

Global and Regional Adjudicatory Bodies (Courts)



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 18 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:



Delivering Better Gender Justice Outcomes

Improving the Quality of Judicial Decision-Making

Increasing Public Trust in the Sector

Enhancing Organisational Performance and Profitability

Expanding Access to Justice and Equity in Service Delivery

Assessing the 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

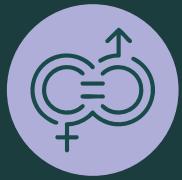
always reflect internal practice, just as their absence does not necessarily indicate a lack of internal action, particularly in the context of the current global anti-gender backlash. The value of our approach, however, lies in offering a clear, comparative snapshot of how organisations publicly present 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:

1 Public statement of commitment to gender equality	Bench selections	 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.
2 Policies with specific measures to promote gender equality on the bench or for court staff	Bench workings	 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.
	Court staff	 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.
		 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 on the bench or for court staff

4

Gender parity on the bench and in the registry

5

Gender and nationality of court presidents, justices, registrars, and arbitrators

6

Policy on sex-disaggregated case data and gender analysis

Bench selections	 Policy with specific measure(s) to improve diversity, inclusion, fairness and/or equality in the selection process.
	 Commitment to promoting fairness and equity in the selection process but does not state what specific measures are in place to promote equality/diversity.
	 No policy or commitment found.
Bench workings	 Policy with specific measure(s) to improve diversity, inclusion, fairness and/or equality in the appointment of the President/Chair and/or working groups.
	 Commitment to promoting 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.
	 No policy or commitment found.
Court staff	 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, but does not state what specific measures are in place to promote equality/diversity; 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.
	 56-100% women represented.
	 45-55% women represented; or difference of one individual.
	 35-44% women represented.
	 0-34% women represented.
	There is no traffic light scoring for this variable; we only report on the aggregate numbers.
Policy on sex-disaggregated case data and gender analysis	 Policy or organisational commitment found to regularly report sex-disaggregated case data and/or to undertake gender analysis.
	 Project- or issue-specific commitments to report sex-disaggregated data and/or to undertake gender analysis.
	 No policy or commitment found.

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.

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)¹

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



Public commitment to gender equality or gender mainstreaming in policy and planning



No formal gender justice commitment, but work includes women's rights / human rights / access to justice



No mention of gender or social justice

 50%

of courts have a public commitment to gender equality

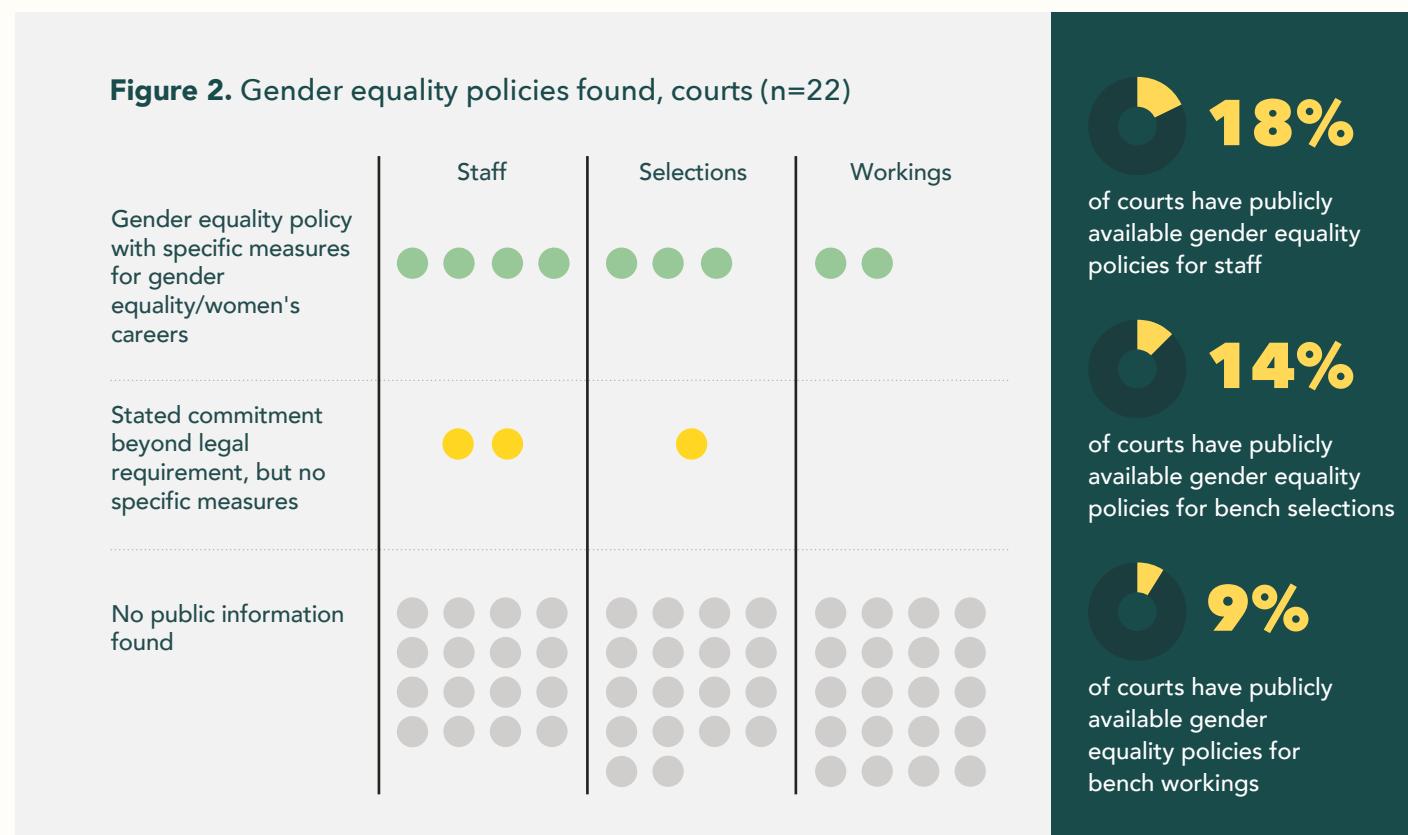
Finding 2. Few courts assessed have publicly available policies on gender equality, fairness and equity for the composition of the bench; fewer still publish such policies for court staff

We looked for gender equality, fairness and equity policies with specific measures related to 1) the selection processes of justices, 2) the workings of the court, and 3) court staff.

Examples of specific measures for advancing gender equality 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.

Specific measures for advancing fairness and equity included: inclusive recruitment and appointment 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 policies found, courts (n=22)



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.

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.

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.

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



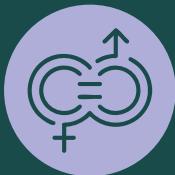
of courts have publicly available gender equality policies for staff



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)²**

**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)³**

**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)⁴**

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

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).

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.

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 Tribunal
for the Law of the Sea
(ITLOS)⁵**

**European Court of
Human Rights (ECtHR)⁶**

**International Criminal
Court (ICC)⁷**

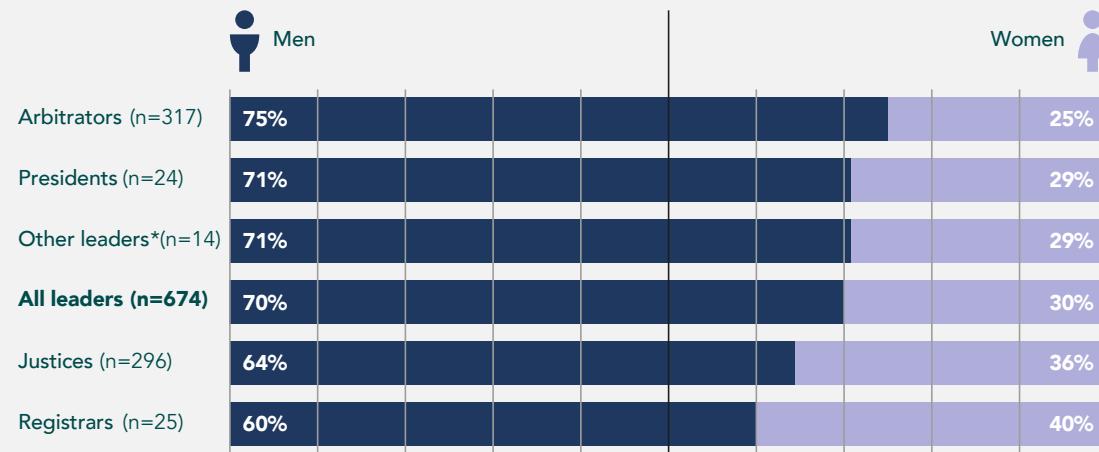
Finding 3. Women from low- and middle-income countries are under-represented across all parts of courts

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.

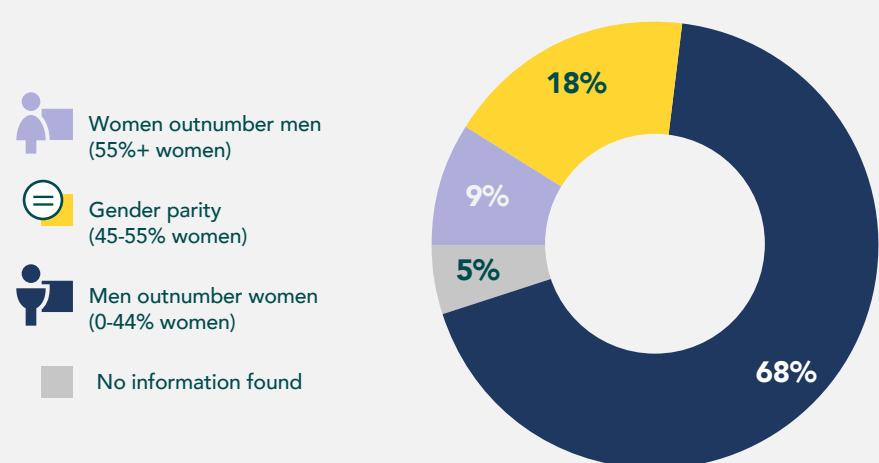


Figure 4. Proportion of men and women among power holders, courts (n=674)



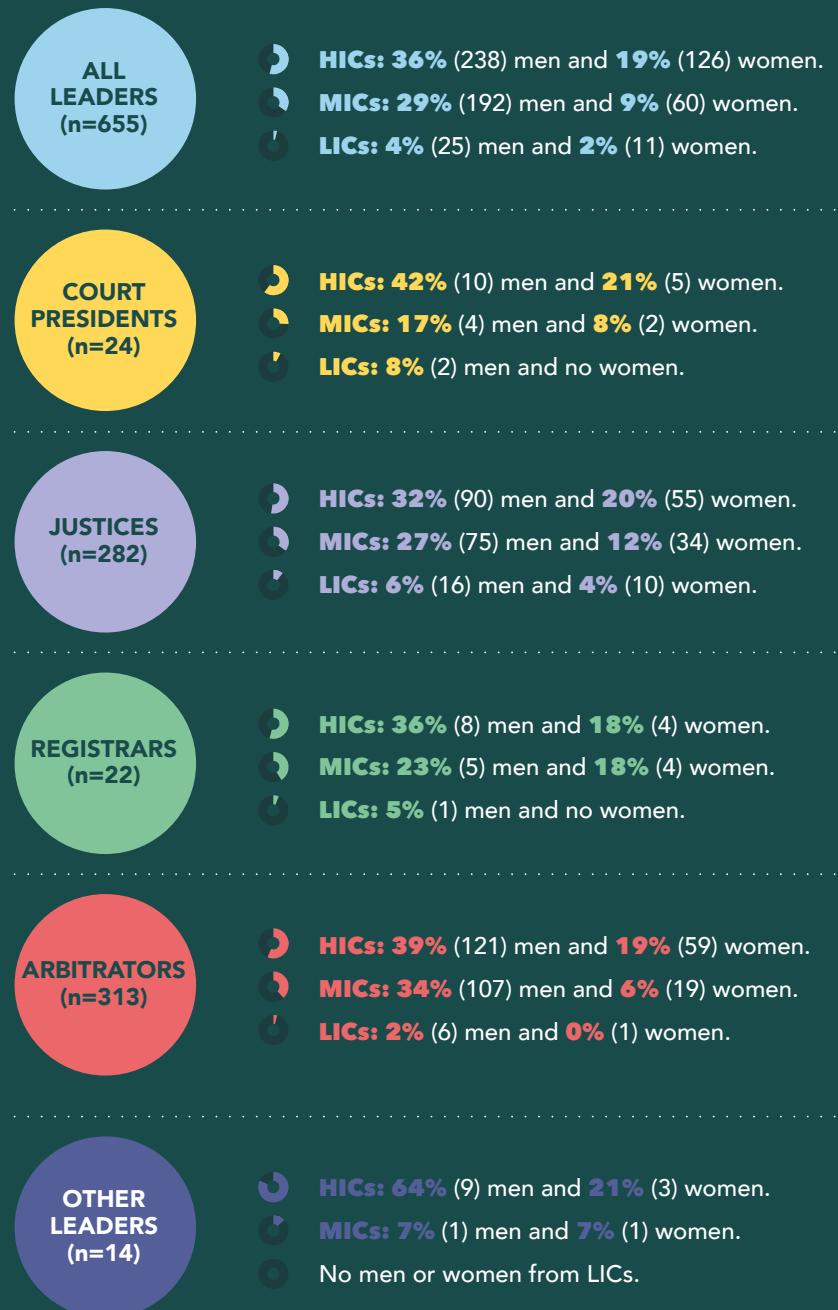
*Other leaders includes the following power holders specific to individual courts:
Advocate Generals and Prosecutors.

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

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

HICs: high-income countries

MICs: middle-income countries

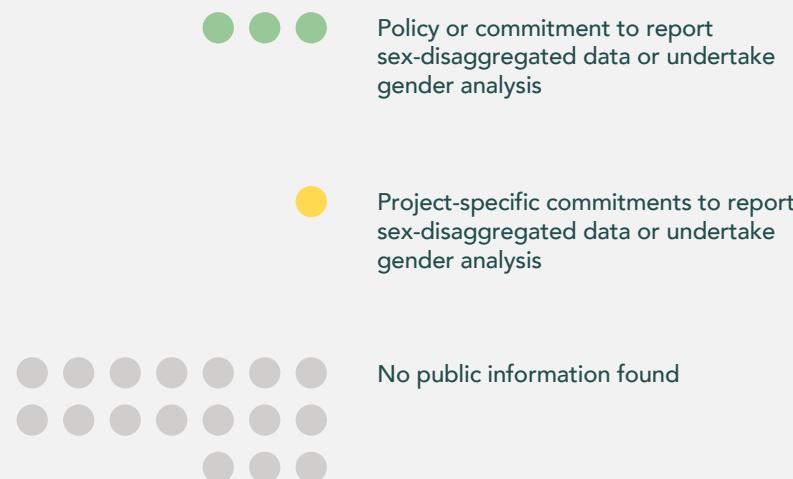
LICs: low-income countries

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.

14%

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)⁸

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 Justice of the European Union (CJEU)
- 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
- 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>