

Common law and equity are legal systems where decisions by courts are explicitly acknowledged to be legal sources. The "doctrine of precedent", or stare decisis means that decisions by higher courts bind lower courts. Common law systems also rely on statutes, passed by the legislature, but may make less of a systematic attempt to codify their laws than in a "civil law" system. Common law originated from England and has been inherited by almost every country once tied to the British Empire (except Malta, Scotland, the U.S. state of Louisiana, and the Canadian province of Quebec).