; 45%) had a public commitment or policy to disaggregate programmatic data by sex or to undertake gender analysis.

**Figure 4.** Policies or commitments to report sex-disaggregated data or undertake gender analysis found, intergovernmental organisations (n=11)



**5/11**

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

## INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

### Box 5. Organisational examples

#### Example of international organisation policy to sex-disaggregate data or undertake gender analysis

*In line with the UN strategy of mainstreaming as a means towards gender equality, UNICRI integrates a gender perspective into its programmes so that women and men benefit equally, or as equally as possible, from its activities, tools, and approaches. UNICRI does so by making the concerns and experiences of women and men an integral dimension of the research, design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of its programme cycle architecture.*

*UNICRI does this by: 1: Systematically producing, analysing, and using gender statistics and sex-disaggregated data. Gender statistics, sex-disaggregated data, and gender analysis tools are integrated into the UNICRI programme cycle to sharpen its understanding and responsiveness to the different needs, experiences, and circumstances of women and men. This, in turn, facilitates better-tailored interventions that drive improved development outcomes and entry points for change by ensuring gendered dimensions are fully considered in programme actions, activities, and impacts.*

**United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI)<sup>4</sup>**

**Mulago school for the deaf**  
Kampala, Uganda. 2023.  
Marijn Fidder

*With over 160 pupils, many with multiple disabilities, the Mulago School for the Deaf represents both a sanctuary and a challenge to educational inequities.*

### 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



# Intergovernmental Organisations in the Global Justice 50/50 sample

- European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)
- Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH)
- International Development Law Organization (IDLO)
- International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA)
- International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT)
- International Labour Organization (ILO)
- Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) – Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)
- United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI)
- United Nations Office of Legal Affairs (OLA)
- United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

# Endnotes

- 1 Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. (nd). Gender Equality. <https://www.osce.org/odihr/gender-equality>
- 2 International Labour Organization. (2022). Action Plan for Gender Equality 2022–25. [https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40dgreports/%40dcomm/documents/publication/wcms\\_856240.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40dgreports/%40dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_856240.pdf)
- 3 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (nd). UNODC Careers. <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/about-unodc/employment-opportunities.html>
- 4 United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute. (2023). UNICRI Programmes Gender Strategy. [https://unicri.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/Unicri\\_Gender\\_strategy\\_web.pdf](https://unicri.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/Unicri_Gender_strategy_web.pdf)

# International Non-Governmental Organisations (International NGOs)

READ THE FULL REPORT, INCLUDING METHODS



Read six other subsector chapters:

- Courts
- Commissions
- Intergovernmental organisations
- Law firms
- Legal professional associations
- Funders

## 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, workplaces 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 51 international NGOs in the sample (see page 110 for full list).

**The enjoyment of life is not for all**  
*Purulia, West Bengal, India. 2022.*  
Barun Rajgaria

*At dusk, a young girl carries water while boys play around her, tracing the early lines of gendered labour that shape lives.*

# At a glance

Our research reveals that leadership and decision-making continue to privilege actors from a small portion of the world, limiting whose perspectives shape organisational priorities. To genuinely uphold the principles of equality, civil society must ensure its own structures reflect the fairness and equity it seeks to champion externally.

## Limited commitments:

Many international NGOs recognise the importance of gender equality, but commitments are inconsistent across organisations.

While many publicly support gender equality, a significant proportion still make no formal commitments, even when working directly on women's rights, human rights, or access to justice.

### Among 51 international NGOs

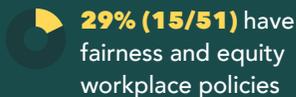


## Partial policies:

Workplace policies on gender equality, fairness and equity with specific measures are not consistently published.

Commitments alone are not enough; specific measures are needed to drive progress. Yet many organisations still lack detailed workplace policies needed to make equality real. Without actionable policies, progress remains aspirational rather than operational.

### Among 51 international NGOs



## Limited board guidance:

Policies on board representation and inclusion are rare.

Eight percent of organisations published policies on representative and inclusive boards. This leaves major gaps in accountability and weakens efforts to build diverse, equitable leadership at the highest levels.

### Among 50 international NGOs



## Concentration of power:

Leadership is gender balanced but heavily concentrated among nationals of high-income countries.

Women from low- and middle-income countries hold only a fraction of CEO and board chair roles, revealing persistent geographic inequities.

### Among 52 CEOs



### Among 54 board chairs



### Among 494 board members



## Data deficits:

Most international NGOs do not have policies to regularly report sex-disaggregated programmatic data or undertake gender analysis.

Organisations' failure to collect, analyse, and report data disaggregated by sex or undertake gender analysis makes the gendered impacts of their work largely invisible. Without this data, organisations cannot fully understand – or be accountable for – who is being left behind.

### Among 51 international NGOs



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



## Assessing international NGOs

International non-governmental organisations (international NGOs) operate at the forefront of global justice, advocating for human rights, legal reform, and equitable access to justice. Their activities include strategic litigation, global public campaigning, technical assistance to states and other stakeholders, and, in some contexts, direct service delivery, as well as research and monitoring. International NGOs also engage with international and regional institutions, contribute to norm development, and hold public and private actors accountable across borders, shaping legal and policy agendas at multiple levels.

The 51 international NGOs in our sample represent some of the most influential organisations working on justice, human rights, and rule of law initiatives worldwide. These organisations were selected based on their transnational reach and sustained engagement with international legal and policy processes. The sample focuses on organisations that shape global justice agendas, rather than those primarily operating nationally or regionally.

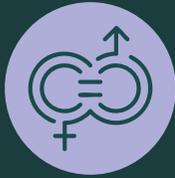
Global 50/50 only assesses publicly available information, a method that promotes transparency but is not without its limitations. Public commitments and policies do not always reflect internal practice, just as their absence does not necessarily indicate a lack of internal action, particularly in the 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.

## INTERNATIONAL NGOs

Table 1. Variables reviewed: International NGOs



Does the organisation make a public commitment to gender equality?



Are workplace gender equality and/or fairness and equity policies publicly available?

Are policies on board representation and inclusion publicly available?



What is the gender and nationality of leaders,

INCLUDING

CEOs

Senior managers

Board chairs

Board members



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

### Box 1.

What we measure for each variable and how we assess the findings.

We assessed organisations' websites for publicly available information on the following:

<b>1</b> Public statement of commitment to gender equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="color: green;">●</span> Commits to gender equality/equity, gender justice, or gender mainstreaming in policy and planning.</li> <li><span style="color: yellow;">●</span> Work on women's rights, social justice, human rights, and/or access to justice, but no formal commitment to gender equality.</li> <li><span style="color: red;">●</span> No mention of gender or social justice.</li> </ul>
<b>2</b> Policies with specific measures to promote gender equality in the workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="color: green;">●</span> Policy with specific measure(s) to improve gender equality and/or support women's careers.</li> <li><span style="color: yellow;">●</span> Stated commitment to gender equality and/or diversity in the workplace (above the legal requirement) but no specific measures to carry out commitments; and/or reports on gender distribution of staff.</li> <li><span style="color: red;">●</span> Policy is compliant with law but no more = "we do not discriminate".</li> <li><span style="color: gray;">●</span> No reference to gender equality or non-discrimination in the workplace found.</li> </ul>
<b>3</b> Policies with specific measures to promote fairness and equity in the workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="color: green;">●</span> Policy with specific measure(s) to improve diversity, inclusion, fairness and/or equality.</li> <li><span style="color: yellow;">●</span> Commitment to promoting fairness and equity evidenced by a) aspirational comments and b) listing protected characteristics; and/or some reporting on characteristics among staff.</li> <li><span style="color: red;">●</span> Policy is compliant with law but no more = "we do not discriminate".</li> <li><span style="color: gray;">●</span> No reference to equality or non-discrimination in the workplace found.</li> </ul>

<p><b>4</b> Policies with specific measures to promote inclusion and representation in governing boards</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="color: green;">●</span> Policy with specific strategies and measures (e.g. targets, dedicated seats, monitoring) to promote diversity, inclusion, and representation in the board publicly available.</li> <li><span style="color: yellow;">●</span> Commitment to diversity and/or representation of affected communities on board found, but no specific measures to advance representation and inclusion; and/or some summary reporting on board composition, but no policy to advance representation and inclusion.</li> <li><span style="color: red;">●</span> Publicly available policy and/or information on board rules but no commitment to principles of representation and inclusion.</li> <li><span style="color: grey;">●</span> No information on board policy or rules regarding composition and/or role (regardless of whether current board members are published).</li> </ul>
<p><b>5</b> Gender parity in senior management and in governing boards</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="color: purple;">●</span> 56-100% women represented.</li> <li><span style="color: green;">●</span> 45-55% women represented; or difference of one individual.</li> <li><span style="color: yellow;">●</span> 35-44% women represented.</li> <li><span style="color: red;">●</span> 0-34% women represented.</li> </ul>
<p><b>6</b> Gender and nationality of the head of the organisation and board chair</p>	<p>There is no traffic light scoring for this variable; we only report on the aggregate numbers.</p>
<p><b>7</b> Policy on sex-disaggregated data and gender analysis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="color: green;">●</span> Policy or organisational commitment found to regularly report sex-disaggregated data and/or to undertake gender analysis.</li> <li><span style="color: yellow;">●</span> Project-specific commitments to report sex-disaggregated data and/or to undertake gender analysis.</li> <li><span style="color: grey;">●</span> No policy or commitment found.</li> </ul>

## Finding 1. Explicit commitments to gender equality are common, but not universal

Public commitments to gender equality signal institutional recognition of its importance and provide a foundation for accountability in practice. We reviewed whether international NGOs had stated such a commitment on their websites. 31/ 51 (61%) international NGOs had a formal, public commitment to gender equality. The remaining 20 (20/51; 39%) had no such formal commitments, although all engage in work related to women's rights, human rights and/or access to justice.

**Figure 1.** Public commitments to gender equality found, international NGOs (n=51)



**61%**  
of organisations have a public commitment to gender equality

### Box 2. Organisational examples

#### Example of international NGO commitment to gender equality

*Vision: A gender-equal world where every person lives free from violence, has full bodily autonomy, and has the power to access justice to protect and promote their human rights.*

*Mission: Creative feminists using international law to achieve gender equality and dismantle systems of oppression.*

*Theory of Change: Achieving a gender equal world requires systemic change and transformation of patriarchal structures through complementary strategies and approaches.*

- Women deserve justice for violations of their rights, and states and institutions must be held to account when they fail to ensure gender equality.
- The progressive interpretation and application of international law and human rights are a strong foundation for gender equality in law and in fact.
- Multilateral institutions must be grounded in a feminist approach to effectively defend and advance human rights around the world.
- Change must be driven by those who are most affected, which requires global north organizations to uplift and share power with feminist grassroots actors around the world.

**Global Justice Center (GJC)<sup>1</sup>**

**Against all odds**

*Nigeria. 2025.*

Aderemi Davies "AyaworanHO3D"

*Adenike Adebayo is radiant, her pose one of quiet power. Having lost both legs in early childhood due to the mismanagement of a treatable illness, Adenike's story is not one of victimhood but of resilience, joy, and ambition.*



## Finding 2. Workplace policies on gender equality, fairness and equity are limited, and few organisations have specific measures to advance those policies which do exist

Workplace policies on gender equality, fairness and equity with specific measures are important for setting clear standards and translating commitments into concrete, accountable actions. 16/51 (31%) international NGOs had published policies on gender equality in the workplace with specific measures.

Examples of specific measures included: gender-responsive recruitment and hiring processes; mentoring, training, and leadership programmes; targets for women's participation at senior levels; gender analysis and action in staff performance reviews and staff surveys; regular reviews of organisational efforts towards gender equality; and/or reporting back to all staff.

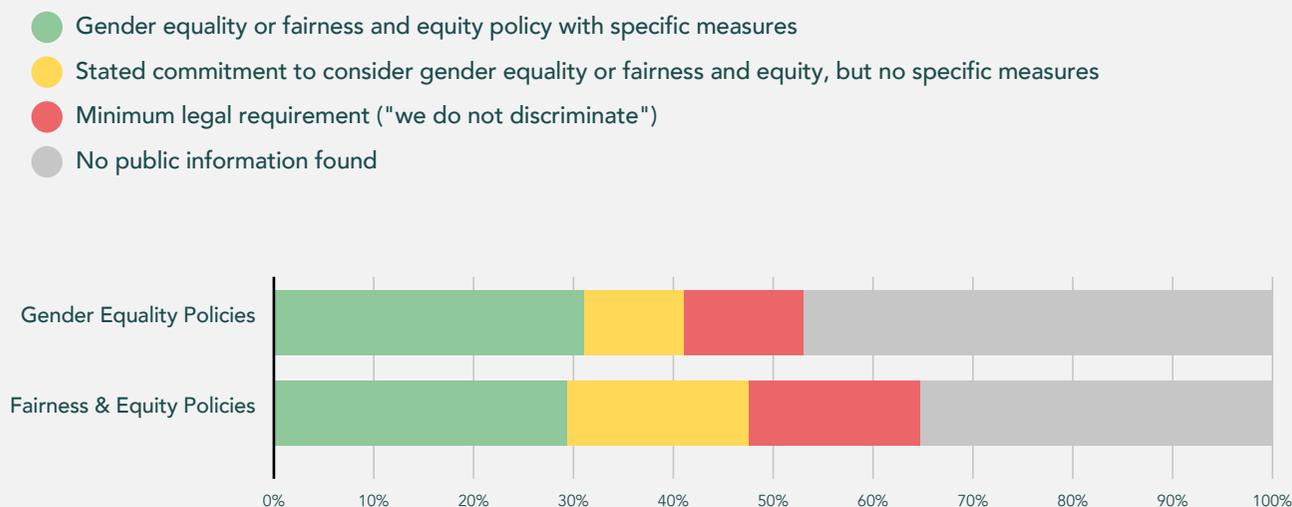
Similarly, a workplace fairness and equity policies with specific measures were found for 15/51 (29%) international NGOs. No public reference to non-discrimination, diversity, fairness or equity was found for 18/51 (35%) of NGOs.

Specific measures included: inclusive recruitment processes; mentoring, training, and leadership programmes; targets for representation; fairness and equity analysis and action in staff performance reviews; regular reviews of organisational efforts towards fairness and equity; and/or employee resource groups.

We do not assess the policies of small organisations – those with 10 or fewer staff – for these variables (unless they are hosted by a larger organisation). We would not expect organisations (nor did we find any) of

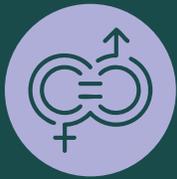
this size to develop gender equality, fairness and equity plans. However, we continue to encourage them to, at a minimum, make a public commitment to gender equality, fairness and equity.

**Figure 2.** Gender equality and fairness and equity policies found, international NGOs (n=51)



### Box 3. Organisational examples

#### Examples of international NGO gender equality, fairness and equity policies



##### GENDER EQUALITY POLICY WITH SPECIFIC MEASURES:

*We owe it as a duty of care to our employees, but also as a social driver – in the US, the Institute for Women's Policy Research found that poverty rates would halve for families with at least one working woman if equal pay was enshrined.*

*At Global Witness we're doing this by:*

- *Providing full pay transparency*
- *Reporting the gender pay gap even if the number of employees you have doesn't require you to report it*
- *Introducing gender neutral parent leave to enable working parents to thrive*

**Global Witness<sup>2</sup>**



##### FAIRNESS AND EQUITY POLICY WITH SPECIFIC MEASURES:

*As part of its commitment to an inclusive work culture, Crisis Group will pursue gender-, race-, religion-, sexual orientation-, and disability-sensitive management. Relevant practices include carefully designed recruitment procedures, a zero-tolerance harassment policy, clear criteria for performance evaluations to reduce bias, generous parental leave, and equal pay for equal work; pursuing diverse means to increase the presence of underrepresented groups, in part through a voluntary mentorship program for junior staff; and fostering open communication.*

**International Crisis Group (Crisis Group)<sup>3</sup>**

## Finding 3. Policies on board representation and inclusion are largely absent

Boards play a central role in shaping organisational priorities, culture, and oversight. Formal policies on board composition can help ensure leadership is diverse, equitable, and accountable. We looked for policies on board representation and inclusion with specific measures on board composition in the public domain.

Four (4/50; 8%) international NGOs had a board inclusion and representation policy with specific measures. For the vast majority (44/50; 88%), no such policy or commitment could be found.

### Box 2. Organisational examples

#### Examples of international NGO board representation and inclusion policy

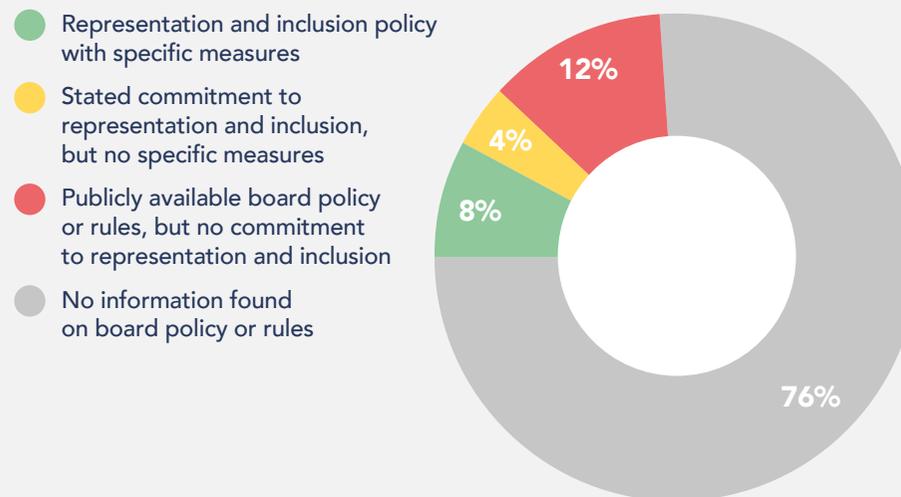
*Article 21: Board election procedures*

2. No more than one third (1/3) of the Board Members shall be elected by the Board itself, to ensure that the Board acquires the necessary balance of gender, expertise, regional representation or other diversity.

4. Neither gender shall comprise less than forty percent (40%) of the Board.

ActionAid International\*

**Figure 3.** Board representation and inclusion policies found, international NGOs (n=50\*)



\* One international NGO has been excluded as the board selection is driven by member states.



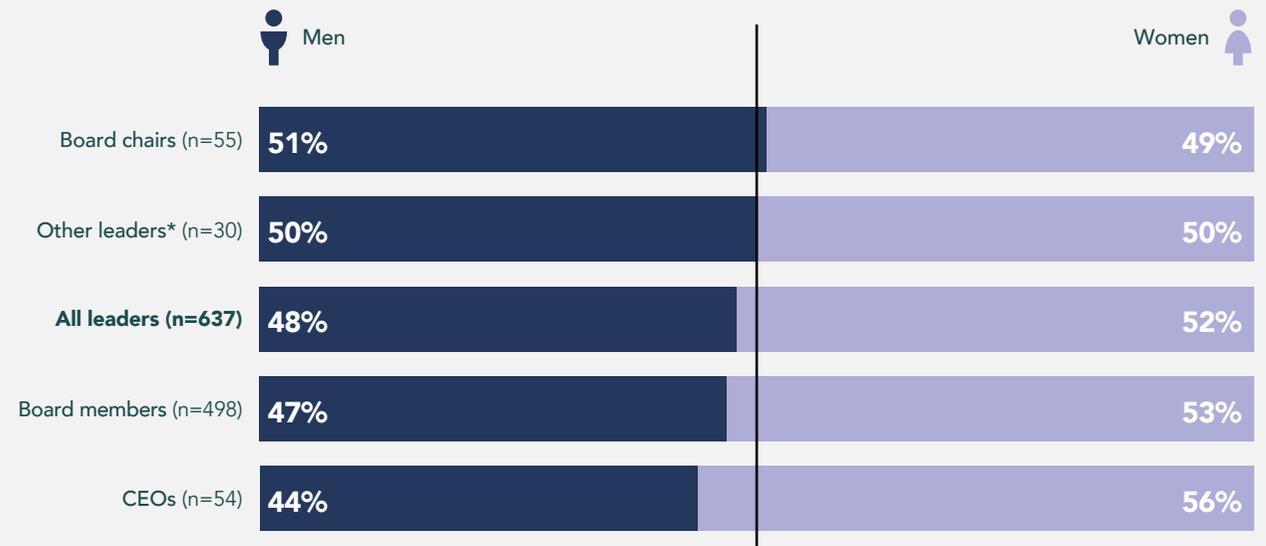
8% of organisations have publicly available board representation and inclusion policies

# Finding 4. Gender parity hides deep geographic inequities in leadership

Across 51 international NGOs, women held 30/54 (56%) CEO positions and 27/55 (49%) board chair seats.



Figure 4. Proportion of men and women among power holders, international NGOs (n=637)

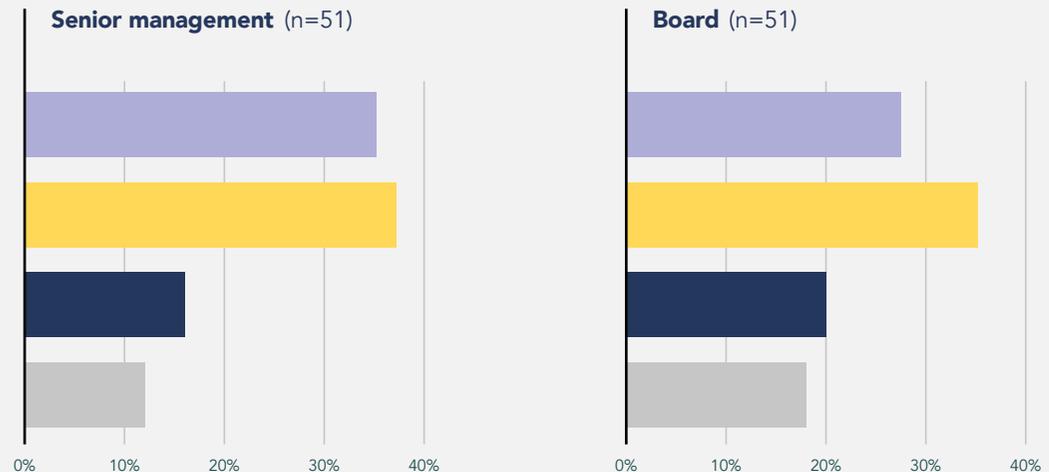


\* Other leaders include Vice Presidents, Executive Vice Presidents, Deputy Secretaries-General, Deputy Executive Directors, Deputy Directors and Associate Executive Directors.

We collected gender data on 562 senior managers across 45 international NGOs and assessed how many organisations have achieved gender parity at the senior management level. For six (6/51; 14%) international NGOs, no information on their senior management team could be found. 19/51 (37%) had senior management teams at gender parity (45-55% women), and 18/51 (35%) had more women than men (55%+ women).

We also collected data on 584 board members across 42 international NGOs. For nine (9/51; 23%) international NGOs, no information could be found on their governing boards. Governing boards showed similar patterns, with 18/51 (35%) at parity and 14/51 (27%) where women outnumbered men.

**Figure 5. International NGOs with gender parity in senior management and board membership (n=51)**



# INTERNATIONAL NGOs

## Distribution of gender and nationality across leadership roles in international NGOs



- 👤 **HICs: 37%** (19) men and **44%** (23) women.
- 👤 **MICs: 4%** (2) men and **12%** (6) women.
- 👤 **LICs: 2%** (1) men and no women.



- 👤 **HICs: 41%** (22) men and **35%** (19) women.
- 👤 **MICs: 6%** (3) men and **11%** (6) women.
- 👤 **LICs: no men and 4%** (2) women.



- 👤 **HICs: 30%** (149) men and **35%** (172) women.
- 👤 **MICs: 11%** (56) men and **11%** (57) women.
- 👤 **LICs: 3%** (13) men and **2%** (9) women.



- 👤 **HICs: 45%** (13) men and **34%** (10) women.
- 👤 **MICs: 6%** (2) men and **10%** (3) women.
- 👤 **LICs: No men or women represented.**

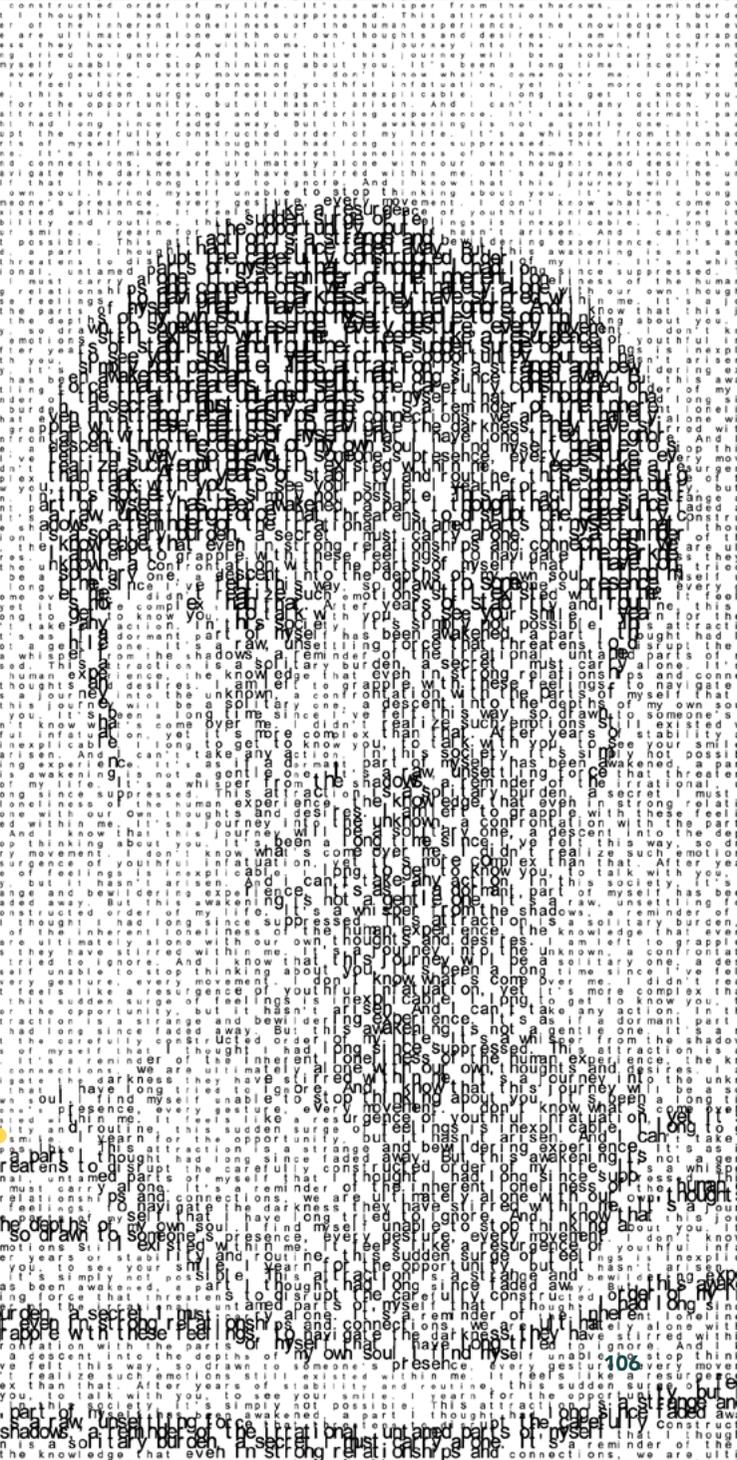
We reviewed the country of national origin of leaders and classified these by World Bank income classification. Of 637 leaders, nationality data were found for 629 (52 CEOs, 54 board chairs, 494 board members, and 29 other leaders), 41 of whom were dual nationals.

While women's representation is relatively balanced, leadership remains heavily skewed by geographical inequities. Most are nationals of high-income countries (HICs): 42/52 (81%) CEOs, 41/54 (76%) board chairs, 321/494 (65%) board members, and 23/29 (79%) other leaders. Nationals of middle-income countries (MICs) (8/52 (15%) CEOs, 9/54 (17%) board chairs, 113/494 (23%) board members, and 5/29 (17%) other leaders) and low-income countries (LICs) (1/52 (2%) CEOs, 2/54 (4%) board chairs, 22/494; 4% board members, and no other leaders) are underrepresented.

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

**Self-portrait I**  
Taipei city, Taiwan. 2024.  
Wu Siou Ming

*A face emerges, constructed from fragments of unspoken thought. This self-portrait, formed entirely of text, transforms the artist's private inner world into a visual field of meaning, contemplating the fragility and urgency of expression.*

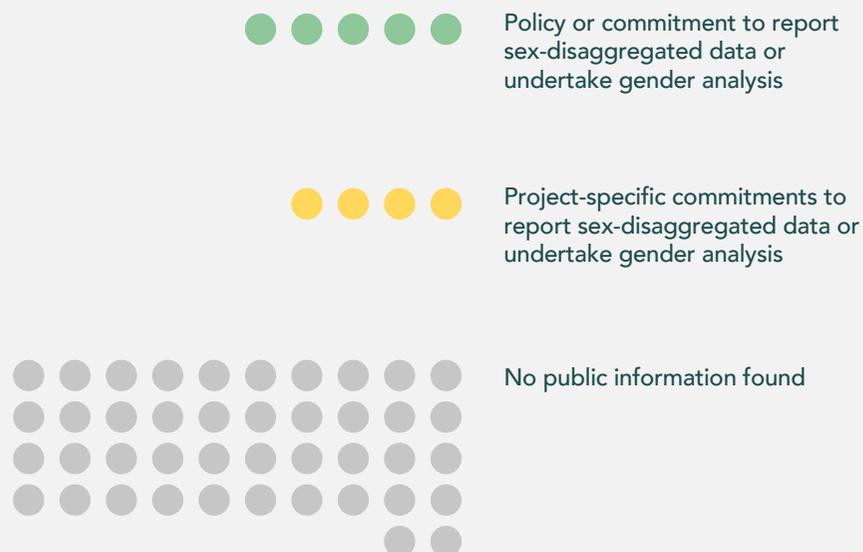


## Finding 5. Commitments to disaggregation of data by sex or gender analysis are largely absent

Sex-disaggregated data is essential for understanding who benefits from programming and where gender gaps persist. For organisations working to advance justice, human rights, and equity, collecting and reporting this data is a baseline requirement for accountability and for assessing whether their external impact aligns with their stated values.

Across 51 international NGOs, we found that most international NGOs do not publish such information. Many (42/51; 82%) did not have a public commitment or policy to disaggregate programmatic data by sex or to undertake gender analysis, while five (5/51; 10%) organisations had a specific commitment or policy to do so.

**Figure 6.** Policies or commitments to report sex-disaggregated data or undertake gender analysis found, international NGOs (n=51)



**10%**  
of organisations have a commitment to publicly report sex-disaggregated data or undertake gender analysis

## INTERNATIONAL NGOs

### Box 3. Organisational examples

#### Example of international NGO policy to sex-disaggregate data or undertake gender analysis

*We collect and analyse data on the relation of gender and corruption, and use them as a basis for our recommendations to policy makers. Through our Advocacy and Legal Advice centres in over 60 countries, we encourage people to report sextortion and other forms of gendered corruption.*

*We call on global leaders to:*

- *Collect, analyse and publish gender disaggregated data on the differentiated impact of corruption on men and women;*
- *Recognise and effectively address sextortion as a form of corruption;*
- *Promote women's participation in public, economic and political life.*
- *Mainstream gender sensitive approaches in all anti-corruption work.*

#### Transparency International<sup>5</sup>

**Women of Srebrenica**  
Srebrenica, Bosnia. 2015.  
Mara Scampoli

*A group of women mourn at the graves of those killed during the Srebrenica massacre in July 1995. The genocide, carried out by Bosnian Serb forces, targeted Muslim men and boys, claiming the lives of at least 8,372 victims.*

### 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 institutions 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





## Claire Thomas

Executive Director of Minority Rights Group

### *Transforming leadership through inclusive policy and decentralised, community-led approaches: Minority Rights Group*

Minority Rights Group (MRG) believes that rights and opportunities must not be an accident of birth. Our vision is of egalitarian societies built by inclusive policy and collective action that respect minority and indigenous ways of life. Members of these communities have uniquely gendered and intersectional experiences and frequently face discrimination and disadvantage. However, such exclusion cannot be addressed if it is invisible. Committed to ethical and community-led data practices, we disaggregate statistics by gender, age, disability and minority or indigenous status and situate quantitative data within qualitative testimony to ensure that lived experiences inform advocacy, intervention and policy. Our gender work, for example, examines how gender intersects with ethnicity, religion, language, disability and age to create distinct barriers, challenges and opportunities.

MRG's decentralized, bottom-up approach shifts power into the hands of minority and indigenous activists at the community level. Our programmes are co-designed in collaboration with our 300 minority and indigenous-led partner organizations worldwide. Gender is mainstreamed across all teams and initiatives, ensuring these programmes address the specific needs of minority and Indigenous women and girls, including those with disabilities. Faced with anti-gender, anti-diversity and anti-human rights agendas alongside diverse global crises, our approach enables meaningful representation and grassroots leadership. Both are essential for transformative, intersectional and lasting impact.

# International NGOs in the Global Justice 50/50 sample

- A4ID: Advocates for International Development
- Access Now
- ActionAid International
- Amnesty International
- Anti-Slavery International
- Center for Economic and Social Rights (CESR)
- Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL)
- Center for Justice and Accountability (CJA)
- Center for Reproductive Rights
- Civil Rights Defenders
- Cordaid
- Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR)
- Earthjustice
- Equality Now
- European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR)
- Freedom House
- Front Line Defenders (FLD)
- Global Justice Center (GJC)
- Global Rights
- Global Witness
- Greenpeace International
- Human Rights Foundation (HRF)
- Human Rights Watch (HRW)
- Humanity in Action
- International Law Institute (ILI)
- Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa (IHRDA)
- Institute for International Law and Human Rights (IILHR)
- International Bridges to Justice (IBJ)
- International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL)
- International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)
- International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
- International Crisis Group (Crisis Group)
- International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
- International Justice Mission (IJM)
- International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP)
- International Rescue Committee (IRC)
- International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
- International Society for Human Rights (ISHR)
- Justice Rapid Response (JRR)
- Lawyers Without Borders (LWOB)
- Max Planck Foundation for International Peace and the Rule of Law (MPFPR)
- Minority Rights Group (MRG)
- Protection International (PI)
- Public International Law & Policy Group (PILPG)
- Survival International
- The Carter Center
- The Cyrus R. Vance Center for International Justice (The Vance Center)
- The International Legal Foundation (The ILF)
- Transparency International (TI)
- UN Watch
- World Justice Project (WJP)

# Endnotes

- 1 Global Justice Center. (2021). 2021-2026 Strategic Framework. [https://wordpress-537312-2488108.cloudwaysapps.com/temp-uploads/2021/11/2021-2026\\_GJC-StrategicFramework\\_final.pdf](https://wordpress-537312-2488108.cloudwaysapps.com/temp-uploads/2021/11/2021-2026_GJC-StrategicFramework_final.pdf)
- 2 Global Witness. (2024). Our gender pay gap 2024, and why NGOs should opt to report. <https://globalwitness.org/en/about-us/our-gender-pay-gap-2024-and-why-ngos-should-opt-to-report/>
- 3 International Crisis Group. (2019). Strategic Framework 2019-2024. [https://www.crisisgroup.org/sites/default/files/Strategic%20Framework%202019-2024-web%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.crisisgroup.org/sites/default/files/Strategic%20Framework%202019-2024-web%20(1).pdf)
- 4 ActionAid International. (2009). The Constitution. <https://actionaid.org/sites/default/files/publications/Constitution%20of%20AAI.pdf>
- 5 Transparency International. (nd). Gender. <https://www.transparency.org/en/our-priorities/gender-and-corruption>

# Law Firms

READ THE FULL REPORT,  
INCLUDING METHODS



Read six other subsector chapters:

- Courts
- Commissions
- Intergovernmental organisations
- International NGOs
- Legal professional associations
- Funders

## 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, workplaces 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 38 law firms in the sample (see page 129 for full list).

**Covid bride**  
Kolkata, India. 2021.  
Avijit Ghosh

*In uniform and masked, Ruhina strides through her school hall, surrounded by her own handwritten testimony. After escaping child marriage, she reclaims space and voice.*

# At a glance

Our research reveals that senior leadership remains overwhelmingly male and dominated by nationals from high-income countries. The legal profession cannot fully uphold principles of fairness and equity until its own leadership reflects the societies it serves.

## Sparse commitments:

Few law firms formally commit to gender equality, and most who do frame commitments in the context of their *pro bono* work.

Law firms play a powerful role in shaping justice, but few embed gender equality into their core values or organisational mission statements. Most firms make no commitments at all, even while offering services encompassing women's rights and access to justice. For the most part firms are silent on commitments to gender equality.

### Among 38 law firms



**10** have a public commitment to gender equality

## Policy gaps:

Workplace policies on gender equality exist mainly for staff, with equality at the level of senior partnership largely unaddressed.

Most firms have gender equality, fairness and equity policies for staff, but far fewer apply to or are specific to senior management or partners. This split creates a two-tier system where the people with the most power – the partners – are the least accountable for gender equality. Without policies that affect the top, equality cannot be realised.

### Among 38 law firms



**27** have gender equality policies for the workplace



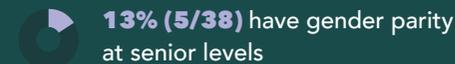
**16** have gender equality policies for senior management

## Concentration of power:

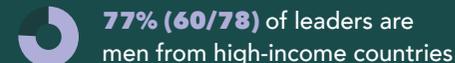
Senior leadership is overwhelmingly male and concentrated among nationals from high-income countries.

Very few firms have achieved gender parity at senior levels, and just a small minority are led by women. The result is a concentration of influence that sidelines the voices of women and those from low- and middle-income countries. Who leads shapes whose justice is prioritised.

### Among 38 law firms



**13% (5/38)** have gender parity at senior levels



**77% (60/78)** of leaders are men from high-income countries

## Data deficits:

Data transparency is essential for accountability, but most firms do not publish sex-disaggregated data or commit to undertake gender analysis.

Those that do tend to focus inward, not on the external impact of their work on women vs men. Without consistent reporting, the gendered effects of legal practice remain unexamined and unaddressed. What firms fail to measure, they fail to change.

### Among 38 law firms



**7** have a commitment to report sex-disaggregated data or undertake gender analysis

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



## Assessing the law firms

Law firms sit at the heart of the international legal and economic order. They advise governments, corporations, and international organisations, shaping how laws are interpreted, applied, and enforced across jurisdictions. In doing so, they influence justice outcomes, market operations, and the functioning of public institutions worldwide.

The firms in our sample represent some of the largest and most internationally active 'elite' law firms, operating across multiple jurisdictions and practice areas, including commercial, regulatory, human rights, and public international law. They provide legal advice and representation in complex, high-value matters and serve as

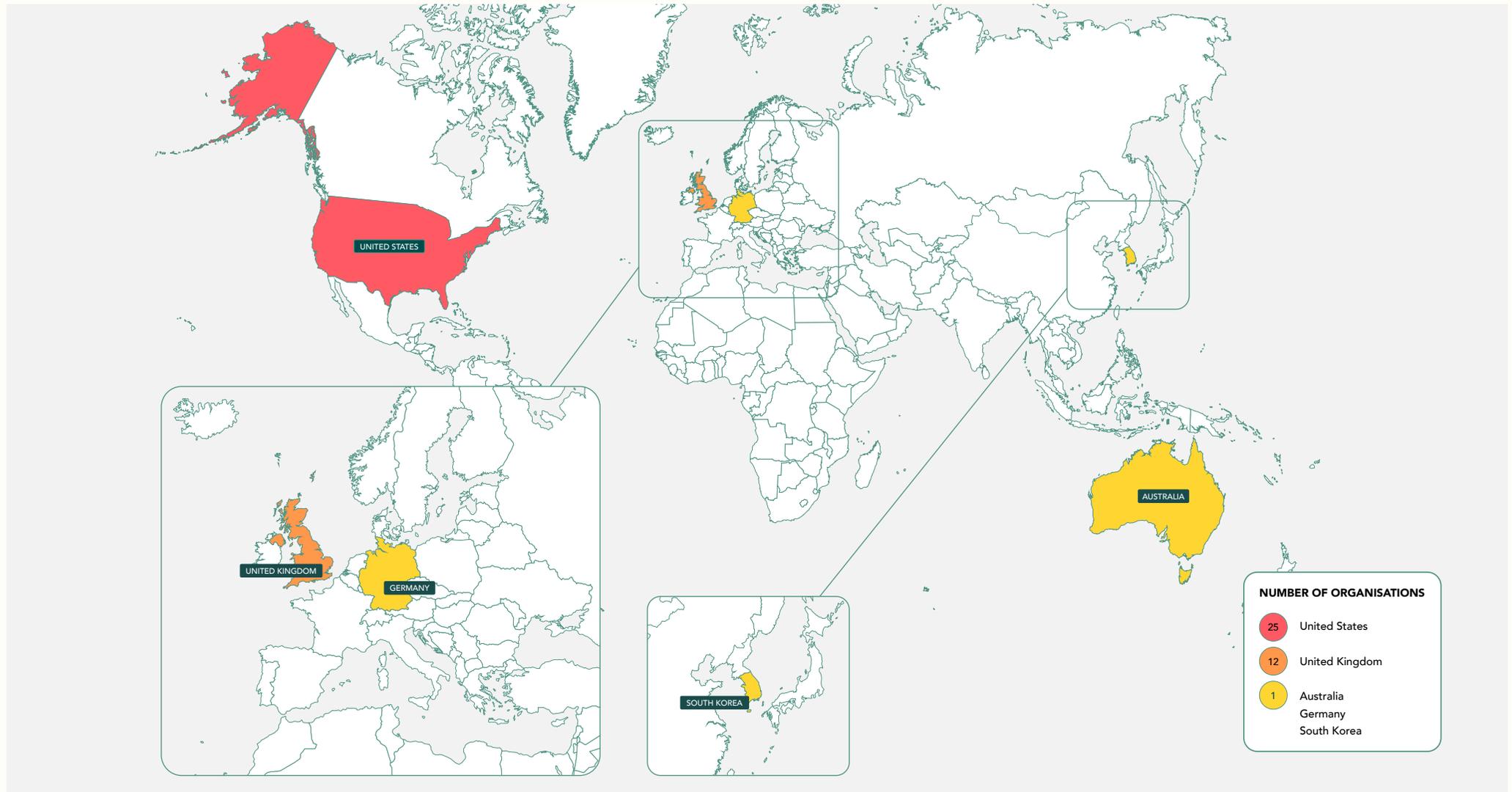
key intermediaries between clients and domestic, regional, and international legal systems. Their work extends beyond individual cases, informing policy, corporate strategy, and global interpretations of law.

The sample is limited to large private-sector firms practising in three or more countries, with transnational influence on legal norms and governance. The final sample was triangulated from the 2025 rankings of three leading law firm directories: the *Chambers Global Guide*, *The Legal 500*, and *The American Lawyer Global 200*. Firms vary in structure, with some operating under Swiss vereins, sharing a brand but not profits. All are headquartered in high-income countries – predominantly the United States

and Europe – reflecting the concentrated geography of influence in the global legal services market and the broader architecture of global law and justice.

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.

Figure 1. Headquarter locations of 38 law firms



## LAW FIRMS

Table 1. Variables reviewed: Law Firms



Does the firm make a public commitment to gender equality?



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

Senior management/  
partners

Staff



What is the gender and nationality of leaders,

INCLUDING

Managing partners

CEOs

Chairs



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

**Box 1.**

What we measure for each variable and how we assess the findings.  
 We assessed firms' websites for publicly available information on the following:

<b>1</b>	<b>Public statement of commitment to gender equality</b>	 Commits to gender equality/equity, gender justice, or gender mainstreaming in policy and planning.
		 Work on women's rights, social justice, human rights, and/or access to justice, but no formal commitment to gender equality.
		 No mention of gender or social justice.
<b>2</b>	<b>Policies with specific measures to promote gender equality for senior management/partners or for staff</b>	<b>Senior management/partners</b>
		 Policy with specific measure(s) to improve gender equality and/or support women's careers in senior positions.
		 Stated commitment to gender equality and/or diversity in senior positions but no specific measures to carry out commitments; and/or reports on gender distribution of senior management/partners.
		 Policy is compliant with law but no more = "we do not discriminate".
		 No reference to gender equality or non-discrimination in the workplace found.
		<b>Staff</b>
 Policy with specific measure(s) to improve gender equality and/or support women's careers.		
 Stated commitment to gender equality and/or diversity in the workplace (above the legal requirement) but no specific measures to carry out commitments; and/or reports on gender distribution of staff.		
 Policy is compliant with law but no more = "we do not discriminate".		
 No reference to gender equality or non-discrimination in the workplace found.		

<p><b>3</b> Policies with specific measures to promote fairness and equity for senior management/partners or for staff</p>	<p>Senior management/partners</p>	<p>● Policy with specific measure(s) to improve diversity, inclusion, fairness and or equality.</p>
		<p>● Commitment to promoting fairness and equity evidenced by a) aspirational comments and b) listing protected characteristics, but does not state what specific measures are in place to promote equality/diversity; and/or some reporting on characteristics among senior management/partners.</p>
		<p>● Policy is compliant with law but no more = "we do not discriminate".</p>
		<p>● No reference to equality or non-discrimination in the workplace found.</p>
	<p>Staff</p>	<p>● Policy with specific measure(s) to improve diversity/inclusion/equality.</p>
		<p>● Commitment to promoting fairness and equity evidenced by a) aspirational comments and b) listing protected characteristics, but does not state what specific measures are in place to promote equality/diversity; and/or some reporting on characteristics among staff.</p>
		<p>● Policy is compliant with law but no more = "we do not discriminate".</p>
		<p>● No reference to equality or non-discrimination in the workplace found.</p>
<p><b>5</b> Gender parity in senior management</p>	<p>● 56-100% women represented.</p>	
	<p>● 45-55% women represented; or difference of one individual.</p>	
	<p>● 35-44% women represented.</p>	
	<p>● 0-34% women represented.</p>	
	<p>●</p>	
<p><b>6</b> Gender and nationality of managing partners, CEOs, and chairs</p>	<p>● There is no traffic light scoring for this variable; we only report on the aggregate numbers.</p>	
	<p>●</p>	
<p><b>7</b> Policy on sex-disaggregated data and gender analysis</p>	<p>● Policy or organisational commitment found to regularly report sex-disaggregated data and/or to undertake gender analysis.</p>	
	<p>● Project-specific commitments to report sex-disaggregated data or to undertake gender analysis.</p>	
	<p>● No policy or commitment found.</p>	

# Finding 1. Few law firms publicly commit to gender equality, and those who do frame it in the context of their *pro bono* commitments

Public commitments to gender equality signal institutional recognition of its importance and provide a foundation for accountability in practice. We reviewed whether law firms had stated such a commitment on their websites, including statements found on *pro bono* pages.

10/38 (26%) firms had a formal, public commitment to gender equality – most of which were found on *pro bono* pages – while the remaining 28 (28/38; 74%) firms had no formal commitments, though all work on access to justice.

## Box 2. Organisational examples

### Example of law firm commitment to gender equality

In 2024, Gibson Dunn was proud to launch its *Justice for Women and Girls* initiative, a project that will bring together the Firm's attorneys around five distinct yet overlapping goals to advance justice and equity for women and girls around the world: (1) educational equity; (2) access to healthcare; (3) legal and social equity; (4) economic empowerment; and (5) prevention of violence against women. Work on behalf of women and girls, as well as other marginalized communities, has always been a cornerstone of our *pro bono* practice. This initiative seeks to deepen and expand our existing work on behalf of women and girls, with the goal of making real, systemic, and lasting change.

Gibson Dunn<sup>1</sup>

Figure 2. Public commitments to gender equality found, law firms (n=38)



**26%**  
of law firms have a public commitment to gender equality

## Finding 2. Workplace gender equality, fairness and equity policies exist for staff, but those that seek to advance equality in senior leadership are less common

Workplace policies on gender equality, fairness and equity with specific measures are important for setting clear standards and translating commitments into concrete, accountable actions. In law firms, however, assessing such policies is complicated by the diversity of roles within “leadership” and “staff”.

Firm leadership can include:

- Equity partners (typically owners of the firm and not employees)
- Salaried partners (partners in title but legally employees)
- Non-lawyer business services leaders (employees in senior management)

Staff can also encompass a mix of lawyers and non-lawyers, and the composition of these categories varies by firm.

Because firms do not consistently classify roles in the same way, distinctions between leadership and staff are not always clear cut. To attempt comparability across the 38 firms in our sample, we simplified these categories into two variables: one assessing policies covering “staff” broadly, and another assessing whether firms had policies with specific measures for senior management or partners.

27/38 (71%) firms had published policies on gender equality for staff. Fewer than half (16/38; 42%) had policies with specific measures to improve gender equality in senior management or in senior partners.

Examples of specific measures included: gender-responsive recruitment and appointment processes; mentoring, training, and leadership programmes; targets for women’s participation at senior levels; gender analysis and action in staff performance reviews and staff surveys; regular reviews of organisational efforts towards gender equality; and/or reporting back to all staff.

Similar to their performance on gender equality policies, 26/38 (68%) firms had publicly available fairness and equity policies for staff, while 8/38 (21%) had such a policy for senior management or senior partners.

Specific measures included: inclusive recruitment processes; mentoring, training, and leadership programmes; targets for representation; fairness and equity analysis and action in staff performance reviews; regular reviews of organisational efforts towards fairness and equity; and/or employee resource groups.

## LAW FIRMS



of law firms have publicly available gender equality policies for staff



of law firms have publicly available gender equality policies for senior management/partners



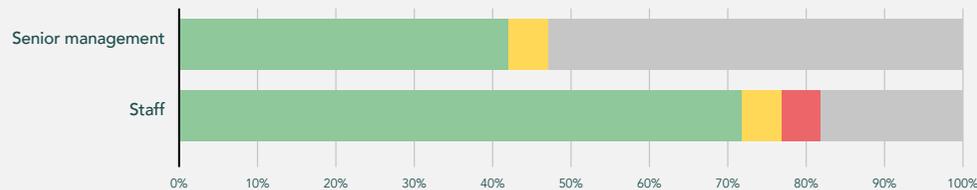
of law firms have publicly available fairness and equity policies for staff



of law firms have publicly available fairness and equity policies for senior management/partners

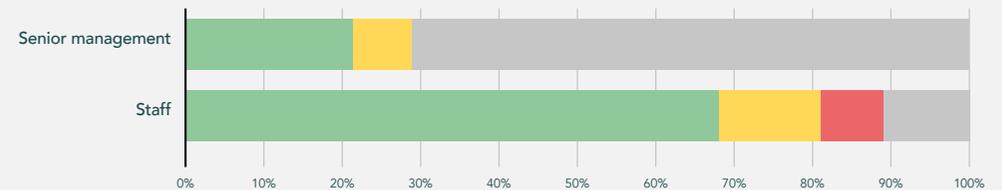
**Figure 3.** Gender equality policies found, law firms (n=38)

- Gender equality policy with specific measures for gender equality/ women's careers
- Stated commitment to gender equality, but no specific measures
- Minimum legal requirement ("we do not discriminate")
- No public information found



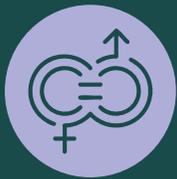
**Figure 4.** Fairness and equity policies found, law firms (n=38)

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



Box 3. Organisational examples

Examples of law firm gender equality, fairness and equity policies



GENDER EQUALITY POLICY WITH SPECIFIC MEASURES FOR SENIOR MANAGEMENT/PARTNERS:

In 2021, we launched ambitious five-year global commitments to diversity and inclusion, setting targets for gender, race and ethnicity and LGBTQ+ representation.

Gender balance: firm leadership\*

\*Board, sub-committees, Executive Committee and Managing Directors

Our goal was for our firmwide leaders to be ethnically diverse, and for this group to comprise at least 40 per cent women and 40 per cent men (20 per cent men, women and non-binary) by the end of 2023.

**Freshfields<sup>2</sup>**

We have made significant progress on gender diverse representation, just missing our target. We partially met our ethnicity goal and both continue to be a focus.

GENDER EQUALITY POLICY WITH SPECIFIC MEASURES FOR STAFF:

We are committed to creating an environment in which women are able to progress and where all genders feel supported in balancing their responsibilities inside and outside of the workplace.

We seek to do this by:

- Creating a balanced and sustainable pipeline of female talent at every career level;
- Ensuring women have access to development and sponsorship opportunities through our talent programmes, including our Women's Leadership Programme for senior associates, and Stepping Forward, our group coaching programme for more junior female associates;
- Leading the way with our parental leave and support benefits;
- Being agile in our approach to working arrangements and career paths; and
- Creating opportunities to build understanding of different perspectives and experiences, for example our celebration of International Women's Day 2023.

**Linklaters<sup>3</sup>**



**FAIRNESS AND EQUITY  
POLICY WITH SPECIFIC  
MEASURES FOR SENIOR  
MANAGEMENT/PARTNERS**

**Elevate**

*Elevate is DLA Piper's international sponsorship programme which supports those from underrepresented groups achieve partnership or another leadership role. During the programme, participants are matched with partner sponsors to help them raise their profile internally and shape their business case for promotion to partner.*

*The programme has been a success, with participants telling us that Elevate helped them achieve their goals, contributed to personal and professional development, and provided practical tools to support their aspirations to become partner.*

**DLA Piper<sup>4</sup>**

**Momentum**

*While Elevate is designed to support those already in senior roles make the leap to partner, there is also a lack of representation at senior levels. Running alongside Elevate, Momentum is a six-month development programme for high potential lead lawyers from underrepresented groups. During the programme, participants are exposed to realistic work-related simulations, as well as the latest thinking in psychology, to help develop the mindset and confidence required to meet their career aspirations.*

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

*We are committed to promoting a culture of respect for people living with disabilities by removing barriers and challenges they may face in the workplace. Our strategy is two-fold: supporting accessibility and adjustments, while becoming confident and knowledgeable about disability.*

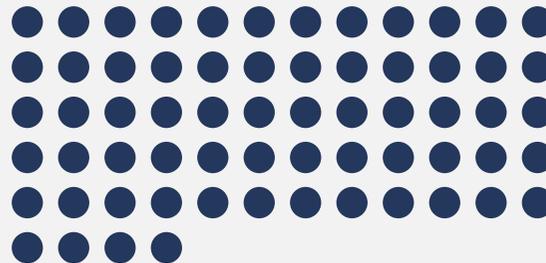
*Our disability confidence and awareness resources are designed to support our people to feel confident in working with and supporting people living with disabilities, allowing them to overcome any fear of saying or doing the wrong thing. We aim to remove assumptions, and instead, have respectful and meaningful interactions with people living with disabilities.*

**Norton Rose Fulbright<sup>5</sup>**

## Finding 3. Law firm leadership is well below gender parity, and concentrated among nationals of high-income countries

We collected demographic data on the highest levels of leadership in law firms: managing partners, CEOs, and chairs. Across the 80 holders of highest office in the 38 firms in our sample, 64/80 (80%) were men.

Figure 5. Proportion of men and women among power holders in law firms (n=80)

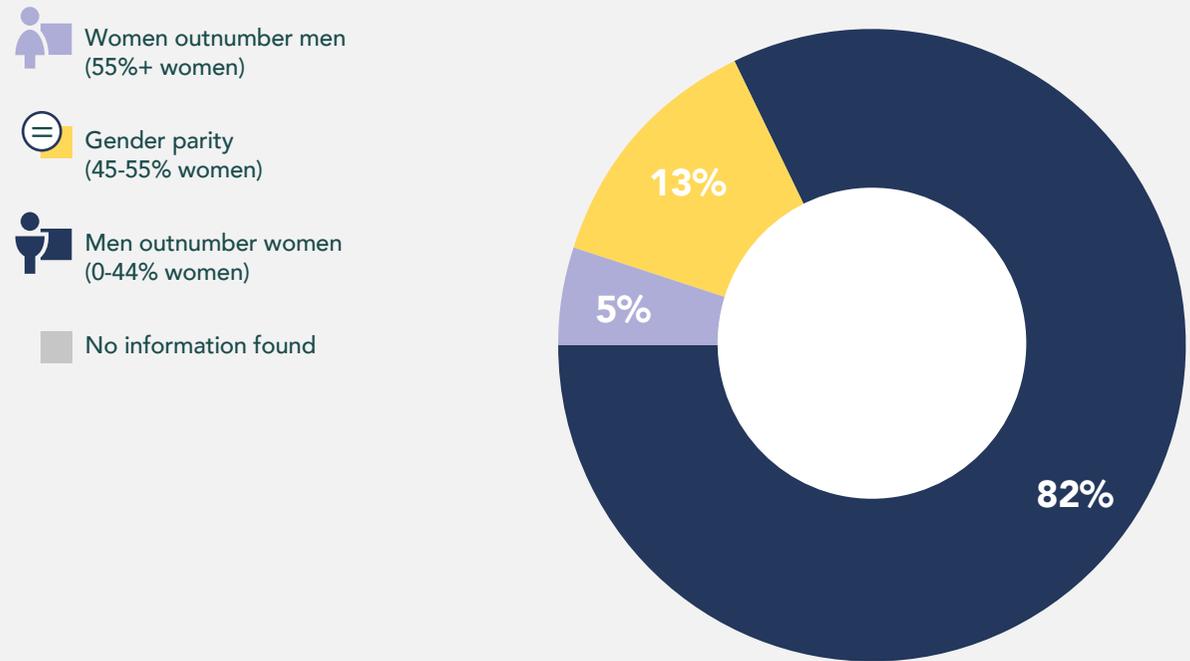


Among 80 leaders,  
**80%** are men

From data collected according to each firm's publicly available structuring, we reviewed the gender data for 2,567 individuals to assess how many firms had achieved gender parity at the senior management level.

Five (5/38; 13%) firms had achieved gender parity (45-55% women), two (2/38; 5%) firms had women outnumbering men in senior management (55%+ women), and 31/38 (82%) firms had men outnumbering women (0-44% women).

**Figure 6.** Law firms with gender parity in senior management (n=38)



## LAW FIRMS

### Distribution of gender and nationality across leadership roles in law firms

Leadership is also geographically concentrated. All holders of highest office for whom data were available (78/78; 100%) are nationals of high-income countries, including two dual nationals of two high-income countries. Combined, these patterns highlight that both gender and geographic diversity remain limited at the highest levels of private-sector legal practice.

ALL LEADERS  
(n=78)

- **HICs:** 77% (60/78) men and 21% (16/78) women.
- **MICs:** No men or women represented.
- **LICs:** No men or women represented.

**Global Managing Partners** run day-to-day operations, strategy, and implementation of partner decisions. Comparable to a corporate CEO, they are typically an elected partner.

**Global Chairs (Senior Partner)** lead the partnership board and steers long-term vision, focusing on governance, oversight, and external representation.

**CEOs** are often a professional manager (sometimes non-lawyer) responsible for business operations like finance, IT, and global integration.

**Ali and Setar dressed up for a gathering**  
Kabul, Afghanistan. 2017.  
Loulou d'Aki

*Both born as girls, Ali wears jeans and a shirt while Setar wears a traditional outfit for men. Bacha Posh means 'dressed as a boy' and is a tradition in Afghan families without sons. Dressing as a boy also means having more privilege and freedom.*



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

## Finding 4. Most law firms do not publicly report sex-disaggregated programmatic data or commit to gender analysis, limiting transparency and accountability

Sex-disaggregated data alongside gender analysis is essential for understanding who benefits from a firm's work – both internal programmes, such as professional development and leadership initiatives, and external programmes, including fee-earning services work, *pro bono* support, and legal aid initiatives – and where gender gaps persist. Publishing such data supports accountability to gender equality commitments and informs more equitable programme design.

Among the 38 law firms in our sample, seven (7/38; 18%) have a policy to report sex-disaggregated programmatic data or undertake gender analysis.

**Figure 7.** Policies or commitments to report sex-disaggregated data or undertake gender analysis found, law firms (n=38)



**18%**  
of law firms have a commitment to publicly report sex-disaggregated data or undertake gender analysis

## LAW FIRMS

### Box 3. Organisational examples

#### Example of law firm policy to sex-disaggregate data or undertake gender analysis

To ensure diverse perspectives are included around the table — whether it be for the purposes of monitoring the gender balance of lawyers in our practice groups or for staffing client teams — we use internal gender reporting dashboards that provide real-time interactive insights based on monthly data updates. In addition to real-time snapshots of gender data by role level, practice area and region, the dashboards allow us to provide clients with precise insights into the gender balance on their matters — a data point that is becoming increasingly important to our clients.

Baker McKenzie<sup>6</sup>

**Water is life**  
Bangladesh. 2017.  
Sumit Sanyal

A woman collects water from the communal handpump. With unplanned urbanisation, population growth, and inadequate water management practices, millions in Bangladesh face the grim reality of water contamination.

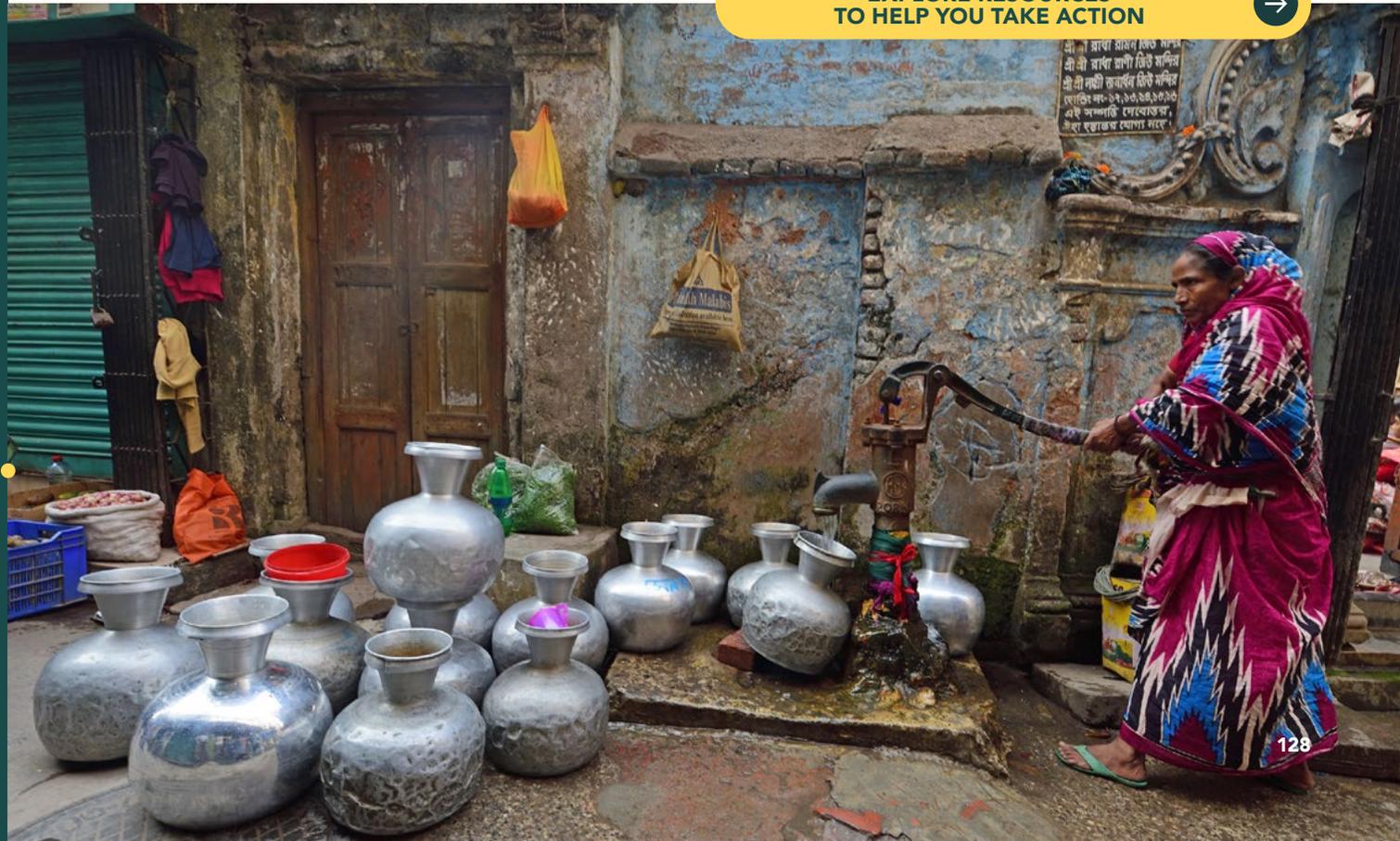
### Towards a gender-equal global law and justice sector

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



# Law firms in the Global Justice 50/50 sample

- A&O Shearman
- Akin
- Ashurst
- Baker McKenzie
- Bird & Bird
- Cleary Gottlieb
- Clifford Chance
- CMS
- Cooley
- Covington
- Debevoise & Plimpton
- Dentons
- DLA Piper
- Eversheds Sutherland
- Freshfields
- Gibson Dunn
- Goodwin
- Greenberg Traurig
- Herbert Smith Freehills Kramer (HSF Kramer)
- Hogan Lovells
- Jones Day
- Kim & Chang
- Kirkland & Ellis
- Latham & Watkins
- Linklaters
- Mayer Brown
- McDermott Will & Schulte
- Morgan Lewis
- Norton Rose Fulbright
- Quinn Emanuel
- Reed Smith
- Ropes & Gray
- Sidley Austin
- Simpson Thacher & Bartlett
- Skadden
- Squire Patton Boggs
- White & Case
- WilmerHale

# Endnotes

- 1 Gibson Dunn. (nd). Pro Bono: Justice for Women and Girls. <https://www.gibsondunn.com/pro-bono/justice-for-women-and-girls/>
- 2 Freshfields. (2024). Responsible business report. <https://www.freshfields.com/globalassets/about-us/rb/reports/2024-freshfields-responsible-business-report.pdf>
- 3 Linklaters. (nd). Diversity Equity Inclusion. <https://www.linklaters.com/en/about-us/diversity-equity-inclusion>
- 4 DLA Piper. (2024). People Deep Dive 2024. <https://edge.sitecorecloud.io/dlapiperuk12c48-dlapiper7aff-prodb8eb-83a9/media/project/dlapiper-tenant/dlapiper/about-us/sustainability/sustainability-report-23-24/people-deep-dive-2024.pdf>
- 5 Norton Rose Fulbright. (nd). Disability confidence. <https://www.nortonrosefulbright.com/en/about/diversity-equity-and-inclusion/goals-and-priorities/disability-confidence>
- 6 Baker McKenzie. (2024). Annual Sustainability Report 2024. <https://www.bakermckenzie.com/-/media/files/newsroom/2024/baker-mckenzie-annual-sustainability-report-2024.pdf>

# Legal Professional Associations

READ THE FULL REPORT,  
INCLUDING METHODS



Read six other subsector chapters:

- Courts
- Commissions
- Intergovernmental organisations
- International NGOs
- Law firms
- Funders

## 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 review 11 legal professional associations (see page 146 for full list).

**It's not all men, but it's always a man**  
*Amsterdam, Netherlands. 2025.*  
Anna Janssen

*In a dark passageway, a woman turns toward a figure in the shadows, a reminder of the vigilance demanded from women in spaces where law arrives only after harm is done.*

# At a glance

Our research reveals that the organisations influencing legal professional standards globally have yet to embody the principles of fairness and equity in their own leadership. The legitimacy of the legal profession depends on who gets to participate in shaping it – and whose perspectives remain outside its walls.

## Partial commitments:

Almost half of legal professional associations publicly acknowledge the importance of gender equality – leaving room for improvement across the subsector.

Public commitments signal recognition of gender equality as an organisational priority, but these are found in only half of legal professional associations. Without formal commitments, accountability is limited, and legal professional associations' role in advancing inclusive legal practices may be weakened.

### Among 11 legal professional associations



5 have a public commitment to gender equality

## Policy gaps:

Workplace policies on gender equality, fairness and equity are still not standard across legal professional associations.

Half have publicly available gender equality policies with specific measures, and around a third have fairness and equity policies with specific measures. Without such policies, efforts to advance equality risk remaining symbolic rather than structural.

### Among 11 legal professional associations



5 have gender equality policies with specific measures



4 have fairness and equity policies with specific measures

## Concentration of power:

Leadership within legal professional associations remains predominantly male and heavily concentrated among nationals of high-income countries.

Women hold few presidency roles, and women from low- and middle-income countries are barely represented. Who leads shapes the global legal professional agenda, and whose voices remain marginal.

### Among 17 legal professional association presidents



5 are women

2 are women from LMICs

## Data deficits:

No legal professional associations have a publicly available policy to systematically collect or report sex-disaggregated data or undertake gender analysis.

Key opportunities for understanding participation and programme beneficiaries are therefore missed. Without such data, gaps remain invisible, progress cannot be measured, and strategies to advance gender equality remain under-informed.

### Among 11 legal professional associations



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

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



## Assessing the legal professional associations

Legal professional associations are membership-based organisations that bring together lawyers and legal professional bodies across multiple jurisdictions or specialisms. These organisations represent the interests of their members, provide professional development and networking opportunities, and establish ethical and professional standards. Many also engage in advocacy, influencing policy, legal reform, and the development of transnational or regional legal norms, serving as key intermediaries between national legal systems and

international frameworks. Unlike regulatory national bars, membership is typically voluntary, reflecting professional affiliation rather than a requirement to practice law.

The 11 legal professional associations in our sample operate at global and regional levels, including networks of national bars and independent international bodies. While membership is voluntary, they are also employers of permanent staff; we examined both leadership composition and workplace policies in the broadest sense.

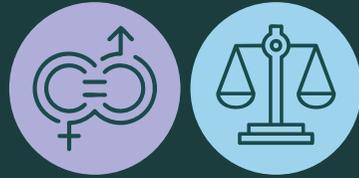
Global 50/50 only assesses publicly available information, a method that promotes transparency but is not without its limitations. Public commitments and policies do not always reflect internal practice, just as their absence does not necessarily indicate a lack of internal action, particularly in the 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.

## LEGAL PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Table 1. Variables reviewed: Legal Professional Associations



Does the organisation make a public commitment to gender equality?



Are workplace gender equality and/or fairness and equity policies publicly available?



What is the gender and nationality of leaders,

INCLUDING

Presidents

Presidents-elect

Vice presidents



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

### Box 1.

What we measure for each variable.

We assessed organisations' websites for publicly available information on the following:

<b>1</b> Public statement of commitment to gender equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="color: green;">●</span> Commits to gender equality/equity, gender justice, or gender mainstreaming in policy and planning.</li> <li><span style="color: yellow;">●</span> Work on women's rights, human rights, social justice, and/or access to justice, but makes no formal commitment to gender equality.</li> <li><span style="color: red;">●</span> No mention of gender or social justice.</li> </ul>
<b>2</b> Policies with specific measures to promote gender equality in the workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="color: green;">●</span> Policy with specific measure(s) to improve gender equality and/or support women's careers.</li> <li><span style="color: yellow;">●</span> Stated commitment to gender equality and/or diversity in the workplace (above the legal requirement) but no specific measures to carry out commitments; and/or reports on gender distribution of staff.</li> <li><span style="color: red;">●</span> Policy is compliant with law but no more = "we do not discriminate".</li> <li><span style="color: gray;">●</span> No reference to gender equality or non-discrimination in the workplace found.</li> </ul>
<b>3</b> Policies with specific measures to promote fairness and equity in the workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="color: green;">●</span> Policy with specific measure(s) to improve diversity, inclusion, fairness and or equality.</li> <li><span style="color: yellow;">●</span> Commitment to promoting fairness and equity evidenced by a) aspirational comments and b) listing protected characteristics; and/or some reporting on characteristics among staff.</li> <li><span style="color: red;">●</span> Policy is compliant with law but no more = "we do not discriminate".</li> <li><span style="color: gray;">●</span> No reference to equality or non-discrimination in the workplace found.</li> </ul>

**4 Gender parity in senior management**

-  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 the head of the organisation**

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**

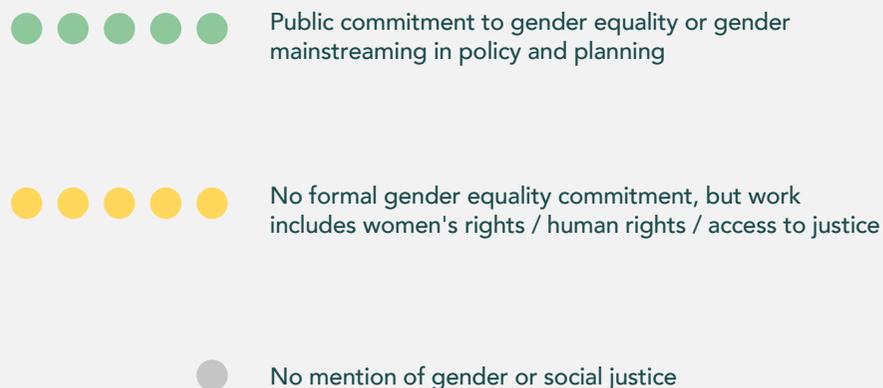
-  Policy or organisational commitment found to regularly report sex-disaggregated data and/or to undertake gender analysis.
-  Project-specific commitments to report sex-disaggregated data and/or to undertake gender analysis.
-  No policy or commitment found.

# Finding 1. Half of legal professional associations publicly state a commitment to gender equality, but many could strengthen and formalise commitments

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

Five (5/11; 45%) bar associations published a public commitment to gender equality.

**Figure 1.** Public commitments to gender equality found, legal professional associations (n=11)



**5/11**

legal professional associations have a public commitment to gender equality

### Box 2. Organisational examples

#### Example of legal professional association commitment to gender equality

*The [International Association of Lawyers] Women's Committee works to promote and strengthen the status and role of women lawyers in the profession.*

*To this end, it organises workshops and seminars in order to identify the different problems to be targeted, on the basis of a comparative approach, and to establish strategies and action plans to remedy them, which it will implement with the support of UIA and in close collaboration with its collective and individual members.*

*The Committee also works to improve the status of women wherever needed, in particular to eliminate all forms of violence against women. In this perspective, the Committee proclaimed on 8 March in Paris the Charter of Fundamental Principles on Access to Justice for Women Victims of Violence and invited the collective members of the UIA to adhere to it (the list of adhesions is available on this link). One of the key objectives of the working group will be to implement the provisions of this Charter effectively and efficiently.*

#### International Association of Lawyers (UIA)<sup>1</sup>

**Maria Elena Rios**  
*Mexico. 2020.*  
Mahé Elipe

*Maria walks through a field of marigolds with her saxophone. She survived an acid attack orchestrated by her ex-boyfriend, an influential politician, after their breakup. Although still a target, Maria refuses to hide in the shadows.*



## Finding 2. Half of legal professional associations publish workplace policies on gender equality, fairness and equity

Workplace policies on gender equality, fairness and equity policies with specific measures set clear standards and translate commitments into concrete, accountable actions. Five (5/11; 45%) legal professional associations had policies on gender equality with specific measures, and four (4/11; 36%) had policies on fairness and equity with specific measures.

Specific measures to promote gender equality included: gender-responsive recruitment and hiring processes; mentoring, training, and leadership programmes; targets for women’s participation at senior levels; regular reviews of organisational efforts towards gender equality; and/or reporting back to all staff.

Specific measures advancing fairness and equity included: inclusive recruitment processes; mentoring, training, and leadership programmes; targets for representation; regular reviews of organisational efforts towards fairness and equity; and/or employee resource groups.

**Figure 2.** Gender equality and fairness and equity policies found, legal professional associations (n=11)



**5/11**

legal professional associations have publicly available gender equality policies



**4/11**

legal professional associations have publicly available fairness and equity policies

### Box 3. Organisational examples

#### Examples of legal professional association gender equality, fairness and equity policies

*This Policy is intended to drive cultural change within the [Commonwealth Lawyers Association] and more broadly within the legal profession throughout the Commonwealth, to support the progression and retention of women lawyers and address the significant pay gap and underrepresentation of women in the superior courts.*

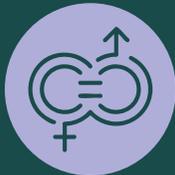
*The Policy also intends to support diversity in a broader sense, to include culture, race and ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, age, gender identity, disability and socioeconomic status.*

*The intention is to create a fair and just profession for the benefit of members and clients and to meet the expectations of clients with respect to the participation and inclusion of women performing legal services.*

#### **The CLA will:**

- *Develop a broad set of principles consistent with this Policy promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in the legal profession throughout the Commonwealth;*
- *Support the development of a Women Lawyers Forum;*
- *Undertake recruitment for CLA Ex Co, Council, Regional Hubs and working groups conscious of the need for diversity of members;*
- *Strive for diversity of representation in all Conference sessions and public events;*
- *Promote the use of unconscious bias tools and programs that reveal persistent discriminatory biases;*
- *Promote flexible workplace structures and tools; and*
- *Develop codes and practices that address sexual and other forms of unlawful harassment and discrimination noting such conduct will not be tolerated within the legal profession.*

**Commonwealth Lawyers Association (CLA)<sup>2</sup>**



**GENDER EQUALITY POLICY  
WITH SPECIFIC MEASURES:**



### FAIRNESS AND EQUITY POLICY WITH SPECIFIC MEASURES:

The [International Bar Association] is concerned to eliminate discrimination and bias – including discrimination on the grounds of gender, age, culture, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, socioeconomic standing, gender identity or sexual orientation – and to support and promote the full and equal participation of all persons within the IBA and its membership.

#### The IBA will:

- Develop a broad set of principles consistent with this Policy, promoting equality, diversity and inclusion within the IBA and its committees, sections, fora and membership.
- Support the work of the Diversity and Inclusion Council.
- Undertake positive measures in the recruitment of the IBA Executive, Management Committee, sections and committees, conscious of the need for diversity of members.
- Establish diversity officers across the organisation.
- Strive for diversity of representation at all IBA conference sessions and public events, and establish a Speakers Bureau to support this aim.
- Promote the use of tools that reveal and address persistent discriminatory biases.
- Establish an online hub for diversity and inclusion, including current research on diversity and inclusion measures and best practice tools and templates on such matters as bullying and harassment, flexible workplace structures and tools, networks and mentoring.
- Develop codes and practices that address sexual and other forms of unlawful harassment and discrimination, noting that such conduct will not be tolerated within the legal profession.
- Consider opportunities for research projects and the collation of statistics to establish benchmarks, and measure progress.
- Establish a President's award or scholarship, acknowledging the diversity and inclusion work or potential of individuals.
- Create video and social media tools to promote diversity and inclusion.

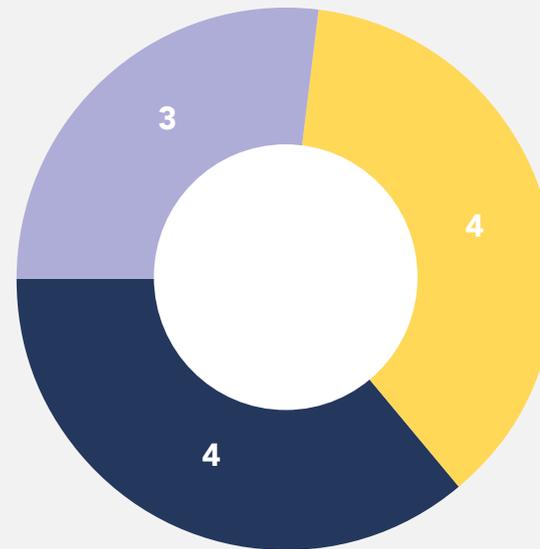
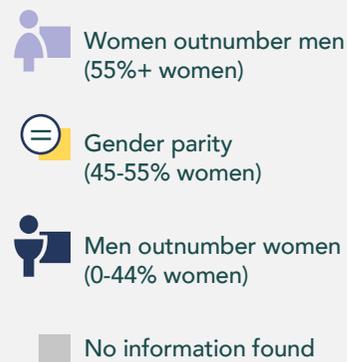
**International Bar  
Association (IBA)<sup>9</sup>**

# Finding 3. Gender parity in legal professional association leadership is far from a reality, and women from low- and middle-income countries are only minimally represented

We collected demographic data on the highest levels of leadership within legal professional associations, focusing on presidents as well as presidents-elect and vice presidents. Of 17 presidents across 11 legal professional associations, five (5/17; 29%) were women. Of 31 senior management positions, which included presidents-elect and vice presidents, nine (9/31; 29%) were held by women.

We collected gender data for 83 senior managers across 11 legal professional associations and assessed how many organisations had achieved gender parity at this level. Three (3/11; 27%) legal professional associations had senior management teams in which women outnumbered men (55%+ women), while four (4/11; 36%) had reached gender parity (45-55% women).

**Figure 3.** Legal professional associations with gender parity in senior management (n=11)



Among 17 presidents,  
**5** are women

Among 31 senior managers,  
**9** are women

## LEGAL PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

### Distribution of gender and nationality across leadership roles in legal professional associations

Income classification data were found for the nationalities of 16 of the 17 presidents. Ten (10/16; 63%) presidents are from high-income countries (HICs) and five (5/16; 31%) are from middle-income countries (MICs), with no representation of nationals of low-income countries (LICs). One of the sixteen presidents was classified as a dual national.

Income classification data were found for 29 of the 31 senior management roles, with two individuals classified as dual nationals. Fourteen (14/29; 48%) are from HICs, eleven (11/29; 38%) are from MICs, and four (4/29; 13%) are from LICs.

#### PRESIDENTS (n=16)

- **HICs: 50%** (8) men and **19%** (3) women.
- **MICs: 19%** (3) men and **12%** (2) women.
- **LICs: no men or women represented.**

#### OTHER LEADERS (n=31)

- **HICs: 29%** (9) men and **16%** (5) women.
- **MICs: 22%** (7) men and **13%** (4) women.
- **LICs: 13%** (4) men and no women.

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

#### Box 4.

We attempted to collect data on board members of legal professional associations. However, we were able to identify board chairs for only one organisation and board members for two organisations. For this reason, we have not reported this data.

#### GENDER (IN)JUSTICE?

**Blindfolded justice**  
Kolkata, India. 2025.  
Rajesh Dhar

*A blindfolded clay head is styled after the Hindu goddess Durga, a symbol of feminine strength, during a march for justice for survivors of sexual violence. Inscribed with the words "We demand justice," the sculpture becomes an indictment of a system that has failed to protect women.*



## Finding 4. The potential of data disaggregated by sex alongside gender analysis is still unrealised among most legal professional associations

Sex-disaggregated data and gender analysis are essential for understanding who participates in bar association activities, who benefits from services or programmes, and where gender gaps persist. Opportunities for disaggregation could include membership demographics, participation in training and professional development, attendance at conferences and workshops, engagement with public legal education events, beneficiaries of *pro bono* coordination efforts, involvement in committees and working groups, and participation in advocacy or rule of law initiatives.

Collecting such data would help understand whether women and men are represented and supported equitably in membership, professional development, and sector engagement.

Across the 11 legal professional associations reviewed, none had a policy to report sex-disaggregated data or to undertake gender analysis. One (1/11; 9%) legal professional association had a project-specific commitment to collect or use such data.

### 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 institutions move beyond rhetoric towards systemic, sustained change. The moment for decisive action is now, and the sector has both the responsibility

EXPLORE RESOURCES  
TO HELP YOU TAKE ACTION



**Marked**  
Downtown Los Angeles, California, USA. 2025.  
Lela Edgar

*A protester stands before police during an anti-ICE demonstration in Los Angeles, baring his chest to reveal the scar left by law enforcement. He lifts his chin high in defiance, facing the armoured line without fear. His body becomes both evidence and resistance, a counterpoint to their riot shields.*



# Legal professional associations in the Global Justice 50/50 sample

- Asian Society of International Law (AsianSIL)
- Association of Corporate Counsel (ACC)
- Commonwealth Lawyers Association (CLA)
- European Bars Federation (Fédération des Barreaux d'Europe; FBE)
- International Association of Lawyers (UIA)
- International Association of Prosecutors (IAP)
- International Bar Association (IBA)
- International Council of Advocates and Barristers (ICAB)
- International Criminal Court Bar Association (ICCBA)
- International Institute of Law Association Chief Executives (IILACE)
- Pan African Lawyers Union (PALU)

# Endnotes

- 1 International Association of Lawyers. (nd). Women's Committee. <https://www.uanet.org/en/network/committees/womens-committee>
- 2 Commonwealth Lawyers Association. (2021). Commonwealth Lawyers Association Diversity and Inclusion Policy. <https://www.commonwealthlawyers.com/cla/commonwealth-lawyers-association-diversity-and-inclusion-policy/>
- 3 International Bar Association. (nd). IBA Diversity and inclusion policy. <https://www.ibanet.org/document?id=Diversity-Inclusion-policy-doc>

# Funders & Philanthropies (Funders)



READ THE FULL REPORT,  
INCLUDING METHODS



Read six other subsector chapters:

- Courts
- Commissions
- Intergovernmental organisations
- International NGOs
- Law Firms
- Legal professional associations

## 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 funders and philanthropies in the sample (see page 163 for full list).

**The wheel and the will**  
Accra, Ghana. 2025.  
Emmanuel Osei-Owusu

*Amid street life, a young disabled girl sits on a makeshift wheelchair, load balanced on her head. Her calm, steady look resists pity, insisting instead on presence and visibility.*

# At a glance

Our research reveals that access and authority remain concentrated in the hands of a few in organisations responsible for directing global resources. The fair and equitable flow of funding depends on who gets to shape priorities – and whose voices remain excluded.

## Broad commitments:

Funders generally recognise the importance of gender equality, but public commitments were not found for all organisations.

While many make public commitments, this is far from universal. The funding landscape uses the language of equality, but not all organisations have aligned their values with action.

### Among 19 funders



**13** have a public commitment to gender equality

## Partial policies:

Some funders have publicly available workplace policies, but clear implementation measures are limited.

Workplace policies on gender equality, fairness and equity with specific measures were publicly available for only a small number of organisations. Commitments without actionable policies risk becoming symbolic rather than transformative.

### Among 17 funders



**6** have gender equality workplace policies



**2** have commitments to gender equality, but with no specific measures to carry these out

## Sparse governance guidance:

Equitable board representation and inclusion is not yet widely formalised through policy.

Only a handful of funders have formal policies to ensure representative and inclusive boards, limiting opportunities to diversify decision-making and strengthen accountability. Without such standards, leadership equity is unlikely to advance.

### Among 18 funders



**3** have publicly available board representation and inclusion policies

## Concentration of power:

Leadership roles are evenly distributed by gender, but positions are dominated by nationals of high-income countries.

Women from low- and middle-income countries remain severely underrepresented across senior roles. This imbalance underscores a deeper inequity in who holds authority and whose perspectives shape the flow of resources to the justice sector.

### Among 162 CEOs, board chairs, and board members



**7% (11/162)** are women from MICs

**1% (1/162)** are women from LICs

## Data deficits:

Most funders do not systematically track or report sex-disaggregated programmatic data or commit to gender analysis.

Without this information, the gendered impacts of funding remain hidden, making meaningful accountability impossible. In the absence of data and gender analysis, equitable outcomes cannot be measured, monitored, or improved.

### Among 19 funders



**2** have a commitment to report sex-disaggregated data or undertake gender analysis

Gender parity in the law and justice sector benefits everyone by



## Assessing the funders

The 19 funders in our sample represent some of the most influential organisations investing in legal development, justice reform, and rights-based advocacy globally. They include large private foundations and public interest philanthropies whose grantmaking reaches organisations across all regions and multilateral systems. These funders were selected based on the scale of their grant portfolios, global reach, and demonstrated influence in shaping agendas across the law and justice domain.

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.

**FUNDERS**

**Table 1.** Variables reviewed: Funders

			
<p><b>Does the organisation make a public commitment to gender equality?</b></p>	<p><b>Are workplace gender equality and/or fairness and equity policies publicly available?</b></p> <p><b>Are policies on board representation and inclusion publicly available?</b></p>	<p><b>What is the gender and nationality of leaders,</b></p> <p><b>INCLUDING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>CEOs</li><li>Board chairs</li><li>Board members</li><li>Senior managers</li></ul>	<p><b>Are policies available on reporting data disaggregated by sex or on undertaking gender analysis?</b></p>

Box 1.

What we measure for each variable.

We assessed organisations' websites 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.
-  Work 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 in the workplace**

-  Policy with specific measure(s) to improve gender equality and/or support women's careers.
-  Stated commitment to gender equality and/or diversity in the workplace (above the legal requirement) but no specific measures to carry out commitments; and/or reports on gender distribution of staff.
-  Policy is compliant with law but no more = "we do not discriminate".
-  No reference to gender equality or non-discrimination in the workplace found.

**3 Policies with specific measures to promote fairness and equity in the workplace**

-  Policy with specific measure(s) to improve diversity, inclusion, fairness and/or equality.
-  Commitment to promoting fairness and equity evidenced by a) aspirational comments and b) listing protected characteristics; and/or some reporting on characteristics among staff.
-  Policy is compliant with law but no more = "we do not discriminate".
-  No reference to equality or non-discrimination in the workplace found.

**4 Policies with specific measures to promote representation and inclusion in governing boards**

-  Policy with specific strategies and measures (e.g. targets, dedicated seats, monitoring) to promote diversity, inclusion and representation of the board publicly available.
-  Commitment to diversity and/or representation of affected communities on board found, but no specific measures to advance diversity and inclusion; and/or some summary reporting on board composition, but no policy to advance representation and inclusion.
-  Publicly available policy and/or information on board rules but no commitment to principles of representation and inclusion.
-  No information on board policy or rules regarding composition and/or role (regardless of whether current board members are published).

**5 Gender parity in senior management and in governing boards**

-  56-100% women represented.
-  45-55% women represented; or difference of one individual.
-  35-44% women represented.
-  0-34% women represented.

**6 Gender and nationality of the head of the organisation and board chair**

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

**7 Policy on sex-disaggregated data and gender analysis**

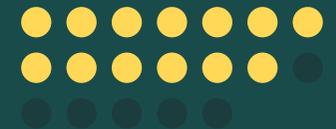
-  Policy or organisational commitment found to regularly report sex-disaggregated data and/or to undertake gender analysis.
-  Project-specific commitments to report sex-disaggregated data and/or to undertake gender analysis.
-  No policy or commitment found.

# Finding 1. Most funders publicly state a commitment to gender equality, but room remains to raise the bar

Public commitments to gender equality signal institutional recognition of its importance and provide a foundation for accountability in practice. We reviewed whether funders had stated such a commitment on their websites.

Thirteen (13/19; 68%) funders had a public commitment to gender equality.

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



**13/19**  
funders have a public commitment to gender equality

## Box 2. Organisational examples

### Example of funder commitment to gender equality

*The world needs effective, democratic governments that are equipped to respond to the escalating challenges of today. They must be accountable to all their citizens, not only elites and corporations.*

*In the face of these challenges, progressive movements are demanding action and advocating for profound systemic change. People power offers our greatest hope towards ensuring that governments put people above profits, protect and strengthen democracy, stop abuses of power, achieve gender and racial justice, and protect the planet while there is still time.*

Wallace Global Fund (WGF)<sup>1</sup>

# Finding 2. Half of funders publish workplace policies on gender equality, fairness and equity, but fewer include specific measures

Workplace policies on gender equality, fairness and equity policies with specific measures are important for setting clear standards and translating commitments into concrete, accountable actions. Six (6/17; 35%) funders had published policies on gender equality, and on fairness and equity, with specific measures.

Examples of specific measures for promoting gender equality included: gender-responsive recruitment and hiring processes; mentoring, training, and leadership programmes; targets for women’s participation at senior levels; gender analysis and action in staff performance reviews and staff surveys; regular reviews of organisational efforts towards gender equality; and/or reporting back to all staff.

Specific measures for advancing fairness and equity included: inclusive recruitment processes; mentoring, training, and leadership programmes; targets for representation; fairness and equity analysis and action in staff performance reviews; regular reviews of organisational efforts towards fairness and equity; and/or employee resource groups.

We do not assess the performance of small organisations – those with 10 or fewer staff – for these variables (unless they are hosted by a larger organisation). We would not expect organisations (nor did we find any) of this size to develop

gender equality, fairness and equity plans. However, we continue to encourage them to, at a minimum, make a public commitment to gender equality, fairness and equity.

**Figure 2.** Gender equality and fairness and equity policies found, funders (n=17\*)



\* n=17 as 2 funders have fewer than 10 full-time employees.



**6/17**

funders have publicly available gender equality policies



**6/17**

funders have publicly available fairness and equity policies

Box 3. Organisational examples

Examples of funder gender equality, fairness and equity policies



**GENDER EQUALITY POLICY WITH SPECIFIC MEASURES:**

One of our goals this year is to monitor diversity as we have defined it – to have more inclusive categories for gender and race/ethnicity and to include categories such as disability, LGBTQA+ status, religion, and others outlined in our definition. Our goal in doing so is to better reflect and more openly discuss the full scope of the diversity we value as an organization.

Overall, the foundation’s gender representation has been increasing to more closely align with the representation of women in the philanthropic sector. Specifically, women now comprise 64% of our total staff, up from 58% five years ago, as compared to an average of 68% in our sector.

**Ford Foundation<sup>2</sup>**



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

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are foundation-supported, employee-run internal communities that are open to all employees. Our first five ERGs were established in 2013. Since then, the number has grown to 14, each providing critical connections, learning opportunities, and perspectives that support our culture and community.

- Africa Employee Resource Group
- Allies for Racial Justice
- Black Philanthropic Partnership
- Cultural Confluence
- D.C. Inclusion Council
- Disabilities Advocacy Group
- Gates Asians in Philanthropy
- Jewish Cultural Connection
- Latinos in Philanthropy
- Native American Network & Allies

**Gates Foundation<sup>3</sup>**



# Finding 4. Gender parity masks the under-representation of women from low- and middle-income countries in leadership roles

Across leadership roles, we found that women are relatively well-represented overall. We collected gender data on 20 CEOs across 19 organisations, with one organisation having joint CEOs. Twelve (12/20; 60%) CEOs were women.

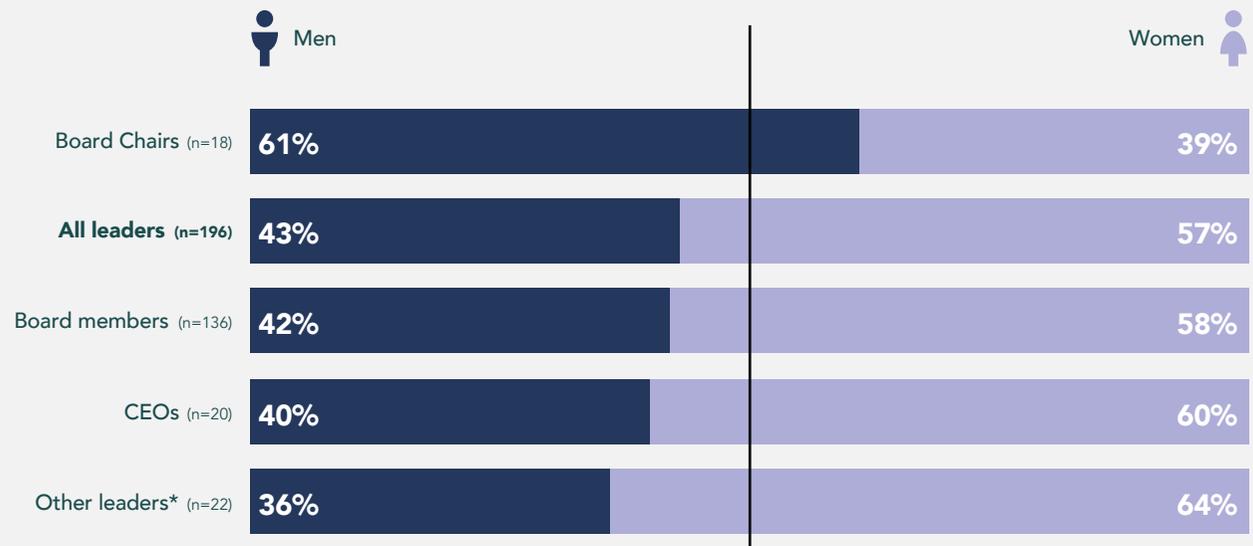
We collected data on 15 board chairs, with three organisations having joint board chairs. For three funders, no board chair information could be found, and one funder was excluded as they do not have a governing body. Seven (7/18; 39%) board chair seats were held by women.

Across boards, women made up 79/136 (58%) of members, with the same trend across other leaders including Executive Vice Presidents, Senior Vice Presidents and Vice Presidents, of whom 14/22 (64%) were women.

Among 20 CEOs,  
**12** are women

Among 18 board chairs,  
**7** are women

Figure 4. Proportion of men and women among power holders, funders (n=196)



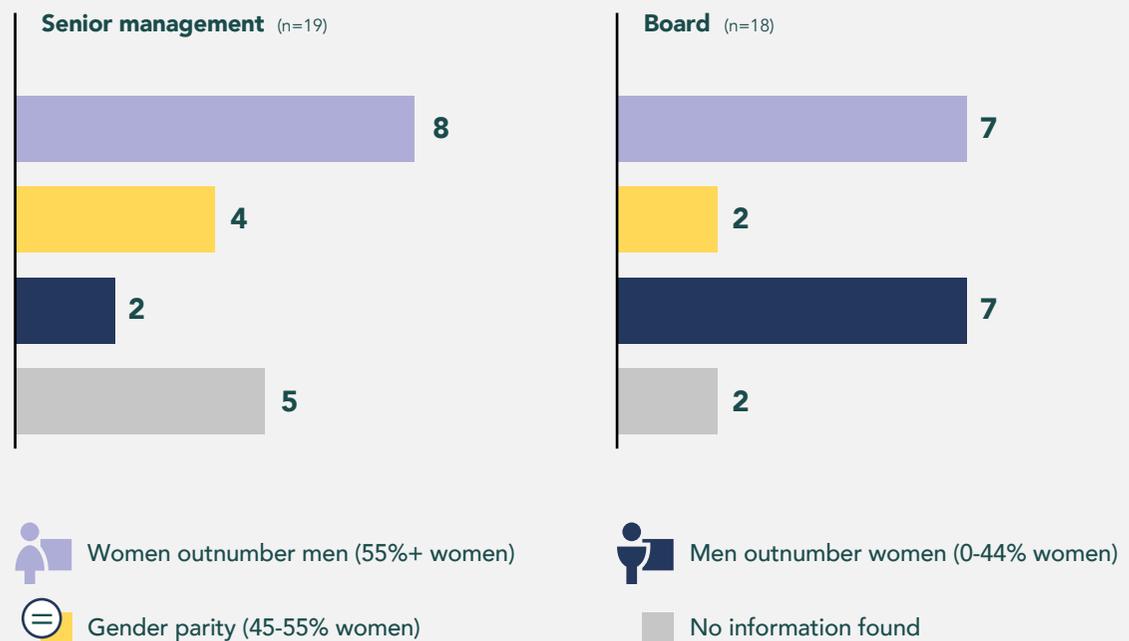
\* Other leaders includes Executive Vice Presidents, Senior Vice Presidents and Vice Presidents.

We also collected gender data on 227 senior managers across 14 funders and assessed how many organisations had achieved gender parity at this level. No information was found for five (5/19; 26%) funders.

Eight (8/19; 42%) funders have a senior management team where women outnumbered men (55%+ women), with a further four (4/19; 21%) at gender parity (45-55% women).

We collected data on 183 individuals across 16 governing boards and assessed how many organisations had achieved gender parity. No information was found for two (2/18; 11%) governing boards, and one organisation was excluded due to lack of a board structure. Seven (7/18; 39%) boards had women outnumbering men, while two (2/18; 11%) had achieved gender parity (45-55% women).

**Figure 5. Funders with gender parity in senior management (n=19) and boards (n=18)**



## FUNDERS

### Distribution of Gender and nationality in leadership roles among funders

Despite overall gender balance, leadership is heavily skewed by geography. Nationality data, categorised by income classification, were found for 19/20 CEOs, 17/18 board chairs, 133/136 board members and 22/22 other leaders. Of these, eleven are classified as dual nationals.

Most CEOs (16/19; 84%), board chairs (16/17; 94%), board members (108/133; 81%), and other leaders (16/22; 73%) are nationals of high-income countries (HICs). Three (3/19; 16%) CEOs, one (1/17; 6%) board chair, 17 (17/133; 13%) board members, and two (2/22; 9%) other leaders are nationals of middle-income countries (MICs), while one (1/133; 1%) board member is a national of a low-income country (LICs); no nationals of LICs were represented at CEO, board chair, and other leader levels.

CEOs  
(n=19)

- 🌐 **HICs:** 37% (7) men and 47% (9) women.
- 🌐 **MICs:** 5% (1) men and 10% (2) women.
- 🌐 **LICs:** No men and no women represented.

BOARD CHAIRS  
(n=17)

- 🌐 **HICs:** 65% (11) men and 29% (5) women.
- 🌐 **MICs:** No men and 6% (1) women.
- 🌐 **LICs:** No men and no women represented.

BOARD MEMBERS  
(n=133)

- 🌐 **HICs:** 35% (46) men and 47% (62) women.
- 🌐 **MICs:** 7% (9) men and 6% (8) women.
- 🌐 **LICs:** No men and 1% (1) women.

OTHER LEADERS  
(n=22)

- 🌐 **HICs:** 32% (7) men and 41% (9) women.
- 🌐 **MICs:** 5% (1) men and 5% (1) women.
- 🌐 **LICs:** No men and no women represented.

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

**Fragmented faces**  
New Dehli, India. 2021.  
Hardeep Singh

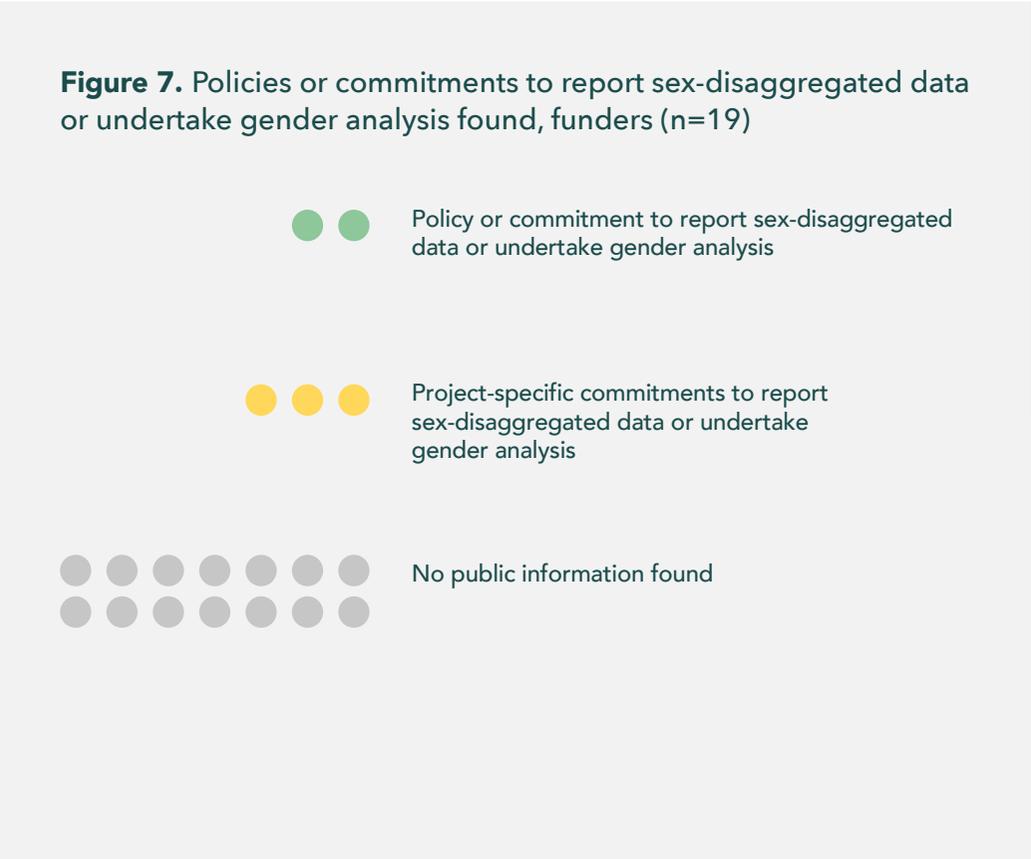
*Fragmented facial features and moving hands explore Deaf communication, gender fluidity, and embodied expression. Evoking sign language and symbolic code, the digital work blends aesthetics and advocacy in a powerful act of self-determination.*



# Finding 5. The potential of data disaggregated by sex alongside gender analysis is still unrealised among most funders

Sex-disaggregated data and gender analysis are essential for understanding who benefits from funding, who participates in funded initiatives, and where gender gaps persist. For funders, disaggregation of programmatic data by sex enables tracking of whether resources reach women and men equitably, supports accountability to gender equality commitments, and informs more effective, inclusive investment strategies. Without such data, assessing the gendered impacts of funding remains largely speculative.

Two (2/19; 11%) funders had a policy or commitment to regularly report sex-disaggregation of data or to undertake gender analysis.



● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

**2/19**

funders had a commitment to publicly report sex-disaggregated data or undertake gender analysis

## FUNDERS

### Box 3. Organisational examples

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

*We ask for voluntary reporting of demographic data from people we work with to help hold ourselves accountable to our strategic goals.*

*MacArthur collects demographic information across a range of its activities, including with respect to our Staff, Board, grantees, vendors, impact investments, and investment managers. We hope this information will help inform and explain what we seek to collect, why we collect such information, and how we use the information.*

*We seek to collect demographic information on a voluntary basis across a range of characteristics, including racial, ethnic, gender, sexual identity, and disability status.*

**MacArthur Foundation<sup>5</sup>**

#### **Dias eternos**

*Granja penitenciaria de Izalco, El Salvador. 2021.  
Ana María Arévalo Gosen*

*A woman bathes her daughter in the El Salvador's only maternal sector of its prison system. The image reflects the harsh realities faced by incarcerated mothers in raising children behind bars.*

### 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 institutions 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**



# Funders in the Global Justice 50/50 sample

- Channel Foundation
- Ford Foundation
- Foundation for International Law for the Environment (FILE)
- Fund for Global Human Rights
- Gates Foundation
- Global Fund for Women (GFW)
- Levi Strauss Foundation
- MacArthur Foundation
- Oak Foundation
- Open Society Foundations (OSF)
- Overbrook Foundation
- Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF)
- Skoll Foundation
- The David and Lucile Packard Foundation (Packard Foundation)
- The Pew Charitable Trusts
- Wallace Global Fund (WGF)
- WellSpring Philanthropic Fund (WPF)
- William & Flora Hewlett Foundation (Hewlett Foundation)
- Yield Giving

# Endnotes

- 1 Wallace Global Fund. (nd). Mission. <https://wgf.org/mission/>
- 2 Ford Foundation. (2021). Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Annual Report 2021. <https://www.fordfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/dei-2021-report-with-memo-ff-website-07062021-double-single-spread-final.pdf>
- 3 Gates Foundation. (nd). Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. <https://www.gatesfoundation.org/about/diversity-equity-inclusion>
- 4 Rockefeller Brothers Fund. (nd). Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. <https://www.rbf.org/about/diversity-equity-inclusion>
- 5 MacArthur Foundation. (nd). Why We Collect Demographic Data and How It Is Used. <https://www.macfound.org/about/our-policies/demographic-data>

# Annex 1. Glossary of Subsectors

READ THE FULL REPORT,  
INCLUDING METHODS



## Sorority

Paris, France. 2024.  
Su Cassiano

On an outdoor basketball court, Diaba, Zoulfat, and Assia face the camera with quiet resolve. Barred from competition for wearing the hijab, they stand for the right to play and to be seen.

## Commissions and Expert Mechanisms (Commissions)

Commissions and expert mechanisms are specialised bodies, often created by international treaties, conventions, or IGOs, to investigate issues, provide expert advice, or monitor compliance with legal or normative frameworks. They typically focus on a specific sector or issue, such as human rights, anti-corruption, or peace and security. These bodies are non-adjudicatory and do not issue binding rulings, but their findings, recommendations, and reports can influence policy, legislation, and practice at national, regional, or international levels.

## Funders and Philanthropies (Funders)

Funders and philanthropies provide financial support for initiatives in the law and justice sector, including rule of law, justice reform, democracy, and human rights programs. While many funders operate globally, financial power is highly concentrated among a small number of actors. Funders operate through grants, donations, or aid disbursements, and their influence often extends beyond direct funding to shaping policy, priorities, and best practices. Their role can also include convening stakeholders, facilitating networks, and tracking and evaluating the impact of investments, which helps drive systematic change within the law and justice ecosystem.

## Global and Regional Adjudicatory Bodies (Courts)

Courts, tribunals, and arbitration bodies are impartial entities empowered to resolve disputes and administer justice. Courts are usually permanent with broad jurisdiction, while tribunals and arbitration bodies are often specialised or temporary. Judges or arbitrators are selected via appointment, election, or other established process, and international courts or tribunals are created by treaty. Decisions are binding within their jurisdiction but may influence other contexts. Many adjudicatory bodies have administrative support for operations and staffing.

## Intergovernmental Organisations

Non-adjudicatory IGOs operate at the international level to set standards, provide guidance, and facilitate cooperation among Member States. Unlike national governments, IGOs typically do not have direct legislative or regulatory authority, relying instead on diplomacy, reporting mechanisms, and consensus to influence compliance with international treaties or norms. IGOs may perform administrative, investigative, or oversight functions and can shape national policies through standard-setting, monitoring, dispute resolution, or sanctions.

## International Non-governmental Organisations (International NGOs)

INGOs are non-profit organisations operating across multiple countries to promote legal, human rights, or justice-related objectives. While the total number of active INGOs is difficult to quantify, only a subset plays a significant role in the law and justice sector. These organisations typically engage in advocacy, policy development, capacity building, and research, influencing law, policy, and practice.

## Law Firms

Private sector legal practitioners include law firms that provide legal services to clients ranging from individuals to multinational corporations. Firms vary in size, structure, and geographic reach, from small boutique offices to large international or global firms, some organised as Swiss vereins with multiple member firms operating under one brand. Leadership structures typically include equity and non-equity partners, managing partners, and senior management teams responsible for operations and strategy.

## Legal Professional Associations

Legal professional associations are membership-based organisations representing lawyers and legal professional bodies at national, regional, or international levels. National bars often regulate licensing, ethical standards, and professional conduct, and can promote gender equality through continuing legal education, disciplinary measures, and advocacy. Regional and international professional associations advocate for reforms and policies that support gender equality within the legal profession but typically lack direct enforcement authority.

# Annex 2. List of Organisations

READ THE FULL REPORT,  
INCLUDING METHODS



**Resilience recycled**  
Daveyton, Johannesburg, Benoni,  
Gauteng, South Africa. 2025.  
Philadelphia Makwakwa

Gogo Mary Mauze stands beside her recycling cart, masked and steady, ankles swollen in worn slippers. Denied compensation after a life-altering accident, she works for survival where justice has failed to protect her.

## Global and regional adjudicatory bodies (Courts)

- African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (AfCHPR)
- Benelux Court of Justice (BCJ)
- Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ)
- Central American Court of Justice (CACJ)
- Common Court of Justice and Arbitration of the Organization for the Harmonization of Business Law in Africa (CCJA)
- Court of Justice of the Andean Community (TJCA)
- Court of Justice of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA Court of Justice)
- Court of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU Court)
- East African Court of Justice (EACJ)
- Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court (ECSC)
- Economic Community of West African States Community Court of Justice (ECOWAS Court of Justice)
- European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR)
- European Free Trade Association Court (EFTA Court)
- European Nuclear Energy Tribunal (ENET)
- Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACtHR)
- International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID)
- International Court of Justice (ICJ)
- International Criminal Court (ICC)
- International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS)
- Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA)
- United Nations Office of Administrative Justice (UNOAJ)

## Commissions and expert mechanisms (Commissions)

- 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)

## Intergovernmental organisations

- European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)
- Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH)
- International Development Law Organization (IDLO)
- International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA)
- International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT)
- International Labour Organization (ILO)
- Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) – Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)
- United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI)
- United Nations Office of Legal Affairs (OLA)
- United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

## International non-governmental organisations (International INGOs)

- A4ID: Advocates for International Development
- Access Now
- ActionAid International
- Amnesty International
- Anti-Slavery International
- Center for Economic and Social Rights (CESR)
- Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL)
- Center for Justice and Accountability (CJA)
- Center for Reproductive Rights
- Civil Rights Defenders
- Cordaid
- Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR)
- Earthjustice
- Equality Now
- European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR)
- Freedom House
- Front Line Defenders (FLD)
- Global Justice Center (GJC)
- Global Rights
- Global Witness
- Greenpeace International
- Human Rights Foundation (HRF)
- Human Rights Watch (HRW)
- Humanity in Action
- International Law Institute (ILI)
- Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa (IHRDA)
- Institute for International Law and Human Rights (IILHR)
- International Bridges to Justice (IBJ)

- International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL)
- International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)
- International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
- International Crisis Group (Crisis Group)
- International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
- International Justice Mission (IJM)
- International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP)
- International Rescue Committee (IRC)
- International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
- International Society for Human Rights (ISHR)
- Justice Rapid Response (JRR)
- Lawyers Without Borders (LWOB)
- Max Planck Foundation for International Peace and the Rule of Law (MPFPR)
- Minority Rights Group (MRG)
- Protection International (PI)
- Public International Law & Policy Group (PILPG)
- Survival International
- The Carter Center
- The Cyrus R. Vance Center for International Justice (The Vance Center)
- The International Legal Foundation (The ILF)
- Transparency International (TI)
- UN Watch
- World Justice Project (WJP)

## Law firms

- A&O Shearman
- Akin
- Ashurst
- Baker McKenzie
- Bird & Bird

- Cleary Gottlieb
- Clifford Chance
- CMS
- Cooley
- Covington
- Debevoise & Plimpton
- Dentons
- DLA Piper
- Eversheds Sutherland
- Freshfields
- Gibson Dunn
- Goodwin Procter
- Greenberg Traurig
- Herbert Smith Freehills Kramer (HSF Kramer)
- Hogan Lovells
- Jones Day
- Kim & Chang
- Kirkland & Ellis
- Latham & Watkins
- Linklaters
- Mayer Brown
- McDermott Will & Schulte
- Morgan Lewis
- Norton Rose Fulbright
- Quinn Emanuel
- Reed Smith
- Ropes & Gray
- Sidley Austin
- Simpson Thacher & Bartlett
- Skadden
- Squire Patton Boggs
- White & Case
- WilmerHale

## Legal professional associations

- Asian Society of International Law (AsianSIL)
- Association of Corporate Counsel (ACC)
- Commonwealth Lawyers Association (CLA)
- European Bars Federation (Fédération des Barreaux d'Europe; FBE)
- International Association of Lawyers (UIA)
- International Association of Prosecutors (IAP)
- International Bar Association (IBA)
- International Council of Advocates and Barristers (ICAB)
- International Criminal Court Bar Association (ICCBA)
- International Institute of Law Association Chief Executives (IILACE)
- Pan African Lawyers Union (PALU)

## Funders and philanthropies (Funders)

- Channel Foundation
- Ford Foundation
- Foundation for International Law for the Environment (FILE)
- Fund for Global Human Rights
- Gates Foundation
- Global Fund for Women (GFW)
- Levi Strauss Foundation
- MacArthur Foundation
- Oak Foundation
- Open Society Foundations (OSF)
- Overbrook Foundation
- Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF)
- Skoll Foundation
- The David and Lucile Packard Foundation (Packard Foundation)
- The Pew Charitable Trusts
- Wallace Global Fund (WGF)
- WellSpring Philanthropic Fund (WPF)
- William & Flora Hewlett Foundation (Hewlett Foundation)
- Yield Giving

# Annex 3. Methods



READ THE FULL REPORT,  
INCLUDING METHODS



**The freedom bell 1**  
Coxsazar, Bangladesh. 2025.  
Mithail Afrige Chowdhury

*From the shadow of a wardrobe, a woman's hand extends toward a dress hung like a waiting silhouette. A still portrait of gendered constraint rendered through what is hidden rather than seen.*

A core function of our work is independent monitoring – which sits at the heart of systems of accountability.<sup>1</sup> Measuring ‘from the outside’ presents several challenges. For example, capturing concepts as contextual as those of fairness and equity with a standardised, simple methodology may seem a fool’s errand. We recognise and acknowledge the critiques, including that reducing nuanced concepts such as intersectionality to measurable indicators may risk flattening their meaning. Nonetheless, we are all aware that what gets measured, gets done.

## Organisational sample and criteria for inclusion

This Report reviews 171 global organisations active in the global law and justice sector. Global 50/50 defines ‘global organisations’ as those with a presence in at least three countries. The sample includes organisations that traditionally uphold the rule of law and those organisations which perform a function of promoting and/or safeguarding access to justice in the wider sense.

For the purposes of the Global Justice 50/50 Report, the justice sector is defined as the set of institutions that are responsible for ensuring that legal rights of individuals and groups are protected, resolving conflicts arising from alleged violations or differing interpretations of laws and rules, and strengthening the normative framework that shapes public and private actions.<sup>2</sup> Key components of the justice sector include judicial or adjudicatory bodies (e.g., courts, tribunals) responsible for interpreting laws and adjudicating disputes. Additionally, nongovernmental components of the justice sector may include alternative dispute

mechanisms (e.g., private arbitral tribunals, community-based resolution mechanisms).

The law sector is defined as focusing on the creation, interpretation, application, and enforcement of laws, regulations, and legal frameworks within a society or jurisdiction. Key components include legislative bodies (e.g. United Nations General Assembly, European Parliament, ministries of justice), regulatory or administrative bodies that facilitate interpretation and implementation of laws (e.g. treaty monitoring bodies), and prosecutorial bodies involved with enforcement. Additionally, nongovernmental components of the law sector include legal practitioners (e.g. private law firms, chambers) who apply these laws and nongovernmental organisations who advocate for changes in the law.<sup>3</sup>

In developing the sampling framework for this Report, G5050 commissioned consultants to map the global law and justice sector and propose approaches for selecting representative organisations across global, regional, and, where relevant, national levels. An [options paper](#) identifying key subsectors for inclusion and exploring different sampling approaches was circulated to experts across the sector, inviting feedback through an accompanying survey.

The process initially resulted in the selection of five analysable subsectors:

- i) global and regional adjudicatory bodies (courts);
- ii) non-adjudicatory intergovernmental organisations;
- iii) international nongovernmental organisations (international NGOs);
- iv) private sector legal practitioners (law firms); and
- v) funders and philanthropies.

Subsequently, commissions and expert mechanisms, originally under intergovernmental organisations, were analysed as a separate subsector, given that they do not have employees. Bar associations, originally under international NGOs as legal professional associations, were analysed separately given their unique structures as membership associations (see definitions in Annex 1).

Other potential subsectors (e.g. law enforcement, law schools, and legislators) were excluded due to limited comparability, inconsistent data, or minimal potential to drive systemic change. This approach allows the Report to identify trends, benchmarks, and best practices that can inform action across diverse contexts.

Inclusion of an organisation does not signify G5050’s endorsement of its activities, nor that G5050 considers the organisation to be contributing to advancing legal discourse in a positive direction. Rather, organisations under review have been identified as having demonstrated an interest in influencing global legal rules, norms, or frameworks.

## Approach and methods for data collection and analysis

G5050 has developed a rigorous methodology that is consistent with established systematic review research methods. At least two reviewers extract each publicly available data item independently, and a third reviewer verifies the data. The reviewers discuss any discrepancies in data extraction until they reach a consensus. Data are coded according to content, using a traffic light system established in advance of data collection and refined iteratively.

Data collected and analysed come from publicly available websites. Transparency and accountability are closely related and by relying on publicly available data we aim to hold organisations and stakeholders to account – including for having gender-related policies accessible to the public.

Several variables assess the availability and contents of policies. We do not consider newsletters or blogs as evidence of policy. Further, for workplace-related policies, we do not consider the contents of job advertisements as evidence of policy, rather, we look for evidence of actual policies or an overall commitment from the organisation. This decision is also drawn from our concern that some people may not get as far as the job ads if they don't see any commitment to equality in the main pages of the organisation itself.

Some organisations follow the workplace policies of host organisations or parent companies. In these cases, we assessed the policies of the host/parent where explicitly stated that these apply to the sampled organisation. For example, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights are both organs of the African Union. Other non-workplace policy variables (e.g. gender parity in leadership, stated commitment to gender equality, etc.) are coded for each organisation individually.

Global 50/50 used an earlier version of this methodology to review a small number of global health organisations and global PPPs in health. These reviews were published in peer-reviewed journals (The Lancet<sup>1</sup> and Globalization and Health<sup>2</sup>) prior to 2017.<sup>4, 5</sup>

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and global PPPs in health. These reviews were published in peer-reviewed journals (The Lancet<sup>6</sup> and Globalization and Health<sup>7</sup>) prior to 2017.

We do not report percentages for subsectors with small sample sizes (fewer than 20 organisations), as percentage values can be misleading when based on small denominators. In these cases, results are presented as absolute counts only. Where percentages are shown for findings with modest sample sizes, the underlying numerators and denominators are provided to support transparent interpretation.

### Engaging and validating results with organisations

We contact each organisation at least twice during data validation. Initially we inform the head of the organisation and a senior member of staff about the project and the start date of data collection, using email addresses found online. In that correspondence, we request the nomination and contact details of a focal point in the organisation who can review and validate the data once collected. Following completion of data collection, we send each organisation their preliminary results and ask them to review and provide any additional information, documentation or policies to review.

#### For the 2025 Report, 23 organisations validated or partially validated their data.

We also offer all organisations the opportunity to engage with us directly to discuss the methods, data, and findings. For the 2026 Report, this included individual meetings with 12 organisations.

To amend organisational scores, we request that organisations show us evidence in the public domain to support their amendment. Throughout the process of data collection, G5050 encourages organisations to contact us to discuss queries about the process and the variables. Results are shared with all organisations before publication.

Data were collected between 12 February and 23 May 2025; data validation with organisations took place between the 9 June 2025 and 30 July 2025.

### Ethics

The methods described above were approved by the ethics committee of University College London, where G5050 was previously housed. Since becoming an independent UK-based charity our methods have been reviewed by the [Social Research Association \(UK\)](#) to ensure our methods continue to align with "principles of good practice in social research, including high standards of ethics".

### Strengths and limitations

As far as we know, this is the only systematic attempt to assess how gender is understood and practised by organisations working in and/or influencing the field of global law and justice across multiple dimensions (commitment, workplace policy content, gender and geography of leadership and gender-responsive programming). While our efforts may have omitted relevant measures and do not include all active organisations, this method provides the opportunity to

measure the status quo and report on organisations' progress. This method has previously allowed us to shine a light on the state of gender equality in the global health sector, and we now bring this proven approach to this new sector. We believe that the collection of data and information for measurement and accountability is a fundamental first step to change.

## Organisational scores

G5050 has developed a research methodology that is consistent with established principles of rigorous research – including double blind independent reviewing. The Gender and Justice Index scores organisational performance predominantly using a traffic light system (green, amber, red). The data collected and analysed comes from publicly available websites. Organisations are invited to contribute to and validate data collected on their policies and practices at least twice during the data collection period.

Special notes on the scoring:

- Organisations with 10 or fewer staff received an NA score for any workplace policies, unless they are subject to the policies of a larger host organisation.
- All commissions received an NA score for workplace policies, due to the organisational structures of a majority of these bodies.
- Member State (MS) scoring was used for the Board representation and inclusion policy variable, the Gender equality policy for the courts bench selections and commissions selections variables, and the Fairness and equity policy for the courts bench selections and commissions selections variables.
  - Organisations received a score of Member State (MS) for the Board representation and inclusion policy variable to recognise that UN and other MS board-led organisations should be held accountable for promoting representative and inclusive board structures, while they may not control board appointments directly. Boards themselves also have the authority to revise and improve their own policies.
  - Courts and commissions received a score of Member State (MS) for the Gender equality policy for the bench selections and commissions selections variables and for the Fairness and equity policy for the bench selections and commissions selections variables where judges and commissioners are selected through Member State-led processes.
- Intergovernmental organisations and bar associations were excluded from the analysis of the Board representation and inclusion variable due to their organisational structures, in particular, the roles of member states or members in deciding the composition of boards.
- Organisations that have informed G5050 that they do not have a governing body received an NA score for the Board representation and inclusion policy variable and the Gender parity in governing body variable.
- Organisations that do not collect or report data on natural persons received an NA score for reporting of sex-disaggregated data or undertaking gender analysis.

We have not assigned a score based on the gender of the CEO or Board Chair, as we have not agreed on a methodology that is fair and defensible. We welcome your suggestions as to what a fair assessment would look like. Please email us at: [info@global5050.org](mailto:info@global5050.org).

**EXPLORE ORGANISATIONS' PERFORMANCE**



**VIEW YOUR DETAILED ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE**



# Endnotes

- 1 Williams, C & Hunt, P. (2018). Neglecting human rights: accountability, data and Sustainable Development Goal 3. In Winkler, I & Williams, C (eds.), *The Sustainable Development Goals and human rights: a critical early review*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13642987.2017.1348706>
- 2 World Bank. (2007). *Justice Sector Assessments: A Handbook*. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/803711468338346161/pdf/437070WP0Box3210March0200701PUBLIC1.pdf>
- 3 Global 50/50. (2024). *Options Paper: Sampling Framework for a Global 50/50 Assessment of the Global Law and Justice Sector*. [https://global5050.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/G5050-Options-Paper-Sample-Frame-for-the-Law-and-Justice-Sector\\_October\\_2024.pdf](https://global5050.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/G5050-Options-Paper-Sample-Frame-for-the-Law-and-Justice-Sector_October_2024.pdf)
- 4 Hawkes, S. & Buse, K. (2013). Gender and global health: evidence, policy, and inconvenient truths. *Lancet* (London, England), 381(9879), 1783–1787. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(13\)60253-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(13)60253-6)
- 5 Hawkes, S., Buse, K. & Kapilashrami, A. (2017). Gender blind? An analysis of global public-private partnerships for health. *Globalization and Health*, 13(1), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12992-017-0249-1>
- 6 Hawkes, S. & Buse, K. (2013). Gender and global health: evidence, policy, and inconvenient truths. *Lancet* (London, England), 381(9879), 1783–1787. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(13\)60253-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(13)60253-6)
- 7 Hawkes, S., Buse, K. & Kapilashrami, A. (2017). Gender blind? An analysis of global public-private partnerships for health. *Globalization and Health*, 13(1), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12992-017-0249-1>

# Image Descriptions

The following are the descriptions of all images included in this Report.

Images also contain hover-over captions, but please note this feature may not work across all software.

- P1 A woman draped in newspapers raises a speaker high in Iwaya, Lagos — a symbolic stand against erasure, claiming space and voice where they are denied.
- P5 Mid-air and defiant, Benita rises above the ring as the crowd surges. In Cholitás wrestling, Aymara women restage and reverse unequal gender dynamics, reclaiming power publicly.
- P8 In a dim courtyard, a tantrik lifts a torch over Chutni Mahato as she sits with her knees drawn close. Once persecuted, she now leads movements demanding justice and protection for women accused of witchcraft.
- P10 An elderly calligrapher sits, surrounded by scrolls of his own making. Between ink, smoke, and fading light, he becomes a bridge between past and present, preserving culture in a moment of peace.
- P13 In Satkhira, families gather around a table submerged in rising water, sharing what food remains. A counterpoint to the polished settings of law and policy luncheons, reminding us where decisions land.
- P16 Rahima Khatun stands in a beam of light inside a lentil factory, hands lifted as if against invisible restraints — a quiet reminder of decades lost to wrongful imprisonment.
- P19 A young girl sits at a school desk against the vast backdrop of her village and surrounding mountains. Here, the promise of education meets the reality of distance, gendered expectations, and structural inequality.
- P25 At the doorway of her home in the Gambaga camp, Bachalbanueya holds our gaze. Banished after a witchcraft accusation, she has lived here for over four decades — a stark reminder of the cost of injustice.
- P29 Egbiameje Omole performs against the horizon, body adorned and in motion. Holding a pankere—a cane commonly used to discipline children—they explore how law and social violence are carried in the bodies of queer and non-binary Nigerians.
- P44 Counselor Fatima Qandil stares into the lens, seated among her male colleagues on the bench of Egypt’s Criminal Court. She is the first woman to ascend this platform, a space long reserved for men.
- P58 A young Buddhist nun looks back toward the camera amid a sea of red robes at Yarchen Gar, one of the world’s largest centres for Buddhist nuns.
- P63 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.
- P71 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.
- P74 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.
- P76 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.
- P79 A mother and daughter kneel beside the rusted remains of a destroyed tank in southern Iran, heads bowed in mourning. A quiet image of war’s aftermath and the gendered burden of remembrance.
- P90 With over 160 pupils, many with multiple disabilities, the Mulago School for the Deaf represents both a sanctuary and a challenge to educational inequities.
- P93 At dusk, a young girl carries water while boys play around her, tracing the early lines of gendered labour that shape lives.

- P100 Adenike Adebayo is radiant, her pose one of quiet power. Having lost both legs in early childhood due to the mismanagement of a treatable illness, Adenike's story is not one of victimhood but of resilience, joy, and ambition.
- P106 A face emerges, constructed from fragments of unspoken thought. This self-portrait, formed entirely of text, transforms the artist's private inner world into a visual field of meaning, contemplating the fragility and urgency of expression.
- P108 A group of women mourn at the graves of those killed during the Srebrenica massacre in July 1995. The genocide, carried out by Bosnian Serb forces, targeted Muslim men and boys, claiming the lives of at least 8,372 victims.
- P112 In uniform and masked, Ruhina strides through her school hall, surrounded by her own handwritten testimony. After escaping child marriage, she reclaims space and voice.
- P126 Both born as girls, Ali wears jeans and a shirt while Setar wears a traditional outfit for men. Bacha Posh means 'dressed as a boy' and is a tradition in Afghan families without sons. Dressing as a boy also means having more privilege and freedom.
- P128 A woman collects water from the communal handpump. With unplanned urbanisation, population growth, and inadequate water management practices, millions in Bangladesh face the grim reality of water contamination.
- P131 In a dark passageway, a woman turns toward a figure in the shadows, a reminder of the vigilance demanded from women in spaces where law arrives only after harm is done.
- P138 Maria walks through a field of marigolds with her saxophone. She survived an acid attack orchestrated by her ex-boyfriend, an influential politician, after their breakup. Although still a target, Maria refuses to hide in the shadows.
- P143 A blindfolded clay head is styled after the Hindu goddess Durga, a symbol of feminine strength, during a march for justice for survivors of sexual violence. Inscribed with the words "We demand justice," the sculpture becomes an indictment of a system that has failed to protect women.
- P145 A protester stands before police during an anti-ICE demonstration in Los Angeles, baring his chest to reveal the scar left by law enforcement. He lifts his chin high in defiance, facing the armoured line without fear. His body becomes both evidence and resistance, a counterpoint to their riot shields.
- P148 Amid street life, a young disabled girl sits on a makeshift wheelchair, load balanced on her head. Her calm, steady look resists pity, insisting instead on presence and visibility.
- P160 Fragmented facial features and moving hands explore Deaf communication, gender fluidity, and embodied expression. Evoking sign language and symbolic code, the digital work blends aesthetics and advocacy in a powerful act of self-determination.
- P162 A woman bathes her daughter in the El Salvador's only maternal sector of its prison system. The image reflects the harsh realities faced by incarcerated mothers in raising children behind bars.
- P165 On an outdoor basketball court, Diaba, Zoulfat, and Assia face the camera with quiet resolve. Barred from competition for wearing the hijab, they stand for the right to play and to be seen.
- P168 Gogo Mary Mauze stands beside her recycling cart, masked and steady, ankles swollen in worn slippers. Denied compensation after a life-altering accident, she works for survival where justice has failed to protect her.
- P172 From the shadow of a wardrobe, a woman's hand extends toward a dress hung like a waiting silhouette. A still portrait of gendered constraint rendered through what is hidden rather than seen.

 GLOBAL<sup>50</sup><sub>50</sub>