

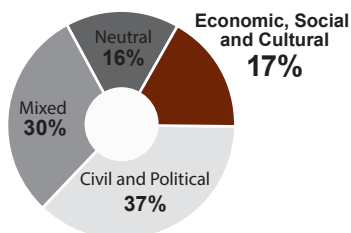
The Universal Periodic Review: a skewed agenda?

New research highlights concerns about the quantity and quality of recommendations on economic, social and cultural rights

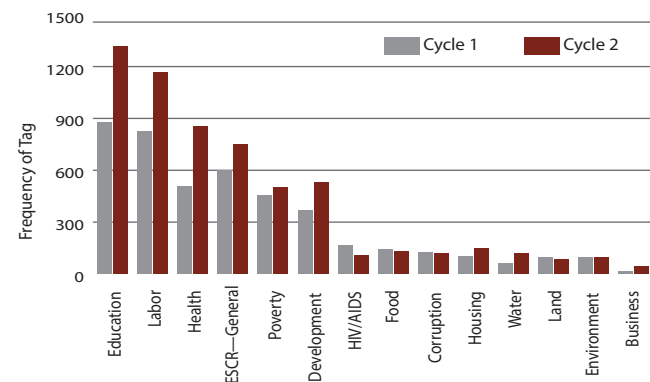
There are significantly fewer recommendations.

Less than one out of five is specifically focused on economic, social and cultural rights — half the number on civil and political rights — while some economic, social and cultural rights issues receive much less attention than others.

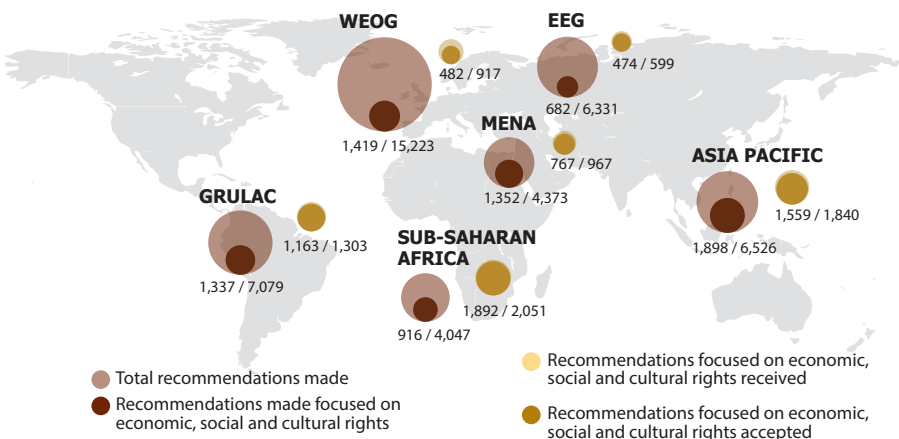
Percent of recommendations by category for both cycles, full dataset



Frequency of issues tagged per cycle, full dataset

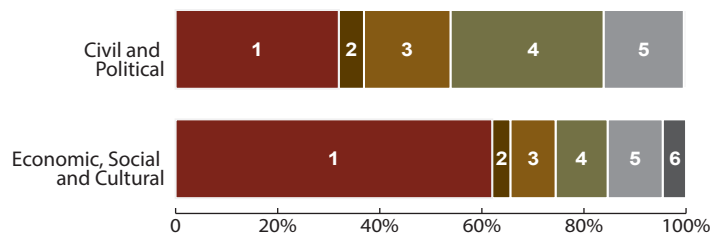


Number of recommendations for both cycles, full dataset



Regions vary in the number of recommendations they make and accept. Less than 10% of recommendations made by countries from the Middle East and North Africa, Eastern Europe, and Western Europe and Others focused on economic, social and cultural rights — the lack of attention to these rights by the latter has an outsized impact, given that 35% of all recommendations come from WEOG. The acceptance rate among WEOG countries was 53%, compared to 80-90% in other regions.

Percent of recommendations by type of action, both cycles, re-coded sample



Recommendations are less policy-oriented. A sample of 21 countries was re-coded to evaluate the type of action they recommend. As shown above, almost two thirds of the recommendations focused on economic, social and cultural rights suggested only general action, which raises questions about their utility in guiding policymaking at the national level. Only 4.6% addressed resources, which is very low considering how central this is to the realization of economic, social and cultural rights. As shown below, for economic, social and cultural rights, acceptance rates were consistently high across the types of actions recommended, with the exception of recommendations to accede to treaties.

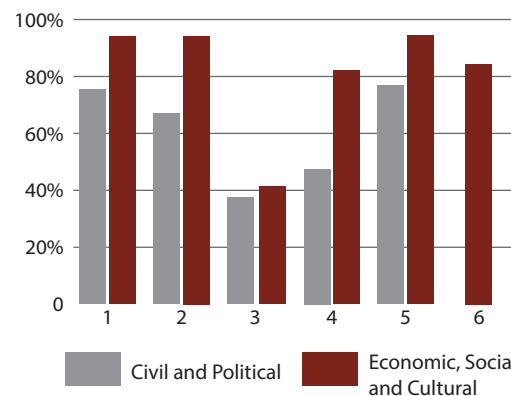
CODE	CATEGORY
1	Take general action
2	Engage with human rights mechanisms
3	Accede to treaties
4	Enact laws, policies or programs
5	Ensure enforcement or implementation
6	Dedicate resources



Recommendations are vague on outcomes. The recommendations were also re-coded according to the type of outcome sought. Only one third of the recommendations focused on economic, social and cultural rights sought a specific outcome (e.g. increase the percentage of children registered at birth in remote and rural areas). Half sought a general outcome (e.g. ensure the protection of women and children) and the remainder sought no particular outcome. This makes it harder to measure progress in their achievement.

The UPR aims to promote the universality, interdependence, indivisibility and interrelatedness of all human rights (A/HRC/RES/5/1). Precise, policy-oriented recommendations are crucial in order to meaningfully measure the conduct of states and the outcomes of that conduct. Without them, the ability of the UPR to guide states towards policy choices — including on economic policy — that fulfill economic, social and cultural rights is significantly reduced.

Acceptance rates by action type, both cycles, re-coded sample



This factsheet summarizes the findings of research that was undertaken by the Sciences Po Law School Clinic for the Center for Economic and Social Rights (CESR). Students at the clinic conducted an overall analysis of the entire dataset created by UPR Info and an in-depth analysis of a sample of 21 countries (chosen to reflect a mix of regions and income levels). Recommendations were classified as “focused” on economic, social and cultural rights using UPR Info’s “issues” tag for the full dataset and after reviewing the full text of each recommendation in the sample. The dataset used is current up to the 21st session of the UPR Working Group (January 2016). For further information, contact Holly Stubbs, Research Fellow at CESR, at hstubbs@cesr.org.