

Mapping Women in Climate and Environmental Leadership



Women play key roles in climate and environmental governance, but not equally across all levels. This overview maps their presence in the three main environmental conventions (CBD, UNFCCC, UNCCD) and key global organizations, revealing both progress and persistent gaps.

The COPs (Conference of the Parties) are major global meetings held by each convention where countries send delegations to set the course of international climate and environmental action, including through negotiations. A different host country presides over each conference, with a high-level national official serving as COP President.

Women lead gender agendas, but are underrepresented in broader national coordination.

They hold nearly all gender focal point roles, which drive gender integration in policies, but only a third of national focal point seats, which coordinate countries' overall engagement in the conventions.

Women as Gender Focal Points and National Focal Points (%)

CBD, UNCCD and UNFCCC

■ FEMALE ■ MALE

National Gender Focal Points*



National Focal Points



*Includes only CBD and UNFCCC.

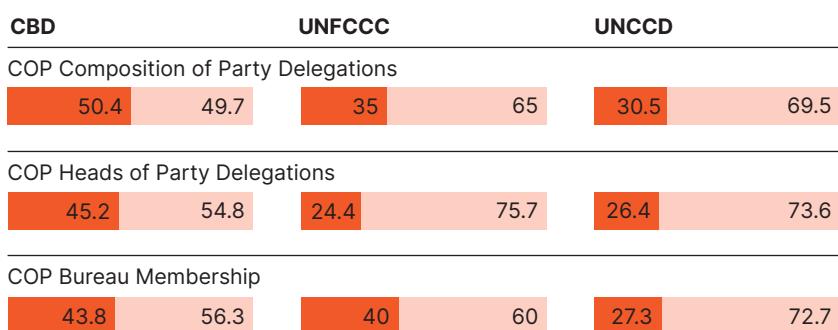
At the most recent COPs, the CBD COP stands out for near gender parity,

with women representing roughly half of participants across selected roles. The other conventions lag behind.

Women's Participation in Most Recent COPs by Region of Origin (%)

COP Party Delegations, COP Head of Party Delegation and COP Bureau Members at COP-29 UNFCCC, COP-20 UNCCD and COP-16 CBD.

■ FEMALE ■ MALE



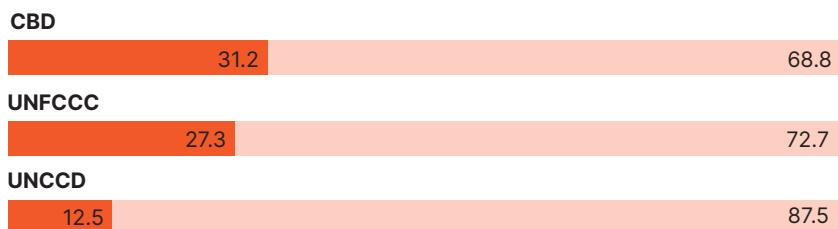
Among COP Presidencies, representation narrows further.

No convention nears parity: CBD leads again, UNCCD lags behind.

COP Presidencies by Gender over Time (%)

COP 1 to 16 (CBD), COP 1 to 16 (UNCCD), COP 1 to 29 (UNFCCC).

■ FEMALE ■ MALE



Across regions, representation also varies.

Women's leadership is strongest in Latin America and Western Europe, but lowest in Africa and Asia-Pacific, highlighting both gender and geographic imbalances in climate decision-making.

Women's Participation in COPs by Region of Origin (%)

COP Party Delegations, COP Head of Party Delegations and COP Bureau Members at COP-29 UNFCCC, COP-20 UNCCD and COP-16 CBD.

■ FEMALE ■ MALE

Latin America and Caribbean States



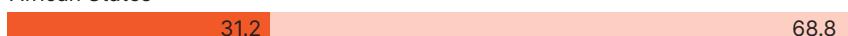
Western European and other States



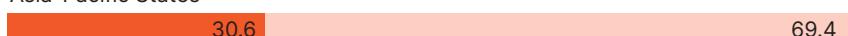
Eastern European States



African States



Asia-Pacific States



Beyond the COPs, progress remains uneven.

Among the heads of global environmental conventions and organizations, gender balance varies widely. The GCF approaches parity, while the IPCC has never had a woman chair.

Female Heads of Key Organizations Since Their Founding (%)

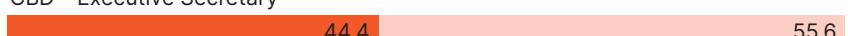
From 1972 to 2025 in GEF, UNFCCC, CBD, CDD, UNDP, UNEP, UNCCD, and IPCC.

■ FEMALE ■ MALE

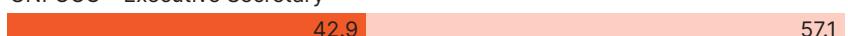
GCF – Executive Director



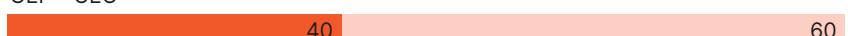
CBD – Executive Secretary



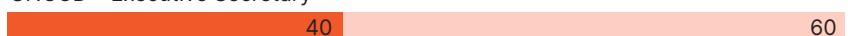
UNFCCC – Executive Secretary



GEF – CEO



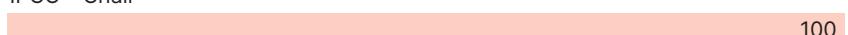
UNCCD – Executive Secretary



UNEP – Executive Director



IPCC – Chair



OVERALL INSIGHTS

Women are better represented in gender-related roles (gender focal points) but remain underrepresented in broader roles (national focal points).

In high-level positions (such as in COP Bureaus, Heads of Party Delegations, COP Presidencies, and Heads of Organizations), **representation remains low**.

Representation also varies across conventions: **the CBD shows stronger female participation in both delegations and leadership**, compared to the UNFCCC and UNCCD.

Regionally, **women's representation is higher** in Western European and other States and in Latin American and Caribbean states, **but remains low** in Asia Pacific and Africa, reinforcing both gender and geographic inequalities in global climate governance.



These findings are part of an upcoming report.

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