

2019 Special Called Session of General Conference – Who are the Delegates?

Among all General Conference delegates,
only **36%** are women.¹

by Magaela Bethune, MS, MPA

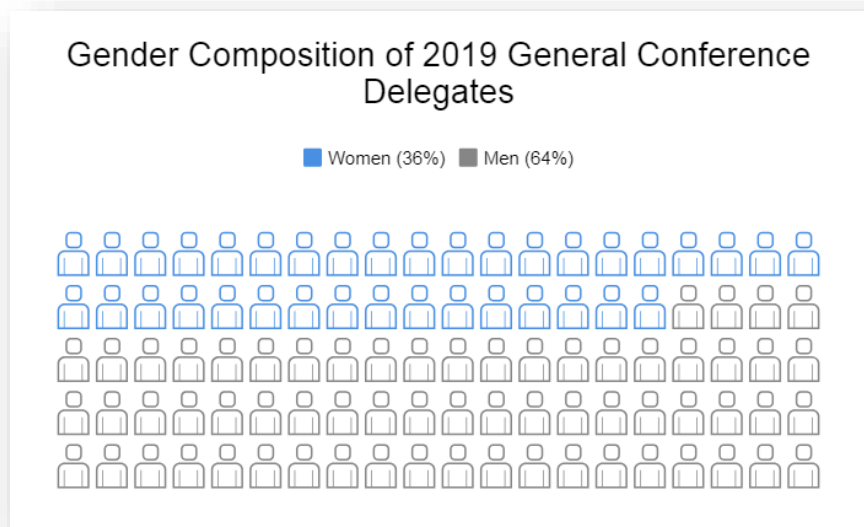
As a result of action at the 2016 General Conference, the Council of Bishops established the Commission on a Way Forward and called a Special Session of the General Conference of The United Methodist Church (UMC). The purpose of the 2019 General Conference is to consider legislation consistent with the scope of the called General Conference and the report from the Commission on a Way Forward, regarding human sexuality and the unity of the church.

Since the Special Called Session is a continuation of the 2016 General Conference, the great majority of the delegates at the Special Called Session are the same individuals who attended the 2016 General Conference. A few Annual Conferences held elections for new delegates, and some 2016 delegates have been replaced by reserves because they are no longer able or eligible to serve.

In 2016, the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women (GCSRW) published a *2016 four-part report* on the representation of women among 2016 delegates. In anticipation of the upcoming special session, GCSRW presents this updated breakdown of the 2019 delegates, with special focus on the representation of women.

¹ Gender data for 12 delegates (10 – Concordat, 1 – Texas, 1 – West Congo) were not reported, and therefore are not reflected in this figure.

Gender Distribution of 2019 Conference Delegates



Of the 2019 General Conference delegates (N=862) that will attend the 2019 Special Session in February 2019. Of the delegates for who gender information are available (n=850), 36% are women and 64% men.

The basic unit of The United Methodist Church is the Annual Conference. In the United States, the Annual Conferences are organized into five jurisdictions: North Central, Northeastern, South Central, Southeastern, and Western. Annual Conferences outside of the United States are organized into seven Central Conferences by regions in Africa: Africa, West Africa, Congo; Europe: Central/Southern Europe, Germany, North Europe/Eurasia; and the Philippines. Also included in the Central Conference delegations are those delegates from the autonomous or affiliated churches.

Across the entire church, women’s representation among delegations varies, ranging from a low of 19.7% in the Congo Central Conference to a high of 54.7% in the Northeastern Jurisdiction. Indeed, the underrepresentation of women delegates is more pronounced in the Central Conference regions than in U.S. jurisdictions. Of the 544 male General Conference delegates, 44% (n = 260) are from Central Conferences. Of the 306 female General Conference delegates, 28% (n = 87) are from Central Conferences.

Table 1 shows the gender distribution of General Conference delegates by jurisdiction/central conference and region (see Appendix A for Annual Conference breakdowns). Bolded lines are areas under the 36% of women delegates.

Table 1.
Gender Composition of 2019 General Conference Delegates (N=852) by Jurisdiction/Central Conference

Jurisdiction/Central Conference	Male		Female	
	%	n	%	n
North Central	52.2%	48	47.8%	44

Northeastern	45.3%	39	54.7%	47
South Central²	63.9%	69	35.2%	38
Southeastern	58.8%	110	41.2%	77
Western	58.1%	18	41.9%	13
U.S. JURISDICTIONS	56.3%	284	43.5%	219
Africa	59.5%	25	40.5%	17
West Africa	78.8%	63	21.3%	17
Congo	79.6%	109	19.7%	27
AFRICA REGION	76.1%	197	23.6%	61
Central/Southern Europe	71.4%	10	28.6%	4
Germany	66.7%	4	33.3%	2
North Europe/Eurasia	73.7%	14	26.3%	5
EUROPE REGION	71.8%	28	28.2%	11
PHILIPPINES	70.0%	35	30.0%	15
CENTRAL CONFERENCES	74.7%	260	25.0%	87

Clergy and Lay Delegates

Half of the General Conference delegates are laity and half are clergy with the number of delegates representing each jurisdiction and each annual conference being proportional to the jurisdiction and annual conference's membership.

Tables 2 and 3 show the gender distribution of clergy and lay delegates for each jurisdiction/central conference.

In most jurisdictions and central conferences, women are underrepresented among clergy delegates, and are more likely to be delegates elected among laity. Overall, only 29% of delegates that are clergy are women; 71% are men. This ratio is similar to the gender distribution of clergy described in a [recent GCSRW report](#) that examined the gender pay gap between clergywomen and clergymen. Of the 305 General Conference delegates for 2019 that are women, 40.5% are clergy delegates, and 59.5% are lay delegates.

Of the 129 annual conferences, 46 (36%) of them have 50% or more women in their delegation (bolded in the Appendix). Five annual conferences do not have any women delegates: Bicol Philippines, Kasai, Malawi Provisional, Quezon City Philippines, and West Congo.

² One person did not report their gender.

2019 General Conference Delegates: Women (N=306)

■ Clergy (40%) ■ Lay (60%)



2019 General Conference Delegates Clergy and Lay Delegates, By Gender

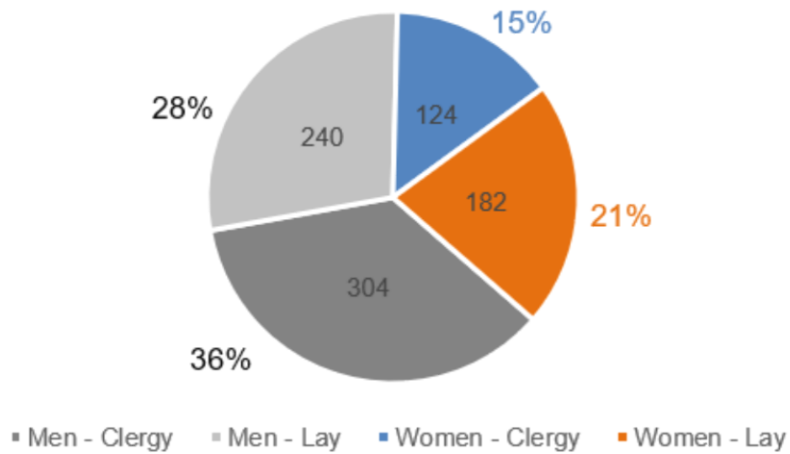


Table 3.
Gender Distribution of Clergy and Lay Delegates by Jurisdiction/Central Conference³

	Male		Female	
	%	n	%	n
US REGION – ALL				
Clergy	63.6%	161	36.4%	92
Lay	49.0%	123	50.6%	127
North Central				
Clergy	60.9%	28	39.1%	18
Lay	43.5%	20	56.5%	26
Northeastern				
Clergy	54.5%	24	45.5%	20
Lay	35.7%	15	64.3%	27
South Central				
Clergy	70.4%	38	29.6%	16
Lay	57.4%	31	40.7%	22
Southeastern				
Clergy	64.9%	61	35.1%	33
Lay	52.7%	49	47.3%	44
Western				
Clergy	66.7%	10	33.3%	5
Lay	50.0%	8	50.0%	8
AFRICA REGION – ALL				
Clergy	80.8%	105	19.2%	25
Lay	71.3%	92	27.9%	36
Africa				
Clergy	71.4%	15	28.6%	6
Lay	47.6%	10	52.4%	11
West Africa				
Clergy	82.5%	33	17.5%	7
Lay	75.0%	30	25.0%	10
Congo				
Clergy	82.6%	57	17.4%	12

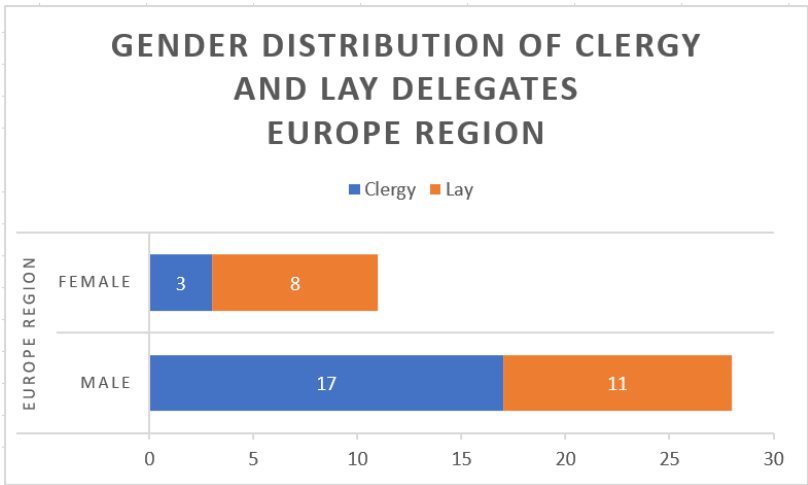
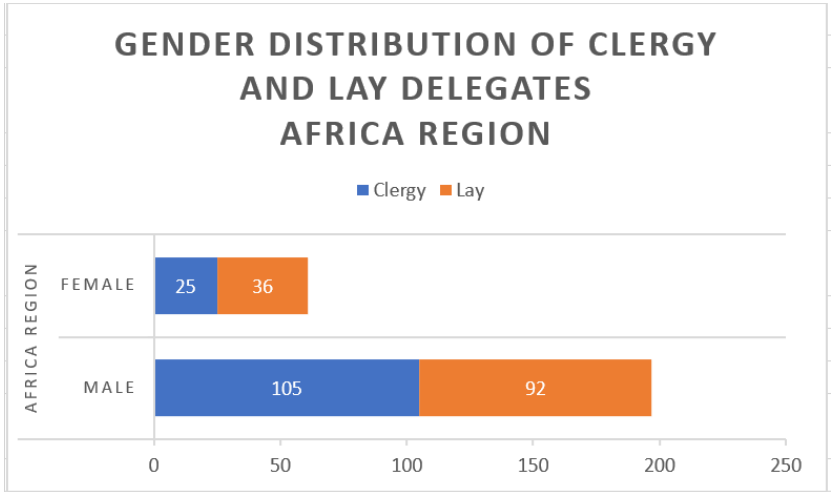
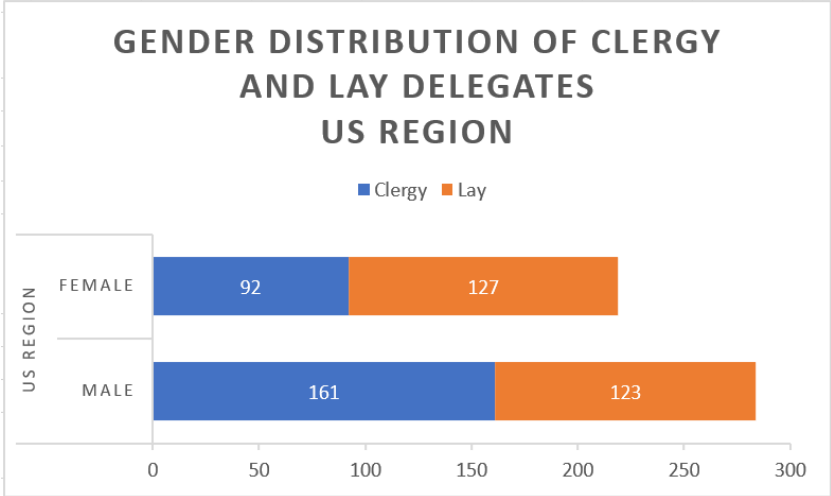
³ 2 people did not report their gender.

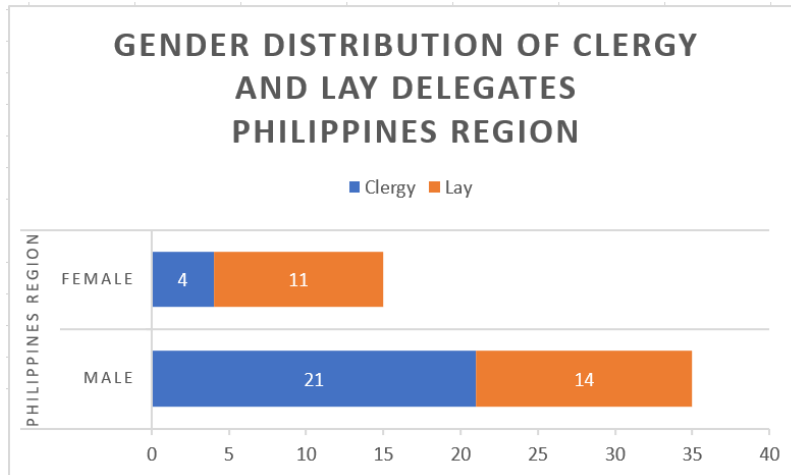
Lay	76.5%	52	22.1%	15
EUROPE REGION – ALL				
Clergy	85.0%	17	15.0%	3
Lay	57.9%	11	42.1%	8
Central/Southern Europe				
Clergy	100	7	0.0%	0
Lay	42.9%	3	57.1%	4
Germany				
Clergy	66.7%	2	33.3%	1
Lay	66.7%	2	33.3%	1
Northern Europe/Eurasia				
Clergy	80.0%	8	20.0%	2
Lay	66.7%	6	33.3%	3
PHILIPPINES - ALL				
Clergy	84.0%	21	16.0%	4
Lay	56.0%	14	44.0%	11
ALL CENTRAL CONFERENCES				
Clergy	81.7%	143	18.3%	32
Lay	67.6%	117	31.8%	55

Clergy and Lay Delegates, By Region

In each of the regions of The United Methodist Church represented at General Conference, women fall below 50% of the General Conference delegates. The most substantial disparities in gender representation are among delegates from Central Conference regions.

Across Central Conference regions, women constitute only 25% of General Conference delegates.





Call to Action

In the spring of 2019, Annual Conferences will begin electing delegates to the 2020 General Conference. As we look at the representation of the delegates at the 2019 General Conference, the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women reminds all voting delegates to Annual Conferences to vote for an inclusive slate of delegates that represents the membership of your conference in deciding the laws, budget, and programming for the denomination. In a church with over sixty percent of the members being women, can we do better in 2020 than thirty-six percent?

Special thanks to the General Commission on General Conference for the collection of data used in this analysis.

Appendix A

Table 4.

Gender Distribution of 2019 Delegates (Clergy and Lay) by Annual Conference

Gender Distribution of All 2019 General Conference Delegates by Annual Conference (n=862)				
ANNUAL CONFERENCE	Women		Men	
	%	n	%	n
ALABAMA-WEST FLORIDA	60%	6	40%	4
ALASKA	50%	1	50%	1
ARKANSAS	50%	4	50%	4
AUSTRIA PROVISIONAL	50%	1	50%	1
BALTIMORE-WASHINGTON	50%	6	50%	6
BICOL PHILIPPINES	0%	0	100%	2
BULACAN PHILIPPINES	0%	0	100%	2
BULGARIA-ROMANIA PROVISIONAL	50%	1	50%	1
BURUNDI	37%	3	63%	5
CALIFORNIA-NEVADA	17%	1	83%	5
CALIFORNIA-PACIFIC	63%	5	37%	3
CENTRAL CONGO	20%	1	80%	4
CENTRAL LUZON PHILIPPINES	0%	0	100%	2
CENTRAL NIGERIA	17%	1	83%	5
CENTRAL RUSSIA	0%	0	100%	2
CENTRAL TEXAS	37%	3	63%	5
CONCORDAT* = 10 DELEGATES	--	--	--	--
CÔTE D'IVOIRE	18%	6	82%	28
CZECH & SLOVAK REP	50%	1	50%	1
DAKOTAS	100%	2	0%	0
DENMARK	50%	1	50%	1
DESERT SOUTHWEST	0%	0	100%	2
EAST AFRICA	25%	1	75%	3
EAST CONGO	17%	2	83%	10
EAST MINDANAO PHILIPPINES	100%	2	0%	0
EAST OHIO	42%	5	58%	7
EAST ZIMBABWE	50%	2	50%	2
EASTERN ANGOLA	50%	1	50%	1
EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA	75%	6	25%	2
EASTERN RUSSIA-CENTRAL ASIA PROVISIONAL	100%	2	0%	0
ESTONIA	0%	0	100%	2
FINLAND-FINNISH PROV	0%	0	100%	1
FINLAND-SWEDISH PROV	0%	0	100%	2
FLORIDA	56%	10	44%	8

GERMANY EAST	0%	0	100%	2
GERMANY NORTH	50%	1	50%	1
GERMANY SOUTH	50%	1	50%	1
GREAT PLAINS	50%	6	50%	6
GREATER NEW JERSEY	88%	7	12%	1
HOLSTON	50%	6	50%	6
HUNGARY PROV	0%	0	100%	2
ILLINOIS GREAT RIVERS	40%	4	60%	6
INDIANA	50%	8	50%	8
IOWA	50%	6	50%	6
KASAI	0%	0	100%	2
KENTUCKY	30%	3	70%	7
KIVU	50%	1	50%	1
LIBERIA	25%	3	75%	9
LOUISIANA	50%	4	50%	4
LUKOSHI	22%	3	78%	11
MALAWI PROVISIONAL	0%	0	100%	2
MEMPHIS	25%	1	75%	3
MICHIGAN	75%	6	25%	2
MIDDLE PHILIPPINES	50%	1	50%	1
MINDANAO PHILIPPINES	50%	1	50%	1
MINNESOTA	50%	2	50%	2
MISSISSIPPI	33%	4	67%	8
MISSOURI	33%	4	67%	8
MOUNTAIN SKY	22%	2	78%	7
MOZAMBIQUE NORTH	50%	1	50%	1
MOZAMBIQUE SOUTH	50%	3	50%	3
NEW ENGLAND	50%	3	50%	3
NEW MEXICO	0%	0	100%	2
NEW YORK	37%	3	63%	5
NORTH ALABAMA	25%	2	75%	6
NORTH CAROLINA	44%	7	56%	9
NORTH CENTRAL PHILIPPINES	50%	1	50%	1
NORTH GEORGIA	24%	5	76%	16
NORTH KATANGA	12%	6	88%	42
NORTH TEXAS	40%	4	60%	6
NORTH-WEST KATANGA	20%	2	80%	8
NORTHEAST LUZON PHILIPPINES	0%	0	100%	2
NORTHEAST PHILIPPINES	0%	0	100%	2
NORTHERN ILLINOIS	50%	3	50%	3
NORTHERN NIGERIA	25%	1	75%	3
NORTHERN PHILIPPINES	0%	0	100%	2
NORTHWEST MINDANAO PHILIPPINES	50%	1	50%	1
NORTHWEST PHILIPPINES	50%	1	50%	1
NORTHWEST RUSSIA PROVISIONAL	50%	1	50%	1

NORTHWEST TEXAS	25%	1	75%	3
NORWAY	50%	1	50%	1
OKLAHOMA	29%	4	71%	10
OKLAHOMA INDIAN MISSIONARY	50%	1	50%	1
OREGON-IDAHO	100%	2	0%	0
ORIENTAL AND EQUATOR	0%	0	100%	2
PACIFIC NORTHWEST	100%	2	0%	0
PALAWAN PHILIPPINES	50%	1	50%	1
PAMPANGA PHILIPPINES	50%	1	50%	1
PANGASINAN PHILIPPINES	0%	0	100%	2
PENINSULA-DELAWARE	25%	1	75%	3
PHILIPPINES	0%	0	100%	2
PHILIPPINES-CAVITE (PACC)	50%	1	50%	1
POLAND	0%	0	100%	2
QUEZON CITY PHILIPPINES EAST	0%	0	100%	2
RED BIRD MISSIONARY	50%	1	50%	1
RIO TEXAS	40%	4	60%	6
RIZAL PHILIPPINES EAST	0%	0	100%	2
SERBIA-MACEDONIA PROVISIONAL	0%	0	100%	2
SIERRA LEONE	33%	4	67%	8
SOUTH AFRICA PROVISIONAL	50%	1	50%	1
SOUTH CAROLINA	37%	6	63%	10
SOUTH CONGO	14%	2	86%	12
SOUTH GEORGIA	12%	1	88%	7
SOUTH NUEVA ECIJA PHILIPPINES	0%	0	100%	2
SOUTH-WEST KATANGA	33%	2	67%	4
SOUTHERN NIGERIA	17%	2	83%	10
SOUTHERN RUSSIA PROV	0%	0	100%	2
SOUTHERN TAGALOG PROVISIONAL PHILIPPINES	50%	1	50%	1
SOUTHWEST PHILIPPINES	50%	1	50%	1
SUSQUEHANNA	50%	5	50%	5
SWITZERLAND-FRANCE-NORTH AFRICA	50%	1	50%	1
TANGANYIKA	37%	3	63%	5
TANZANIA	67%	4	33%	2
TARLAC PHILIPPINES	50%	1	50%	1
TENNESSEE	37%	3	63%	5
TEXAS*	18%	3	82%	14
UKRAINE-MOLDAVA PROVISIONAL	0%	0	100%	2
UPPER NEW YORK	50%	6	50%	6
VIRGINIA	50%	11	50%	11
VISAYAS PHILIPPINES	50%	1	50%	1
WEST CONGO*	0%	0	100%	1
WEST MIDDLE PHILIPPINES	50%	1	50%	1
WEST OHIO	31%	5	69%	11

WEST VIRGINIA	67%	4	33%	2
WEST ZIMBABWE	50%	1	50%	1
WESTERN ANGOLA	40%	4	60%	6
WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA	55%	11	45%	9
WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA	50%	6	50%	6
WISCONSIN	50%	3	50%	3
ZAMBIA	17%	1	83%	5
TOTAL*	36%	306	64%	544

* The 10 Concordat delegates and one delegate each from both the Texas and West Congo annual conference had no gender data were available, and therefore are not counted in these rows.