



## Ratification of the 18 international human rights treaties

### Concepts and definitions

**Definition:**

The indicator refers to a State's consent to be bound by the 18 human rights treaties under international law.

**Rationale:**

When a State ratifies one of the international human rights treaties, it assumes a legal obligation to implement the rights recognized in that treaty. Through ratification, States undertake to put in place domestic measures and legislation compatible with their treaty obligations. The State also commits to submitting regular reports on how the rights are being implemented to the monitoring committee set up under that treaty. Most of the committees can, under certain conditions, receive petitions from individuals who claim that their rights under the treaties have been violated. The State party must have recognized the competence of the committee to consider such complaints from individuals either by becoming a party to an optional protocol or by making a declaration to that effect under a specific article of the treaty. This indicator is a *structural indicator* in the OHCHR methodology for human rights indicators ([HRI/PUB/12/5](#)).

**Concepts:**

A "State party" to a treaty is a State that has expressed its consent, by an act of ratification, accession or succession, and where the treaty has entered into force (or a State about to become a party after formal reception by the United Nations Secretariat of the State's decision to be a party). A "signatory" to a treaty is a State that provided a preliminary endorsement of the instrument and its intent to examine the treaty domestically and consider ratifying it. "No action" means that a State did not express its consent.

The core international human rights treaties and their optional protocols:

1. International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), 1965
2. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), 1966
3. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), 1966
4. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1979
5. Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), 1984
6. Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), 1989

7. International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICMW), 1990
8. International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (CPED), 2006
9. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), 2006
10. Optional Protocol to the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR-OP), 2008
11. Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR-OP1), 1966
12. Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty (ICCPR-OP2), 1989
13. Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (OP-CEDAW), 1999
14. Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (OP-CRC-AC), 2000
15. Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (OP-CRC-SC), 2000
16. Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure (OP-CRC-IC), 2014
17. Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OP-CAT), 2002
18. Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (OP-CRPD), 2006

#### **Comments and limitations:**

The indicator provides information on the acceptance by a State of the international human rights standards and its intention or commitment to undertake steps to realize human rights in conformity with the provisions of the relevant instruments (*structural indicator*). It does not, however, capture actual implementation (*process indicator*) or its results (outcome indicator).

A State that has signed a treaty has not expressed its consent to be bound by it. Signature is a means of authentication and shows the willingness of the signatory State to continue the treaty-making process. The signature qualifies the signatory State to proceed to ratification, acceptance, or approval. It also creates an obligation to refrain, in good faith, from acts that would defeat the object and the purpose of the treaty (see Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, 1969).

The indicator does not reflect possible "*reservations*" entered by a State on a treaty. States parties can enter "*reservations*" on a treaty. A reservation is a declaration made by a State by which it purports to exclude or alter the legal effect of specific provisions of the treaty in their application to that State. A reservation enables a State to accept a multilateral treaty as a whole by giving it the possibility not to apply specific provisions with which it does not want to comply. Reservations can be made when the treaty is signed, ratified, accepted, approved, or acceded to. Although an "*ideal*" indicator on the status of international human rights treaties should include different weights for different reservations, establishing objective criteria to obtain a weighting scheme may be technically challenging. Reservations should not be incompatible with the object and the purpose of the treaty (see Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties). The Human Rights Council also adopted the human rights voluntary goals ([resolution 9/12](#)) to promote the realization of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. One goal is the universal ratification of the core international human rights instruments and the dedication of all efforts towards the realization of the international human rights obligations of States.

## Methodology

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### Computation Method:

A value of 1 is assigned to a "State party" (or a State about to become a party after formal reception by the United Nations Secretariat of the State's decision to be a party) and 0 otherwise. The total is calculated for the 18 international human rights instruments. The provisions under the treaty determine the moment of its entry into force.

### Disaggregation:

Not applicable.

### Treatment of missing values:

- [At country level](#)

No missing values.

- [At regional and global levels](#)

No missing values.

### Regional aggregates:

Regional aggregates are calculated as the total number of treaties ratified by all the countries in the region divided by the total number of countries in the region.

### Sources of discrepancies:

No discrepancies.

### Methods and guidance available to countries for the compilation of the data at the national level:

- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), [The United Nations Human Rights Treaty System, Fact Sheet No. 30, Rev. 1](#)

### Quality assurance

- OHCHR maintains a database that is updated regularly, and makes every possible effort to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data.

## Data Sources

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### Description:

The indicator is produced by OHCHR based on data obtained from and regularly updated by the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs (UN OLA). The UN OLA's mission is to, among other things, register and publish treaties. It also performs the depositary functions of the Secretary-General, including validation with relevant stakeholders at national, regional, and international levels. (<https://treaties.un.org/>).

### Collection process:

OHCHR regularly updates data on the status of ratification of treaties at <https://indicators.ohchr.org/>. The data are obtained from and periodically updated by the UN OLA.

## Data Availability

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**Description:**

**Time series:**

2015 - 2020

## Calendar

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**Data collection:**

Real-time

**Data release:**

Real-time

## Data providers

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United Nations Office of Legal Affairs (UN OLA)

## Data compilers

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Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

## References

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**URL:**

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Indicators/Pages/HRIndicatorsIndex.aspx>

**References:**

UNITED NATIONS (2012). Human Rights Indicators: A Guide to Measurement and Implementation. New York and Geneva. Available from

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Indicators/Pages/HRIndicatorsIndex.aspx>.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), [The United Nations Human Rights Treaty System, Fact Sheet No. 30, Rev. 1](#)

## Related indicators

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- Acceptance of 9 individual complaints procedures
- Reporting compliance by State parties to the human rights treaty bodies
- Standing invitations for country visits to the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council
- Replies to communications from the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council
- Country Visits by the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council
- SDG 16.1.2: Number of conflict-related deaths by sex, age, and cause
- SDG 16.10.1: Number of verified cases of killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture of journalists, associated media personnel, trade unionists and human rights advocates in the previous 12 months
- SDG 16.a.1: Existence of independent national human rights institutions in compliance with the Paris Principles
- SDG 16.b.1: Proportion of population reporting having personally felt discriminated against or harassed in the previous 12 months on the basis of a ground of discrimination prohibited under international human rights law
- Human Rights Engagement Barometer